

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION  
NUMBER  
273

Interview with  
Earle Cabell  
March 21, 1974  
April 3, 1974  
June 14, 1974  
October 2, 1974  
October 9, 1974  
October 16, 1974

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: Open

\*Approved: Elizabeth Halder Cabell  
(Signature)

Date: 3-23-76

\*Independent Executrix of the Last Will and  
Testament of Earle Cabell

COPYRIGHT © 1975 THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE  
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Coordinator of the Oral History Collection or the University Archivist, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas 76203.

Oral History Collection

Earle Cabell

Interviewer: Dale Odom

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: March 21, 1974

Dr. Odom: This is E. Dale Odom on March 21, 1974, interviewing former congressman Earle Cabell at his home in Dallas.

Mr. Cabell, I thought I'd ask you first to, for the record, tell us a little bit about your family-- your father and your grandfather.

Mr. Cabell: Well, my family originally--my grandfather and his ancestors--originated in Virginia. My grandfather went to West Point from Virginia and was stationed, prior to the war between the States, at Fort Smith, Arkansas, at old Fort Davis. He married there, and then when the war broke out and Lee said that he was going to . . . when Virginia seceded and Lee went to Virginia, my grandfather resigned his commission and went with the Confederate Army. My father was born prior to the war in Fort Smith--my father was--because my grandfather was living there and stationed there at the time. After my grandfather got out of prison--he had been captured in the latter months of the war--then he and . . . his family had already refugeed, and then

he joined them a few years after the war, and that was the start of my particular branch of the Cabell family in Texas. There were some other distant relatives whom I didn't know that had been down here prior to that.

Odom: Where did they settle originally? Do you know?

Cabell: Well, no. I think that there was one time in the vicinity of Austin.

Odom: I mean, where did your . . . did your grandfather come on to . . .

Cabell: My grandfather and his family came on to Dallas and settled.

Odom: That would have been right after the war?

Cabell: That's correct.

Odom: Okay.

Cabell: Then, of course, with his West Point education he was able to pass the bar examination at that time, and he also had an engineering degree. He practiced law and then had some contracts for building railroads.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: And then he went on to politics.

Odom: He was mayor of Dallas back in, what, the late '70's?

Cabell: In the '70's and then '80's, and . . . three times. He served two terms and then dropped out and then came back for another one. My father . . .

Odom: What was his profession?

Cabell: He was more of a penologist by practice rather than by academic learning.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: As a young man, oh, he did some prospecting in the gold country--Colorado, Nevada--and then served as a deputy United States marshal for the Indian territory for a period. My grandfather, at that time, was the U. S. marshal for the Northern District. Then he became sheriff of Dallas County in 1892. He served until 1900 and then was mayor from 1900 till 1904. He was quite interested in penology and for several years served as vice-president of the Texas State Fair. And he was then appointed as the chairman of the Board of Prison Commissioners at the first really big reorganization of the Texas prison system. That's where they were put under one governing body which was a board of commissioners of three men. My father was the chairman.

Odom: I see. And that would have been in the '20's?

Cabell: No, that was back in the teens.

Odom: It was in the teens. Okay, I didn't remember that. I suppose I've probably come across it before.

Cabell: But he was the one who abolished what they called the "bat". That was corporal punishment in the system. And also instituted the "trusty" system which had never before been used in the state penitentiary.

Odom: Well, then you were born in . . .

Cabell: I was born in 1906. At that time we were living on a farm which was way out then.

Odom: South of Dallas?

Cabell: But it's not outside of the city limits now.

Odom: Did you grow up, then, living on a farm, or had you moved to town?

Cabell: Until I was about . . . it was about 1919. I would have been thirteen years old then. We moved to California for my father's health. He had a couple of strokes. While out there he regained most of his health, but we lost our mother. We moved back here in 1921.

Odom: Only a couple of years you were gone then.

Cabell: My father and I lived together for a number of years until he joined my brother who was then in the Army and stationed at Fort Sam Houston.

Odom: In San Antonio?

Cabell: Then I went to work.

Odom: That must have been later on in the twenties, then.

Cabell: Yes, in 1926. In the latter part of 1926 I went to work for the old Texas Creamery Company in Houston.

Odom: You must have worked for them . . . was this a large corporation or a small corporation?

Cabell: It was a rather large operator for Texas. It was a part, really, of the old Mistletoe Creamery. The headquarters were in Fort Worth. They had plants in Fort Worth and . . . that was mostly butter in those days. In San Antonio they also had a milk and ice cream plant, a butter plant in Amarillo, and they acquired a milk plant in Amarillo.

Odom: What did you go to work doing?

Cabell: I went to work in the plant, in the butter plant in Houston, and then was later transferred to sales. I was with them . . .

Odom: Did you work out of Houston then?

Cabell: I was in Houston then, and they then sent me to New Orleans. From there I went to Atlanta and then to Macon, Georgia. I was setting up the branches . . . not branches but dealers. Then they brought me back to New Orleans, and then I resigned there. I later

went back . . . in the meantime then the Borden Company had bought that operation. I went back to work with them at their Amarillo milk plant.

Odom: Was there any particular reason why you got started in the dairy business? You just looked for a job and this was the job you found, or did you have some particular reason?

Cabell: My older brother was in the creamery machinery business. Just prior to going to work for Morning-Glory in Houston, I was down there managing a magazine crew--selling magazines from door to door.

Odom: Oh, yes.

Cabell: And he came to town and had the president of Morning-Glory Creameries and the sales manager as dinner guests. They invited me since I was in Houston at that time. We got to talking, and before long they had offered me a job. I had quit a job that had been paying in commissions anywhere from \$200 to \$300 a month, and I went to work for them for \$90 a month.

Odom: You moved up pretty rapidly then, though?

Cabell: Well, over a period of several years. When I left them the last time, I was superintendent of the small milk plant in Amarillo, and I bought and took over a very small plant in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in 1930.



Odom: Then you bought this one in Arkansas, then?

Cabell: Yes, got it out of my savings. And it was there that I met the young lady who later became Mrs. Earle Cabell.

Odom: I see. Is she from Pine Bluff?

Cabell: She was teaching at Pine Bluff at that time. She was born in Little Rock. I had the dubious honor--very dubious or however you want to say it--as the last person to make a deposit in the Merchant's and Planter's Bank of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. That wiped me out when that bank went out.

Odom: That would have been about 1932?

Cabell: That was 1932.

Odom: When all the bank failures began.

Cabell: February 23, 1932. So in the meantime, my older brother, Ben, who is deceased now, was working for a company that was about to go under themselves. They owed him some back expense money. We had this brother who was, at that time, in Panama in the Air Corps. He was a West Point graduate. So we scraped up \$3,000 and started the Double Dip Ice Cream business here in Dallas. The middle brother who stayed in the service for his entire life and career never was active with us, but he did help us financially. Where a young first lieutenant in the Army in those days

had \$1,000, I don't know, except, of course, he wasn't married then so his expenses weren't as much.

Odom: And you started, what, you say the Double Dip . . .

Cabell: Well, it was under our name--Cabell's--but the only product that we had for sale was ice cream, and it was sold in two great big dips in a cone for a nickel.

Odom: This would have been when?

Cabell: Right in the middle of the depression--1932.

Odom: You started right in the middle of the depression. About how much do you think it cost you to get in capital?

Cabell: Well, we only had a total of less than \$3,000.

Odom: You were buying milk and making your own ice cream and retailing it yourself?

Cabell: That's right.

Odom: How many outlets . . . did you just have one outlet?

Cabell: Well, we started with two--one in the front end of the building we'd leased and where we were constructing our plant, and one over in Oak Cliff. In those days you gave curb service. We didn't have our own plant ready, but we made an arrangement with the Garland Creamery. When their shifts were off--when they were shut down--I went out there at night and made and froze our ice cream at night. Then after it had hardened, it was transferred

to Merchant's Cold Storage, and we delivered it to our stores from there. That arrangement prevailed until, oh, I guess about June before we got our own plant in operation because as we'd get a few bucks ahead I'd buy another length of pipe or another piece of equipment. I'd install that pipe and run the piping during the daytime and then make ice cream at night.

Odom: Let's back up a little bit. I didn't ask you anything about your education and your schooling.

Cabell: Well, I graduated from North Dallas High School in 1925, and then I went one term each to Texas A & M and S.M.U.

Odom: What did you think you were going to be when you were going there, an engineering major?

Cabell: No, I thought I was going to be a lawyer.

Odom: Do you regret not having pursued this career?

Cabell: No, no. Oh, certainly I thought about it, but I've had a pretty good life.

Odom: Okay, well, I just forgot to pick that up.

Cabell: I'm not one to look back on life.

Odom: So this was in '32 then. When did you start to branch out from selling ice cream?

Cabell: We added in about '34 . . . we acquired a farm out on Northwest Highway and built up a Guernsey herd. Then

we were the first in Dallas, and the only ones for a long time, to have the Golden Guernsey milk. That was only sold through our stores. Later, in 1941, we put in the first paper bottle machine in Texas.

Odom: First paper bottle machine.

Cabell: That's when we branched out into wholesale as well as retail from our own stores.

Odom: So you were actually producing milk, then, starting in 1934.

Cabell: Yes, it was in limited quantities. It was only for bottled milk. It wasn't enough for any manufacturing process.

Odom: Then were you buying milk elsewhere at that time for manufacturing purposes?

Cabell: By that time we were operating as other milk plants were buying from Grade A farmers and processing and distributing the milk.

Odom: How big an area was Grade A milk coming into Dallas from at that time?

Cabell: Well, at that time there was a lot of milk coming in from Sulphur Springs, a little from Collin County, which we built up materially because we put in a by-products plant up there in 1940 primarily as a source of ungraded

milk for cream and butter and cheese-making. Then we ultimately converted all of that to Grade A milk and discontinued the ungraded manufacturing-type and converted that plant, then, to our ice cream plant. That plant still is the one that furnishes all the ice cream for the Cabell outlets and a large number of the Southland units.

Odom: This is in McKinney.

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: Was the dairy business reasonably profitable here in the depths of the depression?

Cabell: Well, it made a living. And then there was the fact that commodity prices were extremely high. The fact that we were selling it at a low price . . . at a low margin . . . we very quickly built a very nice volume, and a profitable volume, almost from the first several months. However, I'll never forget that about the second or third Sunday that we were open with just those two outlets we ran an ad that we'd give free ice cream cones. We wanted to popularize it. I'll be doggone if we gave away more than a hundred of them, and then we really were discouraged if we couldn't even give it away (chuckle). But that changed quite rapidly, and

inside of not too many weeks' time on nights, and particularly on weekends, the Police Department had to put traffic officers out there to handle the traffic.

Odom: Then you did open some more stores as time went on?

Cabell: The stores that handle food lines came later. Our first stores were just ice cream. Then we added fountains to where they . . .

Odom: Soda fountains.

Cabell: Soda fountains. Then we put in a bakery for cake items and sweet rolls and that sort of thing. Then it wasn't until 1940 or '41 that we put in the first store that was the drive-in food store. As a matter of fact, that was the first store of its kind in the United States that was designed and built from the ground up as that type of drive-in convenience food store. Now prior to that time, the only ones that were operating were the ice stations, and with the decline in the use of ice, the ice people began to put in little grocery items. But they still had the docks, and you walked up on the dock, or you stood there, and they'd hand stuff to you.

Odom: That design is somewhat along the same order as today's?

Cabell: Yes, and carried a much more complete line of groceries than the others did. Now, of course, a standard fixture all over the United States is the convenience food store.

Odom: Do you think that operating the Guernsey herd and producing milk yourself paid off?

Cabell: Yes, it did. We had a show place out there and advertised it rather extensively and invited people out there. We'd give them all the buttermilk they could drink. We had that arranged.

Odom: Sort of as a goodwill gesture.

Cabell: Yes. Oh, yes, it was a goodwill advertising adjunct. It was a very high grade of milk.

Odom: How long did you keep operating that dairy?

Cabell: Oh, we operated that up until 1952.

Odom: '52? Did you sell out to Bluff View, or were they in business then? I don't remember.

Cabell: No, no. By that time . . . they were in business then. But at the time my brother--older brother--retired from the business, he was deeded the farm and the herd, which he disposed of. It didn't fit our operations by that time.

Odom: But in the beginning you thought it was worthwhile for advertising.

Cabell: Yes, we felt that it was. We used to have hundreds of school kids out there every weekend. They'd come out in classes, and we'd always give them refreshments.

Odom: Back in the late '30's and early '50's, Mr. Cabell, what was your main job with the business? What sort of division of labor did you have here?

Cabell: Well, I was in charge of production, initially--of all manufacturing production. My brother was the general manager and handled the sales and merchandising and store operations. Then, of course, as we got bigger and larger, our personnel increased and the organization grew. I still supervised the production and handled all the wholesale sales because in 1936 we started a wholesale ice cream program out in the surrounding area. Prior to that time, we had never sold wholesale. I started a program of putting in exclusive dealers in all the towns in North and East Texas.

Odom: Exclusive dealers? In other words, you had one in each place under contract to Cabell's?

Cabell: Well, and at the same time I would sell to no other outlet in that town.

Odom: I see, yes.

Cabell: Remember that that was before the days of pre-packaged ice cream. Generally, the drugstore was the only place that you could get it . . . that you could get ice cream. Later, of course, supermarkets and other stores began to



take it on. We built very nice volume that way. I had in every one of the towns in North and East Texas the leading drugstore that was handling our ice cream.

Then, of course, my brother retired in 1952. I was general manager, then, of the entire operation.

Odom: Well, when you would put in these outlets in the towns in North and East Texas, would you generally go in and there would be a drugstore in operation?

Cabell: Oh, yes.

Odom: You would furnish the ice cream then . . . Cabell ice cream? When did you start wholesaling other manufactured products?

Cabell: Well, it was in either 1940 or '41 when we put in the paper bottling machine that gave us the opportunity to get into the wholesale milk business.

Odom: How was that handled at that time then--the wholesale milk?

Cabell: Well, by that time all of us were handling it to some extent. My brother initially handled the wholesale because I was still handling the outside sales of ice cream and production for the Dallas plant.

Odom: But it generally just went through the supermarkets and the sales of all the other . . .

- Cabell: Yes, and, of course, through our own stores.
- Odom: And through your own stores, of course, yes.
- Cabell: And other independent drive-in stores.
- Odom: Did you have contracts with producers by that time or with several independent milk producers?
- Cabell: Well, we . . . yes, yes, we bought regularly from them, and then, of course, as the North Texas Milk Producers Association grew and had them under contract, then we dealt through them for our supplies.
- Odom: And the North Texas Producers Association, I guess, began forming after the war. This was after the war.
- Cabell: Well, they were in existence before the war.
- Odom: There was a Producers Association then, but it hadn't gotten very strong at that time.
- Cabell: No, it gained its greatest momentum after the war.
- Odom: How did the war itself affect business from the standpoint of being able to grow and make a profit?
- Cabell: Well, we did alright. We grew. Our volume grew. Our profits were good. Of course, there was an excess profits tax at that time, so it didn't do you a whole lot of good to make too much money, but it did . . . well, let's face it. It helped the economy of this area materially.
- Odom: There was a growing demand for your product.

Cabell: Yes, and so we were able to increase our capacity materially. We were fortunate in having the contract on all milk and ice cream with the North American Aviation Plant, where they were working 35,000 to 40,000 men.

Then the milk distributors--the processors of Dallas--through an agreement with the Attorney General of the United States and of Texas formed a corporation called Victory Dairies that did nothing but furnish military installations because no one individual could handle it. Earlier, as they were first beginning to build up in 1939 and '40, we'd bid on the individual one. But then as the tremendous concentration of training camps hit this part of the country in what was officially known as the 8th Service Command, then it was just impossible for any one or two. It had to be a composite effort. So we negotiated. I was one of the founders of that and was the executive vice-president of that operation.

Odom: Well, was it a super kind of thing, where all the handlers pooled the milk?

Cabell: Well, here's the way it worked.

Odom: How'd it work?

Cabell: We made the contracts--negotiated them--with the Service Command. Our agreement with them was that we would furnish them the same quality that we furnished our civilian population customers. Furthermore, that if for any reason we had to . . . ration's not the word, but if we had to cut something, that it would be done in direct proportion, that is, if we ran into a shortage, drought, anything which . . . those things occur. But that if we were 10 per cent short of the whole demand, that it would be equally borne by the civilian and the military. So then the requirement would be allocated equally among the participating plants which were practically all of them. There were one or two very small plants that couldn't . . .

Odom: In Dallas and Fort Worth?

Cabell: In Dallas. This was strictly Dallas.

Odom: Dallas. What happened to the rest of the dairy companies in the rest of the state then? Were they in on it at all, or . . .

Cabell: They were supplying some. Now like San Antonio took care of its own. Fort Worth took care of their own. But they didn't have the capacity to do a great deal.

Odom: Right, I see.

Cabell: So out of Dallas here . . . and we were bringing in I don't know how many thousands of gallons a day out of Minnesota.

Odom: Oh, you were bringing the milk down here then?

Cabell: Yes, but we handled . . .

Odom: For manufacturing purposes or for bottling or . . .

Cabell: No, just bottles. This was all fluid milk. But . . . like we handled Alexandria, Louisiana--that was Camp Livingston--Camp Polk, Maxey at Paris.

Odom: Houze?

Cabell: Camp Houze at Gainesville. Part of the time Wolters at Mineral Wells, and Hood. We even had to supply the Naval Air Station at Corpus Christi.

Odom: Probably the Houston producers got to handle the military installations around there.

Cabell: No, they were able to handle that down there. Tyler, we handled. Fort Hood. So we made the only record--such record as was made in the United States--that not a single serviceman missed his allotted ration of milk in the 8th Service Command from the time we contracted until the end.

Odom: What kind of arrangements did you have among yourselves now here about . . . you said it was actually a corporation, a dairy corporation.

Cabell: Yes, Victory Dairy Corporation. It had its general manager. It did not own any trucks, but it leased trucks or paid other operators.

Odom: Independent operators . . .

Cabell: . . . independent operators so much per mile to handle it.

Odom: Individual dairies sold to Victory Dairy Corporation, and they sold to the Army.

Cabell: Yes, the Army paid Victory Dairies, and then Victory Dairy paid them. Then, of course, the cost of operating Victory Dairies was allocated on a pro-rata basis.

Odom: Pro-rated among all the various members.

Cabell: Yes. Now, you see, there were one or two plants here that couldn't handle what would be the even pro-rata, so they just handled . . . they had a limitation. Victory Dairies men would order from them from day to day what their maximum was and the pro-rate among the others. It was a very good operation, and it certainly served its purpose.

Odom: Do you know whether this happened anywhere else in the country or not, or whether this was a characteristic thing?

Cabell: I think that after it became known what we were doing, that in some areas that was done.

Odom: When was this formed? Do you recall?

Cabell: It was formed during the very early part of the war.

Odom: Early '42 probably?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: And it stayed in existence until the end of the war.

Cabell: Until there was no longer a necessity for it.

Odom: I see. The profits then that were made were pro-rated back to the individual dairies or . . . there wouldn't be any profit there. All they're doing there is just charging the cost . . . I see.

Cabell: Well, Victory Dairies made no profit.

Odom: When did you start bringing fluid milk in from Minnesota and from the Midwest?

Cabell: All the time these camps were building up.

Odom: There hadn't been any being brought in in the '30's?

Cabell: No.

Odom: Was it possible to bring it in then?

Cabell: Yes, yes, there was ample supplies up there, but there was no necessity there because there was enough milk in this part of the country.

Odom: Probably the transportation costs would have . . .

Cabell: Oh, there might be certain periods in the winter when we would have to bring in small quantities, but not to any major extent. However, you see, this area grew very

rapidly. So it outgrew, for a long period, the ability of local producers to meet the demand. Therefore, a great deal of milk . . . then there was this very severe drought, if you will recall, in the mid-fifties. That was also during the period of the Korean problem. But our milk supplies . . . if we hadn't been able to bring in milk from the Midwest, we would have been in dire need.

Odom: Were there any great changes brought in the operations for the processors and handlers of milk by the adoption of the federal order market administrator?

Cabell: Well, you see, this area, Dallas . . . it had a stabilizing effect. It had a stabilizing effect. Of course, the processors were scared of it because it looked like they would be helpless to combat any trade situation. But it had its merits at the same time because in the case, for instance, of the drought and a shortage, then the farmers would have been violating their contract with the government had they arbitrarily raised their prices.

Odom: In other words, there was some protection for the handlers.

Cabell: But at the same time it gave them protection against bringing in outside milk with which to fight them.

Odom: This is one of the things they complained about most, wasn't it, at the time in the '40's, particularly? The Producers Association was getting started.



- Cabell: But you can see how sometimes bigness begets bad practice because when AMPI got as big as they did they just went crazy.
- Odom: I've got a paper that I've written on the organization of the multi-market Milk Producers Cooperatives and the problems that they got into.
- Cabell: Now, you know, monopoly on one side of the fence is just as bad as monopoly on the other.
- Odom: Well, there wasn't really anything like a monopoly as far as the milk processors were concerned here in the '40's in North Texas.
- Cabell: That's right. Oh, sure, sure!
- Odom: Did you have much trouble along this line as far as keeping producer suppliers?
- Cabell: Not too much because actually there was an adequate supply.
- Odom: Until the '40's.
- Cabell: Fairly well, yes. Now we could have had some trouble had we just gone in and tried to take producers away from other towns. So we did a terrific amount of developing Grade A supplies on our own.
- Odom: How would you do that?
- Cabell: Well, by going out and working with them and helping them get financing to bring their barns up to Grade A standards.

You see, once that was done that made a great deal of difference to the income of the dairyman--getting graded milk versus ungraded at a manufacturing price. Now we built a lot of production in the McKinney area and used our by-products plant there as a receiving station. We also developed a great deal of Grade A milk up there in the Justin area. It was prior to that time that I only had an ungraded market on cream.

Odom: Did you kind of help them get a barn? You mean you would more or less what you would say to the banks, the lending agencies, that they could have a market for their milk. Is that it? That's all you would do.

Cabell: Well, then on equipment we would sell cooling boxes.

Odom: Oh, I see. You sold those.

Cabell: We sold these. Well, we'd have them do business with the bank. They had an agreement with the bank plus we just felt . . . and I think it was good business to try to keep at an arm's length. In other words, a man who owes the bank would be more apt to keep that credit in good shape than he would with us that we're depending on him somewhat for supply.

Odom: What would happen so far as the seasonal change, you know, where you've got smaller amount of production in the wintertime and, of course, flush production in the

spring when the ice is going. What sort of problems did this pose for you during the thirties and into the forties?

Cabell: Well, we would have to pay a surplus price for that which was over and above our Grade A requirement.

Odom: For bottling?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: Then what were . . . when you got this . . . of course, you had manufacturing going on all along. In other words, ice cream. What else? Were you manufacturing anything else?

Cabell: Roller powder and condensed skim milk for ice cream making and feed--chicken feed, poultry feed.

Odom: You'd just have to keep this surplus then in the manufacturing process.

Cabell: That's right.

Odom: Did you in any way get involved in the fight against the Producer's Association in the later forties there or not?

Cabell: Oh, we testified against it.

Odom: In the hearings that were held on it? But Metzgers' was the main one that fought the association so long?

Cabell: Well, they were wrong in what they were doing. I mean, in other words, they were flexing their muscles at the

time that they demanded that all this milk be brought in by their haulers.

Odom: Give me the background on this a little bit.

Cabell: Well, you see, the milk was brought in generally and almost universally by independent haulers who owned their own trucks. They were an entity unto themselves. You subtracted the hauling cost which was about 25¢ a hundred--something like that. You deducted that from the farmer's check, and you paid that to the hauler. Well, the Producers Association demanded that these trucks . . . they would be owned by the driver but leased by the association. So there was no third party people insofar as the cost of hauling and the like. The truck would be directed by them, and the driver was paid so much a hundred pounds, but that was a tie-up. Then that put it all through there, and that way, you see, it gave them complete control as to where the milk went.

Odom: They were paying the milk hauler?

Cabell: That's right.

Odom: Okay.

Cabell: If the hauler . . . prior to that time his obligation was to the plant to whom he delivered.

Odom: Right.

Cabell: He was somewhat of an entrepreneur himself. He would help build production and help keep production because he was competitive with other haulers. So he was really an entrepreneur.

Odom: Now where did Metzger start . . .

Cabell: Metzger refused to sign that because then that threw his haulers out of business.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: And also it reduced the competitive situation. But they were right. They were the only ones that had the money. I tried to hold out and I couldn't. I didn't have the cash reserve.

Odom: Against moving the trucks over to the association?

Cabell: That's how they won that lawsuit because it was a monopoly; it was a violation.

Odom: What they won the lawsuit on was through the refusal to sell milk to Metzgers, wasn't it?

Cabell: Well, yes, but it was because of the hauling . . . I don't remember all the ramifications. It's been so long.

Odom: I don't remember all of the details.

Cabell: But in substance it had to be that they could divert the milk at any time from the hauler or to the hauler and from the plant.

Odom: Well, when was . . . let's see, about when did this become a factor? About '53 or '54?

Cabell: In the mid-fifties, in there somewhere.

Odom: That they began to move to this setup. I know that I hauled milk in the Borden plant for my Dad's dairies in 1953 and '54--all through those years. It was costing us 40¢ a hundred at that time.

Cabell: Approximately.

Odom: It was 40¢ a hundred at that time from up there, and I hauled about a hundred cans a day. I was saying that there was quite a bit of bitterness between the producers and the distributors back in the early '50's as the Producers Association began to gain strength and the federal order market came in, but there doesn't seem to be much of that left. What sort of benefit, if any, do you see for a distributor like your size business was in having a producers association that does this kind of marketing service? Like AMPI does now, or NTPA was doing on a smaller scale even before it merged with the AMPI?

Cabell: Oh, I've been away from active participation in the business long enough that, really, I can't bring it up to date. I couldn't relate that too much as of today.

Odom: What about in the 1950's? You mentioned a few things awhile ago. Did the . . . anything else that . . .

Cabell: Oh, I think like a lot of other things that perspective has changed. I think that dairymen felt antagonistic toward the distributor because he felt that he was being cheated, and sometimes he was. By the same token, the distributor felt that he was very vulnerable because any time that they withheld his milk or it went to somebody else's plant . . . and the smaller one always felt that the big distributor--the big processor--could buy them off. I think in most cases the fears of both parties were not realistic. But in the heat of an argument of that kind they become magnified. Maybe it's just because I'm getting older that I'm talking like that (chuckle).

Odom: It may be. You say they were . . . are you saying sometimes you think they were cheated? What does this mean? Do you have a general reaction to it?

Cabell: Oh, I . . . no. Without naming any names I do know of some instances that . . . in the very early days that the operators of some plants underpaid on the fat basis.

Odom: They didn't test it correctly or . . . they all complained about this. I'm sure that they complained more often than there was occasion to.

Cabell: Long before the association had the order, we told them that they could come in and sit and watch them, come into

our labs. They fired two or three testers because they thought we'd bought them off (chuckle). That's how suspicious they were.

Odom: How rapidly did the technology of production, that is, ice cream making and the other manufactured products you sold, how rapidly did the technology change in that over the three decades you were in the business? Were there vast changes?

Cabell: Oh, the major changes were in the improvement made in the equipment used. There wasn't too much change in the type of raw materials because they were basic and where they were produced under proper conditions, proper sanitary conditions, then you had a finished product that was good. So I would say that as far as I can tell, the major changes were in improvements made in the processing equipment.

Odom: Now how expensive were those?

Cabell: Very expensive. Very expensive. And they not only produce a better finished product, but made it possible for the high volume of some of the plants. You take, for instance, in pasteurization. At the time I first got into the business, it was all done in individual vats anywhere from--depending on the size of the plant--from 100 gallons up to 1,000-gallon batches. There is



the problem of heating that and holding and then cooling, whereas today you've got your short-time continuous operation.

Odom: That runs it through continuously . . .

Cabell: Thousands upon thousands of gallons per hour depending on the size they have. It is just a continuous process which means less equipment--more expensive but fewer pieces of equipment--and it made better products. There was better control because then the temperatures, and the holding periods are all electronically controlled. It takes a lot of the human error out of it.

Odom: How much did it cut down on the manpower needed?

Cabell: Materially.

Odom: When did the homogenization process . . . when was it adopted on a wide scale?

Cabell: Well, it became . . .

Odom: During the 1940's?

Cabell: In the 1940's.

Odom: Did it mean additional costs for equipment? I don't know much about the process.

Cabell: Well, I'll tell you the . . .

Odom: How is it carried out? I've never seen it done that I recall.

Cabell: To make it over-simplified, it's got the pump that forces the milk through a small orifice at high pressure which makes an emulsion of the milk instead of just a mixture. It breaks up fat globules so fine that they don't get back together. At about, oh, 2,500 to 3,000 pounds per square inch of pressure that it goes through that . . .

Odom: What sort of costs are you talking about to begin homogenization in, say, an ordinary-sized plant?

Cabell: I would hesitate to say. I haven't kept up.

Odom: What about that time that it began? It doesn't have to be exactly, just approximately.

Cabell: Well, it was rather costly. I would say that a 1,000-gallon-an-hour homogenization would have cost back in the forties \$3,500 or \$4,000. Then, you see, it also . . . that takes a pretty heavy motor. Then you've got to have the wiring to carry that additional load.

Odom: It may mean a lot more expense, in other words, than \$3,000 or \$4,000 to increase production.

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: At what point did most of the dairies begin using some kind of preservative in their milk to, you know, keep it from spoiling as quickly as it does naturally?

Cabell: Well, that has been a misconception. During the period that I was active in it, they used no preservative. Now there are certain products today where it is permitted to use a very tiny amount. Half and half, I've noticed, does have some which gives it a longer life.

Odom: It goes a lot longer without spoiling than it did twenty years ago.

Cabell: Because of two reasons. In the first place it is produced at the farm cleaner. You've got the same type of mechanical technology that has been developed on the farm comparably to what has happened in the plants. You've got closed systems today in your milking parlors and your milking barn to where that milk is never exposed to the air from the time that teat cup goes on the teat until it's in the tank. That goes right through those stainless steel lines into the cooling tank, through stainless lines into the delivery tank, to the plant. So you do not have the contamination. You don't have the contamination either at a farm that would be in the air, nor a contamination from farm matter that would have bacteriological content. So there's number one. Number two, then, are your processes within the plant where they are controlled so much better.

Odom: The pasteurizing then can have something to do with that, I suppose.

Cabell: Pasteurizing does. Now pasteurizing kills all pathogenic bacteria and kills a large amount of your lactic acid bacilli. Not all of them, but it does kill all known pathogens, so the elements that would cause souring either were never permitted to get in there or were killed.

Odom: I know. It does seem to me though that milk today, for the last few years, for the last fifteen years or more, does not taste the same as the milk twenty-five years ago.

Cabell: What do you eat today that tastes as good as it did when you were a kid?

Odom: I suppose you're right. It doesn't have the milk taste that it once did. It tastes kind of bland.

Cabell: Well, for that reason . . .

Odom: Some people like it better . . .

Cabell: Well, you don't find as many Jersey or Guernsey cows in herds today as you used to. They're the Holsteins with a lower fat content and a lower solids content. So you don't have the elements that give you the body and the flavor. But the main thing of it is just your taste changes, that pipe will have a lot to do . . . you know.

Odom: Yes. Did you ever . . . have you ever . . . was Cabell Dairy ever in the cheese-making business?

Cabell: We made cheese only where the amount of milk coming in was more than we needed. Then we'd make fifty-pound cheddars that we would sell to Kraft.

Odom: Why is it that you didn't go into that business? Is it that you couldn't make any money in it or . . .

Cabell: No, we couldn't make money in it.

Odom: No money. Is it the process that costs? The cost of labor in the process or the price you could get for it?

Cabell: You're having to compete with larger plants that are more mechanized. They even were then, where they have their own market. Now every Tom, Dick, and Harry can't go out and sell his own brand of cheese. He has to sell to a processor.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: And he's not selling a finished product. Now we were lucky on one thing. We had this cheese-making equipment, and during the war when you had your . . . I think they took green stamps for fats. Anyhow, butter and cheese took a certain type of ration stamp. We had it in several of our stores, and downtown we had three sandwich shops. Pimento cheese was always a good item, and

we couldn't have gotten any cheese if we hadn't made our own cheddars up there and aged them. Then we had an ample supply. But that, generally speaking, is the only time we made cheese. Now cottage cheese, that's something else. But yellow cheese, cheddar cheese . . .

Odom: Cottage cheese--you came out with a certain amount of that when you process by-products.

Cabell: Well, that's made from skim milk. Well, it's a number one product for your fluid milk plant. But that's not generally considered as your . . . like your hard cheese.

Odom: Well, what part of the milk operation, then, was the best from the standpoint of profit-making? Was it the fluid milk aspect?

Cabell: Ice cream. Ice cream carries your better margin of profit.

Odom: Ice cream? Better margin of profit. There's a limit, I suppose, to how much you can sell there.

Cabell: But it's good to work them together. Particularly, we always retailed a rather substantial amount of our total production. Now in the last ten years I'd say it was about fifty-fifty.

Odom: Fifty-fifty retail and wholesale. Did you have home delivery?

Cabell: On a small scale. That never was a very big item with us.

Odom: When did you start that? In the 1940's?

Cabell: Oh, it would have been closer to the 1950's--late 1940's or 1950's, yes.

Odom: What was the problem there?

Cabell: The problem was manpower.

Odom: Labor problem, right?

Cabell: Getting people that would hustle--that could sell, that'll knock on doors--and collection.

Odom: And collection. Well, a number of them though, the dairies, got into that pretty big, didn't they?

Cabell: Oh, years ago that was the main part of the dairy industry.

Odom: Was there something about the way in which you moved into it that caused you, perhaps, not to get into home delivery until that late or . . .

Cabell: Oh, yes, we just didn't have the . . .

Odom: You just moved into . . . started out as an ice cream producer primarily, and it was just sort of gradual.

Cabell: And, you see, this thing of building retail milk routes is a long, drawn-out process.

Odom: I solicited to help build one back in the mid-1950's in Irving for Joe Brooks up there in Denton. I worked for them one summer.

Cabell: They're nice. I really got along well with the Brooks boys. Now if we built any substantial profitable volume

in the milk field, we had to either do it by taking it away from the big operators in Dallas that were very jealous of that volume, or it could cause a price war, or expand our area of operation. We chose the latter, that is, to go outside. That was a more susceptible market because the larger Dallas firms had not gone out into those areas. Even the branch plants of your national operators had not kept up the quality that you would expect from a national operator. Eight out of ten of the smaller towns didn't even have paper bottles and had very poor quality. So they were sitting ducks.

Under the law of the standard milk ordinance and which most of your cities and Dallas have long since adopted, and the state had adopted as its official labeling agency, you couldn't lawfully stop a man from Dallas selling milk in Greenville if it met the requirements. But when we started expanding milk operations, the first one was in Greenville. We were arrested. We got out an injunction against their interfering with us because of restraint of trade. We won it in the district court. Greenville appealed.

Odom: Is this the city doing this?



Cabell: Yes! The city of Greenville. You see, they had a little plant in there, maybe two . . .

Odom: They didn't want you competing with the home folks.

Cabell: No, that was the whole thing. Then we won it in district court. They carried us to appellate court, Court of Civil Appeals. We won that and then they carried us to the state Supreme Court. We won that. So that set the law.

Odom: As long as you met their standards they couldn't keep you out.

Cabell: And their standards were . . . right. So we had to go through . . . now we didn't have to . . . we had to go to district court in Jacksonville, Tyler, Palestine, Henderson, Denton, and God, the milk sold like hotcakes because these court cases gave us publicity. And then the products were so far superior. And as far as in Greenville, I bought that fellow's equipment and turned him into an independent distributor for me.

Odom: How long was it before somebody from Dallas was competing?

Cabell: Well, later on, they all were.

Odom: They all did shortly, didn't they?

Cabell: Yes, but we had the jump on them. We did fine. As a matter of fact, I wound up buying a plant in Longview

which I shut down the plant and just made it a distribution point because it was so damn dirty. Then I bought one in Tyler and shut it down so we could rebuild it. But frankly, their quality was so damn rotten they had no business . . . it didn't hurt my conscience a damn bit. No, that wasn't true with Brooks'. They were good, nice operators.

Odom: Yes, they were. I liked their milk. I was going to ask you. How were you affected? Did the milk wars we had here in the fifties . . . they came before you actually left the business, didn't they, some?

Cabell: Well, I don't remember.

Odom: With the gallon bottles and the . . .

Cabell: Well, of course, we were the ones that introduced the gallon bottles.

Odom: You introduced the gallon bottles, but . . .

Cabell: Yes, but that was back in the late thirties and early and late forties.

Odom: When you introduced the gallon bottles?

Cabell: That was before we were in wholesale.

Odom: Before you were in wholesale?

Cabell: Yes, the first gallon bottle.

Odom: Were you selling gallon bottles then?

Cabell: Yes, in our own stores. Then we phased them out during the war because that was that big three-inch or two and a quarter . . .

Odom: Top?

Cabell: Yes. I mean, no way in the world to get a cover cap on then, so we were glad to phase them out. Then when this boy, Young, started in . . . they didn't call it Young.

Odom: Jere's Dairy?

Cabell: Jere's Dairy. That was in the fifties.

Odom: It was in the fifties.

Cabell: That was in the fifties. He came in with those jugs then, and then we came back with them.

Odom: Well, most of the rest of them, I guess, came in with them then.

Cabell: Nonetheless, I had offered to furnish them. They didn't want to install the additional equipment.

Odom: Offered to furnish them?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: To whom?

Cabell: To the others if they didn't want to put in the equipment. In other words, I'd bottle them for them.

Odom: I see what you mean, yes. To meet the competition of the gallon jugs. Could you meet . . . dairies here, could they meet his prices, then, of bottled milk?

Cabell: It was at a loss or very narrow margin.

Odom: Well, where was he getting his milk then?

Cabell: Right here. He got it, you see, from NTPA.

Odom: Directly.

Cabell: And then, you see, here's another thing . . .

Odom: Well, where was he getting it then? From what point?  
I mean, he was just buying milk and bottling it?

Cabell: Yes. Well, he had this little Jerkwater place there  
in Arlington that . . . it would have been alright if  
he had only been selling a few hundred jugs a day. But  
as his sales got up, he couldn't handle them. This  
NTPA group made some colossal errors. This error they  
made, well, by golly, they made a deal with him to set  
him up in the processing business in the Muenster plant.

Odom: Oh, really?

Cabell: Yes! They'd buy his milk. Somebody called all of the  
distributors and says, "Well, now look. We'll just do  
something about breaking some of these orders if you're  
going to get into that kind of business." And then  
they . . .

Odom: Backed out on it?

Cabell: Backed out on it. He sued them. I think he got a little  
money out of it.

Odom: Yes, that's what the suit was about. I never did understand . . . I didn't recall what that was about. I knew that they did get involved with Jere's Dairy over something. I didn't realize that that was the case. I should know more about the North Texas Producers Association than I do. But I only researched the thing up to about '54, I guess. I didn't follow up after that too much. Then, let's see, when was it that you sold out to Southland Corporation? 1959?

Cabell: 1959.

Odom: What sort of . . . did you sell lock-stock-and-barrel? Everything?

Cabell: That's right, every share of stock in the corporation. We had about 25 per cent that was out in the general public's hands. They gave a good price. They paid . . . the only public stock we hadn't sold. In 1936 we sold about 4,000 shares at \$10 a share. From 1936 until 1959 that drew 80¢ per share dividend, \_\_\_\_\_, on that \$10 stock, and when they sold it they got \$180 for it.

Odom: \$180 for 4,000 shares? Well, then you and your brother then had . . .

Cabell: No, well . . .

Odom: . . . the rest of it?

Cabell: No, it had moved around. The brothers, the three of us, had most of that difference. We're talking about nearly 75 per cent. But in 1952 . . . well, at the time that we issued that--or sometime after we issued that public stock--we sold some bonds to carry out an expansion. That was in expanding the little food stores. One of Clint Murchison's insurance companies bought those bonds. At the same time he'd optioned a certain number of shares at a very good price--I mean, more than the book value by any means--which he later exercised. Then when my brother wanted to retire . . . he was ill and I tried to just retire and stay on awhile but he couldn't run it. He didn't . . .

Odom: He didn't want to.

Cabell: He was sick. So a deal was worked out to where Murchison acquired his stock and the bigger part of the stock that my brother, who was then a general in the Air Force, had, which gave him just bare control which he had to have because of some other financing. Then that left me the only Cabell left, and I was chairman of the board. I had about 25 per cent. I sure want the record to show this, that nobody could have asked for any finer treatment

or a more pleasant association than I had with Clint Murchison. A lot of people, just because they didn't know him, would say that, "Oh, he'll grab you, he'll . . . "

Odom: How long have you been acquainted with him then? Since back in the '30's?

Cabell: Well, the only association, really, was when the insurance company bought those bonds. Until, at that time, in '52. Then that put him in a control position.

Odom: Oh, that's right. You said '52. I was thinking the other 4,000 was sold back in the '30's.

Cabell: Back in '36, yes. He had control but you'd never know it.

Odom: This didn't bother you at all in operating the business?

Cabell: No.

Odom: Do you think it would have bothered you, though, had the business not done well?

Cabell: Well, he would have been entitled to.

Odom: I think so (chuckle).

Cabell: But when the deal had been worked out and agreed to between him and my brother, he called me and he said, "Well, now what do you think about it Earl? You're the one that's going to have to run it. If you're not

happy, I don't want any part." And I said, "It suits me fine. I would like to have it myself, but I have no way of financing it. But I do have one thing to ask of you. That is that at anytime I can get through this door and anything of importance comes up, that I will deal directly with you, not through one of your henchmen." Because he had some of these so-called whiz kids around there. I'm not referring to his sons. I was referring to some of the organizations. He said, "That's a deal."

Odom: In these years that you were still in business had you gotten involved in politics to any extent?

Cabell: Not in politics.

Odom: At a local level or any kind of city . . . what kind of . . .

Cabell: Well, I had always been interested in civic affairs and industrial affairs. I had taken part in various business projects of a civic nature and served as president of the Dallas Crime Commission a couple of years and was very active in the Texas Manufacturers Association, later president of that organization. The same way with the dairy industry and served as president of the Texas Dairy Products Institute. I



was a member of Dallas' Sales Executive, and president of that for a year. So I had been quite active in civic and trade affairs.

Odom: Did you do any lobbying while you were involved in those organizations?

Cabell: Oh, yes. They were lobbying. So I had a pretty good knowledge of legislative affairs, certainly municipal affairs. Too, Ben served on the City Council in 1939 to 1943 and was mayor pro-tem. He should have been the mayor of Dallas, but he was double-crossed by some of the Establishment.

Odom: Did he run for mayor?

Cabell: No, the charter had not been changed at that time. The unwritten law was that the councilman who gained the largest number of popular votes would be elected mayor. He had been promised that, and it was broken. The charter was not changed until after they did "Tieste" Adoo the same way. Then he raised a fight about it and got the Times Herald interested. That was Tom Gooch. So they sponsored a charter amendment which made the mayor elected direct. Then "Tieste" came back and was the first mayor under that change.

Odom: Who was that now?

Cabell: "Tieste" Adoo.

Odom: \_\_\_\_\_ . So Ben then really did have the largest number of popular votes.

Cabell: Oh, by far, by far.

Odom: What, in '41?

Cabell: In '39.

Odom: Well, what happened then that he didn't . . .

Cabell: Well, he just didn't make any fuss about it.

Odom: And the council then chose somebody else. Is that it?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: What happened? It was just kind of an informal agreement, is that it?

Cabell: Well, yes, it wasn't written, but . . .

Odom: It wasn't written.

Cabell: But those who had elected the others could have changed it.

Odom: Yes, right.

Cabell: And Tom Gooch was one of them. But then when his boy was mistreated, that was a horse of another color.

Odom: What other . . . anything else in the way of civic or political activities during the '40's and the '50's here that you were involved in?

Cabell: Well, then in the latter '50's I was approached by that . . . this was before we had sold to Southland. I was

approached by the powers that be and asked if I would run for mayor. I said, well, I didn't know and I had the responsibility of the company. "Well, we know that you've got a good organization, and we want you to run. We'll back you." That was the Establishment.

Odom: The Establishment. And who is the Establishment? Who comes to see you who is the Establishment?

Cabell: Well, this is a part that I wouldn't want to have open to the public for some time. It was Bob Thornton that came to me. He said he wanted to retire as mayor and would I take it. He said, "There's no question of your election." And I said, "Well, under those circumstances, yes." Of course, he was it.

Odom: He represented the Establishment?

Cabell: And then the next thing that I heard was just . . . oh, he said, "The strategy is just don't do anything. Just let the people guess that I'm going to run again, and there won't be any big opposition. At the last minute you'll come in and file." So I said nothing. Just two or three days before filing date, oh, I got all those telegrams, "Important luncheon meeting at the Room so-and-so at the Adolphus Hotel." This was a banquet room, small banquet room. It wasn't a smoke-filled back room sort of

thing. There it was announced that Thornton had been drafted for a third term.

Odom: Oh, it was?

Cabell: Yes. So I said, "Well, you sons-of-bitches, you haven't heard the last of me."

Odom: This was in '59?

Cabell: No, this was '57.

Odom: '57. That's two years before.

Cabell: Yes. Well, I ran in '59 and put him in a run-off.

Odom: Was it too late for you to file then, or too late for you really to get into it?

Cabell: Well, I just didn't have too much interest in doing it because it was too late then. I just laid off that year. I went back in '59 and he beat me.

Odom: Well, now what happened in '59?

Cabell: Well, in '59 I ran, but I was defeated.

Odom: He ran again, then?

Cabell: Oh, yes.

Odom: He told you he wasn't going to run in '57?

Cabell: That's right.

Odom: What was his game, do you think?

Cabell: Somebody--and I think I know but I won't say because I could be mistaken--just told him that I wouldn't do at all. I wouldn't do.

Odom: Do you think he really . . . in other words, he was sincere when he came to you the first time.

Cabell: Yes, and he let them talk him out of it.

Odom: He let them talk him out of it. Then still the same thing . . . the circumstances were still working in '59.

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: Well, I really hadn't planned to get into this mayor's race and your mayor career today. I was trying to get all of the other loose ends up to that point--your career in business and so on.

Cabell: Of course, talking about Mr. Thornton, he bore no malice toward me. I really don't toward him. I understand the circumstances. Then when I ran in '61 as an independent, you couldn't get any word out of him. Of course, on the surface he was supporting the Charter candidate. But he was telling friends that asked him that Earle was head and shoulders above the other guy. Then when I ran for re-election in '63 he very openly endorsed me. He even sent me a check.

Oral History Collection

Earle Cabell

**Interviewer:** Dale Odom

**Place of Interview:** Dallas, Texas

**Date:** April 3, 1974

**Dr. Odom:** Mr. Cabell, when did you first seriously consider running for mayor of Dallas?

**Mr. Cabell:** I had never really seriously considered it until I was approached by the incumbent mayor of Dallas in 1956, asking me if I would accept nomination of the Citizen's Charter Association for mayor, that he did not want to run for re-election. He'd served his two terms and felt sure that I could do the job and could get elected because I had been engaged in a number of civic activities, name was well-known, of course, through the business, my brother, father, and grandfather. So I agreed. The plan was to say nothing about it with no publicity up until the last minute before filing date in order not to encourage someone else to get into it. That was known among the so-called Establishment. The only word that I had of any change was when I was invited to a luncheon, a "draft Mr. Thornton" luncheon. They had sold him on the idea of staying in.

Odom: Do you think, then, that some of the leaders of the CCA, the Citizens Charter Association, prevailed on him to run again?

Cabell: There were one or two who didn't particularly like me.

Odom: I see. Do you think they wouldn't have prevailed upon him to run again if he had chosen somebody more acceptable to them?

Cabell: I think that's right.

Odom: What . . . would you give us a brief history of the Citizens Charter Association up to then? How would you characterize it at that time?

Cabell: I would characterize its entire history as very constructive. They were organized as a matter of dire necessity in the very early '30's when we had some administrations that were pretty corrupt.

Odom: It was a reform organization, then?

Cabell: Yes, it was. It was the mayor and the commissioner form of government prior to that. So with a great deal of effort and study the present charter setting up the council-manager form of government and a completely new charter for the city, and they were able to get that accepted by the City of Dallas. There had been constant efforts to break that down because

it was clean and has remained clean. I want to say, even though I opposed them in two different elections, it was never on the idea that there was any corruption on their part. It has been a very fine factor in city government, and I hope that it will continue.

Odom: What about in the 1950's, at the time that you were approached here. Did you at that time, you know, feel like perhaps that it had gotten . . . either had been doing some things that you opposed that early or . . .

Cabell: I felt that there were two or three people involved who were too sated with the idea of being kingmakers. I considered that wrong. I thought that they were putting stress where it didn't belong. My dander was already up over that snub. That's why I ran as an independent.

Odom: Would you care to identify the people you are talking about here?

Cabell: I'd rather not. I'm not one to want to name, rattle bones. There's no percentage in it.

Odom: Okay, alright. Let me . . . alright, between the time, then, in 1957 you were approached, and then, of course, Mayor Thornton ran for office again in 1957.

Cabell: And ran again in 1959.



Odom: Yes, I know but between . . .

Cabell: I opposed him then.

Odom: . . . between '57 and '59 did you make any preparations, preparatory to running again?

Cabell: Not overtly.

Odom: What about other than overtly?

Cabell: Oh, I was giving it a good deal of thought. I was getting my affairs in shape to where I could.

Odom: You were, in other words, beginning to move out of your business.

Cabell: I didn't know where they were going. See, I had made no outcry whatsoever about that '57 incident. And, then, I was waiting to see whether Mr. Thornton would run again or not. But darned if he didn't! He had told me that he doubted . . . I had talked to him before the filing date.

Odom: You talked to him then again before the '59 race?

Cabell: Yes, and he indicated that he didn't think he would. He said, "But Earle, if I do, I'll run to win." I said, "I know that." So we parted friends on that note (chuckle).

Odom: How would you characterize Mayor Thornton and Mayor Thornton's administrations as mayor?

Cabell: Good administrations. It was a good administration. There was one group that I think had a disproportionate

amount of influence. I think some of the land developers had taken advantage of the situation.

Odom: Okay, let me read you a statement here that was written by the researcher. Let me, in fact, read statements one and two about the election of 1959, and let you comment on some parts of them: "Mayor R. L. Thornton ran for re-election in 1959, to complete a \$51,800 capital improvements program which was to upgrade Love Field, construct highways. He also decided to work to establish long range water commission to get Dallas' fair share for unallocated Trinity River water. Thornton, endorsed by the Citizens Charter Association, a civic organization that had dominated Dallas' policy since 1930." Then secondly: "Cabell entered the mayor's race charging Dallas is badly administered and that the community needed a breathing spell." I presume that was from public improvement. I don't know. You may comment on that. "The city did not have even half the money needed for the improvements program, denounced the CCA, Citizens Charter Association, for having a monopoly on candidates and for operating a clique of bankers and real estate developers. CCA countered

by accusing Cabell of using his business to run a beer and buttermilk campaign, noting that Cabell was one of the biggest beer retailers in Texas. As mayor he would judge liquor zoning applications, causing conflicts of interest. Also said Cabell's, Inc., was fined in 1943 for three violations of Pure Food and Drug laws. Cabell said the violations were minor." That gives you sort of a brief from the newspaper rehash.

Cabell: Well, of course, one must bear in mind that in a political campaign each one possibly gets a little too bombastic, too heated, and has a tendency sometimes to make certain allegations that are not really provable. Now the reporter had asked me about this cooling-off period. A reporter had asked me whether I had any plans for expansion or capital improvements, and I said, "No," that there was enough in the mill and enough bonds committed already to take care of the situation for some time to come and that the thing to do would be just to spend properly and wisely the funds that had already been voted.

Odom: Within the program . . .

Cabell: Within the program which had been voted on, yes.

Odom: So you had no real disagreements with that capital improvements program that had been begun at that time.

Cabell: No.

Odom: Then on . . .

Cabell: On that allegation, of course, they tried to use it because we had some stores, of course, that were selling beer. Of course, they tried to say that we would try to get an election, that we would try to change the law. Now this is stupidity on these things, but thinking people are not always the ones that vote. As a city official I have no influence on state laws, and I couldn't call and put . . . as mayor you can't just call a beer election and say, "Okay, you're going to sell beer in Oak Cliff." But that was just something . . . in anything . . . they gave . . . the amount of money that was spent on that election was the greatest that had ever been spent in the history of Dallas on any city election. I don't know whether they've ever spent more than that since. They might have the race between Avery May and Wes Wise.

Odom: I'll ask you more about the money business in just a minute. But what about the violations of Pure Food

and Drug laws? Is this just something they just dragged in all the way back from 1943?

Cabell: Yes, that's what it was. There was some hanky-panky about that. I paid the fine. I was in an argument with the state Health Department over their ruling on some labeling which has since been changed. But we had a chief inspector by the name of Raines that I just abominated, and he abominated me because I wasn't overawed. So he caught us putting butter in buttermilk. The butter was not graded butter. When the . . . I made them charge me, not the maker. Ordinarily, they'd have charged the employee. I made them charge me. So we went before the court--before old Judge Baldwin, J. P. We paid the fine, but it was written for putting butter in buttermilk.

Odom: I see. Was this a violation of federal or a state law?

Cabell: It was under the standard ordinance there, but it was a technicality, and nobody else paid any attention to it.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: But if you've ever seen one of these citations on a Food and Drug thing you'd think that you were selling rat poison for everything it said. But the docket that

showed the disposition of that case was stolen from Judge Baldwin's files. I know who stole them. I can't prove it. But they were destroyed, so that I could not say, "Here is the ruling of the court," so it was lost from that time on that I had put butter in buttermilk.

Odom: Was there no other copy of this extent?

Cabell: No!

Odom: Okay. What about the other two? Were they all involving that same thing?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: All involved three . . . just said that three violations of the Pure Food and Drug.

Cabell: I do not recall that there was even three, but that was the whole thing. That was the only charge.

Odom: The only charge that you were involved in. What about the third candidate in the race, George Fox?

Cabell: He was a parker in a parking station.

Odom: I see. It seems like I remember that from the newspaper now. I didn't recall at the time.

Cabell: But he cost me the election. I would have gotten every vote he did.

Odom: If you would have gotten all of his votes you'd have had . . .

Cabell: On the runoff then . . . on the runoff is where they really spent the money.

Odom: How did you campaign in that race? I mean, speak before organizations or groups?

Cabell: Before any group I could get to. I didn't have very much money. I had, oh, I think it was about \$20,000 total for that race.

Odom: Did you spend your money, or did you have some from business contributions?

Cabell: I had some newspapers . . . oh, no, I had contributions. Yes, I spent \$10,000 of mine. But I had about an equal or maybe a little bit more in contributions.

Odom: Did you have any very large contributions or primarily small contributions?

Cabell: \$100 or \$150.

Odom: Did you serve as your own campaign manager, or did you have an official campaign manager?

Cabell: Well, Sid Pietzsch, who was a former newspaperman and a public relations man, handled my press and a lot of my P.R. from that time right on through when I was in the Congress.

Odom: What was the stance of the newspapers on this in Dallas?

Cabell: The Times Herald fought me bitterly. The Dallas News was neutral.

Odom: Neutral . . . so neither one supported you?

Cabell: No, neither one of them. Of course, that just infuriated them. Some of the biggest advertisers of the Dallas News went down and told them they were going to withdraw their ads and Ted Dealey ran them out of his office.

Odom: Is there any explanation for the opposition of the Times Herald?

Cabell: Oh, they were just very, very close to the top people in the Charter Association.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: And Ted Dealey and I had been good acquaintances and good friends. Not intimate, but he knew I was right. He knew that thing was . . . that they were . . . well, they were committing hara-kiri themselves.

Odom: Did any state-wide or national issues affect the race as you remember?

Cabell: No.

Odom: How did the . . . well, let's see, you got in the runoff. So you had to make two races then. You spent more money, you say, in the runoff election.

Cabell: They did. I spent about the same. I didn't have anymore.

Odom: You spent the total of \$20,000 in both . . . around that in both of them.



Cabell: Well, I'd say in the two of them about \$30,000.

Odom: About \$30,000. And about \$10,000 of your money.  
How did the city council race go in that now?

Cabell: Well, you see, at that time then there were a number of independents and one was elected. That was an attorney by the name of Joe Geary. So the fact that I was kind of a bellwether and leading the way, it gave him an opportunity I don't think he would have otherwise have had to get in. So then during that period from '59 to '61, he ingratiated himself with the leaders of the CCA. Then they were in a quandary. They knew that I was going to run again because I had my dander up.

Odom: When did you determine to run again?

Cabell: Oh, well, they knew that from the . . .

Odom: Did you determine that you were planning to run again as soon as the election was over?

Cabell: Oh, yes. I made an announcement on it. Everybody knew it was a foregone conclusion. I knew what they were going to do. I figured them out because the same people were running it, doing the leg work. They were going to nominate Joe Geary as the only one who could beat me. Now the man that they should have nominated was the mayor pro-tem, Mr. Elgin Robertson--

a fine person, a very able person from Oak Cliff. Oak Cliff had been screaming that it was their time to have a mayor. But they knew that he didn't have the color to beat me.

Odom: Because he was a colorless . . . or not a good campaigner?

Cabell: So they dumped him in favor of running Joe Geary, and I tore him all to pieces.

Odom: Well, now where in the city were you residing at this time?

Cabell: Through the last race . . . by that time I was living on Drane Drive.

Odom: What part of the city is that?

Cabell: Greenway Parks.

Odom: Greenway Parks?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: And Mr. Geary was from Oak Cliff.

Cabell: No, no, he's from East Dallas.

Odom: East Dallas. I see, okay. I didn't recall exactly. This organization, then, that appeared in the next race, the Dallas Charter League, well, what was it and why did you start this organization?

Cabell: No, I had nothing to do with it. I had a good many friends in it and they endorsed me, but I told them

that I did not want any nominations from anybody. I would be very happy to have the endorsement of any honest citizen or group where they knew that there were no strings attached, and I knew. But I would not accept nominations.

Odom: What was the real difference between Dallas Charter League and the Citizens Charter? Just a different group of individuals? Did they stand for anything particularly different?

Cabell: Well, it was the old story of the outs wanting to be in.

Odom: Outs wanting to be in. So it was essentially the same Establishment group?

Cabell: They were full of vinegar and kind of a reform setup; you know. But there wasn't a whole lot to be reformed.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: Other than some of the guiding policies of the organization.

Odom: How did you spend the two years there between '59 and '61?

Cabell: Still in the business.

Odom: You were still in the business then at that time, weren't you? In the election of '61, then, you . . . according to a statement here, the main issue of the

campaign centered on the Dallas transit settlement.

You may want to comment on . . .

Cabell: No. The researcher was wrong on that because that hadn't even been made then.

Odom: Well . . .

Cabell: Oh, wait a minute! Wait a minute! Wait a minute!  
That was the turning point.

Odom: The company wanted sixty-seven buses removed from poorly patronized routes. The city attorney recommended a \$3,000,000 cut in the company's profit base. They regulated their profit base, and I presume it was a private company which ran the buses?

Cabell: No, what they'd do . . . they regulated the fares but were obligated to give them a sufficient fare for them to have a--whatever it was--6 or 7 per cent return. A lot of people think a franchise of that sort guarantees . . . they do not guarantee a profit. They authorize a profit. Of course, this fellow Weinberg, he was a pirate. Oh, there were three operating in the United States, and virtually all are out of business now. There was a Weinberg here. Weinberg also had Baltimore, and he had Scranton, Pennsylvania. Then there was this fellow . . . I can't think of his name right now, but he was operating in Washington, D. C., and several others and wound up in the penitentiary over some tax things. Then

there was Roy Chalk, who bought the Washington thing, and I had to deal with him as chairman of that subcommittee there and got him out of business. But it was just kind of a coincidence.

Odom: This was later when you were in Washington.

Cabell: But there was a lot of talk about . . . they were asking for an increase. They were asking for an increase. They had screwed things around to where the city couldn't deny it. But they didn't want to cut off any service, so they had a special meeting of the Council with him on a Saturday.

Odom: Was this before the '61 election?

Cabell: This was the Saturday before the election on Tuesday.

Odom: Saturday before the election.

Cabell: The election was on Tuesday. This was the Saturday, and the Sunday papers came out "No Increase In Bus Fares. Compromise Worked Out With Transit Company, And They Have Withdrawn The Application For An Increase." So a good friend of mine--he's dead now--was with the Dallas News, and he happened to pay a little more attention to this agreement. For some reason he said it didn't smell right. And sure enough, down in the fine print they were going to take off a half-million miles of service. That way it would balance the money. But they had made the announcement that

service would continue. They were desperate. They knew they were hurting. They knew I had this man on the run. So they came out with this very false or half-truth. This guy called me up Sunday afternoon. I got busy and called the city. But first I'll have to tell you this, that Joe Dealey called me. He'd gotten word as to what it was. He says, "You know Earle . . ." And they have a rule here, which is good, among the papers and the TV stations that they will not accept nor permit a new charge of any kind against a candidate within a forty-eight-hour period."

Odom: Of the election?

Cabell: Yes, so that nobody could make one of these rash charges. But this was an official statement of the City Council that came out of this Saturday afternoon meeting.

Odom: You'd been hitting hard on this before this.

Cabell: That they ought to do something about the transit system, and they they were letting Weinberg run them.

Odom: Right.

Cabell: So Joe called me. He said, "Earle, are you familiar with that?" I said, "Yes, I've got the whole story." Well, he says, "You know, we can't print any more charges. But tomorrow is a Council meeting." The election was on Tuesday. I've got it straight in my

mind now. He says, "If you want to appear before the Council, that would be news."

Odom: I see.

Cabell: "And take them to task and ask for an explanation of that and was it true that they were going to give up 500,000 miles of service." He said if I just happened to have a photographer present . . . now in this race the News endorsed me strongly. The Herald was neutral.

Odom: Neutral this time.

Cabell: No, no. They were against me, but not as viciously as they were before. They were against me. They were kind of half-way when I ran for re-election because actually I had three elections. So I got up there and I took them to task. I asked them to explain that and why did they not tell the people of Dallas that they were giving Weinberg permission to take off that 500,000 miles of service. Where would it come off? Who was not going to have access to the bus service? I had gone down and made a similar statement that was on TV because it was not a charge. This was a refutation. But then on Tuesday morning--the election date, the day following this Council meeting--in a three-column picture on page one, I'm standing there shaking my finger at Joe Geary

and essentially calling the whole outfit a liar. That was it.

Odom: It says here that, "Bus driver's union objected to the settlement for turning some drivers off of permanent runs." I assume that was the service they were cutting out.

Cabell: Well, I don't remember that they even got into the act. Chances are that was so, but it did not become a big thing, no.

Odom: Do you think that in both these races that the two of you were appealing essentially to the same groups, interest groups, in the city?

Cabell: A little more progressive. A little more progressive approach. An approach to the younger ones. I am still criticized badly. They are changing that up now to an extent. The Charter Association had one fallacious, very fallacious, policy. It's alright for them to say "We seek the man. The man does not seek the office." That's beautiful. It would be alright if we could just go out and draft them, which you can't always do. But you let a man who is interested and . . . as in my case, I had a will to serve. I was qualified. I had many years of experience. I had a great deal of experience in organizational efforts doing business lobbying in



Austin for the trade associations, but the mere fact that I had ever indicated that I might want the office disqualified me, see? They said, "Anyone who seeks the office . . ." Now that's stupid. Rank stupidity.

Odom: I have to agree.

Cabell: But it was pretty close to controlled there for a long time. Now then, they've completely lost control with this single member setup. Now I say completely. They haven't completely because they're still in existence and will continue to be, but they can't handle it quite as roughly as when it was an at-large situation.

Odom: Do you think that, at that time, that the Citizens Charter Association group gave as much . . . had as much concern for some of the minority groups and certain sections of the city as they should have?

Cabell: No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

Odom: Some of it's grown.

Cabell: One of the problems that I had with them . . . and had I stayed in office, I was going to fight for a change in the charter. But, you see, I resigned with a full year to go. I wanted to run four of the Council members in separate districts to where people would vote on them and let the other four and the mayor be elected on an

at-large basis and stagger their terms. Put in a four-year term but stagger it so that you would never be faced with the possibility of having a whole brand-new Council. But the thing that killed it, and it was the thing that I wanted . . . they would say that you would wind up with a black on the Council. I said, "So what! That's exactly what I want. Give them some recognition. They're entitled to it. You want their vote, but you don't want to recognize them."

Odom: Was there a tendency of the CCA to tend to oppose changes in the charter for the sake of change? I mean, continuing like it was, or not?

Cabell: Well, there were very few changes that'd been made in it. The major change was when it was changed from the mayor being elected from within the Council to where he was elected separately.

Odom: When was that change made?

Cabell: That was made back . . . well, let's count back.

Odom: Your brother was there.

Cabell: Let's count back. Mr. Thornton served for eight years. I replaced him in '61. So go eight years back.

Odom: It would have been '53.

Cabell: It would have been '53. Take two years off that when Adoo was mayor. So you go to '51. So it was changed in that period.

Odom: Between '51 and '53.

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: Well, just before '51.

Cabell: See, there was another . . . I don't know whether I've mentioned it before or not. I had another burr under the saddle blanket, if you want to call it that, because that same group had double-crossed my brother. It had been the custom--it was almost an unwritten rule--that the Council member--there were nine of them--who polled the greatest number of popular votes would be elected mayor. When they asked my brother Ben in 1939 to run, I guess he was there from 1939-1943 . . . the elections are in the odd years.

Odom: It says he was mayor pro-tem of Dallas from '39 to '43.

Cabell: '39. '39 to '43 . . . '39. When they asked him to . . . Mr. Thornton was the man that asked him because he was running the show. Ben said, no. He didn't want to do it. We had only been in business then seven years, and we were working hard and trying to build a place in the sun. He (Thornton) said, "No, no. It won't take a whole lot of your time. You can let Earle backstop you there, and you can do it." He said, "Frankly, Ben, we need you. We need your name." Because, you see, this charter form

of government was only a few years old, and there was a group of the racketeers that were trying to beat it. They said, "We need your name. We need your background, your name, your father and your grandfather." Ben said, "Well, I'll do it on one condition--that if I poll the greatest number of votes, and only if, that the precedent will be followed and I will be elected mayor."

Odom: He really did? He asked ahead of time?

Cabell: Yes, and they bowed down, yes. That was the precedent, and it was an unwritten law.

Odom: That's an unusual type of arrangement.

Cabell: Yes. So then he just led the field by an un-Godly amount. They elected a man who was about fifth in the race because he had been the one that had been told that he'd be it.

Odom: They had told him beforehand that they were going to elect him mayor.

Cabell: They lied to Ben.

Odom: Just lied to him?

Cabell: They lied to Ben.

Odom: He must have been fairly young then at that time.

Cabell: Well, yes, he was born in 1899.

Odom: He must have been about forty at that time.

Cabell: This was in '39--forty years old. So then the fact that he was slapped in the face . . .

Odom: This is one thing that caused you to oppose the Citizens Charter Association, then, later on in your elections.

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: Okay, we were discussing this election in 1961, I think, in at least as far as any specifics were concerned when we got into several other things here of a general nature. The . . . let me read this, which I haven't read yet. "Cabell ran again . . ." This is still talking about the 1961 elections. "Cabell ran again with the backing of the Morning News and the Dallas Charter League, an organization . . .

Cabell: What, '61? Yes.

Odom: . . . an organization opposed to the CCA. Differences between the two groups never really clear." And as you point out, it's primarily just the outs versus the ins. "In an appearance with all mayor candidates before the Dallas City Council, Cabell charged the City Council with sell-out of votes to the Dallas Transit Company-- the events you told about awhile ago--and drew sharp rebuke from outgoing Mayor Thornton." Is this at the Council meeting that you drew rebuke, or was this simply a report in the newspapers?

Cabell: No, it was at the meeting.

Odom: At the meeting.

Cabell: It wasn't too sharp. He had to protect their position.

Odom: "Cabell also promised fight against corruption, curbs on rising crime, elimination of racketeering. As part of the campaign, Cabell ran special sales on his dairy products, offered an automobile give-away, drawing for which to be on May 1st, Inauguration Day." Now is that something the Times Herald put in here to criticize you or the opponent did or what?

Cabell: I don't . . . that's entirely new. I've never . . .

Odom: You just don't remember doing that?

Cabell: I sure as hell don't. I remember nothing about that.

Odom: Alright, I thought perhaps there was some kind of a charge to that effect by your opposition.

Cabell: No, that's news to me.

Odom: George Fox ran again. This time he wouldn't have made the difference, would he, if he . . . no, not quite.

Cabell: No.

Odom: Of course, you might have gotten the same votes he would have. Did you have essentially the same groups working for you in the '61 election?

Cabell: I had a lot more. I had a lot more. I had a lot of Charter people. They were very unhappy.

Odom: And didn't go along with the leadership of the Charter Association?

Cabell: What I knew--I sensed it--I had good reason to believe that they were going to nominate him (Geary). I went to some of the business leaders in town. Nobody's announced yet, and I know that Mr. Thornton's not going to. The Charter Association hasn't made their nomination. I'm not fishing for that. I wouldn't at that time. I wouldn't have run off from it. But I said, "What you're going to do, you're going to dump the best man you've got of the bunch as far as charter and ability's concerned, Elgin Robertson." For the one who has the most to be desired. There was the little . . . several instances of conflicts of interest in there when Joe was on the Council, you see. I said, "But because you think that they think that he can beat me . . . I'll run." Then they nominated Geary, dumping the best man, and it's not fair.

Odom: Is it because . . .

Cabell: And they said, "Why, that's unbelievable! That's unbelievable!" Because he might have . . . he was not dumped. That's exactly what they did. So I had a lot of their support--if not open, at least passive. I

didn't have the problems of getting reasonable financing that time. See, I even had . . .

Odom: How much . . . this is the election you said you spent about \$30,000, you figured, in the original election.

Cabell: In '59. They were roughly the same. I don't remember exactly.

Odom: You spent about the same amount in this election in '61?

Cabell: Yes, I didn't have to spend as much of my own.

Odom: You didn't have to spend as much of yours.

Cabell: No, but it's rather interesting that Elgin Robertson, whom I liked, stayed on the Council as a Council member, and I made the nomination for him to be mayor pro-tem. But for an awful long time he resented me. His feelings were hurt, but he resented me because of it. Before I had finished my first term, I didn't have a better friend in Dallas. While he was a Republican and had always been previously an Alger man, he supported me very openly in my race for Congress. I'll always feel good that so many of those people turned out to be good friends because I had shot square with them.

Odom: You mentioned awhile ago that you saw some conflict of interest when Joe Geary was on the Council. You said



that earlier unless I misunderstood you. You wouldn't care to elaborate on that?

Cabell: That's right.

Odom: I mean, these are the things . . . just suspicious? You don't have to prove anything on these.

Cabell: Well, there was one case where he represented the Dallas Police Association as attorney and was paid a fee by them when he was on the City Council.

Odom: That does seem a little . . .

Cabell: The implications are rather deadly. Another time that an advertiser in the yellow section of the phone book created a new name for his firm in order to have the first listing, because it's an alphabetical thing, and the telephone company refused to accept it. It was so patently unethical, and would have been . . . they were trying to do the right thing. He accepted the retainer to represent them against the company. Now that's dirty. That's dangerous--whenever you have a man who is on the regulatory body of a utility that is representing someone who is a litigant to them.

Odom: I see. These were cases during the time that he was on the Council and before he ran for mayor in '61. Well, then you . . . but I think there's no need to . . . you've answered it by implication earlier. Now you were

elected in 1961 without a runoff. You have indicated that your relations with, at least, Mr. Robertson of the CCA were very good, at least by the end of your term.

Cabell: They were good with nearly all of them.

Odom: What about with the rest of the CCA?

Cabell: As a matter of fact, you see, there were two independents that came in at the same time I came in as mayor. They were Joe Moody and Elizabeth Blessing. I had more trouble with them . . .

Odom: I remember reading that in the newspaper.

Cabell: . . . than I did with the Charter members because they were trying to make a name. They were trying to hit the . . .

Odom: In the newspaper?

Cabell: Yes. But there was . . . oh, I never did get along very well with Charles Sharp. He was very resentful of me. Of course, he's the one who ran against me in '63.

Odom: What about . . .

Cabell: But, you see, the Charter Association would not nominate him.

Odom: I see. Did they nominate . . . did they support you?  
They just really didn't take a hand in that?

- Cabell: They asked to nominate me. I told them. I told also the Charter League--what was left of them--that I did not want a nomination from anybody.
- Odom: What about that city bus settlement? Was there anything that could be done about that after . . .
- Cabell: Well, finally, I worked out a deal, and we bought the company.
- Odom: Yes, I know that, but I meant about the particular settlement.
- Cabell: Well, we went there and did a helluva a lot of auditing and uncovered hidden stuff like that to where the service was not good, but they did not cut it like they had said they would. We uncovered stuff that had not been uncovered before.
- Odom: Pointed out to them that they didn't need the raise as much as they indicated.
- Cabell: Well, they were covering up.
- Odom: Who helped in doing this mostly?
- Cabell: Well, through the city auditors and the supervisor of public utilities and the city attorney's office.
- Odom: Did . . . you didn't get any obstruction from any of the Council members in pursuing that, then?
- Cabell: No, the only thing that . . . hey, if anything came up about any layoffs or disciplining, it would come from

Elizabeth Blessing because the drivers' union had supported her. Then when it was up before the Council for the purchase, she went against me because, you see, the city does not recognize a bargaining agency and does not have automatic check-off for dues.

In buying the transit company I wanted a . . . I went to Austin, and I had a bill to create a transit authority that was a little bit broader than the authority under which San Antonio was operating. San Antonio had taken over theirs, but it was very restrictive. What I wanted to do was to have it written into the charter that we would go inter-city. Even though . . . now this is an odd situation. Under the old ordinance, you could go from Dallas to Highland Park, from Dallas to Irving, from Dallas to Garland or Mesquite so long as you did not go into neutral territory first. You see what I mean? If you left one city limit . . .

Odom: You had to be going into the other.

Cabell: Yes. You could not go into a county strip for passengers.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: And I wanted it to where you could go and we could serve . . . if it proved . . . as an example, Lewisville,

Farmers Branch, and I believe at that time there was a little stretch between Farmer's Branch and . . . wait a minute. We couldn't go to Carrollton because we were crossing one city thing into another city thing.

Odom: Right.

Cabell: It wasn't contiguous. It was not contiguous. That was the thing. So the Republicans down there in the House were crying "Free Enterprise," and Charlie Sharp was leading them. He's always been a big Republican. They got me. I passed it in the Senate. They blocked me in the House because we had--out of nine legislators at that time--we had seven Republicans. Remember that fluke in there?

Odom: I remember that.

Cabell: So they beat me on that, so we had to go ahead and take it over under the old law. Now then there's been some changes to where they've got much, much more leeway.

But let's get back to why the opposition. The transit union . . . fellow named Grady Atkins was their business manager. He had it soft. Weinberg was paying him a salary. He was handling their check-offs. Then, of course, he was getting his full amount, but he was

also on their pension system. He was accruing benefits all along, and insurance, and drawing enough there in lieu of salary over and above union salary. Well, that was dead when we took over. So he was fighting that. So we told him--I got it through alright--I said, "Well, now if you want to continue with these benefits, just wrap your hands around a steering wheel of one of those busses." Of course, he was dead if they didn't have a compulsory check-off. But that's why those unions fought me on that, you see--because they knew that I wouldn't knuckle under on that.

Odom: But what about the question of secrecy? Was there any kind of question about that at that time that you first became mayor?

Cabell: Oh, yes, there's always been. I think that that can be carried to extremes. I do not believe in just holding secret session after secret session or conducting a large part of your business behind locked doors. I do not believe in that. Now, you see, that was one thing that I fought because the City Council was meeting actually at their luncheon meeting, which was closed. After the '59 race, well, they would let a newsman sit there with them. But, hell, they were making their decisions then. They were making their decisions, and

then if it was a losing proposition it wasn't even brought up. Well, now that's wrong. But there are times if you are under negotiations on something, and you've got several ways to go. You've got to have some privacy. So I think it has been recognized now by all concerned that anything dealing with personnel, where personnels' characters were concerned and legal questions, where you are conferring with your attorney, then it's alright.

Odom: How did you do that? Did you continue the luncheons at the time?

Cabell: Oh, sure.

Odom: You still had the luncheons?

Cabell: They were a great help, but they were open, yes.

Odom: They were open.

Cabell: Well, the main discussions were on zoning matters because we had their books, we could talk, we could look at them, and we had the city attorney and sometimes the police chief. If it had been a police matter, we'd always have them there. The city clerk and city manager, of course, also attended at times. So there was a lot of work to be done that was not of a nature that necessitated any decisions.

Odom: You mentioned zoning problems and, of course, licensing problems, a variety of things of this sort, that the Council deals with in final analysis. Did you run into any pressures or any blandishments or attempts to bribe you or to pay you off or any of these things of this nature in your career as mayor?

Cabell: No, I don't know whether that was a compliment or whether they didn't think I could do anything about it. But I did not have. Now let's put it this way, too. I attacked some of their zoning practices and some of their highway practices because it was a pet deal. It was a . . . done on a buddy basis.

Odom: Opposed to you?

Cabell: Well, no. No, I'm talking about before I got in there.

Odom: That's what I say.

Cabell: Yes. Here's a guy that always supported the Charter Association. He wanted some zoning. Well, he was a buddy. There was too much of that "buddyism." I don't think any money changed hands.

Odom: I understand what you're saying.

Cabell: It was a buddy deal. And there wasn't always the right or the best deal. Here is a man that needed a highway routed through where he had a lot of acreage. Okay,



that's . . . he's good. That's going to bring in more taxes. See, it was all rationalized. Then it would help to beat hell if some old boy, some developer, found out where a big highway was going to go so he could go out there and buy it. Now those are the things . . .

Odom: Were you able to do anything about this while you were mayor?

Cabell: Yes, I did.

Odom: What does it take? Just someone who's . . . the mayor can be leadership enough to say, "Look, I'm going to say something about that if . . .

Cabell: That's right. Reach . . . put up opposition and then also to go to department heads involved like the planning commission and say, "The first time I catch you tipping somebody off, you've had it."

Odom: Yes, I see.

Cabell: I almost forgot myself (chuckle).

Odom: You'd be surprised what kind of language comes over these things sometimes.

Cabell: I'll give you another example that was a little questionable, let me say. There had been very poor ambulance service here in Dallas. Well, they had no central thing. You had the morticians. So then a group--they were very

near and dear to the Charter Association--organized what they called Ambulance Service Incorporated, made a . . . had a contract. The mechanics of this thing are just fantastic, but the ambulance contract followed the pauper burial contract . . . and whoever got that contract . . . it was never rewritten . . . then you paid a dollar. The city paid it. You'd bid that you'd bury the paupers for a dollar. Well, there hasn't been a dozen paupers buried here in the last twenty years.

Odom: But you got the ambulance contract because you took that, is that right?

Cabell: Well, yes. And then they were supposed to have had twelve, and scattered out over the city. Still there's no collection law . . . ability to collect from those who could and should pay because people now just say, "Well, this is a city service." It was unfair, but it was going from bad to worse. They came up then and had it pretty well agreed that they were going to get a big subsidy.

So then that's when I started raising the devil. I was in office. It was in my first term. We worked out a deal with the morticians. The big ones didn't

get into it, and they have regretted it ever since. Sparkman and Brewer, and Smith were the big ones. They weren't in on it. But Dudley Hughes, and O'Neil and . . . not Ellis Campbell, but a Campbell out in Oak Cliff. One in Garland went in and, under one master contract--the others were sub-contractors-- Hughes took the major contract. They had some twelve or fourteen vehicles over town and guaranteed to keep them available. They were set up with trained crews and radio control dispatched through the police office. Didn't cost the city a damn dime. It made Hughes then one of the biggest, if not the biggest, mortician in Dallas.

Odom: Because of that?

Cabell: The reason of it is it's the DOA's. I'm telling you, the way these morticians fight over a body is absolutely sickening. Then they get to how they . . . when they bring them in they have prior claim to them. The other thing is if they can pay, or if they pick them up in a wreck, then they get the transfer charge when they go home. Then they get contracts. If there's a death, even though it isn't an accident, there's a death they've got the first call. But that made Hughes one of the

biggest . . . so then they got away from it and the Council didn't insist on it. So they went back to this subsidized thing, and it was breaking the city, and that's when they went to their own ambulance service through the fire department. But we ran it for nearly three years without it costing and had good service.

Odom: This was during the early '60's that . . . when you were mayor.

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: Now what's the job of being mayor in a city like Dallas like? I mean, is it a full-time job? What's the average day like for a mayor?

Cabell: It is almost a full day's job.

Odom: What would be an average day? I'm not talking about the three-hour days that the City Council meets. But say, on ordinary weekdays, how do you spend most of it?

Cabell: I'd say that the three years that I served there that I put in more hours of city work, or as many, as I had ever put out in the milk business.

Odom: You simply go to the office and . . . is this where most of it is done, or is it making ceremonial ribbon-cutting ceremonies and things of this sort or what?

Cabell: Terrific amount of that. But I maintained my office even though I wasn't active in the business out at the milk plant, paid my own secretary. But then I spent two half-days a week in city hall just interviewing anybody who had a gripe or anything like that. Then I was on call for any conference at any time. Then I was in and out of city hall almost everyday--a conference with the city manager on something or the city engineer--but I always worked, and I had a delightful . . . the whole association with Elgin Crull was delightful. He was scared to death of me when I first went in. We knew each other only casually, and he thought I was going to come in there like a bull in a china closet and that I would not respect his position as city manager. He found out very differently very soon. He found out I knew as much about the city charter as he did. I knew as much about how the table of organizations ran. I never went over his head. Now we had some locked door sessions sometimes, and he'd give in every now and then. He's pretty bull-headed. Well, I can be bull-headed, too. But that's the way we worked there. We didn't have any clashes.

Odom: Then you said some things about the 1963 elections that your opponent Charles Sharp had been on the Council for

some time. I don't know. Was he on there prior to your being elected mayor?

Cabell: No, he went in . . . well, he went in the same time I went in as mayor.

Odom: Is that when he went on the Council?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: He rejected, then, particularly the public transit concept. Is that one of the main reasons that he ran against you, or were there other reasons?

Cabell: Oh, he objected to that. Old man Carr Collins just wanted to be mayor. He wanted a mayor. He's got him . . . later he got him a congressman, but he wanted a mayor.

Odom: Well, now who is Sharp to him?

Cabell: That's his son-in-law.

Odom: Is that his son-in-law? Okay.

Cabell: Now, you see, he tried to get his son in, and they didn't buy him. So he got a daughter-in-law years ago who was the first woman on the Council.

Odom: Oh, really?

Cabell: Yes, and she was Ms. Carr P. Collins, Jr., and a very able woman, a fine person. She later divorced Carr, Jr. But he just wanted a man on the Council. Anybody with

as many real estate holdings and as much going on in Dallas as he had, he needed it. So I put on a program and made one helluva fight for it and lost it to get some more public housing.

Odom: Yes, I know . . . was this in the race, I mean, in the campaign, that time that this issue was the big one?

Cabell: Now this was brought up. That was Charles' big main deal--that I was socialistic.

Odom: That was his big . . .

Cabell: Well, it wasn't very easy for him to put a socialist or a communist tag on me, who had been president of Texas Manufacturers and Texas Dairy Products Institute, Crime Commission.

Odom: Pretty good relations with the business establishment.

Cabell: Yes, but that and then the fact that I was going . . . he knew that I was working toward a purchase of the transit company, and he fiddled around and ran one of the most inept races you ever saw. We just laughed like hell every time he'd come up with something. This fellow Finley, you know, that owns the Oakland Athletics?

Odom: Oh, yes, Charley Finley.

Cabell: Yes, his bunch was in Kansas City at that time. He came in here, and I met with him at the hotel. He wanted to

bring his franchise to Dallas, but he had the most outrageous demand that I just laughed him out of town. He wanted us to build a stadium, either that or acquire Burnet Field out there and redo it, give him free rent until he had a million fans or paid admissions, keep all the concessions, and the City of Dallas . . . he said, "We'll pay it out, but you can sell revenue bonds and that'll give a lower amortization cost." I said, "I wouldn't have the guts to put a proposition like that before the people of the City of Dallas." I said, "Now we'd love to have the thing, but that's got to walk on its own." I never even said anything about it. I didn't even tell the newspapers. I didn't want to get in a fight with them. Well, he told Charlie about it. Charlie made a big to-do that I could have gotten big league ball for Dallas. You notice he's in with this consortium that brought it now.

Odom: Charles Sharp is?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: Yes, that's right. I remember now.

Cabell: I countered and I said, "Alright. That's right. One of the conditions was that we have beer in Oak Cliff.



Now Charles, in order to get beer at Burnet Park would you move all the big Baptists . . . " he never said any more about big league ball.

Odom: He didn't say any more. Did you say this in public or private?

Cabell: Oh, this was in public. I challenged this on TV. Yes, I said, "I want to know about that. I think the people ought to know that you're willing to pay that price." The other thing was on . . . it was the transit thing. There was an old boy down in Houston that later went completely out, that bought some of these busses and was going to make a big to-do . . . it was a promotion. He was trying to sell a helluva lot of them and get out. But these were not diesel busses like the ones we've got here. So he borrowed one of them. It was serviced down there at Continental Trailways. Of course, that man was very friendly to the old man. He was running it up and down the streets free, up and down Main Street, "Vote for Charles Sharp and get buses like this." So when Sid Pietzsch, my PR man, first saw it he called me up. Oh, he was scared to death. He said, "That's going to create an uproar." I said, "Yes,

yes. Let's just prepare a little ditty about 'One-Bus-Charlie', and ask people if they can be satisfied with his one bus." That had ridiculed him so bad. Then the damn bus broke down three or four times. And so he took that off the street before the election was over.

Odom: One other thing I think you started, or you once proposed, was a Dallas Federal Center built from private funds. What about such a deal as that? You don't know anything about that?

Cabell: No.

Odom: A proposed Federal Center? According to this, it was printed in the newspaper about Sharp: "Republican Makes Serious Mistake By Injecting Partisanship Into The Election."

Cabell: Oh, sure! Sure, sure! He's the one. As mayor I had gone to Washington trying to get this Federal Center off center. They owned the property already. It had been designed. The plans were there. So then he said that he was the great free enterprise man and said that ought not to be done on that. Well, why wouldn't he? They were leasing hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space, federal

offices that moved out as soon as we built the damn building.

Odom: (Chuckle) I see. So let a private concern build it, and it wouldn't get built.

Cabell: If it was his private capital, that was alright.

Odom: I see.

Cabell: Same way with public housing. I wanted it. Now, of course, it's been messed up so badly now that it's a disgrace because up until that time the Housing Authority had some authority. They could evict if people vandalized those places and didn't pay their rent when they should have. They had to have . . . pay a certain amount of rent. Where they were unemployed, they could reduce that rent because the welfare department . . . the Texas Welfare Department . . . was allowing a certain amount in payment for rent. But there was a limit. So the Housing Authority would do that with anybody that got into knife fights, vandalized their stuff. They were evicted. Now the courts won't let you evict them. But that was a clean operation. I wanted to get rid of those slums down in West Dallas, and get rid of a big lot of them.

Odom: How did that issue come out?

Cabell: Well, I lost it.

Odom: Yes, you lost.

Cabell: See, the home builders, who were a very powerful lobby nationally and state-wide, got a rule, a law, through the state legislature that no public housing could be built unless there was a referendum held in that governmental subdivision where it would be held. So they won it. I had no money to finance that election. Oh, the business people that were for me put up about \$25,000. But, man, these home builders, they really poured it on.

Odom: Well, was this a referendum in the entire city of Dallas, or what? Did it have to be for the entire city?

Cabell: That's right. For the entire city, yes. They beat me on that referendum. But they used some of the most damnable tactics. They would take a part of . . . not Highland Park, but of the better residential in Dallas and then circulate that, "Do you want one of these low cost housing units built next door to you?" The old school scare.

Odom: It's not likely that they're going to build them, though, in their district, either. There wasn't any room, was there?

Cabell: No, there wasn't because . . . for another thing, the land was too high even if you wanted to because you had to go . . . and one of the provisions in the law is that it should go to land that is useable . . . I mean that is not saleable, and that's a way of recovering some land. And also to go into an area that is not . . . had not been served with city services because the government guarantees, money is allowed for the paving and the installation of utilities. That meant that the City of Dallas didn't have to put out money for enlarging these big trunk lines, sewer lines, water mains, storm sewers, and paving. It also meant that when the damn home builders go into a subdivision they have to pay for that.

Odom: Oh, they had to pay back the federal government.

Cabell: No, to the city government for the expansion of utilities. So they beat me on that. But the way I got rid of so many of those houses, I got a zoning ordinance through, allowing for some spot zoning for retail purposes or . . . you know, you had those Mexicans, blacks. You're not looking for esthetics down there. You're looking for convenience. Well, now they buy their groceries, generally, or part of them, at least every day. Alright, then what's wrong?

They don't object to it--to a little grocery store on the corner. But again, your big developers don't like that. That's what I'm saying because, see they've got all development, all retail development, tied up together,

Odom: I see.

Cabell: Nobody can put in his own little business stand anymore. It has to go into the package.

Odom: It's a part of the big package.

Cabell: Yes. So that would . . . you could have a beauty shop. You could have a little auto repair if it was done in the backyard. They're always having to work on those cars.

Odom: You probably got support from people that lived in those districts for that reason.

Cabell: Oh, certainly. I did, I did. Also, then, the city's program in extending water service . . . for instance, they will extend the main so many feet per tap at no cost. Then if they had to extend it . . . now, like for a developer, you see, they extend it, but the developer pays the cost because he doesn't have the taps there. But then the city repays him as the taps come on.

But then these tenants in there, they wouldn't . . . the owners of these shacks wouldn't pay for the

connection because it meant a water heater, it meant a tub and a toilet, and they just couldn't pay . . . these poor people couldn't pay for those things. So I worked it out with the city attorney and city manager and slipped it through before most anybody knew what had happened. Then we ran these lines even though we didn't have the taps, and where they couldn't pay for it, we slapped a lien on their property. Then they couldn't sell it until they paid off. See, they were sitting up there . . . they were people that owned block after block of that slum stuff and were sitting up there milking it. They were getting the highest income per dollar of investment of any rental property in the country. So by doing that, by tying that up, then we got those things cleaned up, a lot of them. The same way with paving.

Odom: Yes, it's very similar.

Cabell: See? So we got curbs and gutters and some sidewalks, and we got these water lines in and got bathtubs and cut out a lot of privies. The owner, the landlord, ultimately had to pay for it because, see, as long as that lien was on there it was drawing interest.

Odom: This public housing issue, was it at its peak before that '63 election or was it after?

Cabell: Oh, yes, because, you see, it was that . . .

Odom: Was that the time they held the referendum on you, at that time of the election there?

Cabell: Yes, it was . . . the election was after the referendum because Charles figured that since I had lost the referendum that it was a personal loss, but I was stronger than ever actually because people said, "Well, the guy fights for what he thinks is right." And people who voted against the housing . . . they were not . . . it was not a vote against me personally.

Odom: Did he actually bring in the Republican-Democratic type or sort of tie-in the scheme with national questions or what?

Cabell: Well, rather covertly.

Odom: Covertly.

Cabell: Because, you see, he was a great friend of Bruce Alger, and he knew that I was a threat, and I was a very potential candidate . . .

Odom: Well, had you done anything or said anything of this sort which made them think that, or was it simply just the fact that you had come to be fairly popular as a mayor?

Cabell: There was a lot of demand, a lot of talk about that. During the latter part of my first term, I was approached



by--I would say--twentynety-five of the top business people in Dallas--bankers and whatnot. They wanted to back me whole hog to run against Alger, and I said I wouldn't do it because I certainly was not going to quit in the middle of a first term. I said I just would not consider it. I didn't lock the door for anything after that.

Odom: You didn't see this as any attempt to try to get you out of Dallas, did you (chuckle)?

Cabell: Well . . . (chuckle).

Odom: Since you had been going against the CCA and, perhaps, the Establishment. Although you've never really been against them in that sense.

Cabell: Oh, people might have talked about it, but I don't thing that was too much.

Odom: I just wondered if that crossed your mind at all.

Cabell: I really didn't make up my mind for sure that I was going to run for Congress until the assassination of Kennedy. I realized then the disrepute that Dallas was held in by so many places.

Odom: And Alger helped make for it?

Cabell: That's right. We had these incidents of this small, but very noisy, crowd of agitators of the ultra,

ultra-right. We had a series of those things. Of course, we had that situation in '61 or '62.

Odom: You're talking about that Stevenson incident, or are you talking about another one?

Cabell: No, I'm talking about the incident at the Adolphus Hotel in the presidential election when Johnson and Mrs. Johnson were spat on.

Odom: Oh, yes, in '60 when Mrs. Johnson was insulted. Yes, yes, they were insulted.

Cabell: That was '60.

Odom: Then, in '62, I guess . . . wasn't it in '61 or '62 when Stevenson was . . . it may have been that same election.

Cabell: No, a little bit later. A little bit later. This was not a political meeting. This was in either '62 or early '63. He was here to be the speaker at United Nations Day. Then H. L. Hunt and this kook, McGeehee from out at Irving, remember him?

Odom: Yes, sort of.

Cabell: And somebody else. I've forgotten now . . . had a meeting down there at the auditorium the night previous to that. It was one that was small. That was a briefing session as how to raise hell and heckle. Now this incident of hitting the guy with the poster, I

think, was an accident. In other words, it was there . . . open to it. You know, there was a lot of heckling and heckling. We had given Stevenson a whale of a lot of security, but these people were massed along the sidewalk there as you come out that little theater section of the old auditorium. The cars were parked on Commerce Street and, boy, they were lined up on each side, and waving these placards "Get the U.N. out of the U.S., get the U.S. out of the U.N." and all that sort of thing, and "Red Adlai" and . . . so he was just getting ready to step into the car, and he says, "Let's see what's eating on these people." He broke away from his security. This woman had a placard, and she got to gesturing with this thing and hit him on the shoulder, or might have scratched his face or something like that. I'm convinced that it was inadvertent, but all that made the headlines was that he was struck . . .

Odom: Oh, yes.

Cabell: . . . by this woman. And somebody spat on him.

Odom: Yes.

Cabell: Somebody spat on him. Some old boy out here in Irving. Well, that was in national headlines. Then comes the assassination. Then a lot of our people, by golly, even

wanted to burn Dallas down, turn everybody into salt or something. Nobody'll ever know the nonsense on the assassination.

Odom: I do want to . . . we do want to do a whole interview on that. I think Dr. Marcello wants to go into it in detail, but we'll talk about that a little later.

Cabell: What brought it up . . . of course, it was those things, that background, that made me make up my mind to leave the mayor's office.

Odom: Does the mayor have much to do with determining protection or security like that when important figures come into the city?

Cabell: No, it is not an obligation. It is not one of his assigned duties, put it this way. That comes under the city manager.

Odom: City manager?

Cabell: Then all department heads, you see, are all appointees and are subordinate to the city manager. Actually, the mayor is not an administrator, and he shouldn't be. Too often, we've had those that have assumed that role. Now that's one of the big comments that I have or objections to Eric Jonsson's reign. He was too much like that bull in a china closet. He crossed lines and then he put some of his department heads in bad face. You can't do that!

Odom: I know.

Cabell: If you can't respect a man, if you can't rely on him, you'd better get rid of him.

Odom: Get another one.

Cabell: Administrative power stems from the city manager down. He appoints the chief of police. He appoints the chief of the fire department. He appoints city health officer. He appoints the city engineer. He makes all appointments except the city judges, city attorney, city clerk, and members of the boards.

Odom: The Council and mayor do that?

Cabell: That's right. Not the Council and mayor . . . the mayor appoints for the Council on all except the Housing Authority. That is strictly a mayor's appointment. That's where Wes Wise is balled up right now. He's got some good people on that board that he's maligning.

Odom: On the Housing Board?

Cabell: Yes.

Odom: What is the responsibility of the Housing Board?

Cabell: Well, here it is. The Housing Authority is an adjunct of the City of Dallas. It is recognized by and organized by the City of Dallas as an operating entity for federally financed public housing.

Odom: Oh, I see.

Cabell: Then each of these projects . . . each city, then, as they have approval for the construction of these projects, issues bonds. Now those are tax-free bonds because they're municipal bonds of the Dallas Housing Authority. So therefore your interest charges are less. On top of that they're guaranteed by the federal government. Once the bonds are paid off, then the City of Dallas owns that property. Now by that time the structures are probably useless . . . in many cases before then . . . the way they build some of them. But at least any residual value belongs to the city.

Odom: Right.

Cabell: And the real estate, after it's been improved . . . that is definitely an asset. But, you see, that's something that the home builders don't like. They like to be subsidized and like to get their write-off. Then the residuals are clear profit because of capital gains. I got into almost a fist-swinging fight with Secretary Weaver when he was Secretary of Housing. It was before HUD came in. It was still under HEW, but he was the housing director. He started talking about non-profit people could have these 235 projects and 236's. I said, "I just can't see it." I was on the Banking and Currency Committee at that time, my first year in the office. I

said, "What do you mean non-profit?" "Well, well," he said, "the profit is limited. Maybe I'd better say it's limited." I said, "What's it limited to?" He said, "Well, it's limited to 6 per cent net after the operating expenses." I said, "Yes, but before you figure that net, you've got Uncle George in there as the manager for the project. You've got your drunken brother-in-law in there as the janitor, you've got your family all. You are taking depreciation, and then you're still making 6 per cent on it at no risk. Then when it's paid off they own it. Now if that's non-profit I will eat your hat, sweat band and all." Old man Patman got mad.

Odom: He didn't like that kind of analysis?

Cabell: No, because every time Weaver would say, "Froggie," the old man would thump his little rear on the floor.

Odom: What would Weaver . . . did Weaver just not understand this kind of thing?

Cabell: He understood it, but he was in the control of the Home Builders Association. This National Home Builders thing is a . . . it's one of the most potent lobbies in the United States.

Odom: Oh, I see, I see. I knew they were powerful. Well, that's alright. We're getting a little bit ahead again.

Cabell: Getting ahead. This didn't happen about me. But it's designed in such a way to try to keep politics out of it.

Odom: Yes, the Dallas housing thing.

Cabell: Well, the housing authorities are set up wherever they might be. Unfortunately, in too many cities, and particularly on the eastern seaboard, it became a political pawn. For that reason they've got these projects that are only ten or fifteen years old that are now being demolished because they can't repair them. But essentially, theoretically, it's to get it away from political but with political oversight.

Odom: The mayor, then, is really, as far as the city is concerned, the only one who has direct responsibility for them.

Cabell: And the same thing to an extent is true concerning the Transit Authority. I had that ordinance written to where the mayor of the city would be a member of the board, but could not be the chairman. He would be there. So he was there for observation. He had a vote, but then he could not be chairman and get the gavel to where it could be turned to political . . .

Odom: Right. Does the mayor appoint someone as chairman, or is he chosen by the members of the board on the Authority?



Cabell: Well, I chose the chairman to start with. I don't remember. I'll have to look that up.

Odom: That's alright. I was just curious about that particular thing. I notice here that on January 3, back in '64, you announced your intention to run for Congress. It was on January 1, two days before that that the city took over the Dallas Transit Company. Is there anything else other than the things you mentioned earlier here, the development of the climate in Dallas and the image that Dallas had nationally, that determined you to seek congressional office? You mentioned those things there as factors in your decision to do it. Did you have in mind at any time when you began, you know, started out, to run for mayor that you might run for Congress in your future career or something?

Cabell: No, honestly, I did not. I had stated and had said all along that I would never serve more than two terms. I just don't think that that office ought to be held longer than two terms.

Odom: I agree with you.

Cabell: I had watched . . . and you get into a paternalism. You get . . . the first thing you know, the Council is letting

the mayor make all of the decisions if he's been mayor and has seniority. So then after the assassination and these other things, I could see where the City of Dallas and the people of Dallas were suffering for lack of attention at the federal level. Now I'm very definitely opposed to many, many of these federal spending programs. But I'll be very honest with you, that once they are appropriated then I'm not going to throw mud in the face of the guy who's passing them out. If I can get them for my people, then I think that's the name of the game.

Odom: Yes, that's . . . I have to agree.

Cabell: I have talked and gotten a lot of money for Dallas projects where I voted against the project. My trips to Washington . . . having to get up there and beg for this and . . . no representation. You see, the incumbent, Alger . . . I don't want to say anything against his character, but this is his philosophy--that all he was supposed to do up there was to guard against communism and to stop Russia at the shores. He would never contact a federal agency.

Odom: He just wouldn't do it.

Cabell: He wouldn't do it.

Odom: If you went up there, you couldn't go to him about anything?

Cabell: If I went up there with a serious thing to where I needed to work out something with an agency, he would not go. He would have his secretary call and make an appointment. He would take no interest in it, would not address himself to them in any way. Well, that's no . . . that won't get it. That had . . . well, that was the major thing. That and this accumulation of the image that Dallas had.

Odom: I see. Okay.

Oral History Collection

Earle Cabell

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: June 14, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing former Congressman Earle Cabell for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on June 14, 1974, in Dallas, Texas. I am interviewing Congressman Cabell in order to get his reminiscences and impressions of the Kennedy assassination in Dallas in November, 1963.

Mr. Cabell, when did you first get word that President Kennedy was going to visit Dallas, and how did you receive that word?

Mr. Cabell: Well, the official word was not too many days ahead of the actual visit. It would have been, oh, not more than a week or ten days prior to November 22. Of course, we were delighted. We wanted to show that Dallas was not as some people had claimed and terrific preparations were made by various citizen's groups. The Chamber of Commerce and the Dallas Citizen's Council joined as sponsors and hosts for a big luncheon that was set up for the Trade Mart.

Marcello: Who told you of the pending visit? How were you informed or notified about it?

Cabell: As I recall, it was through the papers, and I don't recall any real formal notice on it. Of course, as soon as it became known that he would be here, then I immediately worked with the city manager, and through him with the police department, on making all of the necessary arrangements for the security of the President. (I was informed by the City Manager who had been contacted by the Secret Service for Security measures. This was prior to general publication.)

Marcello: Essentially, were you in charge of the local arrangements as the chief executive of the city of Dallas?

Cabell: No, no. The idea was to get politics out of it entirely, and that this was strictly a citizen . . . nonpolitical welcome to the President and the First Lady.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that basically it was the Citizens . . .

Cabell: Citizens Council . . .

Marcello: Citizens Council and Chamber of Commerce.

Cabell: . . . which is a civic club, yes, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Marcello: How come those two in particular were asked to take care of the preparations?

Cabell: Well, you had all of the business leaders in Dallas included in those organizations. Then they were large enough to undertake all of the necessary preparations, the publicity, and the like.

Marcello: What specific individuals within those organizations had a great deal to do with the preparations?

Cabell: Erik Jonsson, who later became mayor of Dallas, and Bob Cullum. As I recall, Bob was the president of the Chamber of Commerce at that time, and Erik was chairman of the Citizens Committee. Then, of course, you had the publishers of both newspapers.

Marcello: I think R. L. Thornton was in it.

Cabell: John Stemmons, Thornton. Was this before . . . I believe this was after Thornton's death, wasn't it? I'm not sure.

Marcello: According to Manchester's book, he says that Thornton did play a role in setting up the arrangements and so on.

Cabell: My memory's not clear on that. But I'm sure that if he did, he took an active part, of course.

Marcello: What part did John Connally play in the Dallas preparations? Now, of course, at this time, he was the Governor of Texas.

Cabell: That's correct. Well, he took no particular part in the local preparations. He was traveling with the entourage.

Marcello: Do you have any knowledge as to whether or not he met with the citizens group that was making the local arrangements prior to Kennedy's visit?

Cabell: I don't know that there was an actual visit. I'm sure that there were telephone conversations back and forth.

Marcello: You talked awhile ago about Dallas', shall we say, unsavory reputation in certain circles during this period. What are you exactly referring to?

Cabell: Oh, I was referring to that very unfortunate incident involving Adlai Stevenson when he was here a short time before on U. N. Day and made an U. N. address. Then this was to be the first trip of the Vice-President and former Senator Johnson to Dallas since that very shameful incident down there at the Adolphus Hotel.

Marcello: This is when he and Lady Bird were jostled around somewhat?

Cabell: That's right. That was during the campaign of 1960. Some of the effete eastern press got the idea--and

they were always looking for a scapegoat--that Dallas was a seething bed of hate and prejudice and that sort of thing. So certainly, every effort was made to allay those misconceptions.

Marcello: How did you view those incidents involving the Johnsons and Mr. Stevenson? Did you simply believe that this was the work of some--what shall we say--lunatic fringe or extreme group?

Cabell: A lunatic fringe, just exactly. The sad part of it is that, while they were such a minuscule minority, they were loud and some were influential to where good people stood back and didn't say anything about it.

Marcello: A lot of people . . . I think that during this people . . . the John Birch Society was also rather strong in Dallas. Did they have any role in these incidents or anything of this nature? Do you know?

Cabell: For instance, on the night preceding the speech on the U. N. Observance by Mr. Stevenson at the auditorium, there had been a meeting of that group. This fanatic in Irving--I can't think of his name at the moment--but he had initiated what he called the National Indignation Conference. Do you remember that?

Marcello: Yes.



Cabell: Indignant about everything (chuckle). Then some others had a meeting there, and it was for one reason and one only. It was to plan the heckling. Now not a physical encounter, but a heckling. People were dispersed in the audience the following night. Of course, when you incense or stimulate that kind of mind, there is no stopping them at any particular point. They became loud and ugly, very ugly.

But there was no physical contact until they were leaving the theater section of the auditorium. Ample security had been furnished Mr. Stevenson. Just before he got into the car someone screamed something at him. He wheeled and said, "I want to find out what's eating on these people." He got away from his security for a moment. A woman who had a placard in her hands gestured with this placard, and the pasteboard hit Mr. Stevenson. Now it was a glancing thing. It was intentional insofar as striking.

Now there had been . . . there was one incident where a man, a young man, had spat on him. He was immediately arrested and was fined in court a few days later. But that got the headlines.

Then, of course, there was still the memories of that incident of where some fine young people . . . these

were mostly young women at the Adolphus that day. They got so overcome that they were jostling, and it is my understanding--I was not there--that one or two of them spat on or spat at Mrs. Johnson. It was a pretty ugly affair. Now that, of course, again got national press. The unfortunate part of it was that the then incumbent congressman was with the group, and they printed a picture of him standing on the curb with this group around him and this mob in the street. He was holding a sign that said, "Turncoat Johnson! Go Back!" That's where all of that false type of thing, that indictment of the city, originated.

Marcello: What congressman was this? Alger?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: What sort of a job is it to make preparations for the visit of the President of the United States?

Cabell: Well, it's extremely complicated. Now, of course, the Secret Service immediately assumes command. Your local police, whether it be city police or state police, subordinate themselves and subordinate their control through the Secret Service officer in charge. The local Secret Service agent in charge was a Mr. Sorrels, who had been

here for many years, a very fine person. There was a man sent down from Washington several days ahead who was in charge. Now I met . . . I was in contact, of course, with the city manager and with the chief of police to make sure they were cooperating. And they were, no question about that.

I had two meetings with the Secret Service people in attendance. One was checking on the initial preparations, and then the last one just the day before the arrival of the President was to run a checklist with them to see that everything had been done. I specifically asked the agent in charge, "Now have you had all of the cooperation? Have you been assigned all of the men from the Dallas police department that you want?" He said, "More than we wanted." He said, "As a matter of fact, they had detailed fifty more officers to my command than I have requested." The question arose, "Well, what about men up on rooftops and in windows of the buildings?" The man said, "Well, there are not enough officers in the United States to put one behind every window. We'll pass and have them on every roof." Now he said, "The history of such assassinations or attempts has not been anyone that is sniping from afar.

.

It's a man who pushes into the crowd maybe with a paper sack or a lunch box. When he gets up to the car, he pulls out a gun and shoots. That is what we have to be more careful of than anything." I'll always remember that particular statement of his. May I say at this point-- and we'll cover that later in the dialogue--that that fifty extra men caused the death of the police officer who was killed on that day.

Marcello: In other words, he was one of those that originally had been assigned to guard the place?

Cabell: No, in the areas that were considered quiet areas, not hard crime areas, the extra man was taken out of the patrol cars. They were working alone, which is never a good idea. Well, I'll think of his name in a minute-- Tibbitts. This officer spotted the man. He had gotten the radio broadcast of a description of the man they were looking for. He jumped out of his patrol car and ran and asked the man for identification. Then he (Oswald) whipped out a pistol and shot him between the eyes. Now if there had been two men in that squad car, it wouldn't have been possible. I'm getting a little ahead of myself on that. Nevertheless, every possible precaution had been taken.

Marcello: Now during these initial meetings, was this also when the President's route was established?

Cabell: The route was not made known, as I recall, until about two days before the motorcade. It was not broadcast then. It was made known only to the police in order to know where to spot their men.

Marcello: Was this standard procedure?

Cabell: Yes, it's my understanding that it is. Now it was not announced to the general public until the morning of his arrival. It might have been on the afternoon preceding but not sooner than that.

Marcello: On the route that the motorcade was to follow, what areas were particularly sighted as being potential danger spots?

Cabell: Only very possibly downtown where you had large numbers of people closer and would be moving in closer to the caravan. On the streets going out . . . now the route taken was from Love Field to Mockingbird, left on Mockingbird to Lemmon, south on Lemmon to Turtle Creek, which leads into Cedar Springs. Then I have forgotten whether we went down Akard or Harwood. But then it went west on Commerce to Houston Street, made the right turn, which would be north on Houston Street, two blocks to Elm and left then and under the underpass. Actually, we would not have gone under that underpass because . . . well, it would have gone under the railroad underpass before going up on Stemmons to go out to the Trade Mart.

Marcello: What sort of a reception did you think that President Kennedy would receive in Dallas?

Cabell: We thought it would be good. Actually, it was beyond all expectations. I've ridden in lots of parades in Dallas, but never in my experience have I ever experienced nor heard of a welcome as genuine as this welcome was.

I remember one incident . . . they . . . well, the whole course was lined with people, now sparsely out in the residential area, of course. But I recall one incident so clearly at Loma Alta and Lemmon just after we went under the railroad tracks there, the underpass. A lot of people were there, and there was one group of young girls. I imagine they were a class from one of the Catholic schools. There was a nun with them. They surged out and the President had them stop the car. He shook hands with some of them and spoke to them.

There was only one spot in the whole line where there was any ugliness at all. That was on Cedar Springs going up the hill under the KATY Railroad overpass. Well, this was the underpass in this case. There were, oh, a half a dozen people with signs like . . . had to do with the black situation. Nothing obscene. The only thing . . . there was one man, young man, sitting up on top of

a Volkswagon that had a snarling, surly look on him. That was the only thing. The rest of it was just absolutely fantastic.

Marcello: In his book, Manchester seems to take some snipes at Chief Curry from time to time, implying that perhaps that Curry wasn't exactly the most competent police chief around. What are your feelings toward this?

Cabell: Well, let me tell you something! I think that one of the unsung chapters in that whole affair was the fact that the capture of Oswald was one of the greatest pieces of police work in the whole history of the nation. Of course, that thing just ruined Curry. I mean, he just came all to pieces after that. I can well understand it, but it's wrong, criminal, for anyone to criticize Chief Curry for anything to do with that.

Marcello: Also, getting back to the preparations again, how much time does this consume, let's say, so far as the mayor of Dallas is concerned?

Cabell: Not an awful lot of time because the others were taking care of the seating arrangements and the food. So whatever was required of me was insofar as something that involved city hall.

Marcello: Why was the Trade Mart established as the meeting place as opposed to any other particular location?

Cabell: Well, at that time it was one of the largest halls that could be set up for a thing like that. The other is that John Stemmons and Trammell Crow gave it without cost. The other thing was that it was ideally located for making the circle from Love Field to the Trade Mart and back to Love Field because they were on a very tight schedule.

Marcello: This is very interesting. I hadn't realized that the Trade Mart had been offered or given free of charge by these individuals.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: How was it determined who would be invited to attend the banquet and the speeches at the Trade Mart.

Cabell: Of course, the business leaders and the political leaders of both parties--Republicans weren't left out by any means--and civic leaders of the community.

Marcello: Manchester also makes quite a bit over the fact that no labor leaders were included. Is he correct on this, or do you know anything about this?

Cabell: No, there were. There were labor leaders included. In fact, there were a number of them. That Manchester thing



was one of the most biased books that I have ever seen insofar as distortion of the truth is concerned. It was so rank that as soon as it came out--and I had a chance to read any portion of it--I prepared a rebuttal and had a . . . by that time, you see, I was in Washington in Congress. I had a press conference at which time I went over this rebuttal on those things that were so vile and so absolutely preposterous and had tremendous coverage on it, I was glad to say, not for my sake but for the sake of Dallas.

Marcello: What in particular did you find rather repugnant about what Manchester had to say about Dallas and the Kennedy assassination in general?

Cabell: Well, in the first place every reference that he made to Dallas and to the Dallas police force was a Keystone Cop sort of a reference, that is, it was a bunch of amateurs, and that the people were a bunch of louts. He had that East Coast syndrome that nobody from Texas could be anything but a country bumpkin. Then his description of what happened in the hospital was just outlandish, inaccurate and completely untrue.

Marcello: Is there anything else in Manchester's book that you feel is wrong?

Cabell: Well, I think that there are a couple of things that he said that require some detailed refutation. These are not necessarily chronological, but all happened during the period when the President was out at Parkland Hospital. He said that there was a fight between some of the attendants and some of the FBI people, I believe he said. Well, there almost was some fisticuffs between some of the "Irish Mafia" that had shouldered their way into the operating room and who were, in the first place, trying to snatch the body out without proper clearance. Under the state law, a person who died a violent death cannot be moved out of the state without a clearance from the governor or the attorney general or until after an autopsy has been made. Well, here we were-- the lieutenant governor was out of the state. The attorney general, we didn't know where he was. The governor was upstairs in the operating room at the point of death.

Dallas had recently . . . the state legislature had recently passed a statute setting up and providing for a medical examiner in cities of certain population. They would handle the forensic medicine for that area. Dallas had not appointed, at that time, a medical

examiner. Under the old law a justice of the peace could handle it.

So when the Secret Service man came over to me . . . see, I stayed in that anteroom the entire time until the body was taken out. He asked me if I could suggest anything. I said, "Yes, let me see if we can get by with getting a justice of the peace certification." Of course, it was impossible to get to a telephone. The news people had them all tied up. So I ran outside and grabbed the microphone off of a police motorcycle, got the dispatcher, told him who I was, and I said, "Get on the air and get me a justice of the peace out here as quickly as you can." Well, this justice of the peace by the name of Brown--he was no kin, I don't believe, to Judge Brown that later handled that Ruby case--heard it, was not far from there, and was there very quickly. So then he contacted Henry Wade, which was proper. He was the district attorney. He said, "Yes, I think it would be alright."

Still we had to get--and the hospital had to have this--a release of the body, which all Mrs. Kennedy had to do was scratch something and that was it. They made a big to-do about that.

Then they said that the body was held up for a long time because we had an ordinance here that a body couldn't be carried in an ambulance. It was erroneous to begin with. Number two, they had a brand new Cadillac funeral coach sitting there ready.

Another thing was that they said that the mortician demanded money before he'd release the body. I was standing right there. Little old O'Neal was beside himself trying to do anything they wanted. He had some trouble collecting later, which I worked out for him. They just said, "Send the finest casket you have," and he did. As you well know, a mortician's whole pricing structure is based on the casket. So I worked it out with him in my office, and the administrator of General Services Administration, a reasonable price there. But what I didn't want, I didn't want that casket to get out on some carnival circuit, and that was worked out.

But the whole tenor of Manchester's book was along that line. Then, of course, your man Lane came along with a book. This was after the Warren report came out. He had theories just way out. But for my book the Warren Report--now I'm talking about their findings--I'll stand by it. Now what these other people

have done have been to take the transcripts of the hearings because they had hundreds of people who thought they saw something or thought they heard something. Of course, they listened to it. It was recorded but then could not be verified. That's where all the side expose's of the inaccuracy of the Warren Report came in. They were watching the Warren Report. But it's just in the record and completely unsubstantiated.

Marcello: At one point Manchester also says that steps were taken to keep the turnout for the President minimal.

Cabell: That was the rankest lie that has ever been told! All the papers gave it tremendous publicity, the radio-- all media.

Marcello: You mentioned, for example, that members of the host committee allegedly opposed the motorcade, for example.

Cabell: There was some doubt voiced. Remember this. There was all this talk that generated elsewhere than from here. There were a few souls who were afraid that something would happen. That was the thing. It wasn't because they didn't want the President.

Marcello: He also makes a point of saying that the local newspapers, more particularly, the Dallas Morning News,

was greatly responsible for the "air of hysteria," to use his words, that was present in Dallas around that time.

Cabell: He's wrong about that. The Dallas News has always been a very conservative paper. It did not agree with many of the policies of President Kennedy, and who did? I mean, what group 100 per cent did, is the point I'm making. But I think it's (Manchester's comment) strictly erroneous, false, to say that it was encouraged by anything that was written or published by the Dallas Morning News.

Marcello: Another point that he makes--and I would like to get your comments on this--he does not really believe that Oswald was a loner. In other words, what he says in his book is that--I'm referring to Manchester, of course--the climate, the environment, in Dallas was such that it would influence a loner such as Oswald to do what he did.

Cabell: That's about as far-fetched as anything I can think of! Here's a man . . . of course, we're all experts sometimes in second-guessing something that's already happened. But the record shows that his wife was living with these people in Irving. While they were

semi-estranged, he still wanted to be close by. He had played out his string everywhere else he had been. He tried to get money from various groups. He was bound to have gotten fifty bucks here or fifty there. There's absolutely no record of where he got any real sustaining sum. I've talked to FBI people who were on that, and the Warren commission people, and they just couldn't find . . . and they hunted and tried to find it. They tried to find any connection. They did know where he had been in New Orleans and was trying to collect money for this Cuban relief thing.

Now I'm going to stick my neck out here. You don't have to hold it back. I hate to talk about a dead man, but the man who is the most responsible for the death of John F. Kennedy was his brother, Bobby Kennedy, who was then the attorney general and who was the titular head of the FBI. Now I'll tell you why I say that.

Marcello: I was going to ask you to elaborate.

Cabell: I'll tell you exactly why I say that. This is documented. The FBI knew that Oswald was in Dallas. We did not. We had no occasion. He had never violated

a law. He had never been picked up in Dallas. So the Dallas police were unaware of Oswald, knew nothing of this Cuban thing, knew nothing of his sojourn in Russia.

But there was a man by the name of Hosty, an FBI agent, who was sent to Dallas. But do you know what his mission was? It was to tail Mrs. Oswald and determine if she was being harassed by anyone because of her Russian birth! And yet, they knew Oswald's background. Had we known of the existence of Oswald, we would have had him up and probably would have had a tail on him every minute. We had tails on men from Denton--some of your people at the school, if you'd be interested in knowing that (chuckle).

Marcello: (Chuckle) I would be interested in that, sure.

Cabell: I'm not going to give any names, but I'll tell you the circumstances.

Marcello: Sure.

Cabell: We set out and went through the files. The FBI and the Secret Service turned over to us the names of anyone who had written scurrilous letters, had been in any of these student or non-student bashes, and we very carefully checked everyone of them out. There was a half



a dozen or more that were told it would not be healthy for them to be seen in Dallas on that day, that if they were smart they'd stay out of Dallas, and they stayed out.

Marcello: How did you come across this information concerning Robert Kennedy sending the FBI agent to check if Mrs. Oswald was harassed?

Cabell: Well, it came out. It came out through FBI sources. Now Hosty was made a goat of. He was demoted and sent somewhere else. He came to the Dallas police station-- they are now in the City Hall--about three or four hours after we had Oswald in jail with a dossier on "Brother" Oswald. But he said, "I wasn't told anything like that."

Marcello: That's an interesting point, and I think it certainly needs to be part of the record.

Cabell: Well, it damn sure is true!

Marcello: Manchester also characterizes Chief Curry as being "bland and ineffective."

Cabell: I don't want to agree with that! I won't say that Curry was a J. Edgar Hoover. He was a good officer. His men liked him. He was not a man with a great deal of initiative, but he ran a good shop. Manchester was just trying to hunt for a goat, trying to pin it on somebody,

when he makes a statement like that. That's an irresponsible statement. Now I will say this, that Curry pretty well came apart after the terrific pressure and all of these things that were said. That, of course, led to his resignation from the department.

Marcello: He also had some uncomplimentary things from time to time to say about you in his book.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: He makes a point of mentioning that you allegedly attended the organizational meeting of the John Birch Society, although you, yourself, did not join.

Cabell: Sure. There were some people at that time . . . I was extremely active in the Texas Manufacturers Association. A good friend of mine who has since died said, "There's a man going to be here that's got some ideas about conservative, good government practices and principles you might want to listen to." That meeting was held at the Adolphus Hotel. There wasn't any "hush-hush" or anything like that. There were about a dozen people there. He didn't use any name or anything. He just said they were a group trying to get together. I said, "Well, we've got a duplication of things we're doing now. We've got a business-type lobby." So we disapproved it. I mean,

we didn't know anything about it. That was just duplication, so we didn't fool with it anymore. I suspected later that that was the organizational meeting of the Birch Society. I didn't want any part of that. You can be of a conservative nature and bend without being a damn fool!

Marcello: He also makes a point of saying that brutal death was a way of life in Dallas. In other words, I think he's referring to the murder rate and things of this nature at the time.

Cabell: It is about the same as in lots of other cities. Any is too much. It's like during that period following the assassination when some man, jackass, from London wrote a piece that he said there was an aura, almost a smell, of death lurking on the streets. Now can you imagine that! He sent me a clipping on that. I wrote his paper. I think I had somebody from the Dallas News write it, showing what damn fools they were to print that. You know--you can leave this on there--that period put the Press Club in business. They were the only bar in Downtown Dallas under a club system, you see, and all of the visiting press . . . their membership cards would be honored or they were sold temporary cards.

There was just day after day where a number of those syndicated writers, such as the great god on the air . . . Eric Severeid would lay up there either in the Hilton Hotel or in the Press Club drunk as hell, never get around to City Hall, and then would send in a story.

Marcello: Did Manchester ever interview you personally in regard to what happened?

Cabell: No. I wouldn't know him if I saw him.

Marcello: Well, I think this more or 'less brings us up to the actual arrival of Kennedy himself, but there's one other question I want to ask you. Now supposedly during this period one of the purposes of Kennedy's visit to Texas was to heal the breach between Yarborough and Connally. Now do you know anything about that split in the Democratic Party during this period?

Cabell: No. Ostensibly, it was supposed to have been to heal the breach between Johnson and Yarborough. It was done to . . . the visit was made to raise the sagging popularity of President Kennedy in Texas. Now that was the whole story. It was done for Kennedy's benefit. I think that there are other places on the record where you will find that Mrs. Kennedy was going to stay in Washington, and she was told that she'd better come along because people would be more interested in seeing her

than they would her husband. That may be a callous thing to say at this time, but we're talking about events leading up to that assassination. But it was no effort to heal any breach there. I mean, that had been tried many times before because Johnson and Yarborough were just like that.

Marcello: What was the difficulty between Johnson and Yarborough? Was it a matter of patronage and things of this nature?

Cabell: Yes. This happened on the . . . you see, the first stop of the President's plane was Houston. It got there in the afternoon for a dinner, as I recall. It could have been a luncheon and then coming up. But anyhow, Yarborough said he wouldn't ride the same car with the Vice-President. So he held up the motorcade for quite some time until they got him a private car. On the plane going from Houston to Fort Worth, where they spent the night, the President called Mr. Yarborough in and in the presence of some witnesses said, "You either go to ride with the Vice-President tomorrow in Dallas, or you're going to walk." So he rode with Johnson.

Marcello: Well, what part does John Connally play in this business between Yarborough and Johnson?

Cabell: Well, Connally and Johnson were always good friends. But, you see, the ideological poles of Connally and Yarborough were opposites. I don't know of any open breaks that there were, but, you see, Yarborough has never been any respecter of persons. He'll pop off and downgrade anybody if he thinks it will raise his prestige.

Marcello: Okay, so this more or less brings us up to the visit itself to Dallas. From this point I'm going to let you describe in your own words what happened from the time Kennedy landed until the actual assassination took place, and we'll follow it right on through from there.

Cabell; The touchdown of the President was supposed to have been shortly before twelve o'clock.

Marcello: Up to this time was everything going pretty normally?

Cabell: We had a briefing session out at Erik Jonsson's house at ten o'clock. Everybody more or less knew their place in the welcoming reception line. So we were out there. The morning was threatening. It was damp, and occasional little drizzle. That made us all pretty heart-sick. We got out to the airport, and lo and behold, just about ten minutes before Air Force One was due to land, the skies cleared up and it was a beautiful day.

Marcello: Who was in this reception committee at the airport?  
You perhaps can't remember all of the names.

Cabell: I can't remember all of them. Of course, there was the . . . Cullum and Erik Jonsson, some political leaders, both men and women. I can't help you there. That list is available, I'm sure. But Mr. Johnson came in with the press plane. Vice-President Johnson landed first so that he was the first one up when the door was opened to greet the President and Mrs. Kennedy. Then he introduced them down the line.

Marcello: Now where was John Connally? Was he on the Presidential plane?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: As chief executive of the State of Texas that would be proper, I suppose.

Cabell: That's correct, yes. Of course, I'll never forget that when they got to us, Mrs. Cabell had this gorgeous bouquet of red roses she gave to Mrs. Kennedy. The Vice-President said, "Mr. President, Earle here is the one that got those skies opened up for you." The President made some remark about, "Well, you Texans have a habit of getting things done," or some such triviality, but just a little nicety.

Marcello: Is this the first time that you had ever met the President?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: What were your impressions?

Cabell: Well, the man was magnetic in his personality. I think he was a good man. I think he was a good man. I think he meant well, if he could have gotten rid of Bobby a long time before. As you can tell, I didn't have any use in Bobby. But, no, I think that John Kennedy, while he would have gone down in history as probably one of the most inept presidents, even though he had a beautiful knack of getting public acclaim and affection. He was warm, outgoing, handsome. But he couldn't get a program through. He would never have been able to get the program through as President Johnson did. I'm saying this in kindness. I'm not saying this in criticism. But he was a delightful person. But unfortunately, he had surrounded himself with as big a bunch of jackasses as the world has ever known, unless it would be the group that Mr. Nixon has surrounded himself with!

But then going on, the cars for the Presidential party and the Vice-President were inside the gates with several other cars in the motorcade, and then others,



press and so forth, were outside. So the President was asked if he wanted the bubble put on his car and he said, "No." A big heavy plexiglass bubble went in the rear section. He said, "No," and he stopped and shook hands with a lot of people whose hands stuck out through the chain-link fence. We took off then and were running a little late. I think the luncheon was scheduled for 12:30. It was almost 12:30 then.

Of course, there was a motorcycle preceding the first car, then the sheriff and the chief of police in the lead car, then the Presidential car. With the President was Governor Connally and Nellie. Then came the Vice-Presidential car with Senator and Mrs. Yarborough. Then a station wagon with Secret Service people, then the car in which Mrs. Cabell and I and Congressman Roberts from McKinney were riding. Then, of course, the others were strung out. So as I narrated earlier, the motorcade in its progress downtown and on to the direction of the Trade Mart was beautiful, absolutely beautiful.

Marcello: Did you seem to feel that President Kennedy was receiving a warm welcome from what you could observe of the crowd along the way?

Cabell: Oh, it was heartening! It was heart-warming! Gosh, it made me feel awful good, I'll tell you, because I was so anxious that everything did go off right.

Marcello: Probably there's no way that you could avoid thinking of what had happened to Governor Stevenson and the Johnsons earlier.

Cabell: Yes, and even without that you feel a responsibility when the President of the United States, the Vice-President of the United States, governor of the state are right there bunched together in two cars. You couldn't help but be apprehensive.

But just as we got to start the turn at Elm and Houston Streets, just as we were facing the School Book Depository . . . I was sitting in the front with the driver. This was the little convertible. Mrs. Cabell was sitting behind the driver, and Congressman Roberts was seated behind me. Well, I had my back turned, you see, to the buildings.

Mrs. Cabell was looking directly in that direction. And there was . . . they heard this loud "bang." Mrs. Cabell said, "Oh, Earle!" and she tried to say, "A gun!" I said, "Oh, oh, it must be a big firecracker." Of course, I swung back around looking toward the direction that the shot came from. There was no question to the direction of it. Ray said, "My God! That's a .30-.30 or a 30.06!" He's a good hunter, and most of us know the

sounds of those various loads. Then the other two shots popped or rattled off fast even before we got to looking because we didn't know where to look.

Marcello: Now you really couldn't see the Presidential car from where you were?

Cabell: Oh, it was down. We could see people running down there, you see? We couldn't see because they were in the dip. I saw a man throw a child down and fall down on top of him. It was pandemonium! The lawn there was covered with people there were just sitting there.

So then the caravan stopped at that first shot instead of taking off like a spotted ape. It stopped momentarily. Then it took off. So we couldn't tell whether any was hit or not.

Marcello: In other words, at this point you had no idea about anything other than the fact that there were some shots and that there was panic.

Cabell: No. We could see some confusion in the Presidential car by that time. We got up on Stemmons. Ray said, "Well, if we turn off at the Trade Mart, it's alright. If we don't, we're headed for Parkland." That, of course, is where we were. But Mrs. Cabell saw the gun. She couldn't see behind, but she could see this

gun, this gun barrel, and it so was stated to the Warren Commission.

So then we got to Parkland. I jumped out, Ray jumped out. The two limosines had been pulled into the ambulance slips. I told Mrs. Cabell to wait in the car. I helped lift John Connally out of the car and get him on the carriage and then started on in with him. Others then picked up the President. It was pretty obvious that he had to be dead or dying because you could see that a whole portion of his head was blown out. But I went on in.

Marcello: Was Mrs. Kennedy there at that time?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: What sort of a state was she in?

Cabell: State of shock. Terribly bloody because he fell over into her lap. In the emergency section that we went into there is a vestibule, almost a T-shaped vestibule. At the top of the T is a glassed-in office with telephones. Then from down the riser of that T there are four emergency operating rooms, two on each side. Numbers one and three on one side and two and four on the other side. In operating room number one they had the President. Of course, no one was allowed in there except the doctors. In two was the governor.

Mrs. Kennedy was given a chair, and she was sitting outside just almost in a daze. I brought a chair over for Nellie Connally.

Marcello: How was she holding up during this whole affair?

Cabell: She was just almost in a daze, too. I asked her if I could do anything for her, and she said, "Earle, please get hold of Garrison, Homer Garrison, head of the Texas Department of Public Safety. Have him get the girls from school." Also, one of the Johnson girls was in school. I forget whether it was Lucy or Linda. Nellie said, "Take them all to the mansion, and please keep them under guard." I ran in and the press hadn't taken over everything quite then. They had most of it, but I knew of a little telephone in a little side office that the police used. It was a direct line to City Hall. So I got them to put me through to Homer Garrison immediately, which they did. By that time he knew something had happened. I told him what happened and about Nellie, and he said he'd get on that right away. About that time Bill Stinson, who was an aide for Governor Connally, came in and picked up the conversation with Garrison. I went back into the room then.

Marcello: All of this time, what was the Irish Mafia doing?

Cabell: Well, they were coming in. Oh, they were busting in! They were getting in everybody's way and acting like the perfect jackasses they were.

Marcello: What were some of the things they were doing?

Cabell: Well, by the time it was pretty well ascertained that the President was dead. Then they just took charge and were just going to take the body out whether anybody wanted to let them or not, ignoring everybody else. They even ignored Johnson, you know, after he was sworn in. They treated him like he was an interloper or maybe like he had committed the crime. They were the most ill-mannered bunch of hogs that I have ever seen in my life! That's about the best I can say for them.

Marcello: Now at this time yet, had you had the official word that the President was dead?

Cabell: Oh . . .

Marcello: Obviously, you had felt that he was dead, like you said before.

Cabell: Yes, by that time I think the word had passed around that he was dead. Oh, there's another thing that this jackass Manchester said. He said that a Catholic priest,

an old priest, came over and tried to fondle Mrs. Kennedy. There was an old priest, superannuated priest, who was a chaplain at Ursuline Academy. Not Father Huber, who is the parish priest at this one right up here--not Christ the King (Holy Trinity) but anyhow, this church right up here on the hill--had come in and administered provisionally the Last Rites. I guess you know what that means. In other words, they were pretty well sure he was dead. It was done in case that any life was there. And this old man, fine, sweet, old man, came up . . . by that time Mrs. Cabell had been brought in and asked to sit by Mrs. Kennedy. I can't think of the old priest's name at the moment, but he came to me, and he said, "I have a relic, an authentic relic, that I'd like to give Mrs. Kennedy," And I said, "I'm sure she would appreciate it," and walked over there, and Mrs. Cabell introduced him to Mrs. Kennedy. He just sat there. She got up and let him sit down, and he just sat there a couple or three minutes, gave her this little relic, said a prayer or two, patted her on the shoulder, and walked out. This was the trying to push something on her, and I think that he allegedly made some other efforts--that he stole the Bible from her or something. That's some more "Manchesterisms." But I saw that whole thing. It's not hearsay.

Marcello: Go ahead now and pick up the story then from where we were.

Cabell: Well, by that time they had ordered . . . the casket and funeral coach from the mortician . . . the contract with the city . . . the morticians and ambulance contracts at that time with the city were Dudley-Hughes over in Oak Cliff and O'Neal on this side. So they'd called O'Neal, and he brought the casket and had recommended--and they said they should--just preliminary attention and just mainly cleaning up prior to going on their way, which was advisable before flying on to Washington. The body was just encased in a plastic bedcover and placed in a casket. Then after they left, then they were diverted and told to shoot straight to Air Force One.

Again, this business about the coach and the ambulance. So after they had gone then we were told by the Secret Service people . . . by that time the members of the Texas delegation who were there were leaving . . . they'd all gotten to the hospital by then. They were needing transportation and to get out to Air Force One. Their clothes were on it, bags and everything. So I commandeered a station wagon that belonged to one of the TV stations. With the car we



had, we went over to Southwest Airmotive, where they told us the takeoff was supposed to be. They had already strung emergency power lines and emergency phone lines there for any TV stuff.

Lo and behold, we got over there and Air Force One had been moved over to the west side and was loading up. So I got hold of the PR man for Southwest Airmotive and asked him . . . and, of course, they had direct contact with the control tower. I told him to get hold of the airport police and get me a car over there immediately to lead us across the field to let these people out. Of course, there was absolutely no movement allowed on that airport whatsoever. We had come in, of course, from Lemmon Avenue, you see. So they arranged that very quickly and let us across to where they could get on Air Force One.

So I didn't try to go up on the plane. I didn't see any purpose in adding to the confusion. So I was standing just inside the gate when Chief Curry and Judge Hughes came down the ramp together, came by. Judge Hughes went on to her car, and he was shaking his head. He says, "Well, this is a terrible end to a beautiful start," or some such words.

I said, "Well, I hope we can get him." He said, "Well, I just got word that one of our officers has been killed." He says, "We feel like it's a connection, but we don't know yet." Then, of course, it was just a matter of almost minutes before they had Oswald.

Now I mentioned how Oswald was first located. When he shot Tibbitts, he ran and ran into the Texas Theater on Jefferson Avenue and ran in an exit. The little girl, cashier, had a transistor radio there and had been listening to this and heard about the officer being killed because it wasn't . . . fortunately somebody came along and found him lying there in the police car and they called in. When this man ran in, she called the police. But there was just a series of quick thinking and good thinking on the part of people.

So they immediately converged. Half the officers in Dallas surrounded that thing. But they didn't dare go in there and start doing any shooting. Time magazine said, "In a shootout in the Texas Theater . . ." The men posted themselves in the dark--the police--around the theater. And then on a signal the lights came on. Oswald was right there by this fellow McDonald . . . I saw him on the street . . . he came up and spoke to me just a few days ago, an officer. Oswald pulled down on

him with his gun. The officer grabbed the gun and his thumb went in between the firing pin and the hammer. Well, of course, it just cut the hell out of his thumb. But he wrestled that gun from him and then slapped Oswald over the head with it, which was the only thing he could do. Again, that was police brutality that was charged. There was the blazing gunfight in the news. Now if that wasn't a beautiful piece of police work, I'll pay for lying!

Marcello: What were your own feelings when you finally heard that they had the alleged assassin?

Cabell: Oh, man! I was just delighted, of course, ecstatic! Then to see on the TV and watch him get shot by this insane idiot, Ruby! That's when all hell broke loose. Again, this is when Mark Lane went crazy and traced his whole thing to a bizarre plot--Ruby was told to kill Oswald and all this so Oswald wouldn't say anything and all that kind of business.

Marcello: I would assume that during this period you must have been hounded and badgered by the press.

Cabell: Oh, constantly! Letters and telegrams were pouring in. "You dirty dog!" "You killed our President!" "You so-in-so!" "You hated people!" "You should burn Dallas down!" "You should do this!"

Marcello: In other words, these were more or less personal letters directed to you.

Cabell: To the mayor, yes. I had one (chuckle) series from the same man, telegrams, that started at about 6:00 p.m. in New York. I got four from him. They ran about 6:00, 10:00, 12:00, and 2:00 a.m. You could tell from the wording that he was having many drinks or many beers in between each telegram. If it wasn't so rotten it's be funny (chuckle).

Marcello: How many letters of this type did you receive altogether? Can you estimate it?

Cabell: Oh, hundreds of them! I turned them all over to the Dallas Public Library. They've got them. Then immediately after the shooting of Oswald by Ruby, the FBI in Oklahoma City got a tip that the plane I was to be on to fly to Washington for the President's funeral was bombed. So the chief called me and says, "You can't go! You can't go!" I said, "Well, I'm going."

Marcello: I'm sure that by this time Curry must have been paranoid.

Cabell: Oh, yes. Well, he said, "I'm going to send a man with you." I said, "I don't mind." So we changed our reservations, and then under an assumed name we reserved seats on a later flight that went into Friendship instead of Dulles.

So my brother, who was retired by then from the CIA, met us with the assistant chief of police of the metropolitan police, and they brought us on in. Jack Revel was the man. He was a lieutenant in the special services department. We went on to the Statler Hilton where we had reservations. But, of course, we registered under this assumed name. The mayors--and I thought this one of the nicest things, the most thoughtful--the mayors of all the cities that were either visited or were to have been visited by the President on that trip--that was Houston, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Austin--they got together among themselves and came in a body and said they wanted me to accompany them as a gesture of their support and their loyalty to the thing. I thought that was a very thoughtful thing to do.

Of course, I stayed out of the limelight while I was there. I went to the Rotunda while the body was in state on the Monday prior to the funeral. I'd watch the TV, and when I'd see them swinging in my direction, I'd get behind somebody. This is a little amusing as an aside of the way things were. The mayors wanted to get in touch with me and tell me that they all wanted to have breakfast together over at the Mayflower. I was at the Statler Hilton. They asked for me. "No, not Cabell." Whoever was calling said, "Well, he must be.

He's the mayor of Dallas!" The operator said, "Well that son-of-a-bitch wouldn't be here in Washington!" (laughter).

Marcello: I would assume that in the aftermath of the assassination you did have your work cut out for you, especially, I assume, in trying to defend Dallas and this sort of thing.

Cabell: Yes, and, you see, the threats continued to come in, a number of them. Well, not a number of them. I'd say half a dozen. So we were under constant security, oh, for right on through February. Everytime my wife would go to the beauty parlor, there'd be two men with her. One would go inside, and one would sit outside in the car. You know how popular she was in the beauty shop with a man with a shotgun between his legs sitting there (laughter).

Marcello: I would assume that so far as Jack Ruby and his part in the shooting of Oswald and so on, you really didn't know too much about anything that went on there. You probably had your hands full with these other activities.

Cabell: Well, there wasn't a whole lot that did go on other than the . . . you see, he had . . . now this is something that people tried to make something of. Ruby was a

loser! He was a loser. He had tried to be one of the gang, one of the Establishment in Chicago. He was so nutty there he never could get into the inner circles. So he would go up and down here and would get a little backing and had the striptease nightclub thing. He was one of these that was a name dropper and basked in recognition by somebody else. All of the officers knew him. Yes, they called him by name. He'd call them by name. He'd wander in and out of the City Hall. No privileges. But his places had been knocked over often enough or checked often enough that they all knew him. They considered him harmless, just a gip. I don't know that he had ever had any charges filed on him. Maybe some misdemeanors or some violation of a fire ordinance or something like that.

This is my opinion and I've heard others express a similar one. It cannot be considered as official-- that he thought that he saw a way to get national acclaim by pulling this gun. It happened so quick I don't think he meant to pull the trigger and kill him. I don't think he did. Not that he would have been adverse to it, but that would have killed the whole thing. That's what blew the whole thing.

Marcello: Now one last question. Very shortly after the assassination, I guess you had decided that you were going to run for Congress. Or maybe it was even before that had taken place that you were going to run for Congress.

Cabell: No, I was thinking about it. I had been asked a few years before to run, and I wouldn't do it. I was not going to resign in the middle of my first term as mayor. Then they came to me again. This was after the assassination. They said, "Earle, you're the only man that can beat Bruce Alger. We need somebody to change Dallas' image. We will guarantee you . . . underwrite whatever it takes if you'll do it."

Marcello: We'll probably get into the actual campaign itself for Congress in a future interview. But what effects did the assassination have upon your election to Congress?

Cabell: Well, you mean what voter effects?

Marcello: Yes, right.

Cabell: Well, I think it was helpful.

Marcello: For example, there was no question that Alger was rather vehement in his, what shall we say, dislike of Kennedy and the administration and things of that nature.

Cabell: Yes, and that he had added fuel to the fire. He was right in the middle of that Johnson episode. He was a



man that, in the ten years that he was there, had voted aye only 5 per cent of his votes. There were bound to have been a few good votes in there somewhere. And I think the man was scrupulously honest. There was never any question about that. But I think that he got in with the wrong crowd. Those people are like horse flies. Once they think they've got you, they'll just eat on you and feed on you and keep you stirred up. They did a pretty good job because they . . . but he didn't have too much opposition.

Marcello: Then what you're saying in effect is that the Kennedy assassination, from a political standpoint, didn't hurt you any, and it probably harmed him in a political sense.

Cabell: Yes. Another thing that started me thinking about it, also . . . in my experiences as mayor I'd go to Washington on some program involving Dallas, and everywhere I'd go, whether it be Republican or Democrat, "Well, mayor, why in the hell don't you get a congressman up here. He's the one that's supposed to be looking after those things." I knew that we had an albatross around our neck, an albatross. I don't like to sound like I set myself as a Messiah or a Moses to lead you out of the wilderness, but it was apparent that we were never going to get the type of recognition

that we were entitled to as long as we maintained that type of representation. It was an ideological thing. It was not a moral . . . well, I won't say anything further on that, but I'm not impugning his sincerity in the least.

Oral History Collection

Earle Cabell

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: October 2, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing former U. S. Representative Earle Cabell for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 2, 1974, in Dallas, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Cabell in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions during his first campaign for the United States House of Representatives in 1964 and his subsequent election and term in the 98th Congress.

Now Mr. Cabell, to begin this interview, when did you make the decision to become a candidate for Congress, and then why did you decide to run for Congress? Let's start with the date first. Do you recall when you decided to become a candidate?

Mr. Cabell: It was only about, oh, thirty days or six weeks prior to the filing deadline for the primaries. Bear in mind that Dallas had suffered from several traumatic

incidents in the immediate past of that period. I'm speaking of the . . .

Marcello: The Kennedy assassination in 1963?

Cabell: That's correct. And then the incident involving the ambassador to the U.N., Adlai Stevenson, prior to that. Dallas had gained a very bad name. People of Dallas weren't to blame. It was because of a very small segment of a rather ugly group. But unfortunately, the incumbent was not doing anything to help that because he was somewhat sympathetic.

Marcello: You're, of course, referring to Bruce Alger. What sort of a man was Alger?

Cabell: Well, he was a very handsome young man. He was an intelligent young man. Bear in mind that he had been in office there for ten years. But he had let himself become so imbued with this fantastically firm and . . . what I'm trying to say is . . . I can't say conservative. His philosophy was obstructionary. It made Welch and his Birch Society look like communists. There were enough of like-thinking people that swarmed around him like flies, supported his campaigns, that he just felt like that was what the people wanted. He believed in that sort of government himself.

Marcello: I have seen it written that Alger was considered the "darling of the right wing" in Dallas politics.

Cabell: Oh, yes.

Marcello: So do you think that's a very accurate description?

Cabell: Yes. Well, he was their captive. He was their captive, and they furnished the . . . I'll say one thing for those people. They were vocal as hell! They're very articulate.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that he was their captive. In what sense do you use that term?

Cabell: He believed that they were the whole thing and that they could keep him up there forever. Furthermore, he had the zealot's viewpoint that he was helping save the world.

Marcello: Do you feel that Alger was one of those people who, at least in some circles, was responsible for giving rise to the term that Dallas was the "city of hate?"

Cabell: Well, there's no question about it. Bear in mind that he was in the midst of the leadership and was standing out on the curb in front of the Adolphus Hotel when that riot action took place and Lady Bird Johnson was spat on in the lobby of the Adolphus Hotel. That was in the 1960 campaign. He was their . . . he was a symbol.

As a matter of fact, Dallas had . . . the land had been purchased and the plans had been drawn for a federal building for Dallas, and then President Eisenhower, under powers which the President had at that time but does not have presently, line-vetoed it. Alger wrote him a letter congratulating him on it and saying that, "If we're going to conserve, well, then it begins at home." That was the sort of thing. As a consequence, it wasn't just a federal building Dallas didn't get. They didn't get the time of day.

Marcello: As I recall, that federal building eventually went to Fort Worth, did it not?

Cabell: No, I got it, finally. That was my first job up there and did get it in spite of the fact that one South Texas congressman who was chairman of the subcommittee handling that appropriation struck it out himself--he is now dead--because he hated Dallas so badly. But I was able to get the Senate to keep it in their bill and then for the conference to hold it. I had some excellent help from President Johnson, too. I have to give credit where it's due.

Marcello: We'll probably talk about this later on, but just for the record, who was this particular congressman? Do you care to mention his name?

Cabell: It was Albert Thomas.

Marcello: Getting back to your decision to run again, then, are you saying in effect that you had decided to run because of the obstructionism and what have you created by Bruce Alger in Congress?

Cabell: That's right, and by the insistence of the leadership of Dallas who drafted me. They didn't have to hold a gun to my head because I knew what was going on. As mayor of Dallas I had gone to Washington, and I had gone with my hat in my hand to some of the other congressmen and then the Senate. They'd say, "Hell, man, what in the devil are you doing up here? Send a congressman up here to us, and we'll do business." I'd had enough of that to where, certainly, I recognized the position that Dallas was in.

Marcello: Also, is it not true that you had done in many respects about as much as you could do during your tenure as mayor without actually having to move on to Congress? In other words, you were interested, as I recall, in mass transit programs. You were interested in the canalization of the Trinity River, and the Federal Center which you mentioned awhile ago, and improvements for Love Field. All of these things had to be accomplished through Congress.

Cabell: It was absolutely impossible because for every congressman, of course, his own district comes first. Well, he's not going to go out of his way for any community that he thinks wouldn't appreciate it to begin with.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you were being persuaded to run by some of the leaders in Dallas. Who were some of these people who were backing you and who were persuading you to run?

Cabell: Well, you just take the list of who's who in Dallas. And of course, at that time, and still, the Dallas Citizens Council was very powerful, your Chamber of Commerce, your bankers. They said that if I would . . . as a matter of fact, they had asked me to run in '59 . . . no, no, no in '62. I said that I would not quit in the middle of my first term. We'd take a fresh look at it a year later. So then the early part of 1964 they came at it again. They said they would absolutely underwrite anything I needed for me to just go out and go win it.

Marcello: Who were some of the specific individuals that were prodding you to run?

Cabell: They were men like Jimmy Aston, men like Mr. Bob Thornton, Ben Wooten, and Stanley Marcus. I mean, it was just the blue ribbon . . . the first team of Dallas.



Marcello: How did you go about organizing and preparing for that campaign? Now, of course, first of all, there would be the Democratic primary against Baxton Bryant. Describe the establishment of your organization and setting it up and getting the campaign in motion.

Cabell: I had, of course, a pretty nice little organization for my mayoralty campaigns. There was a young man that wanted to come with me as a . . . to quit his job . . . who was in the attorney general's department of the United States, native Dallasite. He said he'd like to quit his job and come work for me. Of course, he knew that I'd give him a job, which I did for two years. That was Buzz Crutcher. You've heard of him. But that's where he got his start.

Marcello: This is the Buzz Crutcher who is now very prominent with Lloyd Benson.

Cabell: That's right, yes. He was more or less, you might say, my administrator for the campaign. Then I had Sid Pietzch and also Jim Susong who were handling my PR and advertising. Susong has since retired and so has Sid. Sid stayed with me for the eight years I was up there, but he was in Dallas in charge of my Dallas office. Buzz was in Washington with me for two years and then set out on his own. He wanted to get back and practice law. So that was the background on that.

Now insofar as . . . the main thing that I had to do was to make myself available, put myself in a position to discuss things with them. But on the other hand, most of them knew what my political philosophy was. I am conservative, but I think I'm moderate. I do try to be at least pragmatic about these things. While I'm much too conservative for many of the more outspoken liberals, they couldn't put a nail on me. They couldn't put a tag on me. Neither could the ultra-conservatives! A man who has been president of his Dairy Products Association, a man who has been president of the Texas Manufacturers Association and president of Dallas Sales Executive Club--how are you going to pin a liberal pin on him? By the same token, a man who had put the first Negro on a retail milk route in the South, the man who as mayor appointed the first black man to a major city board, and who had fought, bled, and died trying to get more housing for the poor people--you couldn't put a wild, obstructionist, reactionary label on a man with that kind of record. My record was more or less my campaign. I'd go up there, and I'd work for Dallas.

Marcello: Essentially, then, during that campaign you, I suppose, could have been considered a middle-roader between Alger on the one hand, who ultimately was your Republican

opponent, and Bryant, who was your liberal opponent in the primary.

Cabell: Baxton Bryant, yes. So I didn't try to out-liberalize Baxton Bryant in the thing at all. I pointed out some of the vagaries of some of this give-away stuff. By the same token, I didn't try to out-Alger Alger on conservatism in the general election.

Marcello: In your primary race against Bryant, what appeared to be some of the major issues between you and Bryant? Now you mentioned, of course, the liberal-conservative philosophical viewpoint.

Cabell: As a matter of fact, I didn't pay a whole lot of attention to Baxton Bryant. I ran against Alger in the primary. I ignored Bryant almost entirely.

Marcello: In other words, it was almost a foregone conclusion that Bryant really had no chance against you, and your real opponent was going to be Alger.

Cabell: Yes, and that nearly ran him crazy, but it was noticeable to the general public.

Marcello: Was it a relatively clean primary campaign?

Cabell: Yes, yes, and so was the general campaign. I haven't been involved in much of that sort of thing.

Marcello: I do know that in the primary campaign against Baxton Bryant one of the issues that did come up periodically

was, of course, the Civil Rights Act of 1966 which at that time was under consideration by Congress.

Cabell: No, it had been passed. Well, wait a minute. Yes, in the primary it was under consideration, and by the general election been passed.

Marcello: What sort of a position did you take on that Civil Rights Act?

Cabell: Well, my position on that was absolutely against the provisions with reference to public accommodations. That was an invasion of private property rights. I was opposed to the, of course . . . the busing thing hadn't come up, but I was definitely on the side of continued desegregation, but not desegregation in reverse.

Of course, I had had quite an experience while I was mayor. It was when we desegregated the first schools in Dallas, 1963. I had called in the leaders before the date. I had called in the leaders of both factions. I called in the Ku Klux type. I won't mention any names on this because they're derogatory. But the leaders of that rabid anti-black group, I told them that this matter of integration of the schools was a school board matter enforced by the federal government. It was not a city matter. But the city obligation was to preserve the

peace, and that we were going to do that at any cost. We were going to have ample policemen on the job and that the first person who made any move that would tend toward disorder, be he white or black, was going to jail, and then we'd ask questions later.

One woman who was a leader of that group said, "I understand that the police have been drilling with and issued bats." I said, "No, what you're referring to are what the police refer to as batons. Now they are the size, the diameter, of a broomstick, and they range from four to six feet in length, but they are not to be used as weapons. They are so much more effective than ropes in lining up and in restraining a crowd." I said, "But if they got into trouble and if I were one of them, I'd bash somebody over the head." She said, "Would you let one of them hit a white woman?" I said, "Miss so-in-so, you've already been singled out, and you're number one of their list of whites!" She walked up and spit in my face and said, "You nigger-loving son-of-a-bitch!" (chuckle) This was in the City Hall office.

But there was . . . and the blacks. I told them the same thing in reverse. There was, if you remember, if you were here at that time, this segregation . . .

we've never had the riots here, and that was the one that could have been because that was at Longfellow School, you see. That could have been one helluva cleavage. That was the first school to integrate in Dallas.

Marcello: Like you pointed out, during that primary against Baxton Bryant, there was really no contest, and, as I recall from the record, you beat him by an almost 2 to 1 margin. I think it was 74,000 votes to approximately 38,000 votes or something like that.

Cabell: Well, I couldn't ignore his possible impact. He was working like the devil in trying to get the black people, and he was also working on organized labor. He was trying to stir up any animosities or prejudices from these organized groups.

Marcello: Well, of course, I suppose he started so far behind that he had to look for issues, any sort of an issue, I guess.

Cabell: Well, he had been quite a political figure here for quite some time. He had a little pastorate, a Methodist Church out at Duncanville or Cedar Hill or somewhere out there. He was an ordained Methodist minister. He was quite political in his activities. He had more guts than an Army mule. One time he . . . he would always

attend the national party conventions and so forth. At one time he had met President Truman. I'm a son-of-a-gun if he didn't talk him into coming out and preaching a sermon for him one time when he was in this part of the country (chuckle). So he certainly was no shrinking violet. I'm sorry I don't have a recent picture of him that somebody sent me. He's really gone mountaineer--beard about this long (gesture), denims.

But, anyhow, I couldn't ignore those things. All I could do was just stand up and say, "Yes, this is why I do it." See, I was a strong advocate, one of the heavy, strong lobbyists, for the passage originally of the right to work laws. Well, that didn't endear me with the union . . . I don't like the word boss, but let's say officials. But there's more strength, more support, among the rank and file for the retention of that law than the average man would imagine.

Marcello: Did organized labor pour a rather extensive amount of support and money into Bryant's campaign?

Cabell: No, not much. He was the protege of Sarah Hughes. Sarah said, "Now is the time for a true liberal to take office." Sarah didn't like me any more than I liked her (chuckle).

Marcello: What is the basis for the animosity between you and Judge Hughes?

Cabell: Oh, just a different political viewpoint, philosophical viewpoint. She thinks I'm too conservative, and I think she's too red (chuckle), too radical. I think she's been messing with stuff that a federal judge has got no business messing with. Now that's the biggest problem. She takes advantage of her position there, pops off, and intrudes herself where it's absolutely wrong for a federal judge.

Marcello: I'm also positive that the fact that you were the incumbent mayor . . .

Cabell: No, see, I had resigned then.

Marcello: Yes, you had resigned, but, I mean, the fact that you had been mayor certainly gave you a political base and decided advantage here against Bryant, also.

Cabell: Well, certainly the name was not strange. Hundreds of thousands of dollars had been spent advertising the name Cabell on milk and ice cream. Then the geneological history here with which many people were familiar was there. We were never known as outlaws or criminals. We had a reputation for being decent, honest people. So I knew I had a fight on my hands on the general election, and frankly, it surprised me. It surprised me a great deal that I beat him by 45,000 votes.



Marcello: Now you say you beat him by 45,000. Are you referring to Alger at this time?

Cabell: Yes, that was about . . .

Marcello: 1964, was it not?

Cabell: Yes, it was 60-some per cent of the total vote.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about your campaign against Alger, since the one against Bryant certainly wasn't a real contest. Actually, the one against Alger wasn't either.

Cabell: Well, my whole campaign against Alger was against his complete inability to do anything. As a matter of fact . . .

Marcello: Was it his inability or his unwillingness or both?

Cabell: Well, it was both because he had made a name for himself even among his own party. They were glad . . . I had any number of Republicans come up and congratulate me and say that he did not represent their party. President Ford was one of them. I don't want to be the dog that's already got a broken leg, we're just talking here about facts, and I don't want to leave the wrong impression there.

But I attacked his voting record which was a "no" record. He had voted "aye" on only 5 per cent of the total votes on which he had cast a vote. He had never

passed a bill, had never been for anything. He was against everything. Now there's a helluva lot of things that go on up there that I'm against and so voted and lost a lot of support here, there and yonder by so doing. But this complete negative attitude that he had . . . for instance, you needed something for your school. You are an official of the school. That has to come through HEW. You would like to know who to go through to have a little help there. I don't mean pressure. Those Cabinet positions, those departments, now they don't kowtow to a congressman. As a matter of fact, too much pressure on the part of a congressman can very often give a program the kiss of death.

But now you would go to him on a project, a thing there that really would merit his going with you, but he'd never do it. He'd call and make an appointment. It might be the end of it. He would never express his opinion on that because anything that had an appropriation tagged onto it, he was against.

Marcello: I assume then that . . . well, how did Alger stand, let's say, on the Trinity River Project and things of this nature?

Cabell: He was against it. He would do nothing on that. Here is a matter of economics. It was better to have this building because in the rentals of the Dallas offices we'd pay off the building.

Marcello: In other words, the federal government was paying more money to rent offices . . .

Cabell: . . . over a period than owning their own building. And here was the other thing. We had federal offices drained out of Dallas. We lost the Veterans Administration to Waco. We lost the area headquarters of IRS to Austin. Now here, for instance, is the center of the business, you might say, of those agencies. Then we damn near had Love Field \_\_\_\_\_ for big jets to put all our jets into Carter Field! That was one helluva thing! I staved that off as mayor and then kind of held this buttoned down for the time being as a congressman until the regional concept could be worked out. But he was just against anything, and I used the slogan "If you keep him up there, we'll have to go to Fort Worth to buy a postage stamp."

Marcello: How much help did you receive from Lyndon Johnson in this campaign against Alger?

Cabell: Well, all that was appropriate. Bear in mind that he had a pretty stiff one himself, he thought. He went over

better than was expected. He was following a Republican. You know, the effete East don't like Dallas. I mean, they don't like the Southwest, and Texas above all. Anybody who has ever gotten cow manure on his boots, they've got no business, no right as citizens, to use that as an illustration.

This, I think, you'd be interested in, talking about Mr. Johnson's race at the same time. About two weeks before the general election, the President, Mr. Johnson, gave a barbecue down at his ranch. Oh, I guess he had about 1,000 or 1,200 people there. Dearie and I flew down there, my wife, and carried a couple with us. I jawboned an airplane . . . one of our companies up here that had a little twin-engine. That was the day, weekend, on which China exploded her atom bomb, nuclear bomb, and Khrushchev was deposed in Russia. Remember, those two things happened almost together.

Marcello: Yes.

Cabell: Well, the President didn't dare leave Washington. So there was Mrs. Johnson standing out there greeting everyone of those people. As I came . . . well, when I passed, she said, "Earle, when I shut down this receiving line meet me up at the ranch house. I want to talk to you." So I said I surely would. So when

I saw her walk up, I went up there. She said, "Tell me. How are you doing?" I said, "If you had asked me this three weeks ago, I would have told you I was doubtful. But now I will guarantee you I've got it made." "Oh," she said, "I hope so." She said, "How are we doing?" It was always we with her and the President. I said, "I'm glad you didn't ask me that two weeks or even ten days ago because I would have had to shake my head, but we're going to get you in. I can sense it. Don't ask me why." "Oh," she said, "I hope you're right."

Marcello: What did you see as turning the tide?

Cabell: I don't know. You know how you can sense something, and maybe it's good sixth sense, maybe it isn't. But it just felt that way. Just the winds felt that way. From the expression on people, the firmness of a hand-clasp from somebody that you hadn't been very close to before, or a nice secretive kind of nod from somebody that you knew would like to cut your throat. Those were the things. So I said, "I'll tell you what, Mrs. Johnson, If we get you in in Texas, get you in there, and especially here in Texas, will you let me get one of my constituents past the gate of the White House?"

Now here is the background of that. Bruce Alger had said, which was true, that he couldn't get a pass for any of his people to the White House, not after that incident at the Adolphus Hotel. Well, she just threw back her head and laughed.

On the day that the Congress was to be sworn in, a Boeing 727 flew up there full of Dallas people. There were nearly 200 people in there to see my swearing in. Old John (Gray) . . . I can't think of his name at the moment. He was president of the National Bank of Commerce. He was with the First National then. He was kind of ramrodding it. In order to get more people interested, he said that he'd get passes. He didn't confer with me. I didn't even get into my office until the night before I was to be sworn in because Bruce didn't turn it loose. So lo and behold, I had five tickets to the gallery for the swearing in of the 89th Congress. We got hold of John. "You've got to do something about this." The doorkeeper said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." He said, "I can take care of a number of the men, men only."

Marcello: This was John that you had to get hold of?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: This was the doorkeeper?

Cabell: No, this was ramrod of the trip up there.

Marcello: I see, yes.

Cabell: The doorkeeper of the House is known as "Fishbait" Miller. "Fishbait" was wanting to be very helpful. He said, "Tell you what I can do." He said, "I can take care of twenty-five or thirty, the men, but they'll have to have dark suits and white shirts." He said, "I'll make assistant door keepers out of them." Of course, all they did was go and sit in an exit, on the steps in the aisle, see. "But," he said, "I can't take care of the women."

Oh, then when we told John that, he said, "Well, I'll take care of that. I told the women we'll give them a special White House tour." Nobody, but nobody, gets into the White House on Monday. That's the day they take all the draperies down for cleaning and do the housecleaning from top to bottom. So we had called-- Buzz was up there--and the man said they couldn't do it. There wasn't a chance.

I got on the phone to him and told him who I was. I said, "Now you get hold of Mrs. Johnson. You get hold of her, and you ask her if she remembers a promise she made me at the ranch." He called back in about ten minutes. I could see him shaking his head. He said, "I don't know, but you get those women here at nine o'clock Monday

morning, and they'll get a special tour over the whole White House, living quarters and everything." So we had a lot of fun about that from that time on. Other Congressmen were calling me to help get some of their people in (chuckle). Now where were we?

Marcello: That's okay. We were talking about the campaign for Congress against Alger. Now was this, generally speaking, a relatively clean campaign, also?

Cabell: Yes, yes. There was no disposition on the part of either of the candidates. There was a little, oh, snide stuff pulled by some of our supporters, but it was definitely of a minor amount.

Now you mentioned . . . I believe you said something about labor backing and money. I did not, and never have, taken a dime from labor. They offered me \$4,000 and I wouldn't. I said, "I'm not going to go up there and put a knife in labor's back. That's not my purpose. Neither will I go up there and be your handmaiden. Now on labor bills you know how I feel, and if it comes to giving you an undue advantage, I'm going to vote against it. But if it's really something that's good, if it's something that is the right kind



of labor legislation, I'll go with you. So I got along with them alright. I never was their best friend. There are lots of people they'd rather have seen there, but they didn't . . . and I didn't . . . like I say, I didn't try to stick a knife in their backs like Alger did at every opportunity.

Marcello: Generally speaking, though, were you successful in getting most of the support that had gone for Bryant in the primary campaign?

Cabell: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, they supported me. They hated Bruce so bad. They didn't dislike me.

Marcello: It's also true, is it not, that in both the primary and the general election itself you maintained the support of the black vote in Dallas?

Cabell: Yes. Now there wasn't too much of it in the primary. It wasn't as evident because the boxes didn't vote as heavy. But then from the general election, and every election since other than the primary race I had four years ago now with Mike McKool . . . so I didn't carry them then in the same numbers.

Marcello: I think your program of slum clearance during the period when you were mayor had a lot to do with influencing the black vote in your favor.

Cabell: Oh, yes. An opponent couldn't fault me on that.

Marcello: I understand that during that campaign you also had the support of the Dallas Morning News, did you not? I'm sure this worked to your benefit, also.

Cabell: Yes, both papers. Now the News had supported me in my re-election bid. In my first race for mayor the News was neutral. In my second race, which was my first successful race, the News supported me. They also supported me right straight down the line. The Herald fought me bitterly on my first one, fought me less bitterly on the one that I ran and was successful, and then endorsed me wholeheartedly and also supported me strongly for my re-election to mayor and for all of my campaigns since.

Marcello: I think that in your campaign of 1964 against Alger, the News also was opposed to Alger because of his philosophy of negativism, I suppose you would call it.

Cabell: That's true. That's correct, yes. And bear in mind that the News has always been considered far the more conservative newspaper than the Herald. Now the Herald really went all out. They turned two reporters over to researching for me. That was when Albert Jackson was alive, and Bob Hollingsworth was in their Washington office at that time. Bob and I had been good friends when he was here. John Schoelkopf was with them at

that time, and John just devoted nearly all of his time to researching and gave me tremendous material concerning the ten-year voting record and activity record of Alger.

Marcello: I think also during that campaign Alger tried to create an issue out of the Dallas Transit settlement which had come about when you were mayor.

Cabell: Oh, yes, yes, because I was supposedly anti-free enterprise.

Marcello: I think he also criticized it for being too expensive, did he not, that it, the settlement itself?

Cabell: Oh, I don't recall that there was much about that. Some of his followers probably did, but even at the time that . . . after the deal was consummated, \$5,500,000 for the whole outfit, then there was . . . in 1964 values there were better than \$3,000,000 worth of real estate involved. But the word was put out that I had made \$2,000,000 on the deal. If you see it anywhere, let me know (chuckle), will you?

Marcello: You'll be the first to know if I find it. Well, during that election against Alger, as we mentioned earlier, you triumphed rather overwhelmingly. I think the final vote was somewhere around 171,000 to approximately 128,000. I gather that the Johnson landslide certainly helped a little bit in that victory, also.

Cabell: I'm going to be a little bit immodest on that. I'm going to say I helped Mr. Johnson as much, if not more, than he helped me because I weaned thousands of people away from that Republican lever that had never before, or certainly not in the past ten years, voted Democratic.

Marcello: Well, you probably have a good point because I would assume that in Dallas, given the conservative strength, that Goldwater probably could have run a relatively strong race against Johnson.

Cabell: Now remember that Johnson was the first Democrat to win Dallas County--and the last--for, good God, time immemorial almost. And then in the vote for governor Dallas hasn't gone for . . . they went for Connally the second time he ran. They stayed with Shivers, but they didn't even vote for John Connally the first time. They voted for the Republican. But my whole pitch . . . and I went wholehearted on this. I had every candidate in Dallas working on my side because through some special elections Dallas wound up with eight Republicans and one Democrat in the state legislature. Remember it now? Were you around there then? Old Ben Atwell was the last one. He used to sing a little song--you know, he's a clown--about "ten little

Indians, ten little Indians," and then "nine little Indians, nine little Indians," (chuckle), then he was the last little Indian.

Well, I pitched my own piece, and then I said, "Now you've seen those idiots down there at Austin . . . and they were idiots. I said, "This is the first time now in ten years that people who are interested in this area, interested in Dallas County, can pull the straight Democratic lever in good conscience. You don't have to pick and choose." It was county-wide, the district was. I worked only on the legislative aspect. But I never had a rally, I never had a party of any kind, that I didn't include those representatives. Hell, they got out and worked as hard for me as they did for themselves . . . and that was before they had single-member districts. There were some of them that were shoo-ins, and they'd work for me as hard as they worked for themselves.

But there was one of them that wasn't too popular. I forget now . . . let me see, a boy named Barnett was nominated. He was nominated in the primary as a Democratic legislator. Then he went to work for an investment-loan company . . . Aubrey Costa. He had to resign. It was Southern Trust and Mortgage Company.

He was the owner of that or operator. So Barnett had to resign, and the Democratic Executive Committee then could name the nominee. It was Jim Stroud. Jim was a labor man. He had obviously lost the thing, but there had been some shifts in the Democratic . . . in the county committee that made it . . . he was the high runner next to the nominee. He was persona non grata with most of those people, those other legislative candidates. I said, "Well, now look. We're talking about a straight ticket now. I'm not going to have any exceptions. I'll just tell you beforehand that anywhere that I ever rally, Jim Stroud's going to be there." So that didn't hurt me a darn bit, and it didn't hurt me in the years to come because Jim Stroud . . . Jim made one helluva fine legislator on his own. But he was always my friend, I'll tell you that.

Marcello: Incidentally, we've done several interviews with Jim Stroud.

Cabell: No, Jim's dead.

Marcello: Well, we did those interviews with him. When did he die?

Cabell: Oh, about three years ago.

Marcello: In summing up the campaign against Alger, what would you say was the single, most important factor in your victory? Was it his negativism?

Cabell: It was his negativism and the fact that I was able to get a pretty good cohesion in the Democratic ranks. I gave, for instance, four backyard parties with hot dogs and beer and cold drinks. I invited all the precinct chairmen by districts, by commissioners districts, you see, and all the legislative candidates. I had this home out on Drane Drive and had this gorgeous backyard with plenty of lights and a patio. It was ideal for a get-together like that.

So the first thing that happened right off the bat, I'd have some precinct chairman say, "Are you going to invite the 'libs'?" I said, "Yes, I'm inviting every precinct chairman." They might have a call for somebody else, and they'd say, "Well, you going to invite them damn Republicans?" I'd say, "There are no Republican precinct chairmen invited, but every Democrat is invited." Then we'd make our bid. It got a certain amount of cohesion. At least it created a little more enthusiasm for lever-pulling.

Marcello: Okay, so you were elected to congress, then, in 1964 as a result of your victory over Bruce Alger. Now describe what preparations and arrangements and what have you that a freshman congressman has to make in going, let us say,

from Dallas to Washington. What is involved in establishing oneself in Washington?

Cabell: Well, a whale of a lot, and, frankly, I don't know how someone does it that doesn't know how to get around already, unless he just hires one of the old hands. You know, there's a bunch of professional staff people that just drift around . . . and just let them set up the whole thing. But I knew enough about it from having to lobby up there and had been in and out on various things to where I knew the basic structure. I had a lot of friends up there in Congress already, so I sent Buzz up about the first of December and had him interviewing for the various positions. We had a table of organization--pro-forma--and I told him that on those major positions to pick three, and then I'd come up and we'd make the final decision.

Marcello: In other words, you'd pick one out of the three choices.

Cabell: That's correct. And that's the way we staffed it.

Marcello: As a freshman congressman how large a staff would you have?

Cabell: Well, I had to have a pretty . . . the maximum staff, representing over a million people.



Marcello: In other words, the size of the staff depended upon the extent of the district.

Cabell: Well, you are also restricted by law as to the size of your staff. It seems to me like at that time it was about eleven people. It's up now to about fifteen or sixteen. That was for both offices.

Marcello: That is, your Dallas office and your office in Washington.

Cabell: That's right. So I had to set them both up. Now there is a drawing. You have the drawing about the first of December for the offices . . . the new ones. Then those older ones, there's a drawing then for those with seniority or if there's equal seniority. But if they're top they get that. Like, for instance, this term I would have been in the Rayburn Building, but I had nice offices in the rebuilt Cannon Building.

Marcello: You originally were in the Cannon Building?

Cabell: I was in the Cannon, but the Cannon in its old shape . . . and they remodeled it, and they did half at a time. So I was there during the remodeling of the first half, and then they moved me over into the Longworth for the remodeling of the second half. Then I went back into it. The difference was that when they remodeled, instead of there just being two

offices, you really had three. You had a three-office suite, which certainly . . . you had then a private place for your administrative assistant and for your executive secretary who runs the office in between. The congressman's over here, and then over here is the staff office.

But you have to do that. You have to order stationary. If you want drapes, you have to furnish your own drapes. There's a matter of how you want it decorated. Things of that sort, a lot of preliminary stuff. But the worst part of it . . . as I said, the worst part of it was that we couldn't get into that office.

Marcello: Why was it that it took Alger so long to get out of it?

Cabell: Just his damn cussedness, just cussedness. My staff worked all night, and it was ready the next day.

Marcello: As a freshman congressman, in these beginning stages how much of your time was devoted to the matter of patronage? Now, of course, a congressman doesn't have nearly so much patronage as he used to have.

Cabell: No, not enough to put in your eye. The only patronage a congressman had--and that didn't amount to much--was the rural mail carriers and postmasters in his district.

Marcello: How does one go about being assigned to the specific committees when one is a freshman? More specifically, how was it determined in your case?

Cabell: You see, the Democratic members of the Ways and Means Committee up until this term formed what was known as the Committee on Committees. They were the ones that would make the committee assignments. Of course, they tried to balance it out by states. You couldn't have too many from one state on one. Then, of course, the more desirable committees were opened first to the more senior members if they wanted to make a change. Then in the Texas delegation--and this is pretty well true in all the delegations of eight or nine or more congressmen--if there is an opening on a committee that a member from your state would be eligible for and you wanted that or a change, then it would be on seniority within that group, and then the dean of your delegation would submit your application to the Committee on Committees.

Well, I had wanted the Committee on Science and Astronautics for obvious reasons and had written and talked to a number of the members of the Texas delegation and had written to everyone. I had written to every member of the Ways and Means Committee. I had

written to the speaker, the majority leader, and the whip, stating that that was a preference and enlisting their support because theoretically those appointments could be challenged from the floor, but they never were until, oh, three years ago, and then it was a token sort of objection. But since then, they've changed up the composition of the Committee on Committees, and I don't know exactly how. But that was the way the committees were selected.

Well, when I got there, there were already two members from Texas on the committee. There was Bob Casey from Houston and Tiger Teague. So I was not eligible since there were already two members from the same state and the same party on that committee. But then Albert Thomas died, the only decent thing he ever did (chuckle), and that can stay on the tape, as far as I'm concerned. He was on the Appropriations Committee. Bob Casey from Houston was senior enough among those who wanted to get on Appropriations from our delegation to be eligible for it. So when he went off, I was then given that appointment to that committee.

Marcello: Now first you were on what, the Banking and Currency Committee?

Cabell: Yes, for that first year they put me on Banking and Currency. I wasn't happy there.

Marcello: Why was that?

Cabell: I couldn't see eye to eye with the chairman of the committee, Wright Patman. It was embarrassing for me to be voting against him and arguing when he was the dean of our own state delegation, so it was a relief when I got off of that committee. It's a good committee though.

Marcello: What sort of an individual was Wright Patman?

Cabell: Sly as a fox and has that very benign look, benign manner. He can flimflam you pretty fast. Wright would always tell you, when seeking your support on something or even when he was speaking from the floor, the whole truth. He don't lie, but he forgets sometimes (chuckle).

Marcello: Did he more or less run that committee with a rather iron hand?

Cabell: Oh, yes, yes! Yes, he's very dictatorial. We revolted on him one time on a matter there that he was determined he was not going to accept an amendment to a bill that not only the . . . well, the majority of the committee wanted. So we--I joined with them--we called a committee meeting and filed all the notices and everything which is,

under the rules, permissible. Boy, he came in there and stormed and raged and made the court reporter stop taking notes on it. But we won our case.

Marcello: What sort of powers does the committee chairman have that he can more or less work his own will on a particular bill?

Cabell: Just darn near absolute! Now if there's a bill that gets in there that he doesn't like, it's the hardest thing--even though the committee's for it--it's very difficult to jar that bill out of committee and get it on the floor. Then, you see, it's customary and appropriate for the chairman of the committee involved to floor manage that bill when it's time for general debate and vote. So if he gives it the kiss of death when he's supposed to be . . . living up to his obligations. See, he has lots of power.

Marcello: Did you ever have any direct confrontations with Patman while you were on the Currency and Banking committee?

Cabell: Well, I've made several motions in committee with reference to amendments of bills that were passed and in questioning witnesses that he didn't like. I'm not one of his favorites.

Marcello: I assume there was a philosophical difference, also, between Patman and you.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: And as I look back over my notes, I see that during that particular tenure when you were on the Currency and Banking Committee, you were rather unsuccessful as a freshman in getting your proposals out of that committee.

Cabell: Well, I made no effort to pass any. I didn't go up there hell bent on passing a lot of legislation. I didn't introduce one whale of a lot because, you know, do you realize how many bills are introduced into the Congress each two years? Anywhere from 18,000 to 22,000. I think it's the most stupid thing--but a lot of people still do it--is just keep presenting them, presenting them, and telling their folks about it and figuring that's all they'll hear from it. That's Alan Steelman's deal. Oh, he writes in his letters about all those fine bills he'd introduced, and he hasn't passed one yet unless it's one he's co-sponsored with somebody. But my position has been in most of these questions is that we've got too damn many laws now. We ought to shake up some of them and take a fresh look at them.

Marcello: What were your specific objectives when you went to Congress during that first term? If there were two or three personal things that you were going to fight especially hard for, what were they?

Cabell: To dispell the image that Dallas had built up in the minds of those people. I think I did that.

Marcello: In other words, basically this first term, would it be safe to say that you saw your job as being one of public relations?

Cabell: That's right--building friends.

Marcello: How did you go about doing this? How did you go about creating good public relations so far as Dallas was concerned?

Cabell: By moving around on the floor, by attending the sessions on general debate, by meeting them, by working with some of them if they had a pet bill that they wanted to pass and that would mean something to them, well, without it being costly to the country, or, you know, a bad bill. I tried to cooperate with them, make friends.

And I served the constituents from here. It's amazing, absolutely amazing, the volume of work of constituent mail that comes across your desk. Now a lot of it is unnecessary, but bear in mind that the people in Dallas had had a ten-year drought. Half the time, the letters that you'd get requested help or



action and could be cured by a letter. Either that or tell them flat-out that what they want is unobtainable and is wrong. Anytime somebody from Leavenworth or some other federal prison writes and asks you to help them get a pardon, or start telling about the mistreatment that you all get . . . to hear them tell it, of course, every convict anywhere is carried out and beaten before each meal, you know. It'd make Simon Legree look like . . . (chuckle). But in those cases I would just attach a letter. I had a disclaimer on those things that I would clip. I had it mimeographed so I wouldn't have to type it every time: "This letter is referred to you for your information and what action as you deem to be appropriate. This is not intended to influence your decision in any way but is a service which I try to render all constituents."

Handling it that way, and on these pardons, I had a very pleasant surprise one night. My wife and I went out to a little church way out in Northwest Washington, not one of the big three or four, but kind of a community church, that her doctor was a member of. We met a man who was a lay leader and come to find out that he was chairman of the Board of Pardons and Paroles of the Justice Department (chuckle). He quoted me that little disclaimer.

He said, "Congressman, if more would do that, I could get a whole lot more done." He said, "Now when you have some little recommendation about looking into such-in-such, everybody on my staff will beat their brains out to try to do it." So you can catch more flies with honey than you can vinegar.

Marcello: So far as contacts between you and your constituents were concerned during that period, what two or three things seemed to be most on their mind? In other words, on the basis of the mail that you received, what seemed to be of the most interest to those constituents?

Cabell: Oh, Social Security always is a big item in the mail, Medicare. Then there might be some bill that's coming up. It's in committee, due to hit the floor or something. We'll say it's a labor bill of some kind. Then the mail just starts fogging in, and you can tell it's stereotyped. I used to could tell . . . by the way, I want to say that I've got lots of good friends with the Public Affairs Luncheon Club. My wife was a member for many years. But I could tell when they had met by the letters that would come out (chuckle) that I would read. Now I could tell when there was a new issue of Liberty Lobby magazine. You know, it's just . . . which you can't afford to pay too much attention.

Marcello: I'm sure that a congressman has to be continually on the alert for this sort of thing.

Cabell: That's right, and obviously I couldn't read all of it. But if there was one that was . . . if there wasn't . . . if they didn't have a position paper on it, then it would hit my desk or they'd bring it in. But you see, among the staff we had one handling military. Of course, during that period there was a lot of military business. "You've got to get my boy out of service," or something of this sort. Or some gold-bricker that should be discharged because of a physical thing or the first sergeant didn't like him. All that sort of thing. Well, I had one like that. I had another one for, we'll say, Social Security. They were kind of partitioned, but I'd move them around. I wouldn't do that week after week after week so that every member of the staff could do nearly any job there.

Marcello: In other words, you and your staff had created these particular position papers and then when letters would come in referring to one of those particular position papers, your answers were more or less ready.

Cabell: That's right. Now they were not memographed or anything like that. They would be personalized. I signed every one that I could get to. Then, for instance, if . . .

here'd be . . . maybe mail had been a little light or something, and it had come up and it had passed the House, but I knew it would be controversial! Well, then I would write a memo to the files which would have been why I voted that. That's what we had reference to. Then I'd keep a file on that.

It's just like that prayer amendment. I'm sure you're familiar with that. Oh, listen. My Republican friends just gave me unshirted hell about that. That didn't help me at all come '72. I just didn't think it was right.

Marcello: I would assume that veteran's affairs also took quite a bit of your time.

Cabell: Oh, yes.

Marcello: During this first tenure in office, who were some of the three or four personalities among your colleagues that particularly stand out in your mind?

Cabell: Oh, that's hard to say. That's hard to say. There were a number of very close friends that were in and out of there a lot, not because they wanted something.

You know, here's the fallacy in the thinking of so many people about political contributions. I can truthfully say that not a man who ever gave to my campaign \$200 or more ever asked me for a damn thing

or tried to influence me. The guy that gave you \$50 thinks he owns you. Now that may sound crazy to you, but it's the truth.

The biggest contributors that I had, I would call them on matters of legislation. I'd say, "Look, have you read H. R. so-in-so and so-in-so?" "No." I'd say, "Well, I'm going to send you a copy of it." I did this when we could get advanced copies, you know. As soon as it was introduced, you could get copies of it. "Have your attorney or whoever would be the one to handle that look it over, and let me know what it does to you." Then some of them would say, "Oh, my God! That'll kill us!" Or, "That's okay." But I just can't tell you of a single time that anyone ever asked me for a crying thing.

Marcello: Now that first term in Congress must have been a rather hectic one from the standpoint that this was when the great society really got launched.

Cabell: Oh, listen! That's correct!

Marcello: In other words, this was the period when the Appalachia Bill went through, Medicare. The Civil Rights Act, I think, went through during that first session.

Cabell: Well, there were some amendments to it. Now the Voting Rights Act . . . and while I thought the provision in

there outlawing the poll tax--\$1.75 here in Texas for instance, the dollar of it going legislatively to the general school fund--well, if anybody can look me in the eye and tell me that that \$1.75 ever kept him from voting, I'll eat your hat. I just felt that that was an invasion of the rights of the states. But now that . . . we couldn't get it out. Well, I was not going to say that I felt that there was any citizen of the United States who should not have the right to vote. So I voted for it on each occasion, even though I stood up in the well of the House and spoke against and lobbied against that ban on the thing. Now I caught hell from a lot of folks on that, a lot of people that had been on my team.

Marcello: What sort of an atmosphere was there in Congress during this period? In other words, to me it almost seems as though that 89th Congress was very similar to the first Congress under Franklin Roosevelt when you had all of those bills coming up there.

Cabell: Well, let me give you my frank opinion. I think the 89th Congress was the sorriest Congress that I've had any knowledge of. I'll tell you why. It was a veto-proof Congress, and I don't think that's good for the country. This anti-Goldwaterism that nobody knew was going to come up,

certainly not the Republicans . . . of course, if there was a mistake that Goldwater didn't make, I don't know what the hell it could have been, do you? So here was a Congress that was slightly more than 2 to 1.

Marcello: Democratic?

Cabell: Yes. They were wild as March hares.

Marcello: Well, I'm sure, also, that the Kennedy assassination had quite a bit to do with this atmosphere in Congress, did it not?

Cabell: Yes, yes.

Marcello: You might talk just a little bit about that and more or less get into the record what the general atmosphere or attitude was as a result of that Kennedy assassination.

Cabell: Well, of course, that was over a year old before I got up there. There were some that I could tell were antagonistic to me because I was from Dallas, the site of that assassination. But I didn't sense a lot of it in the Congress.

Marcello: But the point that I was trying to express here was that now Johnson had been elected by an overwhelming majority. He was now his own man. All of this occurred in the wake of the Kennedy assassination. That certainly must have had a great deal to do with the fact that he was able to get so much of this legislation through Congress so quickly.

Cabell: Well, yes, and the whole truth of the matter is that most of those things were first enunciated by Kennedy. They sounded good, and he had no more idea that he could get them passed than anything in the world. But then when Johnson came in, Johnson felt that it was incumbent upon him, obligatory, to carry out the programs of the Kennedy administration. A lot of those things were passed that I think were bad. I voted . . . oh, I think my record was something like 61 or 62 per cent for the administration of those things.

I know that a friend of mine who was standing with a group one day, and something had come up that I had voted against. Another man and Mr. Johnson--three or four of them--were talking, and one of them said, "Hey, why don't you do something about Earle Cabell? Why don't you do something about Cabell? He's not going down the line with you like he ought to." The President said, "You let Earle alone. He knows what he's doing, and he's gone out of his way, and he has hurt himself on many occasions to try to help me, so you just let him alone."

Marcello: How close a relationship did you have with the President during this period? In other words, did you get to see him very often? Did he confer with the members of the Texas delegation or anything of this sort?



Cabell: To a minor degree, but there was not a whole lot of fraternizing. Of course, I saw him at certain receptions. Mrs. Cabell and I were at several during his administration, several receptions, that were given for this person or that. We were at three of the state dinners where state dinners were given.

Certainly, he was partial to the Democrats. But by the same token he had to be very careful not to look like he was loading them all with Texans. Of course, that would have been hurtful, and I think that most of the Texans realized that.

Marcello: Let's take a look at some of the specific pieces of legislation that comprised what was known as the great society and which came up during that 89th Congress. I'll mention the particular piece of legislation, and if you would, could you give me your gut reaction to it and why you voted yes or no on this particular issue.

Cabell: I'll try.

Marcello: Let's take Medicare, first of all.

Cabell: Medicare I opposed because it did exactly what I said it was going to do, and that's damn near to bankrupt the country. It did not have any meaningful projections as to what the cost would be. The way it was done, it

provided a great many doctors a license to steal. I was not satisfied with the bill as it was written, and I knew that it could never be tightened up because the ones who were making out of it and getting that which they were not entitled to get would be sufficient in numbers to stop it from being tightened up.

Marcello: Now, in general, while we're on this subject of Medicare, were you opposed to that particular bill then because of the substantive nature of the bill, that is, the way it was drawn up rather than because of any philosophical opposition to the bill itself?

Cabell: Well, it was a question of both there. I want to see the relationship, the doctor-patient relationship maintained. But I don't want to see it maintained in such a way to where, as I said awhile ago, that it would be a license to steal. Now at one time, you know, they had prescription drugs which still, I think, are available to the indigent.

But for instance, one case, I think, was in West Virginia, where a little one-man pharmacy had filled something like \$100,000 worth of prescriptions in one year. This was nothing in the world but just stealing. That's the only term I have for that sort of thing.

Doctors who would have been tickled to death to make a house call for \$10 were all of a sudden getting

\$25. In these nursing homes where they had government help in setting them up, the building--this was the indigent--they were allowed the visitations necessary for the care and where, by God, there'd be a doctor who had a proprietary interest in the nursing home. And on top of that, he was turning around and was billing, we'll say, two bed visitations a day and that sort of thing. If you don't correct those things before the bill is enacted, you won't get it corrected.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say here again in speaking of all of this great society legislation that in a great many cases the bills were rather hastily conceived and perhaps administratively unsound so far as you were concerned? I don't want to put words in your mouth, but is this a fair assumption of your views on this legislation?

Cabell: Yes. The theory behind them, I think, in most cases was good. Certainly, I'd be the last person in the world to want to turn his back on those who are worthy, but unable through no fault of their own, to provide. But not the way it is set up.

I think you've got a case in point, as far as I'm personally concerned, on this legal services business. Now that was no more the intent of that

bill, the way that has grown and the type of thing it has turned into. There never was a man any worse disappointed in the thing than I was over that because I'm the one that got it started here in Dallas. My reasoning was that I talked to Willis Tate, who referred me . . . this was in its early days, just after the passage of the act. He referred me to the dean of the Law School (Charles Galvin) . . . it'll come to me in a minute. My whole thought was--and I took this up with him and some of his Law School faculty--that this could provide not only some free legal service for the indigent who have no access to any, but could also be a training ground for lawyers. In other words, here's your internship. Here's your internship for law that would give your senior law students . . . and then if they'd get a ticklish one where it'd get to the courts and to where, of course, you have to be recognized, you'd have a lawyer who is a member of the bar. But, my God! The way they got over of this thing, it quit trying to do anything about individuals. Everything was class action suits, where you're using federal money to fight federal money. So that's a case in point.

Marcello: Let's move onto another case of this legislation that comprised the great society. This would be the Appalachia Bill.

Cabell: Well, that was noble in its content but was so damn big that it was impossible. Appalachia was extended all the way up into New York. Why? Because Senator Kennedy wanted it up . . . well, past New York. It got up to New Hampshire, all the way up in there. So you start with a specific area, and, my Lord, the amount of millions that have been poured into that! Some good results. No question! It can't help . . . I mean, even the dunces that they have running some of these programs can't help but make a mistake and do something good sometime (chuckle). But that's the trouble with Appalachia. You've got the same problem with this so-called War on Poverty. Your county committees . . . but they've been bumped around, and each succeeding director has gone a little bit more haywire, and it's those things of where, instead of someone with some knowledge or with some ability running it, they won't stand the guff that they get, and you wind up with a bunch of boondogglers and a bunch of people that don't have sense enough to pound sand down a rat hole or who have a personal ax to grind. The Sammy Davis's for instance, the reverend.

Marcello: Let's move on to another piece of the legislation of the Great Society, the Housing and Urban Development Act.

Cabell: Well, now which is embodied in that? Is that where you had your sections 234, 235, 236?

Marcello: Well, you had your . . . is that the one where you had your rent subsidies and . . . I think . . . yes, yes.

Cabell: Well, I think that . . . you don't have to ask my opinion. Just go out and look at how many of these things have been ruined and torn apart by the people who were moved into them with no equity, no sense of propriety, no sense of pride, and where we've got hundreds of millions of dollars invested in it. They're trying to give them away and can't. Now that's my answer to that program. That's why I fought it, and this first rent subsidy thing is one of the reasons that Patman and I fell out in committee. I made the motion to strike the rent supplement from the housing bill of that year. Of course, it got all of the Republican votes, but not enough Democrat votes to sustain it.

Marcello: How about the Voting Rights Act?

Cabell: Voting Rights Act is the one I was talking about awhile ago. I was definitely opposed to the section that eliminated all poll taxes, but on final passage I voted for them because I was not about, in my own heart, to

vote against a citizen, black or white, having the right to vote.

Marcello: How about the Equal Employment Opportunity Act?

Cabell: The Equal Employment Opportunity Act has been so badly abused. Again, I think that some of those acts have done as much to foment fire and hatred and bitterness as they have done good. You start forcing a man to do something, and the thing has happened to that that I knew would happen . . . forecasted. I think if you go back far enough in the record, you'll find where I made the statement on the floor that it's going to turn into nothing but a forum for the no-goods, the misfits, who have been fired to start a lawsuit or start a complaint because they were discriminated against in the hiring practices.

I made it a point to look into some of them specifically from down here, and I've got some files. I had a friend over there that would give me some of the files that I asked for. I found one file where a bunch of people had filed suit against Texas Instruments for certain jobs because they were black. Texas Instruments, actually, was one of the first ones to go equal opportunity in hiring around here. I think they

went overboard, personally. But anyhow, this was filed against them. The job for which they advertised specifically stated "A graduate engineer or with comparable experience," and they brought all this thing and even sent people down to interview and try to make a case on it.

One case was in a clothing factory, and for God's sake, the clothing factories had been integrated for years. These dress lofts around here, they've had more Negro and Mexican help than they have had white help. And then to begin to get complaints from them! I know of one in a schoolbook bindery here, where a Mexican said she was discriminated against and fired. The forelady was a Mexican. The team leader of this little work group was Mexican. You can legislate too much.

Marcello: How about the Civil Rights Act of 1966? This would, of course, have been in the second session of the 89th Congress.

Cabell: Well, what did that add that the '64 didn't?

Marcello: Well, again, I think it was some supplementary things.

Cabell: That was the one. The '64 Act was a two-year act with two-year appropriations. So your '66 was just more of



the same with some additions. Whatever the additions were, I don't recall.

Marcello: How about the Model Cities Act?

Cabell: Model Cities Act, I was opposed to for the same reason that it was just a license to steal for a bunch of home builders and contractors--to get in there and get some federal money and run prices up on land. You see, that's where the home builders have gutted, and yet they scream. They've got more favors than any group of people in the world. I don't brand them all with that iron. That has been the greatest chance of profit and boondoggling you ever saw in your life. Like with these 236's, 235 . . . but it's . . . these houses for resale or these big multiunit complexes. Here's what you can do. Here's a piece of land that actually costs-- and on today's market--\$4,000 or \$5,000. Now I'm just taking a figure. Alright, when they submit that to FHA . . . this land is a separate corporation, of course. They submit this to the XYZ corporation at a land value of \$10,000. Then they set up a pro forma cost of operation. Now bear in mind that this is non-profit.

Here's where I had tangled with Secretary Weaver on this in the hearing room when I was on that committee. I said, "What do you mean by non-profit?" Well, he said,

"It's really a limited profit." I said, "Well, how is it limited?" "Well," he said, "they can only net 6 per cent." I said, "Alright, now that's after all expenses?" "Yes." I said, "Okay, in your stuff there, in your pro forma that is submitted to your agency, you've got \$10,000 here. Then you're going to rent these things for thus-and-so. You're permitted to get that based on the cost, but your costs include management, maintenance, depreciation. Then after all of that is taken out, then you get 6 per cent. Now what all of that have you got? You've got your drunken brother-in-law in there as the manager at \$750 to \$1,000 a month. You've got somebody else in there as the cashier or yardman. Then you are getting full depreciation. You are getting a lay-away, a reserve, for maintenance which never goes into maintenance and you know it. Then you get your 6 per cent off of that. Now after you've bled it and you lost your tenants . . ." Oh, and I said, "By the way, on your construction costs you've already got a 10 per cent cost that goes in there." So I said, "You've got 10 per cent of your building costs. You've got double your money from the land, you've fed all these people, you've got the depreciation, you've got that maintenance reserve which was never spent and they hand it back to

you, and who is you? You is me, and all the American public that have been paying for that." Boy, he got mad and Wright Patman hammered me down because I'd taken too long to question.

But that's exactly what they'd do. Then if one of them does pay out, you've had your profit. You've had your building profit. Then you have got the residual for inflation. That's why I've been against most of these housing things. It's not from the principle of trying to provide some decent, low-cost housing.

Marcello: How much pressure was coming from the White House to Congress to get these bills passed? Did you feel this overtly or covertly in any way?

Cabell: Oh, on quite a few of them I'd have a call from Marvin Watson or some of those who were . . . various ones on the staff, Barefoot Sanders for awhile. "Earle, give us a vote on so and so." or something like that. They didn't bother me too much because they knew my situation here. If I'd start buying too much of that, then they'd lose a friend that they needed sometime. I've had some trading, sure, sure. I'd be dishonest if I didn't say so. I traded a vote, couple of votes, for something that I wanted damn bad here in Dallas.

Marcello: What sort of pressure could the President and his staff exert? Now I'm not sure whether they ever exerted any direct pressure upon you, but what weapons does the President have at his disposal?

Cabell: Well, agencies that you are dealing with. But actually, that pressure is inferred rather than stated and actually is pretty nebulous in the final analysis as to whether it could or would be used. But a lot of these people want to play footsies. They want to toady, don't have the guts. You say, "I can't buy that. My people wan't buy it." But now whether any retribution would be in store, I doubt it. Now let me qualify that. It was in the case of Dallas here for ten years, but that's because there was a man representing Dallas who was fighting and cussing everybody that you could think of.

Marcello: As you look back on that first term in Congress, what were your impressions of Congress and the way it operated and this sort of thing? In other words, did your opinion change any from the time you were elected until that first term was completed?

Cabell: No, because I knew what I was getting into. I knew exactly . . . I say exactly. I didn't know all of the little nuances, of course, but I knew what I was getting

into. I knew that the best thing for me to do . . . and if I was going to build any prestige, I'd have to be pretty quiet my first year. You know, freshman congressman is about as low on the totem pole as a freshman in school. So you don't go around slapping a chairman of some committee in the face.

Marcello: When was it that you moved from Banking and Currency over to Astronautics?

Cabell: At the end of the first year.

Marcello: In other words, it was midway through your first term in Congress.

Cabell: That's right, yes.

Marcello: As a congressman in Washington, how much time . . . how often did you have to come back to Dallas to mend fences and keep in touch with your constituents?

Cabell: At least every two weeks. At least every two weeks. We averaged just about twenty-six rides home, round trips, a year by air.

Marcello: When would you usually come home? On a Thursday and perhaps go back on a Monday or something of that nature?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: And during this period, would you then simply take care of all the business that had accumulated in your Dallas office and this sort of thing?

Cabell: Well, no, no. They were doing business all the time and working with the agencies all the time just like the Washington office, but . . . oh, I'd come back, sure, for a big meeting or a special meeting of the Rotary Club or where you can get big exposure or where there was something specific.

Oral History Collection

Earle Cabell

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: October 9, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing former United States Congressman Earle Cabell for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 9, 1974, in Dallas, Texas. This is the fifth in a series of interviews covering Mr. Cabell's career in the dairy industry, as mayor of Dallas, and as a member of the United States House of Representatives.

To begin this interview, maybe what we need to do is kind of sum up just a little bit about our conversation the last time. I'm referring, of course, to the 89th Congress when a great deal of that Great Society legislation was passed. Would it be safe to say that that was a rather hectic two years in Congress just from the sheer bulk of legislation that was being pushed through?

Mr. Cabell: Well, it was. Frankly, it was very disappointing to me at times. When I would see something railroaded through

just because they had the full strength of numbers . . . you see, Lord knows how many seats turned over that time.

Marcello: This would, of course, be following the Johnson landslide.

Cabell: That's correct. The intemperance that was used by some of them . . . people that . . . Republicans or even moderately conservative Democrats would get up to oppose or to explain or to modify. Some of those things would be shouted down like they were intruders. That's the reason that I thought the 89th Congress was a rotten Congress.

Now my greatest criticism of the Great Society was that it was hammered through so fast that no one, and not even the President, who was doing that in good faith . . . he was doing it in deference to Kennedy, who had originally enunciated some of those programs. They did not have the proper amount of study. They didn't have the proper amount of study toward what could happen in the future as to how effective they would be. There were no cost figures that were within ten miles of what actually happened. It was like it was going out of style. Now that is where my criticism laid.

The trouble of it is, when you pass those social laws and you start giving money away, it never ends. You can't stop it! Now Nixon found that out. That's why Nixon got



the budget into the situation that it is now. He wanted programs that had the Nixon label on it. Revenue sharing, oh, that was the big thing. Of course, the municipal officers and many state officers jumped on it like a duck on a June bug. He thought that he then could turn around and remove some of those costly and ineffective programs-- I'm talking ineffective over the long run--and replace them with his. But he found out you couldn't do it.

Marcello: I think what we had to keep in mind here with the Great Society programs, also, is that at the same time that this spending was taking place at home, we were also trying to fight the war abroad.

Cabell: That's entirely true.

Marcello: It cost a great deal of money.

Cabell: That's entirely correct. It was still the only thing of trying to keep both guns and butter. Now to give you an example of the type of thing that has got us in a big jam, a part of the jam that we're in now financially, I mean . . . it isn't the day-to-day financing. But we have passed so many programs that are commitments for twenty years.

Let's take some of your housing programs. They'll say, "Now this year we only passed \$40,000,000" like you and I would pocket change. But that's \$40,000,000 a year on a forty-year commitment! These FHA poverty-type programs

were on a forty-year basis. So you're not talking about forty or even . . . let's come on back to \$4,000,000.

Four times forty is one hundred and sixty. So just take one hundred and sixty and however many cycles there were after that. Now there's where it is. We've got these continuing commitments and can't get out from under it!

Marcello: Were there very many murmurs at this time among conservatives and moderates as to the impossibility of having both guns and butter at this time?

Cabell: Yes, yes. George Mahon was just tearing his hair out. Many of us were, but they outnumbered us, badly outnumbered us.

Marcello: Could you also compare a great many of these Great Society laws with the laws that were passed during the New Deal, in that a lot of them were hastily conceived? They had good intentions, but they were hastily conceived.

Cabell: I think that there is an analogy there, but they weren't dealing with the same kind of money. They weren't as long-range. Many of them were self-destructive . . . self-destructing, is what I'm trying to say. When they had done a certain thing then they phased out.

Marcello: You're referring to the New Deal programs or the Great Society programs?

Cabell: The New Deal, yes. The New Deal programs, yes. Your WPA finally, as the . . .

Marcello: . . . economy got better?

Cabell: . . . economy got better, then they phased themselves out. Your NYA, your CCC . . . and they were dealing in smaller sums. Finally, a lot of them were passed, but they started off without the terrific deficit that we have today, or not even percentage-wise. Therefore, it wasn't as serious.

Marcello: Now in 1966--this would have been the end of your first term in Congress--you, of course, came home and were facing an election campaign once again. What sort of reception did you detect among your constituents concerning the Great Society programs? Now you were coming from a relatively conservative district, were you not?

Cabell: That's right. Well, let me say that those who were way out in right field weren't too happy, and those who were way out in left field weren't. I never did have that give-to-the-last-drop-of-blood type of loyalty that you get where you're a Messiah for any particular concept. I had many friends, don't misunderstand me, and those who were agreeable, but I had both of the extremes pecking at me all the time.

Marcello: When you came back in 1966 and began your campaign for reelection, what did you detect as being the greatest concern among the voters? Now you were in a new district at this time, were you not? This was a newly-constructed district.

Cabell: Well, it was a new district. Practically everytime I was in another district, there were changes. But this time when it was first changed, I had a conservative . . . moderate-conservative district.

Marcello: Now this was central northeast Dallas County, I think.

Cabell: That's correct, that's correct. Yes, that was changed, you see, in 1965.

Marcello: The first time you ran, you ran in the county as a whole, I think, did you not?

Cabell: That's correct, county-wide. You see, the Texas Legislature had never redistricted because they didn't want to district in such a way that there would be a cinch Republican, and the extreme north end was enough to do that. But finally, they . . . and for that reason, you know, for, oh, three or four Congresses we had a congressman-at-large. We had one more congressman allowed than we had congressional districts. You see, Martin Dies served for, I believe, two terms as congressman-at-large. Then when he dropped that to run

for the Senate against Tower in that sudden death race. Then this Republican, Thad Hutchison, ran and knew that he didn't have enough votes to put in your ear, but every vote that he took came off of Martin Dies. And Yarborough was elected with a minority of the votes because that was before it provided for a majority of the vote in a special election.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that it was during your first term in Congress that the Texas Legislature did get around to redistricting.

Cabell: That's right.

Marcello: How closely does a congressman observe this redistricting procedure, and how much influence does he have over the whole process of redistricting in the Texas Legislature?

Cabell: Well, generally, the Legislature likes to protect the incumbent unless--and this is the case practically in every redistricting--there is some senator who wants to help carve out a district for himself, you see. Now that was done in '65 where there were some districts carved out and threw some incumbents one against the other. That threw Jack Brooks against Clark Thompson. Both of them were veterans. Well, Clark hadn't wanted to make a campaign so he retired, getting up in years, but not senile, but was a very influential figure. He was pretty

high on the Ways and Means Committee. But that was a case of a "switcheroo."

Marcello: Do you, in a case like this, work very closely with the state legislators in the Dallas area so far as redistricting is concerned?

Cabell: Yes, now I worked very closely with them on this last one because . . .

Marcello: That was the redistricting that was done in the Legislature of 1969 or 1971.

Cabell: It must have been the '71 Legislature. That's the one that was contested in the courts, and Judge Taylor came out with a horrible one. It threw about three incumbents head to head. So we got up a pot. The delegation hired an attorney to take it to the Supreme Court and won a stay of execution on it. Then it went back to the Fifth Court of Appeals, and they rewrote the district as it is today. But that district under normal circumstances, I would not have been vulnerable in.

But between McGovern and Dolph Briscoe, that's what killed me. I had conservative Democrat votes in areas that had never voted Republican, and they just voted straight Republican lever. I couldn't have served, however. I would have had to resign because I went in the hospital three days after the election. I just stayed up because I had a nurse come out here and shoot me every morning for the

last three weeks before the election. I had pneumonia. Three or four days after the election, I went in the hospital and was there thirteen weeks.

I'll answer your question quickly that the incumbent works very closely, and as closely as he can, with his state legislator in order not to get bothered if he can help it and if he is in a good district.

Marcello: In your case, what particular legislators would you have been working with here in the Dallas area?

Cabell: Well, most of them were friends of mine. But then I was also real close to some of the others who had a lot to do with it.

Marcello: Well, apparently . . .

Cabell: Governor Connally and Lieutenant Governor Barnes were both definitely on my team.

Marcello: How well did you know Connally and Barnes?

Cabell: Very well, very well. We were good friends and had been long prior to my going to Washington.

Marcello: Well, apparently, during that first redistricting, the State Legislature must have been pretty good to you because you didn't have any Democratic opposition in the primary, and apparently the Republican candidate was a rather weak one, too.

Cabell: Yes, the second one was . . .

Marcello: This was Duke Burgess, was it not?

Cabell: Yes, Duke Burgess. The next one that ran against me was a doctor, I believe. Then Crowley, Frank Crowley, and then . . . that's it.

Marcello: Well, let's talk a little bit about that campaign in that 1966 when you were up for reelection for the first time. What advantages does the incumbent have over the challenger?

Cabell: Oh, he has definite advantages. He has the advantage of name recognition for one thing. He has the advantage of incumbency, and unless he has just made an ass of himself, incumbency is an advantage. Then he has the advantage of the frank, which cannot be used for political purposes but for news purposes. Well, again, it helps the name recognition and gives you an opportunity to show what you've done. Those are primary. Then the position itself carries some advantages.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that in a great many instances the challenger normally has to spend much more money than the incumbent in order to win?

Cabell: Yes, yes, that is true.

Marcello: Were there any issues that you remember as standing out in that campaign of 1966? Again, it wasn't a very strenuous campaign for you, I don't believe.



Cabell: No, that one wasn't, and neither was '68. I was back; I campaigned. I had the usual numbers of coffees and teas and rallies out over the district. I had meetings with my precinct chairmen. It was not a strenuous thing at all. Of course, I had maintained liaison pretty well during the course of the year because Mrs. Cabell and I . . . well, sometimes she'd stay here for a few weeks after I went back or vice versa, but we averaged a trip down here about every two to three weeks, attending various functions, speeches.

Marcello: Okay, so you go back to Congress, and I think we need to mention that by this time you were no longer on the Banking and Currency Committee.

Cabell: No, I was on Science and Astronautics.

Marcello: You were on Science and Astronautics. In fact, you had switched over during that second session of the 89th Congress.

Cabell: Correct, yes.

Marcello: How does this procedure take place? In other words, when a vacancy occurs can you resign your position on one committee and, if you're eligible, move to another?

Cabell: Well, then you have to apply, and as I mentioned the other day, you have to have the approval of the dean of your delegation, of these larger delegations. That approval is

academic if there is no senior member of the delegation who would like to have his name placed in nomination.

Marcello: What happened in your particular case?

Cabell: There was none. Now that sometimes works well, and sometimes it doesn't. For instance, I know of two different times where one member of the delegation--and who is no longer a member, who was defeated--put in for committees where those committee chairmen wouldn't have him. But due to his rank, his seniority on the delegation, he knocked men out that could have gotten that job. Now that's what happened. The reason I didn't get on the Science and Astronautics when I first got there was that Bob Casey had wanted to get on the Armed Services Committee. There was a vacancy. This other man, who was Lindley Beckworth, was on Interstate and Foreign Commerce and decided he wanted on Armed Services. He put in but they wouldn't take him. That held Bob, then, who couldn't move. That position, then, wasn't open until Albert Thomas died. Then Bob applied to Appropriations, and I was able to get into Science and Astronautics.

Marcello: It's a rather complicated procedure at times, I gather.

Cabell: Yes, it is. The anomaly is that had Lindley . . . now in the election for the 90th Congress, Ray Roberts and Lindley Beckworth were put head to head. Ray defeated Lindley

Beckworth. Had that not happened, Lindley Beckworth would now be the chairman of Interstate and Foreign Commerce . . . no, beyond that. Prior to his defeat by Ray, he ran against Price Daniel for the Senate a number of years ago. That was when Morris Sheppard did not run again. It was when Price Daniel won over Lindley Beckworth. If Lindley had not stayed out of the Congress, he then, prior to this defeat by Roberts, would have been the chairman of that committee.

Marcello: I gather that the dean of the Texas delegation at this time was Wright Patman.

Cabell: Oh, yes. You know, he's now the dean of the House with the elimination of Manny Celler.

Marcello: How much influence does a man like Wright Patman have in Congress as dean of the Texas delegation and now, like you say, as dean of the House?

Cabell: Well, he doesn't have too much as the dean of the delegation. He assumes more than he does have. It's a titular thing more than anything. But as a committee chairman, of course, that gives him clout that he wouldn't have, but being dean of the delegation doesn't carry much weight.

Marcello: I gather that from the tone of our conversations that you would feel much more at home on Space and Astronautics than you did on Currency and Banking.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: Why was it that you were so interested in Space and Astronautics?

Cabell: Well, I would have been interested in Banking because I had been associated with a bank for a good many years as a director, as chairman of its executive committee. But there's so much space and scientific activity, space-oriented activity, in this area that I felt that I could do more and maintain a closer relationship and a better base, let's face it, in Science and Astronautics than I could in some of the others. Now Interstate and Foreign Commerce, I would have loved to have been on, but I couldn't be on both of them and it was tight. There was one member . . . I forget who it was now . . . well, there was no room for a Texan on there, but there was for Banking and Currency and later, fortunately, for Science and Astronautics.

Marcello: How do they determine which committee a Texan may serve on and which committee somebody from Massachusetts may serve on and this sort of thing?

Cabell: Well, it's a matter . . . they try to keep those committees representative nation-wide. They don't like to load them . . . they wouldn't want to have two men from Vermont--I think there's only one man from Vermont up there--but as an extreme example, they wouldn't want two men from Vermont

on the same thing. But in order to . . . you still have to look at the numerical representation. Now Texas was about the third or fourth largest state. So then there are more men who have to be placed in committees, and there are more Texas congressmen than there are major committees. So obviously, there has to be certain duplication.

Marcello: Now I would imagine that during this period about which we're talking, Space and Astronautics was a very important and a very active committee, was it not?

Cabell: Very, very.

Marcello: In what ways was it important and active during this period?

Cabell: Well, in handling all of the ongoing programs, we had the oversight on all of the ongoing programs of NASA, of the National Science Foundation, and, in turn, of course, they had the oversight of the Bureau of Standards. And then on aircraft development . . . now the FAA from an operational standpoint of the CAB comes under Interstate and Foreign Commerce, but anything from the technological and development end came under Science and Astronautics, like Wright Field and a big experimental field in Virginia. They're aircraft . . . or any experimentation with craft lighter than air. Those things come under Science and Astronautics.

Marcello: Since this was a rather active committee during this period when you were in Congress, what sort of lobby activities were directed toward this particular committee?

Cabell: Oh, a great deal, of course. There are contractors with NASA. We didn't mess with them. They were very ably managed. Our relationship was good, but, naturally, the contractors, we'll say, didn't want to get off on the wrong foot. Maybe they wanted to be known, so there wasn't any arm twisting or anything like that. I'll tell you. Your biggest lobbying goes on among the administration, the various departments. Hell, you get more lobbying from the Department of HEW for their programs than you do from General Motors on building a new engine (chuckle).

Marcello: We didn't talk very much about this. In fact, I don't think we mentioned it at all, but what sort of a philosophy have you developed, or attitude have you developed, toward lobbyists and lobbying in general?

Cabell: Well, in the first place, I don't look on a lobbyist or the term lobby as a dirty name or a dirty operation. Now that, unfortunately, is not a case in every instance. I think that the lobbyists . . . and they don't like the term lobbyist . . . it's a thing we've all . . . they

all are actually legislative counsel. That's a little expression. But if a bill is before your committee or coming before the House, you haven't had time to really digest it before it comes on the floor of the House and comes out of some other committee. You know a man--you have confidence--that this particular bill will affect one way or the other. Then you can get information.

"Well, how will this effect you? What does your industry think of this? What will it do to you or for you?" That's legitimate.

I've done lobbying myself. I've lobbied in Washington on dairy matters. I've done considerable lobbying in the years past in Austin on general business matters, on labor matters, on other matters pertaining to my industry. Well, I haven't slipped any mink coats under the door or that sort of thing. I knew the legislators, enjoyed, in most cases, a friendly relation with them. They would come to our paid secretary there. I think that they're highly essential. I think that there have been some that have given the whole operation a very bad name.

Marcello: Who was the chairman of Science and Astronautics at this time?

Cabell: George Miller from California.

Marcello: What sort of an individual was he?

Cabell: A very fine person. A man who was dedicated. A man who had a nice career behind him. He had been in offices in California, not elective offices but appointive and administrative offices. In my opinion he did a good job, a fine job. Now he did not have . . . he was defeated for reelection this last time in the primary. I expect because he had not kept a . . . he made his home pretty well in Washington, went back to his district rather infrequently, and I think the newer, maybe somewhat more liberal element . . . however, you couldn't have much more liberal than George on money matters and things like that. But he was not the dynamo \_\_\_\_\_.

Marcello: What seemed to be the major thrust or activities of Science and Astronautics at this particular time?

Cabell: Well, of course, we were continually having to fight for authorizations and appropriations for the continuation and the maintenance of the Apollo program. It was an element, and a very vocal element, in the Congress just like there is on the outside that thought NASA should be shut down and the money be given to poor people. That's not an extreme statement. But that was where our work was. And then there was the screaming from the taxpayer, from the congressional, from the business standpoint concerning



the proposals and the programs of NASA to keep them from going off on the deep end. Damn, they were dealing with heavy money. So its various subcommittees had plenty to do.

Marcello: Well, at that time, I guess, you were on the Subcommittee for Manned Space Flight, were you not?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: This was in the . . . I guess in the 89th through the 91st Congress?

Cabell: Yes, yes. I was on the Manned Space Flight, and also I guess it was later that I was assigned to . . .

Marcello: Science, Research, and Development?

Cabell: . . . Science, Research, and Development, yes. I guess it was in the following year.

Marcello: Well, what sort of work did Manned Space Flight do during this particular period that we're talking about now?

Cabell: Well, your Manned Space Flight had to do with Apollo. Of course, it had been prior to that with Mercury and Gemini and then Apollo. Of course, we were on the Apollo program by the time I got on it. So with the dealing with our authorizations, our programs, and the screening and the hearings, we held our hearings--instead of just in the committee room where it came to this part of what the sub-contractors were doing and the like--we held them in the

plants of the contractors--in New York, Los Angeles, Florida, State of Washington, and it was work.

Marcello: Basically, then, these subcommittees, and more particularly the one that you were on, Manned Space Flight, has a great deal to do with overseeing the spending of money and this sort of thing?

Cabell: There were two things, and this is true of, you can say, nearly any committee. One is oversight on the program as to what they're doing, what their program is, what they propose, what are their goals. Two, authorization for the money and the amount of money authorized for the accomplishment of these goals. This is your subcommittees' work to start with. Then they bring it before the full committee. There'll be a full hearing. So it isn't a piecemeal. It isn't just a situation that's academic, that goes without real searching.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what was your own personal attitude toward manned space flight and the Apollo program itself?

Cabell: Well, I was very keenly a proponent of the program and believed--and I think the figures are available to bear it out--that what we would call the fallout from that program has returned more in health, in usable technology, and in money developed by virtue

of the technological concepts that have evolved from this have paid the American public back two and three times what the program initially cost.

Marcello: Would you say that during this particular tenure in Congress--I'm referring now to your second term in Congress--did Space and Astronautics take up the bulk of your time?

Cabell: Yes, that was the only committee that I was on for the first four years I was up there.

Marcello: Was there any particular personal legislation during that second term that you were especially interested in pushing through Congress?

Cabell: There were several bills that I was active with, and I don't recall the chronology of them. You hear the term about, "Well, he didn't pass a bill." This is something that the freshmen and the average public doesn't know. The individual, and particularly a freshman or a man low on the totem pole, passes damn few bills. There is a routine, a procedure, that you'd better follow and be in a position to follow than just throwing one in the hopper.

Now it's the silliest thing in the world, but a lot of people believe it, and my successor is the world's worst demagogue on that. He's put a bill in

for everything from A to Z. He's going to regulate everything. Well, they die.

The only time that you get a bill, other than what would be known as a private bill, passed is to get the chairman of that committee or the chairman of the subcommittee interested, show him where there is a need for it, get your own state delegation behind you, and then introduce it. Have the assurance that you'll get hearings on it. Then you've got a chance to pass a bill.

Now it so happened that the first bill that I sponsored, that I handled it in this manner, was a bill . . . it was two bills dealing with barge lines, which I still hope will apply to the Trinity River one of these days. There was a good friend of mine, a good businessman in Dallas, that asked me to handle this. It didn't involve any money at all. It was a matter of clarification of some operating procedures. I passed that one immediately.

The second one was a little more complex. It had the opposition of the railroads. But in the second session that I was up there I got it passed. I got it passed through the Senate, and then the House picked it up and passed it on. The nice thing about it is that

the man that I worked for so hard . . . I didn't want a damn thing from him. I genuinely, sincerely thought that it was a good bill, which it was or it wouldn't have passed. But he sold his interest in barges. Then in this last election he was one of the heaviest money contributors to my . . .

Marcello: To your campaign?

Cabell: No, to my opponent's campaign!

Marcello: Oh, to your opponent's campaign. Who was this individual? Would you care to mention him?

Cabell: Yes, a fellow named Jim (Clark) . . . he was down at the Texas Legislature for awhile and made such an ass of himself. Oh, he married Leigh Cullum, and she finally divorced him. What the devil! Well, that's one of the bad parts of getting older. You don't . . . your recovery is not as fast. Don't wait on that. It'll come to me.

Marcello: Okay, well, let's just move on and talk about some of the general legislation that was passed during that 90th Congress. I assume, among other things, that there were some left-overs from the Great Society program that were also voted upon during that 90th Congress. For example, according to my records, there was a bill to create a Teacher Corps which you, in fact, voted against. Do you remember anything about that particular bill?

Cabell: Not too much. As I recall, it was like a lot of those that were hastily contrived. It was just a make-work deal. You couldn't see at the end of the rainbow anything after its operation that was materially constructive.

Marcello: I notice, also, that you did vote for an increase in Social Security benefits in that 90th Congress. Would you care to comment on why you decided to vote affirmatively on that particular legislation?

Cabell: Well, because of the fact that inflation was already beginning to set in to some extent. The amount of Social Security involved wouldn't do the things that it was intended to do. It wouldn't even carry a person past subsistence. I just didn't think there was any recourse but to vote for that.

Marcello: Now also during this 90th Congress, there were additional civil rights and open housing legislation and this sort of thing passed. I think in most cases you voted in the affirmative for that, did you not?

Cabell: I voted against that open housing deal. As I mentioned the other day, I voted for the Voting Rights Act, even though I was very rabidly opposed to the deletion of the poll tax thing. I was certainly not going to vote against a citizen voting under any circumstances, so I voted for its renewal.

Marcello: I also gather that during this particular session of Congress, law and order was a major issue. I think this was basically a result of the riots and the burnings in cities and this sort of thing. What were your feelings on this particular situation?

Cabell: Oh, I was always an advocate of very, very stern law enforcement measures and for assistance to cities and municipalities and for a better interchange of information and cooperation between federal and municipal authorities.

Marcello: Now again it was during this period--and we haven't talked too much about this--that the controversy over Viet Nam and American involvement there was beginning to flare up. What were your views and so on in regard to American involvement in Viet Nam, and then also with regard to the opposition at home to that American involvement there?

Cabell: Well, I felt very strongly, and still do, that we had a commitment there that was right. With the signing of SEATO and with our promises which we made, we would give them assistance toward the creation and maintainance of a democracy as opposed to, particularly, the Chinese form or brand of communism. We had no recourse but to give them every possible help. Those people were

entitled to it, those who wanted a republic, a true republic. You've got to remember that the people of Indonesia, Cambodia, Siam, and other countries in Southeast Asia have always been scared to death of the Chinese and have fought to maintain their independence because where the Chinese move in . . . now this was long before the time of Mao. Where they move in, they take over. So I thought that it was a matter of honor. Now the way it was waged, I think that that so-called graduated reprisal . . . that wasn't the exact term.

Marcello: Graduated escalation or something of that nature.

Cabell: McNamara came out. The only thing he had sense enough to do was to coin some of those things. That was wrong. I think that we could have won that thing. We could have beaten Hanoi to their knees long before we backed out with our tails between our legs. He had a funny name for that--graduated response, graduated response. In other words, you hit me twice and I'll hit you back once. That's about what it amounted to. But if we had gone in there without that on again-off again approach, I don't think that it would have lasted that long. I don't think we would have lost as many people, and I don't think that Brother Mao would have poked his nose



into it to the extent of a third world war. They were no more interested in getting committed there with Russia just aching to move in on them. But we had our Fulbrights and our McNamaras, later Clark Clifford, and a few like that that they just . . . and poor President Johnson went through hell more times than any man will ever know.

We went in there and . . . I know this, but I couldn't prove it, but I knew it from the words, from the lips, of the man that I don't think would have lied about it. This is that Nixon in his campaign recently told Hanoi that if they would ease off on peace negotiations with us that he would okay a softer peace if elected than Johnson would have. It worked out that way. It worked out that way.

Marcello: Who was the individual that told you this?

Cabell: Lyndon B. Johnson. I know it isn't proper to quote a President, but that's a thing there. That statement was made at a breakfast of the Texas Democratic delegation in the White House the day before the inauguration of Nixon.

Marcello: How much contact did you have with Lyndon Johnson, or how much contact did the Texas delegation have with Lyndon Johnson, during your second term in Congress?

Cabell: Oh, I had very little contact. There was no occasion to see him. There were others who did have more contact because there were longstanding friends and closer friends--men like Jack Brooks, Ray Roberts, George Mahon, of course, as a committee chairman. But I had no "palsy-wowsy" type of contact with him.

Marcello: In the time that you didn't have any contact with him, did you detect any changes in the President in the light of the problems that he was facing at home with the riots in the cities and this sort of thing, and the Viet Nam abroad?

Cabell: Well, I think that I can safely say that it was obvious that he was suffering. I don't mean physically, but mentally. The whole thing was certainly a traumatic period for any man, certainly for a President, to go through.

But before I can get off that subject of Hanoi, let me say this. The people who fought in that war were absolutely sold down the river by Nixon in his so-called "peace plan." We did not come out of there with honor. We came out of there with our men. I know that a few in his group were corrupt, but so is all that sort of thing. If you turn your back on them because they're corrupt

instead of just trying to build a fence around them, then you're not going to deal with them at all. But we walked out of there, and Hanoi had not kept a single promise that they made anymore than they kept their promise to the Geneva Conference after France pulled out. So I think that anybody that tells you what a great thing we did pulling out of Viet Nam ought to hang their heads in shame.

Marcello: I would assume that the war in Viet Nam did influence a great deal of the activity undertaken in Congress during this term.

Cabell: It did. It did. You had those super hawks and you had super doves. That caused splits and things that carried over into other matters.

Marcello: Also, I guess it would be safe to say, would it not, that the amount of funding that was necessary to conduct the war in Viet Nam also, indirectly at least, had its effect on other programs that were going through Congress at this particular time.

Cabell: Oh, yes, it couldn't help it. But, of course, it was doing a whole lot to keep the economy going, too. I don't mean that that's ever an excuse for it, though. Don't misunderstand me. But all of those munitions, equipment, so forth . . . there again, you're coming

back to the space program. What did we spend on that in total? About twenty-five or thirty billion dollars, I believe. That's facilities and everything which are still in being. The average person, to hear them talk, thinks we just hauled twenty-five billion dollars to the moon and left it there. We didn't leave a thing on the moon except some used hardware, some used cars. The money that was spent was spent on payrolls and materials right here in the United States. But a lot of people don't have any concept of that.

Marcello: Okay, by this time it was 1968, and you were ready to hit the campaign trail again for your third term in Congress. But before we actually start talking about your individual campaign, something else rather important happened here. I guess we could say in the light of the increasing opposition to the Viet Nam war and then the domestic unrest at home, Lyndon Johnson decided that he would not be a candidate for reelection in 1968. What do you know about his decision not to run, and then we'll follow that up by talking about your reaction to his decision. Let's talk first of all about his . . . what do you know about his decision not to run?

Cabell: Well, I think that he was entirely sincere. It wasn't a matter of whether he would win or not win, but it was

a matter of trying to dispel the diversity that was rampant among the people of the country at the time. He did not want to get the Viet Nam action tied in with domestic politics and felt that he could best go ahead with the prosecution of the action as a non-candidate than if he had been, or if he were, a candidate. I think that he was entirely sincere in his statements to that effect.

Marcello: Did you ever have any inkling or hints through congressional scuttlebutt or any other source that Johnson was going to resign?

Cabell: Well, not resign.

Marcello: Well, not resign. I'm talking about being a candidate for reelection.

Cabell: Not accept the nomination.

Marcello: Yes.

Cabell: Oh, there had been some scuttlebutt, but nothing of any real value or nothing you could hang your hat on, and certainly, as far as I was concerned, there was no hint of it from the President. It caught an awful lot of us by surprise, and I'll tell you a little incident that illustrates that. On a Saturday night or Sunday night--I've forgotten which now--Mr. Frank Ichard, a former congressman, now the president of American Petroleum Institute, who had always been a close friend of the Johnsons, invited about a dozen

members of the Texas delegation and their wives to a little dinner party at his home. When Mrs. Cabell and I drove up, I recognized some Secret Service people there. I said, "Oh, the President, or at least Mrs. Johnson, will probably be at this dinner." Sure enough, they came very shortly thereafter. The Secret Service men came early.

Well, it was one of the nicest, most congenial . . . and not a stilted ceremonial type of affair at all. Very pleasant. There was a lot of reminiscing about things that had happened in Texas and in Washington. I forgot to say that Mrs. Johnson was there first. The President said that he would be late. We waited and, of course, there was no food served until the President got there. There was a phone call, and Mrs. Johnson said, "Lyndon said to please go on and eat, and he will get here in time for desert. He's been tied up at the White House."

So then he got there and everything, as I said, was so very pleasant and it got rather late. There again protocol said that nobody should leave before the President did. Finally, Mrs. Johnson said, "Lyndon, you know that you have a broadcast tomorrow." As I recall, it was in the morning wasn't it? She said,

"I don't want you going before those cameras with bags under your eyes. Now let's go home and get some sleep." The next morning at that broadcast came the announcement. He was working on it, and that was the reason he was late for that dinner. But there was no hint of it at that party.

Marcello: What sort of a man was Lyndon Johnson personality-wise from the contacts that you had with him?

Cabell: Tremendous! He was warm, very alert. A lot of people would let that hill country drawl fool them. But that man was alert. Frankly, I was very, very fond of him.

Marcello: I understand that Lady Bird was a very gracious lady, also.

Cabell: One of the most gracious people I've ever known.

This is interesting along that line of the decision. Horace Busby, who was one of his speech writers and PR people, very able man, was as surprised as we were when he was told that the President was going to put this in his speech. They were writing it is the reason he was late. But Horace told us that of the last several appearances that he had made that he had this decision in his pocket. He never knew at what time he might pull it out. But this decision was made at that time.

Marcello: In other words, he had been thinking about it for some time before that speech actually was made.

Cabell: Yes. As a matter of fact, that was not in the text of his main one. That was taken out of his coat pocket and read. It was not in the text.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up, I think, to your own campaign in 1968, and, obviously, this was a presidential election year, the Democrats having nominated Hubert Humphrey and the Republicans, Richard Nixon, of course. How did the presence of Hubert Humphrey on the ticket affect your particular campaign in 1968?

Cabell: Oh, I was not troubled about that. While Mr. Humphrey was an anathema to some of the more rabid, I didn't consider it any kind of a drag at all. My district was essentially a conservative district, but I didn't turn my back on Humphrey by any means like I did McGovern. As a matter of fact, I met him at Love Field and was on the platform with him when he made a short stop and talked.

Marcello: How well had you known Mr. Humphrey?

Cabell: Fairly well, fairly well, because he was and is a very outgoing person, very friendly, and has a remarkable memory. We were on a first name basis most of the time I was up there. As a matter of fact, prior to the



swearing in of the 89th Congress, Vice-President-elect and Mrs. Humphrey gave a reception to the newly elected Democratic congressmen. I never saw so much snow in my life. His home, a small, very unpretentious home, out in Maryland was way in the hell gone out there. So I just hired a cab for the afternoon because I wasn't about to try to negotiate in all that snow. It's well that I didn't. The cab waited and we went through the line. I had met him, but only casually, prior to that time. He practically stopped the show to put his arms around me and call to those around, "Here's the man that did more for the House than has been done for it in twenty years." He said, "Here is the man that beat Bruce Alger." From that time on, we were strictly on a first name basis (chuckle).

Marcello: Now in this campaign in 1968, once more you did not have any Democratic opposition in the primaries. By this time you had a rather, I guess we could say, solid record to run upon. For example, there were several accomplishments that you could take credit for by this time, after having served four years in the House--the Federal Center in Dallas, the new post office, the work moving forward on the Trinity River navigation. How did these things fit into your campaign in 1968?

Cabell: Well, I just ran strictly on my record and ran as a moderate, not as an extremist. By, generally, on the ADA I would get about a thirty-five or forty rating on the . . .

Marcello: ADA? You're referring to the Americans for Democratic Action.

Cabell: And then the other one, the antithesis of that one, is the American . . . well, they're the ones that published Human Events . . . Americans for Constitutional Action, ACA. I'd run about sixty-five to sixty-seven with them. So nobody could say that they had me tied up and in the bag.

Marcello: I would assume in particular during that campaign the Federal Building was one of your major accomplishments, was it not, in getting that located in Dallas?

Cabell: Well, I got that through on my first term because . . . and, I think, as we mentioned before, in spite of the fact that Albert Thomas had line vetoed it, lined it out of the appropriations for the . . . that would have been for the fiscal year 19 . . . let's see. The fiscal year is always the year behind. I went there in 1965. I was elected in '64, but beginning '65 . . . that was for the '66 fiscal year. He had line vetoed it, but by working with men in the Senate because it was in the

President's recommendation . . . it was in the budget. When Albert Thomas got to it, he just lined it out. He had that kind of disposition. So I got Magnuson, Senator Magnuson, who was chairman of the Senate committee, to hold it in the Senate, and I worked with George Mahon. Now George rarely will go against any of his subcommittee chairmen. That Appropriations Committee is so vast that the subcommittee chairman is pretty well the king.

Marcello: He has a great deal of autonomy, in other words.

Cabell: He does have, and it's rare that George will ever go against them. But while he wouldn't go against them, I'm sure that in this instance he didn't give them any solace. Then, of course, Albert was on the conference committee. I think that the President had a great deal to do with Albert not fighting it. But I worked with the . . . I lobbied, as the term goes, with every member of that conference committee.

I even lobbied with a Republican that even in that short time I had gotten to admire and who is now the minority leader, That's John Rhodes. But John had been friendly to me because he had not liked . . . he felt Alger was a stone around the neck of the Republicans, which he was, unfortunately. John and I got to be good friends, and we could work together. So they held it in conference. So that gave us the appropriation.

Marcello: How much did that Federal Building mean to Dallas?

Cabell: Well, it meant a great deal to Dallas. It meant that it could retain these offices that were being siphoned away. You see, the government had already bought the land, and the plans were drawn. It was in the budget, in the approved budget, in the appropriations, and damned if Eisenhower didn't line veto it! Alger wrote him a letter and published it, that he did the right thing. "That if we're going to save money, we'll just start at home, and I congratulate you on that." But the big thing was the effect that it had on that part of town that is deteriorating, that old downtown part. Twelve or fourteen million dollars spent among your contractors and laboring people isn't hay, but that was only the immediate benefit. But it was the retention, having the space for these offices to stay in GSA owned and operated buildings rather than all of this rental. I think that's where the value . . .

Marcello: Well, your Republican opponent in that election of 1968 was Roy Wagoner.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: I gather he didn't put up much of a campaign. He was poorly financed for one thing, I believe.

Cabell: Yes, and he spent . . . I think he darn near impoverished himself. He's a practicing physician, a man completely without personality, but, I think, a nice person, a good doctor. He had a little farm, I think, out here close to Rockwall. I understand that he got so in the hole that he had to sell that to pay off his debts.

Marcello: Apparently he waged his campaign on . . .

Cabell: On the coattails of Nixon.

Marcello: Is that right?

Cabell: Yes. He thought that was the time that this would get the Republican back in.

Marcello: Incidentally, how far had work progressed toward, let's say, getting a Trinity River Canal Bill passed?

Cabell: Well, you see . . .

Marcello: In other words, how much of an issue . . . was it a major issue at that time?

Cabell: The canal part was authorized, but the appropriations had very little meaning. I won't say meaning. It did not specify canal. All of the appropriations . . . and I was able to get lots more in there than would have been the case. I got more in there sometimes than was in the President's budget. But it was for water supply. It was for cleaning out some channels here and

there, like some appropriations for Aubrey. I got appropriations for the cleaning out and the control of Duck Creek out by Garland, initial appropriations for the engineering on Lake View. Those things were all an integral part of the final, overall Trinity program, but they didn't . . . they were like that money on the salesman's expense account. There was a suit of clothes on there but it didn't show. You see what I mean? So I was soft pedaling all that time, especially that part, because I knew there would be some opposition, and there wasn't any use at that time. I was getting all the money that was available to do these things that had to be done before you could go to actual canalization.

Marcello: Now, of course, the . . .

Cabell: Now we're up to that point, practically, see.

Marcello: Of course, the whole issue of the canalization of the Trinity River would not occur until your last election when you ran against Mr. Steelman, but at least by 1968 you were almost to that point.

Cabell: That's right. By that time your environmentalists were in the picture.

Marcello: Already by 1968 they were becoming vocal?

Cabell: No, not '68.

Marcello: I was going to say, not yet. I don't think it was in '68 yet.

Cabell: No, no, I thought you meant by the time Steelman came.

Marcello: Yes, oh, definitely so, yes. There's no question about that when you ran against Steelman. Let's just go back a minute because I think we're at the point where, perhaps, we can start talking about this in more detail. When you got to Washington, how much work had been done toward the realization of the eventual canalization of the Trinity River?

Cabell: Oh, a great deal. A great deal had been done. I don't want to in any way belittle or gloss over the efforts that had been made because, you see, the overall program was authorized by the Congress during the 89th Congress. So don't for any minute think that I'm the guy that got all of this done because there had been terrific work done.

Marcello: Oh, again, there were all sorts of other congressional districts that would have been affected by that canalization besides Dallas.

Cabell: That's right. That's right, but some of them adversely, they thought, for a long while. That one was Houston. Albert Thomas--may his bones rot--was behind all of that. The truth of the matter is Albert didn't hate Dallas; he

hated one man in Dallas who was the representative of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce in Washington.

Marcello: And who was this individual?

Cabell: That was Dale Miller. Dale's a fine person, and this goes back to one of the pettiest quarrels that you ever saw in your life. You can delete this if you want, but I'll tell it.

Marcello: I won't delete it, but when you edit it, maybe you'll want to delete it.

Cabell: No, I won't do it because it's a matter of known fact. Every year, you know, they have the Cherry Blossom Festival. Each state elects its Cherry Blossom Queen as the state queen or state princess. You can't have that many queens. Then from the fifty princesses one is elected by the thing as the queen. I think eighteen is the cutoff point. When you're eighteen you're no longer eligible. Well, Dale had a daughter who then was seventeen, very popular. Dale had been up there for years. He represents some other people there, too. Albert Thomas had two daughters. No, he had one daughter who was only sixteen. The jury, the committee, was picking Dale Miller's daughter. Albert nearly hit the ceiling. He said, "In the first place, no goddamn lobbyist has got any right to be given any recognition. This ought to be for congressional members' families



completely." And they said, "Well, now Al . . . " he was never too well beloved anyhow by the rank and file. They said, "Your daughter will have a chance next year. This girl will not be eligible. She's the choice of the committee." One member of the committee was a man representative of Lykes Brothers Steamship Line. Albert got hold of his people, of the officials of Lykes Brothers, and said, "I'll see that you never get another bit of shipping subsidy as long as I live if that man doesn't change his vote!" And he told him, "I'll have you fired!" Now that was how vehement he was. But they went ahead and stuck by the decision. That's why Albert hated Dallas.

He didn't hate Dallas. That isn't why he fought me so bad on the building. He said, "You mean that goddamn 'Dale Miller Building' they're building?" And he lied to me like a dog. I got wind of it at Christmas, Christmas of '65, when I was down there. We were on recess. I called Albert and told him, "Al, I hear that you've knocked out the Federal Building in your appropriations bill." See, it wouldn't be acted on till we came back. He says, "Oh, no, you heard wrong." But see, here's where he made his mistake. I was taping that conversation. I always kept a dictaphone connected

to a telephone or anything. Watergate notwithstanding (chuckle). He says, "Oh, no, you heard wrong." He says, "If the committee don't . . . if anything should happen, I'll give you my guarantee it'll be in next year's." But he says, "I have not knocked it out of this year's appropriations." But I was going through some stuff, oh, a year or more ago and came across that disc and threw it away. There's no use keeping a thing like that. The man's dead. But that's the kind of a man he was.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what happened to all of those dictaphone belts.

Cabell: I threw them away after they'd served their purpose. A few of them came in handy. I even did that while I was in business.

Marcello: Was this a common practice, let's say, among other congressmen, also?

Cabell: Not to my knowledge. I don't think so, and I didn't advertise it. Now I was . . . one day I had a very long conversation with an executive of one of the federal departments. There was quite a few details on it. After I was through I said, "Now Mr. So-and-so, I have recorded this conversation. Is that agreeable with you? It was for the details." "Oh, sure, it's perfectly alright."

Marcello: Getting back to this Trinity River business again, what happened from this point? Who else among the Texas delegation was working with you in this Trinity River bill? Obviously, there were other congressmen involved.

Cabell: All of those involved in the Trinity Basin. That was Jim Wright, who had a good deal of seniority at that time, Ray Roberts. Ray and I had been close friends for many years, old hunting partners. John Dowdy, out of Athens. Let me see, Dowdy went down that far and he went to Palestine. That pretty well covered it, I guess.

Marcello: Now what committee would this be going through, Rivers and Harbors?

Cabell: It goes through the Public Works Committee.

Marcello: Public Works?

Cabell: Yes. But if the whole package was authorized in 1965 . . . yes, '65 . . .

Marcello: It was authorized in '65, but no appropriations, is that correct, at that time?

Cabell: Well, this was the overall project. Now there had been appropriations prior for some piecemeal stuff, authorizations separate, but then this just gave the full authorization, and not one that would die. It was not

a one-year or two-year authorization. It was full authorization. From there it has to get its appropriations one at a time or however it goes. Then we were up to the part to where we had to get into some channel widening. That was over and beyond that which would be required just for flood control.

Marcello: Up until this time you had been working in that direction.

Cabell: Also, bridges. You see, immediately after it is declared navigable, the Coast Guard has jurisdiction. The Coast Guard says that you cannot have a bridge over the river under a certain elevation. Well, the first thing we ran into was right down here south of town on that loop. So we got the money to build that up. There was another one down the river there just ahead of Lake Livingston. Of course, Jack Brooks got interested in that one. So while Jack was not the happiest man in the world about navigation in the Trinity, however, I'll say that after . . . but he was very, very close to Albert. But after Albert's death, the Trinity River Improvement Association was about to show Houston where this would mean money in their pockets because they would get tollage, you see. It

will create a spur down through their canal, so they would get some tollage. And it would bring them considerably more traffic because they would get heavy commodities--grain, cotton--where they are coming from far West Texas. It's going by train or by truck. But there would be a saving to them if they trucked to Fort Worth, barged it to Houston, and put it on deepwater ships at Houston. Even if it were going to stay on the intercoastal canal, Houston would get a bite of it, you see. So they're for it now.

Marcello: You mentioned the Trinity Improvement Association awhile ago. How closely was that organization working with the congressional delegation?

Cabell: Oh, very close, I mean, just as close as could be!

Marcello: Was this organization mainly based here in Dallas?

Cabell: Dallas, Fort Worth, and the whole Trinity Basin.

Marcello: Who were some of the principal movers in that organization?

Cabell: Oh, Ben Carpenter is the ramrod, has been. His daddy was and then Ben . . . you've got the Who's Who of Dallas-Fort Worth and on down the line that are very interested in it. Now I worked with them extremely closely because I didn't want to do anything . . . now for instance. On doing something about Duck Creek, those floods out there

have been terrible. Then you talk about somebody getting left holding the bag. I was assured by the mayor of Garland and the city manager that Garland had the money put aside, put away, for their part of the channel improvements and the flood control improvements that were a part of the overall Trinity project. Well, I wouldn't move on that until I got hold of Ben Carpenter, and he took it up with his engineer. I said, "If I push and miss, will this hurt or in any way disrupt the routine, the schedule?" He said, "No, this is part of it." He said, "Get it." So then I got it, and goddamn if they hadn't spent that money. The ecologists started running and raising hell because they would cut out some trees and some rustic stuff that was causing all the flooding.

Marcello: You might just talk at this point a little bit how you maneuvered this bill through that particular congressional committee. Which one did we say it was?

Cabell: Public Works.

Marcello: Public Works, I mean to say, yes.

Cabell: Well, just by lobbying it with my friends on the committee. Then it was after their authorization it

was necessary to get it through the Appropriations Committee.

Marcello: But I gather then that by the campaign of 1968 the Trinity River wasn't the issue that it was to become later on when you ran against Steelman.

Cabell: No. Well, no, that's right. Now it was an issue in the '64 campaign because Alger would have no part of anything that meant spending a dime of federal money, see. That was one of the planks in my platform that I would work toward, that he had . . . I caught him flatfooted one day in a debate or a joint speaking at his own Princeton Club. He was a Princeton man. They had their luncheon meeting out at the Adolphus Hotel. Oh, boy, they had their guests, and there must have been a couple of hundred there. In enumerating the 'why you thought you could do a good job' and so forth, he was a great Congressional Record waver. "Well, the record is right here. Here's the record to prove it." Who in the hell's going to look it up, or how are you going to find it? He went on and I raised a point. I said, "What would the Trinity River mean and what would it do that you have no interest in it?" He said, "Well, I don't believe in that sort of thing." I said, "Well, how did you vote

on the Arkansas River project? Are you willing for Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Little Rock, Fort Smith to get the advantage of barge traffic, all of the economic gains that accrue to that? Are you willing for them to have it and then want to kill it for us?" He said, "If they've got such ideas as that, I'll look it up and find out about it." I said, "You're a little late." I said, "It's already been passed and it's built half-way to Tulsa." Boy, the crowd just roared. That was it as far as that group was concerned. But that was the truth. That was a fait accompli.

But in those things you don't . . . in Congress, like a Sunday School class or anything else, if you don't make friends, if you're not willing to help a man, how can you expect him to help you? I don't mean just sit there and swap out this, that and the other. But you do have to give sometimes, not take all of the time. I think that I did a pretty fair country job in making friends among those that could help and who were sympatico. I didn't make too many friends in the ultra-left or ultra-right.

Marcello: Okay, now you were reelected again by a relatively large majority to the 91st Congress. I noticed from



my records that you received a new committee assignment during this Congress. You were put on the District of Columbia Committee.

Cabell: Right, yes.

Marcello: You might explain how this came about.

Cabell: Well, I had been there four years with only the one committee. There was an opening that I could have had-- I already had talked it over with the chairman--on the Interior and Insular Affairs, which is a pretty key committee, particularly with this upswing of the environmentalists and so forth. I wanted on that committee. The chairman said he would ask for me. So I went . . . there was no other member . . . there had been another Texan on there previously, but he had gone off. Oh, it was White from El Paso, who left that committee to go on Armed Services. That was where he wanted to get because of Fort Bliss out there. So the dean put it up, and I talked to Omar Burleson from Texas who was on the committee. I said, "Omar, give me a boost. I want to get on that committee." So I was sitting in my office, oh, a day or two after that, and he said, "Earle, I'm afraid I can't get you on that Interior and Insular Affairs. There's a more senior man who has asked for it." "But," he says, "we can get you on the District Committee." I said, "I've got enough troubles without getting on that."

He said, "No, seriously, Earle, we want you on that committee."

Marcello: Why didn't you want to go on the District of Columbia Committee?

Cabell: Oh, it was a bucket of snakes, absolutely!

Marcello: In what way?

Cabell: Well, that's the committee that operates, you might say, as the city council for the District of Columbia. That's where all the wild ones are. And if you did a good job and used all your time on that, then I knew your own constituents would ask why you're spending all that time on the District.

Marcello: In other words, it was the type of committee where you really can't give your own district much help.

Cabell: No, it's strictly a labor of love or something like that. So I said, "No!" And I heard this voice in the back that said, "You tell Earle he's on the District Committee." That voice was Wilber Mills. Well, now who in the hell's going to slap Wilber Mills in the face, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee? But anyhow, they said, "Look, you've got a bunch of people on there. It's about to go flip all the way over. They just want to give the District everything, home rule and all that sort of thing, so we need you on there." And he says, "We can rationalize you because you've had

experience in a big city and municipal work." They said, "We want you on there to keep that thing in balance." I said, "Okay," without much recourse. That's how they got me on the District Committee.

Then, oh, at that time they just had numbered committees, not titled committees--committee one, two, three, four, five. The chairman, who pretty well ran the show, would assign you to . . . a bill would come in, and then he'd more or less name the committee that he'd assign it to, see. Or it'd be named already to committee one, but if a bill came in that he had to give to a committee, he'd pick the committee he wanted to give it to rather than one, you see, that was named or labeled, categorized, you see. So then he began to get into some trouble with his constituents, and then by that he felt like he should be spending more and more time.

The second year I was on that committee . . . I think it was the second year . . . prior to that time, though, I worked on the one dealing with law enforcement and had a big hand in the writing and passage because I was on the conference committee with the Senate, and also I worked on the floor on the D. C. Crime Bill. I have a beautiful letter from the attorney

general complimenting me and thanking me for my efforts on that bill, but I don't know whether I want to put that in my scrapbook or not. That with the attorney general John Mitchell (laughter).

But then I wound up as chairman of the number one committee--Subsidy. Ordinarily, again, your subcommittees are by history appointed by seniority, and I was jumped over about five or six men to be made chairman of the subcommittee on Trade, Commerce, and Fiscal Affairs. In other words, that was a real good committee. That was a lot of work, a lot of grief, but I had the job, and I tried to do the best job I could.

Marcello: Now were you still on Science and Astronautics?

Cabell: Yes, I was still on that. It's customary for a man to be on two committees. Some are even on three. But you can't do a good job.

Marcello: Now would it be safe to say that by this time, by 1968, the District of Columbia Committee was becoming a very important committee with a great deal of work attached to it?

Cabell: Terrific amount of work attached! Well, I went on that in '69. You said by '68.

Marcello: Right.

Cabell: Yes, it was becoming increasingly so because of the change in the complexion--and I use that term advisedly--of the citizenry. They got awful school problems, police problems. Every problem that you could conceive of, the District of Columbia had and has.

Marcello: Now was Walter Washington the mayor at this time?

Cabell: Yes. That was after there had been an amendment to the statutes setting up the District, the District government. He was the mayor-commissioner, they called him. Then they had a deputy who was an administrator more or less like a city manager, but still responsible to the mayor, and then a council. They were always wrangling and countermanding another's orders.

I mean it was a . . . and then there was a group in Congress and a large group on the committee that wanted to give them complete autonomy and then just pick up the bill for what it cost because there's a limit there to what you can tax. They said because it was a federal entity that that was a matter of no consequence. Well, of course, that was ridiculous.

So that's when, really, I had some tough work to do because we had to handle the pay schedules, pay

authorizations, for all of your city employees-- firemen, police, teachers. The school board were separately elected. But their budget had to be approved by the city council and in turn by us. It was the shoddiest run operation you have ever seen in your life! You can imagine, I guess. Just like if you cut off West Dallas and gave them complete autonomy and a blank check. That's about your situation, but where you were still having to do business down there, and you put your city hall down there, and then turn everything over to them.

Marcello: How did you feel when the whole issue of home rule for the district?

Cabell: I was opposed to it, very definitely opposed to it, because that is a federal entity. The federal interest has got to be protected. I don't think that an installation such as the federal government has there should be under the control or subject to the vagaries of an electorate that are just interested in draining money from somebody else to pay their own cost of operation. It was for that reason that the Constitution set it up that way. They tried it once before, and it wasn't until about 1948 that their last bonds were paid off. They went bankrupt. The federal government had to take them back over.

I think . . . but, of course, Maryland wouldn't want them. You see, they had taken in a considerable amount of Maryland. The smart thing, if it could be done, would be to go back to the original district. That doesn't encompass so much. It takes in, of course . . . they don't go across the river anymore. That was ceded back to Virginia. They were over there at one time. But it would take care of the federal triangle, Anacostia, Georgetown--that's about it--and give the rest back to Maryland. But Maryland's like this half-back on the football team. He don't want that ball.

But on that, the thing that damn near killed me . . . I had two terrific bills that I had to get passed at the request of the administration. John Connally was Secretary of the Treasury. That had reference to that metro system, the integrated bus, rail, and subway, building a subway. They want to get it completed, of course, by '76. They had tried to finance it by the normal method of municipal bonds, but along about that time . . . and now there is still a question about municipal bonds, particularly with the tax free part of it. That's the only thing that will sell the municipal bonds, is the fact that it

will yield you a little bit more net than other bonds. So nobody would buy it. You couldn't sell them. It was, in round numbers, a four billion dollar program of which 20 per cent was an outright federal grant. Eighty per cent would be what they would furnish. That would be 3.2 billion. The bond issue was a little more than that. It figured out about 3.7 or 8, but who's going to argue over four or five billion (chuckle)? So this was a new concept that would be . . . they would be interest bearing bonds at a nominal rate. Of course, the rate would be set when they were sold, actually, by the price they brought, but they would be guaranteed by the federal government. So then that made it considerably more desirable than the ordinary municipal bond, even though it might be tax free. But that had to be passed, then, through the Congress.

The bill that was sent to me--that had to go before my committee--I didn't like in several respects. So I wrote in and told them I wouldn't handle it without a provision that any contracts which they made with the unions--of course, they are forced to have the unions--but that any contract that WAMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority) entered into with labor would have to have a no-strike clause, and then a failure to



reach agreement would be subject to compulsory arbitration, two, that the fare box must pay the service charges for the indebtedness. Not necessarily operations, but the fares had to be set to where the fare box would pay that. For any entity, any group, for whom reduced fares were granted, the entity requesting those would make up the difference. Now the reason for that was that immediately the schools would want a reduced fare or maybe the aged or maybe something else. See, this was a compact between the District of Columbia, Western Maryland, and Northern Virginia. So it's a concession of those three areas, of those three groups, because it feeds out into them. So I just didn't want any of this free stuff, this freeloader stuff.

The other was that an audit be made by outside auditors under the direction of the Treasury Department. I didn't want to name any particular one, but since the Treasury was guaranteeing these things that there would be an audit periodically of their total, not only books, but operations. Not just a fiscal, but an operational audit. So they agreed, alright.

So then I had to get that passed through subcommittee. I got by with something that's never been done before. It just never had been thought of I guess. To Tom Eagleton,

chairman of my opposite number in the Senate, I said, "How about us having joint hearings, and then we'll save some time because time is going to be an element? Would you be agreeable to a joint hearing?" "Why, sure! Why, yes, it would be fine!"

So the hearings started. We had four hearings. The first one started in the House, the next one over at the Senate, and so forth. I worked in these things that were not in the bill, but worked them into the hearings so that then we could write the amendment. But you can't very well write an amendment into a bill in committee that there hasn't been a hearing on, you see? Well, I know how the Senate works. You know, they don't even attend half of their hearings. Just their staff attends. With us, we attend. Now our staff doesn't and our staff doesn't take part in a hearing. So we wrote the damn bill, and they couldn't say anything about it because between them . . . for them it was, let's see, it was Eagleton . . . I don't remember who else was on their subcommittee. They couldn't give any arguments because they weren't even there, see.

So they agreed to my bill, and the bill that they submitted to the Senate, then, was the Cabell

bill. They just said, "You send your bill over and we'll pass it." So it carries the name Cabell on it. I don't know whether that's good or bad (chuckle), but we sold it.

I made a hundred dollars on it. The bill came up under a suspension calendar, which meant that I had to have a two-thirds vote. A friend of mine wanted to bet me a hundred dollars I couldn't pass it. In fact, he offered ten to one. So I took ten dollars of it on suspension, but that kind of money . . . it was 3.8 billion dollars involved, as I recall. I passed that thing. Oh, it was a fight on the floor.

Marcello: How much was involved altogether?

Cabell: About 3.8 billion of guarantees, you see. Then the other bill that was a companion to it, also, I had a helluva lot of trouble on the floor with it. I didn't have any trouble in committee. There was a Maryland bus company and a Virginia bus company that was going under. They were flat broke. The Washington bus company was in the same shape as this fellow Chalk who was like Weinberg, the same kind of operator that Weinberg was here--just let everything go to hell and just milk it. He was asking a helluva big price for

it. But I got another bill through authorizing WAMATA, since they were a congressionally chartered, you might say, entity, for WAMATA to buy those three companies because obviously you couldn't operate in competition. The other thing is that you would have a problem of a non-integrated operation, where somebody might come in on the underground and then need a bus to go on farther because this does not entail any rail within the city. It's strictly for inte area travel. So it was essential that the entire public transportation system be under one national control. So we got that passed. That's why I was so late getting down here for my '73 campaign, was trying to get those bills through.

Marcello: Most of this took place, then, in your . . . in the . . . would it be the 92nd Congress, then, I suppose?

Cabell: That's right, yes.

Marcello: You had been put on that District of Columbia during the 91st Congress?

Cabell: That's right.

Marcello: 91st Congress. Yes, and then you remained on it through the 92nd Congress.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: From what you say, I don't get the impression that your time on that District of Columbia was exactly your happiest in Washington?

Cabell: No, but I was determined to try to do a good job of it. I wasn't about to just turn my back on it because I was a victim of some of that.

Marcello: As a result of all of your activities on the District of Columbia Committee, did this curtail your activities on Science and Astronautics?

Cabell: No, because that slowed down somewhat.

Marcello: I see. By this time the activity there had ceased. Not ceased, but had diminished.

Cabell: The only thing that I had other . . . there was very little happening on the other subcommittees on Science and Astronautics other than the Science, Research, and Development. That was almost entirely the National Science Foundation. That did not take an awful lot of time because they were always extremely well-prepared. We had a good subcommittee where there wasn't a bunch of . . . well, philosophy didn't get in there too much. It was a pretty high class bunch. So that was not an unpleasant thing. I enjoyed that, but there was two years there that I handled as acting chairman . . . seeing as I couldn't be designated. Under House rules you can't be subcommittee chairman of more than one subcommittee. But for all intents and purposes . . . because I chaired the hearings, carried it on the floor,

and handled it in conference and then conference committee back. But about two big District Committee bills, I told you about, I avoided the conference. I had those joint hearings, so then they couldn't argue. If there was something they didn't like, I would say, "Well, why in the hell didn't you bring it up in the joint hearings?"

Oral History Collection

Earle Cabell

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Date: October 16, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing former United States Congressman Earle Cabell for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 16, 1974, in Dallas, Texas. This is the sixth in a series of interviews with Congressman Cabell. At this point we are going to be talking about his activities in the 91st and 92nd Congresses, and possibly the elections of 1970 and 1972 if time permits.

Now Mr. Cabell, the last time we had spoken and when we had stopped, we had been talking about your activities in the 91st Congress. According to the records that we've accumulated, it seems as though your work on the District of Columbia Committee consumed a great deal of time during that particular session. Was this the rule or was this an exceptional period here?

Mr. Cabell: It was an exceptional period because the District of Columbia had gotten into such a fouled-up condition. There had been a modification of their political set-up,

organization, about two or three years before. There were so many things at loose ends--the judicial system, the operation of the City Hall under a quasi-city council and a mayor who was scared to death, a nice person, a good man.

Marcello: This was Walter Washington?

Cabell: Walter Washington, yes.

Marcello: You say he was scared to death. About what?

Cabell: Well, of doing anything that looked as though he were going against the blacks in the community. The statutes that were passed by the Congress must have been passed in either the 90th or the 91st, and very frankly, they didn't do a darn thing but put Washington out front and get the people off the President's back. Now that's the whole sum and substance, I think.

Marcello: Now again we're talking about a period here, are we not, when ghetto tensions were quite . . . well, it was a touchy situation, was it not? We'd gone through this period with the riots in various cities and this sort of thing.

Cabell: The touchy situation was enforcement of the law. It was aggravated by an attempt to lower the quality and the integrity of the overall police force in order to recruit



more blacks. It was just a lowering. That's something those of us on the committee, a number of us, fortunately, were reasonably successful and able to defeat.

In the so-called Omnibus Crime Bill there were some rather drastic measures passed that created a lot of confusion among the American Civil Liberties Union and that type, but they have had a good effect on law enforcement. For example, one was preventive detention. Previously, they had been letting these people off on their own recognizance for lack of bail. Our investigation showed that there were men on the streets out on bond for twelve and fifteen and even more felonies and on their own recognizance. That, we put a stop to in giving the judge discretion that it didn't have to be a capital case for him to refuse bond or to set an unusually high bond.

Another provision was what we called the "no-knock" provision whereby the police officer would have the discretion on their own part. They had to go to a magistrate and show good cause why they should be able to break and enter without identifying themselves. This came about primarily as the result of two FBI men being shot and killed while they were identifying themselves.

Another thing was that dope was and is sickeningly plentiful. It was almost impossible to get a dope seizure because, if you identified yourself before you served your search warrant, then, Lord knows, how many grains of heroin could be flushed down the sink or the toilet during that thirty seconds or one-minute period. So we got that across.

Then there was one other . . . that was three items in there. We did get a mandatory prison sentence for . . . and a mandatory sentence of ten years, as I recall, for a second offense of armed robbery, and another provision that doesn't come to my mind. You can see the trend was to tighten the confounded thing up to where you could incarcerate.

Marcello: How closely did the committee work with Mayor Washington in all of these various measures concerning the District of Columbia? Is there, or was there, a close liaison between the committee and the mayor's office?

Cabell: Oh, yes, reasonably, yes. We were on good terms. We liked him. We admired him. We thought he was a straight, honest person. But his hands were tied. We worked very closely with the Department of Justice and with the Police Department.

Marcello: You mentioned that his hands were tied. In what way?

Cabell: He had no authority.

Marcello: Where did the authority rest, with the District of Columbia Committee?

Cabell: The authority rested in just a number of boards, commissions. It was just a jungle.

Marcello: In other words, it was just a very decentralized administration in that city?

Cabell: Very, very.

Marcello: This apparently, then, explains why at one particular point during that 91st Congress you proposed a bill to establish a committee on the organization of the government in the District of Columbia. Do you recall that?

Cabell: Yes. That was proposed to put a stop, or to try to head off, a quick passage of just an out and out Home Rule Bill. I was not the author of that particular bill. The author of that was Bernie Sisk from California, who had introduced it back in the 89th and had gotten a breather.

Marcello: Why was it that you were opposed to home rule for the District of Columbia?

Cabell: Because there was too much federal interest in the District that would not be taken care of without the expenditure of huge sums of money. We did not feel--I say "we"--a number

of others, that those people had the ability or the character as displayed in later incidents to govern that city with that much national investment and that much dualism there. They weren't even able to handle the muggings in their own areas. The amount of money . . . what they wanted was a blank check. Whatever they didn't raise in taxes to run the city the way they wanted to run it, that automatically would be made up by the federal government.

As an example, that school system which they set the budgets for . . . but the Council then would pass on it, and then we would have to determine the amount of federal supplement we would have to give. The cost per pupil in the District of Columbia is the highest in the United States, and the degree of education is among the lowest. The reading level of the high school level is comparable to about a fourth or fifth grade reading level over the rest of the country. It was costing something like half a million dollars a year to replace the vandalism in the schools. Those were things that we were . . . we just didn't think that ought to be turned over to the people who were perpetrating that kind of thing.

Marcello: I notice another one of the items that you were particularly interested in with regard to the District

of Columbia was the development of a transit system there.

Cabell: Yes, that was the result of long years of study through the federal government, the Department of Transportation. There was formed this WAMATA, which I mentioned, Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority, which was a consortium of the District of Columbia, North Virginia, which would have been Arlington and Fairfax County, and two or three counties of Maryland abutting the District. So they wanted to put in--and it was recommended--a subway system of some . . . it was going to wind up with some eighty miles that would feed into the city, and then your crosstown tubes, but then you still would have to have your surface transportation for the business and shopping centers.

Marcello: Incidentally, where did you live while Congress was in session?

Cabell: We had an apartment in Arlington right across the river.

Marcello: How tough was it for you to get work from there?

Cabell: Easy because we were just a hop, skip, and a jump over the river from the Capitol.

Marcello: I thought that maybe you would have had some firsthand experience with the terrible traffic in Washington, D.C.

Cabell: No. Of course, that's why we located where we did.

Marcello: But you did get some idea as to how bad the traffic was in that city.

Cabell: That's right.

Marcello: There were some other pieces of legislation concerning the District in which you apparently were interested, also. Is it not true that you sponsored a bill to reorganize the juvenile court procedures in the District of Columbia?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: Why was that necessary?

Cabell: Because there practically was no juvenile facility . . . they had the juveniles, both the petty offenders and the felons, together in a prison located out in Virginia called Lorton, and it was badly overcrowded and horribly mismanaged. Dope was freely obtainable. The escapee incidence was just terrible.

Bear this in mind. I don't want to take credit where it isn't due. Nearly all of these pieces of legislation, whoever might introduce it, after it's been worked over in your hearings, and you come out then with what you call a clean bill to avoid amendments having to be voted on on the floor, then the committee chairman is generally designated as the author of that bill. I didn't author a

number of those bills. I only helped put them together as chairman of the subcommittee and as floor manager. They carried my name.

Marcello: Okay, another one of these was a bill to increase the salaries for public employees--policemen, firemen, and teachers.

Cabell: Well, that came up every year, and we did that . . . we'd have to follow the national trend with reference to cost of living and the like. You see, those salaries had to be set by the District Committee.

Marcello: A couple of other bills that came out of that committee . . . something that I'm not too familiar with and don't know too much about. Perhaps you could explain these. There was one bill, again, which you introduced which was to establish offices of delegates to the Senate and House of Representatives from the District of Columbia. Are you familiar with that?

Cabell: Yes. The bill was up to provide for a delegate, a non-voting delegate, from the District to the House. So I altered and passed in the House a bill to have one in the Senate, also. Of course, that was a gimmick. I knew damn well the Senate wouldn't accept it, not that bunch of so-called highbrows (chuckle). That was to give that thing the kiss-of-death. The Senate didn't

accept it, and the House then accepted the Senate version (chuckle).

Marcello: How much time did that District of Columbia Committee take during this 91st Congress so far as your personal business was concerned?

Cabell: Well, it took a great deal of time. Our hearings, of course, were in the mornings prior to the sessions of the Congress, and during the last year--I guess it was only the 92nd Congress--the rules were changed to where a committee could meet during general debate but could not meet during what they called the "five minute rule" when amendments were in order. Of course, that work was done primarily in the mornings. It didn't take the whole day by any means because then I was always a stickler for being on the floor during general debate on the various bills.

Marcello: I would assume that the District of Columbia Committee was taking up more of your time than Science and Astronautics, which was your first love.

Cabell: Well, yes, because the Science and Astronautics Committee was not as busy then, not nearly so busy. There were some of the subcommittees of which I was not a member that were reasonably busy, but, of course, I still made



all of their full committee meetings and kept up. But other than the Science Research and Development Subcommittee, I did not have . . . I was not called on for much of anything.

Marcello: Were you receiving much flak during this period to decrease the amount of money being appropriated for NASA and the other space projects?

Cabell: Oh, that was constant from the Year 1. There were these that thought that we were just leaving all of this money on the moon and that none of that should have been spent. It ought to have been given to poor people. We were up against that every day, even among certain members of the House and Senate.

Marcello: Now during this particular session of Congress, you were serving under your first Republican President. What sort of change did you note between the Johnson style, if that's a good word to use, and the Nixon style? I don't want your opinion to be colored by recent events such as Watergate.

Cabell: I say quite frankly that Nixon had the poorest congressional relations imaginable.

Marcello: Why was that?

Cabell: I guess he was just too damn thick-headed or too egotistical. But Republicans themselves were fussing about

that. During the Johnson administration, there was contact frequently on various bills by his staff members. It wasn't very often that there was direct contact with the President, of course, but he had a staff of congressional liaison men, and if there was something that you needed some help on, you could always get hold of one of those men, like if you wanted to jog up an agency about something. But even the Republicans were fussing about that. I made the remark one day . . . oh, I guess, President Nixon had been in a year or more, and rather facetiously I said, "Well, I guess that you boys can get in the White House now because we're not in there so much." He said, "Hell, we could get to the White House and to the President easier with President Johnson in there than we can with that guy." He said, "We can't get past the 'Berlin Wall'." Now that was the term that was in general usage in the full four years of Nixon's administration that I was up there.

Marcello: When they were using the term "Berlin Wall" were they referring to Haldeman, Erlichman, and all the other Germans?

Cabell: That's right.

Marcello: What seemed to be the tone or the manner here? Was it one of arrogance or simply remoteness or non-cooperation, or what seemed to be the problem? How do you account for this?

Cabell: I think that he was leaving it entirely in the hands of his staff, and they were not fit. That staff-- Erlichman, Haldeman, and some of those others, later Haig--were about the same, were the nearest thing to American Nazis I've ever known, and history has borne that out . . .

Marcello: Why do you particularly . . .

Cabell: . . . in their general attitude. I mean, it's just their general attitude. I mean, they were above the law. When they took it upon themselves to by-pass the FBI on matters of internal security, took it upon themselves as being more capable . . . whenever they overstepped themselves to the point of trying to involve the CIA into activities that, organically, they were forbidden to do, that's to get involved in domestic affairs.

Marcello: There were even incidents of this sort taking place while you were in Congress and long before Watergate came to the surface?

Cabell: Yes, but I wasn't familiar with them. I did know that they were putting . . . that they would put excessive pressure on some of these departments, but it was not for a humdrum thing. It was big stuff, big stuff.

Marcello: Big stuff in what sense of the word?

Cabell: Well, he was interested in the well-being of Vesco, ITT, and things of that sort. It wasn't for old Joe Doe.

Marcello: In other words, there was a lot of special-interest-type of activity taking place. From what you've said, then, and without trying to put words in your mouth, it appeared to you and some of your colleagues even as early as 1968 that there was a chasm or a certain remoteness developing between Congress and the White House.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: There was very little liaison or cooperation between the two branches. Of course, this is a complaint that has been voiced many times since, especially since the Watergate investigations and that sort of thing.

Cabell: It's come out from under a log.

Marcello: Okay, well, this more or less brings us up to 1970, and it was time for you to come back to Dallas and face another election campaign. Now this one of 1970 was . . . I'm not sure if it was your toughest campaign because, of

course, you were defeated in 1972 by Alan Steelman. But the 1970 Democratic primary was a rather bitter campaign for you, was it not?

Cabell: To an extent, yes. There was a lot of very unjust and untrue stuff thrown out.

Marcello: This, of course, was the campaign in which you were running against Mike McKool.

Cabell: That's right.

Marcello: Now you mentioned some unjust and untrue things. Could you elaborate on that?

Cabell: Well, for instance, I say untrue. Maybe they weren't untrue. He was trying to alienate me or alienate the minority elements completely away from me. They had always been friends and supporters. We had gotten along well. He also dragged up the oldest thing in the world--absenteeism, which is a bunch of hooie. Oh, for somebody to go away and stay for months, that's something else. But anytime you can maintain 75 to 80-some per cent answering the calls, you're alright because so much stuff is of little consequence, just a matter of meeting, and that was it, just to make quorum. The main thing was his distortion of some of those things rather than outright lie.

Marcello: Now this, of course . . . was this the first time that McKool had run, or had he ever run before?

Cabell: For Congress? Now wait a minute.

Marcello: I think he has run a couple of times for Congress.  
Maybe that was the first time, but he's run since then,  
I think.

Cabell: Yes, yes. When did Milford go up there?

Marcello: That would have been around 1972 perhaps, was it not?

Cabell: Yes, because Milford had a reelection this time. He  
ran against Milford.

Marcello: It must have been in 1972 because he ran against you  
in 1970.

Cabell: I guess he did. But I was thinking that . . .

Marcello: Now McKool seemed to be gearing his campaign, like you  
pointed out, to . . .

Cabell: Well, that's right. I never was up there when Milford  
was. Milford was elected in '72. I guess this was  
McKool's third attempt.

Marcello: Like you pointed out awhile ago, I think he did, that  
is, McKool, did gear his campaign to attract minority  
support, especially in South Dallas and areas like this.

Cabell: An awful lot of demagoguery. If I hadn't taken one  
particular line of action, I would have lost that primary.

Marcello: What was that?

Cabell: Now he couldn't have won the general.

Marcello: This would have been running against Frank Crowley, you mean?

Cabell: Frank Crowley would have beat the hell out of him in the district as it was composed at that time. But he had a number of the Negro precinct chairmen bought, paid for. This came to light in a school board election which was held just some few weeks ahead of the national elections, that is, of the primary. There was just no end of voting discrepancies in that, just a flock of them. I learned about it. I mean, it was just actually stealing votes on that. So I hired Pinkerton men. I had them take a course in poll watching, and they were qualified by the county clerk as poll watchers. I had them standing there in the polling place all day long. You may recall that McKool made the remark, "Well, his people just didn't get out and vote." They didn't get out because they didn't want any trouble. Now two or three of them, of the suspect precinct chairmen, tried to bar those men from being in there. They had been giving these Negroes a pretty rough time if they didn't vote the way they had told them to in the school election. So we just had the county chairman and the man from the sheriff's department just go out there and read them the riot act. He said, "These men are qualified and certified

as poll watchers for Mr. Cabell." So there was no end of the numbers that would come up and see that man and turn around and never go back and vote.

Marcello: That was a fairly close primary, as I recall. You won by about 4,000 votes, I think. Somewhere around 30,000 to 26,000, I believe.

Cabell: I think it was about 53 or 54 per cent margin where it had been running . . .

Marcello: I gather there was quite a bit of verbal mudslinging in that campaign between you and McKool.

Cabell: Not too much, not too much. His was underground mostly. He thought he had that so well-organized that he just couldn't lose.

Marcello: I gather that there was no love lost between you and McKool though, and is it true that you would not have supported him had he beaten you in that primary and had been running against Frank Crowley?

Cabell: Oh, I don't know. Now when I beat him in there, his wife Betty said, "Well, we're behind Cabell." At a Democratic meeting out in South Dallas Mike was somewhat loud and excited.

Marcello: There was quite a great philosophical gap between you and McKool.

Cabell: Yes.



Marcello: He, of course, was quite liberal, and as you have mentioned you were considered yourself moderate. Okay, so in the general election, then, in 1970 your Republican opponent was Frank Crowley.

Cabell: Crowley, yes.

Marcello: And he had been a former Dallas County Commissioner, I believe, had he not?

Cabell: Yes, he had been a county commissioner, and had been for, oh, a number of years the administrative assistant to Bruce Alger.

Marcello: So far as his politics were concerned, how did he compare with Bruce Alger?

Cabell: Oh, all the difference in the world. Frank Crowley's a gentleman.

Marcello: What seemed to be the major issues in that particular campaign against Crowley?

Cabell: Oh, the only thing there that he could do . . . he said that I was a big spender because I had voted for a number of these relief bills, and he was taking strictly the Liberty Lobby and ACA line, Human Events, and tried to make hay out of not having a 100 per cent voting record. The truth of the matter is, as I recall, the two terms that I served up there--at the same time as Jim Collins-- I supported the President 2 to 4 per cent more than he did.

Marcello: But nevertheless, as I recall, Crowley tried to make an issue out of your non-support for the President or your uncooperative attitude or whatever toward President Nixon because of a few votes of yours to override some Presidential vetoes.

Cabell: Well, but I sustained him on several, and Mike McKool used that.

Marcello: Well, obviously, I don't think that that general election was as tough for you as the primary had been because you defeated Crowley rather handily. I think the vote was somewhere about 57,000 to 38,000, I believe--a rather substantial margin. How do you explain this substantial margin? Now, of course, obviously, people were voting on your record. Do you have an advantage in a non-presidential election year in running?

Cabell: Oh, I think so.

Marcello: In other words, what I'm getting at is that usually the party in power--by "in power" I mean in the Presidency--normally loses votes, do they not, or loses seats in an off-year election?

Cabell: Yes, yes. That's in the history. It hasn't been true the last few times.

Marcello: No, that's true.

Cabell: But over a long period. I had rather run each time in a non-presidential year.

Marcello: And again, is it because the opponents can come in or gain a good many votes off the coattails of the President?

Cabell: Yes, and then your organization can get screwed up and can get gung ho over the presidential instead of your election.

Marcello: And I think you were to find out that this was the case to a great extent when you were to run in 1972, which we'll talk about a little bit later on. Okay, so you go back to Congress now, and this, of course, is the 92nd Congress.

Cabell: One thing that I thought of that I haven't mentioned, as long as I'm supposed to be tooting my own horn to some extent. It must have been in about sixty . . . it could have been in the 90th Congress. I had been trying to get something done in the remodeling and air conditioning of the Veteran's Hospital out here at Lisbon. That was another thing that my predecessor had made absolutely no effort to have done. It was the largest non-airconditioned veteran's hospital in the United States in the warmer climates where air conditioning is needed. The Veteran's Administration had authorized it, had asked for it, but

never could get the appropriation. Through some friends, I learned that the Veteran's Administration had about \$18,000,000 committed to them, appropriated, for a hospital in California. Don't ask me how I learned this. I ain't going to tell you. But the land was tied up in litigation over title. It looked like it was going to be several years in straightening it out. Now these agencies can reallocate money under certain circumstances but must get the approval of the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. In other words . . . and that's a good one, as you can well see. That's a very good provision, that they can't shuffle this stuff around. So I went to Tiger Teague and asked him if he'd support me for this transfer of funds, and he said, "Hell, yes." And then I went to George Mahon and went over the situation with him. He agreed to it. That's how we got this hospital completely air-conditioned. It was about a \$12,000,000 job.

Marcello: And this took place in what session of Congress? Do you recall?

Cabell: It was either . . . it must have been the 90th . . .

Marcello: In the 90th?

Cabell: . . . when the work was started.

Marcello: Okay, so you were going back to Congress now, and this was the 92nd Congress. You were picking up just a little bit of seniority by this time. This would have been your fourth term.

Cabell: Fifth.

Marcello: Your fifth.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: How much seniority were you picking up, and how much more clout do you think that you had at this time as compared to when you first entered Congress?

Cabell: Well, your clout multiplies almost by the sum of the square. A man that's been there for six or eight years . . . and it depends on how he has comported himself. I can show you men that have been up there for twenty years or more and have absolutely no standing in there. But if he's made friends, hasn't made an ass of himself which is awfully easy to do, then you've got some seniority that means something by your fifth term. Also, when you have sufficient seniority to be a subcommittee chairman, that means that you're on the floor more, you're speaking more, you are . . . they can size you up better rather than just sitting around with an occasional remark. Then there's somewhat of a fraternity if you want to call it that. That's not an apt phrase, but you

can always . . . a subcommittee chairman can always get the ear of another subcommittee chairman--where one who has not obtained that recognition can't always do it--because you never know when you might want something from him when the guy comes to ask you something.

Marcello: Now at this time are you still on both the District of Columbia Committee and the Science and Astronautics Committee?

Cabell: That's right, yes.

Marcello: Another one of the bills that came up during this session--and actually it had come up during the 91st session also, but I forgot to talk about it--was the establishment of a Big Thicket National Park. Now you were fairly active in that movement, were you not?

Cabell: Yes, and . . .

Marcello: This really wouldn't have too much to do with the District of Columbia or Science and Astronautics, but you were apparently quite active in that movement.

Cabell: Alright, there's quite a story on that.

Marcello: Why don't you describe your particular part in the establishment of that Big Thicket National Park.

Cabell:            Alright.  Back when Ralph Yarborough was still in the Senate--and as you know that was quite a cause with him--he got a bill through the Senate calling for not less than 300,000 acres.  Well, to tell you the truth, the Senate only voted him that bill because they knew he would still be in trouble in his next election, and they wanted to help old Ralph and knew that it would never pass.  Well, the environmentalist group here--and this is a kind of a hotbed of them as you know--two or three of them that are making good money out of it because they're drawing fees to represent.

Marcello:          Who are these individuals?

Cabell:            Oh, one of them is this damn fellow Ned Fritz.  They wanted to try to get something, and I wanted something done about the Big Thicket even though it wasn't in my territory, but it was in Texas.  I talked to John Dowdy.  It was in his district at that time.  I had talked to Wayne Aspinall, the chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, and two or three others.  Wayne said, "Earle, I'm not going to hear that bill.  I'm not going to touch it because 300,000 acres is absolutely impossible."  The lumbering people . . . there were thousands of acres of reforested timber

involved in that. It's already . . . the pristine growth was cleared away years ago. There's even third growth on some of it where they've replanted, reforested. He said, "I'm not going to touch that thing. It's ridiculous."

Marcello: In other words, the bill was okay in principle, but the scope of the bill was too great.

Cabell: That's right. And he said, "I'm not going to start out with anything that has that kind of acreage involved. In the first place there's too much money.

Marcello: How much money would we be talking about in terms of establishing a national park with 300,000 acres? Would you have an estimate on that?

Cabell: Well, it would be difficult because . . . let's say you had 100,000 acres of good pine timber. That's worth several thousand dollars an acre. So \$2,000 an acre for just 100,000 acres, what's that? It's about \$20,000,000 or some such.

Marcello: I'm not a mathematician.

Cabell: I'm not either, but I might go get my calculator. But it was in the millions of dollars, many millions.

Marcello: Did Aspinall have an alternative to the bill?

Cabell: They gave us the alternative that we worked out. "We'll put in a bill for not more than 75,000 acres. Will you give it a hearing and will you give it a run?" He said, "Sure, I will."



Marcello: Now what particular Texas congressmen were involved in this Big Thicket project?

Cabell: Well, the only other one was Jack Brooks.

Marcello: Now this would have been somewhere back, probably, in the 91st Congress at least.

Cabell: Well . . .

Marcello: It came up in the 91st, I know, and it came up in the 92nd.

Cabell: The 90th. So they were the only ones involved. It would be Jack Brooks--a little of it extended over into his--and John Dowdy.

Marcello: How did you personally feel about the establishment of some sort of a Big Thicket National Park?

Cabell: Oh, I was definitely for it because it is a very unique bit of land. The flora and the fauna are very unique. There are many endangered species down there. So I certainly was for it. So Wayne said, "If you'll give me a bill calling for not more than 75,000 acres, we can start with that. Then we can work out something that's sensible, that I think we can pass out of the House. Then we can have a conference, and we can get something that's reasonable."

Marcello: How well did you know Wayne Aspinall?

Cabell: I got to know him real well. So I sent word back through Sid Pietzsch, my administrative assistant who was in contact with Ned Fritz and others, and wrote him a letter on this. I did not name names for obvious reasons. He took this up with those environmentalists here. They said, "Why it's absolutely ridiculous!" They got mad and blew up and said I was an enemy of conservation and the environment. Now you can see what's happened now. Just six years later, they got what I could have had them six years ago.

Marcello: What happened from this point, then, after the bill was introduced at 75,000 acres?

Cabell: Oh, there wasn't even a hearing on it. I pulled it down. I pulled it down. I didn't want to be made a fool of. If that isn't what they wanted--and they were cussing me out--I said, "To hell with them!"

Marcello: I think, subsequently, you did bring this up in one or two sessions after that, also, did you not?

Cabell: Not as an original author. Then in . . . I guess it was in the 91st Congress. That was before Jack Brooks worked it up, and he had been working with the timber interests down there and those who were going to fight

that other thing tooth and toenail. So most of the Texas delegation co-signed with him . . . Eckhardt was there then, but not Jordan. Damned if Eckhardt didn't go to Wayne Aspinall with one and told him, "Well, this is the one that all of the Texas delegation's for." He lied.

Marcello: Did it call for more acreage above 75,000.

Cabell: Called for very little difference between that which we had worked out in the luncheon and co-sponsored with Jack. So I think Jack's prevailed pretty well, and they came out with 87,000 acres. But I got credit for being anti-environmentalist.

Marcello: Now in this 92nd Congress, once again it looks as though the District of Columbia Committee was going to be occupying a certain amount of your time.

Cabell: Well, those transit bills were the main thing. That delayed my return to Dallas.

Marcello: In other words, you had the authority to begin that transit system, but I think one of the things that was necessary was to get some sort of federal guarantee, was it not, of the obligations for the Transit Authority?

Cabell: And the authority for the WAMATA to purchase those surface lines.

Marcello: You might talk just a little about this because I think it is kind of an important part of that committee work at that time.

Cabell: Well, there were two things involved. Number one, the surface system, bus system, operated by a man named Roy Chalk, was going from bad to worse. He had bled it as had been the case . . . he was the same type of transit operator as Weinberg was here in Dallas. There were three of them, and then there was one whose name escapes me at the moment who operated in the East and then finally went to the penitentiary over some conniving on something. But what they did, they bought all the transit companies and bled them, just bled them white, and then either sold them or abandoned them. But they always bought where there was good real estate. Then if they threw them out . . . \_\_\_\_\_ under, their franchise . . . and Lord knows Chalk had a sweetheart franchise. So there had to be something done about that.

Then there was the program to build the subway system, the Metro, and the WAMATA, the metro commission, was organized and it was originally intended that it would be financed by revenue bonds. But by that time revenue bonds, number one, were becoming somewhat unsteady because of the talk that the tax free interest

provision on revenue bonds was going to be discontinued. The other thing was that the bond examiners did not think that . . . would not give them a good rating because of the nature and the cost, and they couldn't sell the bonds. The government had already put up several billion dollars which was their share under the DOT transit bills that had been passed, where they give you about a 20 per cent grant if you raise the other 80.

So then at this time Mr. Connally was Secretary of the Treasury, and he and the President worked out a provision which was submitted, that in order to get this thing under way, to have it operated by the bicentennial year, that these would not be municipal bonds--would not be tax free bonds--but they would be guaranteed by the government. Now this had been talk for some time but had never been drawn past the talking stage.

So then this bill was written up, drawn up, by the Treasury Department and submitted to our committee. It amounted to almost a four billion dollar guaranty. I studied it. We had some hearings. Before we had the hearings, I studied it. I had talked to Secretary Connally about it and also had talked to some White House people. I had three provisions, three privisos, and I told them that I would call hearings and try to put it

through, but not without those provisos. Those provisos were these: that the fare would have to be set to where the fare box would pay for the service on those bonds; that an outside audit, complete audit, both operational and fiscal, be done under the supervision of the Treasury Department since they were the ones who were guaranteeing it; and third that any contract, any labor contract with maintenance men, drivers, and whatnot carry an absolute enforceable no-strike clause, but would provide for arbitration. You almost have to have that if you're going to have a positive no-strike.

Well, they agreed to that. Senator Eagleton was chairman of the opposite committee in the Senate. We held joint hearings on it and wrote those things in, and then I was able to pass that under suspension rules-- that's two-thirds majority--in the House just about three weeks before the election. The Senate just picked up my bill and passed it, and there wasn't even a conference on it.

Now there was another bill, a companion bill, that would give Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the acronym being WAMATA, that would give them the authority to buy three existing transit systems. One was Capitol Transit owned by Chalk. The other was the ABW,

which was Arlington, Baltimore, and Washington. The other one was a small, strictly Virginia Company that didn't get over into the District but was serving what would be the District of WAMATA. They were very anxious to sell. They were in bad shape. I made certain stipulations to WAMATA as to the purchasing, what to look for, of Chalk because I had gone through the same thing with Weinberg and knew what to hunt for, knew where the bodies were.

So when I got those things through then I could come home. But the problem was that I was carrying such a load--and Mrs. Cabell was already down here--there was a period of, I guess, six weeks, that I never left my office before twelve o'clock at night, taking care of my mail and dictating letters and signing them, lining up the work for the next day. And I walked around here for three weeks with pneumonia on top of a pretty bad pair of lungs anyhow, where I was in the hospital with pneumonia two years ago. That got me.

Marcello: In other words, once again, in that 92nd Congress, the District of Columbia Committee did occupy quite a bit of your time.

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: Now another interesting aspect of the District of Columbia that you apparently were interested in at this time was the establishment of a District of Columbia Development Bank.

Cabell: I held hearings on that, but never did . . . I wouldn't turn it loose. That was one of those things that sounded pretty high and lofty but didn't smell just right. It was too big an opportunity for some well-placed developers to cut a pretty fat hog, so I killed it. Frankly, some of the businessmen in the District were glad of it.

Marcello: What exactly would that development bank have done?

Cabell: Oh, rehabilitate some of the burnt-out and dead sections of the district. It was a license to steal if the wrong person got hold of it.

Marcello: Also, during that session there was some national legislation of importance that I'd like to have your ideas about. One of these was the equal rights amendment which you voted in the affirmative. What was your reason behind your vote on this equal rights amendment?

Cabell: There was just so much emotion behind it that I had enough to worry about without having a bunch of hens down on top of me (chuckle).



Marcello: How about the Consumer Protection Act? Now you had voted against that one. What was your reasoning behind that?

Cabell: Well, if you will study now some of the history of some of these so-called Consumer Protective Acts, you'll find that they've caused more trouble than they have good. This Naderism that took such a . . . became so popular has accomplished very little, if anything. Your consumer acts, your truth-in-labeling, those things . . . they were just a creation of another department, another bunch of boondoggling, and doing things for people who ought to be looking out for some of those things themselves.

Now the biggest steal that was ever perpetrated was this truth-in-lending. Do you know what that actually did?

Marcello: No.

Cabell: It practically voided all of your usury laws. It gives merchants an opportunity to get as high as 18 per cent annual interest on accounts that previously they had been carrying at no interest. Zales down here even got into trouble and were forced to charge interest because the law said it shall be charged. They had never charged interest on their lay-away

and pay-as-you-go sales. It's been the biggest money-maker that your department stores have ever had in their lives.

Ned Fritz made a fortune out of representing these out-of-state loan companies who couldn't come into Texas because they couldn't make any money here. But the hue and cry went out about the loan sharks, loan sharks. But all you had for many years were a few small loan companies. Some of them were usurious, yes, but not in any great numbers. What have you got now? You've made it possible under this new usury laws that protected the borrower. You've got the big national companies in here now because they're making plenty of dough--Household, Beneficial, Pacific--and they couldn't come in until these laws had been passed.

Marcello: Now one of the major pieces of legislation which President Nixon was particularly interested in during that 92nd Congress was the Revenue Sharing Act.

Cabell: Revenue Sharing, yes.

Marcello: Why don't you talk a little about that. I notice from the record that you did vote against it, did you not?

Cabell: I did vote against it and spoke against it on the floor because, where does the revenue come from? It comes out of our pockets, and if you will look over the

dispersements, money that is allocated by the appropriations department for this revenue sharing, you'll find that about five of your big metropolitan and definitely decadent cities are getting the lion's share. It isn't pro-rated by any means. Then what has happened? None of that has meant a decrease in the local taxation. That's just something free.

Now what Nixon was trying to do was gain favors with municipal officers and state officers because he had never had too many of them. That was his way of buying governors, mayors, and councilmen because he gave them something for free. Of course, it was very popular with them.

Marcello: Are you saying in effect, that there was a great deal of political motivation behind that revenue sharing?

Cabell: Oh, 100 per cent! A hundred per cent political motivation! He was hoping that he could cut something off somewhere else but hadn't been able to do it. The scheme was that he could cut off some of these designated funds--some of your OEO (Office of Economic Opportunity)--and some of those programs he was hoping he could cut back on. But you can't do it. There's no such thing. Now you take this transit bill that, I believe, Ford . . .

did he veto that? Or has threatened to . . . but what it is, billions of dollars over a period of years. Where does the money go? There you are-- Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia. You know why? Because it all goes to fixed rail transportation. Now out of that big hunk of stuff Dallas wouldn't get a dime. We had no fixed rail transportation. I don't know whether there ought to ever be any more fixed rail transportation. Even though I helped put across the subway bill in Washington, I've got serious doubts that it'll pay itself out. You have no flexibility.

Marcello: As you look back over the legislation of that 92nd Congress, in a domestic sense were most of the major pieces of legislation that came before the House concerned with, shall we say, consumerism and environmentalism? Was the bulk of the legislation passed by the 92nd session centering on those two particular topics?

Cabell: Yes, and I think it was in the 92nd that your revenue sharing thing came in.

Marcello: Incidentally, we've talked about your activities in all of these various Congresses. How much mail did

you receive from home with regard to any of these specific pieces of legislation? Did you receive very much mail on any of these bills and legislation we're talking about here . . .

Cabell: Oh . . .

Marcello: . . . or is most of the mail that you receive concerned with things of a local nature?

Cabell: Well, it's concerned of a local nature, or where there is at least a local interest. Now your so-called Equal Rights Amendment, oh, I got letters from the . . . from NOW. What is it? Something about women . . . something about NOW . . . your League of Women Voters and those things. But you get most of your stuff . . . on your national issues you get it from the same ones that subscribe to a certain political philosophy and then subscribe to the periodicals or the poop sheets that followed that line. I can tell you almost the date of the issues of some of those pamphlets that went out because then I get mail on it.

Marcello: I'm sure you also have to be aware or alert when you receive a huge deluge of letters on a particular issue. In other words, are these people really interested in this issue? Do they know something

about it, or are they writing simply because they have been told or something?

Cabell: Ninety per cent of it is because they have been instructed. You get stuff that is . . . you can believe this or not. You get worlds of mimeographed stuff where you just sign your name. Then you get worlds of stuff to where it's in their own handwriting, but it won't vary. I had one cute thing when this Section 14-B was coming up in the 89th Congress. UAW out at Grand Prairie, they were virtually locked in, were given scratch paper. One paper had been torn out of a loose-leaf, wire bound notebook. You could see where it was torn out. One old boy wrote, "I've got to write this quick while the steward isn't looking. Don't vote to repeal 14-B. We want it." and sealed it and mailed that dumb paper in the mail (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, how much of an influence does this mail have so far as your voting is concerned? Obviously, you have to use this mail very, very carefully as a gauge for attitudes back home.

Cabell: And you won't know what you're doing if you try to follow every damn one of them. Now that's maybe an error on my part, but you can't hold a referendum on every confounded piece of legislation that comes before the Congress. If

a man hasn't got enough sense to exercise some judgment, then he's got no business being up there.

Marcello: How did you find was the best way to get the pulse of the people back home as to what they wanted and what they didn't? What was the most accurate way that you found?

Cabell: Oh, I sent out a number of questionnaires from time to time. Mostly, they would come back pretty well the way I expected. Now some of these questionnaires that were out were awful phoney because they are so written that anybody of any political persuasion would give the same answer. That was one of Alger's big stunts. "Do you believe that the American government should be economical in its operation?"

Marcello: Nobody could be against something like that.

Cabell: That's right. I wouldn't stoop to that.

Marcello: Okay, 1972 was another election year for you, Mr. Cabell, and this time you were facing another rather tough race. Now I don't even think it's necessary to talk about the primary campaign, the Democratic primary, when you ran against Mrs. Emily Cathey. You beat her rather handily. In fact, it wasn't even a contest. But, of course, in the general election your opponent was going to be Alan Steelman, and he promised, of course, to cause you a

great deal of trouble so far as being reelected is concerned.

Now let's start by talking about the effect that the Nixon-McGovern contest had upon your own election. I think that's perhaps a good place to start. You had a handicap from the beginning, I think we would agree.

Cabell: It was poison! This district had been changed again. The district as it stood in '72 . . . it stood at that point under a court order because we had hired-- the Texas delegation--a very fine attorney who appeared before the Supreme Court and held it at this spot. Then, of course, it was changed and Mac Taylor let this boy, seventeen-year-old boy . . . he's a statistician from Magnolia Oil. They did it by computer, but he did it in order to create this time a McKool district. You asked me how well I was maintaining contact. When the district which I had for '72 was about ready to go through in Austin, I was called and asked to check on it and see how it fit.

Marcello: Who called you?

Cabell: A friend of mine . . . in a good . . . well-located. So we ran this thing. I had Sid Pietzsch and I had



Alex Lewis of Lewis and Bowles sitting there with all these . . . so what it figured that it would do, it would lose 2 per cent based on the previous election of these precincts. You see what I'm talking about? Based on the previous election in, where I wasn't there, we took a Connally vote, see. We took a liberal and a conservative precinct to determine how that precinct . . . where there was a new precinct in the district. On the basis of that and harking back to the '70 election, where that district was a little bit loaded for the liberals--and that's Mike thought he had a good goal--this Fifth District would have given me 2 per cent more of the conservative votes of the conservatives which I could spare very nicely. So it looked like that I would have, taking all things being equal, I would still have a 62-63 per cent . . .

Marcello: Majority.

Cabell: . . . majority. Alright. Then, bingo! Here comes McGovern with his poison. Good God, he was poison in this area! I denounced him immediately. Sincerely, I thought he was a menace.

Marcello: Did you, incidentally, attend any of those Democratic conventions during this period that you were in Congress?

Cabell: No, no, I stayed away from them. I denounced him and gave a list as to why.

Here's what happened. McGovern and Briscoe are the men that beat me. I'll tell you why Briscoe did. This may seem a little nebulous, round and round. When Dolph Briscoe went to the Democratic convention in Miami, he first, at the insistence of some of his good friends and advisors, endorsed Jackson. No harm there; nobody could get mad. It made Jackson feel pretty good. He knew he didn't have a chance anyhow. So it was a token. Everybody was . . . nobody was mad. Then without consulting with anybody, he jumped on Wallace's bandwagon.

Marcello: I remember that.

Cabell: He jumped on Wallace's bandwagon. Well, it made the Wallace people very happy, but they felt like that they had most of the Texas delegation anyhow. So help me God, at the last minute if he didn't dump Wallace and go to McGovern!

That's when the feather pillow hit the fan. The Wallace people were absolutely furious. So were the Jackson people . . . they didn't mind him going over there, but then he went from Wallace to McGovern . . . the Wallace people were strong in the blue collar areas--

Garland, Pleasant Grove, Mesquite--where I've always carried good majorities. For the first time in their lives--and I rechecked a bunch of the precincts--precincts there just went straight Republican that had never voted Republican before in their lives. That was the story there on that.

Marcello: And again, it was because of the fact that Briscoe had jumped from Jackson to Wallace and then to McGovern.

Cabell: No, now they weren't voting against me. They were really surprised. They thought, "Oh, it won't hurt Earle."

Marcello: In other words, these people were voting a straight Republican ticket in that election.

Cabell: Yes. Precincts out there weren't Republican, never before in history.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you, of course, were vehemently opposed to George McGovern and that you had a list of particulars as to why you were opposed to him. Just for the record could you mention some of those particulars.

Cabell: Well, as I recall, one was his proposal for total amnesty for draft dodgers; his indication, which he later denied, that he would legalize marijuana.

Marcello: How about his stand on the Viet Nam War?

Cabell: The Viet Nam War, there was just to be a pull-out without any conditions. Just pull out and leave them hanging there. That was one that didn't even take into consideration the POW's. There were one or two things that to me were just absolutely impossible.

Marcello: Had you ever had any contacts with McGovern at all while you were in Washington?

Cabell: No.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about your opponent in this election, Alan Steelman. Now we all know, of course, that image is a rather important thing in elections. So, first of all, you had the disadvantage of running in a year when Nixon was destined to receive a landslide. Secondly, you were running against a rather attractive opponent.

Cabell: That's right.

Marcello: Is that a good word to use?

Cabell: Yes, yes, attractive, glib, had nothing but time.

Marcello: In what sense?

Cabell: Well, to run a campaign. He campaigned for six months, walking around, shaking hands. The biggest thing that

elected him, though, was the fact that his campaign director was the wife of the city editor of the Dallas News.

Marcello: Of the Dallas Morning News?

Cabell: Yes, and there were several stories where he got three and four-column banners for nothing. I had stories turned down. Now that was contrary to their editorial policy, but the Dallas News does not mess with the news department. Knowing Jack Krueger as I do--and we've been friends many years; he's the managing editor; I believe they called him executive editor or something--but Jack is the kind that if you say anything about one of his people, oh, he gets mad as a wet hen! He wants to scalp you! Now he may turn around later and fire them, but, by God, he'll spit in your eye if you say a thing. So I made no . . . I couldn't say anything.

Marcello: So you were caught in a Nixon landslide; you had an attractive opponent who had a great deal of time to campaign in the district; you had an opponent who was receiving a great deal of press coverage in the most influential newspaper in your district, in Dallas. Now how great a part did the proposed Trinity River Canal play in this election? Now we know, of course, from the record that Steelman was opposed to the Trinity River

Canal project. What sort of a part did that play in the contest?

Cabell: The environmentalists, those that had previously . . . a great many of those had been friends of mine. Oh, they just became rabid about it. Out at Garland, along Duck Creek there that flood, I walked in houses there that had had six foot of water in them. Dollye Bateman sent me a petition one time up there that had five or six hundred names on it. All these people lived down there said, "Do something about Duck Creek." I had the money for it. Then he turned them against me because it destroyed some of the beauties of the environment, cut down the trees that were in the course of the flow. Some of the same people whose houses were flooding . . . Steelman came up with a phoney proposal that the thing to do to stop that flooding was to build dams up above that area on somebody else's land--flood their land. So there was a combination of things.

Marcello: How did this campaign compare so far as bitterness and mudslinging and this sort of thing with your campaign against Mike McKool in the Democratic primary of 1970?

Cabell: Oh, I'd say about the same. He was pretty blatant with trash, trashy stuff. He pulled, of course, the old absentee thing, that I was against the environment,

spent all my time on District affairs instead of Dallas' affairs.

Marcello: Surprisingly enough, in that election against Steelman, you received a rather large proportion of the black vote, did you not, which was voting straight Democratic?

Cabell: Yes.

Marcello: That black vote is strange to me because one time you run against McKool, and you don't get the black votes. Then you run against Steelman and you . . .

Cabell: Well, I got it on the general election. I got it on the general ten to one.

Marcello: I see.

Cabell: Yes. And I would have gotten many more against him, but those people were scared. I talked to dozens of them after that.

Marcello: Scared in what way?

Cabell: When they saw those Pinkerton people there, they didn't . . . and they knew, too, that they were going to get argued with. But then when they saw the Pinkerton people, they knew that somebody else might cause some trouble.

Marcello: But in that sense was the election of '72 against Steelman a little bit more clean than the primary had been against McKool?

- Cabell: I would say so. I would say so, yes.
- Marcello: Now, of course, we know the results of that election in 1972.
- Cabell: But I think it was only, what, 52 per cent?
- Marcello: I think it was something like that, yes. Okay, now what does an ex-congressman do at this point? How do you go about cleaning up your affairs in Washington and getting out of Washington and coming home to whatever you're going to do later on?
- Cabell: Well, I haven't got a lot of it cleaned up yet. You see, about three days after the election I went into the hospital for thirteen weeks. So I had to close down an apartment in Washington, close down the office there, and close an office here. So I've got stuff scattered all over hell's half acre (chuckle). I still haven't gone through all of it.
- Marcello: As that election approached, that is, the actual election itself, how did you feel you were doing against Steelman?
- Cabell: Oh, I knew I was in trouble. How much you were in, you never can tell.
- Marcello: What have you done since that time, that is, since the campaign of 1972?
- Cabell: Well, not a whole lot of anything. I haven't been able to. I am very definitely limited on my range.



Marcello: Are you active in any way in politics anymore?

Cabell: No.

Marcello: Mr. Cabell, I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to interview you. Your comments have been most candid, and I'm sure that scholars will find them quite valuable in increasing our understanding of the workings of history and government.