

THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWS WITH SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD
DEMOCRAT OF WEST VIRGINIA,
MAJORITY LEADER OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE

INTERVIEWER: FRANK VAN DER LINDEN

Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd

U.S. Sen. Robert C. Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, has risen from grinding poverty to the heights of national politics.

He was born in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, November 20, 1917, and christened "Cornelius Calvin Sale, Jr." His mother died in the 1918 influenza epidemic, and the boy was adopted by his father's sister and her husband, Dalton Byrd. They brought him to their home in West Virginia.

As the foster son of a poor coal miner, Byrd had a hard-scrabble youth. He was the "scrap boy" who collected his neighbors' garbage and fed it to the hogs he raised to earn a little money. At great sacrifice, his foster father bought him a violin. Byrd was reared on fiddling and hard-shell Baptist religion.

"I asked the good Lord to give me one of three things," he says in these memoirs. "Either make me the best fiddler in the country, or a man of towering strength, or give me Erma James for my wife. And he answered my prayer; He gave me Erma James." At 19, Byrd married his high school sweetheart. He was clerking in a store then for \$55 a month.

Later, Byrd became a butcher and, in World War Two, he worked as a welder in shipyards at Baltimore and Tampa, Florida. He never owned an automobile—or even learned to drive one—until he was 32, a member of the West Virginia Senate. As a U.S. Senator, at 45, he finally won a law degree from the American University in Washington.

With his fiddling and his campaigning as the coal miners' friend, he went to the legislature in 1946, the U.S. House of Representatives in 1952 and the U.S. Senate in 1958. In 1971, he took the Senator majority whip's job away from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. In 1977, Byrd became the majority leader.

Byrd reveals how he made the mistake of joining the Ku Klux Klan and how the revelation of that

secret nearly wrecked his career; how he defied John L. Lewis, the United Mine Workers union chieftain, to win his Senate seat; and how he gave up his prospects of being named to the Supreme Court by President Nixon.

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FIRST INTERVIEW: February 11, 1977

Interviewer: Senator, this series of interviews is intended particularly to tell the young people of America how a boy can start out in poverty in the southern hills and rise to be the majority leader of the United States Senate. Let's record at the very beginning, tell us when you were born, your original name, your parents' names and how you started out in North Carolina.

Sen. Byrd: I am trying to recall a bit of verse in response to your introduction. It goes like this:

Ah, great it is to believe the dream
As we stand in life by the starry stream,
But greater still to live life through
And find at the end that the dream is true.

These lines typify the American dream, the dream that any individual in this country of ours, under our system of government, can go as high and as far as his ambition, his drive, and his ability will take him.

I was born in 1917, November 20, in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. My name was Cornelius Calvin Sale, Junior. My mother died on the eve of Armistice Day, 1918, during the great influenza epidemic—an epidemic which took the lives of 20 million people around the world and 500,000 in our own country.

All of the family had had the 'flu. They tell me that people died quickly in those days, of that influenza—died in a matter of hours. I had three brothers and a sister. I was the baby in the family. My mother, I am told, had ministered unto all of us—we all apparently had the 'flu. We were getting over it, when she became ill. I am told that she told my father, Cornelius Calvin Sale, that if she did not recover from the 'flu—I am sure she knew people were dying in those days and they didn't have the medication and doctors and health services that we have now, so she probably felt that she might not recover—in any event, she told him that if she did not recover, it was her wish that the baby be given to Dalton Byrd and his wife, to raise.

Now, Dalton Byrd's wife Vlurma, was a sister of my father, Cornelius Calvin Sale. The Byrds had no

living children of their own. They had earlier had one son, but he had died of scarlet fever while very young. My mother died that night, I believe, and she talked of the whistles and firecrackers and the guns saluting the Armistice in her last hours, and she was buried down on a little hill there in North Wilkesboro. Today, no stone marks the location of her grave.

I was brought to West Virginia by Dalton and Vlurma Byrd. They were poor. I think we first lived in Bluefield in Mercer county, West Virginia. They brought me to West Virginia when I was about three years of age, I guess, and my foster father worked in a brewery, the Bluefield Brewing Company. Later, we moved to Landgraff, in McDowell county, where my foster father worked in a coal mine. We later moved to Algonquin, another coal mining community in Mercer county, where I first started to school. I was around six years old. I began going to school in a little two-room building. And in the same room, of course, were the upper gradesmen. I started out in the primer.

I remember in the primer we had stories about Baby Ray.

Q.: I had Baby Ray, too.

Sen. Byrd: You also had Baby Ray. Well, I stayed in the primer about two weeks and was promoted to the first grade. In the first year, I went through the primer, the first and second grades. Of course I was in the class with children in the third, fourth and fifth grades, and in the next room were the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, I believe.

As time went on, it so happened that one of the two teachers at that little two-room school boarded at our house. My foster mother kept boarders, and one of the boarders was a Mr. Lawrence Jennings, one of the two teachers. He taught the upper classes. Well, upon one occasion, I decided to promote myself. I wanted to study in a grade higher than I found myself in, so I told my foster father that I wanted him to go to Matoaka—about five miles from Algonquin—and get me a copy of the book, Frye's Geography, as I recall it, and the other books that went along with the next grade, whatever it was. So that night

we caught the train—the passenger train in those days was very crowded—went down to Matoaka and he bought the books. So, the next day I went to school and I took my new books and I didn't take the old books. The teacher wanted to know why I was bringing those new books to school. I said I wanted to go to the next grade. So, she let me stay in that grade. I just promoted myself. I got along very well.

Those, I guess, were the mid-1920's or early 1920's, 1924 or 1925. Subsequently, we moved over to a little old farm of 26 acres on Wolf Creek, in Mercer County. Lawrence Jennings, the school teacher, had a farm over there and he and my Dad talked about it. Dad, my foster father, decided he'd like to live on a farm, so he went over to see this 26-acre farm—it was 3.1 miles off what we called "the hard road" in those days.

Three and one-tenth miles up a hollow, dirt road, 26 acres, just two hillsides came together at the bottom. One did very well to get a wagon up to that place. Anyhow, he decided he'd buy that piece of property from Mr. Jennings, and I believe he paid about eighteen hundred dollars for it. That was the price. Well, we moved from Algonquin to this old farm. We lived there a while; times were hard; my foster father finally had to quit farming and go back on what we called "the public works."

Well, "public works" in those days was a coal mining community or a place where the public generally was employed. So he located a job at Stotesbury in Raleigh County working in the mine. During that summer, my "Mom" and I grew a garden and also grew some corn, potatoes, and beans, on the hillsides. I'd help to "bug" the beans. "Bugging" the beans was an operation in which I would go along and look at the bean leaves, look on the bottom leaves and find the eggs of the beetles, put them in a glass jar, and dispose of them, destroy them, burn them. We had no electricity in the house. We had an old spring house out there where my foster mother kept butter and milk. We had one cow and one horse—an old horse named George—and an old hound dog and a couple of hogs and some chickens and two or three guineas. We would use an old oil lamp.

We had an outside toilet; and an old telephone that was on the wall. I remember I used to stand up on a chair. I'd crank that telephone—two longs and three shorts—and my boy friend a couple of miles down the hollow would answer the telephone. Of course, everybody else in the whole countryside would take off their receivers at the same time, and they'd all listen in.

I went to molasses-makings in those days, what we called "molassie-makings." The farmers would grow cane and in the fall they'd make molasses. There was a left-handed fiddler who played while the syrup was boiling, and I enjoyed listening to him. I always wanted to play the fiddle like that left-handed fiddler could play it. I went to school at that time up on the mountain, which was probably a mile and a half or two miles up the mountain, above where we lived. There was only one house above our house in the hollow.

There was a school teacher by the name of Archie Akers who lived down the hollow, perhaps three and a half miles. He would walk by my house every morning on his way up to the school on the ridge. When he came along, I would go with him and we'd walk along and talk about the history lesson and some of the other things we were studying in school. Again it was a little two-room school. I used to sit up at night and memorize my history lesson by the light of the old oil lamp.

I would study and memorize the chapters on Nathaniel Greene, Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox," and some of the other early Revolutionary heroes. I enjoyed going to school.

Q.: Was history your favorite subject?

Sen. Byrd: That was one of my favorite subjects. I liked arithmetic. We used to have adding matches, and spelling matches. On Friday afternoons, we'd have these spelling matches. I always looked forward to the hour that came when we would have the spelling match, or multiplication match. These usually came along about the last hour of the last school day of the week.

Q.: I'll bet you were good at it.

Sen. Byrd: Well, pretty good. The teacher would name two students to act as the captains of the two teams. Each captain would then name the students to be on the same team with him or her, and we would have these words thrown at us and the last student left standing, of course, would be the winner of the spelling match. I did pretty well, I did all right; I was one of the best of the spellers, and the arithmeticians.

We then moved to Stotesbury where my foster father had gotten a job in the coal mines. We stayed a couple of years and he worked hard and saved and paid off that bill on the farm.

I recall now it was eighteen hundred dollars. He paid it off and then we moved back to the same place. In the meantime, I had started going to school there at "Mark Twain" in Stotesbury, and I had met up with another coal miner there who worked in the same coal mine with my Dad. The man's name was Fred James. Fred James played the fiddle. He took a liking to me—I was just a little old boy—and I liked to hear that fiddle. Fred James taught me how to play "Old Ninety-Seven," "She'll Be Coming Around the Mountain," "The Little Brown Jug," and so on.

Q.: How old were you when you started fiddling?

Sen. Byrd: I must have been about ten.

Q.: Did you own your own fiddle?

Sen. Byrd: Not at that point. At Stotesbury there was a wonderful music teacher who had a little orchestra up at the Mark Twain school, and it was made up of junior high and high school students. She convinced me that I ought to start taking lessons on the violin. I talked to my Dad about it. One Saturday night, we got into a truck—we had no car in our family but there was a man there at Stotesbury whose name was Clayte Parsons.

He had an old truck, and on payday Saturdays, which came every two weeks, miners would get a little pay and they would go to Beckley, which was about ten or twelve miles away from Stotesbury, and they'd do some shopping.

They'd get groceries and so on. Clayte Parsons would fill up that old flat-bed truck with eight or ten coal miners, and my Dad would let me go along. I always looked forward to that ride over to Beckley in that truck.

On this occasion, I can remember coming back home from Beckley. The moon was shining, and I was hugging that fiddle under my arm. He had gone to Beckley and he had bought a violin, a case, and a fiddle bow for about twenty-seven, twenty-eight or nine dollars—which was a lot of money in those days. It took him a long time to save that much money working in the coal mine. He was only getting, maybe, two or three dollars a day, and the family had to live out of it.

So I brought home that violin and started taking music lessons; then, when we moved back to the farm, over in Mercer county, I had then gotten through the seventh grade and started going to Spanishburg school when I was in the eighth grade. I'd walk the 3.1 miles down the hollow; you see, the first time we lived on that old farm I walked up the hollow to the ridge. I'd walk down the hollow, in this instance, to catch the school bus and ride four miles to school.

Q.: You were about 12 or 13?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, about 12 or 13 years old. I would carry with me a quart of milk and a piece of corn bread, and a piece of pork that my Mom had packed for me, ride that school bus to school and in the afternoons ride the four miles back on the bus, get off and walk the 3.1 miles home.

By the time I got home, the shadows were lengthening, the hoot owls were hooting, the screech owls were screeching, and I'd cross the creeks and walk along the hillsides, and the snow was often heavy. Then at night I'd take that old hound dog, and we'd go out and sit on a rock and perhaps he'd chase a ground hog or a rabbit in a hole and I'd set a trap at the hole. Next morning, I'd go out there, and there would be the poor rabbit with his leg in a trap. Tears would roll down my cheeks—I felt sorry for him. Then I'd take him down to the store on my way to school, and there at the store, Fred Jennings, who had the

store, would buy that rabbit from me, and pay me fifteen cents probably for him.

Q . That was the only money you had, wasn't it?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, yes. We didn't have much money in those days. We were able to get a bottle or two of soda-pop a year. If we were lucky, on the Fourth of July we'd get a bottle of pop. We'd make our own ice cream.

Q.: At Christmas, I don't guess you got a lot of presents, either.

Sen. Byrd: No, I can remember at Christmas time if I got a pair of shoes and a pair of socks and a new pair of overalls or a shirt or two, why I was lucky. Some Christmases, I didn't get anything, maybe a little fruit.

Q.: Not many toys and not a lot of candy.

Sen. Byrd: No, my foster father never bought me any toys. The only toy I ever remember him buying for me was a little toy automobile I could sit in and pedal.

Q.: Like a wagon.

Sen. Byrd: Yes. But he never bought toy guns or anything like that for me. He would prefer to buy books, writing tablets, or drawing tablets or water color sets for me and so on.

Q.: Something useful?

Sen. Byrd: Yes. Well, as time went on we moved back to Stotesbury, and I stayed there until a few years after I graduated from high school.

In the meantime, I'd learned to play the fiddle right well. I played it by ear a lot, you know. It was a great pasttime for me and I enjoyed it.

Q.: Did you play for dances, and things?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, I used to play for a lot of square dances, used to get into some fiddling contests,

from time to time. I graduated from high school in 1934. I was valedictorian of the class—of course, it was a small class—probably under thirty in the class, otherwise I probably wouldn't have been the valedictorian. I had a great interest in math. I like geometry, algebra, mathematics, history, and I always sought to do my best. I was very interested in my class work. I also was the bass drummer in the high school band: played first violin in the high school orchestra. Every chance I got, though, I'd slip out and play "Old Joe Clark" on my fiddle. Rather than play sheet music, I preferred to play the old mountain tunes on my violin.

Q.: What were some of the other favorites you played?

Sen. Byrd: "Sally Goodin," "The Cumberland Gap," "Going Up Cripple Creek," "Turkey in the Straw," "Mississippi Sawyer," "Arkansas Traveler," "Soldier's Joy," and so on.

Q.: Did these, in many cases, come from the Old Country, the British Isles, a lot of those tunes?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, a lot of those tunes, when played on the violin, sound a good bit like the Scottish bagpipes.

Q.: I thought maybe your ancestors, like mine, were Scotch-Irish, and brought those old tunes to the New World.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, those old Irish reels, Scottish airs and hornpipes, and medleys. In any event, I graduated in 1934, and it was very hard to get a job in those days.

Q.: The bottom of the depression.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, it was a very cold winter in January and February of 1935. I was able to get a job working in a gas station at Helen, West Virginia, which was three miles from where I lived at Stotesbury. Mr. W.P. Myers was the store manager at Stotesbury. There was a chain of stores, the Koppers Company, in various coal

mining communities. One day Mr. Myers said to me, "Bob, how would you like to have a job?"

I said, "I'd love to have a job." I graduated in May of 1934, and here it was January, 1935, and I still didn't have a job. He said, "Well, go down to Helen and talk to Mr. Sterling, the store manager there, and he's got a need for a man to work in his gas station."

So I saw Mr. Sterling and started to work, and I had to walk those three miles, and the temperature that winter got down to 16, 17, or 18 degrees below zero. Of course, we didn't know anything about the wind chill factor in those days. Never heard of it. I suppose, if that had been counted in, it would have been considerably lower than 17 or 18 below zero.

Q.: I imagine you didn't have very many warm clothes, either.

Sen. Byrd: No, I didn't. My foster mother kept boarders there at Stotesbury, and there was a man who boarded at our house—as a matter of fact, he's still living, he lives over at Lashmeet, near Kegley, in Mercer county. His name is Ed Millsap. He had come up there, out of Tennessee, looking for work. He and his two brothers got a job there working in the mines, and he boarded at my Mom's house. My Mom was a good cook—I believe she was the hardest worker I ever saw in my life—she would get up at three-thirty or four o' clock in the morning and fix me a little breakfast and I'd start walking off down the railroad to Helen. She'd pack dinner buckets for those boarders, and she packed a good dinner bucket; charged seventy-five cents a day for food and lodging, and many times couldn't collect that.

Anyhow, Ed Millsap weighed about 180 pounds and I weighed about 135 pounds at that time, and he loaned me his topcoat; so I wore his overcoat and he loaned me his hat and I wore his neck scarf. I didn't have any hat or topcoat of my own. I was getting fifty dollars a month, working seven days one week and six days the next. Sometimes, I'd walk back home; sometimes I'd catch a ride. And from time to time, walking to Helen in the early morning—I had to be there at six o' clock to open what we

called "the grill" and the gas station—the "grill" was a place where people could buy ice cream and sodas.

Sometimes, I was able to catch the bread truck that came through and ride on it—considered myself lucky when I was able to do that. One morning, I got to Helen and opened the grill and looked in the mirror and saw I had lost my hat—or Ed Millsap's hat. Of course, I had his scarf tied around my head and face and the hat on top of it, so I didn't realize I'd lost that hat until I looked in the mirror. Quite often, on the way, I'd get so sleepy I'd just sit down on the railroad rail, and then I'd think, "I can't afford to do this. I can't let myself fall asleep on this railroad rail." I'd get up and keep walking.

Q.: You'd walk down the tracks?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, I'd walk down the railroad tracks. That was the Virginian railroad on one side of the creek, the C. & O. on the other. So, I worked there in the gas station for a period of a couple of months, I guess. One day, I was talking to Mr. Myers again, up at Stotesbury, and he said, "How are you getting along, Bob? How do you like your work?"

I said, "I like it all right, but I surely wish I could work closer home."

He said, "I'm going to have a job opening in my store here in the produce department the first of next month. How'd you like that?"

I said, "I'd just be tickled to have that."

So, he managed a transfer for me up to Stotesbury where I could live at home and work in the produce department. Still making fifty dollars a month and working in the produce department, which was associated with the meat shop, I was able to learn the trade of a meat cutter. I got myself a meat cutter's manual, and I took it home and I'd study it at night. So after four years I was transferred to Stanaford, West Virginia, where I became the head butcher. Meanwhile, I had had an increase of five dollars in my salary. Mr. Myers told me that the Koppers

Company Stores in that area needed some signs painted for their sale days.

Every two weeks, on pay day, the stores would put on what they called "sale days," and get someone to hand paint the signs. So, I took on the job of painting the signs, for which I got the extra five dollars a month. In the meantime, I was courting pretty heavily. As a matter of fact, one of the best old tunes is "You'll Never Know What Courting Is, 'Til You've Courted in the Rain."

My high school sweetheart, and I decided to get married.

Q.: What was her name?

Sen. Byrd: Her name was Erma James. It turned out that she was a daughter of the Fred James who, several years before when I was just a lad, had taught me how to play some of the old tunes on that fiddle.

Q.: So you became sweethearts in high school?

Sen. Byrd: Yes. I often tell the story about going to school there at Mark Twain. I couldn't afford to buy any candy or chewing gum. There was a boy in my class named Julius Takach. His father had a grocery store, and every day Julius would bring candy and chewing gum to school from his Dad's grocery store. I always made it a point to get near Julius when he first came into the class room so that he would give me some of the candy and chewing gum.

I didn't eat the candy. When classes changed, I met my sweetheart out in the hall and gave her the candy and chewing gum. She was one class below me and so we weren't in the same class together. But when the classes changed I'd see her and give her that candy and chewing gum; and that's what I called, "courtin' your girl with another boy's chewing gum."

Q.: I don't guess you had money to go to the movies and dates and things like that?

Sen. Byrd: Well, once in a while, I'd go to a movie. In those days it didn't cost much. I can remember

the old silent movies, back in the days of William Desmond, Jack Hoxie, and Joe Bonamo, Hoot Gibson, Tom Mix. I'd go on Saturday nights to the theater in Stotesbury. Back in the days of the old silent movies I was living at Algonquin.

Back in those days at Algonquin when I was eight or nine years old, I always looked forward on Sunday to getting the Bluefield Daily Telegraph and keeping track of Andy Gump, Uncle Bim and Chester Gump. Uncle Bim was in Africa hunting diamonds. I can remember Andy Gump's license number. It was 348.

I also remember the old phonograph records about "Uncle Josh." One was "Uncle Josh and Aunt Nancy Putting Up the Kitchen Stove." There was another one, "Uncle Josh Goes to the Dentist." In the course of having his tooth pulled, the dentist gave him gas...laughing gas. Uncle Josh would laugh, and at the end of the record, Uncle Josh was laughing uproariously, and the dentist asked him what he was laughing about. He said, "You pulled the wrong tooth."

Well, I married my childhood sweetheart in 1937—when I was nineteen—and this coming May 29, the Lord willing, we will have been married 40 years.

Q.: Goodness, just nineteen years old and making fifty-five dollars a month!

Sen. Byrd: Fifty-five dollars a month.

Q.: Where did you set up house keeping?

Sen. Byrd: We got two rooms upstairs above my wife's sister—see, those mining community houses were, most of them, four-room houses. They didn't have any running water in the houses, or any inside plumbing. My wife's sister had married a coal miner and they had a house, and we were able to rent two rooms upstairs and they had the two rooms downstairs.

We had an old kitchen stove, burned kindling and coal in it, the mornings were cold, but I was just so delighted to be able to work close to home. There at Stotesbury, our older daughter came along—Mona Carol—and

that's about the way we started out in life at \$55 a month, working hard but—

Q.: You were still in the grocery business, doing a little meat cutting too?

Sen. Byrd: I was working in the produce shop and the meat shop at that time.

SECOND INTERVIEW: February 16, 1977

Sen. Byrd: I was very interested in my work. I was receiving \$55 a month at that time. On Sundays, for example, I would go out and take orders from people in the coal mining community for watermelons, or, depending upon the time of the year, for bushels of peaches, or bushels of pears, so that they could can them. In an effort to do an outstanding job as a produce salesman, you see. There were several stores owned by the Koppers Company around the state. I tried to be one of the best produce salesmen in the chain. And then I worked in the meat shop at the same time and picked up the trade of becoming a meat cutter.

We ordered our produce from a wholesale produce house at Beckley, which was about ten or twelve miles away; we ordered meat from Armour and Company, Wilson and Company, Swift and Company, and we would work—many times I would go to the store on Sunday and prepare the display in the meat case. In 1939, I was transferred to Stanaford, another Koppers store, where I was given the job of head butcher. So my wife and I and our daughter moved there and the salary was—let me see—I can't remember what the salary was but not over a hundred dollars a month.

I worked there for a while and then I heard about an opening at the New River store at Mount Hope. So, I went there and became the head butcher at the Number One New River store. The Koppers people wanted me back so I went back with them and went to Montgomery in Fayette county, for a salary of about \$135 a month, I believe, working as head butcher.

But I wanted to get back up to the area where I'd lived previously. I soon saw an opportunity to go to the Carolina Supermarket, which was at Crab Orchard, West Virginia, and I liked that area because some of my wife's relatives lived up there. My foster parents also lived there at that time. I was the butcher there at the Carolina Supermarket for quite a while. Then World War II was going on. I took lessons in the welding school at

Beckley College, went to Baltimore as a welder in the shipyard there, Curtis Bay...in the fabricating shop—that was part of the Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipbuilding Company.

Q.: What type of ships did you work on?

Sen. Byrd: Liberty Ships and Victory Ships. The work there was interesting to me, of course, I tried to be a good welder. I was in Baltimore about a year and a half. I then decided to go South, where it was warmer. So, I went to Tampa, Florida, and was a welder there in the shipyards until the end of the war in 1945.

Q.: I presume, being in a defense industry, you were deferred from the draft?

Sen. Byrd: Yes. I then went back to Crab Orchard and got my old job back at the Carolina supermarket as meat cutter. That was in 1945. I had become interested in politics, so in 1946 I filed for the House of Delegates, the lower house of the West Virginia Legislature. There were three Delegates from Raleigh county and there were thirteen candidates in the race. I led the race. Of course, I was politically unknown, my foster father was a coal miner. I didn't have someone to pull me up, you know, by virtue of being well known in politics. I just had to sort of start out on my own.

There was a Republican lawyer in Beckley, named Oppie Hedrick, and he took an interest in me and he suggested that I use my fiddle everywhere I went. He said: "Make your fiddle case your brief case. Everywhere you go, you carry that fiddle case."

He said, "Your identity will become known. You make yourself a little speech, and they won't forget you because of that violin."

So I did that. I would go to meetings—just any kind of meetings—Odd Fellows, Fraternal Order of Moose, the Elks, women's club meetings, Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, all these. I would play some of the old tunes.

Q.: You guaranteed them some entertainment, rather than just a speech.

Sen. Byrd: Well, I guaranteed both. I would play two or three tunes and then I would make a little talk, quote some poetry and state why I thought I should become a member of the Legislature. The outcome of the election was a surprise: I led the ticket! I led the whole field of 13! I had campaigned assiduously. I tried to call on all the Democratic county executive committee members and other politicoes. I would go to their homes, sometimes as late as nine or ten o'clock at night, and take my violin with me. I would tell them I was running for office, and while I was talking I would say, "Would you like me to play a tune on my violin?" and they'd say, "Yes." And it sort of caught on, like fire, you know. I didn't have an automobile of my own—never had an automobile in my family until I was in the West Virginia Senate—I was about 32 years old before I owned a car and learned to drive.

But I had two or three coal miner friends who had automobiles and in the afternoons, when they had finished their day shift, they would come to my house and pick me up. One of them in particular did a lot of that for me; his name was Dallas Radford.

He still lives in Beckley. Dallas would come after he had worked in the mines and he would drive me around to see the politicians, political leaders, the committee members, county officials. We would go into the various magisterial districts and see the leading politicians. He never charged me anything, except that I would buy the gasoline.

I've never forgotten that friendship on the part of that poor old coal miner, who had known me since I was a boy and who believed in me to the extent that he just wanted to see me win in politics.

Q.: He made it possible for you, didn't he?

Sen. Byrd: Yes.

We only had two months in session every two years in the legislature in those days. I think the salary was five hundred dollars for the two years. The minister of my church was Colonel Shirley Donnelly. He was the

chief chaplain in General Patch's Seventh Army during World War Two, and he was a very outstanding chaplain.

He had a sister who lived just across the street from the State Capitol at Charleston. So Col. Donnelly suggested that I board at his sister's house, get a room there, where I'd be close to the Capitol and away from the hotels, and so on, where most of the legislators had gathered. He thought it would be a better influence on me, which it was.

I also selected a good attaché—an old gentleman whose name was Granville Bennett. He had served on a good many juries, and been around the courthouse, and interested in the Democrat party for a long time—a very high time gentleman. So I chose him as my attaché when I went to Charleston for the session. My wife stayed up in Raleigh county. By then—let's see now, we were still at Crab Orchard. I would study the bills at night in my room and Mr. Bennett, who boarded nearby, would come up to my room and we would go over those bills and resolutions together.

I'd get his advice as to how to vote on them. He was a very good influence on me and the fact that I stayed there at the home of the sister of my pastor, I think, was also a good influence. I spent my full time there. I was 28 years old. So I did very well at that session of the legislature. However, before the session began, Mr. George Titler, the President of the United Mine Workers in District #29 called me in and told me he wanted me to vote for a certain member of the House of Delegates for Speaker. But I said, "No, I can't vote for that gentleman because I've already promised another gentleman." I won't identify them at this point. This incurred the wrath of the President of the United Mine Workers in my district and he assured me that, when the time came for my re-election, I wouldn't be forgotten.

Well, during that session I introduced a workmen's compensation bill to liberalize workmen's compensation payments. Growing up in a coal miner's home, having slept in a coal miner's bed, eaten from a coal

miner's table, I knew the needs of coal miners and had their interests at heart.

I don't mean to say I had only their interests at heart, for I tried to serve the school teachers, the veterans, and all the people, but—

Q.: You knew the miners were losing their health?

Sen. Byrd: Yes. I thought the time had come to improve the workmen's compensation payments. So, I introduced that legislation and it passed the House; and the only speech I made in that session was my speech on workmen's compensation. I felt it wasn't wise to get up and talk too much and too often. I had been told not to. The best thing to do was to, whenever I had anything to say, say it and say it well, be prepared and let it go at that.

I received the plaudits of, I suppose, half the members of the House of Delegates that night. At the time, I believe, we had 96 or 100 members. In any event, there were two former United States Senators serving in that House of Delegates when I was there: One was the late Rush D. Holt, who had served as United States Senator, and the other was Joseph Rosier, who had been appointed to fill out the unexpired term of Senator Neely. When Senator Neely became governor, he appointed Joseph Rosier of Fairmont, in Marion county, to serve out his unexpired term. Afterwards, Mr. Joseph Rosier came down to Charleston as a member of the House of Delegates. So, I was walking in some pretty high cotton, with former United States Senators sitting in that legislature. And Mr. Rosier, when I made my speech, asked unanimous consent that my speech be made part of the House Journal. The situation wasn't like it is here in the U.S. Senate, where whatever one says automatically goes into the Congressional Record. In the West Virginia House of Delegates at that time, what a member said didn't go into the Journal unless unanimous consent was granted.

Well, when the time came for me to run for re-election, in 1948, the president of the United Mine Workers kept his promise. He really went after me.

I campaigned again with my fiddle. I met him head on, though; I just told the people exactly why he was against me. I said to them, the gentleman wanted to tell me how to vote for Speaker of the House of Delegates, and I didn't intend to be told how to vote. I'd made a commitment to the man who did become Speaker, and I didn't feel I ought to break my promise. I had good reasons for making my promise because I thought he was the better man for the job.

I felt he was better qualified for various reasons—nothing personal against the other man, of course. We had quite a contest in that race of '48, it was the year in which there was a presidential race; as I recall, there was a race for sheriff and various county offices, but my race attracted more attention because of the fact that the chief of the United Mine Workers in that District was really after me.

Q.: Did they get a man out against you in the Democratic primary?

Sen. Byrd: They supported others against me, yes. But the outcome was that I won again. At that time, the United Mine Workers had 135,000 coal miners in West Virginia; it was a very potent organization. John L. Lewis was at the top here in Washington.

Q.: Who was the official who made the threat against you?

Sen. Byrd: His name was George Titler. He was an old-time labor leader, rough and tough.

Q.: "Reward your friends, punish your enemies," was their old slogan.

Sen. Byrd: But the miners demonstrated that they wouldn't be told how to vote, either. They voted their choice. They voted their sentiments, and they supported me strongly. I was re-elected. In later years, Mr. Titler became a good supporter of mine, and we became friends. He has now passed on.

In 1948, then, in the month of June, I moved to Sophia which is about three or four miles from Crab

Orchard. I saw an opportunity to set up my own little grocery store in Sophia. My wife and I ran the store. In that year, the pastor of my church, Mr. Donnelly, told me that he wanted me to teach an adult Sunday School class. I had been teaching a class of boys.

Q.: Were you a Bible student before?

Sen. Byrd: No, not a Bible student. It was the pastor's feeling that I would put a lot of time into the work and I would do a good job. I had built up the boys' class and on Sunday afternoon I'd get out and play ball with them. I brought them to Washington, D.C. , on one occasion. We got a big covered truck and about thirty-five boys, came to Washington and stayed four or five days. Then I took them all to Charleston on one occasion and visited the Governor's office, Gov. Clarence Meadows who was from Beckley in my home county. The boys' class was at the Missionary Baptist Church, at Crab Orchard.

I asked the governor to let each of the boys sit in his chair which he did. The boys have long since become adults and have families of their own...

Q.: When did you open the store?

Sen. Byrd: June, 1948. We'd put long hours into the store work. We'd work late at night and on Saturdays, and many Sunday afternoons, too.

Q.: You were used to working all the time?

Sen. Byrd: It was a necessity; it was a way of life.

Q.: You had to work all the time, just to survive, didn't you?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, it was a way of life. I knew nothing else. In 1950, I decided to run for the West Virginia State Senate. I filed and, in this contest, I was running in a Senatorial district. Wyoming county, which adjoins my home county of Raleigh, was the other county in that senatorial district. So I had to run in two counties instead of one.

Well, Mr. Titler was still after me, and he would go over into this new county and campaign against me, but I worked that county pretty hard, too, and as it came out, I won that State Senate race. That was in 1950.

That same year I decided I would make a start on a goal that I had long desired to achieve: I wanted to go to college.

Q.: You just never had had a chance before.

Sen. Byrd: I had graduated from high school in 1934, sixteen years earlier. Serving in the legislature, I recognized my need for a better education. I enrolled at Beckley Junior college and took some courses, and then in the fall of 1950 I enrolled at Morris Harvey College, just across the river from the State Capitol.

While I served in the legislature, I attended classes at Morris Harvey College. I was thirty-three years old. My wife stayed at Sophia and ran the store, and I would drive to Charleston. Incidentally, I got my first automobile in 1950—a Chevrolet. I was running for the State Senate. I had never learned to drive. But I learned. There was a man by the name of Ott Rhodes, who lived at Sophia. He wanted to learn the meat cutting trade and I wanted to learn to drive a car. So we worked out a proposition whereby he would teach me to drive a car and I would teach him how to cut meat.

Q.: Did you have trouble driving that car?

Sen. Byrd: Oh, I had a little difficulty; at first I was scared. He was taking me out in his car, to teach me.

Q.: He was scared too, I'll bet.

Sen. Byrd: No, he didn't seem to be scared. In any event, I went to school at Morris Harvey that fall and the next spring when the State Senate was in session—in January and February, 1951—while my wife ran the grocery store, up in Sophia. I was going to college and I was serving in the State Senate. That summer I decided to go to Concord College at Athens, which was closer to Sophia. When the fall came in 1951 I decided I would enroll at

Marshall College, now Marshall University. I carried 22 hours that semester—eight subjects—and made eight "A's."

Why did I go to these various colleges? I was thinking forward to the day when I would run for an office that would encompass more than just the two counties. This would give me a chance to know more about the colleges in West Virginia. It would give me a chance to meet more people.

Q.: Oh, that was a very smart idea. You switched colleges, not only for convenience, but because you would meet more people in different counties?

Sen. Byrd: Yes. I enrolled at Marshall College in the fall of 1951. In the spring of 1952, and about two weeks into the second semester period, the Representative of the old Sixth Congressional District Dr. E. H. Hedrick, made a decision to run for governor and not to run for re-election to the House of Representatives. So I decided to run if Dr. Hedrick, the incumbent, who was very popular, chose to run for another office. As it happened, he filed for governor, and I was at the Secretary of State's office in Charleston the same day he filed, and within a couple of minutes after he filed, I filed for Congress.

There were five men in that congressional race. I had a competitor even from Raleigh county, my home county, which helped to split my home county vote. There were only four counties in the old Sixth District at that time: Raleigh, Kanawha, Boone and Logan.

Inasmuch as I had enrolled already in the spring classes, I decided to withdraw from college after two weeks and put my full time into running the campaign. Now, in the course of that campaign, it became known that I had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

Q.: That is interesting. Please clarify that.

Sen. Byrd: It was brought out in the primary election in 1952.

Q.: How did it happen? Where were you then?

Sen. Byrd: Two or three former members of the Klan signed affidavits that I had earlier been a member and that I had gotten them into the Klan.

Q.: What were the dates supposed to have been when you were in it?

Sen. Byrd: I can't remember. It was in the very early forties. Years before, in the Twenties, it had had quite a lusty life in that state and many others. My foster father had been in the Klan—in the Twenties.

Q.: They thought they were doing the right thing?

Sen. Byrd: As I recall, hearing my elders speak of the Klan, they would say that women were in it, lawyers, judges, ministers—upstanding people—were in it. Then I had also heard that they would help a lot, help churches and charitable activities, they would make contributions to these things, and so on. I had gotten into the Klan in the early Forties and had tried to get others to join it. I'd been named a "Kleagle," which was an organizer. I didn't get paid anything. It was just an honorary title. Of course, I had no automobile. I couldn't get around and organize anywhere except in my own locale. I was able to get about 150 joiners and, as it came out then in 1952, in this congressional race, two or three of these former Klansmen had violated their oath and revealed that I was a member.

Q.: It was a secret order, wasn't it?

Sen. Byrd: Yes. I had been a member, but I stated that I was not a member at that time. I made the mistake of trying to pinpoint the dates, and I made it through the primary, all right, but in the fall, a letter was brought out that I was said to have written—and I later recalled that I did write the letter. I foolishly wrote the letter to the Imperial Wizard in Atlanta, whom I didn't personally know, but I had seen his name in the papers, recommending that the Klan be revived in West Virginia.

Q.: I guess you were a rather naive young man, you hadn't been to college, you didn't know the history of the Klan.

Sen. Byrd: I was very naive, I hadn't been to college at the time, and I wrote this letter at the request of a man who lived in Beckley, who wanted to be the Kleagle in the Klan. I had gone off to Baltimore and worked in the shipyards, and at Tampa, Florida, and I'd come back to Beckley occasionally and he saw me on one or two occasions and asked me to write this letter to the Grand Dragon--no, not the Grand Dragon, what was he called? The Imperial Wizard.

So I foolishly wrote the letter and forgot about it. That letter surfaced in the fall campaign after I had indicated in the primary contest that I had been a member back in 1941 or '2, or '3, and I had forgotten about the letter, written in 1946. In the primary of 1952, I had said I had been a member in 1941 or '2 or '3 and had since then lost interest which was correct. I think, though, that I was correct in pinpointing the years. But I think I made a mistake in implying there had been nothing since those years showing interest on my part. I had forgotten about that letter, written in 1946 and it surfaced in the fall campaign of 1952 and it appeared that I had lied in saying I had lost interest.

Q.: It really was the crisis of your political career, wasn't it?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, it was. So it appeared that I had lied. I had been honest in saying I had lost interest; I had forgotten about this letter. This foolish letter of mine, which I had written for a man who, I thought, was my friend. It was a terrible mistake that I wrote the letter, at his request. I should have known better. But I wrote it. It created quite a stir. The governor of the state, who was of my own party, withdrew his support--Gov. Okey Patteson. My Republican opponent in that race, I can't remember his name, but he went after me, hot and heavy.

The governor called me down to the Capitol on a Saturday night after the news broke. He had been away on

a vacation, and he said to me, "I've been away on vacation and I've had to return earlier than I had intended, because of three problems: I had the miners' strike in Widen, at which there had been some shootings; I had the West Virginia Turnpike problem, and I've got your problem. I don't mind telling you Bob, that your problem is giving me more headaches than the other two put together."

He said, "I would recommend that you get off the ticket." I was midway in my senatorial term. He said, "You pull out of this race, serve your two years in the State Senate, and then perhaps you can run for Congress."

I said, "Governor, if I pull out of this race, I'm as close to Congress as I'll ever get." I said, "The people who are supporting me expect me to run and I won't get out of the race."

He said, "I can't force you out. There is no law under which I can force you out. But I'll have to withdraw my support."

I said, "Well, I understand that. That will be perfectly all right with me. Just don't fight me, if you can avoid it. You know, if you have to withdraw your support, fine. You're the titular head of the party in the state and you're under a lot of pressure. I understand that. But just don't make it any harder than that on me."

So he said, "Well, Bob, I won't do anything to hurt you; as a matter of fact, if I were a voter in your congressional district, I'd vote for you." So he was a very, very kind man.

Q.: I imagine there were a lot of people who thought this [the Klan] symbolized everything they didn't like.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, he had to do what he had to do. The next morning, the newspaper headlines were, "Byrd Refuses To Get Off Ticket." Phone calls started coming in and people would call and say, "Stay in there. Don't get off the ticket." It created a lot of public interest, and as a result I fought my own race, and I won, and came to Washington to be a member of Congress at age 35.

I talked to the late Harley Kilgore, who was from Beckley, in my home county. He was one of the U.S. Senators from West Virginia, and I said to him, "I'd like to continue my college work. I'd like to get my A.B. degree." I had seventy hours of A-grade work toward an A.B. degree—a little over halfway—perhaps 126 hours were required. He said, "Don't waste your time. Enroll in law school."

I went down to George Washington University and enrolled. I didn't have an A.B. degree. I enrolled in a category called 'special student.' I went to law school there at night while I was serving in the House of Representatives. I accumulated 22 or 24 hours of work at George Washington. I realized more and more that I was not achieving my objective. I had to have that A.B. I talked to the dean and he said they could not recommend me for a law degree because I didn't have the prerequisite A.B. or B.S. degree. He suggested I go and see Dean Myers at American University just down the street, and see if they could work out any special arrangements. But Dean Myers informed me that their university likewise required an A.B. or a B.S. degree.

But, he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. In view of the fact that you have got seventy hours of "A" credits in your pre-law work and you're doing well at George Washington, I'll make you a proposition: If you can complete your required courses at American University with a "B" average, I will recommend you for an L.L.B. degree." You know, students didn't have to have a "B" average to graduate. But for me it had to be a "B" average. I jumped at the chance. I went to college at night, and sometimes on Saturdays, and over a period of ten years, I completed the courses. You will recall that when I started in law school I was in the House of Representatives. I had to run every two years for re-election. So in the second year of each Congressional term I couldn't go to law school, I had to return to West Virginia at every opportunity to campaign.

It was only after I was elected to the United States Senate (in 1958) that I really was able to apply myself at night and finish the job. I graduated in June,

1963, at the age of 45, cum laude. I kept my end of the bargain. I graduated with a high "B" average—maybe a low "A" average and the Dean kept his promise. I was awarded the L.L.B. degree.

There were many times during those ten years when I wanted to get out on a Sunday afternoon and drive my wife and two daughters for a ride in the car and relax, but I had to keep my nose right in those law books. I would brief my cases on weekends, and by Tuesday or Wednesday I had grown rusty on those cases. I had to keep up my work in the Senate and also get back to West Virginia from time to time, too, so it was a very difficult thing for me. I would go to class feeling that, if I were called on for a recitation my fellow students in the class would judge me as a Senator on the basis of my recitation, and, as I say, I could only spend Saturday and Sunday briefing my cases and by the time Monday or Tuesday or Thursday or Friday rolled around, I had grown rusty and I thought I wouldn't do too well. It kept me under great pressure and tension. But I did all right.

I served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. While in the House, I served on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and that gave me a chance to learn a little about international relations. I made one trip around the world, in the fall of 1955, when Congress was not in session. I went around the world with former Congressmen Walter Judd (Minnesota), Mrs. Marguerite Stitt Church (Illinois), Ross Adair (Indiana), Richard Wigglesworth (Massachusetts), John Jarman (Oklahoma), and Clement Zablocki (Wisconsin).

It was my first trip outside the United States. We were gone something like two months, visited 25 or 26 countries. When I was elected to the House, I closed down my store. Business was not too good anyway because miners had been on strike. Some credit was collected, some wasn't. It was a good thing I was elected to Congress. I had hit the skids in the grocery business. I was putting pretty much full time, going to school and political campaigning. My wife did a good job at the store but it was too hard for her to handle alone.

Q.: When you went to Congress that was good solid pay, about \$12,000.

Sen. Byrd: I believe it was \$15,000 by then. So we came to Washington (1953). We had two daughters. The older daughter was named Mona Carol. She was born when we were at Stotesbury, as I said. Marjorie Ellen, our younger daughter, was born at Crab Orchard, about three years later.

The older daughter was enrolled in high school at Sophia and wanted to finish her high school work there, so she stayed with my wife's mother until she graduated from high school. She graduate as valedictorian and was the commencement speaker on that day.

In the U.S. Senate, I was immediately put on the Appropriations committee and the Banking and Currency committee. I later switched from Banking and Currency to the Armed Services committee.

I was elected in 1958...I later went off Armed Services and went on Judiciary, once I had completed my law work. I have served on the Appropriations committee now for eighteen years and the Judiciary committee for, I suppose, something like ten years. Now an interesting little anecdote might be appropriate here. In 1957, I was in my third term in the House of Representatives and thinking very seriously about running for the United States Senate seat which was then held by Sen. Chapman Revercomb.

I was over in West Virginia in the fall after Congress had adjourned in 1957 and I was traveling around the state to see what support I could get for a United States Senate contest. While I was in Wheeling one night, a very cold night--and incidentally, I would get a cab driver to take me around to all the places where the county executive committee members lived. In this way I'd go right to their homes. So that night, a call came from Robert Howe. He was the legislative liaison man for the United Mine Workers here in Washington.

He said that Mr. John L. Lewis, whom he called "The Boss," wanted to see me. He wanted to know when I'd be back in Washington. I said, "I don't have any plans to

be back in Washington in the near future." I told him that I was planning to be in Romney which is in Hampshire county, in the eastern panhandle area of West Virginia only about 115 miles from Washington, on the following Thursday night, as I recall.

I was going to speak to the Lions Club there, or one of the civic clubs. So Mr. Howe said, "Well, I'll drive over and meet you there." The day came. I went up to the hotel room in Romney where Mr. Howe said he would be staying; he had brought Mrs. Howe over for the drive. So he and I closeted ourselves off in a room and this was the story:

He said, "Mr. Lewis wants you to run for re-election to the House. He doesn't want you to run for the Senate. He wants to support Bill Marland for the Senate." Bill Marland was governor of West Virginia, and-or former governor, I can't remember which, at that point-but Bill Marland and the United Mine Workers had been very close-Bill Marland, Senator Neely, John L. Lewis, were very close; so it was Mr. Lewis' wish, according to Mr. Howe, that I run for re-election to the House, not run for the Senate.

He said that my labor record was "good," they would support me for re-election to the House, and Mr. Lewis would support Mr. Marland for the Senate, even to the extent of coming into West Virginia and speaking for him. I said, "Well, it seems to me that the Mine Workers have fulfilled their obligation to Mr. Marland." Two years prior to that, they had supported him in the election for the Senate, in which he had lost to Mr. Revercomb; and I said, "You supported Mr. Marland in that race. He lost. You fulfilled your obligations. He lost."

I said, "We now have a Republican United States Senator. I think I ought to be given a chance."

He said, "Well, I'm sorry the Boss wanted me to give you this message. I have no alternative-which he didn't-"but," he said, "the Boss wants you to know that he will come over into West Virginia and speak for Mr. Marland." I thanked him and said, "I'll let you know."

That night, on my way south after I had finished the speech to the Lions club, I drove to Beckley, a couple hundred miles from Hampshire county, in the eastern panhandle. Beckley is in the southern part of West Virginia. It was a cold night, there was snow on the ground. I was passing through Petersburg in Grand county and found a telephone booth and called my wife in Washington. I said, "Erma, I have made up my mind to run for the Senate." She said, "How did you come to make up your mind?" I said, "John L. Lewis made my mind up for me."

I made a few calls the next day around to people in that part of the country—political leaders. The next night, I went into Williamson in Mingo county to speak and I announced that I was running for the United States Senate. When I announced for the Senate I also announced that Bill Marland would be a candidate against me, and that John L. Lewis would support him.

As it turned out, the coal miners were very upset that John L. Lewis was going to support Bill Marland against me. Because I had a good labor record in my service in both houses of the legislature for six years, I had a good labor record during my six years in the House of Representatives (it was five years at that time, I hadn't completed the sixth) they were very upset, and he was getting some messages here in Washington about how they felt. I was getting some messages, too; they were supporting me. In any event, as it turned out, the other United States Senator—(you see, Harley Kilgore had died and Revercomb had run for the final two years of Kilgore's term) so I was running then for a new term—the other Senator, Matthew Neely, died. This opened up another contest entirely. So former Gov. Marland decided he would not run against me, and filed for the other seat. So this eliminated that problem. My present colleague, Sen. Randolph, ran for the unexpired term of Senator Neely, at the same time...Sen. Randolph and I won the nominations and we both went on to win the elections in the fall. Senator Randolph became a Senator immediately. I had to wait until January when the new Congress convened to be sworn.

I thought that little story was interesting. But that's not all the story yet. Subsequent to Governor Marland's getting into the other senatorial race, thus eliminating any possible competition between Marland and myself, it was the advice of some of my friends that I ought to go to see Mr. John L. Lewis and call on him, because he was then supporting me in that race, he was also supporting Marland—he was having the best of two worlds. So I went down and called on him one day.

I'll never forget it. I sat up there in his rather ornate office. I believe there were one or two other persons in the room, one whose name was Jim Marks, I believe, and it may have been that Mr. Howe was sitting in also. In any event, Jim Marks was the representative of the United Mine Workers on the Senate side, whereas Bob Howe had been representing the United Mine Workers on the House side...Mr. Lewis started the conversation. He said that he had noted that I had announced that I would be a candidate for the Senate, I had announced that Bill Marland would be a candidate against me, and that he (Mr. Lewis) would be supporting Mr. Marland against me.

He had the kind of blue eyes that could just drill a hole through you. So he looked at me with those blue eyes, and those bushy brows, but there was a twinkle in those eyes. I'll never forget, he said, "Young man, I like to make my own public announcements."

I listened while he finished, and then I said, "Well, Mr. Lewis, I respect you a great deal as a labor leader. My foster father was a coal miner back before the days when there was any union. I know what it is to live in a coal miner's home, I've stood at the mouth of a mine explosion and seen the faces of the friends and relatives of the miners who were being brought out. My foster father was a coal miner in the days when he had to buy his own dynamite, and auger, and pick and shovel and carbide lamp and carbide and work for two dollars or two and a half a day and, many days, was overdrafted on pay day—in other words, in debt to the company. I saw the union come along, and saw the changes that it made, and I have had a tremendous respect for you as a great labor leader and a great leader of the coal miners."

"But," I said, "I have worked hard in the House of Representatives, had a good labor record, I have never had anything easy. I've always had to work, and work hard for everything, and, I resented it."

He had told me he resented my making the public notice of his support for Marland. That is how "resented" got into it. He had said, "I resented it. I am accustomed to making my own news releases, young man."

So, I led into the story of my having grown up in a coal mining community, having married a coal miner's daughter, having worked hard in the legislature, having supported legislation in behalf of coal miners, having given credit to coal miners in my grocery store when they couldn't get credit anywhere else during a strike, having gotten off my bed in the hospital as a member of the State Senate, having gone up to the Capitol and voted for the coal miners and gone back to the hospital when I could have easily avoided a controversial vote.

I related all of this to give him the background that I had come out of the life of a coal miner's friend and that I resented his sending Mr. Howe over to West Virginia to tell me not to run for the Senate, when I felt I was entitled, as much as anybody else, to run. They had supported Mr. Marland, they had fulfilled their obligation to him. He had lost, that was why we had a Republican Senator in now.

I felt it was my time. I resented it. I said, "I say most respectfully to you, I resented your doing that; and that made up my mind to run." "And," I said, "I feel that when one runs, he ought to run his best. And why should I announce that I was going to run and not play your ace card? Why should I wait for you to make the announcement that you were supporting Bill Marland? After all, I was running to win; I wasn't running to lose. I wasn't running to give every advantage to Mr. Marland. I was running to win and I thought it was to my advantage to announce what was the truth—that Mr. Marland was going to be a candidate and that you were going to support him, and so I did it." All the time, he was listening and looking at me with that twinkle in his eye. "Well," he said, "I

appreciate your frankness. I'm going to support you, we're also supporting Mr. Marland." I then said, "Mr. Marland won't win. Jennings Randolph will beat him." He didn't believe that. But as it turned out, that's the way it went. On the way back up the Hill to my office, Mr. Marks accompanied me. He said, "I have a feeling that you made a real friend in John L. Lewis today. I have a feeling that he liked the way you said what you said. He respected you for that. I'm going to the office and I'll call you later."

So he went back and later that day Jim Marks called me and it was just as he said. He said he went back and talked to Mr. Lewis and Mr. Lewis said, "There's a young man who's going somewhere." He said, "He's got guts, he's courteous, stands up for what he thinks, says what he thinks," and, since that day, Mr. Lewis was a very good friend of mine.

Now a little story about that first campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives. Dr. Hedrick was running and Bill Marland was running, and there was another gentleman from my home county, whose name was Shafer—all running for Governor on the Democratic ticket. So there developed a faction that supported Dr. Hedrick and a faction that supported Bill Marland. The State House faction supported Bill Marland, you see. I tried to be a friend of both factions. I wasn't interested in getting caught in the cross fire in the governor's race; I wanted votes from both sides—all sides.

So I learned that there was going to be a meeting of the supporters of Dr. Hedrick at Van in Boone county. I wasn't invited but I heard there was going to be a meeting. I went that night. I got in after the meeting had started and made my way up to the front row, and sat down and introduced myself to the gentleman who was the master of ceremonies, a Mr. Woodrow Hendricks. He was a lawyer. I told him I was a candidate for Congress, of course. He very much supported Dr. Hedrick and for some reason or other, they thought that I was tied in with the State House faction, which I suppose, was correct. I didn't have any feeling against other factions; I wanted the support of all factions. But I was associated in the

public mind with the State House faction because he Governor was at that time supporting me and the state organization was supporting me. The state organization was also supporting Marland for governor. It was not supporting Dr. Hedrick.

So Woodrow Hendricks was a little cool toward me. Finally, at the end, when the program was over, he stood up and he said, "I'm going to introduce a man from Raleigh county who is a candidate for Congress. He is a butcher and he is a fiddler; here he is."

Of course, his calling me a butcher and a fiddler wasn't intended to be exactly complimentary. He did this in a manner that, I thought, was not very charitable. And, I suppose, he thought that, if I was introduced, I'd just get up and sit down. Well, I didn't sit down so easily. I said, "This gentleman, who is a lawyer, has introduced me as a butcher." I said, "Shakespeare worked in his father's meat shop, so what's wrong with being a butcher? He has introduced me as a fiddler. Thomas Jefferson, one of the great Presidents, founder of the Democratic party, was also a fiddler. So what's wrong with being a fiddler? Then I said, "This gentleman is a lawyer. If it's the last thing I'm ever able to do, I intend to get a law degree...if for no other reason than to put that sheepskin under the nose of a man like this, and show him that a coal miner's son can do what he did." And the crowd liked it. They ate it like ice cream.

Well, when Mr. Hendricks got the floor again, he indicated that there would be another meeting of the Hedrick supporters over at Nellis—a few miles away—the following Saturday night, and that Mr. Bill Blizzard, the president of the United Mine Workers in District—I believe it was District 17, I'm not sure—would be the speaker. One of the UMW districts was headquartered in Beckley, my home area, I believe that was District 29. Another UMWA district was headquartered in Charleston, the state capital. Mr. Blizzard was president of that district, whereas Mr. George Titler was president of District 29, located in my home country.

The next Saturday night, I rounded up a banjo picker and a guitar player, and the banjo picker had a couple of sisters who sang. We drove to Nellis. When we got there, Bill Blizzard was speaking. He had the stage, and he was a very rough, tough labor leader. A mine worker chieftain in those days was a tough cookie, and Blizzard was no exception. As I said, back in those days there were about 130,000 to 135,000 coal miners in West Virginia.

Bill Blizzard was on the stage speaking, when I walked in and took a chair. He pointed his finger at me, and said, "Now, I want to say to you coal miners, when any of these candidates ask you for your votes, you ask them, where they stand in this governor's race; and if they're not for Dr. E.H. Hedrick, don't you vote for them—for whatever office they're running." And he said, "I say this with respect to every office, from Congress to constable." He pointed right at me. So, when he finished, Woodrow Hendricks, who again was the master of ceremonies, said, "We'll now have the benediction and after the benediction, there are some refreshments, ice cream and cake, and sodas and so forth, over in another room." (This was in a school building.) "Go over and help yourself to some refreshments."

A grizzled coal miner in the back of the room stood up and said, "We want to hear Byrd."

Woodrow Hendricks said, "You can hear Byrd some other time. We're going to have the benediction now."

So there was no stopping that. We had the benediction. Well, after the benediction, while the people who had attended the political meeting went over to the next room to get refreshments, I sent out to the car to get the banjo and the fiddle and the guitar. And, while the people were having refreshments, we tuned up our instruments and started playing music. I played "Old Joe Clark," and "Fire in the Mountain," and "Git Along Home, Cindy," and some of those tunes, you know.

The people started coming back into the room, bringing their cake and ice cream with them. I asked them to kindly move in and take chairs and not crowd the door,

not fill up the door. I filled that room back with every person who had been there. Every one.

I finished my music and while they were all sitting there, I said, "Now this is my meeting. I drove 75 miles to come here tonight, I'm a candidate for Congress, I think I'm entitled to be heard. I think you ought to hear what I have to say. This is my meeting. Mr. Blizzard has told you to ask every candidate how he's going to show down in this governor's race."

About that time, Mr. Blizzard walked back in and he said, "Where do you stand?" I said, "Just have a seat, Mr. Blizzard. I'll tell you where I stand." I went on to say that the candidates for governor had paid their filing fees, the candidates for Congress had paid theirs. I had paid my own filing fee, Dr. Hedrick had not paid it, Bill Blizzard had not paid my filing fee. I paid it. I said, "I would be foolish to make public any position in the governor's race. I have a race of my own. There are five of us in this race for Congress. I'd be very foolish to come out for any one of the candidates for governor because, if I did, I would lose support in my own race. Any politician knows better than to do that. Dr. Hedrick wouldn't expect me to do it. I don't expect Dr. Hedrick to choose up sides in my race; he's running his own race. If I came out for Dr. Hedrick, I would offend Mr. Shafer who is also from my own county."

I said, "I think each man should run his own race, so I'm not going to say where I stand in the governor's race." I said, "Let me say this to my friend, Mr. Blizzard: I grew up in a coal miner's home; married a coal miner's daughter; ate from a coal miner's table; slept in a coal miner's bed. Are you going to vote against a man like that?"

"No!" the crowd roared.

I said, "When I was in the state Senate, I had an ulcer of the stomach, was in bed in a hospital. The Fire Boss Bill came up, a bill that you coal miners were very interested in. I didn't need to go up to the Senate and vote. I had all the excuse I needed, if I had wanted one. I could show a doctor's slip that I was in the

hospital. But I didn't take the easy way out. I got a cab and went up to the Capitol and I voted with you, the coal miners of West Virginia, on that bill. Are you going to turn down a man like that? Are you going against a man that stands up for you?"

"No!" came the chorus back.

I said, "I had a little old grocery store over at Sophia. The strike came, coal miners couldn't get food, couldn't get credit. I didn't have much, but I let 'em have what I had. They fed their children. Some of that money I was able to collect, some I won't ever collect. Are you going to turn down a man who stood by the children of coal miners when the coal miner couldn't get credit anywhere else?"

"No!" that chorus kept getting louder.

Bill Blizzard, by then, saw that he was licked. So, I said, "When I finish, I'm sure Mr. Blizzard will have something more to say to you, and when he finishes, I'll have something more to say, too. Stick around."

Well, Bill Blizzard got back upon the stage and said, "Senator Byrd." (I was a state senator then, you know, running for Congress) "we can't go against you, your labor record is too good. But we do wish that you would support Dr. Hedrick." When he finished, I stood up and quoted a piece of poetry and dedicated it to Bill Blizzard, and we all went away friends.

The point I'm making here is that, if it had not been for that violin, I would not have had an opportunity to address that meeting that night. It was the violin that opened the door, set up the new meeting, and made it possible for me to speak to the crowd about my candidacy. So it's had quite a history. It is the most famous fiddle in West Virginia.

Q.: Do you still have the original fiddle?

Sen. Byrd: I have four fiddles. I gave one to one of my daughters two or three years ago so that her

children could take music lessons on the violin. I still have four.

Q.: Do you have your original violin that you had as a boy?

Sen. Byrd: No, I don't guess I have the original. I don't know whatever happened to that original violin, but I'm sure I don't have it. The violins I have now were all given to me. The people of West Virginia know that I play the violin, they enjoy the music, and out of their great love for fiddling and old time music and out of the goodness of their hearts for me, they have given me violins.

I remember going over to speak in either Gilmer or Braxton county one night, and a friend of mine—Robert Butcher—who was an auctioneer in that part of the woods brought a violin that he had acquired in an auction and gave it to me. I still have that violin. Also, just a few weeks ago, I was able to find the old violin that my wife's father had played when I was a little boy.

Q.: Was it found in an attic?

Sen. Byrd: It was in a basement. The ribs in it had come unglued, it was in terrible shape. I took it downtown here in Washington, to Weaver's violin shop, which is one of the great violin shops in this country. They kept it for a period of six weeks, I suppose, repaired it, and it's in beautiful shape. It cost me \$125 to get it repaired. It's a violin that both my wife and I cherish because it was a possession of her father.

Q.: What was his name?

Sen. Byrd: His name was Fred James.

Q.: Was he a coal miner?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, he was a coal miner. A lot of people think these violins—I have people who write to me and say, "I have a violin, it's a Stradivarius, what do you think it would be worth?" As it turns out, it's just a copy of a Stradivarius. Actually, these violins I have were commercial violins. They were made for students,

probably 75 years ago or a hundred years ago, and they may have sold for five, ten, or twenty dollars apiece back then.

When they were originally manufactured, they were very low in price, but now I suppose one of these violins would be worth about \$250. I have one violin that I play more than the others. Of course, I tune them all differently. If I play "Black Mountain Rag," I'll tune the violin in a different way. I'll run the two basses, the G string and the D string, up one step. I will run the E string down two steps, and I keep one violin tuned just for "Black Mountain Rag." That's the only tune I play on it. Then I have another violin that I play most of the time. I have the two bass strings, the D string, and the G string, each up one step. I play "Turkey in the Straw," "Cumberland Gap," "Cripple Creek," "Rye Whiskey," "Amazing Grace," "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" "Put my Little Shoes Away," "The Roving Gambler," with the violin tuned that way.

Then I have another violin, I only run the G string up one step. I play "The Arkansas Traveler," "The Mocking Bird," "There's More Pretty Girls Than One," "Forked Deer," "The Chicken Reel" on that violin. Then I have another one in the standard tuning arrangement. I play "Over the Waves" and a few tunes like that. So I have four violins and I have all of them tuned differently.

Q.: I wonder if the Library of Congress has ever thought about having you record for them?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, there's a gentleman with the Library of Congress who heard me play a couple of years ago and immediately was interested in recording some of my numbers but we have not gotten around to doing it.

Q.: Do you practice much during the week?

Sen. Byrd: I play the violin in the evenings just before going to bed, two or three nights a week. It rests me, it relaxes me. It takes things off my mind, takes my work off my mind; it puts me in a good mood to sleep. Then, when my grandchildren come over to see me, occasionally I'll play a few tunes for them. They like the

music. Sometimes I take the violin over to their house and play it there.

Q.: So it's good entertainment and therapy too, isn't it?

Sen. Byrd: Oh, it's tremendous, great therapy. I can play for thirty minutes, and when I play, I play all over, really, it gives me a great workout. I've never played a game of golf in my life, but I've heard those who love golf talk about what a great relaxing sport it is, and I'm sure it is good exercise, but I can take that violin of mine and put thirty minutes of hard work on it and I've had all the relaxation and exercise I need.

Q.: With all the hard work you do, you haven't had time for golf or any other sport, have you?

Sen. Byrd: No, when I was in high school, in my teens, of course, I enjoyed sports. Growing up in a coal mining community, I watched the newspapers, and read the news on big league baseball clubs and was interested in football. I wasn't much of an athlete, but I liked to play football and baseball. We didn't have much of a ball ground but we used such as it was. We had our teams in the coal mining communities. Once in a while yet, I'll watch a football game on television but it's very seldom because I feel that when you've watched one game, you've watched them all.

Q.: And you find you're wasting hours on TV.

Sen. Byrd: Athletics has a proper place. We need to be interested in developing our bodies, developing good team work and sportsmanship. But I feel there is an imbalance on sports. I can't believe that we ought to pay our scientists and school teachers the kind of salaries they get, and then pay people in athletics three or four times as much. I don't say this to denigrate athletics, but I just think we need to balance out our values. I often have students who come to visit me in the Senate. I ask, "How many of you like football?" All the hands will go up. "How many like baseball?" Hands will go up. "How many like basketball?" Hands will go up.

"How many of you like spelling?" Not too many hands go up. "How many of you like math?" Surprisingly, a good number of hands will go up, as a general rule, and a good many of these are girls. "How many of you like history? Music?" and so on. "Well," I then say, "it's good to like sports and be involved in them but not many people make a living playing baseball and football. In this country, we need mathematicians, we need scientists, we need historians, we need music teachers, we need to develop not only the body but also the soul, the heart, and the mind. It's the scientists, the mathematicians who keep our country ahead in the race for outer space. It's the physicist."

"Our country's security depends, not on football players and baseball players, but upon people who can add and subtract and read and write and spell," and, I say, "One of these days each of you will have a family and will have to 'bring home the bacon' at night, and you'd better know how to add two and two." I say, "It's the person who excels in spelling, and in math and in history and in art and in music, and who prepares himself for the competition of life. When you get out into the Great School of Hard Knocks, you're going to run right into competition." And so I urge them to try to excel in their classes, and while they play ball, also be good in their studies.

I think this is a message we ought to try to get across. I often go to communities across the country and they just go wild over their football teams, but it sort of hits me cold because I feel the emphasis is too much on something that is not going to fulfill the basic needs of life and society. My question is, "How well can they spell?" I don't say this to imply that I'm the world's best speller, but the emphasis, I think, should be put more on the scholastic side, not on the athletic side, which, I think, is what's happening in this country.

Q.: You can't build a career without being excellent in some profession or skill.

Sen. Byrd: And there's no short cut. We hear a lot about the New Math but you still have to add 2 and 2 to get 4.

Q.: You mentioned, several times, that you quoted poetry. I'd like to ask how you learned all the poetry? Did you teach it to yourself?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, I found that in delivering a speech, poetry appeals very much to an audience. So, over the years, I committed a good bit of poetry to memory.

Q.: I understood that sometimes you recited poetry while driving your car home. Is that true?

Sen. Byrd: Yes.

Q.: What are your favorite poets?

Sen. Byrd: I suppose I'd have to say, Edwin Markham, author of "The Man With a Hoe."

Q.: Is that your favorite poem?

Sen. Byrd: No, that is not. There are several poems he wrote that had a quality about them that was very appealing to me. "I Fear for Thee, My Country," is one he wrote that I like very much. There are others.

I'm no expert in this field, but I try to utilize the kinds of verse that will make a point in the speeches I make, and which can be communicated to the audience. There is some poetry that is so complicated and arcane that it goes over an audience's heads. There are lots of poems that go over mine. It's hard to get the point.

Q.: Did you just go to the library and get the books yourself?

Sen. Byrd: No, I would buy poetry books or run across two or three in a publication called "Grit."

Q.: Oh, yes, I used to sell "Grit."

Sen. Byrd: It's still a very popular publication out in the country. Speaking of selling

newspapers, I sold the Cincinnati Post when I was a little boy. I often repeat this story to audiences that are political in nature. I saved up seven dollars and put it in a bank at Matoaka, West Virginia. The bank went under, and I haven't seen my seven dollars since.

When I was in high school, in the 1930's, times were very hard, and my foster mother kept boarders. My foster father used to buy eight, ten, twelve, fourteen Poland China pigs and had a place there in that coal mining community where he had a hog pen.

Well, it was my lot to go from house to house every day after school was out and gather up the food garbage. If a new family moved into the coal mining community, I would visit the house, take the lady a coffee bucket or a lard bucket, tell her I was the scrap boy, and would appreciate it if she would save her scraps for me. She would have a nail on the side of her house or I'd drive a nail there, and she'd hang that bucket there and put the left-overs of the table in the bucket. People didn't throw away much in those days, but, anyhow, it was something.

I'd say, "How often do you think I ought to come back? Once a week? Twice or three times?" and she'd say, "Maybe every other day," or something like that. I would carry with me two large buckets. I expect each of them would hold, perhaps, eight to ten gallons. I'd go from house to house and put that food garbage in those big buckets. In the winter time, the garbage would freeze in the bucket, and I would have to take a stick and pry it out or chop it out. Then I would take the buckets up to the house, put a little water in the garbage and heat it, and I'd take it up to the hogs and feed them. Perhaps we'd buy a little chop or middlings or—I forget what you'd call it—some kind of hog feed in hundred-pound bags, but the main food was this food garbage which I picked up from houses in the coal camp.

Q.: When they talk about "sloppin' the hogs," that was it.

Sen. Byrd: "Sloppin' the hogs," that's right. I would feed those pigs and they'd become good size hogs. Then November and December came, and we'd kill 'em. My

foster father would let me shoot them. I had a .22 rifle, and the only things I ever shot in my life were rats and hogs. I'd shoot those hogs. The Prodigal Son didn't know about living with the hogs any more than I did.

Q.: No, that's true. And you know (the Bible says) "he fain would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat." I guess he really was hungry. You learn a lot about life when you have a hard scramble that you did, on your way up. You said you must have been about 16 years old when you found your real identity?

Sen. Byrd: Well, my mother died in 1918. I was down in North Carolina a few months ago, and spoke at the dedication of a statue to a Revolutionary War hero. There was an old gentleman present who said to me that he knew my father and mother and he was present when my mother was buried. He said they brought the body out through the window of the house; the house is no longer standing. I went up to the place during my visit to North Carolina (in the fall of 1975).

My brother Reuben Sale and I went up there. My brother remembered the old house. He could remember playing around the old house, near Wilkesboro. They have established the ground as a little park called the Robert C. Byrd Park. Upon the occasion of the dedication of the statue, the old gentleman said he was present when they brought my mother's body out the window. It was a period when people didn't want to go into crowds (flu epidemic). He said they took my mother's body to the graveyard and there was just a handful of persons there, no minister. Someone said, "We ought to have a prayer." So they said The Lord's Prayer and buried my mother.

I went up to the cemetery there, but my brothers couldn't recall just where her grave was. They knew the general vicinity, but there was no marker. My father, after she died, married again, and then married a third time. I didn't know the story until I was about fifteen or sixteen years old. My foster father decided it was time I was told the story. So he took off work from the mine for about a week and took me down to North Carolina.

He told me the story on the way down there. We looked up the address where my real father lived, and it was the first time in my memory ever to see him. This must have been about 1934, around the time I graduated from high school.

I spent a week there and upon that occasion I met my sister for the first time in my recollection. I had three brothers whom I had not met, insofar as I could recall. I did not see any of them on this particular occasion. My father was glad to see me. He burst into tears when he saw me and I stayed there at his house a week, as I say.

Q.: I guess it was an emotional experience for both of you.

Sen. Byrd: Not for me; but for him, it was.

Q.: I would think that was true, because you had your emotional ties to your foster father.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, my foster parents were my only parents, in my mind.

Q.: Your real father was just a strange man you had never seen before.

Sen. Byrd: That's right. My foster parents were the only parents I had ever known. They were poor, but they were honest and hard working and they were good to me.

Q.: They gave you a lot of love and care.

Sen. Byrd: My real father had a good many guitars around the house. He worked in a furniture factory. He was good with his hands. He made musical instruments. He sold a guitar while I was there. He had also made most of his own furniture. He would pick up little blocks or scraps of wood where he worked and put them together into beautiful furniture. He had a table made of several thousand pieces of wood.

When I was back in North Carolina recently, at the dedication of the statue, I went to see a cousin of

mine who had a little wood chest—oh, about a foot and a half in length and perhaps a foot wide and a foot high, that my father had made. She gave it to me. It was made out of many pieces of wood and it was a beautiful piece of work. My father told me that, although he had been married three times, his first wife, my mother, was the only one he had really ever loved.

Also he was working on perpetual motion. He had a contraption that he'd been working on for years. It was a huge wheel, and it had a lot of spokes and steel balls. He was trying to devise something that would operate perpetually on its own output of energy. He told me that this had operated for several hours without stopping but that friction at the center of the wheel would stop it in due time. In 1945, he died and I went down to North Carolina to attend the funeral. It was on that occasion that I recall having seen for the first time one of my brothers, Reuben Sale.

Then, when I ran for Congress the first time in 1952, a second brother, Clyde Sale, came up to West Virginia and that was the first time I recall ever having seen him. He had been in Gen. Patton's army; he was in the army many years until he retired.

The third brother, whom I don't recall having seen until about 1966 or 1967, after I was already in the U.S. Senate, was a merchant seaman for many years. He traveled all over the world. Occasionally I would get a card from him from India or Greece. One day I heard he was in Baltimore, where his ship was being repaired. I called him on the telephone and told him I was coming up to see him. He said, "No, I'll come down to see you."

So he came down and we had lunch together. That was the only occasion I ever had to see him. All these years until I was about sixteen, I had been told by my foster parents that I was their child. Of course, you know how stories get around the neighborhood in a coal mining community. Little boys would come up to me and tell me that these were not my parents. Apparently, my parents had talked to their parents and the children had heard it.

I would ask my folks if they were my parents and they would say, "Yes, don't pay any attention to those boys."

But I was always told that my name was Robert Carlyle, Robert Carlyle Byrd. My foster father always told me that my birthday was January 15, 1918. When I ran for Senate majority whip, in a race with Ted Kennedy, and won, the newspaper carried the story and stated my birth date as January 15, 1918. My brother, Clyde, down in North Carolina saw these news stories. He went to the local county courthouse. He sent me a copy of a birth certificate which said my name was "Cornelius Calvin Sale, Jr." and I was born November 20, 1917.

So I was two months older than I had always thought. I was born at two o'clock in the afternoon according to the birth certificate.

There was a midwife, I noted her name on the birth certificate. So I did not know until 1971, when I was 53 years old at the time, that my birthday was November 20, 1917, instead of January 15, 1918, and I did not know until that time that my name when I was born was Cornelius Calvin Sale, Jr. Of course, I have my mother's picture in my office; I have kept in communication pretty well with Clyde and Reuben. They live in the North Wilkesboro area. I have two half-sisters, one in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. Her name is Mrs. Quelle Eckhardt. I have been up to visit with her on two or three occasions. I am very fond of her. She is a very bright person, sharp, highly intelligent. I think a lot of her. I have another half sister, in Kentucky, her name is Mrs. Annie Ruth Bishop, and we also stay in touch. I like both of these sisters a lot. That's about the story.

Q.: It's very fascinating.

Sen. Byrd: I'd be interested in tracing my lineage if I could. But back in those days they did not keep many records. My people on my father's side had characteristics of Indians, very dark skin, black eyes, black hair, rugged facial features. I know other little boys used to come to me when I was a boy and say, "Who's that nigger at your house?"

You know, back in those days, fifty years ago, they'd say, "Who's that nigger at your house?" I would say, "That's my Mom." She was very dark-skinned. Remember, my foster mother was my father's sister, so she was in the Sale line.

Q.: So your foster mother was very dark, like your father's line?

Sen. Byrd: Oh, my foster mother was very dark. My grandfather was her father. His wife was a Henderson. She was also very dark-skinned, black-eyed, and on the back of her picture, which I received the other day from a cousin in Tennessee, whose mother was my father's sister, my cousin wrote that our grandfather married the daughter of a Cherokee chief. I have the characteristics of my dead mother—a small woman, blue-eyed, fair skinned. She was a Kirby—Ada Kirby—before she married my father.

Q . Yes, I don't believe you have any features that would be called Indian.

Sen. Byrd: Whatever Indian characteristics I might have would be about one-sixteenth.

Q.: It might be enough to make you a tough fighter, a hard man to beat. You mentioned your race with Ted Kennedy. I know that was such a surprise to many people. You won that with hard work and persistence.

Sen. Byrd: I'd rather not discuss that. It's in the past.

Q.: You won that by the same hard work and persistence that you won everything else. The record is there and the votes were counted and you moved up. In the same situation a few weeks ago, you had the votes counted in advance [Editor's note: This refers to Byrd's re-election as Senate Majority Leader over Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey, D-Minnesota.]

Sen. Byrd: Well, I had a minimum of 43 votes and a maximum of 45 out of 62 in the race for Majority Leader. There was never any doubt about that.

Q.: Well, you certainly earned it and a lot of your colleagues felt the same way.

Sen. Byrd: You know, I can remember the first radio I ever saw: back in the days, about 1927.

Q.: Practically in the crystal set days.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, I remember on this occasion, Dempsey and Tunney were fighting in their second fight. I had sort of idolized Jack Dempsey as a boy, I wanted to hear that fight. So my foster father said we would listen to this fight on the radio. We walked about a mile and a half to the lower end of the coal-mining community where the company store was and what we called the grill, a sort of recreational facility—a pool room and a place where you could buy a cone of ice cream or something.

On this occasion there must have been 40 or 50 persons gathered around that radio. The man who was in charge of the grill was named Julius Sleboda. Mr. Sleboda was listening to the fight. I went away a disappointed lad that night because Dempsey didn't win, and I didn't get to hear the fight. There was only one set of earphones. The general manager of the coal operation, Mr. C.R. Stahl, took over the earphones and he gave those of us standing around a blow-by-blow description of the fight.

I remember in 1927 Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic: it was a great occasion. I can remember reading how he passed over a certain area of New York or Newfoundland flying at "great speed, one hundred miles an hour!"

Back when I was a boy in school, there was a book, I believe by Jules Verne, Around the World in Eighty Days. That was required reading. Back in those days, the talk among us schoolboys was of traveling at the speed of "a mile a minute." Of course, today, man travels around the earth in eighty minutes, about eighteen thousand miles an hour.

Q.: I remember the Lindbergh flight, too, because when we were all boys, everybody in the

neighborhood had to build a model of The Spirit of St. Louis.

Sen. Byrd: When I was a little old boy, I had dreams of growing up to be an aviator. I wrote a letter off to the "flying" schools and got them to send me their catalogues, their books. I was just obsessed with the idea of being an aviator.

Q.: That was when you were about 10 or 12?

Sen. Byrd: Yes.

I scarcely ever saw an airplane fly over. My first plane trip was when I came to Washington with a man named Basil Deck. He is still living, at Sophia, West Virginia. He was the local Scoutmaster. I was a Tenderfoot Scout or something like that, a Cub Scout. Mr. Deck brought a group of the Scouts to Washington. Each of us paid him five dollars—a cheap fare in those days. He must have brought 25 or 30 boys here, in a truck, and we stayed three or four days. We went over here to an airport—was it called the Hoover Airport? I'm not sure. I recall getting into that plane. It was an open cockpit plane, with two seats. One of the boys who came in the group was named Eugene Vaught. He went to school with me at Stotesbury. He was killed in World War Two. He and I rode in the back seat of that open cockpit plane. It cost each of us fifty cents. We flew around over Washington. In taking off, my cap flew off. I was about 13 or 14 years old. When we moved to that little old farm on Wolf Creek, we moved in wagons. I can remember taking the corn to the mill and having it ground. My Mom would bake the best corn bread out of that corn meal.

Q.: You were living in a throw-back time, a hold-over from ancient times.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, there is no question about it. We never had a radio in those days. We never had an automobile in my family until I was thirty-two. No indoor plumbing. I never lived in a house where there was indoor plumbing until I was 23 or 24 years old.

Q.: Think of that.

Sen. Byrd: It used to be, you know, we'd eat on the inside of the house and go outside to the toilet. Now we eat on the outside of the house and go inside to the toilet.

Q.: That's a good Chic Sale observation.

Sen. Byrd: My Mom was an excellent cook. I grew up on rough grub and I still love it today. I don't care anything about pastries, never have cared anything about pastries. My wife makes one kind of pie that I will eat—it's a cheese cake, and she puts cherries on top, and the crust is made out of corn flakes.

Q.: I know what you mean.

Sen. Byrd: I don't go for sweets much, but I do like vanilla ice cream. I said, when I was a boy, that if I ever became a man, I was going to eat all the ice cream I wanted. And so I do love vanilla ice cream. I don't care about any other ice cream. But I still like the old corn bread and pinto beans, cabbage, potatoes, turnips, onions, and greens. When I was a boy, you know, times were so hard, I would go out on the hillside and pick salad, you know, what we called "Poke salat," Poke greens and cress and other wild greens.

Q.: I used to have an old neighbor who would sell "creeses." (cress)

Sen. Byrd: "Creeses," yes. Water "creeses."

Q.: In the hills of West Virginia and North Carolina, the old-timers would call them that.

Sen. Byrd: So, don't give me any of this "rare" stuff. I say facetiously, that people get above their raising, when they come to Washington they want to eat steak rare. I still want mine "well done."

Q.: When you work hard all the time, you develop habits that way.

Sen. Byrd: I don't go to lunch here for two or three reasons. First of all, it takes a lot of time. To go over to the Senate restaurant, one can spend an hour,

an hour and a quarter, getting a little something to eat. And it costs so much. A half-pint of milk, twenty-five cents, that's at the rate of about four dollars a gallon. Let's see, four quarts in a gallon, two pints in a quart, four half-pints in a quart, that's sixteen half-pints in a gallon, 16 times a quarter, four dollars a gallon.

I bring my own milk most of the time. I bring my own lunch meat and bread. I have a refrigerator. It takes me about three or four minutes to eat my lunch, and most of the time I'm looking at a piece of mail or something, and I can make a couple of dollars go a long way that way.

Q.: You save time and money. Use of time is one of your secrets, of your success, the way you can do three or four jobs at once.

Sen. Byrd: My breakfast, every morning, is a bowl of Cream of Wheat. No sugar, just milk. I pour about three or four heaping tablespoons of whole wheat bran in it. Very nourishing. On Saturdays or Sundays, my wife will prepare an egg or sausage and bacon. So I keep the cholesterol down that way. The only cholesterol I get is in the ice cream and cheese.

Dinner is probably my heaviest meal. I go home to Lady Byrd—I call her Lady Byrd, you know—since Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird became prominent, I called my wife Lady Byrd too. She's a good cook and a fine housekeeper, keeps everything spic and span, has been an awfully good mother to our children—two wonderful daughters—I guess they never took a drink or smoked a cigarette or used God's name in vain in their lives. I have to give the credit to her.

One of the great sacrifices that a politician makes—and I have made, having been in politics thirty years—is that one stays away from his family. My children were growing up when I was beginning my political career. I was away from home campaigning, late at night, and on weekends, and so I gave up something there that I can never retrieve. She was at home with them, reared them well. They are fine daughters.

One of them married a young man from Iran. He came to this country. At some point in his life time, he had to learn the English language. He came from the old Biblical country of Persia, worked his way through college in the United States, got his bachelor's degree, then his master's degree, and then his doctorate in nuclear physics.

Then about a couple of months later, he became an American citizen. His name is Mohammad Fatemi. I am exceedingly proud of him. I have spoken of him all over this country in every state I have traveled in, because I'm proud of our system in which men like Mohammed came to this country from various countries—Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, the Middle East—worked hard, and had the ambition and the drive. They came here at a disadvantage, they couldn't speak the language, they were looked down on, and laughed at, and fun was poked at them, but they had the ambition and the drive to succeed and today there are just millions of Americans, or whose parents, came to this country and worked. I often recall an old gentleman down at Beckley, named Nick Rahall. He was Lebanese. Came from Lebanon many years ago. Died just a couple of years ago at age 92.

I can remember, when I was a boy, he used to come through Stotesbury, walking and carrying a big pack on his back, peddling laces and linens from what we called "the old country"—Lebanon. He'd sleep out in the barns. He became wealthy. Owned a chain of radio stations, TV stations, a hotel in Beckley, a ladies' wearing apparel shop there.

Q.: Started off with a peddler's pack.

Sen. Byrd: Yes.

Q.: And you can do that in these times, not just in the 19th century but today.

Sen. Byrd: Absolutely! I tell you, I don't have very much patience with these people who don't want to start at the bottom any more. They want to start at the top. They're not willing to work and sweat. They think society owes them a living, not too many people want to start at the bottom today. We are very fortunate to live

in a country like this. I have traveled in many countries, and I have seen how the people live, and I know the best place in the world is right here.

I've been in the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, in India and Pakistan, Afghanistan, and South America, Egypt, and Western Europe and I've seen many of the world's wonders—the Taj Mahal, the Pyramids and the Sphinx, and the most satisfying sight that I've seen upon my return each time is that monument, right down through the window that Washington Monument, with its two poor lights in the top. I'm glad that I was born a poor boy, and came up the hard way. I wouldn't want it any other way.

Q.: In fact, if you hadn't had all that struggle you wouldn't have risen so high.

Sen. Byrd: I sometimes feel that one of the strands in this fabric of ours that holds this country together today is that there are still a lot of people alive, who came through the Great Depression in the early '30's.

Q.: Because they know you have to work to succeed, and you have to convey that to the younger generation.

Sen. Byrd: Yes.

Q.: Well, your philosophy had been molded by that. I guess you always were a Jeffersonian, from the first time you began reading history books?

Sen. Byrd: Well, I don't know about that. I probably didn't have much philosophy. I was taught the basic fundamentals by poor parents. My foster father was one of the greatest men I ever knew. I never heard him use God's name in vain, all the years I lived with him. He worked hard. He was honest. He didn't owe anybody a penny when he died. He was just an old hard-working coal miner, humble, believed in God, read his Bible—I still have it. My foster mother was the hardest-working person I ever saw in my lifetime. She had a hard time all her life. She was tough, fearless, plain-spoken. But she taught me, when I

can barely remember, that there was a God, and she was a very religious woman.

I don't remember her ever having given me a kiss. She was tough. All discipline, but she had a good heart and deep religious faith.

Q.: Really? Is that so? That's fascinating: You knew she loved you, of course, but she never did give you a kiss?

Sen. Byrd: No.

Q.: Why?

Sen. Byrd: She wasn't emotional or outgoing. She was tough, but I used to hear her, on the Sunday afternoons, when we lived back in the country. We had an old organ and, as I told you, my real father was good with his hands; he was also musically inclined. I was told he could play the auto harp and the organ and the banjo. He and his sisters could sing. She was his sister—my aunt. I used to hear her on Sunday afternoons singing, "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood flown from Emanuel's Veins and Sinners, plunged beneath the flood, lose all their guilty stains."

I guess I had a sort of spiritual experience when I was a little boy. Having all this ingrained in me, you know, I liked to read the Bible. I'd be away out there in the world of loneliness, you know, a mile from the closest house either way, living out there in the woods. I can still see a little old stream running down the meadow, and a black snake crawling through the grass, but there I was close to God. I think it would be good for every boy and girl in the country to have to live out in the "sticks" like I had to live for a while; it would make them believe there's a God, and they'd feel close to him. I used to pray, when I was a little boy, pray that my foster parents would live until I became a grown man. I loved my foster parents. I'd pray, you know, I'd say, "Dear God, please let my Dad and Mom live until I get to be a grown man;" and He did. Then when I was in my teens, I asked the good Lord to give me one of three things: either make me the national champion fiddler, or to make a big muscle man out

of me. When I was a little boy, I'd look at these advertisements by Charles Atlas and I had visions of being a man about six and a half feet tall, weighing about 250 pounds, all muscle; as it turned out, I fell far short of that.

But I asked the good Lord to give me one of three things: either make me the best fiddler in the country, or a man of towering strength, or to give me Erma James for my wife. And he answered my prayer; He gave me Erma James.

Q.: That's great. How old were you then, about 16 or so?

Sen. Byrd: I expect, about 16.

Q.: Well, He came through. I guess, of the three you probably came out ahead—you got the best of the three.

Sen. Byrd: I did. I got what He thought was best.

Q.: You mentioned a religious experience. Did you have a conversion?

Sen. Byrd: I felt, as a child had it ingrained into me. If one is raised by parents who are religious he'll never get away from it. He'll stray from time to time but he'll come back some day. He'll never forget. He'll never forget those things they taught him. Those early lessons never get out of him. Now, I don't claim to be a religious man, but I have never hesitated to believe that there is a God. There has to be a God. Time after time, I've asked doctors the question: "Doctor, you've studied the human body, this marvelous miracle; the human eye immediately adjusts itself to light and to distance; the cells replenish themselves; the blood replenishes itself; the brain governs the actions of all parts of the body. We have all the systems—the digestive system, the respiratory system, the muscular system, the nervous system, all these systems, everything is controlled by this marvelous little bit of gray matter up here between one's ears. Can you believe that there isn't a God?" I

haven't had a doctor yet to answer that he doesn't believe it.

Q.: Because there is no way you can say man created himself.

Sen. Byrd: It just has to be part of a marvelous plan. The universe itself is still expanding. There are stars so far away that it takes millions of light years for the light to reach the earth. Stars so large that they could not pass between the earth and the sun—93 million miles away.

Q.: Yet you can take the components that make up a man and they reduce down to a little speck. That little original cell has all the characteristics that make up a person.

Sen. Byrd: That atom, I presume, has the same characteristics, in a way, that the universe has. Everything in the universe operates on the basis of some natural immutable law. So I believe this country, in great measure, is what it is today and became a great nation because its people were God-fearing people, not of any particular single denomination. I'm glad to see that a great majority of young people today believe there is a God....The scientists indicate a feeling that there has to be a Creator back of all this creation. I don't see how they can avoid it. A lot of people try to explain it on every other basis. They talk about the "nebular hypothesis" and all various other hypotheses. But they try to explain it on any other basis, no matter how ludicrous it comes, they don't want to accept the belief that these things originated from an Originator, who was infinite and omniscient and omnipotent; it is difficult to believe there is a God because we can't see Him, but how much more difficult is it not to believe it!

You can't take a photograph of the wind, or of electricity, but I'll tell you one thing, I've never seen it, but I wouldn't put my finger in an electric socket.

Q.: Well, your parents must have inculcated a belief in you, although you couldn't go to church every Sunday.

Sen. Byrd: Oh, no, I probably didn't start to Sunday school until I was 12 or 13 years old. It was so remote and I was a poor boy. I was down at the store one day, and Mr. W.P. Myers, who was the store manager, said to me, "Bob, why don't you come to my Sunday school class?" I said, "I don't have any socks to wear." He took me back to the dry goods counter and bought me a couple of pairs of socks and said, "Now come to Sunday school tomorrow." The next day, I went to Sunday school. I started going to Sunday school.

I thought a lot of Mr. Myers. As I told you, he was responsible for getting my first job in that gas station; and, later, becoming a produce salesman. He and Mrs. Myers had two daughters. One was named Marjorie, and one was named Drema. Marjorie died in a swimming accident on one Fourth of July; she was drowned. My wife and I named our younger daughter Marjorie because we thought so much of Mr. Myers. The butcher there, whose name was Charles Farthing, had a daughter named Mona Carol. I worked with him four years. Charlie taught me how to cut meat. When our first daughter came along, we named her Mona Carol.

Charlie Farthing is still living. His daughter Mona Carol is a nun living over at Clarksburg, West Virginia. Mrs. Myers is still living, lives at Mann, West Virginia. I saw her last fall, during the campaign.

Q.: You are certainly loyal to your old friends who were helpful to you.

Sen. Byrd: Oh, I never forget them. My foster mom told me never to get above my raising.

Q.: You said you didn't have a lot of philosophy in those days, you were just struggling to make a living. You were not interested in politics in high school.

Sen. Byrd: I never dreamed of being in politics; I wanted to be a civil engineer or a mathematician or an artist or architect. I was pretty good in math.

Q.: But I suppose it was impossible, during the Depression, to go to an Engineering school.

Sen. Byrd: Pretty hard for a boy like me. When I got out of school, I tried to get a job. I must say, I had marrying on my mind, too. I watched that girl, I liked that girl, Erma James. Next May 29, we will have been married 40 years. We have six grandchildren. We are fond of our grandchildren. I used to hear that grandparents dote on their grandchildren, and I thought, "Well, there isn't anything to that." I have found out that every word about grandchildren is true. True!

Q.: I guess you didn't have any thought of politics even during the war.

Sen. Byrd: I became interested, about that time.

Q.: When Roosevelt was president.

Sen. Byrd: Yes. I didn't like the way we were buddy-buddying up to the Soviet Union. I have never deviated from that feeling: they can't be trusted. I'm not saying this of the Russian people themselves; they don't run their country.

Q.: At the end of the war, it looked as if the Russians were grabbing half of Europe.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, we were lucky that we got some of those German scientists.

Q.: Yes, because we were so intent on being nice to Moscow, we were virtually going to let them take Germany.

Sen. Byrd: They got most of the scientists; that's why they beat us into space. They put Sputnik up first. The German scientists, for example, back in World War Two, were able to develop petroleum from coal. They operated their war machine from synthetic fuels. They were engaging in rocketry; they would shoot rockets at London. Here we are today. We have come a long way. We were fortunate that we got some of the Jewish scientists and German scientists.

Q.: So you got interested in politics, right after the war. I suppose you had no idea of becoming majority leader of the Senate?

Sen. Byrd: Never. There used to be a Conservator of the Peace, there at Stotesbury in the coal mining community. He was a very big man, his name was Clyde Goodwin. He had mean eyes that would look right through you, but he was a good man at heart. My wife and I were about to get married, and I needed somebody to sign some certificate. He was the Conservator of the Peace, so I had him come up to my Dad's house upon this particular occasion. He sat down at the table and wrote his name on this piece of paper. I said, "How much do I owe you, Clyde?" He said, "You'll need it worse than I do. Keep your two dollars."

He didn't charge me anything. Well, we went up to Sophia, three miles away on our wedding night. Had a very—I guess you'd say inconspicuous and meager, simple wedding, just my foster parents and my wife's parents. Went up to Sophia, to a preacher's house. His name was U.G. Nichols. He's still living. When I was a little boy, he was the section foreman on the railroad. He would have his men over there working on the railroad and I would go over there and watch them. I said to him, one day, "Where were you raised?" He said, "North Carolina." I said, "I was raised in North Carolina." He said, "You ain't raised—yet."

I'll never forget that. But I used to go to the store for his wife. She'd send me up to McAlpin, a neighboring coal company store; I'd go get a couple of bags of groceries for her and bring them back, and she'd give me a nickel. So, when I was married—he was a preacher—he married my wife and me.

Q.: As you say, that wasn't the world's most elaborate wedding. But it seems to have taken pretty well.

Sen. Byrd: During the war I thought I ought get into politics. As a matter of fact, it was the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan who said to me, one day, "You ought to get into politics." This Grand Dragon was a Methodist minister. His name was J.L. Baskin. He lived

right over here in Arlington. He came down to Sophia on the occasion when we formally organized the Klan I had put together. He said, "Bob, you ought to run for Congress. These people like you. They want you to lead them. There are 150 men here and you're just a boy, 21 or 22 years old. I asked them, who they wanted for their leader, and they said you." That planted the seed. I went off to the shipyards, and then the war went on and time went on and I became interested in our relations with Russia, and when I came back from the shipyards, I decided that I would get into politics.

So I called old Clyde Goodwin after the war when I got back to Crab Orchard, and I said, "Clyde, I think I'll go into politics. What's your recommendation?" He said, "Well, run for the House of Delegates." I also called Mr. Baskin. I hadn't seen him for a long time but he was a retired minister and I respected him. He said, "Don't run for a county office. Don't run for sheriff or county court or anything; run for the House of Delegates. You're a poor boy, you've got no money, nobody to lift you up. You have to start at the bottom." So I filed for the House of Delegates—ten dollars. I then asked Clyde Goodwin to "tell me what to do."

He said, "Well, go up and see Harry Anderson; he's the County Democratic Chairman. Go see Cam Lewis, he's the sheriff. Call on the members of the County Democratic executive committee. Go all through the courthouse. Meet the assessor, members of the county court; let them know you're running for the House of Delegates." So I did that. So, you see, even though you don't have much of a starting point, there's somebody who has watched you grow and they will take an interest in you and they will advise you if you will ask them.

I remember B.B. Chambers was a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates. There were three members of the House from Raleigh county. He was a good school man, had been superintendent of schools, and he took a very great interest in me in that campaign, took me around and introduced me to all his friends and acquaintances throughout the county. The Chambers family was a big family in Raleigh county.

He was running for re-election himself. He took me around, took me under his wing, introduced me all up and down the Coal River and, as it came out, I won the election and he lost. But he was pleased that I won.

Q.: He gave you exactly what you needed: introductions to all those people.

Sen. Byrd: He was a good man; still living. I was very disappointed that he lost the election. I liked him.

Q.: I guess you represented those people in the coal mining area and you knew what it was like. You must have instinctively related to them.

Sen. Byrd: Well, when you come up as I came up you're flesh and blood with them. You don't have to go to a seminar to find out how they feel.

Q.: In fact, if you know how you feel, you can pretty well figure that's how they feel.

Sen. Byrd: Exactly! Your intuition is there.

Q.: I was interested in your worry about the Russians. You were ahead of the field on that.

Sen. Byrd: Once the idea was planted, I wanted to get into the thick of things...

Q.: When you moved through the legislature and then through Congress, it was a steady progression. You never lost an election?

Sen. Byrd: No, I have never lost an election in 30 years. I have held more legislative elective offices than any other person in the history of the state of West Virginia. I hold all the voting records in West Virginia. I have the highest popular vote ever given to any West Virginia candidate. I'm the only West Virginian who has ever gotten over 500,000 votes. I've gotten it twice—in my last election and in my race with George Wallace in the (1976) presidential primary down there and also got over 500,000 votes back in 1964 when I ran for re-election to my second Senate term. I also have the highest vote,

percentagewise; in the Primary six years ago I got 88.88% of the vote. In my race with George Wallace I got 89.01%. So I improved my percentage point by thirteen-one hundredths of one percent.

Q.: I know, when Wallace first announced, a lot of people thought that it would be a close vote.

Sen. Byrd: I am the only person ever to have carried all 55 counties in a statewide contested General election—six years ago—got 78% of the vote in the General election. We have several rock-ribbed Republican counties, but I carried every one of them in that General election. I have carried all the counties in a Primary several times, but in a General election I am the only person ever to carry all 55 counties.

In the last election, last year, I had no opponent in the Primary. No Republican opponent, no Democratic opponent. The Republicans declined to put anyone on the ticket against me. It was the first time in the state's history since the Seventeenth Amendment, when people started electing Senators by popular vote, that the state of West Virginia has had a United States Senator elected without opposition in the General election.

Q.: That is remarkable. That is a tribute to the way you must be pleasing all your constituents, regardless of party.

Sen. Byrd: I've been fortunate in being a very good vote getter, and, Number Two, I have good support from both parties.

Q.: A lot of the positions you just mentioned, the Republicans couldn't quarrel with.

Sen. Byrd: Some of my strongest supporters have been Republicans.

Q.: You've been against superstate government, and against Big Brother on the busing, and I remember when you cleaned up welfare fraud in the District (of Columbia) and you got a lot of flack from certain liberal elements; and yet, when you were elected majority leader, you had a lot of liberal Senators voting for you.

Sen. Byrd: Oh, yes. In the leadership, I have been in the Senate leadership now ten years, four years as secretary to the Democratic conference, six years as majority whip, and in those ten years I have demonstrated a moderate, middle of the road voting record. I have demonstrated an ability to work with senators from all parts of the country, and senators of all political persuasions—liberals and conservatives, north, south, east and west, and I work hard at the job. I've been fair and objective in the work, and I think this has appealed to liberals and conservatives in my party.

Q.: You never got polarized in any one bloc.

Sen. Byrd: You can't do that in the leadership. They understand that I have my own convictions which may not agree with theirs. But I try to be the kind of leader who doesn't attempt to force my own personal convictions on other senators. Each senator has to represent his own constituency and his own convictions and his own conscience, and I try to do that, myself.

Q.: This will prevail in your relationship to the new President?

Sen. Byrd: Yes. From time to time I'll find myself in a position of disagreement with Mr. Carter, but it won't be often, I think. For the most part, I found myself in agreement with Mr. Ford on a good many issues. We had a good personal relationship. The same thing was true when Mr. Nixon, Mr. Eisenhower, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Johnson were our Presidents.

Q.: Speaking of Mr. Nixon, do you want to tell us about the offer he made to you to be on the Supreme Court?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, there were a number of Senators who wanted me to be on the Supreme Court—Republicans and Democrats.

I suppose I was what you would call a "strict constructionist" of the Constitution. If I were a judge I would be a "strict constructionist." I happen to believe that judges ought to be conservatives. Legislators, I

think it well that they be a little on the liberal side—not doctrinaire but pragmatic, progressive conservatives, or pragmatic liberals. The legislative branch is supposed to make the laws under our Constitution. I don't think the Supreme Court ought to be a traveling constitutional convention. I think judges ought to be conservatives; they should interpret the laws, not make them. They do sometimes, in effect, make them, however. So Mr. Nixon wanted to appoint some conservative judges, and did. He had a couple of them turned down, Haynsworth and Carswell.

Q.: It was right after those that he turned to you?

Sen. Byrd: Yes, and some of my colleagues suggested that he ought to appoint me, because I would fit his standards of being a conservative strict constructionist Justice on the court, and I would be confirmed by the Senate. So he invited me to go with him over to Elkins, West Virginia, one day on his plane (in 1971). He went over to speak to the Forest Festival in October. On the way, he said that he was considering me and wanted to know if I would be interested.

He wanted to know a few things about me—where I went to law school, and all that. I told him. I told him I had never practiced law; I had attended American University. He said, "I want you to know I am considering you very strongly. You've got a lot of people boosting you, a lot of your senators." Sens. Griffin, Hansen, and Thurmond, Republicans. Sen. Long, who is a Democrat, John Connally, secretary of the Treasury, and these people, he said, were boosting me.

So I said, "Well, I'd be interested, yes." Two or three days passed and the more I thought about it I began to wonder if I would really like the job. So I took my wife out to dinner one night over in Arlington, at a restaurant, and we sat there and I said, "You know, the more I think about this, the more I'm afraid of it. I think I would just sort of wither away. As a judge, I'd be off in those rooms, reading all day long, sequestered and cloistered, and I think the atmosphere would be too stuffy

for me. I like the legislative branch and I just don't believe I'd like that."

Of course, the salary is better and a member of the Supreme Court will make more history there than he will as one of a hundred senators. But I said, "I don't think I'd like it, although it's a lifetime job with no campaigning." My wife said, "Why don't you let the President know?"

I came up to the office the next day and called (Rhode Island Sen.) John Pastore, and I went over to see him. I said, "John, I'm not sure Mr. Nixon will appoint me, of course, but he is considering me and I really don't want to be on that Supreme Court, the more I think about it. I've never practiced law. It would be a sort of learning process for me. I might turn out not to be too good a Supreme Court Justice. I'd work at it, but I just don't think I want it."

"Well," he said, "You ought to let him know. If he does appoint you, he'd be embarrassed if you turned it down." He said, "Why don't you get in touch with him? Don't go down there now, because the press will see you going and they will ask what you are going for."

Q.: The story was already out, from Long and Connally.

Sen. Byrd: Oh, yes. So he said, "Whom do you know down there?"

I said, "I could get the word to him through John Connally."

Pastore said, "Why don't' you do that?" I went over to my whip's office, called Treasury Secretary Connally and said, "I don't know whether the President is going to nominate me or not; maybe he is, maybe he isn't. But I don't want him to. I've thought about it, but I wouldn't be happy."

John Connally said, "Well, I want you to know that I don't agree with what you say but if that's the way you want it, I'll let him know." I never heard any more about it. That was the end of it.

Q.: As I recall, the President chose Justice Lewis Powell.

Sen. Byrd: Powell or William Rehnquist.

Q.: They were confirmed together; the two vacancies occurred at the same time in 1971. (Judiciary Committee Chairman) Jim Eastland handled them as a pair. You would have been confirmed with no trouble at all. That would have been a breeze.

Sen. Byrd: I would have been confirmed, all right. I had been elected majority whip by my colleagues.

Q.: Despite all the things anybody had raised against you and all the enemies you had, they had said everything that could have been said.

Sen. Byrd: The old Klan issue was dragged up but it had been pretty well laid to rest. It always comes up. It came up when I ran for secretary of the Democratic conference. It surfaced in the newspapers when I ran for majority whip. It surfaced again when I ran for majority leader. It was a mistake that I made, but not one I can erase. Hugo Black was a member of the Klan, you know.

Q.: He was fortunate in having a heavily Democratic Senate.

Sen. Byrd: A lot of young people join organizations that they'll later regret.

Q.: Yes, some join peace organizations that turn out to be front groups. As you say, your background and Mr. Carter's are about the same. He came from a little farther South, but still from a rural background. But the Senate will write its own version of some bills.

Sen. Byrd: There will be some changes made.

Q.: Do you think the Warnke nomination is in trouble?

Sen. Byrd: I think Warnke, as of today, would win by a substantial majority. The Armed Services Committee is going to have him before the committee on Monday. I'm going to look through the transcript of the

Foreign Relations and Armed Services hearings. I haven't made up my mind at this point yet.

Q.: It's fortunate that the White House doesn't think the Senate majority leader is supposed to be the White House leader.

Sen. Byrd: They have to keep in mind that I represent the Senate.

Q.: Sometimes the White House staff didn't understand that, in previous administrations—that you are independent.

Sen. Byrd: I like Mr. Carter. I'm sure our working relationship will be good.

Q.: The U.S. Capitol Historical Society appreciates your giving so much time to these interviews. This project, I'm sure, is going to open the eyes of a lot of young people, when we publish this transcript. They will learn what the work of the Senate majority leader is and particularly how hard you had to struggle to get here.

Sen. Byrd: I suppose I live in a different world from the one they live in. They can't remember when there was no television. I can remember when we only had the old Philco and Majestic and Atwater Kent radios and the only stations we could get were in Cincinnati and Nashville and on Saturday nights we would listen to the Grand Ol' Opry. That was about the only recreation there was; that and square dancing. I didn't have a television set in my home until I was a member of Congress. I came home from work one day—probably 1954 or 1955—and found my wife had bought a television set. It was black and white, of course; it wasn't color.

Q.: No, there is a time lag. Your life, even as late as the 1940's, was similar to the life of 20 or 30 years back. Especially kids in the cities, they don't know about a world without television and jet planes.

Apparently, you adopted good work habits in those days of hard struggle and they certainly stayed with you.

Sen. Byrd: Well, hard work never killed anybody, I suppose, unless it was John Henry, the Steel-Driving Man, who helped build the Big Bend Tunnel in West Virginia. Work is a necessity to me. I have my recreation. I like to be with my grandchildren. Work is a relaxation to me. When the Senate is not in session, and I am working here in the office, I relax. On the Senate floor, there are many pressures. But once we are out of session, I relax, I come to the office, read the mail, talk with the staff, go home. The most enjoyable part of the day to me is when I go home and lock the world out and I am just there with my wife. I take work home, read, play the violin, talk with my wife, look forward to the weekends when I can just be with her at home. I don't watch television much. I watch the news. I do watch the Sunday programs, the talk shows, Face the Nation, Issues and Answers, and so on.

Q.: I remember we were on Meet the Press together.

Sen. Byrd: Yes. I like Washington Week in Review. I sometimes watch Agronsky and Company. There used to be some very good programs on public television. Alistair Cook had some outstanding programs. "Six Wives of Henry VIII," "Elizabeth R," "The Last of the Mohicans," "Jude the Obscure," "The Gambler"—those were made by British actors. The British really have it all over us when it comes to being actors—their perfect language, they're just natural actors. Those were excellent pictures. I used to be a great fan of "Gunsmoke," too. Matt Dillon, in "Gunsmoke," was on for several years, I enjoyed that. We don't have it any more. "Gunsmoke" petered out along about 1971. But most of the television shows are an absolute waste of time. They are not edifying at all. I always liked to watch Jackie Gleason. Another one I watch—one of my little grandsons always calls and tells me when it's on: "You're on Candid Camera." But television could be a great medium if we had better quality programs.

Q.: I guess when you're on the Senate floor, you're under pressure.

Sen. Byrd: Yes, there are a lot of things going on all at the same time. One has to work out time agreements, and smooth out the path of legislation on controversial issues. Senators on both sides of the question get set in concrete and you have to get them off in a room to themselves and talk it out. I have found, over the years, in the leadership, just to get Senators off to themselves and have them sit and talk out their differences, 99 times out of a hundred we will resolve the issues and come out with an agreement on the bill and it will go through. Whereas, if you try to settle everything right out there on the floor, they will get so deep in concrete they won't give an inch. But get them off and say, "Let's talk about this," they will give a few points, they are more amenable to trying to work out a way to get out of the briar patch.

Q.: I guess you had that come up when you were a whip, several times.

Sen. Byrd: Oh, yes. Legislation, someone has referred to as the art of compromise. That doesn't mean compromising one's principles; it means finding a middle road or a legislative middle ground which commands the support of the majority. Few votes are ever changed by speeches.

Q.: But decisions are made behind the closed doors. I know your technique will be needed on all the problems facing you. Senator, you have been more than generous with your time.

Sen. Byrd: I think we have pretty generally covered lots of ground. We could, of course, go into a lot of issues. Later on perhaps we will have other interviews.

End first series of interviews

February, 1977