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Oral History Interview #2

David R. Bowen

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DR. BALLARD: The date today is August 21, 2001 and we are at David Bowen's home in Jackson again at 75 Eastbrook

MR. BOWEN: We were just talking about a column that I wrote about Eudora Welty, that column took place of course after I attended Eudora's funeral and I had known her, as I pointed out in that column which is in the Special Collections at Mississippi State, I met her about 40 years ago at Tougaloo College. Of course, it is a black institution just north of Jackson and I used to go out there to what was called Social Science Forums, run by a man named Dr. Earnst Berinsky who was a very good friend of mine and a man who had been brought to the United States in the late 1930's by the famous radio and later television commentator H.D. Coltenborn and Berinsky would invite a number of white Jacksonians to come out to Tougaloo and as I said in my column, we sort of regarded this as doing our "radical thing" by going to these meetings because usually the State Sovereignty Commission and the White Citizens Council would take down license plates numbers and we would be recorded for whatever they wish to do with us and that is where I met Eudora Welty was out there. Among other people, we visited with people like Medgar Evers and a lot of black leaders as well as white leaders here in the late 50's and early 60's. I moved to Jackson in 1958 and taught for a year at Mississippi College and five years at Millsaps so I frequently went out to Tougaloo and got to know Eudora there and she told me some things about my own family history that I did not know. She told me about her visits with

Elizabeth Bowen at Bowen's Court, which is in Ireland but the Bowen name is a Welsh name and she told me a lot about the history of the Bowen family and so I began my friendship with Eudora Welty at that time. I used to see her off and on over the years, most recently about seven or eight years ago, I guess it was 1992 that she spoke in Washington at an organization called "Pen Faulkner Foundation." She read one of her stories called The Wide Net and they had the biggest crowd they had ever had at Pen Faulkner which was a literary organization that represents writers. But, in any event, after her death, and of course I attended her funeral, I wrote a column about Eudora, but before I wrote that column I talked to Elbert Hilliard, Director of Archives and History and I talked to William Winter also to see if there was any possibility or prospect of having a small room of some kind dedicated to Eudora Welty at the new Archives and History building, which of course is named for William Winter. I was thinking of course of the John Grisham room at Mississippi State in the Mitchell Library and of course that is a large magnificent space and I didn't expect anything like that because I am sure John himself invested a certain amount of money....

DR. BALLARD: He did...(Laughter) pocket change

MR. BOWEN: There you go (laughter), but I thought, at least, as the most prominent writer that ever came from Jackson, Mississippi and certainly second only

to William Faulkner from the state of Mississippi, that having a room to honor there would be a good idea. But, I was informed that the development of the Archives and History building, plans for the construction of it, the internal organization that proceeded so far that it would not be possible to design a room and a retrieval system and an access system around the concept of a Welty room there. Elbert Hilliard did remind me that there is a new historical museum that is going to be constructed just north of the presently under construction William Winter Archives and History building and that they hoped to have some kind of display, and I call them hopefully permanent, to honor Eudora Welty. But, that visit and as I think about those days, I realize that I actually probably, in terms of things that I taught in college and the experiences that I had in the years before going to Congress pretty decent training for that kind of public service. Of course, in college, I taught subjects like International Relations and Comparative Government and Political Theory and American Government and State and Local Government, American Political Thought. A lot of different things, of course, when you are teaching in a one or two man Political Science Department, you do a lot of changing, you teach a lot of things and I was the only person teaching Government at Mississippi College where I also taught some history and I was one of two people teaching Government at Millsaps. During that period when I was teaching, I traveled from time to time to Europe. I remember especially traveling to Europe in the summer of 1961 and I

spent the whole summer there. I was in Berlin when the wall went up and I remember taking clandestine photographs of Russian T-34 tanks from under a trench coat (laughter) like a good spy. As they were lined up in East Berlin behind the new wall prepared to start World War III at any moment the tanks were lined up, the engines were running the drivers were in the tanks and they were waiting to see if the United States responded with some kind of force to the erection of the wall. Of course, we did not, we responded with other measures, of course we had the Berlin Airlift. But, in any event it was rather exciting to be there in the midst of that great event and to travel in and out of Berlin, of course, Americans could go back and forth from the East and West sectors, Russian, French, British, American sectors in Berlin. And I had an opportunity to do a good deal of public speaking while I was teaching college. I think that my first interest in politics was developed as a result of speaking to city organizations, women's clubs, men's clubs, that kind of thing. When you are teaching history in college, there are always a lot of local organizations that want speakers so I ended up doing that. I had never, as I might have mentioned earlier, I had never grown up as a politically oriented student and I had never been a speaker, I had not entered the declamation contest, etc. (Laughter) which used to be so popular when I was coming along. I just didn't do any of that sort of thing and so when I was teaching in college I did get much more involved in community activities and more involved in political activities and I

remember going to county Democratic meetings and being a delegate. I recall in 1960 to the County Convention, which met in Raymond, the Democratic County Convention and voting for John F. Kennedy for President at that convention, but I think that was the period. So often, young people ask, college students, high school students, “How do you get into politics? What prompted you to do it?” And in my case I sort of went into it rather gradually and sort of accidentally by virtue of doing things that put me into a context of political action and having people say things like “hey, you’re pretty good at that. You ought to think about getting into politics someday.” Well, having somebody say, you know, you ought to be a politician and actually becoming one are two different things because it is just not easy to jump in and do something like that. Sometimes young people will say to me, I know that I would get this question when I was teaching at Mississippi State as I did at other places “Do you have to be a lawyer to be a politician.” Well, of course the answer is no but the major advantage to being a lawyer is that usually you belong to a law firm and you have people who can cover for you while you have to go off to a session of the state legislature or you do some other political service. Whereas, if you are doing something like I was doing, being a college professor, what it amounts to, if you decide to run for public office, you are quitting your job. (Laughter)

DR. BALLARD: Right.

MR. BOWEN: You are out of work and running for public office is always a huge

gamble, but I feel that the kind of experience that I had while I was teaching college and then when I ended up going to Washington and working for the Office of Economic Opportunity and for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, that gave me a much closer association with the legislative process. I was able to work with a number of committees on the hill and to understand both the administrative side of government and the legislative side. So, I think that probably that sort of background was very useful to me. I am somewhat amused and occasionally used to kid my own staff about the fact that I tried for several years to get a job on Capital Hill and was never able to do so but I would constantly interview in committees, members of our own congressional delegation, Stennis, Eastland, Whitten, Abernathy, and Montgomery. John Bell Williams, I would call on different people at that time and never was able to get a job on the Hill and as I told my staff the only way that I would get a job in Washington was to come back to Mississippi and get elected to Congress. (Laughter). Now, of course some of those staff situations were unusual. My predecessor in Congress, Tom Abernathy, had an all female staff.

DR. BALLARD: I wasn't aware of that.

MR. BOWEN: Well, he didn't ever hire a man. He was very much afraid that somebody would run against him, one of his own staffers would run against him.

DR. BALLARD: Oh, ok.

MR. BOWEN: So, at that era nobody thought of a woman running for Congress and certainly not from Mississippi and he felt that he was safe if he had an all

female staff. But, I of course took that next step, which involved a real clear cut preparation for a career in politics. When John Bell Williams hired me to be the coordinator and I think that I talked about some of those things earlier

DR. BALLARD: Right

MR. BOWEN: But, that really thrust me into the political process and put me into the position to work with supervisors and mayors and state officials and state legislators and get very much into that process. Not only making myself better known to a great many people but also simply learning a lot more about the politics of the state of Mississippi and made me a more credible candidate. I am not saying that I might not have been electable had I not done that but it certainly provided an open door, people knew who I was, I had been in a position to do a lot of favors for a lot of people and that was somewhat helpful when time came to, both to raise money for campaigning also to simply to be known, because I had mayors, and supervisors and police chiefs and state legislators and people I had done favors for, they knew me. They thought I, presume, that I was a decent fellow and that if I had worked that hard to help them in an appointed position that I might well be in a position to do something for them in an elected position. All those things that I did, the kind of subject matter that I taught my travels in Europe, as I think back even to the three years that I lived in England, two years at Oxford University getting a Master's degree

and then a year teaching in London. I took off the summer of 1956 and spent it through all the Middle East, just before the war broke out. The 56 war, the so called Suez Crisis. I was able to visit with Palestinian and Israelis and see a great deal of that part of the world. Of course I think all of those experiences were of value to me as a college professor, as a teacher, but they also provided an excellent background for International Relations when I got to Congress so that I always had some kind of dual commitment both to International Affairs and that area where my heart laid, probably that subject that I was most interested in. But also to the domestic subjects such as agriculture, public works. Things that anybody in Mississippi has got to be involved in if he's gonna be successful...

(laughter)

DR. BALLARD: Can we get back to something that you brought up and I'm sure we didn't get into it last time. You mentioned when you were talking about Eudora Welty, the Sovereignty Commission keeping records of tag numbers of people who dared associate with black people or whatever. Can you comment a little more on that little time period there that the Sovereignty Commission, I mean here we are in 2001, and I think, well, I know that it's hard for students, especially today, to envision a Mississippi where a state agency was actually spying on our own citizens.

MR. BOWEN: Well, they did it all the time. Of course they argue that it was a very benign sort of process. Later on I got to know Earl Johnston, who was the Director of the Commission, and he sort of mellowed out (laugh) and

softened, as a lot of those people did. And just as I've gotten to know a little of Bill Simmons, who headed up the White Citizens' Council. Everybody changes their politics a little bit over the years, and these people, I think, simply saw the changing times and accepted the realities of what was going to take place.

DR. BALLARD: When the papers opened, the Sovereignty Commission papers. Did you check and see if they had a file on you?

MR. BOWEN: I did, I got that notice from Elbert Hilliard and the folks at Archives and History notifying me that I was in the file and that I had the right, under the ruling, that the federal judge had laid down to review those papers and see what was there. I knew that not much was going to be there, because of conversation that I had had with Earl Johnston several years prior to that time and I had known about it from other sources, including the Governor's offices because when I was hired by John Bell Williams to come down and to be a special assistant to the Governor and to be the coordinator of federal state programs. This took place in January of 68'. Earl Johnston, who ran the Sovereign Commission, went to see Herman Glacier, who was the legal assistant, the principal assistant to the Governor, as he was to several other Governors. And he said "Herman, this fellow that y'all just hired from Washington to come down here, David Bowen," He said "Yeah, we got a file on him at the Commission." So Herman Glacier said "Is that right?" And so he said "what do you

want us to do with it?” And he said, “burn it.” (Laughter) So they burned it, they destroyed my file, in any event. I think Herman was afraid that it might be embarrassing in some way to Governor Williams. So Earl Johnston told me that they did destroy that file. Of course I knew approximately what was in there. The only things that could have been in there is that I was speaking on black campuses. I was attending functions that I mentioned, such as Ernst Berenski’s Social Science Forum at Tougaloo College or other events on that campus or other campuses. I may have spoken at Jackson State. But I had no reluctance to attend integrated meetings, which was regarded as somewhat subversive (laugh) in those days. So when I saw my file, all I found in there was a couple of newspaper clippings about press releases of federal grants that I had made when I announced when I was federal state coordinator in the Governor’s office. There wasn’t much left on me in those files and I never knew exactly what the Citizen’s Council was up to. I remember arguing successfully with my father that he should not join the Citizen’s Council. Of course at that era it was a very popular thing to do and there was a lot of social pressure among the middle class white.

DR. BALLARD: Well, I’m sure you remember they had ah, not only a regular radio program but they started there own TV program.

MR. BOWEN: Well, that’s right. A guy named Dick Morfew. And indeed, one of the television stations here in Jackson got in a lot of trouble. Channel 3, WLBT had a sort of a little freedom newsroom or bookstore of some kind,

featuring conservative publications and conservative in that era, simply meant pro-segregation. Also with a strong anti-communist tinge to it, and they got in trouble with the Federal Communications Commission and ultimately lost their license. And of course a new board was appointed, a biracial board who took that station over. But that was a tough time, they thought that probably keeping a record on who went where and who went to concerts at Tougaloo College (laugh) or attended biracial meetings, they put in a file. What ever happened to those files? There were a few people who did get into some trouble I think. But mainly it was just one of these things in which they were keeping records and never did anything particularly dangerous with them. Now the embarrassing thing for some people was that they did, the records show certain black leaders who were cooperating with these conservative white leaders. And that was embarrassing to some of them who did not want it known in the black community that that is what they were doing. And there were some other items in there which should not come to light that might be embarrassing to some people, but all in all it was a large enterprise of record keeping, which didn't do a lot of damage to a lot of people. But with unfortunate and unsaid potentially tragic aspect of our history we moved out of it pretty rapidly once things changed. Mississippians are pretty realistic people and when we saw the handwriting on the wall, we said okay.

DR. BALLARD: As I recall, J. P. Coleman tried to kill it before it got started but didn't have any success. I'm sure they had a thick file on him. (Laugh)

MR. BOWEN: Any body in public office, anybody in public life, anybody who went to the wrong meetings, or said the wrong things. The major difference between this and some of the things we hear about life behind the iron curtain is that this didn't have the same fatal consequences as descent and places like that. This was a lot of people keeping a lot of files in case they wanted to use them. Most of those files, see that's one thing that most people didn't even know that their names were in the files, and so they didn't even know until they got these notices from Archives and History that they were there and there's a lot that still hasn't come out. And I can appreciate the fact that there were some people who did not want this made public because they did not want the precise activities they were involved in during that era, freedom riders, and so on, made public. That was a really interesting and challenging time. Now of course for somebody in my position, as a college professor, it was not, I don't think that bold a move, because college professors are always soon be pretty independent minded.

DR. BALLARD: Well you know as I recall you taught at Millsaps, and Millsaps was considered a liberal school anyway. So I figure anybody associated with Millsaps, you're probably on their lists.

MR. BOWEN: That's a good point, (laughter) that's a good point. Millsaps did have that reputation and maybe to some extent it still does but it certainly was thought of as probably the most liberal college in the state. And remember again, when you use that term liberal, today it's an all together

different situation liberal/conservative, but in that era, the fifties, sixties and even the seventies, it tended to mean, have much more racial overtone. Much more to suggest that you are an integrationist, and you wanted to end our state legally established system of segregation. But all these terms that we'll get into later, all these terms change in their connotation. Liberal/conservative today means something all together different today. Just as I, I felt I often say people who read the columns that I write today, they suggest that I've gotten to be very conservative and I mentioned to them back in that era, in say the early sixties, when I was making speeches on black campuses and being labeled as a flaming liberal on race questions, that my position then was only that I thought, that black people and white people should be treated the same and they shouldn't be, neither one should be discriminated against. In that case it was black people who were subject to be disadvantaged legally. Should be given the same opportunities as anybody else as citizens of our state and nation. And that was described, and I certainly was at that time described as a liberal, for saying that black people and white people should be treated the same under the law. Of course today we live in a different era, in which black people have been given a vast array of privileges which they deserved and which they uh were owed to them under the constitution, equal rights, equal opportunity, equal access to jobs, education, a whole wide range of things. But today of course, a lot of the leaders of black community have taken a different position. They've argued that

discrimination is okay as long as it's discrimination in their favor
(Laughter) and therefore if you oppose this, which is kind of come to be known as race preference legislation or affirmative action, then today that being opposed to those things is called conservative. So I was called a liberal back in forty years ago for saying people should be treated the same, and I'd probably call it conservative today for saying that people should be treated the same. (Laughter) So it's uh, that's how political terminology changes.

DR. BALLARD: I can't let this pass without asking you, I don't know. Did you ever have any direct dealing with Ross Barnett back in those days? He's such a fascinating character!

MR. BOWEN: He is an interesting fellow. I knew him, and bumped into him, and talked to him. Of course his service as Governor was before I came back to Mississippi, and worked with Governor Williams. But I kept up with his politics and what he did. In fact somebody was telling me that one time, after he left office, of course a very celebrated figure. A notorious SOB (?) that's what I remembered. (Laughter) He would have reporters who would come down here to see him and would, he was getting quite up in years and he would occasionally take some northern eastern reporter around, drive them around, and he didn't see very well and didn't drive very well... Somebody reported that he was going up the wrong way on a one way street, and that people would jump cars driving on the curb to get out of the way. (Laughter) People were jumping up on the side walk and

shaking their fists at him as he went by. And he said “boy, look at that boy, they still love me.” (Laughter) He thought all those people were shaking their fists at him or waving at him and cheering him as he rode by. (Laughter) He was a kind of absent minded fellow. We all know he walked into an airplane propeller, one year when he was campaigning. And he was always interested in what people thought about him. One of my friends here who is a reporter, Bill Meyer, whose papers are also at Special Collections in Mitchell Memorial Library, he used to say that Ross would come up to him in the hallway at the Capitol and lean over quietly and say “Bill, what they saying about me boy, what they saying about me these days.” Then of course there was another famous trip he took to South America with a group of governors. Different governors were assigned to go to different countries, and he happened to be in Brazil and he was attending a dinner with the President of Brazil, sitting next to him. Of course we all know as Brazil as a multi-racial country, very much so. Large population of African slaves and then Portuguese settlers. It’s probably regarded as the most strongly, maybe the most multi-racial country.

DR. BALLARD: Even some decedents of confederates. (Laughter)

MR. BOWEN: That’s right, that’s right, there are confederates down, in fact I’ve even visited that town once. Called Americana, and there are still a lot of English names. Good ole southern names and people still speak English with a southern accent down there, (Laughter) one hundred and fifty years

later. At that dinner, of course at the height of the racial turmoil here in Mississippi and in the nation, Ross Barnett leaned over to the President of Brazil and he said uh, "Mr. President, let me ask you a question," and the President said yes Governor, he said "Mr. President, has integration got to Brazil yet?" (Laughter) and the President of Brazil of course did not quite know how to respond to that question. So he stumbled a little bit and then Ross Barnett leaned over a little bit and he said "Mr. President, let me tell you something. When it gets here it's gonna be rough." (Laughter) That was his analyses of the problem, it was like it was a great global plague, spreading around the planet. And he did not know whether it had gotten to South America, but he was very much concerned to inquire about that subject. There was another occasion when he happened to be in Argentina and this was told to me by the Argentine Ambassador of the United States, and the Argentine Ambassador of the Organization of American States in Washington, um, he was speaking in a town called Mendoza. And this man happened to be the Mayor of Mendoza at that time. And the plane landed there with Barnett and had a platform and public officials there and he was to say a few remarks representing the American Governors Association. He climbed up on this platform and he looked around him, all this crowd gathered, and he said "my good friends, it is indeed a great pleasure to be here in the beautiful city of" then he looked all around. He had obviously forgotten where he was. He said "it is a joy and a privilege to be here with the fine people of," (Laughter) then he kept looking around

trying to figure out where he was, what country he was in, and what city he was in. And then he looked up on the wall of the airport and he saw a sign and he smiled broadly and he said “it is a great joy and pleasure and makes me indeed happy to be here with the wonderful citizens of Sinzono.” Well, he had seen a sign for a famous aperitif (Laughter), an alcoholic beverage, on the side of an airport, and that sign he saw glowing and he thought that was the name of the city. (Laughter) Well there’s no end to stories about old Ross.

DR. BALLARD: Bill Meyer told a couple I recall. You remember the controversy over the Islands over around China, Kemo and Matsu. Somebody asked Governor Barnett what he thought about Kemo and Matsu. He said “well, we probably got a couple of openings over at Wildlife and Fishery.” (Laughter)

MR. BOWEN: Only then they called the Kemo and Fish Committee. I’ve heard Bill tell that story, I’ve heard other people say, you know he was kind of like that, what Kemo. Actually later on, when I was in Congress, I did visit Kemo and Matsu. So I thought about Ross Barnett and his, every time I here those I think what about Kemo and Matsu, what do you think? And he said “Well, uh, I thought we put them on the gaming fish commission.” (Laughter) Anyway. What a character.

DR. BALLARD: Well yeah, Bill told the story too, they were in a press conference one time, and a reporter that Governor Barnett didn’t like was there and he just pointed him out and called him by name. He said “y’all know Mr. Who

ever you are, he's with the A and P. Of course over here we got Mr. Meyer," Bill spoke up and said "yeah, Governor, I'm with Jitney Jungle."

(Laughter) But he is such an interesting historical figure in this state.

MR. BOWEN: He is certainly one of the most colorful Governors and controversial Governors.

DR. BALLARD: I think he did more harm than good, unfortunately.

MR. BOWEN: Well, we could of used a little better leadership over the Governor's mansion at that time.

DR. BALLARD: Well, we went from J. P. Coleman to Ross Barnett took about a 180 shift.

MR. BOWEN: It's worth keeping in mind that even those Governors that we think of as most progressive, uh, let's say J. P. Coleman, William Winter. Most of those Governors felt it necessary to publicly profess their commitment to segregation. John Stennis, John Stennis is...

DR. BALLARD: Well, Stennis I know in 1964 just looking at his papers, he was afraid Barnett was gonna run against him for the Senate in 1964. So while Senator Stennis condemned violence and all the stuff that the Klan was doing he was very careful.

MR. BOWEN: You know, speaking of the members of our delegation and Washington at that time and that period, which was about 1968, when I was doing some interviewing in Washington. Sort of doing some job seeking up there, uh I had pretty much decided rather than going ahead and spend two or three more years to get a Ph.D., that I really preferred to get into government. But again as I have said earlier, I never really thought that I was likely to

run for public office but I thought I would probably get an administrative position of some kind, which I initially did do. I think probably people like Stennis and Senator Eastland, my house delegation too, uh thought of me in that era as somewhat on the radical side. Maybe a little too liberal having taught at Millsaps and having been involved in a lot of interracial activities. That probably climated that whole period, when you're very suspicious of people who do not have a conventional, orthodox kind of lifestyle (Laughter) there was race relations.

DR. BALLARD: Exactly, exactly. Well, is there anything else we need to cover before we move on?

MR. BOWEN: Well, I think we talked earlier about the campaign itself and the sort of accidental way in which I got into politics and the fact that when you end up a political race of that kind, you simply try your best to make as many friends as you can. I didn't have a lot of money and I felt based on what public response was, that "I needed a good appearance," as they like to say. And I, again as they say, "met the public well," some of those famous terms. So I felt that if I could just meet enough people, I had a reasonable chance of making the second primary, and maybe under those circumstances raising enough money to survive and make it. The problem always in that type of situation, when you have a lot of people running, in this case 9 people in the Democratic Primary, how do you raise money? All the people who have money are sitting around worried that if they put their money all on one horse, that one doesn't cross the finish line first,

their in trouble with whoever wins. So they like people who have interest in government, we all have interest in government, but there are a lot of people who have a fair amount of money, and who are willing to bankroll candidates who are worried about that. Sometimes it will happen, and I never complained about it as people gave money to several candidates, as long as they gave me a little to work with. (Laughter) I didn't mind if they gave money to other candidates. It would be nice if we had a society and a nation in which small people would give money and we'd have a lot of small contributions, so that you didn't feel any particularly heavy obligations to any big givers. And of course we have campaign finance reform issues before us today, and I would like to see some reforms in that area. I always felt myself, during the time I was in Congress, and as I look back on it, I always felt it was good I could get financial support from a wide range of sources. Because I didn't feel obligated to anybody in particular and because of the very diverse nature of the second congressional district at that time, even more so than the nature of the current second district. The current second district of course, uh represented by Benny Thompson is a black majority district and is probably as less of a diversity. But I had to put together farmers, lets say particularly the white farmers, school teachers, labor unions members, business men, black voters of all kinds, works and stations in life, uh and I had to raise money from as many different places I could. And I did raise a lot of small contributions. I did have some active support from

organized labor and as I may have mentioned I was the first person in the history of the state to be elected to Congress in the support of organized labor. Though I had a lot of business support too. I had worked for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; I had a lot of business friends. I had a lot of agribusiness support. I came from a farming background. So I had fairly, the nature of the district was such that I was kind of forced to do that, but I had rather wide support financially, of course politically too, just in terms of votes I, I always liked to tell people that I felt good about the fact that whenever I voted on any issue, I made somebody mad, because that was my insurance of personal integrity that I knew I was gonna make somebody mad no matter what I did on any issue because I had such a wide range of support. Therefore, I just tried to do what I thought was best for the most people or right at the time. Try to follow my conscience and my head as to what to do on certain subjects without feeling that I really owed a great deal to anyone person or block or people or any one group I wasn't a property of business or labor or the property of agriculture. I remember that even though I was very grateful to have the support of organized labor, they were frequently irritated by my votes. I would vote for free trade issues for example. Of course Mississippi agriculture always wanted more free trade. We were always one of the great free trade areas of the nation. And that's an important part of our history. But organized labor wanted less of that and so I felt an obligation to explain to people why I voted the way I did, and I tried to do that. I

would occasionally pick up the phone and call Claude Ramsey or Tom Knight, down here in Mississippi running the AFL-CIO and say “look fellows, I know you’re not going to like this but I feel obligated to vote for this reciprocal trade legislation and I see it this way.” I explained my position, and I said also “you might keep this in mind, its gonna pass pretty heavily. My votes not gonna change the outcome, but I do feel that I’m going to remain more electable if I do this or personally I think it’s the right thing even though I realize that you disagree.” And so I tried to explain my position that is you always have that problem of explaining to people who want you to do exactly what they want you to do. They say “I worked for you, we gave you money, we helped get you elected, now do what we tell you.” (Laughter) And so we’ll have to explain, that a lot of people want me to do what they tell me and I just can’t please them all and I’ve got to hurt some feelings sometimes. If you think you can find somebody that you could elect that would do a better job than representing your interests than you might want to consider that. But I suggest you can’t, I suggest that I am more likely to do the kind of things that you think are desirable and good for the country and good for your population, your members, your contributors, than anybody else. I would have a lot of those discussions and sometimes they got to be heated arguments. And it hurts a little bit when you make people unhappy, but that’s the nature of politics. If you don’t want to make some people unhappy, don’t get in public office. (Laughter)

DR. BALLARD: Stay Out. Well, that's true. Let's check and see where we are. We got a little bit more, a few minutes anyway.

MR. BOWEN: I was just going to say that when I got elected finally after making it, gradually, stumbling in to the second primary, barely inching out Frank Smith a former Congressman, to be run second to be in the second primary then winning that and then winning the general election. It all descends upon you, that you actually won and the responsibilities of office. I remember that when I was in the campaign headquarters, in my hometown of Cleveland, there were two or three telephones only we had set up that night and wire services, reporters were calling, there was people calling in to interview you and the phones were all tied up and one of the amusing things I recall was that across the street was a movie theater called the Ellis Theater and some reporter had called the Ellis theater at the box office and asked them if they could go across the street and get me to come over and take the telephone call. (Laughter) So I walked across the street and talked on the telephone in the box office of the movie theater to some A.P. reporter from Washington or someplace. And, hmm, the kind of amusing things that happen on election night. You always happy to get the congratulatory message and phone calls, and then immediately though back to that subject of people who want you to do things, immediately people start hitting on you for the get on this committee, get on that committee. They want you to get on a committee that will serve their interest and help them. I don't think there is anything illegal or un-

American about wanting somebody to get on a committee that can do some good for your economic group, or your friends. Of course I had made some campaign commitments that I would get on the agriculture committee or I would seek appointment to the agriculture committee because my predecessor, Tom Abernathy, was retiring and had been on the committee. Sonny Montgomery had initially been on the agriculture committee I think for a couple terms and then he changed over to the armed services committee. We did not have anyone in the house, would not at that point and no one else seemed to be, since I represented such a large agricultural district and a large chunk of the Delta and middle part of the Delta, as well as a lot of agriculture interest across the state. I felt that I would probably be appropriate when and so I did make that commitment during the campaign to seek appointment with the agriculture committee and there where each Democrat in this case could serve but one major committee and one minor committee. The committee on committees was the democratic membership of the House Ways and Means Committee. But the chairman of that committee was Wilbur Mills. So what I did during that interim after Election Day in early November and going to Washington, I think this took place, about the middle of November. Only a couple of weeks after I was elected, I called Wilbur Mills in Little Rock and asked him if I could come over and see him, because as chairman of the committee and a very powerful figure, but also chairman of the democratic committee on committees. Now that has

changed today. We have a different kind of committee appointed in a different way to make nominations to committees. But at that time the majority of the Ways and Means Committee, as Democratic members always need to be served. So I went to Little Rock. Sat down with Wilbur Mills and had lunch with him and told him I would like to get on the agriculture committee and I said for my second committee, I mentioned 2 or 3 but I said I think the Merchant Marines and Fisheries committee would enable me to do some good for the state because my districts on the Mississippi river, the state of Mississippi is on the Gulf of Mexico. We have important dealings with the Coast Guard, with Merchant Marines and all also, the Fisheries and Wildlife responsibilities to Congress happen to be on that committee.

(END OF SIDE ONE OF TAPE ONE)

Wilbur had the power to say I think we can let you have those committees, that he could get the majority of his colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee to approve and that indeed was the case. So I did have those two appointments and I began making some plans. Of course I had lived in Washington for a couple of years and I had worked on Hill and I did know my way around the Hill. That was one of those things that I campaigned on is that I would not have to go through some on the job training, that I had worked in Washington, I knew the subject matter. I not only worked there, but I spent four years as Federal State Coordinator

working in federal agencies bringing in federal money to Mississippi. That background of experience would be of value as a freshman Congressman. I did not make a point that one of my competitors in that race, Frank Smith, in all has spent ten years in Congress. (Laughter) Knew more about that place than I did. Fact is, I think that was helpful to me that I had actually worked in Washington, I had dealt with Congress, I had spent four years in state government, and I suspect too, having spent the time in what might be called a conservative administration, that was helpful to me also, because my background as a college professor, not having gone to college in Mississippi, having gone to school in places like Harvard and Oxford, probably established more of a liberal image than was really good for me at that point, politically and working for a conservative government like John Bell Williams was probably helpful. Still in all, I had sort of a mixed message, which I think was good. I had worked for the opposite economic opportunity that is, world poverty. I had done a lot of things for blacks, Head Start programs, community action agencies, others through the poverty program and I work for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and I had really, I was probably about as much a middle of the roader as anybody could expect to see in that situation. Again, that turned out to be somewhat useful in a district which is very diverse. And I had lots of colleagues when I went to Congress who had an all labor district or an all suburban Republican district and or all black district virtually. Life was simple, they didn't have to make any

tough decisions. They knew what to do all the time. (Laughter) But when you have a district such as the one I represented it was always a struggle intellectually maybe morally to make the right decision. And you have to ask yourself, what is my job; is my job to do what I think is right personally or is my job to try and please the largest number of constituents, to do what's best for the second district, or what's best for the state of Mississippi, or what's best for the nation? After all, you are a U. S. Congressman, not a Mississippi Congressman. And you represent the whole nation. So there is always a little give and take, a little struggle internally in balancing those competing demands.

DR. BALLARD: I know you and I have talked about this before, but I don't remember if we got it on tape last time, but perhaps we did. I think, you know, looking back, I was in my mid-twenties I suppose when you were elected the first time. I think you benefited from a backlash against the Klan and the violence and the racism and the overt racism, because I think people saw you as the kind of person that wouldn't embarrass the state in Washington. People were sick of the race baiters and the negative national TV coverage. You know, I still remember how my parents reacted so well, the first time they heard you speak. "Well, he doesn't sound like some nut from the south." (Laughter)

MR. BOWEN: Well, there's probably some truth in that. I most appreciate that response. I probably didn't think about it as much myself, as others who saw me and read about me. I did have people who said they had never met me the

whole campaign but they just read the newspaper story when I made my announcement. They sounded like I had a kind of un-orthodox educational background from Mississippi. That might be a welcomed change. I think that there were a lot of Mississippians who were ready for a new look and a new style. That was a in particular, you take the confrontation that took place in the democratic second primary, in which I was running against Tom Cook, of Starkville, who had been a county sheriff, who at that time until he ran the Superintendent of Parchman our penal farm. And that kind of image of a former county sheriff running against a college professor, was, that was about as dramatic as you can find. And so, there were probably a lot of people who, I may have lost some folks (???) And people who thought I was probably a pointy-headed intellectual and too liberal. But I think all in all, it helped because when your in a race with a lot of candidates, what you want to do is just find a way to amass enough votes and enough support in the first primary to make it into what as they call it , the second date or the second primary. And that probably helped. I think that may have been an important turning point in Mississippi history. I don't know that I want to declare myself as a great historical figure. (Laughter) I'm only saying that by virtue of being elected with black support, with you know, what might be called their most support. Certainly with labor support, with the support of a lot of school teachers, and a lot of people who thought it was time for change, a different kind of look and style. That was the first time that

happened really. You could say that John Stennis was a different kind of figure. Well that's true, he was a very able man, but he did not go public so much as I did. But he didn't have to. He was able to run as a conservative, as a segregationist, and I didn't. I ran pretty much openly as somebody who had a different approach a different style. I openly sought black support. I campaigned in black churches, I spoke at voters leagues, there was no covering up. I just wanted, I had the district was 43% black, and I had to have the black vote to win. I openly sought labor support. Nobody had done that before, seeking endorsements of organized labor. Even though, lets say for example, one of my predecessors and one of my opponents, Frank Smith, he did have a good bit of support in those areas, but he was always very cautious, as Stennis was, not to go public openly, and not to seem to be that. So I think that to an extent that I could simply clearly speak out publicly as being someone who wanted to end any discrimination, wanted support from all Mississippians, from all races and religions. And also incidentally the shape of the district was different. I had a district that was half Hills and half Delta. And there again you had this sectional fight in Mississippi, there again you had to be able to draw from both parts of the second district. That itself was I think, important, but not nearly so much so as the fact that I had a different perspective on some of the hot political issues of the day and on race relations.

DR. BALLARD: Well, you know I've always read how important timing is in politics. So I think you ran at the right time. You know if you had run earlier you might

of had trouble with some of the issues that weren't issues. Cause you know...

MR. BOWEN: Earlier I could not of been as bold as perhaps, one of the reasons I would have not is because that not as many black voters were registered and voting, and so, that was one of the first times that there were enough blacks there to make a difference, in which you could actually afford to campaign actively and aggressively in the black community. And realizing that you would lose some white votes. But also what was happening in that particular moment in history, is that white voters had also accepted the inevitability of black voting and the fact that they accepted the inevitability that a candidate , such as myself, that I would have to be a person who could seek white votes and who could seek black votes. White people did not hold it against me that I was seeking black support. And obviously the blacks did not hold it against me that I was seeking white support. So it was one of those interesting little water sheds in history, and times changed after that. As I think about people who have been elected since, a former student of mine at Millsaps, Wayne Dowdy. Wayne probably in more different respects, was a more liberal Congressman than I. But he came after I did too. It was easier for him aggressively to go after (laughter) certain voting blocks than it was for me.

DR. BALLARD: I think it was a water shed time cause if you look back, Trent Lott and Thad Cochran came on the scene about the same time.

MR. BOWEN: All three of us were elected the same year.

DR. BALLARD: And the first time we had Republican Congressmen.

MR. BOWEN: It was a tough year for Democrats. Remember in 72 when I was elected, Richard Nixon blew away George McGovern, carried Mississippi overwhelmingly, and at that time I don't believe most people realized that the Republican Party was as powerful in Mississippi as it was. And so when Trent Lott won on the coast, replacing Bill Comer, and when Thad Cochran won in Jackson to Natchez, Vicksburg area, defeating among others, Ellis Boatman, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, in the State Legislature. I was the only surviving Democrat of the open seats. Of course, Jamie Whitten and Sonny Montgomery were still there. And they of course came from a very conservative Democratic tradition. So that shocked people to some extent. They may have been shocked for different reasons. Some of them, they had been shocked that a Democrat won at all, that I got elected. But there again, there were a lot of, the state was still full of very conservative Democrats, who were still voting Democratic. The same kind of people who voted for John Bell Williams. Now, the state of Mississippi today is a different place because so many of the conservative Democrats are now voting Republican on a very regular basis. The fact that I won that year, of course it helped me to have Jim Eastland running that same year, and I benefited from that association. But that is another reason it's such a watershed time. And I may have mentioned in an earlier discussion, the fact that you could have this unusual kind of cooperation between conservative Democrats and

Republicans that Jim Eastland would in effect be supporting Richard Nixon for reelection. That as I mentioned his chief finance man, Jesse Brandt, was a chairman of the committee to re-elect the President. And at the same time, supporting David Bowen and supporting Jim Eastland and probably a few other Democrats around. That took really a unique time in our history and our state has not been quite the same since.

DR. BALLARD: I think from my own perspective, I think the reason that the Thad Cochran, Trent Lott could be elected, when you heard the word Democrats back in those days, you thought of Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern all liberals and certainly at that time in our history they were very liberal. And I think there was just a backlash.

MR. BOWEN: I think also, and I don't imagine that in Trent would disagree with this, both of them, it is my personal belief, thought very seriously about running as Democrats. And looked around to see where the money was and was and where the votes were. And concluded that what was likely to face them, was a large Democratic primary same as I had. And that they would have a very hard time raising money, which I did. And that with Nixon heading the ticket, and with a lot of Republican money available to support the Republican nominee, that this was probably a good time to run as a Republican. And so, I think they did that wisely in their case. They made I think the right chose and were elected and when I mention the money of the Republican Party, that is an important factor because it was my feeling then when I ran in 72, and it is still my feeling today, is that

when you run for public office as a Democrat, you are just running on your name, and a word that's on the ballot or two words, Democratic Party. (Laughter) There is no money there for you, the Democratic Party in Mississippi is just totally unorganized or disorganized entity. Whereas the Republican Party is tightly organized and there's a lot of money, and is in the position to support party nominees very aggressively and very generously. So there's a great temptation there. And indeed, I had people who tried to get me to run as a Republican. I remember. For example, someone in West Point flew me in a plane over to Greenville to have a luncheon meeting with Clarke Reed, who was then the State of the Republican Chairman. Clarke whom I worked with later on agricultural matters, farm issues, he was in the rice business, among other things. He tried to talk me into running on the Republican ticket. But for a number of reasons, even though I knew life would be a lot easier, I'd have no money problems, I could let the Democrats fight it out in large numbers in the primary, which is what happened. Then I would have heavy support and probably plus an addition to that the discouragement of any other candidates running against me in a Republican primary. So I had the prospect in being the one and only Republican nominee or candidate and later nominee. But I just felt that my own personal opinions at the time, where I stood on political issues and the composition of the district, you gotta be realistic, just as Thad and Trent were realistic about the composition of their districts. They knew that their districts had a lot of

people who were conservative Democrats but who were beginning to go to Republican in national elections and were unhappy about a lot of things that were going on in the Democratic Party. They made a decision they felt that was best for themselves, and I made one which I felt was best for me and most consistent with what I believed. The composition of my district and it worked out well.

DR. BALLARD: Yea, if you had run as a Republican you probably would have lost most of the black vote.

MR. BOWEN: I would have, it's quite possible. It's hard to say, depending on who the Democrat... If I had known who the Democratic nominee was, I could have been a more progressive Republican, lets say a Gill Carmichael, I might have been somebody like that running against, lets say a Tom Cook, a Democratic nominee. I might still of had a reasonable chance of winning the election under those circumstances, but at that particular time, given the composition of my district as the, having the highest black percentage of any congressional district in the state, I just thought, well, I have to be honest about it too. The black support is so likely to go automatically to the Democratic nominee, that it does not take a lot of work. I mean, I try and be good friends to my black constituent voters. I think I was, but the fact of the matter is that vote is not a difficult vote to get for a Democrat, if you become the Democratic nominee, unless you are an out-right racist kind. And there were certainly a number of conservative Democrats that they would not have voted for. (Laughter)

DR. BALLARD: Yea, there was still some of those around. Well, I'd like to, we can back track if we think of something else later. So, to the point where you're elected and I think for the benefit of those who will be listening to the tape or reading this transcript in the future. So you're elected, where do you go from there? Does the party get your office assignment, office building? How do you go about getting a staff together? The whole thing, how do you start from square one.

MR. BOWEN: It's tough to do if you're just starting from Cleveland Mississippi and we had a meeting in Washington, all the Congressmen elect. Were invited to come up. You have meetings, caucuses, I think the meeting was the first week of December, which you first of all you've got to have ratified the committee appointments that you've been tentatively given, lets say by the Democratic Committee on Committees as I said the majority members of the Ways and Means Committee. (Laughter) So the Democratic caucuses has got to prove that the House, that it's all Democratic members of the House. Then you've got to draw for office space, all the members draw. Of course, all the older members are trying to up there positions too. They want a better office somewhere, so they're ahead of you, they've got the seniority on drawing. Just as they have seniority on committee assignments. Remember that Wilbur Mills and his committee controlled all of the appointments and living next door to Arkansas was not a bad situation for me, and I felt that I was in a good position to get the committees that I wanted and did.

DR. BALLARD: I guess I should interject here for everybody's information that the house was controlled by Democrats when you were...

MR. BOWEN: Yes, of course the house was controlled and indeed that's a good point that you make because one of the things that helped me run and certainly helped me in the general election running against a Republican, was the assumption that as far as the eye could see, there would be a Democratic majority in the Congress. Nobody really thought there was a slightest possibility or remotest possibility that there could ever be a Republican majority in the Congress. I mean they had then, but it had been a long time. There were a lot of conservative people and indeed a lot of Republicans who voted for me and who gave me campaign contributions. Who otherwise were backing Republicans for every other office. What they realized that if they wanted to have any influence in the Congress, it had to be on the side of the Democrats, not exclusively. They were probably giving contributions to Thad and Trent running on the Republican ticket, but in my case, they felt that there would be a Democrat mainly in the second district; they wanted me, for example, on the agriculture committee. Therefore they thought "hey, we've got the support, somebody's gonna be on the majority." It's nice to have these guys on the minority, raising cane, but the guys on the majority are writing the legislation. So, you've got to play ball with whose in power, and I've said before, Mississippians are pretty pragmatic. Especially the agriculture community in this state, very much so. Agribusiness wants to

know where the power is, whose got the majority, whose got the committee and the subcommittee chairmanships. So that was helpful to me given the political attitude at the time, which was that there is no likelihood that there is going to be a Republican majority. So, in any event, going there, you know, made you feel good. Know I had made a couple trips to Washington that summer. I'd gone up and met Carl Albert, the speaker, and Tip O'Neil, the majority leader and Hale Boggs, the whip at that time. Of course, Hale died then later, a couple months later. I believe it was in August, in a plane crash in Alaska, with a Democratic Congressman named Nick Bagich. And of course, his wife Lindy, who became a good friend of mine and colleague, was elected to replace him. But we draw and I drew probably middle of the pack for office assignments. I ended up with a decent office in the Longworth Building. Some who drew at the bottom of the line, had a pretty difficult assignment, and were tucked up in the fifth floor somewhere in some corner without a window and some such. But I had a pretty good location. As it turned out, I spent one term in the Longworth building, and two terms, as I recall, in the Cannon building, which I got a better office, a more attractive location. Then two more terms in the Rayburn Building, which was the top of the heap. That was the newest office building and the most luxurious quarters and the most attractive. I served, I had offices in all three of the House office buildings. But that process of going up, meeting your new colleagues, having everybody pat you on the back,

congratulate you, getting your committee assignments, getting your office assignments, and hiring staff of course is an important part of that too. Cause as soon as you are elected, all of a sudden you've got a very full mailbox, (Laughter) with resumes, applications. I mean, keep in mind that every time you have an election, you have a mass of unemployed staffers in Washington. Just think, if you took an average of 15 people per house staffers, were not even talking about the senate, you've got 435 members and you know, lets' say you have, I don't recall how much of a turnover there was that year but 50, 60, 70 Congressmen that don't come back for one reason or another. Multiply that times 15 or so and you see how many unemployed people you got. So they are desperately running around looking for a job. So, I would get all this mail, phone calls, and I would began to talk to your colleagues, I talked to Jamie Whitten, Sonny Montgomery, were good friends and talked to Stennis and Eastland about staff people. You do interviewing. I did some interviewing when I would go up, that's one of the first things that happen. When you go up there to meet with the Democratic or Republican colleagues, whatever the case may be, you not only get your committee assignments, your office assignments, you know learn a lot about the mechanical details of what has to be done, but you began to interview people because they are lined up. I ended up hiring some people with experience from other Congressional staffs. For example, I wanted to hire southerners if possible, Mississippians if possible of course. But I didn't have anybody.

Tom Abernathy, I would have hired some of his staff but since Tom opposed my election and there just didn't happen to be anybody on his staff that wanted to go to work for me, I would have been happy to have hired some of them. But they just didn't do it. There really was nobody else on the Mississippi delegation, (?) staff, coast folks. Trent probably hired a lot of those people. I guess Charlie Griffin's staff was still some of John Bell's staff. When Thad was elected, he may have hired some of those, I think he did. But as it turned out, there really wasn't much of a pool of staff in the state of Mississippi for me to hire. So I did hire some out-of-staters. I hired a couple of ladies from Louisiana, who had worked for Democratic Senators from Louisiana. I did hire some people who worked in a campaign, that's always another source of support, is campaign workers, your own campaign. I didn't have a real formal campaign staff, as I may have said. I never spent a dime for any campaign workers. So I didn't have a real campaign chairman, or anything like that. I really wanted to hire the best qualified people I could find, who would be loyal to me. So I slowly put a staff together. What you do is you get a bit of a skeleton staff, you've got to have somebody up there quickly, on the scene, who knows their way around, who can actually get the keys to the office. Who can talk about furniture, (laughter) Who can get you moved in physically. So that helped me to have about three or four people that I hired that were already in Washington, who already knew the scene. Either working in the house or the senate side or both in turn. Who were

able then to help me get moved in, to get things squared away. See, I was back in Mississippi, trying to tend to things and make my own plans to move to Washington. Try to find a place to live up there. It really is pretty complicated trying to do that all at one time. Trying to hire staff, get your committee assignments, find a place of residence to live and then go back and forth between you home district, all these people who want jobs who want you to get on certain committees and want to tell you about things they want you to do up there. You're just hit with all this at one time. It's quite a chore, but slowly you get what I said a skeleton staff together to give you time to get up there and get moved in and somebody's gotta start answering mail because you're getting all these congratulatory letters and people are asking you for things that they want you to do. The work starts immediately, in fact, it starts well before you take office. You begin to take care of these things, then when you get there, you are able then to begin to evaluate staff better, look around, find people. There's always a good bit of turn over in staff and expense in staff in the first year or so, because you have to build your staff up. Some of the people you hired on an emergency basis may not be just the ideal people and you might make some changes. You then have a chance to meet people and interview people more extensively when your on the job. That's a tough issue. Then when I went up, to move up. I stayed in a hotel for a week or so, until I looked around and found a place to live. I was able to find an apartment, a furnished apartment in Georgetown.

Which was a nice place to live. I indeed lived in Georgetown previously when I worked up there, so I knew the neighborhood real good. These things fall in place, because you immediately are going to committee meetings, you're assigned subcommittee and of course, not only do you get your committee assignments, but then you have to meet with the Democratic members of your committees to get subcommittee assignments. That's as important as anything. You are going to be on two or three subcommittees, of both of your committees, the major happened to be Agriculture, the minor one Merchant Marines and Fishery. So I got on, of course, I had to be on the Cotton subcommittee. I got on the Forest subcommittee. I rotated around several committees. Oil Seeds and Rice, there were three committees I was on Merchant Marines and Fishery: Fisheries and Wildlife, I was on Coastguard and I was on Merchant Marine. So getting those subcommittee assignments, that's voted on your colleague, your party colleagues on that committee. So you have a meeting, lets say, in the Agriculture committee room, in which, you and the other Democrats vote on who gets which committee assignments. I was happy to get what I had wanted. I had had a heavy obligation to get on Cotton, but I got on some other things which I thought would be of value too. As it turned out, I had only one turn to serve before I became chairman of the Cotton subcommittee. That was convenient. There was a man named Bernie Sisk from California who was the chairman of the Cotton subcommittee and his administrative assistant was a guy named

Tony Quello, who later became a congressman and succeeded his boss, Tony Sisk and became the Democratic Whip, a very important force in Washington. That's a wild and wooly process. Going to Washington for the first time to get organized, to get committee assignments, to get office space, to find a place to live. It's tough.

DR. BALLARD: Is your operating budget, in other words to hire people to do all these things, is that set by the party?

MR. BOWEN: That's set by House rules. I cannot remember the exact amount of dollars involved. There was an upper cap on the number of staff. I think it was sixteen, and you had an amount of money too. You had funds to special purposes, so called stationary funds, to buy certain office supplies, to buy stamps. Of course, there were one or two congressmen who got in trouble with buying stamps. They converted those to personal use. (Laughter) You had to have somebody, you needed a few people on your staff who knew the ropes up there to keep you out of trouble, who knew how to go over and requisition things and knew how to buy the envelopes and paper and all the office supplies you had to have. It's just like opening up a business office anywhere. Say suddenly you're the president of a company, but there's no staff and you've got this money and so here you go. You've got to find somebody to go do these things. It's tough, a start up operation like that. If I had been able to inherit a staff, it would have been a lot easier. For example, if frequently it's the case, that when a new congressman is elected, he or she may have a close relationship with his

predecessor. Particularly if they are the same party. You often acquire a lot of that staff. Of course, that staff wants a job, and you're happy to have them because they know what's going on. I was not fortunate in that sense, I think because of friction with Tom Abernathy. I don't know, I think his administrative assistant was ready to retire. It was different with Thad Cochran and Trent Lott because they were able to, they had staffs from their predecessor. In this case, Trent Lott worked for Bill Colmer. He was Bill Colmer's Administrative Assistant. So he had built in staff that he was running as the head, the Chief of Staff. That term Chief of Staff is coming into use now, it used to be called Administrative Assistant, as the top person. I think Thad was in a position to draw upon staff in place. So I had to work a little harder than the rest of them. I'll say this; I feel that over the years, over the ten years that I was there, I think I succeeded in hiring good staff. I always found that people were complimentary of the staff that I had. They said that I had good people, courteous people. Folks who did good case work. As you know the term case work applies to helping people with all the things, all the problems they have with the federal government. I believe in service. Now I think I may have learned that from Jim Eastland than from anybody else. Jim Eastland was perhaps a little more service oriented. John Stennis brought his wonderful qualities, was, as they like to say, more of a statesman, who believed in dealing with big political issues, international issues, military issues. Jim Eastland, the Chairman of the Judiciary committee and

dealing with some rather important matters, clearly felt that he got elected on service. I think I probably was influenced on that, and his advice to me was, “do good deeds for as many people as you can, and help people with their problems, everybody’s got headaches with the federal governments, everybody wants something from the federal government.” They may want an emergency leave for a nephew from the army, or they may want agriculture aide, or they may want education grants. They may want highways built, they may want whatever. Some of the things that they want help with are state and local issues and not necessarily federal issues, but you can help them, you can help them contact the officials they need to reach. I think that probably was my guiding light in most of my congressional services. That you may well want to make a stand for noble, and just issues, but you will not get reelected for that. (Laughter) In the House of Representatives, you will be reelected on the basis of service. I think there is a little distinction between the House and Senate in that respect. People expect the U. S. Senators to stand for issues much more so. They are more likely to come to House members for service. If you’ve got a problem, aches and pains with the federal government, you are more likely to go to the House member to help you solve that problem or get something that you need. The House has a little heavy orientation. Plus, keep in mind the fact that you’re running every two years, you never stop running. (Laughter) You never stop visiting people. You never stop having your picture made on the House steps with high school classes, and

choral groups, and so on. You never stop doing favors for people, you don't, if you had a six year term and you could wait till one or two years before election to get into heavy campaign mode, it would be different. But you're in a campaign mode all the time. You go home a lot; you see a lot of people. And it's all, you know, its part of the job. That's what's involved in being congressmen, doing good deeds for people. That process begins immediately after the election. That is a very hectic and frantic time, but somehow you live through it and you get moved in. And somehow with a lot of certain amount of turnover of the organization staff, you get the people you want. You're off and rolling, you get your committee assignments, you start going to subcommittee meetings, committee meetings, you start voting on issues on the House floor. You have usually a legislative assistant to help you analyze legislative issues. You have usually a personal secretary, somebody who does your own letters and that sort of thing. You have specialists sometimes and casework issues. You may have somebody specializing in Military issues. You may have somebody specializing in Foreign Policy Issues, somebody specializing in Agriculture issues. But usually you have somebody who does two or three issues at once. You don't just have one field. You might if you have a huge amount of work, let's say in Agriculture. Before I became Chairman of an Agriculture Subcommittee, I had somebody to spend a lot of time on Agriculture. But then when I became chairman of the Cotton Subcommittee, I had a staffer given to me as already on the

Agriculture Committee. So I had an Ag Staffer that I wasn't paying for in my committee, in my personal office money that the Agriculture Committee was paying for. So that made life a little easier in that respect.

We have a lot of military cases in Mississippi, so were having somebody to spend a lot of time on. Just think about all the applications for Service Academy appointments. All the military problems that people have. We have a large military population in this state. And although you see people like Sonny Montgomery or John Stennis who were serving on Armed Services committees and obviously they would be the principal focus. But you've got your own constituents who come to you with problems involving military service at one time or another and that's a lot of that, a lot of volume of that. You get anything that Legislation deals with. You get education issues. You've got school people who want grants, want help. You've got universities who want help with all kinds of programming. They want government grants of one kind or another, assistance in some areas to get programs designated for this university or that university. Of course, having several colleges in my district as I did, Mississippi State, Mississippi University for Women, Delta State University, and with a number of junior colleges and private colleges in the district. I had more colleges in my district than any other, doing a lot of work for universities, of course Mississippi State being the largest of them and a big research university, with heavy interest in Washington, and particularly a lot of heavy agriculture industries, but also across the board.

As a big, comprehensive university, I did spend a great deal of time working with Mississippi State. Of course, I set up a field office at the Golden Triangle Airport and I hired Billy Stacy, a Mississippi State graduate and star football player and pro football player to run that office. My predecessor had not had a district office of any kind. This was another change that was taking place. I don't think until that election, there was very much in the way of district offices. Now the senators would have an office in Jackson. Both Stennis and Eastland had offices in Jackson. I don't think there was a field office of any kind for anybody else in the delegation as I recall. I may have missed one somewhere, but I can't think of one. What happened that year is that suddenly you get these district offices being set up. I had one in my hometown of Cleveland, I had one at the Golden Triangle Airport between Starkville, Columbus and West Point, and then I had one in Aberdeen where there was a federal building and I had space available that was not open on a full time basis, but was open one day a week so that my field representative would go there. I also, as soon as I was elected, I not only hired Billy Stacy but I hired the first black staffers since reconstruction. A man named Henry Miles. He worked out at the Cleveland office and other places around the district. Thad Cochran and I used to kid each other about who hired the first black staffer and it turned out I did hire the first black staffer, but Thad followed very closely thereafter, and others in the congressional delegation followed suit. So you had, with my election and hiring a black

staffer, you had a change, a dramatic change in the relationship of black to whites and staffing. Of course later on we had black congressmen, but taking that first step was important. Then you had a change that took place, and it was not on my part, but the general attitude about putting up district offices. How you relate to constituents. So Thad and Trent set up district offices. Even Jamie Whitten and Sonny Montgomery set up district offices. It became a standard way to relate some of my colleague, they even had mobile offices and trailers and they'd ride around in trailers and interview people.

DR. BALLARD: Thad still does that.

MR BOWEN: Yeah, yeah.

DR. BALLARD: In fact that one, the Golden Triangle Airport that you opened up first, that office is still there. Sonny used it later.

MR. BOWEN: Oh, that's right, Sonny did use it, cause he took over...

DR. BALLARD: Chip still used it.

MR BOWEN: Chip Pickering has a...

DR. BALLARD: Frank Mosely's still over there.

MR. BOWEN: That's right. I was looking for a way to be good to the folks of all three of those cities, Starkville, Columbus and West Point. Rather than make two of them mad and one of the happy, (Laughter) I decided to put it in the middle.

DR. BALLARD: (Laughter) That was the whole ideal of the airport, to serve all of them.

MR. BOWEN: And the people in Aberdeen. My mother was from Monroe County and

Monroe County was one of the four counties that went for me, that led where I lived in the first primary, Monroe, Clay, Lowndes and Bolivar County, my home county. They felt that since it was a federal building there, that I would have an office there. So I may have made a few promises about that and I did in deed put one there that was there that was open one or two days a week.

(END OF SIDE TWO OF TAPE ONE)

DR. BALLARD: I decided there was another direction I could go in. (Laughter)

MR. BOWEN: I'm glad you did. You know we were talking about my first term in the 93rd Congress. The challenges were exciting because everything was new and fresh. You're doing a lot of things. You're not only trying to make a record legislatively, but you're trying to make sure the people back home know you're doing well and your spending a lot of time coming home and making a lot speeches, trying to mend a lot of fences. Well, you're trying, one thing, you're trying to bring people over to your side who didn't vote for you. I worked pretty hard at that. I've never been a heavily partisan sort of person or one who went to extremes or one who regarded those in disagreement with me as irreconcilable enemies. I just assume politics is politics and people have reasons for voting for other people. So I wanted them all on my side. I also wanted to pay off campaign debts, of course the campaign. I'm trying to remember how much of a debt I had. It doesn't seem like that much today. I think it probably was, I may have

owed, it could have been a hundred and fifty thousand dollars or something. But at that time, it was a lot of money. So I set about trying to eliminate that debt. One of the people who helped me do that was Lindy Boggs' son, Tommy Boggs. Cokie Roberts is Tommy's sister.

DR. BALLARD: Right.

MR. BOWEN: Tommy was and I think probably still is regarded as the best lobbyist in town. His law firm had both Democrats and Republicans both in it. Of course Tommy indeed came from a Democratic background, and indeed had run for Congress once as a Democrat in the state of Maryland and was defeated. But Tommy wanted to know if he could help me get rid of some campaign debt and I said I would be very happy for him to do it. (Laughter) So we set up a nice party at the home of a friend. A nice impressive house. We got Stennis and Eastland, Jamie and Sonny to come to the party. Got a lot of other Democratic House leaders to come. It's for maybe a hundred dollars. Of course the price has gone up for fundraisers now.

DR. BALLARD: I bet it has. (Laughter)

MR. BOWEN: We came close to getting rid of that debt. Of course, there were a lot of other organizations who had been sitting on the side lines waiting to see who won, who were willing to make contributions. Various political action committees. You had farm groups...once they discovered that I was gonna be on the Agriculture Committee, you had dairy groups and cotton groups and soy bean groups, this that and the other making contributions.

Both individually and through political action committees or PACs. This was truly general and it's not too tough to bet on the winning horse after the race is over. So a lot of them just wanted to save their money. I was happy to have the help. I admit that those people who were early supporters really were truer and tighter friends, but the fact is when somebody helps you when you need help and they wiping out your campaign debt is the best way to get reelected is to build up a campaign fund and get rid of your debts for one thing. You can't build up the funds till you pay off the bills. It didn't take me long, it took me about a year I think, to pay off the campaign bills. Of course during the campaign, I had various friends that cosigned notes and things like that to be able to pay for the campaign. Getting rid of the campaign debt was one of the first obligations of your first year and as soon as you get reelected you know very clearly that a lot of people assume that the most vulnerable you will be is when you run for reelection. The first time. So two years later they know you're gonna be vulnerable, and they know if you've got a big debt hanging over your head you can't run a good campaign. So I had to get rid of that. Then you have to mend fences with people. I immediately set about going to see people that were not on my side. I knew they were not on my side, but I wanted to go see them, say hello, tell them how much I look forward to working with them and being of service. I didn't really, I never did just exactly say to somebody "I know you didn't vote for me, and you gave a bunch of money to my opponents." (Laughter) But I want

you on my side now. That was not necessary. They knew that I knew. But the fact that I was friendly enough and interested enough to go see them and ask for their help and let them know that I was going to be of service to them in any way I could. I think that helped establish a good relationship. Helped broaden my base of support because that's what it's all about, bringing people in, just as you have to do that in the second primary in the general election in election year itself, but then after that, you've got to go out and reach out to people. That's a pretty difficult time that one (?) running for office but because you're the Congressman and they have to see you, cause they figure you're gonna be there for a while. They're trying to figure it's the same that goes with how to get right with God. How can I get on the right side of this guy now. Of course he is probably mad as heck at me cause he knows I supported so and so. But I didn't get and as heck at all. I just wanted their support. That was kind of, not a difficult process winning friends over after the election. Just as paying off a campaign bill. I had two, couple of fundraisers I think, the first two years. That pretty well wiped that out. Now I was not a committee chairman then. The Chairman of the Cotton Subcommittee, I mentioned a man named Bernie Sisk from California. I brought down to Mississippi State to visit the Boll Weevil laboratory. We had a nice delegation down, you know, had good press coverage, and the fact that I was able to bring a Chairman of the Cotton Subcommittee down unto my congressional district and especially Mississippi State. That got good

press. That was able to help me.

DR. BALLARD: Yea, I think I attended that.

MR. BOWEN: You may well have been there, cause we had a good crowd there. I wanted to make sure that everyone in the State community and certainly everybody in Oktibbeha County knew that I was a friend. Because after all, my general election, I mean my primary point was from Oktibbeha County. And indeed my general election opponent was from Columbus, who taught at Mississippi State, Carl Butler. I worked pretty hard to get through to Golden Triangle folks and of course the Mississippi State community. While never as powerful in my influence as say Senator Stennis is in his campaign. (Laughter) Nevertheless, it was, my father had gone to State, my brother, and I had ties there. So I set about being as good a friend to Mississippi State as I could possibly be. I was able to get a bill passed relatively early in 73, which got me some, a certain degree of acclaim. I think I was dealing with Rice acreage and we had big flooding that year. Many people old enough to remember that will recall, there having flooding. Rice growers did not have the same rights as other crop growers to transfer disaster acreage and so I got a bill passed that allowed rice growers to retain there acreage at another location, so that what was under water would not be held against them. They could plant the same crop. Basically, I got able to get the consumer oriented support for that in Congress. But hey, you want production, you want rice to feed a hungry nation and you don't want production to fall off. That Legislation was not

a big thing. But it got a ceremony and it had a letter from President Nixon. And the Library of Congress saying this was the earliest in twenty years that over twenty years that a new member of Congress had gotten a bill passed. I always felt that you gotta get the press out, you gotta let people know what you're doing. Have any occasions like that, award ceremonies. The kind of thing to get your name in the papers. Having a good pressman, speaking of staff, is a very important part of the job, press secretary, whatever title you want to use. That's very important to get the good word out. Just doing good deeds is fine, but you got to let the public know about the good deeds. Otherwise they won't give you credit for it, politically. You gotta get those votes next time. Then I got into a few other things that were of interest and probably helped out. I remember one time, NBC called me and asked me if I would appear on the Today Show, I forgot, at some point in 73, this is during the closing year of the Vietnam War. They wanted me to debate Ed Koch, who was a Congressman from New York. And of course as we all know, later became the Mayor of New York City. To debate him on the subject of amnesty for draft dodgers. That was not too tough an issue for me being from Mississippi. (Laughter) Fairly conservative, and militarily oriented state to argue against amnesty. Nor was it a difficult case for Ed Koch. As I remind him on that television program in that little debate, that I'm sure a large number of his constituents, here or in Canada, Sweden, or some place else. People who are trying to escape the draft. Made that

choice and I did not think it was appropriate for us to grant them some legal amnesty. Merely because we thought it was an unpopular war. In any event, I think I got the best of old Ed Koch on that Today Show debate. (Laughter) Well the kind of thing you have to do in terms of press is, first I contacted NBC and got a photograph taken of the set with Ed Koch and me sitting there. Bill Monroe, who was the moderator, was sitting in the middle. This big wording of Today on it, I think I got photograph circulating in a number of papers in the state. You're always looking for something to do. You've got newsletters to put out too. I started immediately putting out newsletters on a regular basis, in which you're telling people what you do. This is sent to every mailbox in the district, Congressmen are allowed to do that, Senators, to send out and use. You can't ask people to vote for you for election in that type of newsletter because its tax payer financed, but what you can do is tell them what you are doing. What committee action you've been involved in, what you voted for. You can do surveys, questionnaires, which is very common to ask them what you think about this, that, or the other issue. Find out what the public's thinking. That I had gotten geared up and moving as well. The perch of two years, you simply want to keep this high voting percentage as you can. You don't want miss any folks. (Laughter) I don't think I traveled outside the country in that period. I did take on trip, an amusing incident took place. The agriculture committee was going down to Venezuela. We had to vote on Sugar allotments for

different countries, we had a lot of trade issues dealing with Venezuela and how Bob Poe, who was the in Chairman of the Ag. Committee, decided to go to Venezuela, I don't know. The committee was going down and had a plane going down. I think this was the summer of 73. It was scheduled I think late in the summer like August so after I had spent a lot of time circulating around the Second Congressional District, seeing everybody and being seen, making speeches and getting as much press out as I could. Letting everybody know I was home, I was able to go back for a couple weeks and join this trip to Venezuela. Now, the committee trip and the publicly financed portion was from Washington to Caracas and back. But I on my own, decided, I'd never been to South America, decided to pay my own way and travel elsewhere in South America, so I took another ten days, I guess a week, ten days. Went to Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru. Of course I was welcomed in those places even though I was paying my own trip, it was private travel. I was welcomed by Ambassadors in those countries, I do remember. That when I was in Buenos Ares, Argentina, our Ambassador, who was the brother of Henry Cabot Lodge who had been a Republican nominee for Vice President in 1960, his name is John Davis Lodge. Beautiful embassy residence, gave a nice party for me there. He had the Mississippi state flag out and mounted in front of the mansion he lived in. (Laughter) So when I walked up there was the state flag of Mississippi there, that might have offended some people, but (Laughter) in any event, there it was. It

was nice to be treated in that working manner, when I was not on official travel. I guess our Ambassadors; the State Department has sent cables around to these Capitols, to our Embassies saying that this Congressman was traveling. Then I did do some things that were very closely work related. I went out and looked agriculture in Argentina and different places. Our Embassies overseas would generally follow the practice that they would assign somebody to be your escort officer who was oriented to what your major committee interest was. So they most often would name the agricultural attaché to be my escort officer who would meet me at the plane and who would go with me to show me some of the agriculture production or show me what American Foreign Aid was doing or American Assistance. Something connected with your Congressional responsibilities. But the main thing was I paid all my air travel, all my hotel bills and everything. I think I not only enjoyed the trip, but I think it was a trip that was of value to me as a U.S. Congressmen. But when I got back, I remember that one or two of my colleagues said, I told them about the trip I had, they said, “what committee did you travel with?” I said, “I didn’t travel with any committee, I just paid my own way.” They said “you what,” (Laughter) “you’ve gotta be crazy. Nobody pays there own way to travel, you gotta cut that out.” (Laughter) “You’ll get us all in trouble.” So that was kind of amusing. Of course I did travel a good deal overseas during my ten years in Congress. I was on the Foreign Affairs Committee and of course Agriculture had such heavy international

interest. And we here in Mississippi are so heavily oriented toward export. Trade in agricultural commodities, that that was never a problem.. I'm sure there were a few people who thought I should never set foot outside the United States. But that's not in my view of the duty of a Congressman is. We're a global power, a global trading nation. We in the south are very export oriented, especially and more than anything, perhaps in our agriculture commodities. So I always felt that was an important part of it. I was able to get myself involved in a lot of Foreign Trade issues during my service in Congress. All five terms I served on the Agriculture Committee and I served five terms on Merchant Marines and Fisheries. On Agriculture, for example, the Cotton Subcommittee, which I chaired in my second term the 94th Congress. Then later became turned into Cotton, Rice and Sugar, and I chaired that. I served it one point on Forest, one point on committee called Conservation Credit, which had to do with farmers loans, a lot of lending practices of the Agriculture department. I served on the subcommittee, rather subcommittees on Forests, Cotton, Conservation. And also on the subcommittee on Department Operations Research and Foreign Agriculture. Bare in mind that we have an agricultural attaché as we said in every Embassy, and that person's job is to support American exports with agricultural commodities. So, one of my duties was Foreign Agriculture, was dealing with foreign governments on the export of American products. I later on did lead a committee, an Agriculture committee delegation to China, the

People's Republic of China, in I believe 1979. It was one of the first Congressional Delegations that went over there. In my work on Merchant Marines and Fisheries, I was on the Panama Canal Subcommittee, which obviously had international implications and became a very fascinating and controversial committee. But as we had to pass Panama Canal Legislation later...

DR. BALLARD: That's one committee you don't hear much about. I mean, what's this... what does it do?

MR. BOWEN: It has been folded into two or three other committees in recent years. But at that time, it was classed as a minor committee, but it had an important role because first of all, I was on the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment. I did become the ranking majority member on that committee at one point. And then you've got all the Wildlife Preservation programming, all the government's role, and through the Department of Interior especially in Fisheries and Wildlife matters. A lot of environmental stuff to deal with, of course. That's important to Mississippi and its important to the country. For example, once with that Subcommittee I took a trip up the Alaska Pipeline. We flew to the North Slope and Prudhoe Bay. Went up to see the oil wells and to see what the relationship was between the oil production and natural setting in Alaska, what damage, if any, was being done. What about our wildlife programming through government owned land? So much of Alaska is government owned land. Either in special preserves or otherwise. I think

probably I arrived on a perspective on that, that has colored my judgment today on the question of Alaskan Wildlife Reserve, National Wildlife Refuge, ANWR issue. After watching those caribou walk under and over the pipeline, (Laughter) and watching the oil drilling operation in Prudhoe Bay and the North Slope area and to see how actively the wildlife were moving and living in and around those derricks and drilling platforms. I concluded that having the extraction of petroleum and the preservation of wildlife were quite consistent and not in conflict with each other and that's why I think probably, we don't know yet what Congress is going to do about this, but President Bush would like to do some drilling up there in ANWR. I don't know whether he's made the best possible case to the public with that. I think he may have had some; he has done some things that need a little better explaining, should we say. I have a little different perspective on it as result of my travels up there. Then the last two terms in Congress, I had an additional Committee assignment. I served on the Foreign Affairs Committee. Although, at that time, a Democrat could not serve on two majors committees. If there happen to be a vacancy, that is a regular, permanent assignment...but if there happen to be a vacancy on a committee, then you could apply to the Democratic leadership of the house to be assigned to that committee on a temporary basis. It's a little competitive sometimes because a lot of people want to be on more committees than they're assigned. So I was able to be assigned to Foreign Affairs. I like the subject matter because I had taught it in college, traveled

a good deal abroad and lived abroad. So I served on the Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee. That of course was important, particularly to us here in Mississippi because we export so much to Asia. Japan is our biggest customer for cotton and soy beans and wheat and corn. We've got important trading relations with Korea. Asia has just always played an important role in American agricultural exports. So I was on Asian Pacific Affairs. I was also on the Subcommittee on International Operations which fundamentally is State Department oversight. You deal with the Legislation that governs the State Department. And on the Subcommittee on International Organizations which deals with the U.N. and other international organizations. So all that was my cup of tea. That actually merged in fairly well with my work on the Agriculture Committee because, for example, take PO480 Legislation, Food For Peace. There that legislation has to be subject to votes in both the Agriculture committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee. That's called the International Relations Committee. That committee's changed its name from time to time. So I was able to be a sponsor of legislation dealing with food for peace and Foreign Aid legislation various kinds that served our interest in terms of the exports from our state and markets for American products. Later on, I was involved in the Panama Canal Legislation. And every year I was heavily involved in Agriculture Commodity Legislation, especially after I became chairman of the Cotton Subcommittee, I had to take a leadership role in writing that legislation, working with various farm organizations.

The federal agencies such as State Department and A.I.D.: Agencies of International Development. Sort of a division, a subgroup of that agency. Probably more close to Agriculture than any other agency interior through the wildlife programming. I did, was involved in the Congressional Delegation to a number of place. I had to lead a Congressional Delegation for several years to an organization called the Council of Europe, which met in Strasberg. I was the official House Representative to that international organization. Another one called the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development which meant in Paris the OECD, which is the developed nations of the world. Western Europe, especially including Japan and the U. S. I was there to represent the U.S. in the meeting. I participated in the Tokyo (?) general agreements of tariffs and trade, gathering that was our major export. Free trade structure for the globe. Another organization that I was involved in throughout my services is called the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We would meet at different points around the globe with Parliamentarians from other countries as members of Congresses and Parliaments of various nations. I think that was of value to me and enabling me to have a somewhat different perspective on foreign policy matters and foreign trade matters. Another interesting organization I served on from a Starkville point of view, was I was named by the Speaker of the House to represent the House on Historical Publications and Records Commissions. The Senate was represented by Clayton Pell and the Supreme Court was represented by Justice Blackman, Mr. Justice

Blackman. The three of us were the, what we call the Hill representatives, the House, Senate, and Supreme Court, which is also on the Hill, represented on that Historical Publications and Records Commission. I felt that part of my duty as a Congressman, especially one serving on the Foreign Affairs Committee and on Agriculture particularly, as well as Merchant Marines and Fisheries was to have a very clear perspective and as close an understanding as possible of International Relations and Trade matters. I was able to join delegations at different points of the globe, Africa, Asia, Europe, Central America, a number of times I had to go down there working on Panama Canal Legislation. So I was, you take a certain amount of flack about junkets. But I found I worked probably as hard on those trips as I did any place. You go to some foreign capitol, you have to attend a conference, you gotta make speeches on behalf the United States, you gotta defend your country. Or you're with foreign Diplomats and Parliamentarians. You have to work with your Embassy, see what the embassies are doing, see what our Foreign Aid program is doing, how it can be improved, try to figure out what kind of markets are there for American products, what can you do to enhance our trade relations with other nations. All that's there. I'll admit it's easy enough for editorial writers and reporters occasionally to talk about junkets. I'm sure there have been a few that have been less than useful, you know. (Laughter) I'm not claiming that every single foreign trip taken by a Congressional Committee was noble, but I tried to work hard and I believe I did. I believe

I was successful. I got a lot of good press, let me put it this way, I got a lot of good “cable traffic” as the State Department like to say. From our Embassies abroad saying send us more Congressmen like David Bowen from Mississippi, he works hard, he does what we need done, he sees the right people. You see, there’s an interesting problem that our Embassies have overseas, and that is that most people over seas do not understand the role of the U.S. Congress. Most other nations in the world have an executive branch that makes all the decisions. What the politicians think is of minor interest. Even our fellow democracies, take Britain, for example, once you have a government formed, once one party or the other wins a majority and you have a cabinet, government formed, then that government makes the decisions and what Parliament thinks is not relevant, it’s relevant but it’s not very important, unless on a vote of confidence they defeat that government. So they are not accustomed to that. For example, I once had to make a long speech, in which the copy I think is in Special Collections. My paper in Santiago, Chile to a large gathering of military and political leaders of South America, explaining to them what the role of the U.S. Congress is in foreign policy. They didn’t really understand it and they’d never read the U.S. Constitution, they didn’t think about it very much. So they were always frustrated by it. They couldn’t understand why it is that the President could stand up and say the United States wants to do one thing but low and behold the Congress didn’t always vote the way the President wanted. It sometimes, Congress didn’t ratify treaties or

sometimes we didn't vote for Foreign Assistance programming that the President wanted or we voted for Trade Legislation they didn't like, or something. So I think explaining what the United States of America is all about, how our government works, how our Constitution works, what the role of the U.S. Congress is in relation to our Executive Branch and our Judicial Branch. That's something that our Embassies appreciated and found it useful for me to meet with Foreign Officials and have interviews with foreign newspapers. It could support what they were doing. In other words it gave them the kind of back up, legitimacy they wanted when they explained how difficult it was to do something having a Congressman or a Delegation there who can support that position. I think they found useful. So I was pleased that I got as they say "cable traffic." They sent cables back to the State Department analyzing these Congressional trips. I don't think I have anything to apologize for in my foreign travel. I always felt that was as much a responsibility as any other. If we were a minor nation with no global interest, no military interests internationally, no trading interests, well hey, that's another problem. That's not the way the world is organized.

DR. BALLARD: Don't you think it's better for you to get over there and see for yourself, then just have to depend on other people telling you?

MR. BOWEN: That's right. Otherwise you've got the diplomats telling you what's going on over there, while, I like diplomats, (Laughter) they're nice people. I think it's better for people who have got the responsibility for spending

billions of dollars, not only on those Embassies, but on our military programming and our aid programming. Who have to make decisions about international alliances, weapons policy, all of that. Even though the committees or jurisdiction have the principle responsibility, I have to say that I have always looked to John Stennis and Sonny Montgomery for leadership on military issues because they served on the Armed Services Committees in the respective houses. Just as they look to me certainly in the House, more, especially they look to me in leadership on agriculture issues. I think I can honestly say that was true of the Senate too. Both Stennis and Eastland...while Eastland was on the Agriculture Committee, I think he and I were good friends, he just expected me to initiate most of the Ag. legislation involving our state. I would clear it with the Eastland staff, make sure everything was alright. But I was the one who had to write the Farm Bills, I had to write the Cotton Legislation every four years. What aspects I had some jurisdiction over, otherwise, of course, later on, I was able to pass, get a Rice Bill passed, which was quite a battle, as I recall. I may have introduced it in 1975 and it may have passed in 1976. That was fairly traumatic legislation that opened up rice production in the nation. Rice was treated differently from other commodities, and we in Mississippi, along with Arkansas and the northern part of Louisiana were what one would call New Growers. That is we were the newest kids on the block in terms of rice production. The old growers, who had the allotments established by law because they had been growing rice for a longer time,

were in south Louisiana and Texas and California. So we had a bit of a sectional battle. In the case of Louisiana, that state was divided in the north and the south. So I had to, as the author of that legislation, had to organize a major campaign of support to get that passed. Some of our own Mississippians who were old growers, who already had there allotments, were not too happy about opening up production to anybody who wanted to grow rice. Of course we simply were just going to treat rice like other major commodities, such as cotton. But in this case, what happened was that after we did this and after I got that legislation passed, we found, to my great satisfaction, that most of the Mississippi growers were planting so much more rice than they had before, even the ones who had allotments before. They were happy enough with the outcome, and then you had a lot of people growing rice who had never grown it before. And that gave them another crop. Cotton and soybeans, of course now we have a lot more corn being grown, wheat being grown. Cotton and soybeans principally and rice gave them an opportunity for those who had the right kind of soil for it. In fact, it gave them a chance to take some of their very poor soil and growing rice on it. So it was a real opportunity for them. It was something of a battle. I had to put together a coalition with a lot of help, involving not only people with agricultural interests, but a lot of the urban builders of the country and the Congressman and the Senators who were concerned about those populations who didn't grow any rice at all. I was able to frame this as an opportunity to expand production of rice, to lower food costs. We had

a pretty effective alliance going between Agriculture Committee and urban folks. One good example of that was the Food Stamp program, which was in the Agriculture Committee. Which enabled us in the Ag. Committee to be able to get the support of urban Democrats who otherwise would not remotely be interested in voting for farm legislation. So by virtue of being able to give the big cities Food Stamp Legislation, they were willing to vote for farm programming. So people would say “oh, why are you voting to give away those terrible food stamps?” Well, I said for one thing, a lot of Mississippians use them. But secondly I could never get a Farm Bill passed. Now if you want me to just shut down the cotton program and the rice program and every other commodity program, let me know because we’ll shut them down for sure if we end the food stamp program. Because that’s the only way I can get votes to pass this. We don’t have many farmers in America. I think we had about three million then and fewer than that now. And you cannot pass legislation to benefit a commodity and its growers with that kind of population base unless you do a lot of horse trading. So we had to do some serious horse trading and that gave us some really substantial leverage was the food stamp program. Now, we certainly tried to clean it up and tighten it up and end any waste fraud or reduce that program. But the fact of the matter was is that it was sort of an important sort of part of the package we had to deal with in the Agriculture Committee. You know, if you have some subject that everybody is for in the country, that’s one thing. But if you pick a small block of Americans

who happen to be farmers, how can you get legislation passed that serves their interest? Well, you do it by supporting other people. For example, you support a lot of projects out west. You support irrigation programs and of course we had other major interest such as public works here in our state. We are a state that's always wanted a lot of federal help in building levees and draining, clearing deepening rivers and dredging operations. So that's a lot of what Congress is about, getting along with others a little mutual back scratching. I know there are certain folks who get irritated with that and they say just stand for principle and do what you think is right. Well, that's fine, but politics is the art of compromise and its the art of getting the best deal you can. You're one of 435 people in the House and one of a 100 in the Senate, and you've got to do something for other people in other parts of the country, if you expect them to do anything for you. So that was an important part of my work there. All three of the committees that I served on, involved me and a lot of negotiating with others. I was, for example, one of the original authors of the Endangered Species Legislation. Then I took a very active role in modifying and improving that legislation every time re-authorization came along. 1976, for example, I was I guess one might call the major House leader in trying to restructure that to take greater consideration of economic problems as opposed to purely environmental ones. As something of a moderate, I always felt there was a reasonable balance to be achieved between two desirable goals. One of the ongoing struggles we've had in American

politics is our desire to preserve environmental standards, to hold down pollution, to preserve our wildlife and of course the Endangered Species Legislation was designed to address that. But we have an equal commitment, and perhaps a greater commitment to preserving our economic survival. We've got to make a living, we've got to keep people employed, we've got to keep people eating. How you reconcile those two, sometimes things that are desirable for one are not desirable for the other. So I felt I was in a good position to try to moderate that legislation and I think I was successful in doing it and I think a number of people who have looked at that period and studied that legislation have made that observation only in the last couple of years. We had somebody who came here to Jackson and spoke, an attorney from Birmingham who worked on that legislation at that period and he was kind enough to say some nice things about the fact that I was instrumental in building more economic considerations into the Endangered Species Act. I'm not saying it's a perfect piece of legislation, it's still being proved, and it can be abused by the Bureaucrats who have to handle it. That's one of the problems I have discovered as legislator is that you pass a piece of legislation that you think is good, you think will achieve what you want. You think you made your intentions clear but the Bureaucrats get a hold of it and they write regulations, rules and guidelines that seem to go off in another direction. And sometimes the federal Courts uphold that. The Federal Courts simply say okay. Well, if you Congressmen don't like what they are doing, well

do something about it, change it. Of course it's not always easy to rewrite stuff once you get some general language put in a legislation and then you get a federal agency that expands upon that and somewhat I frankly have said abuses it's authority to simply decide what it wants to do. Then the Federal Court, I can understand the Court's position which says hey, just go pass some other legislation. Slap their hands, you don't like what the Bureaucrats are doing, tell them what you want them to do, write more precise legislation. Once you get something in place, it's hard to go back and rewrite it and that's why we do have some of these problems. This struggle between the two ends of Pennsylvania Avenue as they like to say, between what the Congress wants and what the Bureaucrats want, what the Executive Branch want. See, a lot of good people, I once worked in the Executive Branch of the federal government and I understand what goes on there. There's a little bit of a power struggle and there are a lot of people in every federal agency, including the ones I dealt with: State Department, Agriculture, Interior Department, as soon as a piece of legislation is passed, after they lobbied for certain things, and they may not have gotten the specifics they wanted, then they start going over it with that famous fine tooth comb (Laughter) to see how they can get what they want out of that legislation despite what you put in it. How can they justify legally doing what they want done, instead of what the Congress wants done. It's a tug of war. You keep battling these things. I've got to say, we deserve a little of the blame in Congress too. Because sometimes we find conflicting

opinions among Congressmen and in order to placate everybody, we write general legislation. The language is a little more ambiguous than we would like. What happens when ambiguity gets written in a legislation, the federal agencies take advantage of it to see what, or the Federal Courts take advantage of it. They then decide they'll do it their way. So, we deserve a little of the blame for writing it that way. But that's also understandable part of legislative process to get a majority to pass something you have to write language a certain way, then you have to talk about it on the House floor. You say I know the gentlemen from Pennsylvania says this legislation sounds like this but I want to assure him that's not what that means. We are quite confident it will not be interpreted that way. We'll use all of our influence in working with the Agriculture Department or the State Department or whoever, to make them understand what we had in mind on that legislation. (Laughter) So if you're always trying to please people, placate people, get votes for legislation. Then when you get through you try to patch it up. You write committee reports. If it's not clear what you say, you even say I expect to be a Conquery on that bill, I'll be meeting with Senate Committees and I will ensure we have committee report language it says thus and so and so. You've gotta have all these ways in trying to satisfy the complaints that some people have about what's in a bill.

DR. BALLARD: Well, of course the committee can, I don't know what the circumstances are at this an absolute right to do it or what? But if the Bureaucracy does

interpret legislation differently than what you intended, you can and testify before your committee and justify that.

MR. BOWEN: We do that a lot. That's a good point. First of all, before we write any bill, let's say a farm bill comes along. Every four years you'd have an Omnibus Farm Bill. The first people to testify are the spokesmen of the Department of Agriculture.

(END OF SIDE ONE TAPE TWO)

MR. BOWEN: Commodity (?) legislation, that's the first thing. You wanna know what the President thinks. Theoretically, what the department says is what the President thinks, but that's not always the case. So you have departmental witnesses, you have the Secretary of that department or you have other officials. You always have an assistant secretary for Congressional relations or other commodity experts that say in case of the Department of Agriculture...State Department you get top diplomats who come to testify before you and they tell you what they'd like to see. They'd like to try to lead you to believe that if you don't put in what they want the bill might be vetoed by the President. But in any event they testify first. So your first courtesy and obligation is to communicate with the agency that's got to run the program, cause you're a Congressman, you don't run the program. You learn very rapidly there is a big difference between passing legislation and administering programs. That program has got to be brought to life. Those

dead words on a page have got to be converted into rules and regulations and guidelines and administrative decisions. That's very complex and it takes a lot of hard work on the part of the administrators and sometimes as I said what they do is not the way the Congressman would like for them to do it. After they testify, then you got commodity witness, let's say, again, in the case of the Ag. Committee. You have spokesmen for specific commodity groups. Lets say the National Cotton Council has recommendations, talk about a cotton program or Soybean Association or rice growers or rice miller or various commodity groups may well appear and testify. You may have other Congressmen or Senators who wish to testify. I've testified both on the Senate side and on other House Committees about legislation. While I also presided over or been a part of a committee which listened to testimony. And you bring your constituents in too. That's always an important point, if you can bring some of your own constituents, people from your home state up to testify. That give you an opportunity to hear them, it gives you an opportunity to have pictures made with them, and to send those pictures back to the papers at home. They feel good about it and it sort of cements your relationship with them. Their also leaders, they are leaders in that area. But economic development people, or farmers or whoever they might be, that's an essential part of the hearing is to have individuals who are beneficiaries. Let's say if you have food stamp program for people who come in who are recipients of food stamps even, or not only administrators. So you get a wide range of people

and committee puts that list together and when you finish the committee votes, the subcommittee votes on legislation and the pool committee and the House votes on it. The other side, that legislation may have started in the Senate, whichever side passes both sides. Hardly ever in the same version, then you have the conference committees and that may be the single most powerful spot is the conference committees, which include representatives of the Committees of Jurisdiction. Sometimes there's more than one committee in a given houses jurisdiction, therefore you members of several committees. The Speaker in the House and the Senate Leadership on their side will name the, the Speaker will name, if it's a Democratic majority as it was when I was there, will name the Democratic members of the Conference Committee. Usually, the Republican Leadership would name, but usually there is a difference to the Committee Chairman and ranking members. That is the chairman of the, lets say the Foreign Affairs Committee is a Democratic member, he needs the Democratic members of the Conference Committee, the ranking Republican member, that is the person who would be the chairman if they were a Republican majority. But at that time was not, he would name the Republican members of the Conference Committee. Then you go over and meet with Senate Conferees, in equal numbers. It may take several days to resolve the differences between House and Senate. When you come down to horse trading, that's the real serious horse trading is on Conference Committees. Then when you finish that conference report if you come to

some agreement, you bring the common version back to the House and Senate and vote on it goes to the White House with signatures on it. But it's a long process and a laborious one. One that probably justifies, I think, the committees system that we have in the Congress. That is you cannot be an expert on everything, so you try to master the subject you're in. I came up in a system, in a tradition here in Mississippi, which is in a general sense could be called a more conservative tradition. That is to say you don't try to sound off on everything that comes along. You don't try to be an expert on everything that comes along. You master the subject matter of your committee assignment. And you defer to your seniors. That's not the way it's done now. (Laughter) What we have now is everybody wants to grab headlines on every subject.

DR. BALLARD: Kind of a free for all. (Laughter)

MR. BOWEN: That's right. It's a free for all. Everybody wants to speak on every subject, everybody wants to make headlines back home on subjects on committees they have nothing to do with. I came along with that southern seniority approach which is you defer to those who are senior to you, who have been there longer than you have been. You do not try to upstage them, and you do not try to sound off on subjects that are not related to your committee jurisdiction. You don't get up on the House floor and start talking about a bunch of foreign policies when you have no jurisdiction. Of course admittedly if you're talking about war and peace issues, anybody can speak. But I'm just saying that, and you can speak on any subject you want

anyhow. But the important thing is that you try to limit your activities to your jurisdiction and you work your way up the ladder. You become a subcommittee chairman you may some year, some day, a decade, two, three, down the road become a full committee chairman. A lot of things can happen, but there's this kind of hierarchy of seniority which I think serves a useful purpose. Now it's been modified in many ways and of course the Democratic and Republican Caucuses in the House and Senate can deny certain people seniority can...committee chairmanship, for example, even when they are seniority and that's not unusual now. Somebody based on seniority on the committee is up to be chairman, but his majority caucus or minority caucus, in this case, majority caucus chairman, that they don't vote for him. They bounce him out and they may pick somebody 2 or 3 or 4 notches down the line of seniority to be the committee chairman. So that happens as well but I probably had a little more of that traditional approach when I came in. But I did come in at a time that we were going through turmoil and transition. In 1973, we were changing the rules for Congressional campaigning and then you had the big Watergate class of 1975. Then the Vietnam War was a lot of impact and you had Watergate which brought in a lot of new members, a lot of Democrats who were oriented in a different way. I think I was apart of another one of those interesting historical watersheds, in which instead of simply deferring to the senior members in every instance, deferring to your subcommittee chairman or your full committee chairman, you found people

that as the comedian said, “they don’t have no respect.” (Laughter) They just do what they, they say what they want to say and do what they want to do and let the chips fall where they may. That’s more or less what we have now. Of course, we have also since that time made changes in the Republican Party in the House. They don’t allow committee chairmen to serve more than 6 years, 3 terms then they have to rotate out. I was there at a time, then the Democratic Party has not adopted that rule, by the way. That would be unheard of to have. A committee chairman gets there and he may be 30, 40 years as chairman of the committee. He spent most of his life trying to get there. It’s probably served us well here in the south and in the state of Mississippi you get, why Jamie Whitten who stays for 25 or 30 years as chairman of the Appropriations Committee, you get, Southerners have a little tendency to, I think put people in the key places and leave them in those committees and let them build up seniority. A number of other states, a lot of northeastern states regard home state offices as more important. For example, running for mayor of New York or Governor of New York was regarded as being more important than being in the U.S. Senate or the House. (Laughter)

DR. BALLARD: It’s probably true.

MR. BOWEN: There are those stylistic differences regionally around the country. That’s probably a little bit of an overview of the committees that I served on and the general sort of legislation that I dealt with over the ten year period. Each year was a new battle a new fight over something. Each year was a

challenge to continue to raise money for your re-election campaigns. That's one reason I happen to hope they can pass some kind of decent campaign finance legislation that will change that some what. I was pleased that my relationship with my colleagues was a good one. I was not the kind of guy that sat around playing cards and drinking booze with the guys. I was not particularly oriented to that sort of style or relationship with my colleagues but I believe I got along well with them. I think I had certainly had the respect of those with whom I served on my committees. I think about one instance in which I was on the Foreign Affairs Committee and we had an issue come along involving cutting off the PL480 program to the country Zaire. President Mobutu was not exactly the most attractive head of state around the world. But they were a good customer of ours. A lot of American rice, a lot of southern rice went under the PL480 program, the Food For Peace program, to Zaire. It was a market that we had, it was useful, whether or not the government was somewhat corrupt was another issue. One of our colleagues from New York a good friend of mine. A guy named Steve Solarz was so unhappy about Mobutu that he wanted to cut off any kind of American relationship. My view was that, well it's a little bit like FDR said during WWII. He was talking about Generalissimo Trujillo down in the Dominion Republic. He said, "Well, he may be an S.O.B., but he's our S.O.B." And so we were in the midst of a cold war situation with the Soviet Union. And also a situation which we were looking for markets for our products over seas. My view was, as long as

somebody was on our side and not on the Russians, and as long as they were customer for our products they were buying what we shipped over and helping the economy of the state of Mississippi and this nation, I was all for maintaining decent relations with them. And, if we could use our influence to modify their regimes, fine. If we could push a button to get democracy there, fine. Whatever we could do would be to improve the situation of those people would be fine. But it was not our duty to reform the globe. It was not our duty to go in and try to create revolutions around the world, just because were a little bit unhappy with some head of state. I ended up taking on Solarz on the Foreign Affairs Committee. As I remember on the committee, we I think may have lost in the committee because the Foreign Affairs Committee was a very, very liberal committee in terms of its politics, its orientation. It was more of a human rights oriented committee. Less economic development oriented, less market oriented. It was not generally regarded as a committee that did a lot of good for you politically. You don't have a lot of folks at home that are gonna vote for you because of what you do on the Foreign Affairs Committee. What I did then was I organized a lot of farm support around the country. You know this farm allowance were talking about people who support Ag. Legislation and natural resource developmental people, public works people. Also, a lot of Republicans and a lot of conservative Democrats who were cold war oriented, that is, they had that same feeling that were fighting here the Cubans have got armed forces in Angola.

We've got a communist menace which may look a little peculiar today with the Soviet Union out of business. To say why are we so concerned about the so called Communist Threat around the world? Well at that time, it was rather important. At least we certainly perceived it to be important. You got foreign forces present and shipped from the western hemisphere into Africa to fight a war in the neighboring country of Zaire you have a customer of ours a friend of ours with a somewhat corrupt leader, admittedly. My view is to continue to do business and sell our products and maintain the friendship and to do what we can to improve the situation. So I organized a coalition on the House floor which succeeded in sort of bushwhacking my friend Steve Solarz and defeating his position passing my amendment which allowed us to continue to sell rice through the PL480 Program to Zaire. I think he confessed to me that I won his respect at that point; he did not wish to take me on any further legislative battles. (Laughter) Because he was so surprised that he was ambushed by all these people. You know, where did all these votes come from? He thought he had it lined up. But I had put a coalition together. That probably was a little easier for me to do that as a Southern Democrat as a somewhat more moderate Southern Democrat; I got along well with Republicans. I was not regarded as some flaming liberal hostile to Republicans. I got along well and I didn't disagree with any based on Republican wanted to pat me on the back and say David, you're a good guy and we know that if you were from some other state beside Mississippi, you would be a Republican up

here instead of a Democrat. (Laughter) That's all right if they thought I was one of there's, that's fine. We have a strong tradition of that. We have conservative Democrats like Sonny Montgomery and Jim Eastland and John Stennis and Jamie Whitten too for that matter. In any event, I think I was well positioned to be able to maintain the kind of negotiating stance that was necessary to pull coalitions together. Some people have little prickly personalities, they have less compromising, they think God is on their side, whether it's left or right, their right and the other side is wrong. I never really went at it that way. I always assumed that while I wanted to defend my position, I always wanted to get a half a loaf or three quarters a loaf rather than no loaf. I knew I had to give some, I had to negotiate some and I think that's an understandable part of the legislative process and the democracy.

DR. BALLARD: I think we touched on this last time, but why do you think there has been such an evolution in the way things are getting done in the Congress now that we've talked about how Newt Gingrich seems to symbolize a change in attitudes and from collegiality to hostility. Could you see it coming when you were up there?

MR. BOWEN: I saw a little bit of it coming. One of the things that preserved the Collegiality was the fact that the Democrats were in the majority and they always expected to be there. So you can be very nice to the opposite party when you're in power. And it was probably not as comfortable for the Republicans and that may be why, one of the reasons that Trent ran for the

Senate. Thad ran for the Senate and Trent ran for the Senate. I know a number of friends up there who retired from Congress as Republicans because they just didn't want to play second fiddle all the time.

Democrats ran the committees and they were just always just asking for favors from Democrats. If you are in power, you are in the majority and you run the institution, you can afford to be very nice, and of course as Southern Democrats we have that understandable close cooperation. And Republican Presidents worked very hard at that too. Nixon, for example, Reagan worked pretty hard and of course Bush later, worked hard at trying to, Nixon most famously for building that coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats. I saw little traces of that in the last few years that I was there. When Newt Gingrich came on as a very fiery, aggressive, uncompromising sort of leader. Republicans that generally had fairly compromising moderate leaders who got along well with everybody, including the Democrats. Newt was a different kind of fish all together. It shocked people; it shocked a lot of members of his own party. I do remember indeed, Newt was not, of course, the minority leader, but I do remember when he started speaking up on the House floor and raising hell, and cussing royally, I do remember several of us even rather moderate to conservative Democrats sitting there watching Newt saying "wow! Just imagine what it would be like if a fellow like that had some influence around here." (Laughter) Well, Newt didn't have much influence; he was just a voice in the wilderness. He later did as we all know. I think

probably what brought this to a head and created more hostility between the two parties was the change of control. The fact that the Republicans got the majority in the House, of course this happened in the Senate too. The divisions are very close between the two parties. I think a certain number of Republicans felt that they had not been treated well by the Democrats and they wanted some revenge and they wanted to do it there way. And a certain number of Democrats were frustrated being out of power, and being in the minority after being in the majority. It's got to be frustrating to spend your whole life to be a committee chairman or a subcommittee chairman and all of a sudden it's snapped away from you and the other party has got it. And your supplicating the favors from the other party, you want a little more staff assigned to you or the opportunity to do something and you want a delegation to go somewhere and hold a hearing. You've got to get the committee chairman of the other party to approve it. All these things are, they may seem small, but they are fairly important to those involved. That's part of it. The closeness of the division, just as it is today, creates great hostility between parties. I think as a nation, and I think the statisticians, the political scientists who analyze voting practices in Congress would agree, we have moved a little more to extremes in the Congress. There are lots of Formal Liberal Republicans who have decided to become Democrats and a lot of Conservative Democrats who have become Republicans. The middle of the road is not quite as comfortable a place as it once was. We had the Boll Weevils,

which I belong to. Which Sonny Montgomery chaired at one time. Conservative Democrats and today they have what they call the Blue Dog Democrats. I don't think the Blue Dog Democrats today are quite the same sort of position as the Boll Weevils before. I think people have been pushed to the extremes of left and right. So the hostility is greater. You get a certain moral servitude on the part of people of the far left and the far right, that theirs is the path of righteousness and that God is on their side and that they have a holy mission to transform the nation into their own image. That creates a lot of friction. You don't just have that sort of friendly collegial cooperation that we had when I was there.

DR. BALLARD: You brought up Boll Weevils. That's always been a fascinating little period to me. Just like you say Sonny was a part of that, you were. Was that ever really kind of a formally organized group or was it more of a tag that was put on some people?

MR. BOWEN: No, it was actually organized. We had meetings and discussed issues and decided what position to take on issues.

DR. BALLARD: Were these strictly Southern Democrats?

MR. BOWEN: There were a few non-Southern Democrats that were conservative. Just as today there are some non-Southern Democrats who are in this so called Blue Dog group. There were some non-Southern Democrats who were as conservative as the Southern Democrats who met with us. But because most of the people were southerners, we called ourselves Boll Weevils.

DR. BALLARD: Was that a tag that you guys came up with or...a press thing?

MR. BOWEN: I don't know who came up with that title. The press could have called us that and we may have decided to stick with it. (Laughter) That was not our former name for some reason I cannot recall right now. But, in any event, the nickname that everybody would know is Boll Weevil. We would have meetings and discuss issues. I think at that time, we were still living in what we will call the Nixon era, even though he was not there for too much of it because of his impeachment, his resignation. I think he set the stage for that, he is the man that dramatized the conservative coalition idea. The fact that he felt that by building a working agreement between southern Democrats and Republicans they could establish a majority which would effectively pass legislation. We were not regarded as enemies by fellow Democrats, they needed our votes, we had a lot of clout a lot of seniority there. Without our votes, the Democrats wouldn't of had the majority. But the fact of the matter was we did vote for nontraditional Democratic issues, but that we just picked and chose some of those things that were important to us. For example, the military preparedness and strength was important, general fiscal conservatism was important to us. But we were not likely to be hostile to legislation favoring let's say raising the minimum wage or things that might give interest to organized labor. Certainly we were not likely to be hostile to things that favored was supported by our black constituents because all of us had black constituents in large numbers. So on certain of those human rights, civil rights issues we tended to stick with the party, but on a lot of the economic relations things, we tended to be a

little more conservative. We're probably a little more free trade oriented. That's the way in a lot of issues, you support your party on some things, you vote independently on something else, you may be one of the very few Democrats voting with the Republicans on something else. Discipline was never very tight. It is tighter now, but it was not very tight then. I had very little support from any body in the Democratic Party. I never got a dime from the Democratic Party when I was running for Congress. When I got through being elected in 1972, I had a number of interest groups around the country of people I had never heard of who called and volunteered to help or send contributions and I was happy to have it. I think I may have gotten, I think, in the general election, I may have gotten something like \$500.00 I don't recall from the Speaker's Campaign Funds. Carl Alberts had a Speaker's fund, Tip O'Neil had a Speaker's fund later. They would send money to Democratic nominees. Sometimes it was just token money to let you know they cared or they'll give you a little obligation to you when you got there. But I think probably just as I had mentioned earlier, the discipline within the Republican Party was a little stronger. Mississippi I think probably Republican discipline in the House was a bit stronger. The Democratic Party has always been such an amorphous collection across the board of left, right, center. It's always been hard to hold together. Often read the famous old saying that, I belong to no organized political party, I'm a democrat. That in itself probably reflected the character of the Democratic Party in the House and the Senate itself has always been a

more independent institution, individual Senators are freer to do what they want with out party discipline. Frequently I remember on votes I would be standing around and Tip O' Neil, for example, would come over, put his hand on my shoulder and say "David can you give us a vote?" I'd say "Mr. Speaker, or, Tip, I wish I could, but if I did, I wouldn't be around here next time, and you'd have a Republican in my place." (Laughter) "So I got to get re-elected, so I don't think I can help you this time." So you would find that sort of situation. They understood it. They very well understood, I'm speaking of the more liberal Democrats they fully understood that those from the south were more conservative and that the only way we could be elected was voting in more conservative manner on some issues.

DR. BALLARD: Seems like I do recall, I guess this may have happened after you left and decided not to run again, that the Democratic leadership did threaten some of the Boll Weevils with losing chairmanship if they didn't stay with the party a little better.

MR. BOWEN: That's right, there were some conservative, some Southern Democrats that did lose chairmanship but I don't think it was because of the membership of the Boll Weevil. But those threats were made, for example, Bob Poe one of my good friends who is chairman of the Ag. Committee was defeated for chairman of the Ag. Committee by the Democratic Caucus. But it was not because he happened to be from Texas. In fact, I don't think he was very much involved in the Boll Weevils at all. It's just because Bob had made enemies, he was very independent, very stubborn, he was part of

the old school approach that I'm the committee chairman and I run it the way I want. He didn't show any difference to the Democratic Majority of the House on any subjects whatsoever. Plus he had a personality that irritated people. I found him a very likable guy. But his approach, somebody described it to me one time, he would start off speaking down to the well of the House. In a very calm and mild manner in support of some farm bill or whatever he had to bring to the floor. But the longer he talked, the madder he got (Laughter) and the louder he got. They said he was the only man they knew who could get angry at the sound of his own voice. He would start screaming and hollering at people and he just had a personality that rubbed people the wrong way sometimes. He lost in the Caucus. The fact was that the man behind him who would become the new chairman and who did become the new chairman but a man who did not really work to defeat Bob Pole was Tom Foley. And of course Tom Foley from the state of Washington was very popular, he had a much more liberal voting record and got a long a whole lot better with the rest of the party in the House than Bob Pole did. So what Tom did is he had a more liberal voting record on a whole wide range of social issues but at the same time, he fought just as hard as Bob Pole to get the farm legislation passed. But he was able to bring more liberal Democrats to support it. Where as Bob Poe was just a hard core conservative on every issue that came along. You (?) told his voting record for the most conservative Republican in the House. So Tom Foley became chairman of the Ag. Committee, served as

my chairman for a couple terms, and then became Speaker of the House. So that process, there was always a little, you know you always had an understandable friction between two parties, but the American system as I used to explain to a lot of people over seas, since we don't have a Parliamentary system in which the members of the lower House who have the majority elect the Chief Executive, the Prime Minister. We have the, with separate President, we have the luxury of letting people vote the way they want on subjects, and they do. Vote all over the ballpark. My voting record as I recall was after looking at several organizations left and right, that evaluate voting records, I think I had about a 20% liberal voting record and about a 60% conservative voting record. So I guess you could say I was about three times as conservative as I was liberal in that sense. (Laughter) Jamie Whitten had a more liberal voting record than I did, because he was on the Appropriations Committee as Chairman and he had to pass all the spending bills. He couldn't vote against the cups that he was, the bills he was bringing in to the floor. Thad and Trent, I think Sonny Montgomery had a slightly more conservative voting records than I did. The public doesn't read those things. They don't know, they just care about specific issues. They care about what you did on something that nothing...

DR. BALLARD: It always kind of amazes me that Jamie Whitten went hand and glove usually with the party line. And still kept getting re-elected in one of the conservative parts of the Mississippi.

MR. BOWEN: Well, there again, that brings us back to the pragmatism of Mississippians. We know very well, we knew at that time and still do. We are a small state. Particularly when you have a Democratic Majority, they knew that Jamie Whitten, in order to continue to be chairman of the Appropriations Committee had to vote for a lot of legislation that he didn't like. That's not a bad position either because you can explain it that way. (Laughter) You can say "Hey, I didn't like that stuff either, but if you want me to stay your chairman, if you want me to be chairman of this committee or chairman of that subcommittee, you gotta give me the freedom to do that. Otherwise, I'll get bounced out in a minute. You know all those crazy people up there. Those wild-eyed liberals up there." (Laughter) "They'll throw me out in a minute if I didn't vote for this."

DR. BALLARD: I'm sure he used that already. (Laughter) I remember Sonny being threatened with the loss of his chairmanship, one time. I think it was directly because he had been involved with the Boll Weevils.

MR. BOWEN: Well, that and probably some specific issues that irritated them.

DR. BALLARD: Of course Sonny was kind of in a box too because he and George Bush were always so close.

MR. BOWEN: Right, they were very close personal friends. Sonny probably, well, it's not so much that you belong to an organization that's kind of a descending organization and a more conservative organization like the Boll Weevils. But that you vote on certain issues in ways that anger people. In other words, the caucus, the majority, the Democrats took the point of view that

if we are going to elect you to be a committee chairman, we have bestowed that honor and that power upon you. You didn't elect yourself, we did. You got yourself there by serving 20 or 30 years in Congress and you got to the position that seniority should be eligible to be a committee chairman but you can't name yourself a committee chairman, we do. It's the caucus that names the chairman and if you thumb your nose at the caucus and you vote against issues that we desperately care about in New York and Chicago and Los Angeles and Seattle, then we don't have to make you committee chairman. We can find somebody else just as easily.

(Laughter) So that threat was exercised frequently hardly ever realized. I mean, I'm trying to think of any other committee chairman that got bounced out. But it was not so much the fact that in theory you belonged to an organization, whatever you call it a Democratic Leadership Council, which may have been the title that was bestowed upon it or you had more liberal organizations. It's not in theory, but it's what you did on specific issues that people cared about. If you took an emotional subject, very powerful one, there are honest differences. I would have to admit to you that if in order, for example, for me to keep the voting face that I had, I had to probably make a few votes to the left to hold onto my black constituents support that I might not have done otherwise. I happen to believe, for example, that while the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was essential legislation at that time and very badly needed to ensure that blacks could vote. I do not happen to hold that view today, I do not believe that if you had none of

that legislation on the books you would still have no problem. I think you would have the black voters of this state and this nation have so established their powers, their influence, their right and duty to participate in the political process that nothing is going to change that. Every ten years that legislation comes up for renewal. I did vote for it in 1975 when it came up. I must admit I did resent the fact that we here in Mississippi and in all the states where there was legal segregation at one time, we're treated as colonial serfs by the imperial power in Washington and that everything we did in the voting process had to be subject to Justice Department review. If you wanted to move a polling, a ballot box ten feet down the hall in Ackerman, you couldn't do that without getting the Justice Department to approve it. I felt, and I still feel that we have outgrown some of the problems of the past. I also felt as one who would always champion the right for blacks to vote and to participate in the political process and have equal access and equal opportunity and equal rights with everybody else, I did not carry any burden of guilt and I thought what I wanted to do was to see reforms legislatively, and socially that would level the famous playing field that we talked about and would give African-Americans the same opportunity politically, to participate in this political process. But once we achieved that goal, I wanted to see equal treatment for everybody. I did not want individuals and I do not today want individual Americans to be discriminated against simply because they happen to be white, or black, or brown or yellow on grounds that that's necessary as some kind of

retribution and compensation for the sins of the past. I believe people should be treated the same regardless of the race today and I felt that before. I don't think it's fair to discriminate against certain states and the citizens of certain states of this union, simply because we had problems in the past. Yes, we discriminated, yes, we did things we were not awfully proud of, it's over. It's changed and I would like to see the Voting Rights Act off the statute books. But I did vote for it that time. That's one of those issues I didn't have any choice about. Now, one other issue in that same area that I didn't have to vote on and I'm glad I didn't have to vote on it, I was gone from Congress when that came along. But I would have had to vote for it (Laughter) if I'd have been there and that is the subject of a national holiday for Martin Luther King. I don't know, as I see it, they have one holiday for all the Presidents of the United States and one for Martin Luther King is not exactly the kind of balance in our national holiday structure that I think is appropriate. Hey, I knew Martin Luther King, I've met him and talked to him. He did a lot of good things. Whether he deserved a national holiday in his name and honor in relationship to the very limited number of national holidays we have for other Americans. But still, if I had to vote on it at the time I would have done it. Simply out of political survival. Because as I have said before, there are certain issues that if you want to hold onto a certain voting block, you have to do, you have to vote for him. And the fact that people in motion today, I fully understand that a lot of our African-American neighbors and friends and I

have plenty of black friends, that they probably take the view, that if we did not have the Voting Rights Act, that they would all be reduced to subjugation and that they would lose the right to vote and that they would have a new reconstruction, a new post reconstruction era in the south of a restoration of old style white dominance. I don't think that would happen remotely. The nation has changed too dramatically for that to happen. But I understand their point of view.

DR. BALLARD: Especially those that remember the days that they did have any rights.

MR. BOWEN: But I don't think, I think we need to grow out of that we need to try our best to mature and grow out of that. We can have a problem a social and political problem that we solved. Its just like fighting a war, Hey we fought a war with the Germans and Japanese but we learned how to get along with them the wars over, they were wrong, we think, we were right, we think, but we managed to get along with the Germans, the Japanese, and the Italians, even get along with the Vietnamese today. Alright we had differences domestically, we had slavery, its over, we had segregation, its over, lets learn to live together, lets treat each other fairly lets treat people as individuals and not as members of races or religions or groups.

DR. BALLARD: I had my own opinion on that and I have heard it expressed to others that the Martin Luther King thing, it would be better to have a day to honor all civil rights leaders like we honor all presidents and not single out one.

MR. BOWEN: You have got a lot of other minority groups in America who would like a day as well. You got a lot of Hispanics a lot of Native Americans, every

immigrant group in the country, you know a lot of people have been discriminated against in America history and admittedly the others were not slaves, but there has been a lot of discrimination you can also say this go back and say hey a large number of Americans came over as indentured servants, a lot of white people and that was very close to a slavery status, not quite the same but very close.

DR. BALLARD: A lot of the Indians were probably treated worse than slaves in some cases.

MR. BOWEN: The idea of taking the original owners of this continent and putting them in what amounts to as some would see it concentration camps, the Indian reservations, placing severe restrictions upon them, seizing all their properties, seizing their land their sacred places, their burial grounds their hunting grounds, seems to me they might deserve a special day to honor them, but that is not the way politics work, politics is a matter of who has got the most potent force organized. People used to ask me how it is that minority forces whether economic, religious, racial whatever they be, how do they get the power that they have as an opposing force in some case to the majority. And the answer is that in politics it is the loudest voice the most consistent voice who cares about the fewest issues that get things done...

(END OF SIDE TWO OF TAPE TWO)