Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

Preface

by Donald A. Ritchie

The investigatory functions of Congress provide some of the most dramatic moments in Senate history. Investigations have served both as a means of gathering information and of sharing it widely with the nation. Often held in the ornate Senate Caucus Room, reported on by armies of the press and by network television, these hearings have captured public attention and focused it on the particular problems and legislative remedies of the time.

Prior to passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, the Senate and the House created a plethora of special and select committees to handle most investigations. As part of its streamlining of Congress, the reorganization reduced the number of committees and recommended standing committees for investigations. In 1948 the Senate created the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which is now part of the Governmental Affairs Committee. Under such chairmen as Homer Ferguson (R-Michigan), Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin), John McClellan (D-Arkansas), and Henry Jackson (D-Washington), the subcommittee conducted many memorable hearings: the "Five Percenters" investigation of the Truman administration; the Army-McCarthy clash; the investigation of Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters; the TFX investigation; and numerous others.

Serving as the subcommittee's chief clerk during those turbulent years was Ruth Young Watt, who joined the subcommittee at its founding in 1948 and remained until her retirement in 1979. As chief clerk, Ruth Watt managed the hearing rooms, made arrangements for witnesses and investigators, took care of the subcommittee's finances, issued its subpoenas, supervised its records, and in general handled its paperwork. On television and in countless newspaper photographs she could be seen hovering behind the senators, passing documents to witnesses, and making sure that the proceedings moved smoothly. She worked closely with the subcommittee chairmen and with a staff that during the course of her service included William P. Rogers, Roy Cohn, Robert F. Kennedy, Pierre Salinger, and Carmine Bellino. Her candid reminiscenses about them, and about such witnesses as Howard Hughes, Jimmy Hoffa, Vito Genovese, and Joe Valachi, make these interviews a colorful history of the subcommittee's first thirty years.

Ruth Young Watt was born in Brooks, Maine on February 26, 1910. She first came to Washington in 1930 to attend George Washington University, and stayed in the city as a secretary to the director of Children's Hospital. In 1947, when the Republicans organized the 80th Congress, Senator Owen Brewster of Maine hired her as clerk of the Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program (popularly known as the "Truman Committee" after its first chairman,

Harry S. Truman). When the special committee disbanded in 1948, she became the chief clerk of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, a post which she held until her retirement in 1979. From 1957 until 1960 she also served as chief clerk of the Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in Labor-Management relations (the "Rackets Committee"). After her retirement, Watt returned to Maine where she died on June 16, 1996.
"As the most senior member of the staff, Senator Charles Percy commented at the time of her retirement, "Mrs. Watt was also the most knowledgeable about the inner workings of the subcommittee. During executive and public sessions, there was never a time that things did not run smoothly. To a large extent this was because of her careful preparation beforehand. There were times, during the subcommittee meetings, where Mrs. Watt was asked to recall for the members previous precedent on a Procedure; her memory was practically photographic and her good judgment impeccable."

About the Interviewer: Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has published several articles on American political history and oral history, including "Oral History in the Federal Government," which appeared in the *Journal of American History*. His books include *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Harvard Press, 1980); *Heritage of Freedom: History of the United States* (Macmillan, 1985); *The Senate* (Chelsea House, 1988); and *The U.S. Constitution* (Chelsea House, 1989); *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard University Press, 199); and is editor of *Minutes of the U.S. Senate Democratic Conference, 1903-1964*, recently published (Government Printing Office, 1999) and available online in Text and PDF format. He also edits the Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series) (Government Printing Office, 1978). A former president of the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), he received OHMAR's Forrest Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.

Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk Permanent Subcommittee on Investigation

Interview #1
Origins of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
(July 19, 1979)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ruth Watt, far right, confers with Howard Hughes during hearings before the Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense, 1947. Accompanying Hughes are his body guard and two unknown visitors. *Senate Historical Office*

RITCHIE: I was looking over a brief biography of you and I noted that you were born in Brooks, Maine. Is your family from Maine traditionally?
WATT: Oh, I think I was the first one ever to leave Maine of the family. My family originally set tled on Mettinicus Island, which is eight miles off the coast of Rockland, Maine, from England, 1628 1 think it was, and they've been there ever since. I don't think many of the family have left Maine since. Now my nieces and neph ews, they've all spread out all over the country. But my family just stayed in Maine.
RITCHIE: What did your family do there?

WATT: My grandfather was born in Rockland, Maine. I don't remember much about him. My dad had grocery stores, and always had a store of some kind. I was born in Brooks; Dad was born in Liberty; and Mother was born in

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Palermo, a town close by. They're all small towns, wide places in the road. During World War I, we lived in Exeter, Maine, and Daddy worked in a grocery store there. Then he went to Scarborough, Maine, which is right outside of Portland. I think he worked for a dairy or something, I was about seven or eight years old at that point. Then they moved back to Brooks and Daddy had the Farmer's Union there, that was a store also. And then in 1923, we moved to Yarmouth, which is ten miles east of Portland, and Daddy had a store there. During World War II he went to work in Bath Ironworks, which is a shipbuilding area about thirty miles from Yarmouth. And when he retired, my mother taught him how to paper and paint and so in his seventies he had a paper and painting company, just a little bit of one in a small town; Yarmouth has a 3,000 population. So that was it.

RITCHIE: You attended all the local public schools?

WATT: Yes, I graduated from Yarmouth High School. When I was going to high school, Mildred Bishop, who lived across the street from us, said, "If you want to go to college, you can go. You can just work your way." I was the oldest of the

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six children, so we didn't have much money. No one in the town had any money, so we were all in the same financial status. But we didn't miss it because we didn't know what it was not to have it.

I had three sisters and two brothers. There was only ten years between me and my youngest sister, so we all grew up together, and really had a great time, a very happy time, even though we didn't have very much. Then when we got out of high school, my Dad said, "I've got you through high school, now you're on your own." So we went on that premise.

RITCHIE: Did any of your brothers and sisters go to college?

WATT: My brother Hervey, who died during World War II, went to Bryant-Stratton in Providence, Rhode Island, that was a business school. He was in accounting, and then went back to Maine. Then I have a brother Richard, who now lives at Lake Winnepesaukee, in New Hampshire. He retired and bought a farm up there. He went to Lynn, Massachusetts and tried out with General Electric. They had an aptitude test, and he passed it. So he was with General Electric for more than thirty years. They laid them

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off during the worst of the Depression, and he was back home in Maine doing sheet metal work, which put him in good stead when he went back to General Electric. They sent him to Lowell Institute, so he had a good education without having to pay for it. But then he retired about four or five years ago and is having

a great time making syrup on a renovated farm in Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. My three sisters married very young.
RITCHIE: It sounds as if you were the most adventure-some of the family.
WATT: Probably. Of course, the men sometimes get involved with getting married and so on, and can't afford to be adventuresome. But you see I was forty-two when I got married, so I had quite a long time to be adventurous. The rest were all married at eighteen, nine teen, or in their twenties. My brothers were about twenty-four or twenty-five before they married.
My father died in 196S of emphysema. I went up to Maine recently for my mother's birthday, she had her ninety-fourth birthday. I talked to her this morning and she's doing

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all right. She's lost her eyesight, that's the main thing wrong with her, and it's very sad.
But I just wanted to get in there that our growing up was a very happy time. No one ever heard of separations or unhappy marriages and so on back then. We were all a very moral town.
RITCHIE: Was it a very religious place?
WATT: Yes. I think the population was around three thousand and there were five churches in that town. A great many of them were Catholics, because so many French Canadians came down from Quebec when the mills were opened. I was brought up a Baptist. Most of our social life was around the church. We had Campfire Girls, we had socials, we went to young people's meetings and conducted them. Then in high school the principal of the school was very active in keeping the high school students busy. On Friday nights we always had a social and square dance and all that. So our social life was always quite well supervised. And then we branched out.
I went to Poland Spring the year I graduated from high school to wait on tables at

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a sort of summer-winter resort. There were very few people there in the wintertime, so we could practically do all the things the guests did. Now they are advertising Poland water.
RITCHIE: Is that where it comes from? They used to use that in the Secretary of the Senate's office.
WATT: Yes, and now they are advertising on TV for the first time. When we were waiting on tables we used to serve it out of the bottle at the tables. And they had a small plant, about the size of this room, where the water was piped in. The springs were at the bottom of the lake at the foot of the hill. It's good water, I lived on it for a year!
Then I went to Atlantic City in the fall of '29, never been out of Maine in my life. About five or six of us got our preachers and all kinds of recommendations and went to Hadden Hall, it had just been open a year or two. We had to have more of a background and good reputation than you did to get to a boarding school. They

practically screened us and everybody who ever knew us. We got there and I waited on tables in Hadden Hall. If you were out after midnight you were fired;

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or if you smoked or you drank. It was very, very, very strict. We had a housemother. It was just like being at a boarding school. We had all the advantages of a winter resort, and that was from November '29 until March of 1930.

RITCHIE: Were you working to earn money to go to college?

WATT: Yes, so when I had saved a thousand dollars, which was a lot of money then; Mildred, who was also my Campfire Guardian--she was about six years older--said she had told me in high school, "If you want to go to college I will go with you when you graduate from high school." And she had been out of high school for six years. I had been accepted at Bates College, in Lewiston. She wrote me from Florida, she was down there for the winter with her family, and she said, "Washington, D. C. would be kind of interesting. Why don't we look up the schools there?" Which was what we did. We came to Washington and went to GW George Washington University, and she went home and got married after that first year, and I stayed on.

Here I waited on tables, too, at night, and nobody knew that I even worked.

RITCHIE: Where was that?

WATT: Over at the All-States Hotel at 17th or 19th and F, right down there beyond GW. I worked Sundays and Saturdays and then evenings. Got my meals, and so on, and made thirty-five cents an hour. My meals, that was the main thing. Back then I would go to school, and then at lunchtime I'd have a chocolate milk shake and a grilled American cheese sandwich, and it was twenty-five cents for the two at People's Drug store. I can remember all these prices because I know how little money I had. But I made out all right. My room was $3.SO a week, I think. I lived right by GW in a sorority apartment (Delta Zeta); I belonged to a sorority and they had some rooms there; they had a bed room there that helped out paying their rent. Another girl and I paid $3.50 a week. And there were kitchen facilities if you needed them, but I worked right around the corner so I didn't need to cook my meals.

RITCHIE: What kind of a school was George Washington back then?

WATT: It was a big, big school, ten thousand people. That was a big school then. They had the gym which was right in back of the school yard-they had called it like Yale--the gym was a

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big old building, I'm not sure if it's been rebuilt or not. Of course, they have enlarged the school. At that point it was Stockton Hall one one side of the block and on the other was Corcoran Hall, and it was just one block. Now it's spread out for blocks and blocks and blocks.

RITCHIE: It's taken over the whole neighborhood.
WATT: Yes, I notice way up above George Washington University Hospital that they've got big buildings up there even. I come in on the Metro, you know. The hospital back then was downtown in the center right off H Street, in that area not far from the shopping center of downtown. So they really have enlarged. The football team was something else again. I think some of them were almost professionals. We had Tuffy Lehmans and ZooZoo Stewart, and one of the Blackistones, they were older boys on the team. They had good teams. Of course, I remember Tuffy Lehmans particularly because he was a professional player later. But it was all quite an experience.
RITCHIE: Did you have a particular major while you were at George Washington?
WATT: No, as money ran out I took part-time courses and I never did. I started out in library

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science and it wasn't my thing. So then I "over-did" and had to quit. Then I went to business school.
RITCHIE: The Depression hit in the middle of all that?
WATT: No, the Depression hit in 1929. Up in Maine things were really bad. But I went home for a year, my health sort of went on the blink, came back, and I got a job as an assistant manager at what they called the Blue and Gray Cafeteria at 19th and F, or up in that area, and my main job was tasting food before they served it, to make sure everything was flavored right. It was government people mostly, up in that area. And it was ten dollars a week. I asked for a dollar raise a week, but it was unheard of, they were horrified that I would ask for that big a raise. But I got it. I made out on ten, eleven dollars a week very well. I lived with a private family (in fact, I lived with private families pretty much until I came on the Hill to work when I could afford an apartment).
Then I went to Temple School for Secretaries the next year, on a shoestring. Franscesa Steere with whom I went to GW was married to a Naval Academy graduate, and her

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Aunt Margaret Hanna worked in the State Department. She was the first lady to come up through the ranks that President Roosevelt appointed as an envoy to the Hague. Her great aunt was ninety-one years old, and Franscesals father who was up in his sixties worked for the German-American Mixed Claims Commission here in town and he was out quite a bit. They wanted somebody to stay with Aunty who was ninety-one years old. So she wrote and asked me to come back to Washington to stay with her for the year that Aunt Margaret was going to the Hague. So I thought "that's great," because I was engaged to be married and I wasn't quite sure I wanted to go back to Maine for the rest of my life, and I couldn't think of an out. You know, it was one of those things. So I jumped at the chance. I went up to 16th and Lamont and I remember the day I got back, here

was the ninety-one year old aunt canning peaches. I was so impressed that somebody that age was able to do that sort of thing!
But it was a really good year. I went to business college and got through there, and then I went home for the summer and

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when I came back, I had to brush up a little bit at the school. The President, Mrs. Stevens, said, "Can you spell?" She said she had a friend who belonged to a Zonta club, or one of those clubs, that wanted somebody older and more responsible who could spell. So the next day I went to work for Children's Hospital, as secretary to the superintendent. It was really a dedication, all you thought of was that hospital. And during World War II, of course, you were tied to your job, you couldn't quit. You had to quit for two or three months and not work elsewhere if you quit. But I had no desire to. I made just barely enough to live on, I think I was making eighty dollars a month. Of course, three square meals a day didn't hurt, that was in addition.
RITCHIE: You said that they had quite a bit of extra food there because of the rationing.
WATT: Oh yes, because I had charge of getting the points together, and they had all the children, each formula was counted as a meal. You counted the number of meals served per month in the hospital. And they were always donating extra canned milk and so on for the children, so we ate very well, but we almost went broke

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as a result. We sort of forgot about the money because the ration points were scarcer for the most part than money was. Then, of course, oil was also rationed. I lived with a private family, and they had my ration card, because I ate at the hospital. Another family came in with a baby, the Banworths--he worked at the FBI in fingerprinting. They came in during the war, so there were eight people in the household with eight rations, and two infants, so they ate pretty well too!
RITCHIE: I guess it was pretty common for people in Washington to rent out rooms during that period to people coming in.
WATT: I guess so. I lived with the Wescotts with whom I had gone to school, and doubledated with them when they were at GW, and then I went to live with them after I had been at the Martins, when Aunt Margaret came back- Martin was the last name, they were related to I think, Mark Hanna. Washington has so many of them you almost forget.
RITCHIE: Where was this house located?
WATT: First we lived on Lamont Street, in an apartment. That was at 16th and Lamont, right next

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door to where I lived when I first came to Washington. Then we went over to 13th and Monroe. Then in 1941 they bought a house out on the 9th hole of the Indian

Spring Country Club, they had built houses on the first nine holes. They bought a house out there and it was something like $6,500 and it had three bedrooms upstairs, and a den downstairs which was sort of a living room for me. I think they had that built on for about a thousand dollars more at that time, so I think they paid about $7,500 for the house and the lot. It was a pretty good size lot, a quarter of an acre probably. Later when my husband and I were married we went out there and looked at the houses, this was '52, the houses were selling at that point for $23,000. I hate to think what they would be now!
RITCHIE: Washington must have been a very exciting city to live in, in those years.
WATT: It was, really. I can remember going to the parade when Roosevelt was elected in 1933. The parade came up right in front of the Willard Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue. I put my camera up over my head like this and

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then couldn't get my arm down! I have a little picture of the car that I took this way. You can just barely see the car, and I've got an arrow pointing to it saying, "President Roosevelt." Nobody would know it even with a magnifying glass!
RITCHIE: Did you see a lot of the government in action in those days?
WATT: Well, I was insulated from it, working at Children's Hospital. Politics wasn't some thing I paid attention to. The only thing I remember really over the years was the fact that there was a write-up or a feature or something on the front page on Harry Truman every single day, he got well known because he got good publicity as chairman of the War Investigating Committee. So I didn't even think about politics, it didn't mean a thing to me. Except I went downtown to watch the King and Queen of England when they came up the avenue--I was so impressed with the pink complexion of the Queen with her umbrella, riding up there with Mrs. Roosevelt. In the front car was the King and President Roosevelt. That was a thrill. The first year I was

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in Washington I went to every parade there was; 1930 was a centennial year.
RITCHIE: George Washington's birthday, wasn't it?
WATT: Maybe it was. I went to every parade in sight, and I think they had one every week that year.
RITCHIE: It must have been exciting to have just left Maine to come down to the big city.
WATT: It was, the only other time I had been out of Maine was when I went to Atlantic City. We took the train to Philadelphia, first trip on a subway, too. It's amazing how those things were exciting then.
RITCHIE: After all those years, though, you've still maintained your Maine residency.
WATT: Well, I haven't since my mother sold her house in Yarmouth. She's in a retirement home now in Brunswick. I voted in Maine, now I vote in Virginia.

RITCHIE: I was looking in one of the old Staff Directories and saw that you had a Maine residence.
WATT: Yes.
RITCHIE: And you belonged to the Maine Society here.
WATT: Well, that's actually how I happened to get on the Hill, indirectly. I had been very active in the Maine State Society, and as

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usual, like at the hospital I handled funds, donations, and so on, and at the Maine State Society I was treasurer and handled all the financing for the big Maine lobster dinners they had.
RITCHIE: Was it sort of a social group?
WATT: Yes. Of course, during the war it was quite active with all the soldiers and everybody here. I remember we had a reception for the governor of Maine and so on. The people in the Congressional offices were active in it because there were a lot of people here they could keep in touch with. Roy Haines, who was Senator Owen Brewster's office, was president. We had meetings frequently down in Senator Brewster's office. Then I got to know Mrs. Margaret Chase Smith, because she was our Congresswoman, not well but I met her. Then there was a Congressman by the name of Frank Fellows, he was quite active, and then Senator Wallace White was here, too. Before Brewster there was Senator Frederick Hale. I wasn't active then, I just got tickets to go to the Army-Navy game through him one time, that was how I remembered him, from 1935 probably.

They really were interesting times. For instance, the first year I was here I would go to the movies and I was hilghly insulted because I wasn't used to people being impolite. I was taught that if you didn't like something, just stay quiet and talk about the things you thought were nice. But anyway, any time the newsreel came on they would hiss when President Hoover came on. I was horrified, I thought, "Gee, how can people be that rude, and to the President of the United States?" Polly Morrison, whom I used to go with, was from down in the Shenandoah Valley and was going to the Corcoran Art School, she said, "Well, we express our pleasure, why shouldn't we express our displeasure?" That had never occurred to me! But I was just horrified when they would hiss when Hoover came on the screen. Of course, in later years he became quite a senior statesman, he was really well revered. They were interesting years. Washington gets in your blood, I don't care what they say, no matter how short a time you go home you want to get back here. Of course, it was like a

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small town then, everybody was from somewhere else. You never heard of a native Washingtonian.

Then in 1947, the superintendent of Children's Hospital retired--she had been a nurse in World War I, and she was getting up towards 70. She was a beautiful person, she was the only woman I ever knew who was able to think and act administratively like a man but still stay completely feminine, she was really an unusual person. I hated to leave, but I thought, "Well, there's no future here." There was no Social Security back then for eleemosynary institutions. I think they went under it about two years after I left. So I had no retirement, and you know you made just enough salary to live on, period. So I was looking around to find out if I liked something else, and my next-door neighbor was Harold Beckley who was the Superintendent of the Senate Press Gallery (I used to go to the beach with him and his wife and was quite friendly with them, and got to know quite a few of the press because they used to take me down to the Press Club to parties, and to parties at their house). He was trying

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to think of something that I would like to do. First he thought, well, we'll just get a private organization set up to give information for documents and so on. And I thought that didn't sound too good. So then he said, "Well, the Republicans have just won the Senate and House, and you're from Maine, and Senator Brewster and Senator White both are going to have chairmanships of committees. You know all those people, why don't you go see them?" Well, that had never occurred to me, to come on "the Hill."

I came down to Senator Brewster's office, and saw Mrs. Dustin, who was his top secretary or administrative assistant, I'd known her for quite a long while, and Mr. Haines, who was president of the Maine State Society. I called and said I was interested in making a change. One of the resident doctors brought me down, and I had an interview with Mrs. Dustin and Mr. Haines. She said there were two jobs available on the Commerce Committee, which was Senator White's committee, and this War Investigating Committee, which was going to wind up in a year. I said, "Well, I think

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that investigating committee sounds more interesting than this other." They said, "Well, it's only going to last a year." I said, "Well, I'll take a chance on it." So the next week they brought me in to see Senator Brewster. He said, "I don't know you personally, I know your reputation and so on, if Frances Dustin recommends you that's good enough for me." So that was on a Friday. I went to the Hospital that Saturday and came to work at the Senate on Monday, the 10th of February. That was the beginning of my working on the Hill.

RITCHIE: What type of a person was Senator Brewster?

WATT: Well, I got along with him fine. But there were those who thought if he could walk a crooked mile he would walk it rather than go a straight mile. It was said he was intellectually dishonest, let's put it that way. That was the opinion of people on the staff who worked closely with him. In my job I didn't have that much contact, of course, just for hearings and so on. Anything I had to be done I

took to Frances Dustin and she took care of it for me, so I really didn't have that much personal

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contact with him. So from my own viewpoint I saw nothing wrong with him, but I was a good listener.

RITCHIE: One of the descriptions that I've read of him was that he was probably the best interrogator on the committee, because he had been a prosecutor, but he was also the most partisan person on the committee. Do you think that's an accurate assessment?

WATT: I don't remember that. I was new and politics didn't mean a darn thing to me, except that I was being loyal to the person who hired me. I remember going to a hearing in the Caucus Room, it might have been the Hughes thing, I don't remember now, but I remember there were several people there that had been on the committee for quite a few years. When things I didn't like the sound of were said, I would glare at the senators'. and I remember this Mr. Cole came to me afterwards and said, "Ruth, you're going to have to learn to keep a deadpan face. Every time something goes on that you don't think is loyal to the chairman, you glare at them. You're working for the whole Senate, you're not working for just one man." I never forgot that, and after that I got so that nobody

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could tell if I liked anything or not. That was my first lesson.

RITCHIE: I guess a lot of the staff had carried over from the earlier years?

WATT: There were quite a few of them that worked for Senator Ferguson, who had been on the committee for many years, and Senator Brewster had several. I think they were the only two that had been on for any length of time. And Senator Claude Pepper was on that committee. He's the one that I used to glare at, that was when I got corrected. I remember one time, I hadn't learned all the things you were supposed to do in the Senate. They put an exhibit in, and the chairman is supposed to authorize it, and say, "This will be made an exhibit," and so on, or, "This will be made a part of the record," to make it official. Senator Pepper put something in, and I just made that an exhibit too. It was very controversial, those days were very partisan, the issues were political. So Senator Ferguson called me up in the office, "What do you mean putting in stuff that I haven't seen?" Then Bill Rogers said, "Don't worry about it Ruth, he's not

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that angry." Anyway, I always learned things the hard way.

RITCHIE: What were your functions at first with that committee?

WATT: The same as they have been all through the years. I handled all the finances, set up the hearings, and was sort of a housekeeper, ordering anything in the office, typewriters, telephones or anything, and assigning work for the girls.

RITCHIE: Did you handle the structure of the committee room where they met?

WATT: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: Who sat where, and who was admitted?
WATT: That was a routine, ordinarily at a hearing you have the chairman in the center, the Republicans on one side, the Democrats on the other. The name plates are placed according to their seniority on the full committee or the subcommittee. Then the staff, usually the counsel would sit next to or just in back of the chairman. Back then there were no staff that were minority and majority. They had people who were hired, from Maine for instance, but they were not considered minority or majority. That didn't happen until many

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years later. But people became very political along the line. I think it was more so then because the Republicans who were just coming in were feeling their oats a little bit. The Democrats had been in so long they had taken everything for granted, run the show for so long--I don't remember when there was a Republican Congress before that.
RITCHIE: 1930 was the last one.
WATT: See, I was not even curious about politics at that point. That was the year I came to Washington, as a matter of fact. Yes, because I remember after that President Hoover tried to put in all these reforms and he couldn't get anywhere because there was a Democratic Congress. The same thing, when Roosevelt took over he was able to do it because he had a Democratic Congress with him, and they were doing the same things t~at Hoover had tried to do. I remember that much of politics.
RITCHIE: You handled all the paperwork, then, in the committee?
WATT: Yes, the exhibits, making sure that the senators attended committee hearings, sending out the notices, and those things.

RITCHIE: Did you find this a little overwhelming at first to come in to something like this?
WATT: Not really, because I had worked at the hospital. No, I wasn't overwhelmed. I was impressed with the senators. In fact, I had a great deal of respect and awe of them, and I still do. I've gotten over it some, but not too much. I still thought they were elected by the people and I feel that they are to be respected. In fact, I've heard people call a senator by his first name, and I couldn't do it if I had to. I think once in the Press Club, when Senator Joseph McCarthy was there I called him "Joe," but it was because I had had a cocktail. But to me they are all "Senator" and they deserve respect for having been elected by the people. Of course, it was quite a contrast from working with doctors for almost ten years and then coming to work with senators. They were sort of a different world. No, I wasn't overwhelmed at all.
RITCHIE: Even with all the kleig lights and the. press pouring into the Caucus Room for some of those big hearings?

WATT: No, because I had gotten to know so many of those people, being good friends with Beck. All of the press liked him very much and he was included in a lot of things that the press had. So I knew so many of them that there was no awe there, and the lights didn't mean anything to me. For some reason, I don't know why, I wasn't overwhelmed with anything like that. I think I still am more overwhelmed with seeing a movie actor than anything with all these VIPs down here. You're used to them but you're not used to people from Hollywood and so on.
RITCHIE: How was the committee staff set up back then? Were there people that you reported to?
WATT: Just the chief counsel, that's the same as it is now. And the senators, you are responsible to the senators through the chief counsel. I never went over a chief counsel's head, or did anything senatorwise or chairmanwise that I didn't tell our chief counsel. Because after all he was the head of the committee, as far as I was concerned. If I went over and saw, say Senator Brewster or Senator McCarthy or any

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of the senators, I just went back and reported what had gone on to our chief counsel so there was no surprise to him if something was mentioned, if a senator mentioned something to the counsel. I think the strange thing was that, being from Maine, and I had been here seventeen years when I came to the Hill to work, one of the people in the office said, "Now we expect you to report the goings on on the committee to us." And I said, "I think that's up to the chief counsel. I don't think it's up to me to report anything."
RITCHIE: People in Senator Brewster's office wanted you to report back to them?
WATT: Yes, and I have never done that to any chairman or anybody. I think if there is anything to be reported--and we've had problems along the line, even when Senator McClellan was chairman we had a problem, I wouldn't report it--I figured that somebody else should do it. If it had gotten bad enough so that it effected me personally I would have, because I'm pretty good about fighting my own battles. But I wasn't about to report back, and I kept that policy right straight through.

I think that's one reason why I survived so many chairmen, that I didn't make it a partisan thing.
RITCHIE: Your first chief counsel was William Rogers?
WATT: No, when I came it was George Meader, who later became a Congressman from Michigan. I don't know if he was hired by Senator Mead after Truman became Vice President or not. I don't remember how long George was there, but he was the chief counsel. Then Brewster picked Bill Rogers, who had worked with Governor Thomas E. Dewey in New York, and Brewster hired him in April and then George left about the first of July that year, and Bill took over as

chief counsel. It was a matter of Brewster wanting his own man, and they do that. George left, I don't know if he practiced law, but there was a Congress man from Michigan who was not going to run again, so he asked George Meader to run against him so he would get well known, because he was not going to run again the next time, so after that George Meader became a Congressman. He was in for fourteen years and then he was defeated. He was at my retirement party.

After that Bill Rogers took over and Frip (Francis) Flanigan, who had been the chief investigator--he was a lawyer and had been with the FBI for many years--he was the assistant. The two of them worked together closely, and they were good balance for each other. Then when the subcommittee was set up, that was in January or February of '48, the committee was only to last for one year and officially was supposed to be over the 31st of January of that year, but then they extended it just for writing the report. So I had two or three payrolls to do then! But the hearings for that year were quite something.

RITCHIE: I wanted to ask you just a little bit about Rogers himself. What type of a person was he to work with?

WATT: Bill was just starting out, but he had had investigative experience with the prosecutor, Dewey, up in New York, and he and Frip Flanigan worked together. If Bill was going to get a little bit way out in problems, why Frip could slow him down, because Frip had been there for three or four years.

RITCHIE: They did seem like such different personalities.

WATT: Yes, and of course Bill had come up the hard way, but he sure enjoyed life. And back then we all did. You know, it was just a year and a half after World War II, when things were getting back from when we didn't have that much. For instance, automobiles and rents and everything else were not back so you could afford them. They weren't there, because they hadn't started building the country up again. I remember Bill Rogers, and he brought down four people from New York, Jim Sheridan and Jerry Adlerman, Felix Larkin and Robert Brosnan. But anyway, he brought some of his own people in that he had worked with, so he had a nucleus, which is a wise thing to do, I think. They all got rooms over here at McLean Gardens, and some of the girls, a couple of stenos, they all had rooms over there. Can you imagine Bill Rogers now in McLean Gardens in a little room! With all that he's done since.

And of course, he became close to Richard Nixon when he was a congressman, and they were good friends. Then when Bill

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left the committee after being a year with Clyde Hoey, I guess it was 1950 or '51 that he left, he went into a law office with Kenneth Royall who had been Secretary of the Army, from North Carolina, and I remember one of his first cases was for

Drew Pearson, a lawsuit or something, he won it for Drew Pearson and he was on his way after that.
RITCHIE: Was there any difficulty on the committee between Rogers and Brewster? You said Rogers didn't particularly care for Brewster.
WATT: No, except that you get all the backlash in the office. I'm not too sure because I didn't know the politics between them all, but I remember Senator William Knowland was on the committee, and he left because there was a conflict of interest with the Arabian Oil--we had hearings on Arabian Oil and I don't even remember what they were about because they've been so long ago. Knowland left because he had a conflict of interest there. Then Senator Brewster had some tie-in with Pan American, and what's his name . . . ?
RITCHIE: Juan Trippe?
WATT: Juan Trippe. And so he stepped down from the chair on the hearings on the

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Howard Hughes matter, and Senator Ferguson acted as the subcommittee chairman for all that. Then along comes Mr. Howard Hughes. We had an executive session the second day I was on the committee. He had just had that plane accident and was sort of crippled up. And I can remember the atmosphere there was, "He's going to be a push-over" because he's kind of--you know, he wasn't quite with it because he was still all stunned from his airplane accident. But they thought he was going to be a push-over. This was in February. I think we had the hearings on that in July. He came to the committee and he had them fooled, he fooled them. He had a hearing aid, and when he didn't want to hear anything that hearing aid went off.
RITCHIE: Didn't you have some trouble trying to get a document from him?
WATT: Yes, because he turned his hearing aid off. He had a book, and I got it from there. That was the socond or third time he was back. I remember the last time he wore his sneakers or tennis shoes, he could have cared less. It was kind of sad because that last hearing we had, when he gave the

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committee such a bad time, poor Senator Ferguson had poison ivy all over his feet and he was miserable! So everything worked against him.
RITCHIE: That was a famous hearing, in fact I've heard it recorded by Edward R. Murrow on one of his albums, some of the dia-log. Hughes gave out as good as he took.
WATT: Better. He made some of them look a little silly. But poor Senator Ferguson, if I had poison ivy I'd be pretty silly, too. That was in August, as I remember, the "I don't think I will" remark to something they wanted. In the meantime, one of the witnesses they called was Eliott Roosevelt, because apparently this flying boat that Hughes was working on all those years, he had been getting government money, and it was sort of drying up as far as I can remember, and so they got this public relations man, Jonny Meyer I think his

name was, and he had all this social stuff going. I remember, I was so impressed, they had all these exhibits and there was one that said for some party they were throwing I suppose for some government or Defense Department official,

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saying "$50 for one girl late" or something like that, and I remember them asking him what that meant, and he said, "late meant after dinner." Then there was a story when Roosevelt was on, you remember he married Fay Emmerson?
RITCHIE: Yes.
WATT: They got them together on a plane trip to try to influence Eliott Roosevelt to get his father to see about getting more money for this flying boat.
RITCHIE: I've just been reading about this in the old newspapers, and I noticed that you had to subpoena a lot of records from the FDR Library.
WATT: Was that then? I remember we had a lot of trouble getting them, I had almost forgot ten that.
RITCHIE: That was when they were investigating Eliott Roosevelt. That was quite a precedent making event.
WATT: I had forgotten all about that. I had charge of making up all of the subpoenas and getting them ready to be signed by the chairman.
RITCHIE: A lot of people thought that Brewster was using the investigation to attack Roosevelt and the Democratic administration through Eliott.

WATT: Very possible, but of course I wouldn't even have thought about that. No, I don't know if that was so as far as he was concerned. Of course, I was here all during Roosevelt's administration and they were pretty independent people. His children did what they wanted to do, his daughter and all, but I never thought about that. It was very interesting about three or four years ago we had Eliott Roosevelt back as a witness.
RITCHIE: Oh, what was that about?
WATT: On this Vesco thing. We brought him back from Portugal. I reminded him of the fact that he testified back then.
RITCHIE: Did he recall the occasion?
WATT: I think so. He was a little vague about it. But it was many wives later I think. But he was still married to Faye Emmerson at this point in time back in 1947.
RITCHIE: At that point Brewster had stepped down
WATT: As chairman of the subcommittee, he was still chairman of the War Investigating Committee, which was the Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, which was the official name of the committee.

RITCHIE: He had become something of a target in the Hughes hearing.
WATT: Yes, because of the Juan Trippe thing and because with unlimited funds Howard Hughes had this public relations firm that set out to defeat and ruin

Brewster, which he succeeded in doing. I mean, he was really responsible for his demise as far as being reelected to the Senate. That was sometime later, but not that much later.
RITCHIE: But at the time Ferguson was chairman of the subcommittee when Eliott Roosevelt testified, but Eliott Roosevelt pointed out that the telegram inviting him to testify was signed by Senator Brewster.
WATT: Well, it would have to be, because he was chairman. Ferguson was just appointed, he was not an official appointee. The chairman had a right to appoint anyone.
RITCHIE: I see. There was some suspicion at the time that Brewster was still pulling the strings behind the scenes.
WATT: Well, that's very possible, of course, being new and not knowing behind the scenes things, I wouldn't have known. As time went on I became more aware of finagling and the different

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things that go on on Capitol Hill, but as far as I was concerned it was just open and shut, the same as Children's Hospital, you're sick or you aren't.
RITCHIE: Were the senators and the staff surprised by the turn of events in that investigation, when Hughes proved so successful at rebutting them in the public hearings?
WATT: Yes. Many of the staff were carry-overs, but the new ones coming in weren't that much with it. They didn't have the experience, in fact, to me I think they were political hacks. They hadn't had experience on Capitol Hill, anymore than I had. I don't think they did Senator Brewster any good. Let's put it that way.
RITCHIE: What about Senator Ferguson? He's the one who carried the ball for the subcommittee. What type of a person was he?
WATT: As far as I was concerned he was a delightful man. I became very close to his office, which I have generally avoided, getting too close to any of the senators' offices, then they don't feel too bad if you get the axe, but I did become friendly with them. They were just people I naturally took to. I

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knew the people in Senator Brewster's office but I didn't get too close to them because I was new and I felt that I should be my own person. He had a delightful staff and they were approachable but not really intimate. He was just a nice person, I liked him very much.
RITCHIE: How did he compare to Brewster as chairman of the committee?
WATT: Well, you really couldn't compare them because Brewster wasn't chairman for that long. You see, Senator Ferguson was chairman of the subcommittee after it was set up so I got to know him better as the chairman. About the only time that Senator Brewster was chairman was when we had the Arabian Oil hearings and some executive sessions, and we had one hear ing on renegotiation of way contracts and industrial mobilization. On either renegotiation or industrial mobilization we had Bernard Baruch, and he was up

in years. I was so impressed because I had been hearing about him being a great man all those years. He came in, and his secretary who must have been with him for many years--he was very deaf, too, and had a hearing aid--but she

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wouldn't let anybody get anywhere near him. I remember when he was a witness and I'd go to hand him a piece of paper and she would take it from me., she was not letting anyone get within a mile of him. I'd go and she'd take the paper and hand it to him. I was so impressed because she was just protecting him all the way right down the line. I remember him as well as anybody in those earlier years, he was really something.

RITCHIE: The committee, as you pointed out, only had a year's life left to it, and then it became the permanent subcommittee in 1948. I was interested that instead of Brewster chairing the permanent subcommittee it was Ferguson.

WATT: Well, see now what they did was make it a subcommittee of the Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments, so the subcommittee had to be set up from membership of the people who were on the full committee. Senator Ferguson, Senator Herbert O'Conor, Senator McCarthy were all on that committee.

RITCHIE: But Brewster wasn't?

WATT: No. I don't remember what committee he was on. Commerce, because I remember I took the

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minutes when they first set up a subcommittee on aviation. Aviation was not in its infancy but it hadn't gotten to the point where it was necessary to have a committee; it was a Commerce subcommittee and I remember taking the minutes because they hadn't hired anybody else, and that was in '47. He was on another committee, I think maybe the Armed Services Committee, I don't remember the other committees he had. But he was not on the Expenditures in Executive Departments, which was a minor committee. The District Committee, and that, and I think the Rules Committee, were the three minor committees at that point. The Reorganization Act of 1946 was just going into operation then. That's when Floyd Riddick came aboard over in the "Daily Digest." We started out together practically up here.

RITCHIE: Looking over some of the other members of the special committee, people like John Williams of Delaware, and George "Molley" Malone, and Joe McCarthy, and Claude Pepper, were there any of them in particular that stood out in your mind as more impressive or interesting?

WATT: That year I remember Senator Pepper, I was very much impressed with him because he was unusual.

RITCHIE: In what way?

WATT: Well, it was just his approach, and his Southern accent. And then Senator Malone was a rough and ready sort of person, didn't care what he said or what he did. Senator Harry Cain was on that committee. He was from Washington State--Senator Jackson defeated him later on.
RITCHIE: What was Cain like?
WATT: He was nice but he never set the world on fire, let's put it that way. There was Senator O'Conor, I liked him.
RITCHIE: Senator Carl Hatch was on it also.
WATT: Senator Hatch, yes. I think he liked his schnapps a little, but I never saw him under the influence or anything, but he had that reputation. He didn't--in fact, if you hadn't mentioned his name I would have forgotten him. Among those who made an impression was Malone, I'd remember him, I think he and Joe McCarthy were friendly at that time.

RITCHIE: That was McCarthy's first year in the Senate, too.
WATT: Yes. He was a batchelor around town, dating all of these beautiful girls.
RITCHIE: He was sort of getting his feet wet in these hearings.
WATT: Yes. But I don't remember his having anything to say. I don't remember except that he was there. So he didn't do much. The ones I remember the most for making the biggest splash were Senators Brewster, Pepper, and of course, Ferguson. I can't remember if the others made any noise. They said back then when you were in your first term you were seen and not heard. They're all different now. We had so many that were elected this year and then on the subcommittee, and they would say, "Oh, they're first termers, they'll never make it beyond this term." That was the consensus then, and some of them didn't. Of course, we had some carry-overs from the War Investigating Committee, but we had some new ones too, Cain, and Malone, and Joe McCarthy, O'Conor, they were all new that year. And there was also the fellow who became Attorney General briefly, from Rhode Island.

RITCHIE: Oh, McGrath.
WATT: J. Howard McGrath, he was one for a while. It was his first year. So we practically had all new senators.
RITCHIE: So the senior senators really took the initiative?
WATT: Yes.
RITCHIE: You mentioned before that you didn't follow politics that much in the press, but I assume you once you started working for the committee you became more aware of the press. How did it feel to read about in the newspapers events that you were participating in?
WATT: I got a big kick out of it. But I was more interested in the behind the scenes things that were going on. I would read it and say, "oh, that isn't exactly the way it is." But I got a kick out of that. My relations with the press were very good, and I made sure that everybody got the same treatment. I was very much

aware, from being close to the Superintendent of the Press Gallery, what to do and what not to do. So that's why my relations were so good, I didn't have any problems because I knew what to do and what not to do.

RITCHIE: What would you say was what to do and what not to do?
WATT: Back then if you said something was off-the record, it was off-the-record. You didn't tell people anything even off-the-record. I didn't, because I didn't know all that much about it. But you always showed no partiality to anybody. You just gave every body the same thing. If there was a press release or if you had some information you couldn't give to all of them you called the press gallery and let the superintendent or whoever to give out the information. And you notified people of hearings, gave them every thing, everybody the same thing, you didn't show any partiality. That's the only way to stay close to them. Now, that's one of the mistakes I think Senator Brewster made. I remember we had a report one time, they were filing a report, and all the senators had it, and I remember that Senator Brewster asked me for an extra copy of it, and he gave it to, I think it was Ed Hawkinson or Jack Bell of the Associated Press. You see, the other press got down on him because he was showing partiality to others, just giving special

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treatment to some, and that's a big mistake. Joe McCarthy, I think, made that mistake, too. It can ruin you, the press can ruin you.
RITCHIE: Did you have much trouble with senators leaking material from inside the committee?
WATT: That's a good question. I remember one time that we had an executive session, I don't remember what year it was, I remember that it was leaked to the press. The chief counsel was told by the chairman to check with everyone on the committee, of the staff members, to find out who had been around and seen it, and he had to question all of us, of course, I was in on all of them anyway. It turned out that a senator had leaked it, though. We found out, but the staff went through this thing feeling, well you know, feeling as if they were under suspicion and so on. But the senators had a way of leaking stuff that they were not supposed to.
RITCHIE: There wasn't anything you could do about it, I guess?
WATT: No. Well, it wasn't for the national security, but it was embarrassing, and it meant that some got it and others didn't. Usually U.S. News and World Report, I think it was,

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used to get material. We knew pretty much who had done it each time, but it happened several times. Either a reporter or a senator said what something went on in an executive session.
RITCHIE: Did you have any trouble with any particular reporters who were more persistent than others?

WATT: No, I was very lucky, very lucky. We had a lot in those days, we had many come in the office all the time. As time went on we had fewer and fewer. It depended a lot on the chief counsel, how your press was. Of course, Bill Rogers was very good with them, and Frip Flanigan was very good with them, and Bobby Kennedy was great, he knew how to handle them. He just instinctively knew how to handle people, period. Roy Cohn, catered to special ones, and he had a lot of enemies in the press, too. Of course, Jerry Adlerman always got along fine, but after that, after Jerry, the people have not been friendly with the press, they don't know how to handle them. That's been unfortunate, I think. Of the last two chief counsels, one had been on the committee before, and he was impossible. He was there when Senator McClellan was fighting for his political

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life, because you know he lost out in the primary and had to have a run-off with Senator Pryor, when he was a congressman. We were pretty much like step-children that year, he didn't pay much attention to the committee. In the meantime he also was chairman of Appropriations, when Allen Ellender died; that changed everybody's life!

After that the two chief counsels weren't very with it, the press wasn't their cup of tea really, and I think that may have hurt Henry Jackson some, I don't know. Of course, he had his own press man, Brian Corcoran, he was around but you can't cover a committee very well, I mean a press man in a senator's office, that well. I think some of these people did not want to handle the press, and I think this is very important to a committee and to a chairman. Now Senator Sam Nunn is handling himself very well, he's got his own press man and he's all right, doing a good job. He makes up for what we have lacked in that committee. Now we've just gotten a new chief counsel, I don't know what he's going to like because he's just come to work last Monday, and I don't know him that well, just met him once.

There's one other story I just recalled. This was back in 1949 to '50 when Bill Rogers was counsel and we had a former staff member who had been on the War Investigating Committee, and when we had the "5 per center" hearings with Johnny Maragon and General Harry Vaughn and all those people, his name was Charles Patrick Clark, and he ran into Bill Rogers at the Mayflower one night and they almost had a fist fight. I think it was because they were trying to get us not to have the hearings. That just popped into my mind.

RITCHIE: He was with the administration?

WATT: Charlie Clark was a lawyer uptown and drove around in a big chauffeured car. He had come in to write the final report on the War Investigating Committee but never did a nickle's worth of work, somebody else had to do it. But anyway, he was the big wheel uptown and he'd been on the War Investigating Committee with Harry Truman when Truman was chairman.

[End of Interview #1]

Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

Interview #2:
Truman-era Investigations
(September 7, 1979)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ruth Watt with unknown witness, *ca* 1951. *Senate Historical Office*

Ritchie: The last time we talked about the first year you were with the committee, when it was a special committee. At the time you were hired you were told it was just a one-year job, but at the end of that year they set up the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, early in 1948. Did you have any second thoughts at all about staying on with the committee?

Watt: It never occurred to me. I enjoyed what I was doing because I always liked being in finances; even at the hospital I had worked on donations. No, I liked it. It was an adjustment of course from doctors to senators when I first came in 1947. They kept the people on from the War Investigating Committee that they wanted and the rest they let go.

Ritchie: Was there very much of a rearrangement of the staff or staff assignments?
Watt: No, not really. Many of the men had left. Some of them had been on it for a long time, from 1941 to 1947--that was quite a long time

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back then, but now to me it seems like a short time! There were several people from Maine that Senator Brewster had put on the War Investigating Committee, they were not kept on. There were some people from Michigan that were added. There were one or two of them who had been on the Surplus Property Subcommittee which was merged with the Permanent Subcommittee at the time it was set up. There were five people on there who were transferred to our payroll, and a couple of them were from Michigan as I remember it. Of course, Senator Ferguson had been chairman of that Surplus Property Subcommittee.
Ritchie: And now he was chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee.
Watt: Yes. And you could only be chairman of one subcommittee of a committee. Back then it was true too after the Reorganization Act of 1946. They kept all the girls on, and Bill Rogers, and Francis (Frip) Flanagan who was assistant chief (held been on since '44 on the War Investigating Committee). And there was a good friend of mine who was hired from Maine, but he left to go to the Pentagon, I think he became general counsel over there,

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Fred Coughlin. Then there were two or three people that Bill Rogers had brought down, and two left. They started off with some people from Senator Ferguson's office; but we did not have a large staff. It sort of petered out. There were about 26 or 28 on the War Investigating Committee when I came aboard, and it was down to probably 15 or 16 when the subcommittee was set up.
Ritchie: When they set it up as a subcommittee, did either Senator Ferguson or Bill Rogers instruct the staff as to what the purposes or the scope of the Permanent Subcommittee were going to be? Was there any sort of getting together and beginning again? Or was there just a continuity from the old special committee?
Watt: It was really a continuity, because we got the functions of the old committee with the addition of one of the sections of the Committee on Expenditures of Executive Departments, it was section XII or something like that, saying that we were to investigate malfeasance, wrongdoing, and all that sort of thing in the executive departments. it was set up to investigate the executive

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departments actually. That's all our function was the first two or three years.
Ritchie: Because you were part of the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments.
Watt: Of which Senator George Aiken was chairman.

Ritchie: Was there any relationship between the subcommittee and the full committee? Or were you independent?
Watt: Well, there were some functions of the subcommittee that have to go through the full committee, like putting people on the payroll. It has to be signed or approved by both. The money resolutions are approved by the full committee, but we made our own budget and we had it all set up, but the full committee has to pass it on to the floor of the Senate. Subcommittees have no authority for any legislation of any kind.
Ritchie: So if it suggests legislation it has to go through the full committee?
Watt: Anything. A resolution is a Senate function, and we've always been under a resolution. We have to be renewed every year. We call ourselves permanent, but we're not. If they decided that they didn't want to continue us, why we've sort of had it. You expire

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at midnight on the date that the resolution has set. It used to be January 31, now it's February 28 or 29.
Ritchie: What about issuing reports and other publications?
Watt: Publications are approved by the subcommittee and then by the full committee. A subcommittee cannot file a report to the Senate, it has to come from a full committee.
Ritchie: But other than that, the actual functioning of the subcommittee was done independently?
Watt: We were pretty independent. When the committee was set up, why of course, the full committee thought they should have the say-so over the subcommittee, and our chief counsel made it very clear that if he was going to function he was not going to be under the thumb of the committee staff members. So we started off right away as a separate entity, except for the things that legally we had to do through the full committee.
Ritchie: And it stayed that way?
Watt: It stayed that way up until Senator Sam Ervin took over as chairman. That was when Senator Allen Ellender died and Senator McClellan had to give up the chairmanship of the full

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committee. Then they started little by little chipping away, so that now the subcommittee has very little that it can do on its own. They have to go through the staff of the full committee. I mean to say all except for the actual investigating and hearings.
Ritchie: In terms of investigations?
Watt: Investigations. Well, the subcommittee can approve an investigation. Filing reports, of course. But then there are little items like you have got to go through them to get parking stickers and equipment, especially all those little things which you could get without question before. The staff is hired by the subcommittee chairman, but officially the full committee chairman hires them.

Now since they had a bill passed two or three years ago where you have a staff member on a payroll that is working with the chairman--remember that went through with all those high-priced people--now when you swear them in there is a square on the form where you have to indicate whether or not they are working for another senator or for the committee only. For instance, we have minority people and

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majority people, and the funds are separate, too. A certain amount of funds from our budget, a third, is set aside for the minority salaries. When they put them on the payroll a letter comes from Senator Charles Percy requesting they be put on the payroll.

Ritchie: Did the full committee ever attemi3t to veto a staff person or any action of the subcommittee during the time you were there?

Watt: The only time they ever did it was because of one person. You see, we have to get a security clearance for everybody on the staff, and it turned out that one individual was unacceptable.

Ritchie: Was that an action of the full committee or of the subcommittee?

WATT: That was the subcommittee. What happened then was that Senator McClellan was chairman of the full committee and the subcommittee. So things for the full committee would come to him, but the full committee staff would not see them--they-would just come to me to put it in my file, in my safe. But if someone else had been chairman it would have come through the full committee. For instance, when Senator Ervin was chairman,

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it would have gone to him rather than come to Senator McClellan as chairman of the subcommittee.

Ritchie: But for all intents and purposes the subcommittee was independent in its actions?

Watt: Very. Right down the line.

Ritchie: From the beginning when William Rogers said that he wouldn't work there under any other circumstances.

Watt: Yes, that's right. Right up until 1972 when Senator Ellender died and Senator McClellan became chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Up until then we were very independent. I signed vouchers and the chairman of the subcommittee signed. The full committee never had to be involved at all except for putting people on the payroll. So when Senator McClellan became chairman of the subcommittee and Senator Ervin was chairman of the full committee, I no longer could sign vouchers. So I told Senator McClellan held been demoted, because he was signing where I'd been signing for thirty years!! But the finances were completely controlled, and I was very careful to clear everything to make sure it was legal. You know, these

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investigators would get a little out of line sometimes if you didn't check after them.
Ritchie: Did they have to vote separate appropriations for each investigation?
Watt: Oh, no, no. We had a lump sum. We would make a budget up the first of the year, how much we thought should be for each one. Then if we found an unusual investigation that was going to take a lot of money, about August we'd ask for an additional appropriation, which happened quite a few times. Then that was just added to what we already had.
Ritchie: Did the investigators have to come back and file a voucher for everything that they had done, or were they given a free reign over what they could do as far as spending was concerned?
Watt: They knew what they could do, and they couldn't go over it. There were certain rules they couldn't go outside of. For instance, you have so much a day per diem, and its in quarter day. At first it was a flat rate if you were on an investigation out of town for three hours or twelve or twenty-four it was the same amount. Then Bob Brenkworth,

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when he became Financial Clerk, put in a resolution that changed it to a quarterly basis. They waived some of those rules that were passed for finances on the floor of the Senate, the Rules Committee always consulted with the Disbursing Office Financial Clerk actually because they were more familiar with it. Some were a little ambiguous. One of them I never could understand was the witness resolution that said "reasonable transportation" or words to that effect, per witness. Well, they interpreted it as if you took your car a witness had to keep track of what he spent for gas and oil and that's all he got. Staff and senators got so much a mile. If he took a plane, we paid for it. But if he took his car and came across country he had to keep track of every nickel. Of course, he was getting paid per diem, which you get paid from the time you leave home to the time you got back home from Washington, if it was a reasonable time. If you spent a couple of days on vacation you wouldn't get paid for it, but I had to figure that out and use my judgment on that. The men

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were not allowed to rent cars in Washington, nobody can in the Senate. You can rent cars out of town, you can pay for cab fares. Your hotels and meals have to be included in the per diem. Now it's $35.00 a day. And hotels are $30.00 and $35.00, you have to eat on your own. Since I've left they receive a little more, it's $40.00 per them and you have to submit your hotel and food bill in order to get the $40.00. In different cities you can put in your actual expense and they subtract it if it goes over the $40.00 or $45.00, different rates in different cities.
Ritchie: How did things work in general? For instance, at the beginning of the year when you were planning your budget, did they map out strategy for the rest of the year, that they had in mind that they were going to look into several areas?

Watt: Well, that all had to be included in the letter to the Rules Committee in order for you to get the money.
Ritchie: And did the staff get together to work as a team on these things?
Watt: On the budget?

Ritchie: And on planning what the committee was going to be doing for that year.
Watt: Just the chief counsel and the senator, I don't know of anyone else. But they knew pretty much what they were working on, and what had been finished. They would put a background in the letter to the Rules Committee on what they had done all year and what was continuing and what new ones they were going into.
Ritchie: When they decide on a particular project, when they decided to follow through on something, what would they do? Would they call in various investigators? Did they have a permanent staff of investigators or did they hire people specially?
Watt: Well, if it was a big hearing we used to use the General Accounting Office people for many years. Then we hired some from other agencies on reimbursal, we reimbursed the agencies. Usually when they set up a hearing--of course, nowadays nothing is done unless the minority approves.
Ritchie: But back then they didn't?
Watt: We didn't have any minority people for many years, as far as staff was concerned, up until about 1972 or '73 we only had two

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minority people, and none up until January 1954. Everybody worked together and there were no politics involved. It was just an investigating committee and you were for motherhood and against sin!! Everybody was in the same boat. But after the McCarthy problems, why then the senators said we had to have a minority counsel, that was in January 1954. I'm way ahead of the story now, we ought to get to that later.
Ritchie: While we are talking about investigators, one name that comes to mind is Carmine Bellino. He worked for the committee right from the beginning didn't he?
Watt: He came on in October of '48, was on the regular payroll until about 1953. Then he was off and on, because he was not into Communism too much. He did one investigation up in Alaska, as I recall, Palmer-Alaska Airline, but other than that he didn't do too much work for the committee in 1953 and 1954. He went on somewhere along the line on a contract, because he had worked on another subcommittee that had contracted him, it was a labor subcommittee that Senator James Murray had. So we copied it after that and put him on a contract basis,

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which meant that we paid him by the hour when he worked, and paid his expenses. That was a new wrinkle. Then he left us and went on the payroll of the Rackets Committee, because he was a great Kennedy man. Then he left and went to the White House to work up there as a consultant to President Kennedy. Then he came back and worked on a contract basis with us for a while. Then when Bob ran for the Senate he dropped everything and went up there and campaigned for Bob in New York. Now he's working for Senator Teddy Kennedy. He worked on the Watergate, of course, and then retired. Then he was off for a while and went back. I don't know if he's on contract or regular payroll for Senator Ted Kennedy's Judiciary subcommittee.
Ritchie: He was an accountant by trade, wasn't he?
Watt: C.P.A. One of the best in the business.
Ritchie: Was that the general type of person who would be an investigator for you, someone with an accounting background?
Watt: Well, accounting is a very important part of it. He can look at a sheet of paper and see if there is something-wrong. He's amazing. He is so involved, he is just married to

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the idea of the Kennedys. I've never seen anybody so devoted in my life.
Ritchie: Was that from the very beginning when John Kennedy joined the committee?
Watt: It was Bob. You see because John Kennedy was on the Labor Committee, and the Rackets Committee was made up of four from each committee. That's how he happened to be with us. Four from the subcommittee and four Labor Committee members, when that was set up in 1957.
RITCHIE: What type of a person was Bellino? How would you describe him?
Watt: I liked him very much. If he found any wrong doing he could go after it. When we were in investigating he could really find it. He was unbelievable. I liked him and his whole family. Of course, Angie Novello was Carmine's sister in-law. Angie came to work on the committee through Carmine in 1955 and then Bob took her as his secretary in 1957 or '58. But I think he is a delightful man.
Ritchie: Did he have a crusading spirit when he got into those cases?
Watt: It was a job for him. Held work until 4:00 o'clock in the morning. He's an

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amazing man. He's still going full speed ahead and he's somewhat older than I am.
Ritchie: We talked about some of the staff members, I also want to talk about the first two chair men of the subcommittee. Ferguson became the chairman . . .
Watt: He was on the full committee and the chairman had to be someone from the full committee.
Ritchie: So he served for the first year.
Watt: He was a Republican and it was the 80th Congress, and a Republican Congress. We also had Senator Edward Thye, who was a one termer, Senator

John Bricker, and Senator McCarthy, and then there were three Democrats, Senator Clyde Hoey, Senator Herbert O'Conor, and Senator McClellan. That was the first subcommittee.
Ritchie: Would you say that Ferguson was an effective chairman during that first year?
Watt: Yes.
Ritchie: In getting everything set up?
Watt: Yes., he did a good job. And Bill Rogers and Frip were the ones who did the work on the committee and set it up for the chairman, whatever he wanted. That was the year of the convention, when the President

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was up for reelection. President Truman of course had once been chairman of the committee, and I remember that Charles Patrick Clark came on to help write the report in 1947, which was just a lot of wasted money because he didn't do anything anyway, but he's the only one I think had served on the committee when Truman was chairman. Anyway, when President Truman came to the Capitol one time, the first time I had ever seen him, there was a girl who used to work for Senator Kenneth McKellar that had been close to some of the girls who worked for the committee when Truman was chairman. I was standing over in the Capitol when he came through, and she was so glad to see him she didn't think about it and she dashed up and tried to shake hands with him, and the Secret Service people were all over the place. She wasn't thinking at all. I was so impressed, here this man had been in the Senate for many years and you could talk to him without any problem, and all of a sudden he's not available. You can't do this anymore. That was my first experience with how protective these people have to be.

Then in November of that year, Harold Beckley who had been superintendent of the press gallery back when Truman was in the Senate (they had a poker club, certain ones who played poker, Truman, Beck, and others) invited me down to Union Station the Sunday night when Truman took his last trip on his Whistle Stop. It was less than a week before the election. There were about ten people standing down there to see him off. I went up with the Beckleys because they knew him, and I'll never forget Beck saying, "Well, Mr. President, how do you think it's going?" And President Truman said, "I think we've got them on the run." And I thought, "Oh, he has to be kidding." So the next week, after the election, he came back with a big parade. The whole town turned out for him. I was standing at the corner there by the subway entrance as he came through triumphantly reelected.
Ritchie: Quite a change.
Watt: It was such a contrast. It made a great impression. Of course, that was during my early years down here and I was very much impressed with everything. But I thought it was a very interesting sidelight.

Ritchie: With that election the Democrats took control of the Senate . . .
Watt: Yes.

Ritchie: . . . and the subcommittee. Did you worry at all that would effect your position?

Watt: That was the first and only time I've ever done any politicking. I went to every one of the senators on the committee and told them I'd like to stay. So, much later) Senator Hoey told me he had no intention of letting me go. But the girl that I replaced was back, working on the full committee on a temporary basis.
Ritchie: Oh, I see. You had replaced a Democrat and she now came back to the committee.
Watt: Well, she was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat and she had made the mistake of making some remark where Senator Brewster heard her that she could never work for a Republican, or something like that. So when she had appendicitus she went to him and asked if he wanted her to resign or take leave of absence, he said, "Resign." Otherwise she would probably have been kept on, if she had used her head a little better.
Ritchie: But you had always tried a nonpartisan approach.

Watt: I always made no bones about the fact that I was a Republican, but I never played politics, because I never had any reason to. I always felt my value to the committee was gone when I played politics. For many years there were no politics anyway. And I always stayed clear of them.
Ritchie: Did any other members of the staff change? I guess the Michigan people must have left, if they came with Senator Ferguson.
Watt: Gradually. Bill Rogers stayed on for a year. He was of course a Republican. And Frip Flanagan was the assistant. And then a man named--we called him "Doggy" Hatcher-Colonel Hatcher came up from North Carolina. Then there was a man named Thomas who came on, he was a lawyer but he didn't plan to do any work. Senator Hoey said, "I'm sorry but I had an obligation to his family," or something; so we got some of those that year. Then Jim Sheridan stayed on, and Jerry Alderman, and the girls all stayed on. I can't remember who else we had beside those people, because when Senator Hoey took over we only had fourteen on the staff the entire time he was chairman.

Ritchie: It was a small staff, and he kept on most of the people who had been there.
Watt: If they left, why he replaced them. But fourteen was the most we ever had. Of course, when Ferguson was chairman we had about eighteen.

Ritchie: All I know about Hoey are the pictures I've seen of him, and he seems like a funny little man.
Watt: He really wasn't, he was tall.
Ritchie: He wore an unusual costume.
Watt: Oh, he wore that from the time he was twenty two. It was a long frock coat and had the wing collar, and the suits were grey or black. He was about six feet four. He lived at the Raleigh Hotel and he used to take the streetcar to work, and lie would hang onto the strap with those coattails flying! He really was a fine man, but he was really! He always wore a rose, and when his wife was living she always gave it to him every morning for his lapel. After she died, his staff had the rose there every morning, I always used to think: "what a nice thing." But we are skipping that year with Senator Ferguson. There were several things I wanted to mention about him, and the hearings. For instance, we had hearings on Ilse Koch.

Ritchie: That was the Nazi case?
Watt: Buchenwald. They called her the "bitch of Buchenwald." There was one hearing we had in executive session, around one of those great big hearing tables, this was ten years before the new Senate Office Building came along. And we came into the hearing, there were about six senators there, and we had a witness who had been a prisoner of war who did laboratory work. Anyway he was a professor in New York State, I don't know if it was Syracuse or up in that area, I can't remember his name now. They had in the center of the table a foot-high head of a German prisoner. It was a shrunken head, which the Nazis had forced him to work on in the laboratory. It was the most gruesome thing. This huge table with the little head in the center. And the hair of course was down long, but the rest had been shrunken. Gruesome. Then they had lampshades of tattoos of soldiers, from their chests.
Ritchie: It must have had quite an impact on the committee.
Watt: It did on me I know! This was thirty-one years ago and it was so vivid I can still see it. Some things you can go to bed and see in your sleep, and this was one of them.

Ritchie: Had the committee been prepared for this, or had it just been brought in?
Watt: I suppose the staff and Senator Ferguson knew, because he always knew ahead of time, you have to tell your chairman what's going on. But Senator Ferguson said to the witness: "Did you ever know this fellow?" (pointing). I suppose he had to say yes, I don't remember what the answer was, but he naturally had to work on him. It was one of the things that you don't forget. Then there was the first hearing when Senator Ferguson first took over. It was really on export control and so on, and they discovered this William Remington, who was apparently working with the Communists. He was working in a

government agency and they knew about his activities, but then he quit and went to another government agency and they had no liaison with other agencies. If you have a file on someone here and they go to another agency, unless it has changed very recently, they just start out cold as if they had never worked before. And this happened. Then Elizabeth Bentley, who was a card-carrying Communist, identified him

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as being a Communist. So he was tried and went to prison.
Ritchie: That was the first Communist hearing that the subcommittee held?
Watt: That was the first, and it started out as a loyalty hearing, if I remember correctly.
Ritchie: And that was while Ferguson was still chairman?
Watt: It was a loyalty program, the way the loyalty program in the federal government worked. But then this Elizabeth Bentley got out of the Communist Party and went as a teacher in some convent down in Louisiana--of course the Communists were after her. This William Remington, he was about six feet tall, and young, and very handsome. He was imprisoned and the inmates murdered him. He went to prison about 1948 or 1949.
Most of our people in those years, like Francis Flanagan, had been with the FBI; Carmine had several years with the FBI; so a good many of our people that were hired were ex-FBI agents, and had the experience already. They didn't have to be trained, which was great because we didn't have a school over there. And Senator McClellan pretty much followed that, he

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wanted experienced people, not to have to train them. It was very valuable to the committee and we didn't have that many problems. You do have problems if people go out on their own and do things that they don't know that are wrong. We were lucky on that. We had one man, who I think had been CIA or OSS. Anyway, the Remington case was kind of sad. He worked in the Commerce Department and one time played a large part in what goods should be sent to Russia and so on. Back then we didn't trust them, even though they were allied because of the fact that it was one of those things to survive, I suppose for them to survive at least.
Ritchie: So one of the first hearings in 1948 was the investigation into Communism.
Watt: The loyalty program.
Ritchie: But most of the investigations of the subcommittee in '48 and '49 and really right on to the early '5O's were really focused on mismanagement in the executive branch, corruption.
Watt: That's the only authority that we had.
Ritchie: And you had actually sort of stumbled onto the Communist issue in an investigation of export controls?

Watt: Yes. That reminds me also, if we start an investigation now the minority is advised of it. We never have been able to have a hearing that isn't voted on and approved by a majority of the full subcommittee, not the full committee, the subcommittee. We can have an investigation without any problem as long as the minority has. been advised. The chairman could authorize the staff to go ahead with a preliminary investigation. So that is a protection for everybody, if you have a majority of the members of the subcommittee voting to hold the hearings. So if things don't turn out right they're all equally to blame.
Ritchie: The one set of hearings that got the most publicity in that period were the "5 percenters" hearings. They were all over the newspapers.
Watt: Well, they involved the White House, you see, and General Harry Vaughn who testified. John Maragon, who came over from Italy and started out as a bootblack or something and became very influential and was buying presents for government officials, was a subject. We had quite a few executive sessions with him. He seemed to be the key at that time for the

information. I remember one day we had an executive session in Senator Hoey's office, because we didn't want the press to know about it. We had hearings in senators' offices because that was the only way to keep it away from the press. Anyway, sometimes they got wind anyway, and they'd be standing together at the door. So John Maragon had been testifying in the Senator's immediate office, and he said: "I don't want to go out there with all that press. What will I do? How can I get out of here?" I said, "You'll have to just wait." I said, "I'm going to put you in the Senator's bathroom, and I'll come back and get you when they are gone." Well, I went back to'my office and forgot all about him. About an hour later I remembered. So I had to dash back upstairs and he was still there! I told him he could go now. Then that evening I was over in the Capitol and he was holding a press conference over there. They had caught up with him. But that was funny; putting him in the bathroom and forgetting about him.
Ritchie: Were meetings held in executive session sort of fishing trips for the senators? Were they trying to test out the witnesses?

Watt: Well, in many cases they would have an executive session to find out--they had rumors and they had people giving them information--and they'd find out under sworn testimony if it was true. And it if turned out they were not involved and they were innocent, why they would protect them. Once you get into an open hearing people ask you questions that put doubt in the public's mind. It was a good protection for the witnesses.
Ritchie: The "5 percenter" hearings seemed strange to me because it was an investigation by the Democratic administration by a committee that was controlled by the Democrats. And yet it had a Republican counsel who was very persistent in pursuing one of the closest friends the president had.

Watt: Yes, and it was funny because Charles Patrick Clark, who ran into Bill Rogers at the Mayflower one night and almost got into a fist fight. He had been in the office earlier that day and asked him not to hold the hearing. And it was entirely up to the chairman.
Ritchie: And Hoey went along with them.
Watt: Sure. He was for motherhood!!!

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Ritchie: They had apparently gotten a tip from a reporter that originally got them started on the investigation.
Watt: Really? I don't remember how it started, because we've had so many different means. We've had anonymous phone calls, anonymous letters, letters of complaints. They come from all directions. Other senators would refer things to us; reporters. I don't know who it was who gave that one, but we've had several newspapermen who have given material to the chairman and the chief counsel, and they'd go in and look into it.
But the "5 percenter" really was a big one. They passed some legislation on it, as I remember; if you were in government and had a top job, if you retired or left government you could not practice before the government legally as a lawyer for a year after you left. Jess Larson was one of those people, as an example, who was head of GSA at that point. He went to Canada for a year and practiced law and then came back, so he was not involved with government.
Ritchie: Do you recall when General Harry Vaughn came to testify during that investigation?

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Watt: The only thing I remember is his cigar. He and Senator Karl Mundt and Senator James Eastland, they were all smoking big cigars, and I remember Senator McCarthy was allergic to the smoke. He never smoked. Senator Hoey didn't smoke in general, because it was not dignified or something. Anyway, the place was all smoked up with all that cigar smoke.
Ritchie: Going back to the old newspaper clippings, I noticed that while Hoey was the chairman of the committee., almost every headline was something that Senator Mundt had said, or Senator McCarthy had said. The two of them really seemed to dominate the hearings, or at least they had the best press.
Watt: You get that now, too. You get Senator Percy, who is our ranking Republican. Why it is, I don't know. Senator Nunn now is getting good press with Armed Services, but last year when he was chairing our hearings, Percy had more press than he did. Why it is, I don't know.
Ritchie: Perhaps the minority members can make more charges than the majority members?
Watt: Yes, probably that's true. I don't know. I really hadn't thought about it.

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Ritchie: Was Mundt a particularly aggressive man when it came to those investigations?

Watt: He always took a great interest in all of the investigations, and he and his staff did their homeowrk. They knew what they were doing.
Ritchie: He certainly got a tremendous amount of press, I was surprised, much more so than the chairman did.

Watt: But if you will notice down the line, of course Senator McClellan always got good press, but Senator Mundt was ranking with Senator McClellan, he had good press. And when Senator McClellan was chairman and Senator Irving Ives was vice chairman, he was never that forceful. I think it depends upon your personality, how much press you get.

Ritchie: Was there very much grandstanding on the part of the senators, sort of playing to the press and the galleries?
Watt: This is hard to answer. I think they're all hams. They have to be to make it in public life. Like someone said the time that General MacArthur made that big speech before Congress, somebody said, "There's a lot of ham in everybody that's in public life." I think that's the answer. But they have to

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have publicity to get reelected. Otherwise, how do people know what they stand for? Since the advent of TV and the radio of course.
Ritchie: The 115 percenter" hearing was very successful. Maragon went to jail eventually, and Truman was badly hurt by the scandal involving General Vaughn.
Watt: There is an interesting sidelight on John Maragon. When he got out of prison, he hadn't been out too long when Senator McCarthy took over as chairman, and at every executive session we had, John Maragon would be standing outside the door. As the witnesses came in he would say, "Now, you tell the truth. You don't want to have to go to jail the way I did." He was right there. And he didn't show malice toward anybody.
Ritchie: How long did that last?
Watt: A year or two. The first year anyway, I don't remember the second year, but I remember up there in Room 357 I'd come up to the hearing and there he would be standing outside the door.

Ritchie: That's very interesting. I wondered, in terms of all those headlines about Mundt and McCarthy, if Hoey was all that strong a chairman? Did he allow other members of the subcommittee to take charge? Did you have a feeling about that?
Watt: No, not really. There was some rumor, just gossip, but when Senator Hoey took over some where along the line I heard--you see, Senator McClellan was chairman of the full committee, and Senator McClellan and President Truman were not the closest of friends. It was my understanding, and I don't know if there was any truth to it or not, that President Truman had asked Senator Hoey to take the chairmanship of the subcommittee.

Ritchie: So that McClellan wouldn't be chairman?
Watt: Although Senator Hoey had seniority. I don't know why Senator McClellan was chairman, because Senator Hoey was ranking on the subcommittee. I know what the answer was. A chairman can take a subcommittee if he wants it. It's up to him who gets the chairmanship. McClellan could have taken it if he wanted to. Senator Hoey was ranking on the subcommittee when it was set up. I suppose Senator

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McClellan got on afterwards. But from 1949 to 1952 Senator Hoey was chairman. Senator McClellan got off the subcommittee when he became chairman of the full committee in 1949. He got off the subcommittee and appointed someone else on it. He was not on that year. Maybe that was because Senator Hoey took the chairmanship. Of course, Senator McClellan at -rhat point was a meek little senator. You never heard anything from him. I made a statement for his library that you woulan't have noticed him. Meek. I thought, "Gee, is he a senator?" Later he developed gradually into a great senator. But at that point I was not too impressed. but I know Senator McClellan and Truman had not gotten along. See now Senator McClellan came to the Senate in 1943, and Truman was chairman since 1941, so held been a senator for some time. He was quite senior to Senator McClellan.
Ritchie: Truman came in 1935.
Watt: Did he? See there's almost ten years. But there was something there that made Senator McClellan not take it, because he could have had it if he wanted it, because he was

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chairman of the full committee. Now, I don't remember if Senator Hoey was chairman of anything except the subcommittee. But he was a very easygoing senator as far as the subcommittee was concerned. There was never any controversy, let's put it that way, as far as he was concerned. I never thought about the fact that there were stronger individuals because it seems to be always that the chairman is directing and the others have the chance to say anything they want to. They can be controversial if they want to. But Senator McClellan could get pretty rough with them, when he knew he was right. You know, when he had his facts in front of him. Of course, some of the senators went out and did research on their own and found out things that we didn't know, that the staff didn't know. Or he might have someone on his personal staff working on things, too.
Ritchie: So they didn't always share the information they got?
Watt: Even now they come in with information, personal information, that we don't have. They come in and spring it on you. But that's the way it goes.

Ritchie: In looking at the papers, the "5 percenters" hearings got the most publicity of any of the hearings. And it seemed like after that was over the subcommittee took a low profile for a while.
Watt: Senator Hoey had one hearing a year.
Ritchie: One hearing a year?
Watt: We had little ones, but look at that schedule.
Ritchie: Yes, by comparison there were very few.
Watt: We had one in Jackson, Mississippi. It was while Truman was President and the Mississippi people would not admit that he was the head of the Democratic Party. I think there was a William Boyle who was chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Anyway, the Democrats down there decided they were going to have their own Democratic Party. So they were taking charge of Post Office jobs, and they were selling them. That's what our hearing was about. And there were these little people from out in the country who had been through the fourth grade who came in and testified that they had paid for their jobs. They were postmasters from all these little towns in Mississippi. It was quite interesting.

That was the only out-of-town hearing I ever went to. I went down there and the hearings lasted three days. When I returned I realized that I had not gotten permission from the Senate to meet. I had been kind of excited about going out of town. And when they got ready for the trials, they threw one case out of court because I had neglected to get permission of the Senate to meet.
Ritchie: Does the Senate as a whole have to agree?
Watt: Yes, on the floor of the Senate. If the Senate is in session you have to have permission. Now the rules have changed over the years. Now you are able to meet until the Senate goes into session and until the end of the morning hour. Then you have to have permission to meet if you go in the afternoon. Many of the senators prefer to have hearings in the morning and not go over into the afternoon. Senator Ribicoff, for one, always has tried to have hearings in the morning except in an unusual case. Senator McClellan would go all day. Senator Jackson, unless he had something on the floor, would go all day. Senator Walter "Dee" Huddleston, when he

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was chairing the hearings for Senator Jackson, would go in the afternoon. And Senator Nunn did that last year and the year before, when we needed to. But as a rule they prefer not to. I think that was the reason that they instigated this ruling about getting permission to meet. In so many cases now they meet on the floor at 9:00 or 10:00 O'clock in the morning that you always have to get permission.
Ritchie: What did the subcommittee do if it wasn't holding hearings?
Watt: We were writing reports, and investigating, but not holding hearings. We were always investigating things. Many times you would investigate some agency and they would correct it themselves, so you didn't need to have hearings. The

fact that the subcommittee was there and it was looking into things, they would correct the things themselves. It was very valuable.
Ritchie: But certainly nothing that would generate any kind of press attention or publicity.
Watt: No, nobody was supposed to know about it. Because you are supposed to have a vote of the subcommittee to hold a hearing. But

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they would investigate--there was one agency I think it was the Maritime Commission--they were investigating their finances, the fact that they hadn't been collecting money or something. I think they got several million dollars as a result of it. It was not made public, we didn't have hearings on it. We were just investigating it. it justified our existence for that year.
Ritchie: At the same time, in the 81st and 82nd Congresses there were investigations going on all over the place. According to the papers there were record numbers of investigations in both the House and the Senate in all these other committees and subcommittees. But the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations was . . .
Watt: Fairly quiet. Well, Senator Hoey was not a big hearing holder. We were pretty quiet except for that one year.
Ritchie: I was surprised because my image of that period is the Kefauver Crime investigation and all the other investigations, and when I went back to look at the investigating committee there were so few hearings!

Watt: Well, the Kefauver time was 19SO and that took up the whole year. Nobody paid much attention to anything else. I think the first televised hearings in the Congress were the Kefauver hearings, and the next ones were the Army-McCarthy. We had just a little televising, I think Channel 5 had some live televising of the Rackets Committee with Dave Beck and those people, but very little otherwise. Those only were the two big televised hearings until the Watergate came along.
Ritchie: Tell me, was there any feeling of resentment or competition among the staff of the investigating subcommittee that someone like Kefauver was grabbing all the attention?
Watt: No, we were sort of an entity unto ourselves. In those two or four years we were socializing and had a good time. The rules were very strict about office hours. The North Carolinians are famous for that. We'd come to work, but then we'd have this "Doggy" Hatcher, he became assistant counsel after Bill Rogers left. We used to party a lot, went to the Carroll Arms after work. They'd hire a bus and get a whole bus load of us to go to a football game on a Saturday at the

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University of Maryland when some North Carolina team played. It was really quite a social four years. We didn't work very hard. We had one big hearing a year

and wrote the report and that was it. The rest of the time we had little investigations, and we didn't have that big a staff to do anything big anyway. These other things were mostly executive sessions, like the Ilse Koch thing. We voted to have hearings on--in fact they referred it to us on a special resolution, 180 1 think it was--on subversives, homosexuals. That was an executive session. We wrote a report on it, homosexuals in government. We called in people from the government. Apparently someone referred it to us, that there were homosexuals in government and it was very dangerous so far as the Communists were concerned, that they could be blackmailed and so on. So the first thing we did was go to the Library of Congress, there's a special section over there, a blue section, where you have to have a senator's signature to get certain books out of the Library. We wrote a letter over Senator Hoey's signature to have access

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and get the books out of the Library, everything they had on homosexuality. You never saw so many people reading books in your life! The whole staff was involved. Those books disappeared off my desk like that! Anyway, we held the hearings and had several witnesses. We got the District of Columbia list of known homosexuals. In fact there was an elevator operator in the Senate Office Building whose name was on the list. Of course then, whoever heard of that? You didn't talk about it. So Mrs. Smith was on the subcommittee and we held the hearings and they were on such a high plane that you could have been talking about the weather. You never heard a bunch of hearings with so little sex and so little controversy in your life. It was funny. I never heard so many days of clean, simple, innocent hearings, nothing that would have offended people in any way. In fact, we filed a report on it later with the Senate.

In 1948, Mrs. Margaret Chase Smith was elected to the Senate and she was on the subcommittee for two years. When Senator Nixon was elected, I don't know what his

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relationship was to Senator McCarthy. Of course, Mundt had been on the House UnAmerican Activities Committee with Nixon, and it might have been through him, but the ranking minority member can pick his members, and he bumped Mrs. Smith off it and put Nixon on. I guess the Committee on Committees had to elect members of the full committee.

Ritchie: But she didn't want to go?

Watt: From then on--you remember her speech on the floor?

Ritchie: The "Declaration of Conscience."

Watt: Yes, it was not too long after that. I've never known whether that had anything to do with that or not. She had a right to make her own declaration, but that was when I think the whole thing started. Nixon was on the subcommittee for two years. Then he became Vice President. That's when Rose Mary Woods and I became close friends.

Ritchie: Was she his secretary back then?

Watt: Yes. She was on a subcommittee he was on on the House side, and when he came to the Senate he asked her if she would like to come as his secretary, and she's been with him ever since. She's a very lovely person. She lived in the

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same apartment building, at 2000 Connecticut Avenue, that I did, that's how we became friends. When Walter Watt and I were married in 1952, she and another girl, Kay Kenny, we were very close to, who worked for Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois--the two of them took Watt and me to the Shoreham Terrace for dinner the night we got married. Because we just went down to Fredericksburg, Virginia and were married and came back on again.

Ritchie: Do you recall Nixon as a member of the subcommittee? Was there anything about him that stood out in your mind at the time?

Watt: I always thought he was very nice. And the fact that I had become good friends with Rosey Woods, of course I was in that office more than I would have been otherwise. He was right up on the fourth floor above us. He was right across the hall from Senator Jack Kennedy. I liked him, but I didn't have any personal contact with him. In 1954, when he was vice president when the Democrats came back, he asked Rosey Woods, "Is that friend of yours down in the committee, is she going to be all right? Or is there anything I can do to help?" Which I thought was nice. He

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didn't remember my name but he knew who he was talking about. Then we had a meeting in his office in 19S7 when under the resolution the vice president had to hold the meeting to elect the chairman of the Rackets Committee, and also the vice chairman. So when Senator Ives got off the committee because he was not going to run for the Senate again, we had another meeting to appoint Senator Mundt as the vice chairman. I had contact with him then. We haven't seen Rose much in recent years. It's so hard to get together with people you've been away from for quite a while. She's here, she's retired, but she's out in California some. I understand that he's writing another book, so maybe she's out there now.

Ritchie: She certainly dedicated her life to him and his career.

Watt: Yes. And she and Pat Nixon were very close, too.

Ritchie: There was another member of the staff at that time I was interested in, and that was Jean Kerr. Was she on the subcommittee staff?

Watt: Jeannie was between her junior and her senior year at Northwestern University. She came on

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the subcommittee as my assistnat the summer of 1947. That was when she met Joe McCarthy, but they didn't start going together until after she went back to college. He used to go by and take her to football games and so on. Then when she graduated from college she went to work in his office, which was a year or two later. They were married the year after we were, in the fall of 19S3. They had a big

wedding at the Catholic Church right off Connecticut Avenue and a reception in a big private club. I remember we went to the reception, going up the step stairs and to the receiving line were my husband, me, and on one side was Bill Rogers and Gene Tunney, and a waitress from the Carroll Arms, all five of us abreast going up the stairs to the reception, it was quite a combination'

Ritchie: Didn't McCarthy have a reputation as sort of a womanizer at that time?

Watt: Well, the first year or two when he was single. He was a gay blade about town.

Ritchie: Didn't Jean Kerr turn him down the first time he asked her out?

WATT: That was when she was on the subcommittee.

Ritchie: I suppose she didn't like his reputation.

Watt: Well, she thought if a senator was inviting a staff member to go out with him, he had, you know, ulterior motives, I suppose, but I don't know. She asked a girl on the staff, what she thought, and she said, "Oh, you better not go out with him." So she thought and said, "No, I won't go out with him." Then of course he was several years older than she was, too. Senator McCarthy was my age and she is fifteen years or more younger than I am. It's funny that Joe McCarthy would be almost seventy if he had lived. You don't think about him as being an older man. But he's been gone twenty-two years. I think he was the only senator on the subcommittee from the time I came on the Hill until he died, that I worked with right straight through. Then Senator McClellan, all except for about two years, until he died. It was just one of those happenstances that people stay on and stay around all those years. And the staffs.

I should also mention the fact that in 1952 Walter Watt and I were married, in July of '52. 1 had been single all those years and he was widowed.

Ritchie: How did you happen to meet?

Watt: Well, he was retired from the Fire Department as a captain after twenty-five years--he had a disability, bursitus in his hips--and he came up here as a Capitol policeman, through Senator Cain, I believe. I think he had a connection through Washington State. He was on the police force. Then in 1954, when the Republicans had lost out, Bob Kennedy asked me if Walter was going to have any problem keeping his job, and I said I didn't know. So he said, "Well, I'll take care of that." So he put Walter on as one of Senator Jack Kennedy's employees. They had so many on patronage. It was a night job, and Senator Ervin had a student on his patronage that wanted to go to school and work at night. So they switched positions and Walter went on the door, over there outside the Secretary of the Senate's office.

In a year 'or two, Joe Duke who was Sergeant at-Arms, asked him if he would be willing to take the desk at the entrance across from the Vice President's office, where the people are admitted to the floor of the Senate. He did that for a while. He was there during the

Rackets Committee, I remember, because I used to work late, and when the Senate was late I'd go over there and wait for him. Then the director or superintendent of the warehouse where all the books from the Government Printing Office come in, he retired or died, so Joe Duke said he didn't care what my husband's politics were, that he was asking him.if he would take charge of that. So he's been over as superintendent of the warehouse ever since then; he's still there.

Ritchie: Was he assigned to your committee room when you first met him?

Watt: Senator McCarthy requested that he come and cover the hearings. There was a man named Goodall that covered them, and there was a little bit of bad feeling there I found out later because held been taken off, but Joe McCarthy had asked for Walt because we were married. So he was outside the door of the executive sessions and I was inside, which I thought was pretty good. One time when Joe McCarthy was chairman, we had a witness from Pennsylvania, and he had been known to threaten Senator McCarthy's life. I remember that Walt was outside and

Roy Cohn was inside, and Watt wanted to find out if the witness was armed, and Senator McCarthy said, "Oh, no, no way." We had a girl, Nina Sutton her name was, who worked on the committee taking stenotype, and we had her taking the minutes of that meeting. And here's Senator McCarthy, and Nina sitting here, and the witness here, and Nina is shaking like this all the time she's taking notes knowing that he's threatened Senator McCarthy's life'

Ritchie: She didn't want to be in the cross-fire.

Watt: She was very nervous. I met Walt through the Congressional bowling league, actually. He was on the force but I didn't know his name for a year or so,- That's why I still call him "Watt," because I didn't know his first name for a long time. Then along the line his wife died very suddenly of a heart attack. That year there were about seven couples on the bowling league that were married--in fact we had a party with the seven couples that were married--it was a regular matrimonial bureau. But anyway, that's where I met him. Then my whole life changed, and I didn't know what I'd been missing all those years.

That was in July, we were married between the Republican and Democratic conventions that year, just happenstance. The Saturday after we were married, we didn't tell anybody, but we went to Maine to meet my folks and have the once-over. We went to a party at Carmine Bellino's. The Republican convention had been over the weekend before and the Democratic was supposed to start soon. We went to the party and we told Carmine confidentially that we were married. Bill Rogers was there, and he was telling us that he was on the legal committee at the Republican convention and that he had gone all out to see that Senator Taft

did not make it, he had gone all out for Eisenhower, and he was one of the people responsible for Eisenhower being on the ticket. Then of course he became Deputy Attorney General when Eisenhower was elected, until Herbert Brownell resigned, then Bill Rogers took over as Attorney General. All these little sidelights, you never hear about what's going on behind the scenes.
[End of Interview #2]

Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

Interview #3:
Chairman Joe McCarthy
(September 21, 1979)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Chairman Joe McCarthy questions witness General Henry Vaughn. Seated, left to right, are Senator Clyde Hoey, McCarthy, Senators Karl Mundt and Margaret Chase Smith. To Smith's right are staff members Bill Lewis and Obie O'Brien, Counsel Jerome Adlerman, and Ruth Watt (second from right, looking at papers). *Senate Historical Office*

Watt: In December 1952, after the Republicans had won and before Senator McCarthy took over as chairman, Senator McClellan had been chairman of the full committee. I went up to see Senator McCarthy when he got back to town, and I said, "Senator McClellan says that he doesn't think that he's going to stay on the committee." So Senator McCarthy picked up the phone and called Senator McClellan and he said, "John, what's going on here? I hear that you're thinking about not staying on the committee." He said, "You've got to stay on the committee to keep that son-of-a-bitch Joe McCarthy in line!"

Ritchie: McCarthy said that himself?
Watt: Yes. I just remembered that. I was also remembering some of the errors I made, there were a couple during Senator McCarthy's regime. I had charge of writing up the subpoenas for witnesses and then Senator McCarthy would sign them, the chief counsel used to take them up

to him. But I made up one that they asked for, and it was served, and we had a hearing the next few days, and the witness did not show up. Senator McCarthy said, "I guess we'll have to have a meeting and cite him for contempt." Well, that night about seven o'clock I got a phone call from Jim Juliana, who was then an investigator and later became temporary chief counsel of the subcommittee, and said, "They've just called me and said there's a witness at the police desk at the Senate Office Building who says he has a subpoena to appear at 10:00 p.m. today." I had put the p.m. on instead of the a.m.! He showed up at 7:00 o'clock at night to report in for a 10:00 o'clock hearing! But I didn't make that mistake again. People didn't check on me much in those days. Now everybody checks on everybody to make sure you don't have an error, which is good. When the subpoenas are made up the chief counsel goes over them carefully, then the minority chief counsel goes over them and approves them, and then they go to the senator. So there is not much chance for error. But we didn't have the checks then that we have now.

That reminds me of an earlier story when we were talking about Elizabeth Bentley. She was under police protection. She had left the Communist Party and was a teacher in some kind of a school for Catholics in Louisiana. She came up to testify, but she came a few days early to be interviewed by the staff. We had her in a hotel with police protection-Capitol police. There were three policemen covering her. One was Lt. Disney who died in the last few years. There was one named Joe Baldisaro, who was one of the ones who married during the 1952 "matrimonial bureau" at the Congressional bowling league. And one Ballard, who is an inspector over in headquarters now. The three of them were protecting her. We had her first in the Hay-Adams house. After two or three days they came over to ask for some money to take care of this thing. Well, of course, I was new, I had only been there a couple of years (this was in '48) and hadn't had this before, so it never occurred to me not to pay. When it was the War Investigating Committee I had a bank account and I paid people out of the bank account and then turned vouchers into the disbursing office

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and they subtracted it from my account. Then we had her in another hotel, and finally in the Congressional Hotel. In the meantime, they were feeding her--and she apparently was drinking quite a lot of beer or whatever because the bill was quite high--and we were supposed to pay the policemen's expenses, too. Well, I didn't know it was illegal. You couldn't pay them unless they were on your payroll. I paid Lt. Disney for what I owed him and put the voucher in, and it came back and they said, "No, you can't do this." But they said, "We'll let this go through this time." So the other two never got paid. So they were out of pocket. But that shows you how you should check on everything, and which I later learned to do for every little detail. I'd call Bob Brenkworth or else call Bob

Heckman who was up in the Rules Committee. I had to spend quite a few hours with those two people.
Now you'd like to start in with Senator McCarthy, I guess.
Ritchie: Yes, I thought we could backtrack a little bit. McCarthy came on the committee in 1947, you said he was one of the two that stayed on for that whole stretch. By the time he became

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chairman in 1953 he was a nationally famous senator. When did he begin to become a really influential person on the committee? Was it before he became chairman?
Watt: His name came before the public when he named those people in West Virginia in a speech he made there, and then Mrs. Smith made her "Declaration of Conscience" on the floor. I don't remember that he was that important before that.
Ritchie: Were you surprised when he suddenly broke into the papers with that Wheeling, West Virginia speech and began his whole anti-Communist crusade?
Watt: I was surprised when they started questioning whether or not he was telling the truth. Mrs. Smith, of course, started that right after she went off the subcommittee.
Ritchie: Why were you surprised?
Watt: Because he hadn't been in the press before then; it was all of a sudden. And then I think he realized that a good press was not bad. From then on he was in the papers all the time for one thing or another. The strange part of it was, when he became chairman of the committee he started right in on Communism.

It was a time when that was popular because of the Cold War--wasn't that about the time that the Cold War was on? They had the airlifts into Germany and so on. And Senator Jenner, who was chairman of Rules Committee, was really into this anti-Communist bit too. There was, I thought and still think, a real threat. I wasn't the way some of the people on the staff were, looking under rocks for Communists, but the country was geared to it, it was a sign of the times. And everything was blamed on Joe McCarthy, he wasn't the only one.
Ritchie: When McCarthy went from being a regular freshman senator to becoming a nationally known politician, did he change? Did you notice any change in him? Or was he the same?
Watt: The same. Of course, Jeannie, Jean Kerr McCarthy, was working for him and we thought that she would calm him down some; I thought at the time the marriage would be good for him, but I couldn't see any difference. I think she was a little hungry for publicity, too. She was a smart girl, there was no doubt about that. She had quite an influence on him, I felt. Of course, Roy Cohn--he was a Democrat, as a

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matter of fact. Dave Shine was a Republican and Roy was a Democrat. So the politics didn't mean a thing. Dave was never on the payroll, he just was a consultant on his own.
A sidelight on that--Dave's father owned a chain of hotels and apparently was quite wealthy, and Dave wrote a letter to the Rules Committee saying that it would be very desirous if Dave Shine could go in the senators' baths and so on, and he signed Joe McCarthy's name on it. Of course the Rules Committee turned it down flat, and Senator McCarthy knew nothing about it until later. He apparently had a good in with Senator Jenner, because I had been trying to get a wall built in Room 160 to divide it, and they turned it down. But Dave Shine went in and before I knew it one day there was a wall up there, so he had a little clout!
Ritchie: He was an operator, I guess.
Watt: Well, yes. For instance, if they were going to have live television of some hearing, he would call his friends in California and all over the place to tell them he was going to be on television. Then when the bill came, it was personal, I wasn't going to pay it.

So Roy Cohn ended up paying his telephone bills. Of course, Roy would go for two or three months without going over to the disbursing office to collect his money for his pay, and he probably wouldn't have a nickle in his pocket. His mother would call every once in a while--his father was judge, incidentally, in New York--and ask me if I would please get him to go over to the disbursing office and collect his pay because his checking account was overdrawn. But he never paid any attention to details. He just left that to everybody else, and that was half of his trouble I think as time went on. He got so that he didn't care--but that was after he left the committee.
Ritchie: Well, we'll come back to these) I'm very interested in all of these people. But I'd like to go back to 1953 when McCarthy became chairman. I was interested in what your feelings were when you thought of Joe McCarthy now as chairman of the committee. Did you have any premonition that the committee was going to change?
Watt: No. I don't think so. As you change over you always are a little concerned whether

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you're going to still be there. Of course, Joe McCarthy told me there was no question about my staying anyway. But I had no feeling about it. I was a little concerned,about some of the people that went on the payroll. Then Francis "Frip" Flanagan was chief counsel and all of a sudden Senator McCarthy brought in Roy Cohn and made him chief counsel. Then they said, "Well, Ruth what are we going to do, we can't have two chief counsels?" I said, "We'll ust have to make Frip general counsel." So when some decision would have to be made, I'd say to Roy Cohn "What'll I do?" Held say, "Well, ask Frip." Then I'd go to Frip and he'd say, "Ask Roy." In other words I'd just end up doing what I thought was right. I didn't

have any backing unless I went to the chairman, and there was no point in doing that for office details.
Ritchie: You had a small staff under Senator Hoey. Did McCarthy dismiss many of those people or did he keep them on?
Watt: The only ones I remember that left were Colonel Hatcher, who was assistant chief counsel. They wanted to make him chief and Bill Rogers recommended that he not be because

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he didn't have the experience. He had been head of the highway patrol in North Carolina; well, that didn't give him experience to become a chief counsel of that committee when, Hoey was chairman. So Bill Rogers suggested to Senator Hoey that Frip Flanagan be made the chief counsel, and Colonel Hatcher was very happy to be assistant chief counsel. He really wasn't into wanting responsibility at that point. Well, he left, because he said he didn't think he could be loyal to Senator McCarthy. And Jim Thomas, who had a law degree but was really a political appointment, for paying a debt or something, left the committee and started running a filling station. There was a Nina Sutton from North Carolina, but she stayed on until the end. I think those were the only two people who left. Jerry Adlerman went to another committee and returned in 1955. Jim Sheridan went to Immigration; those were from choice.
Ritchie: But then McCarthy expanded the staff?
Watt: Oh, yes.
Ritchie: He brought in a lot of new people. The first was Roy Cohn, he came on as chief counsel. He was only about twenty-six years old at the time.

Watt: Well, he was about the same age that Bob Kennedy was when he came on. Bob came in on the committee at that time, too.
Ritchie: What was your impression of Roy Cohn in those days?
Watt: He was going so fast that I couldn't keep up with him. He raised his voice to me once. I reminded him that people didn't raise their voice to me and that was the only time I had a problem with him. I was not about to take any criticism--I probably had it coming but I didn't take to it very kindly. But I always got along fine with him. I was kept advised on the hearings, because I had to take care of notifying the senators and getting the notices out, and making sure that we had a room and we had a reporter, and the whole bit. This was all the mechanical part. of getting ready for a hearing. Then I had to pay the witnesses by voucher. There is a ruling somewhere that if you subpoena a witness, if he asks for transportation to get into Washington in advance you have to furnish it to him, otherwise he doesn't have to honor the subpoena. So there were times when I had to furnish transportation in advance.

Back then witness fees were three dollars a day. Then it went to six and up and now it's thirty-five, but that's not enough for a witness. You pay their transportation but that has to include their meals and lodging, which is not adequate. I remember one time we had a witness coming down from New York who had to sell his radio in order to get transportation down here, until we could pay his expenses. So it is a hardship-back then especially on three dollars a day. You couldn't get a hotel room even then for three dollars a day and buy your meals; even at the middle-class hotels around here.
But we had some big hearings, and we had a lot of hearings in the Caucus Room. Many of them were to do with the State Department and with Army bases. They were most all government-based hearings.
Ritchie: You mentioned that Bobby Kennedy joined the staff just about the same time that Roy Cohn did. I understand they didn't get along.
Watt: I would say that that is putting it quite mildly. I think there was very deep animosity. When Bob came on the committee he had been at the Justice Department, and I

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often wondered how he got on the committee. Well, as time went on, they tried to avoid the fact that he worked for the committee when Joe McCarthy was chairman. They were trying to get around that, especially when he was running for the Senate, and for president. Well, I've heard some conflicting stories on that. One, Senator Mundt told me later on that Joe Kennedy, his father, had come to him and asked him to put Bob on the staff. Francis Flanagan, the chief counsel at that point, claims that he and he alone hired Bob, and that was before Roy came here. And I've heard other stories too about who was responsible. But they did mention Frip's claim that he alone had anything to do with Bob's coming on the committee. What difference it makes was that at that point they didn't want the stigma of Joe McCarthy. I'm sure that Joe had something to do with it, but some things I don't remember very well. (Bob left the subcommittee in August to go to the Hoover Commission.)

Ritchie: Do you think it was that the two of them were very young and very ambitious men, that that was the reason why they couldn't get along together? Were they too much alike perhaps?
Watt: I don't think there was any problem when he first came on the committee, because he was just making seven or eight thousand dollars a year--of course, the maximum was ten thousand for the chief counsel, that's what Roy Cohn was making. That was a lot of money back then. I thought I was wealthy, I was making five at that point. I started out at thirty-six hundred, and that looked like a million dollars to me. But along that period I remember Bob sat in 101, there was a bookcase in between, I was out front. He was working I think with Carmine some at that point on the Palmer-Alaska airline investigation. But he went home at 5:30 p.m. on the dot. We laughed later because we would work way into the

night--our hours were nine to six and later, quitting time was six if we were going home early--and we thought it was a big joke in 1953 because on the dot of 5:30 p.m. he was out of there.

Then in June of 1953, they hired J. B. Matthews, you probably read about him. I have his book. He apparently was a Communist at one time and was a convert as so many of them were. Well, he came aboard as administrative assistant and everything was in a shambles until then as far as the staff was concerned, because everybody was at cross-purposes; everybody was vying for position and so on, which will happen on a committee. He hadn't been there a week when he had everything straightened out. He just had good administrative ability. Then he wrote that article for *Fortune* magazine, claiming that there were Communists in the clergy, and of course that stirred up the biggest hornets' nest you ever saw. Always the chief counsel or chairman had hired the people on the staff, and that was just a foregone conclusion. So the three Democrats, Senator McClellan, Senator Jackson, and Senator Symington (J. B. Matthews quit, I guess he went the first of August, he was there less than two months), left the committee. They wrote a press release out saying they were leaving the committee

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because of the fact that the chairman was hiring people and they thought they ought to have a say-so. So we had Senator McCarthy, Senator Dirksen, Senator Potter, and Senator Mundt, the four Republicans on for the rest of 1953. We had many hearings. There was always controversy right on down the line because, Roy Cohn is capable of stirring up controversy. I got along with him fine, but he did have his enemies. He had his friends, there was one fellow who wrote in the *News* he was very close to, and Walter Winchell he was close to, conservative writers and so on. Of course Walter was well known anyway for having gone into this Communist business. So there was never a dull moment.

At one point when things got pretty rough, I told Walt I decided I'd like to quit, and he said, "You can't quit when the going gets rough. That's the one time you're not going to quit." He was behind me the whole time and I was leaning on him a great deal. He has more of a level head than I do.

Ritchie: There were a lot of charges against McCarthy that he was hiring and firing people on the

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committee at will without consulting the other senators.

Watt: They never had been consulted though, up 'til this point. This was nothing new. Senator Ferguson never mentioned to anybody who he was hiring. Senator Hoey certainly never did. And I'm sure Senator Brewster didn't. So it was nothing new. This was a thing that was done all the time.

Ritchie: But the three Democrats walked out because of the hiring of J. B. Matthews. And then they took Bob Kennedy as their counsel.

Watt: Well, this was much later, you've got almost a year in between. Then we had all the hearings on Fort Monmouth, and so on, then in January of 1954 we had a meeting--it was not a committee meeting, it was a "conference" with the Democrats and the Republicans. They got together and set up a code of rules, conditions they would consider to return to the subcommittee. One was there would be a minority counsel, which was the first minority counsel on the committee, there had never been one before. Another thing was that they would have two senators present at any hearing or executive closed meeting. And there were

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some others. The staff had to be confirmed by the subcommittee. I'll have to look back in the minutes, because I took the minutes of all these things. I know we had a morning meeting and an afternoon meeting, and then they came back to the committee, about the 25th or 26th of January of 1954.

I suggested to Senator McClellan--he may have had it in mind all the time, Watt and I both talked about it--I said, "I think Bob Kennedy would be a great minority counsel." So he came aboard probably the first of March or thereabouts, or maybe in February sometime, he came on the payroll as the minority chief counsel. On the staff was my assistant, Maggie Duckett, and there was a girl by the name of Maxine Buffalohide, they both had come over from the Defense Department to work on the committee in the fall of 1953, and Bob asked me who I thought he could trust. I suggested Maggie, Maxine was more of a secretary but I wasn't sure of her, and he used Maggie up until 1956 or 1957 when he took Angie Novella as his secretary. Maggie said whe would just rather go back to helping me do my work rather than being his secretary too, because she didn't

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feel that she was adequate to do the extra work he was having at that point, after he became chief counsel in 1955. So I suggested that Angie would be good. Maggie always has said that Carmine was instrumental in doing this, but she forgets that she didn't want to be his secretary any more. She forgot about that, so there was a little bit of hard feeling there, but she forgot the sequence of events. So then they came back to the committee, and in March, all this controversy was going on about Dave Shine getting favors because of Joe McCarthy, up at the Defense Department. Then this Fort Monmouth thing they were claiming it was a coverup, one thing against the other. They had this meeting in early March, middle of March sometime, and that's the picture you saw of my husband standing outside the door with the press. They decided that they would have to have an investigation. Senator McCarthy would step down as chairman of this particular hearing. He was still chairman, of course he signed vouchers and was running the committee, but not the Army-McCarthy bit. And they

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named Senator Mundt to chair this. Then they put another member of the full committee on until this was over, Henry Dworshak, I've forgotten the state he was from.
Ritchie: Idaho.
Watt: Anyway, he was on for the duration of that to replace Senator McCarthy. They decided that inasmuch as I knew all these people so well and I might get involved, that I would act as chief clerk for this group except for executive sessions. That it would be better if I didn't go to those because I might get involved emotionally or get involved because I'd been working so closely with all these people. So I handled all of it but that.
Ritchie: Who handled the executive sessions?
Watt: Bob McCaughey in Senator Mundt's office. I didn't even know they were going on half the time. They had them in his office. I got all of them later, but at that point I didn't even bother to see who had testified, I wasn't that interested. For some reason, you know you get sort of turned off on things after a while when you see enough of it.
About that time, sometime in March or April, I don't remember which, I was over having lunch

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at the Carroll Arms. Roy Cohn was there; Senator McCarthy was out of town. Dan Buckley, who is a cousin to Senator James Buckley and Bill Buckley, was on the staff, he came in with a letter in his hand. Roy Cohn came up, and they didn't see me, and they were standing in the middle of the dining room with this letter, looking it over. Roy Cohn has a quick mind, he's a very brilliant man, and I thought, "Gee whiz, I wonder what's going on." But I didn't think about it until later. So that afternoon one of the staff members, Tom Lavenia came around to me and said, "This is a letter from the staff" (I don't know who it was signed by-or a memo, I thought it was a letter but it was not signed by Senator McCarthy because he was out of town). It was three paragraphs, but in the first paragraph it said, "We, the undersigned, believe in the loyalty of Roy Cohn and Francis Carr" (who came as administrative assistant after J. B. Matthews left, he was ex-FBI, left the FBI to come down) "to Senator McCarthy." There were two other paragraphs, but I didn't read them, I just saw the first paragraph. I said, "This is not done on Capitol Hill. I'm not signing anything."

These guys at this point were a little scared of their jobs, you know they all had to make a living. I had a husband to fall back on, but I wouldn't have signed anyway because it was not something that was done on Capitol Hill. So everybody had signed it at that point--Don O'Donnell was out of town, and Edith Anderson was sick, and Maggie, my assistant, said, "If Ruth doesn't sign it, I won't." Everybody else had signed it. It was loyalty to them, it was in the papers, it was called a loyalty letter, Joe McCarthy's loyalty letter. Well, he never saw it. Then the next morning, Jim Juliana whom I'd been very close to all these years, said, "It would

mean a lot to Roy if you would sign it." I said, "No, I'm not signing it because this is not done on Capitol Hill and Joe McCarthy knows that I'm loyal to him anyway." There was something else in there about staff, but I didn't remember what was in it because I didn't read it. As soon as I saw what it was I said, "You don't do this on Capitol Hill, the senators choose their people. You're not going to influence anybody, a staff member's not. It's just not done."

Then Drew Pearson had an article on it. I always said that if you were in Drew Pearson's column you had arrived. Well, then it wasn't funny. I said, "Now I can see why people get mad."

Ritchie: Did he mention you in the column?

Watt: Oh, yes. He said that I had refused to sign this loyalty letter, and nobody knew what was in it. It said Ruth Young Watt has been around for many years and she'll be there long after Joe McCarthy's gone. That was about what it said. But I didn't want to be involved, I kept away from the press and publicity all my life, always tried to. Then the letter went up to Senator McCarthy's office and he was still out of town. Tom Lavenia took it up to Mary Driscoll, his secretary. Mary Driscoll put it in her pocket and it's never been seen since. When Senator McCarthy got back, Mary Driscoll had destroyed the letter. He said to Don Surine and some of the others: "Why didn't you do the same as Ruth and refuse to sign that?"

In the meantime, Bob Kennedy got wind of it, and I think he saw it. And he went to the press. I think he's the one who told

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the press about it. Anyway, Cecil Holland who was with the *Star* came to me, apparently Senator Potter was anti-McCarthy, because he was all gung-ho with Bob. Oh, it was a big mess for those two days. The press was around and the whole bit. I remember Cecil coming to me and telling me not to worry about my job. Later on Watt said, "I would have divorced you if you signed that!" Of course, I'm sure he was kidding, but he was serious about the fact that I used my own judgment. Then the Army-McCarthy hearings started around the 20th of April. I learned only this year that Dan Buckley authored the letter.

Ritchie: Before we get into Army-McCarthy, just to get some framework on 19S3, we talked about when Senator Hoey was chairman there was one major hearing a year. Under McCarthy that changed completely.

Watt: Oh, yes. We had them every day! You have a list there.

Ritchie: Yes, the comparison is incredible. There are about 25 or 26 major hearings under McCarthy as opposed to three the last year under Hoey.

Watt: That's right, and the thing is that we worked the same hours. We worked even Saturdays until

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noon in those days. We never had Saturdays off. It was just busier. Busy, busy, busy, just all the time. By that time I had the experience, so I could handle it. If I'd come in cold I would have been probably all at sea. But I'd had 1947 through 1952 behind me. So the transition was not too much of a problem, because whatever problems I would have I'd run into along the line, so I knew how to handle them. As I said, sometimes there were things that had to be settled and I didn't know whom to go to, so I had to use my own judgment on them. As a result I got a lot of self-confidence that I hadn't had before because I didn't need it.
Ritchie: The nature of the hearings changed also.
Watt: Yes.
Ritchie: Before then you only had one communist investigation in the previous years, and now practically all of the investigations were into Communism. McCarthy in fact asked permission to go wider into these areas.
Watt: And the thing was that we had some other investigations but he wasn't too interested in them. Because he was into this "Communist threat" as he called it. I think there

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was more than we realized. I was a little concerned about some of these things that came up.
Ritchie: Were you impressed by the things that were going on, and the testimony that you heard at that time?
Watt: I was a little frightened. Of course, in the papers we also had this Cold War thing going on, and it was a little frightening. But on the other hand every once in a while you would hear about the Weathermen and so on, on the other end. They were well armed and everything and that frightened you a little bit too, because you didn't know what they might do. But we were so busy we didn't have too much time to think about it.
Ritchie: There were a lot of executive sessions held at that time; a lot of witnesses were called in, some of whom did not testify in public.
Watt: In open hearings? That's right, because he still was looking out for people if there was nothing there. That was our whole attitude toward that as a protection for a witness, because if there was nothing there he was excused and nothing more was said. That's why we were so careful about keeping the executive sessions secret.

Ritchie: Did you ever have any troubles with calling the wrong person, or getting the wrong name?
Watt: No, even on the Annie Moss thing it turned out they were right. It turned out she had been a Communist. When it did come out, Senator Symington was embarrassed. You remember the big thing they had about that? Well, it turned out later they were right about her. And they still forget that when they talk about Annie Lee Moss. She was very articulate and smarter than they gave her credit for. But there were some of the witnesses--I never could see. The author Howard

Fast, who was one of the people they investigated, and I never have figured out whether he was actually a Communist or not. He might have belonged to a club in New York University the way so many of them did. Then there was one famous writer of symphonies, Aaron Copeland, I see his name all the time now. They investigated him, too.
Ritchie: Some of those sessions read pretty rough, the dialog sounds like strong confrontations. Did you ever feel any sympathy for some of the witnesses who got called up?

Watt: No. Of course, usually I had read a background, because we had a lot of FBI reports, because we could get them, you see. We had them right straight through the Rackets Committee, many of them. Of course, they were mostly Mafia types. I think Roy and J. Edgar Hoover knew each other pretty well, so it was not too difficult to get these things.
Ritchie: That's another question I was interested in. It seemed like there were so many hearings. I wondered how well were they doing their homework on them? Were they as well prepared for all of those twenty-five hearings as they were for the handful they were doing previously?
Watt: I don't think so. They asked about the same questions of all of them, and sometimes they had a little background on them. But sometimes they didn't. For the most part you wouldn't have time to do all your homework on that, we didn't have a big staff. That was one of the criticisms. When they had the books--remember the books and the libraries--of course Howard Fast was one, and there was a black writer. We had many of them and we also had musicians and so on. Of course, these people don't get into politics,

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they're not politicians. Novel writers aren't, of course Howard Fast has written many, many books--I never read one of them, and wouldn't know whether or not he was a Communist. But somewhere along the line they got this information. There were a lot of newspapermen who were furnishing them stuff. I don't know about Walter Winchell but there was a prolific writer who had a big article every day in the old *News* or *Times-Herald*. They got some of their information from other people. I'm not sure if it always was checked out, I don't know that, because Roy and Dave and a couple of the secretaries moved down to the HOLC Building not too long after they came aboard, maybe six months afterwards. They had an office down there, and I was never down there. All their operation was out of there. They would call me to handle things for the hearings and so on, to set them up, and they'd have hearings out of town that I never went to.
Ritchie: Why did Roy Cohn go down to the HOLC Building?
Watt: Well, they had a lot of Senate offices down there.
Ritchie: Oh, they did. I was wondering why he decided to do that.

Watt: I don't know. I think it was because we were quite crowded and cramped and they had the space available. Then he corralled all this expensive furniture and everything. It was funny. Dotty McCarty was telling me about it. She was the chief clerk of the Sergeant at Arms office and they were in charge of all the equipment outside of the building. He apparently had corralled furniture from down there, from everywhere and had quite a plush apartment as well as a bar, I understand. But I was never down there, this is just hearsay.
Ritchie: Did any other counsels from the committee ever do that, have an office outside the committee?
Watt: No, we had offices around the building. When I came on the War Investigating Committee they were all spread out. They had three small rooms in 110, then they had 160, then they had an office over in the Capitol, and they had one down in 7B in the basement. They were just spread out all over the place, and of course, eventually we lost all of that space. They moved to 101 the day I came to work on the committee. There was just that one room and 103 which is under the stairway there at First and Constitution, with no windows. The chief counsels

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Watt: I don't remember that. And of course, I wouldn't necessarily be at a press conference anyway. I don't think I ever went to more than two or three in all the years that I was there.
Ritchie: Well, the press I know sometimes congregates outside the door of an executive session.
Watt: Yes, but I'd be inside cleaning up or something and as far as I was concerned, I was through as far as my part was concerned. I had to rush back to pay witness fees. So that part just went over my head.
Ritchie: The big hearings that everybody remembers were the Army-McCarthy hearings.
Watt: No one will ever forget that. Of course, it was nationwide television for weeks. From the 20th of April until the 21st of June there was only one week in between that we didn't have hearings five days a week.
Ritchie: That must have been quite a pace for you.
Watt: Well, actually they had hired three or four people to handle it. There was Ray Jenkins, from Tennessee, and his secretary came, whose name was Pruitt. Then there were a couple of people who had been on the Hill that came to work, they were temporary more or less. About the 12th of May, it stands out in my mind,

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were in there for years until Howard Feldman took over. And we always had Room 160. But the other space they chipped away until it was gone. So we had just the two rooms.
Ritchie: Would Cohn and Shine hold hearings without senators; out of town?

Watt: Well, they were just conferences, they were not official unless you have a senator present and an official reporter it's not sworn testimony and it doesn't mean anything. You can lie in your teeth and nothing would have happened.
Ritchie: What was Shine's role on the committee? He wasn't on the payroll.
Watt: He worked with Roy all the time and they went on trips. Of course, we couldn't pay his expenses, but he didn't have to worry about money anyway.
Ritchie: Was that unusual?
Watt: It's the only time it has ever happened, to my knowledge, in all the years I was around.
Ritchie: It was hard to figure out what he was doing.
Watt: Well, he worked with Roy, and he had all the information. Where he got a lot of it, I don't know. It was strange because he wasn't on the payroll. Then he went in the Army and Roy was the one who did all the stuff on trying

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to get him out, trying to get special attention for him. Of course, Joe McCarthy could have cared less, but he did it for Roy, I think.
Ritchie: In the period before the Army-McCarthy hearings, was there any particular hearing that stood out in your mind? The library books investigation or the loyalty in the State Department, was there anything in particular that really impressed you?
Watt: I remember the executive session where his life was threatened by that Pennsylvania man. That was just one day of hearing in executive session. That one I always think about because I can remember how uneasy they were and how Senator McCarthy said, "Let him stay. if he's armed, so what." I think they all were about the same. They were long hours, long hearings. Many of them were in the Caucus Room. Sometimes I'd be so busy I wouldn't even know what they were talking about. I remember they had several hearings on the State Department, and there was one witness that they had that worked for the State Department whose brother I knew. They lived out in the area where I had lived all during

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the war. And that was a little bit upsetting, to think that someone I knew would be having to testify before the committee. It wasn't that he had done anything wrong, but it was one of those things. He was being accused. I know he wasn't a Communist. But things like that, when you saw people that you knew, or a relative of people that you knew, that was a little upsetting. But I don't remember any particular one. They all seemed alike after a while, you know, you got pretty tired of all of it.
Ritchie: Did you have any problem with leaks to the press? You said the press was helping you on occasion but did Roy Cohn and others leak material out to the press?

Watt: I don't know. I would think so, but I don't know. The only ones I remember were when there would be a leak to the press and we would try to find

out where it came from and it would end up we'd find out it was a senator who had done it. Now as far as the other, I don't know.

Ritchie: I understand that McCarthy was somewhat casual about leaving an executive session and then speaking before the press about material that had been discussed in executive session.

Senator Hoey was no longer on the committee, and we got word that he had gone to sleep at his desk, this was in '54. I had worked for him, he'd been chairman for four years; of course he was no longer connected with the committee in any way, but I couldn't understand why they didn't recess, because he had died. But that didn't happen.

Then about the 20th of May, Walter Watt had a heart attack, and between the hearings and him I was a nervous wreck. He was in the hospital and I spent half a day in the hearings and then I left Maggie to take care of them in the afternoon. I spent the other half of the day at the hospital. The fact that he was so sick and I was so terribly worried about him, the hearings meant nothing to me. Of course, that was the biggest -part of my life I was worried about. I had been married less than two years. So the hearings were unimportant to me from there on. He was in the hospital for about three weeks, and I stayed home a week with him, but by that time the hearings were over.

I also remember--do you have that subpoeana thing, that was interesting.

Ritchie: Oh, for the party for participants in the Army-McCarthy hearings? Was that held right after the hearings?

Watt: That was on the Saturday after the hearings were over, but on the Saturday morning when it was supposed to take place, Senator Lester Hunt committed suicide, so it was cancelled. Remember he had his office right above us there on the second floor as you come in the Constitution Avenue entrance. He was a dentist, as I remember.

Ritchie: And you were there at the time it happened?

Watt: No. But that's why they cancelled the party.

Ritchie: That was supposed to have been a get-together for the whole staff after the hearings?

Watt: And the press, the people that worked at the hearing.

Ritchie: I'm surprised when you say you weren't that involved in the Army-McCarthy hearings, because you did get a lot of publicity at that time. I read in a couple of articiles in the papers that people kept noticing you on television.

Watt: Well, now don't forget at the beginning of the hearings everything was gung-ho. This was the 20th of May when he had his heart

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attack, and the hearings started the 21st of April, there was a whole month in there. That's when most of those articles were. Then at one point--of course the Senate was in session all this time and they'd be over voting and they were having interviews with everybody under the sun. They ran out of people to interview on live television and they finally interviewed me. Everything was so controversial, I couldn't say anything that I wasn't going to get in trouble with. I remember they asked me how many glasses of water Senator Jackson drank a day! And even that was controversial because he was on a health kick. They asked me such insipid questions, but I couldn't answer any of-them, I had to skirt them. Not being used to interviews I was not that good at it.

After the interview, the phone started ringing. The switchboard was trying to screen the calls, but if it was a person to person they had to connect. Of course, they had put my name on public television. This call came in for me from New York, and it was a lady and she said,

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"We just wanted to tell you that we're having a luncheon here and watching you all the time, and we're so proud of you, and think you're the greatest" and all this bit. I was feeling so important! I hung up, the phone rings. They said, "Is this Ruth Watt?" I said, "yes," and it was a man calling from Texas and he said, "Why don't you go home where you belong you horse's ass!" and hung up. So I was right back down to size. I guess he was so disgusted with that interview, it was so innocuous. I was thinking, gee wouldn't it be too bad if somebody had to have a job that put them in the position I was in, in one of those things where you had no choice, because you don't stop and think of those things then.

Ritchie: Do you think that television changed the atmosphere of those hearings?

Watt: Yes, oh yes. I think anytime you get anything like that it changes completely. You are playing--I don't care what anybody says--you are playing to the cameras, to the radio, or television, or any public.

Ritchie: I've heard it-said that Joseph Welsh, the lawyer, was quite an actor and knew how to play to the television.

Watt: Well, he was not one of my favorite people. I think we got off on the wrong foot because on the first day of the hearings he was being a little bit of a clown, I thought. I think he did it for publicity, because I don't think he was paid, representing the Army, I'm sure he was not paid. There was a telegram that came in for him. I thought it might be something very important so I went over and gave it to him and told him it might be important. And he practically bit my head off for even bothering him, "I don't want to be bothered." So that noon when we recessed I went over and told him, "I didn't appreciate the way you treated me. I'm not used to that kind of treatment, and I just want you to know I don't appreciate the way you acted." So then we got along fine.

But I think that was a big mistake McCarthy made when he was accusing that Fred Fisher. I don't know if he was or not, but the fact was that the way it was

handled was very poor. And of course Welsh cashed in on it to the ninth degree, that the thing now, they're not letting Joe McCarthy stay buried. They still bring it up every

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so often on television, and quoting it. They use that part of the record.
Ritchie: We've been talking mostly about the hearings and the events. We haven't really talked that much about McCarthy. I wanted to get some of your impressions of him. One of the accounts I read suggested that McCarthy was like two people: on one hand there was "Joe," who like people and wanted 'be liked by them; and on the other hand there was "McCarthy," who was the tough politicia-.,i, who sometimes couldn't seem to restrain himself. Is that a fair characterization?
Watt: Joe McCarthy was a very kind man, very thoughtful of people working with him, and I was very much taken with the way he treated people. When I made a mistake held say, "That's all right Ruthy, we all make mistakes, don't worry about it." You know, that sort of thing. Now, when he got in the hearings he was on a tirade sometimes. Whether or not he was playing to the press, which is possible, because I've seen other senators do it, or he just was taken with it. But he did get off on a tirade sometimes in the hearings. I can't remember if there was ever a time when I felt, "gee, I

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wish you didn't do this" or not, as I've felt that way on other occasions when some senator went off on a tangent, even not too long ago. It would get me a little upset thinking "gee, I wish you hadn't done that" to myself.
Going back on one thing that happened that was kind of funny. The day that the senators came back to the committee in January of '54, we had a farewell party for Frip Flanagan, who had gone off our payroll and gone on the full committee and somebody else had come on our payroll to replace him, of course it was one of those unfortunate things for him. Senator McCarthy said to me at this party--it was down the hall in Room 154--he said, "Ruthy, you know what, you've got to remember that you are not a senator." He said, "Today in that meeting, every time I said something that you didn't approve of, you frowned at me so that it slowed me down and I couldn't say what I wanted to say." I said, "Gee, I didn't know that I was doing that!" You know, I didn't, because I could just glare at them. But instead of saying something to me about "you were out of line"

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or something, he put it that way which was a very diplomatic way to put it, I thought. While I was standing there with a drink in my hand, too!
Ritchie: Some of the people who were associated with him, particularly other senators, said that at one time he could attack them on the floor and be as vicious as possible, and then as they were walking out the door he would pat them on the back and ask them how they were feeling.

Watt: I don't remember the vicious part. They do that all the time, let's face it. One time, the only time I ever saw that was when, I don't know what the lawsuit was, but I remember Edward Bennett Williams was representing him, and it was Senator William Benton of Connecticut, and we were up in the hearing room. How I happened to be there, I don't know, because it was something to do with the lawsuit and had nothing to do with the Senate. But I remember being up there and it was probably 357, because that was our hearing room, and the bells rang, and they were fighting and going at it tooth and hammer. A vote came and they went down the hall arms around their shoulders. That's an example, but I've seen and heard

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them go at it on the floor and then behind the scenes laugh it off. It was grandstanding, but that's not unusual, I don't think for any of them.
Ritchie: The other characterization I've heard about McCarthy was that he had no use for a lot of the niceties of protocol in the Senate, the way the senators are always polite to each other, and there's an apprenticeship system, and seniority counted, but McCarthy was sort of a blunderbuss toward protocol.
Watt: I don't know. I wouldn't see that side of him. The first year, of course, when they all came on in the Class of '47, they still were saying that freshmen senators should be seen and not heard. Of course, that's not the case now. Now they come in and they are seen and heard more than the seniors are. It's a whole new ball game, the whole picture has changed.
Ritchie: Were you present during Army-McCarthy hearings when Senator Ralph Flanders came in and presented his invitation to McCarthy to be on the floor?
Watt: He came in and just broke up everything. They were talking and he just interrupted the proceedings. I was not impressed with it.

Ritchie: Were you surprised by what was happening?
Watt: Yes, I thought he was off his rocker. You know, the feeling ran very high in those hearings. In back of the hearing table the VIPs requested seats. There was one group that always had seats: Jeannie McCarthy, I think Katy Malone, part of the time, Mrs. Mary Mundt, and Dolores Bridges. Then they went out together at noon and had lunch. Then one time, Mrs. Pearl Mesta came, as I remember, and she sat down--the place was crowded--in the seat where Bob Kennedy sat, and Bob couldn't get her out of the seat! And he sat right there in a little chair right by Senator McClellan so he could advise. Then Mrs. Alice Longworth used to come. They were all pretty pro-McCarthy, or else they didn't express themselves. But then, one day Mrs. Tobey came in, she was widowed then. She came up and said, "I want to sit back here and I don't want to sit anywhere near anyone who's for Senator McCarthy." There was nobody up there who wasn't, so I had to sit her in under the water cooler. That was the only chair that was empty, and she had to pour water for everybody else because there was no other place for her to sit! It was pretty well filled up with pro-McCarthy people.

Ritchie: I understand that when McCa-.rthy went through the halls lie drew quite a crowd, and had quite a following.
Watt: He was a likeable man. He had a nice personality. One Thanksgiving he got on the elevator (Walter knew the elevator boy) and he asked him what he was going to do for Thanksgiving dinner, and he said, "Well, I'm here and I'm broke so there's nothing I can do." So Senator McCarthy gave him twenty dollars to buy a Thanksgiving dinner. He used to do things like that. Then when they bought their house over on Capitol Hill, of course, he got all kinds of presents as the senators do, you know gifts, cheeses, and the whole bit, of course the Wisconsin cheese was the thing, and he'd go around the neighborhood and give all the neighbors all the stuff. I remember one Christmas eve, it must have been in '53, we went home and there was a big package of cheese on our doorstep, we lived out in Wheaton. That's the only time that a senator ever gave me a Christmas present. They took care of their own staff, but they couldn't very well take care of all of us. But he was a kind man.

I remember we went to Boston in 1954 on a trial for people at Harvard University that Senator McCarthy had accused of being Communists. There was an undertaker in Little Italy up there who just adored Joe McCarthy and followed him around everywhere he went. He also had a big Cadillac at his disposal, and everywhere that Senator McCarthy went he tried to go with him. Senator McCarthy would have to go out the back door of the hotel just to get away from this man for five minutes. I've never seen such adoration for a man in my life as there was in Boston. All those ethnic groups thought he was the greatest.
Ritchie: They followed him around whereever he went?
Watt: Yes, the Polish group, and the Italian group. "Little Italy" was a big Italian section of Boston, and we were at the Courthouse in Boston for this trial.
Ritchie: Did McCarthy go out to the neighborhoods while he was there?
Watt: No, they just came to him, he didn't have any reason to go there. This was in '54 and had to have been before the censure. I can't remember what time of year it was, but I remember that the defense had to pay my expenses,

so I never got called back. That happens sometimes, when they have to spend all that money, for the defense. The committee pays your expenses when you are a witness for the prosecution.
Ritchie: After Flanders came and delivered his invitation, a censure movement began. Were you surprised by that?
Watt: No. But I was quite pleased when they found only one count against him, and they all had made so much of it.
Ritchie: Did you think it was justified at that point?

Watt: I was influenced by what Senator McClellan said, I think. I thought he did it very well. He said, "I'm fond of Joe McCarthy, but he's getting out of hand, and we have to do something to control him." So that was the whole attitude. I remember being over there when they were going up to vote that day.
Ritchie: How did you feel?
Watt: I was on the elevator with Senator McClellan when he was going up to vote for censure. I can't remember whether Senator McCarthy was on there, at that time, he could have been. This was after the election in December of '54, and I remember Senator McCarthy said, "Well, Ruthy,

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here's your new chairman, you've got to start taking orders from him." And I didn't know what to say, because I didn't want to say, "Well, I can't stand it because I'm not going to have you for chairman anymore." You know, because I was in the middle about making any comment, because I worked for the both of them so long. I think that was when they went up for censure. I'm pretty sure it was. Because I got on that elevator where the senators' dining room is now in the Capitol, I was going up to the second floor to go to the disbursing office probably and just happened to get on the elevator when the vote was about to start and I probably didn't even realize it was about to go.
Ritchie: What effect did the censure have on McCarthy?
Watt: I think it was very sad. After the censure the press completely ignored him. If he sent out a press release you never saw it unless it was on the back page. And he was into the press stuff pretty much, I think held gotten it in his blood, as it does so many of them. He didn't get the invitations. I think it affected him greatly; I think it broke his heart, really.

Ritchie: Did he become less active on the committee? He wasn't chairman anymore.
Watt: No, he came just the same. You see the time in between, in '55, we started off with the Irving Peress thing, which he had started, the Fort Monmouth thing. Senator McClellan had extensive hearings on it in '55.
Ritchie: And McCarthy continued coming to them.
Watt: Oh yes, until the Rackets Committee, but that was way beyond this. But I'm trying to remember some other things about McCarthy. One Saturday we had hearings, and I called the official reporter the night before and told him we were having hearings on Saturday morning at 10:00 o'clock in 357. And then the next morning we had the hearing at 10:00 o'clock and about 11:00 o'clock Senator McCarthy said, "Will the reporter please read back that last question?" There was no reporter there! I hadn't even missed him. The girl who answered the phone at the reporting company got word that her brother had died and she had forgotten completely about everything and had just gone; and I didn't even notice that he wasn't there. The radio had been taping it, but they just had parts of it, so we had to start all over again.

Senator McCarthy said, "Don't worry about it, Ruthy, we all make mistakes." That's the way he always was. I never made small mistakes; when I made mistakes they were biggies.

Ritchie: I've heard that after the censure Senator McCarthy began to drink pretty heavily. Was that noticeable?

Watt: I don't think it was any different then it was before.

Ritchie: He drank heavily before?

Watt: I think he drank before. I don't know that he drank that heavily, but by the end of '55, about '56 he was in pretty bad shape and we knew he had cirrhosis. And about that time someone told me that McCarthy had told Senator McClellan he had just a year to live. He knew that he had something that was not going to get any better. The person who told me this, he never would have said it, but this person knew that he had said it to Senator McClellan. I was told about it in '56 sometime. He died the end of April in '57.

You know, McCarthy and President Eisenhower were arch enemies really. The White House was having a reception for all the senators, around

the time of the Rackets Committee, actually in late March, and they were all invited except Joe McCarthy. We were having a hearing that day in the Caucus Room and Senator McCarthy kept calling me over and saying, "Ruthy, go ask Mary Driscoll if I've heard from the White House yet, if I've gotten an invitation, which I thought was kind of sad. I'd call Mary and she'd say, "You know very well he hasn't. He's not going to get any invitation to that party tonight." Then I remember after the hearing was over Ruth Montgomery, who later became a seeress or something, covered, our hearings pretty much, and he gave quite a long interview to her about the fact that he had been snubbed by the White House. But it was really kind of sad because he was at that point being ignored so much. Of course, I think it was of his own doing, as far as the White House was concerned, because he and Eisenhower hadn't been exactly the friendliest people you ever saw.

Ritchie: Do you think in any way that McCarthy as chairman changed that committee? Did he have a strong impact on it?

Watt: No, because we picked right up after Senator McClellan took over. We got back real fast. Those people were just all into investigating Communism. Of course, he hired people that were into it. We had hearings on east-west trade, which was unpopular as far as the trade was concerned, because there was still a Cold War; and then we had a couple of Palmer-Alaska hearings on airplanes up there, and Senator McCarthy wasn't too interested in that because he wanted to get back to this other thing that he was into so much.

Ritchie: So after he left as chairman, the subcommittee went back to its earlier pattern?
Watt: Except that we had more hearings. There were more things to go into, and the staff was different. Of course, Bob was chief counsel, he went from minority counsel to chief. And we had Don O'Donnell who was there under Senator McCarthy. He was a Democrat, but was appointed by Senator Bridges. If someone was from New Hampshire, Senator Bridges hired them, he didn't care what their politics were. He was looking out for his people from New Hampshire. So Don O'Donnell who was a dyed in the wool Democrat came on as the counsel, he

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stayed on. Then we had Jim Juliana, who stayed on as minority counsel, he was ex-FBI. Of course, Carmine was ex-FBI, he came back with the committee. Then we had Al Calabreeze, who had been CIA, and he had the same experience as the FBI people. And Paul Kamerick, who was FBI. Paul Tierney, was ex-FBI. He really put together a good staff, Bob did. The investigative staff from the Appropriations Subcommittee was hired for the most part. They all had the experience, so he had a good working group.
Ritchie: There was one other thing I wanted to ask you about McCarthy. When he became chairman, he asked for authority to get copies of federal income tax returns for the investigations.
Watt: That started when President Truman was chairman. He was in the White House the first time I worked on it, in 1948 I believe.
Ritchie: They did that back then?
Watt: You polled or had a meeting of the full committee to get permission. Then you wrote a letter to the President of the United States, it was the same wording right straight through, but every time a new President came in they had a new group at the Treasury Department, and they researched this thing and came back with the

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same wording every time. Anyway, it was permission for us to secure income tax returns. You had to go through these procedures, I don't think we ever had any problems. The full committee had to approve it, we usually polled them and had their signatures approving it. Then the letter went to the President of the United States from the chairman. Then an executive order would come out maybe in a month or two, sometimes longer, in the Federal Register, authorizing it. Then you had to get a list of the people who could see income tax returns, and send a letter to the Internal Revenue Service so that no unauthorized person could see the income tax returns. They would not allow you to get them. You had to copy them over there. You could not xerox them or anything, you had to sit at the Internal Revenue Service and copy them. Then when they were authorized, they would send you a letter saying that you could go to a certain petson in the Internal Revenue Service and they had the files there. Sometimes they had to bring them

from different parts of the country into Washington--or if you requested they be seen in a certain city, which was not too often.

Then they would write and say that you could go to such and such a room in the Internal Revenue Service and see an authorized person. That's when they would go down and copy them. But never copies of the original, just pertinent information you needed. This process was discontinued about three years ago.
Ritchie: So when McCarthy was making that request he was just carrying on former policy of the committee?
Watt: This had been going on every two years, for each Congress. It was effective for each two years. No, we'd been doing that from '48 on, it was nothing new.
Ritchie: There were some people at the time who were afraid that McCarthy was collecting income tax returns of prominent officials.
Watt: He couldn't get them, they had to be copied. It was not possible to get them. Unless the people gave them to him, the personnel.
Ritchie: You once said that you had watched the program "Tail-Gunner Joe," on television. What was your impression of that program?
Watt: I thought it was terrible. It was not factual. It was an insult to the Marine Corps, I thought, because who in the Marine Corps would allow

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somebody to go around shooting the way he did? It was completely untrue, I'm sure. I don't believe the girl that did the work did the research in the right places. She did the things she wanted to do, in my opinion. I thought it was very inaccurate. I was disgusted with it. I didn't think it was fair or true. There might have been some things in there that were true, but very few. But I suppose she had to make it interesting for TV, probably.
Ritchie: The portrayal of McCarthy as a senator didn't ring true to you, as a person who knew him?
Watt: Not necessarily, no. They had to exaggerate. Of course, a program like that was not supposed to be a factual thing anyway, was it? If it was, it was not factual. There were just so many things that were not true. I'd have to go through it piece by piece before I could say what.
Ritchie: When do you think that McCarthy began to lose support? There was a time when he had most of the other, especially Republican senators behind him, but there was a point when he began to lose them. Senator Ferguson, for instance, voted against him during the censure.

Watt: Was Senator Ferguson still in the Senate then?
Ritchie: Yes, he left in 1955.
Watt: I know he was defeated because Senator Patrick McNamara defeated him.
Ritchie: That was in '54.

Watt: Was it that late? I lose track of the time. See, I don't know how the feeling was other than the committee people. I was not in touch with them. You were in your own little world over there in the Senate, as you know. Mine was broader than most people in the Senate be cause I had all the different senators on the committee, because I made sure I got to know them, and their staffs, at the hearings, too. But your scope is so narrow over there. I'm just amazed sometimes. You know Senator McClellan's secretary and I are very close friends and I'm amazed at how few people she knew in the Senate. In fact, she'd go to the old building and get lost, even last year. But to me, Senator Potter was the first Republican to be anti-McCarthy, and that was before the Army-McCarthy hearings, he was definately anti-McCarthy right down the line. Where it started, I don't know. He was Michigan, too. Maybe he influenced Ferguson, but I'm not sure

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if Senators Ferguson and Potter were that close. Of course, when I first came, Arthur Vandenberg was senator, and I think Senator Potter replaced him. But I don't know that Senator Dirksen was ever turned off on Senator McCarthy.
Ritchie: Senator Dirksen stayed with him to the end.
Watt: And Senator Mundt of course did. And that was the Republicans on the committee. Of course, Senator Symington, I think, on the Annie Lee Moss thing . . . And Senator Jackson, you never quite know about Senator Jackson as far as I'm concerned. He doesn't express his opinions much unless it's energy or one of those things that he is really into. I'm not sure that I know how he felt about Senator McCarthy, I don't remember, so it couldn't have been too pronounced. Of course, Senator McClellan always did think a lot of him, and he just was using his head on things. Senator McClellan just thought a lot of Senator McCarthy, period.
Ritchie: But they broke with him, and they all voted against him on the censure.
Watt: Well, the only thing I know is what Senator McClellan said, his was the only opinion I

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ever heard. I don't think that Senator Bridges and Senator Mundt and those people voted against him. He only had about fourteen people that voted for him. They voted against censure. I've forgotten who else there was, but I remember Mundt and Bridges especially. And Senator Bridges was a powerful man.
Ritchie: Each time around, McCarthy seemed to take on something bigger. He took on the State Department, then he took on the Army, he took on the President. It didn't seem as if anything was going to stop him.
Watt: And he had Allen Dulles /CIA Director/ over a barrel. I remember an executive session we had on that.
Ritchie: What happened then?
Watt: He just was after him. He called him down to an executive session. I don't even remember what it was about now. I remember it was in the afternoon and we were in 101, in the "inner sanctum." I remember a lot, but it's funny how many

things I'm vague on, because so many things went on during.those years. I don't know why some things stand out in my mind and others don't.

I remember back in 1953 my oldest niece turned eighteen and graduated from high school, so she took a civil service exam up in Portland. She knew that her boyfriend was going to have a GW scholarship for football, so she wanted to come to Washington, naturally. She came down to Washington and wanted to stay with us, but we were way out in Wheaton, which was a long way to be away from your boyfriend and have to go fourteen miles to downtown every day. Anyway, they sent her to the CIA. She moved in town and left her winter coat with us, because spring was coming and it was too warm. Well, we didn't see much of her, she was just a kid out of high school. About September she called us and said, "Can you bring my coat in to me? I'll come down and pick it up."

She told them she wanted to get off a little early and come down to the Senate and pick up her winter coat. And they wanted to know who her aunt worked for. She said Joe McCarthy. Hah! Some big honcho the next day called her in and questioned her at length whether or not she was a spy for Joe McCarthy. Wasn't that funny?

Ritchie: Everybody was under suspicion.

Watt: Yes, a little eighteen year old kid who didn't have the slightest idea about Joe McCarthy or anybody else. That I thought was not the best judgment, some little high school kid being accused of being a spy. They didn't accuse her of that, but that was the implication. They never gave her another thing to do after that. They didn't give her one assignment until she went back home. She went home in January and was married in August, but they didn't give her anything to do, she just was being paid.

[End of Interview #3]

Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

Interview #4:
Chairman McClellan and the Labor Rackets Committee
(October 5, 1979)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ruth Watt, standing, distributes documents to (left to right) Senator John McClellan, Chief Counsel Jerome Adlerman, and Senator Edmund Muskie. *Senate Historical Office*

Ritchie: Today I'd like to talk about the McClellan years through the Rackets Committee, in the late 1950's and early 1960's. It struck me that when McClellan became chairman that was the fourth time that the parties had changed since you had been there.

Watt: Yes, there was Senator Brewster, Senator Hoey, Senator Ferguson, Senator McCarthy, and then Senator McClellan.
Ritchie: But you managed to survive each one of these transitions. To what do you attribute your success?
Watt: I stayed out of any controversy and just did my work. I always felt that if I got involved or played politics my value to the committee was over. I was handling finances, running the hearings, and getting people on the payroll. As I

said, the way I felt about it, because I took care of all of the mechanics of the committee. As far as the meat of the hearings was concerned, I had no part of it.

Ritchie: Had you always had good relations with McClellan?
Watt: Sure, I always got along with all of them.
Ritchie: What kind of a person was John McClellan?
Watt: Well, as I said in the beginning, in 1948 when the subcommittee was set up there were three Democrats: Senators Hoey, O'Conor, and McClellan. The first time I saw him I thought, "Gee, he couldn't be a senator. He's a meek little man." I just couldn't believe it, because Senator Hoey was six feet four with his wing-collar and swallow-tail coat. And O'Conor was a little on the forceful side. He was a person that you paid attention to. So I didn't pay too much attention to Senator McClellan. Then he went to that hearing we had in Mississippi, but he didn't take much part. He always came but he didn't ask questions much. He was just there. He really didn't come into his own until the McCarthy days when he asserted himself on the J. B. Matthews thing. He was up in arms because he was a Baptist--I don't know how religious he was--but he was up in arms about the fact that anybody would dare to say that there were any Communists in the clergy (which it was later proved that there were). Then he

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was the senior minority member and he and Symington and Jackson got together and resigned. That's when he first became well known. Then during the Army-McCarthy hearings he was ranking and was very active. Then people knew who he was and he had become quite a forceful and very fair senator. So when he took, over as chairman in '55 he already had a reputation.
Ritchie: Had he become much more assertive in general about things in general?
Watt: I don't know. All I knew about were the hearings, because you don't have that much contact with a senator on a committee. You go to meetings, they are all business. You don't have any personal contact with them unless they are chairmen, then you can't avoid it. I've never made a point of playing politics anyway, I just do my job and stay out of the public eye as much as possible. The more you get known the more you are going to find some jealousies. I avoided it as much as possible, but sometimes you can't avoid it. But for the most part I did my job and let it go at that. I also made it a point never to get too friendly with the people in the chairman's office. I always

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made the rounds to make myself known in all the senators' offices, because it helps when you call on them when you need to get them to a hearing and so on. If you know the people, you have a contact.
Ritchie: How would you have compared McClellan to the other chairmen that you have served under, like Ferguson and Hoey and McCarthy?

Watt: Many people have asked me that, and I said, The only thing they have in common is that none of them had ever smoked." They were all so different you couldn't compare them. They were all different individuals. I had access to their offices when I needed to, and I never made any point of seeing them if I didn't need to. I see their staff and say, "Can you take care of this for me?" A lot of people think they have to see a senator, I don't know whether it's to prove they are important or what, but I never made any point of that. If I went in the office and the staff said, "Well, he's here, why don't you go in and see him yourself?" then I would. When Senator Nunn was down the hall from us they'd say, "Why don't you go in and do that yourself?" I'd say, "I don't need to bother him, just put it on the list." I

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know if I'd have been any better off if I had, but it's not my style.
Ritchie: Does the chairman make much difference in terms of the efficiency of the committee and the effectiveness of the hearings?
Watt: He can be very assertive, but he's only as good as the people he's hired around him, if they've done the legwork and then briefed him him on all these things. He-has to do his home work to be effective, and listen to his chief counsel and the people that are working on the case. They have conferences and put out a press release for him, and he okays it. Frequently, he will change it around. But the chairman cannot do the work, he doesn't have the time. He's only as good as the people around him, like the President of the United States but to a lesser degree for committee chairmen.
Ritchie: Essentially would you say that the committee continued on the same patterns when McClellan became chairman, or did he make any drastic changes in the way things were done?
Watt: As far as I was concerned, I had a set a pattern of doing things. If they came and wanted something different I would check with the Rules Committee if I could do it. And if I knew I

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couldn't do it I'd still go to the Rules Committee so I could show them the citation, because there were many things they asked for that couldn't be done. Sometimes they changed the rules, and there were many times when there were special things that we requested and wrote in a letter to Rules, and they were approved. Then the Rules Committee would come back later and say, "What did you do on such-and-such a case, I think we did this for you?" Because we had so many different things that came up. But I was very, very careful about the finances, and I think that's one reason why I lasted. I knew what you could and couldn't do and wasn't afraid to say so. Also, they had to have somebody from one regime to the other that knew the answers. Of course, I had to brief the chief counsels, when they came aboard. I've always said that I trained Bob Kennedy, because once he knew, why that was the end of it. But that was the same with anybody new coming in.

Ritchie: You mean that once you told him what was the policy he never came back to you about it again?
Watt: He didn't need to, unless it was something he hadn't heard before. Once in a while

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over the past few years somebody would go ahead and do something, I remember one time they did something that wasn't legal and I didn't know anything about it until the chief counsel said, Why didn't you tell me this, you knew the difference?" And I said, "Well, if you'd have asked me, or if I had known it was going on I could have told you, I wouldn't have hesitated. But you didn't bother to come and find out if it was legal." They all knew that I knew what could be done and couldn't. That's what experience does for you. There are so many things you have in the top of your head.
Ritchie: You mentioned Robert Kennedy as the new counsel when McClellan became chairman in '53. Earlier when you talked about Kennedy you said he left on the dot of 5:30.
Watt: Yes. Well, he had an assignment, but he was just an investigator. He came in March of '53, and then when all this controversy came up about J. B. Matthews he left and went to the Hoover Commission. Then when they had the first minority staff member, Senator McClellan took him as counsel to the minority. I think that was probably in February of '54. So then when the Democrats came back he became chief counsel,

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and Jim Juliana who had been on since the McCarthy days stayed on as minority counsel under Senator Mundt until about '59. In the interim after Roy Cohn left, which was August or September of '54, Jim Juliana stayed on as counsel--he was not a lawyer, but stayed on until the Democrats took over.

Ruth Watt, standing, distributes documents to members of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. Seated, left to right, Senators Sam Ervin and John McClellan, Counsel Robert

Ritchie: Did you notice a change in Robert Kennedy from his earlier years until he became chief counsel? Was he more harder working?

Watt: Oh, yes, very. And very astute. He was a smart, smart man. He had his prejudices, of course.
Ritchie: What do you mean?
Watt: Well, there were certain people he didn't care for particularly.
Ritchie: You mean people on the staff?
Watt: There were three over the years that I knew he had no use for. One was Roy Cohn. One was Bobby Baker. And the other was Jimmy Hoffa. Those were his three pet hates.
Ritchie: And he really showed it.
Watt: Oh yes, he made no bones about it.
Ritchie: This was when Bobby Baker was still majority secretary of the Senate. What was it that caused their split? What did you see?

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Watt: Well, I was not aware of this until later. I knew that he was really out to get Jimmy Hoffa, let's face it. And as far as Roy Cohn, there was no question about his dislike for him when the McCarthy hearings started. Why, I don't know. You asked me last time whether I thought it was because they were so much alike. I don't think there was any resemblance, I think it was just a natural antagonism and where it started, I don't know. Both Bob and Ethel were friendly with Senator McCarthy and Jean, and they were friendly before Senator McCarthy was married. I'm pretty sure that one of the Kennedy girls went out with Joe McCarthy--at that point Bob was the only one that was married. Bob was married when he came to the committee, I think they had Kathleen and Joe and Bob at that point and I think the next one was David. I have their Christmas cards which showed them as the family grew.
Ritchie: And McCarthy was godfather to one of Kennedy's children.
Watt: I had forgotten that. I went to two of the christenings later on. One was out in McLean and the other was out on Massachusetts Avenue at that Chancellory. Some really old priest

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that could hardly hold his head up was christening and a younger priest had to sort of prompt him on what he was saying. And I remember that one of Ethel's sisters was sick and almost fainted. See that was the Skakel family. There was quite a large family of them--Union Carbide. In '56, 1 believe, Bob and Ethel were on a trip in Russia when Ethel's family were killed in a private plane accident. That was a tragedy. That year they had brought the Skakel yacht up from Florida

and had it here for a month or two and they used to take us down on the yacht at night.
Ritchie: Different members of the staff?
Watt: Yes, and Watt and I went down two or three times. One night they had the press there and they had all these huge lobsters, they had quite a feed. But it was fun. Bob worked very hard but then he made it up to the staff by having a little party for them, when they were at 0 Street or out in McLean. He said, "Well, you've worked hard and I'm going to have to give you a little respite now." Which was very nice.
Ritchie: Did Ethel Kennedy spend very much time around the committee?

Watt: She didn't come in the office very often, but during the Rackets Committee when Bob was chief counsel she came a half day every single day. She came in either morning or afternoon, but half the day she always spent with the children. She was very religious about it. She never neglected those children.
Ritchie: You mentioned about Bobby Baker. Did you have many dealings with him through the committee?
Watt: Well, Bobby was never on our committee, but you felt his presence. I think the senators depended more on him than on any other secretary of the majority that they've ever had. Because I know when I was in a hearing they'd call me over and say, "Ruth, call Bobby Baker and ask him so and so." And held be able to give you the answer like that. Some of the others you'd have to wait. He just had a knack of knowing what was going on, and they depended on him a great deal. If he hadn't gotten so greedy held have been still there. He'd have been Secretary, and I think he'd have been Attorney General with Lyndon Johnson, I really have felt that, because he was going to law school while he was working up there. I liked Bob.

In the early days, '47 and '48, Henrietta Chase was chief clerk of the Banking and Currency Committee, and Bobby and Charles Jones--that was when they were single--they used to come up to Hank's (Henrietta Chase) and play cards, and they'd bring their dates once in a while, but we used to have a lot of fun. They were happy-go-lucky days. Charlie Jones works over in the Radio Studio where they record down near the subway, he's been around all those years. I don't know if he was a messanger then, but he and Bobby were good friends. Then in '49 when Bob and Dorothy Baker, she worked for Senator Lucas, when they got married on a Thanksgiving day they had the reception over in the District of Columbia room which was later Lyndon Johnson's office, right across from the Reception Room.
Ritchie: He really was a "child of the Senate."
Watt: Yes, and loved it. He was good. He could wheel and deal without even being obvious about it.

Ritchie: But you don't know what it was in particular that Bobby Kennedy didn't like about him?
Watt: No. But I knew that he was one of his three pet peeves.
Ritchie: You mentioned that Robert Kennedy was one person who came to you for advice when he became chief counsel.
Watt: Well, he called me in and I briefed him the way I had all the chief counsels, on the little things that he had to know, on the finances, and of course, I always made the budget up and then they went over it. What they would do was to say, "We want a budget for such-and-such an amount." So I had to work the budget around that amount, down to it or up to it. Which was fine because I loved finances.
Ritchie: Basically, McClellan and Kennedy intended to continue the committee as it was going. In fact their first hearing was really a continuation.
Watt: On Irving Peress, because that was unfinished. He was up in the air. He was a dentist, as I remember it. They had the hearings because it was unfinished and it had to be done. As I remember it was a good hearing. Then there was the Fort Monmouth thing. Then after that

they got into some Navy issues, there were some shennanigans going on. In '55 and '56 we were having those hearings off and on, of course, we had other things in between. We had Cape Canaveral work stoppages, we had AGVA, American Guild of Variety Artists, we had Billy Sol Estes.
Ritchie: You also had the Harold Talbott hearings.
Watt: That was just a brief hearing, in executive and one or two public hearings.
Ritchie: That was one case where Kennedy was accused of being somewhat "ruthless" in his pursuit. Did you ever feel that those charges of ruthlessness were accurate?
Watt: You know, that Talbott case I remember he resigned but I can't remember too much about it. I never thought about Bob as being ruthless, although he was accused of that. Of course, I remember best all those Mafia types, and you had to be ruthless because we had some real criminal elements. But I admired Bob and enjoyed working with him. I think those years were the highlights of my whole career in the committee, because we worked hard, they were interesting and yet we had our fun moments, too, the lighter moments. He had interesting

people, we had an interesting staff, interesting committee members, the whole thing to me was the best part of my thirtytwo years.
Ritchie: Didn't you get started on the Teamster hearings while you were still in the Permanent Subcommittee?
Watt: I think it was those hearings on the Navy textile procurement. During the period that we were investigating that, this labor thing came up. That's where it got started and I believe it was Clark Mohlenhoff that kept pounding away at

Senator McClellan that they ought to have hearings on labor rackets. Then the Labor Committee decided they were going to do something about it. Then somebody put in a resolution for the Senate Labor Committee to have a special committee to review this thing. Then Senator McClellan got into it for the subcommittee and they compromised and put in to have a select committee with four members from the Labor Committee and four from the subcommittee.
Ritchie: Was Mohlenhoff around the office a lot in those days?
Watt: Yes.

Ritchie: Basically trying to find out what you were doing, or was he providing information?
Watt: He was providing, too. He was close to the staff. He was from Iowa and LaVern Duffy was from Iowa, and they were good friends. And he and Bob were good friends, although I think Clark was always a strong Republican. He wrote for the Des Moines Register. He was there at every press conference., and he was around all the time, in fact he wrote one or two books on the committee. He was the one who started pushing to have this investigation into labor.
Ritchie: When they set up the Rackets Committee you were one of the three staff members who transferred from the Permanent Subcommittee. Did you leave the staff of the Permanent Subcommittee?
Watt: I went on the payroll of the other committee. I asked for a $500.00 raise and that was unheard of; they said, "We'll give you a $300.00 a year raise and you can keep it when you go back to the Subcommittee." But in the mean time I handled all of the finances from both committees, and except for the hearings I handled both committees. Senator Jackson was acting chairman on the subcommittee,

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and Senator McClellan was chairman, but Senator Jackson went ahead with the hearings, the little they had. During that period the subcommittee just had small hearings. And there was only the nucleus of a staff: Maggie Duckett who was my assistant went on as acting chief clerk, but I still handled all the finances, made up both payrolls, she had nothing to do with the finances. Senator McClellan had told some senator, who later told me, that if I wouldn't handle the hearings and carry on as I had been with the subcommittee that he didn't want to take it, because he said you needed to have experience to start off with this big amount of money--which was a lot then--and so many other things that had to be done, you couldn't just start off cold. He didn't hire anybody who was inexperienced.
Ritchie: At one point you had 104 people working on the staff of the Rackets Committee, I read in one of the accounts.
Watt: That's right. We had forty-six on the payroll and we had more than that, we had GAO (General Accounting Office) people all over the country. They weren't on our payroll, they were being

paid by GAO, but they were working for us. And we had offices all over the place.
Ritchie: How did you keep track of all of that?
Watt: I did. But I wouldn't have if I hadn't had all those years behind me. I would go off on vacation and take my checkbook and special delivery stamps with me, because they would call me all hours of the day saying they had to have money, they were broke. I had a revolving fund in the bank and would give them cash advances. Then when their expense accounts came in all checks came to me, always, so that if they got a check they didn't go and spend it until they paid me back and it went back in the bank. Sometimes I got down pretty low in my bank account because there were so many requests, but the Disbursing Office was great because they would try to get the checks as soon as they could, knowing it was a one shot deal--it was supposed to be one year, but of course it lasted three.
Ritchie: Do you think that Kennedy handled that large staff effectively?
Watt: Yes. He had the knack. And then Kenny O'Donnell came after I don't know what period. Bob hadn't been there too long, maybe three or four months when Kenny O'Donnell came aboard, because I

remember Kenny was up at Hyannis Port with us on that Fourth of July in '57.
Ritchie: What was that occasion?
Watt: Bob had part of the staff up at his place at Hyannis Port working on the New York hearing. We went up for the Fourth of July, and Kenny was there.
Ritchie: What was Kenny O'Donnell's role?
Watt: He was administrative assistant and he sat right outside of Bob's door and he was his memory, because he had a magnificent memory. Bob would say, "We did so-and-so at such-and-such a time, what was his name?" And Kenny could tell you; of course Bob was involved with so many things. But Kenny was really his right-hand man. They were a great team together. I had a great deal of admiration for both of them.
Ritchie: Pierre Salinger also came on the committee staff.
Watt: He was the first on the payroll of the Rackets Committee. He had worked for Colliers and had some information on rackets so that he sold Bob on employing him. So they put him on the payroll on March Ist, I think it was.
Ritchie: It was quite a colorful staff of people.

Watt: Yes, and we had James McShane who later became head of the United States Marshalls when President Kennedy came in (he died only a year after he was in). Of course, Pierre and Kenny. Larry O'Brien was never on our payroll, I don't know if he was on Senator Kennedy's payroll, but he was around so much I almost felt he must have been on Senator Jack Kennedy's payroll. He was a smart politician, smart campaigner. He was in and out of the office a lot, especially when we knew that Senator Kennedy was going to run for the presidency. They were running for President in our office after 5:00 o'clock in the evening. Kenny,

and Larry, and Pierre and all those people were working on the campaign back in '59.
Ritchie: They would all gather in Robert Kennedy's office?
Watt: Yes. You knew they were going to a campaign strategy meeting when you saw them come and go. But it would be after hours.
Ritchie: It must have been quite an atmosphere.
Watt: It was. And you see we only had 101 and 103 and 160 then. I guess we got Room 100 after they moved to the new building.
Ritchie: Was that when they blocked off the corridor and made an extra room?

Watt: We had to have that when the Rackets Committee started. We put the stenographers out there. In the back we had the staff editor, because they didn't have, room in 160, because we had a lot of people down there, and we had a big file system. We had three file clerks.
Ritchie: Were most of these 104 people working for the committee, around the country, or did they actually work out of your offices?
Watt: The GAO people, when we had a specific hearing in some Dart of the country, they would all come back. Sometimes I would come back from a hearing and find four people sitting on my waste basket and all around my desk. There were three times as many people as there were desks for them. But then they would be out in the field, because we had offices in Detroit, Chicago, New York, Florida, and I don't remember where else. Then we had temporary offices. Back then you could get a room in a government agency without any problem; in about 1970 or around there GSA (General Services Administration) made a ruling that everybody had to pay rent. We had had an office in New York for years and we closed it because we weren't

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about to pay rent! But we had had a free office up there in the federal building at Foley Square for years. It was on the FTS line and we had our own phone, too. There was a man from GAO who retired and went on our payroll and he ran the office up there. But then when they went to New York they had a place to work. During the Rackets Committee we had two or three stenographers working up there on our payroll. That was great, all we had to pay was rental on the typewriters, and three salaries.
Ritchie: During the Rackets Committee hearings you had a lot of pretty tough characters testifying. You had Dave Beek, and Jimmy Hoffa, but you also had Vito Genovese . . .
Watt: Oh, he was the scariest one. He was the only one that really frightened me.
Ritchie: In what way?
Watt: I would stand in back of where the senators were when he was testifying, and he had the coldest eyes. He would look right through you and just make chills. He was about the coldest individual I think I've ever seen. We had the Gallo brothers, I think one of them was murdered.

Ritchie: Joey Gallo.
Watt: Yes. He was testifying one day and sitting at the hearing table and he flicked his glass and it went right into an ashtray on the floor where the photographers sat facing him. It broke into a million pieces. So I had to sit down and clean it up. He said, "Oh, I wouldn't have done that if I'd known you had to clean it up'," So apparently he had done it on purpose, just to cause a diversion. Of course, that didn't stop Senator McClellan or Bobby Kennedy. The attendance was pretty good for those hearings. Jack--Senator Kennedy-came quite frequently. He would come when Bob would call and tell him it was going to be very interesting. I remember one day that he came into a hearing, it must have been when they knew he was going to run for the presidency because the press was flocking around him. He hadn't had any lunch and Evelyn Lincoln came in with a tray of lunch for him, and he took it and went into the telephone booth to try to eat it. The press was like this around him, so he never ate his lunch. I remember it very well, because he was in that little telephone booth with his lunch. No matter what he

did it was news. When the Kennedys were around you felt it in the air. I don't know if I feel that way about Teddy Kennedy because I don't have much dealing with him, but for Senator John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy you just felt the excitement in the air when they were around. I don't know how to explain it. And when their father came to town everybody hopped! I remember one time he came during the hearings and he was going back to Boston. They had Eastern Airlines, Jack Kennedy's office, me, the SEC, and somebody else working on one reservation for him to get back to Boston!
Ritchie: Did he come to the office at all while you were there?
Watt: Oh, yes. fie would come in every now and then. And Mrs. Kennedy was so quiet that you never much noticed her. He just overshadowed her so. They never were there at the same time. But after he died she came into her own. Before that you never heard a thing about her. You didn't feel as though she was a very strong personality, but she kept it under wraps, I suppose, because he was so much stronger.
Ritchie: Did he come to the hearings very much?

Watt: Oh, he came every once in a while. You knew when he was there.
Ritchie: In what way?
Watt: Well, Bob was a little keyed up, a little tense and so-on. There was a strong paternal influence over all the Kennedys. He really was a strong, strong person.
Ritchie: Talking about some of those witnesses like Vito Genovese and Johnny Dio Dioguardia and all the others, did you ever fear for any physical violence?

Watt: No, never. I think it's true that they take care of their own when things don1g go right, but not anybody else. I don't think that anybody had anything to fear.
Ritchie: I noticed a picture of Johnny Dio punching a photographer outside the hearing room.
Watt: *New York Times*, yes. Somewhere I have a picture of that. One time we had a witness, I don't know whether he was Mafia, or involved with the Mafia, or what he was, but it was something to do with a labor union. We subpoenaed this older man to come to Washington, and his doctor sent a note that he had a bad heart condition and could not come. So we always excused people like that, we had

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several of those. But he showed up anyway. He came with his son. He walked into 101 and dropped dead. It was a quarter to ten in the morning and we were getting ready for a hearing. Everybody was coming and going and right in the hallway of the outer office between all the stenographers there he was. So we had to close the room off and call the doctor and call the nurse, and went out through 103. And the son was out in the hallway, running up and down screaming, "You murdered my father! You murdered my father!" I don't remember his name, but that makes an impression on you, believe me!
We had one other man who had a heart attack in the hearing. I called all around the neighborhood and had an awful time finding a doctor. Then I had to find some way to pay for him! There's nothing in the rules that says you can pay for a witness having a heart attack. We had another in '55 or '56, he came in and his wife came with him, and he never did get to the committee; he died in the hotel room before he came to testify. Of course, we'd already paid for his ticket,

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so we paid his way back home, too! But you can't avoid that when you have 2 or 3 or 5,000 witnesses over a period of years.
Ritchie: Well, with the Rackets Committee alone you had some 1,500 witnesses.
Watt: Yes, and we paid every one of them. One time, when Dave Beck was testifying, we had some people in from Oregon. It had something to do with west coast labor unions. But we had two women that they supboenaed, both were named Helen. One was "Big Helen" and the other was "Little Helen." They had been madames. They both were very respectable looking ladies, and one was a tall lady who lived in Oregon and was now happily married. The two of them were sitting there and Fred Othman, who was a newspaper man, said, "My God, Ruth, she looks just like my sister!" Anyway, she had come in from the west coast and one of the investigators had used his airline card to pay her way, and neglected to tell me, and I paid her again. I called her on the phone and wrote her a letter and told her that she'd been paid twice and I would be "out of pocket." I think I had a check back from her within

a week. I was a little uneasy, you know, about having to pay a one-way fare to the west coast.
You finally reminded them so they told you everything you needed to know. I got in the habit of saying, "Did you buy any tickets for these people coming in?" When you had that big an operation it was hard not to slip up sometimes. But the Disbursing Office had a great system. Bob Brenkworth had worked out a system whereby they cross-indexed everything, so that if we inadvertently paid something twice, the Disbursing Office would catch it for you. It was a great help when you had the volume of business, and hearings all day, and working at home at night on your accounts, you can't help but slip up. There were car rentals and air line transportation, and we had two different accounts, one with Eastern and one with American Airlines. They were always turning in tickets that should be on Eastern Airlines on American Airlines. American Airlines was on the computer and Eastern wasn't, so if one penny was off the American Airlines man would

be in the next week and say, "You paid too much" or "You owe a penny" and so-on. And rather than go through all that I would just give him the cash to even up their accounts. But Eastern never did have the same kind of account.
Ritchie: The Teamsters hearings seemed like a replay of the Army-McCarthy hearings in some ways: you had television cameras, you were in the Caucus Room . . .
Watt: I had the Caucus Room reserved the year around. Anybody who wanted it had to come to me. There wasn't the tension. The only time there was live television was during the Beck hearings, and that was Channel 5, I believe. Clark Molenhoff was the one who was in charge of it, and was the voice. Other than that it was just the cameras for news.
Ritchie: But you were in the papers quite frequently at that time. I've seen pictures of you handing subpoenas to Dave Beck and to Jimmy Hoffa. There seemed to be a little humor there as well, some of the characters went to great lenghts not to answer the questions.
Watt: Oh, yes. Jimmy Hoffa was famous for that. He never claimed the Fifth Amendment, but would say, "I can't recall," and so-on.

Ritchie: What was your opinion of Hoffa? You must have seen a lot of him.
Watt: Oh, yes. It felt as though he lived with the staff in the day time, during the hearings. He was back and forth, even after the Rackets Committee was over he was back before the subcommittee in 1961. Of course, I was prejudiced, naturally, so I really didn't have the right focus on him as a person. I was prejudiced that he was a wheeler-dealer and was, we thought, part of the mob. And of course, we played right into his hands.
Ritchie: What do you mean?

Watt: By having the hearings on Dave Beck who was president of the Teamsters Union. Following a prolonged investigation, Jimmy could step right in as president of Teamsters. So we always felt that we were responsible for him being president of the Teamsters Union. He was smart, but all these mobsters--you couldn't help but feel that he was tied in with them.
Ritchie: Did Hoffa come to the offices before and after those hearings?
Watt: I can't remember that he was ever in that office. He might have been, but I can't remember.
Ritchie: I wondered, because you see all the performances in the news and on television, I wondered

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if the relations between people changed at all when the cameras were turned off.
Watt: Oh, it was the same. It's not the same as on the floor of the Senate, but this was not politics. This was good over evil!!! It was a sincere thing. Everybody was trying to do a job. With the Teamsters Union I've heard it said that they don't care because they get their increases and they are interested only in a good living for their families. They don't know what's going on at the top. They're paying in their dues and getting their benefits and that's it--the welfare benefits, sickness, and their salary.
Ritchie: I've heard that it was very hard to collect evidence on them because they destroyed so much of their paperwork.
Watt: Maybe they did, but we had an awful lot of files sitting in there. One time I think there was half a roomful of things that came in. I had to testify to that. Officially, I was responsible for them to be turned in, of course I never saw them, the investigators were the ones who did, but as chief clerk I

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was responsible officially. I can't remember which case it was that I testified, but I remember all those things in Room 160, files, great big bales of them. It might have been on the Sally Hucks case, that was a Hoffa case. She was a telephone operator at the Woodner, and she testified that she never got anything, but she had received a fur coat from him. The committee found out and it was turned over to Justice and I had to testify in that case. She went to jail. You see it was poor little people like that got it in the neck because the big ones were smart enough to get out of it. She had a good lawyer, but they had all the telephone tolls from the Woodner Hotel. And of course, Carmine Bellino was working on that, too.
Ritchie: I've read that they collected the tolls, who called whom and where. Did they ever get involved in wire tapping?
Watt: No, never. At the very beginning in 1948 when these telephone things were first coming into use--you know, the telephone system has really developed in the last thirty years, with all these bugs and everything--but it was just coming in where you could put that thing on

your telephone and have your conversation recorded. We did that just for a little while because it was a novelty more than anything else. Then it came out that it was illegal, and we stopped. You had to notify people when you were recording, you had to tell them, "You're being recorded." Then later they had these very sophisticated things that came along, but we never had any of them. In fact, in the last few years people came to me and asked me to have these things put on the phone, and I said, "Uh-uh, you can take it up with your chairman, or you can take it up with Senator Percy, but it's illegal and I'm sure they're going to say nothing doing."

Ritchie: So you never paid any bills for anything that came close to wiretapping or that kind of surveillance?

Watt: Oh, no. We never had anything on the committee like that. The only thing I ever heard of was after Bob went to the Justice Department and he had a wiretap on Martin Luther King. My understanding then was that Bob had a tap on him because he was sure he was a Communist, that he was a subversive. Then later on he changed completely and embraced King.

But we also had some very well-known underworld characters at that point.

Ritchie: It seemed like the whole mob was down there.

Watt: Yes, as time went on. I got used to all these strange names. And we had so many labor unions, the Teamsters was the biggest one, but we had the Bakers, and the Steamfitters, and all kinds of them.

Ritchie: I noticed a clipping in the paper that the reporters depended on you to spell all the names for them.

Watt: Yes, I've always done that. If I didn't have the spelling in front of me--the investigators used to sometimes make a list of the spelling if they had time, and sometimes we would hand them out--but most of the time there would be some question and I'd take a note to the senators if I could. I was more or less of a liaison, or a housekeeper, let's put it that way. I kept away from the political and the controversial, there was no point to it, my job was not to ask the reason why.

Ritchie: The Rackets Committee had some interesting members, in fact it made a lot of reputations for John Kennedy and Barry Goldwater and others

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because of all the exposure they got from it. What were they like back then? Was there anybody in particular on the Rackets Committee that impressed you?

Watt: I thought they all were pretty outstanding. Senator McClellan, Senator Mundt--well, he had made his name as chairman of the Army-McCarthy hearings--Senator John Kennedy even before that.

Ritchie: John Kennedy was on the Government Operations Committee but not on the Permanent Investigating Subcommittee.

Watt: That's right, but he was on the Rackets Committee because he was on Labor. I didn't have that much contact with Senator Jack Kennedy. I saw him in

Hyannis Port once, and I saw him at the Rackets Committee, but he was not there every day. Bob made sure that when there was oing to be publicity he came, and some days we didn't have that much. Bob was,, after all, going to become chairman of the campaign for the presidency, and that helped him a lot. I told Senator McClellan one time, "Senator, Jack Kennedy would not be president if it hadn't been for you and this committee." He said, "Yes, people forget things so fast." And that's true, it's true of everybody; they want to know what have you done for me lately?

One time in '55--of course, the Kennedys have always frowned on people discussing the trips that they took to Hyannis Port--but Bob asked me and Watt who were on our way to visit my family in Maine to stop in Hyannis Port, Watt had had his heart attack the year before. We were supposed to fly into Hyannis and spend two or three days with him. But it was fogged in, so we called and they said, "Well, take the train." We took the train and it turned out they had sent the chauffeur to pick us up at the station in Boston. But it was forty miles by train, it was an endless trip down the strip to the Cape. The first day we got there we stayed at the big house, the old family house. On the left coming in was where Bob had his house, right next door. Later there was a house in back of that which Jack Kennedy owned, but they hadn't bought it then.

That first night we slept in Jack Kennedy's room, which was on the first floor. It had twin beds and bookshelves lined with "who-dunnits." The next morning Watt said, "Was your bed hard last night?" I said, "No, I slept like a log." Well, there was a board in the bed and he had slept on that board all night. So they took

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it out, but then the next day Senator Jack Kennedy came. So we had to move to the room upstairs which was Joe Kennedy's room. It was a huge bed, but it had a board in it, too! I remember coming to breakfast, Bob and Jack were there and they were talking politics, they didn't even know we were there, almost.

Ritchie: Nobody noticed you?

Watt: They made the necessary amenities and so on, but we sat down, Watt was facing me, and Senator Kennedy was at the end of the table, and we almost didn't get breakfast because he was so intent and wasn't passing things. I was getting hungrier by the minute! But they were so intent, and they were such a close-knit family. I remember how I sat there wanting a piece of toast. But it was fascinating listening to the two of them talk. Then we left that day for Maine, we had just stayed the two nights. I remember how impressed I was, being from a small town and always buying ice cream by the scoop, they served scoops of ice cream in a big bowl and you just served yourself. Isn't it funny how you remember things like that! They were really very gracious people.

Ritchie: The person who seemed to be Robert Kennedy's chief antagonist on the committee was Barry Goldwater.
Watt: Well, he and Jack Kennedy were both presidential aspirants. He was conservative and Bob wasn't; their whole viewpoint was different; and one was a Republican and the other a Democrat.
Ritchie: What did you think about Goldwater in those days?
Watt: I liked him. He was very nice. One time he called me up to his office to meet Bob Cummings and his wife, who had come to the hearings--that's in my photograph album. Edna Carver, his secretary, was my good friend. Then one time he came back from somewhere and brought a little bottle of perfume, I remember it had my name on the outside, I was quite impressed. Of course, he had that department store out in Arizona. I liked him very much.
Ritchie: Homer Capehart was briefly on that committee, he succeeded someone.
Watt: When Senator Ives didn't run again in 1958.
Ritchie: Capehart seems like an amusing character.
Watt: Wilma Miller, who was his secretary--we became very good friends afterwards--but she

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was very difficult when she was working for him at that point. When she was in his office I wasn't too happy going to that office. When I saw him in the hearing, why he didn't know me from Adam, he wasn't there that long and I didn't have that much contact with him. But I remember Wilma was very difficult. Later on, Senator McClellan gave her a job on the Patents Subcommittee after Senator Capehart was defeated, and I got to know her pretty well. But she was a difficult person when she was in authority.
Ritchie: He was sort of a blustery little character.
Watt: More or less. He wasn't that little, he was kind of wide. But then he had a big tragedy in his life, some of his children were killed in an accident, about '58 or '59. Of course, we had all that tragedy in Senator McClellan's life, too., around that point, when Jimmy was killed in that private plane accident in '57 or '58. When the Rackets Committee started on the first day, Senator Goldwater and Senator Carl Hayden presented the Senator McClellan with a gavel that was made out of Arizona ironwood. It had his initials on it, and I was custodian of it all those years

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up until he was no longer chairman of the subcommittee. But there was a little chip in it. When Senator McClellan's father died in 1958, Senator Ives took over for one day of hearings when he went out to the funeral, and we had a little board so the gavel wouldn't ruin that beautiful table in the Caucus Room. Well, Senator Ives on his first whack hit the corner of the board and took a chip out of that gavel. Senator McClellan couldn't figure out what happened, but of course we told him later. Arizona ironwood--you wouldn't think anything would damage it!
Ritchie: Frank Church also was on that committee briefly.

Watt: He replaced Senator Pat McNamara. You see the first year Senator McNamara had defeated Senator Ferguson. McNamara was a big labor union man. After the first year he said, "We don't need this committee anymore, I'm getting off. We've served our purpose and I'm getting off." Well, probably the labor unions told him to do that. When he went, Senator Church came on to replace him. On the first day that Senator Church came to the committee he came over; they were voting and he was the first one there in the Caucus Room. I, of course, introduced myself to him

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and he said, "You know, I feel like what Harry Truman said when he first came to the Senate. fie said, 'when I came to the Senate I wondered what I was doing here; and after I had been here six months I wondered what everybody else was doing here!'" That was the first time I had ever heard that when Senator Church told me. He's come a long way.

Ritchie: He was very young at that point.

Watt: He had graduated from college and won an oratory contest or something. And when he made that keynote speech at the Democratic Convention he used college oratory. I was quite disappointed when I heard that in 1960. He's of course, grown up since then, but it was difinitely college oratory, the whole thing.

Ritchie: Eventually when Robert Kennedy came back to the Senate, he was on the Government Operations Committee, but he never got on the Permanent Investigating Subcommittee, did he?

Watt: Yes, he was on the full committee, but he asked not to be put on the subcommittee.

Ritchie: Why was that?

Watt: Well, after all he had been chief counsel and had all those people. He had other fish to fry anyway.

Ritchie: I would have though that after all his connections with the subcommittee he would have wanted to serve on it.

Watt: Well, it probably would have brought back some pretty hard memories because he had been through so much with the assassination of his brother. He'd been there in the happier days, his growing up days really because he really matured during those years on the committee. He became anadult.

Ritchie: You saw a real change in him?

Watt: Yes, I watched him grow up. I feel as though I brought him up! Because he was only 25 when he came and I was already in my forties. I was old enough to be his mother.

Ritchie: Did you see very much of him when he came back as a senator?

Watt: No. Then as far as I was concerned he was "Senator Kennedy." Our relationship changed and I felt no personal affinity to him at all, because I've never done that. Pierre Salinger was a senator for a few months, you remember, when Clare Engle died, and he was on the full committee.

Ritchie: He was on the Government ODerations Committee, too? Did you ever have any dealings with him?

Watt: I had to go up and get his signature two or three times when I polled the committee, and that was in the privacy of his office and so it was "Pierre."
Ritchie: Had he changed very much?
Watt: He was just the same.
Ritchie: But even though Robert Kennedy was on the Government Operations Committee you didn't see very much of him?
Watt: Just when I went to his office to get things signed. He was always very cordial and very sweet and treated like he always had, but I still said, "Senator Kennedy," I never called him Bob again. I just didn't think it was proper. I've always been very careful about niceties and the proper attitudes towards the senators. Just because I'm a lot older doesn't mean I don't have the same respect. I remember some personal incidents. One time when Bob was chief counsel we were getting low on stenographers. Angie Novello had become his secretary by that point. Bob said, "We've got to get some more people on this staff, some young glamorous people." You know, joking. So Angie went down to Room 160 and got everybody's jewelry and got all this fancy stuff on and went up and

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rapped on the door and said, "I came applying for a job." Because all of the people were older and had a lot of experience. You couldn't start some young person coming in on a big thing like this. We had many people who were older and had plenty of experience, and for them it was a one-shot deal for a year.
Senator McClellan told me once to have a picture made of the staff, but I never did because they weren't very glamorous; I thought, "No, I don't think I will." I'm not sure that would make too good an impression with all those people 55 to 60." I figured if you had a group picture they ought to be at least a little glamorous. So there were no pictures of the staff that year. One girl came down from Senator Kefauver's office. Senator McClellan had a specific policy of not hiring people from another office. He didn't believe in taking people away from other offices. But she specifically asked Senator Kefauver if he would object if she came down. So Kefauver called Senator McClellan. But I never knew him to hire anybody from another staff.
Ritchie: When you mentioned Kefauver, it reminded me: Did the Committee have access to the Kefauver Crime Committee papers?

Watt: I don't know. My biggest regret was that there were so many of the printed hearings around all the time that I never bothered to get a set for the committee. We never did have a set, we had to go to the library. All the papers went to the Commerce Committee, and I don't think that we had any of their files. Of course,

we had access to the FBI files, and if we wanted a file we just wrote them. We wrote the Attorney General or J. Edgar Hoover.
Ritchie: I've been through some of the Kefauver records at the Archives and I was struck by the mug shots and criminal records of some pretty frightening looking people.
Watt: That's right. We had many pictures and charts of the families. We had big charts on the walls, and then they were made smaller to fit into the printed hearings. They were put together by the staff. There were many of those families, and a lot of them have been killed in the mean time since then. The ones that were the most frightening were the narcotics hearings. Genovese was the head of that. Later on we had Joe Valachi, that was the first time we knew it was called "Cosa Nostra," he's the one that introduced that.

Ritchie: I noticed that in a short biography you once did, you said that while the Army McCarthy hearings were the most spectacular hearings that took place while you were with the committee, that you thought the Rackets Committee hearings were the most interesting. What did you mean by that?
Watt: I think it was probably the people that I worked with. They just made it more interesting to me. The staff that was around when Senator McCarthy was chairman, they were all gung-ho as far as communism was concerned and were interested in hearings one after the other, but there wasn't the preparation that went into them that went on later during the Rackets Committee. And I worked more closely with the chief counsel during the Rackets Committee. One reason was that while Roy Cohn was counsel he had his office down in the HOLC Building, and I was never down there. All I did then was to go to a hearing knowii~g there were certain witnesses I would have to write up subpoeanas for, or on another day I was going to have to pay them. But I knew nothing about the content of the hearings because it was remote, it was way off somewhere else. So I was not involved

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with the preparation. I was in Room 101 during the Rackets Committee, which was the center of activity, so I knew everything that was going on--and that makes a lot of difference. The witnesses were in and out; and I would hear discussions and briefings and so on; whereas I was not involved in it during the Army McCarthy days because the HOLC Building was about three blocks away.
Ritchie: So would you say that Robert Kennedy made better use of the staff than Roy Cohn did?
Watt: Well, his investigators yes, but I was clerical, you see. Of course, there were two girls working down in HOLC that did all the work for Dave Shine and Roy. I may be unfair, but I don't think he put the preparation into a hearing that Senator McClellan and Bob Kennedy did. Because Bob never went into a hearing when he wasn't well prepared. His people worked all night sometimes. I've come in in the mornings and found investigators who slept on the floor all night, who

worked until 4 or 5 and just went to sleep on the floor. And there they were in the morning when we got to work, There was a dedication there, complete dedication. I'm not sure that was there during the earlier hearings,

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except for our dedication to Senator McCarthy. Most of them on the staff weren't there that long, I had been there since he came to the Senate, but I was in a different position, because mine was purely to make sure the place ran smoothly, not the preparation of the hearings. I paid the bills, took care of the vouchers, and made sure everything was legal, and attended and set up all hearings in Washington.

Bob went into everything very carefully, and he had a larger staff. There were 46 on that Rackets Committee and there were only two minority people out of the 46. It wasn't until 1973 that we started getting bigger staffs for the minority. But Bob just did a magnificent job. fie kept the senators briefed. Of course, it got political with the senators themselves as time went on, but at the staff level, politics wasn't discussed.

[End of Interview #4]

Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

Interview #5:
The Turbulent 1960s
(November 9, 1979)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Ruth Watt (center) stands behind members of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *ca* mid-1960s. Left to right, Senators Carl T. Curtis, Karl Mundt, John McClellan, Chief Counsel Jerome Adlerman, Senators Edmund Muskie, Abraham Ribicoff, and Thomas McIntyre. *Senate Historical Office*

Ritchie: Looking over the 1960's, one thing that appeared to me was that there was a lot of interest in military activity on the committee: missile bases, missile procurements, TFX, military PX system, etc. Was there any particular reason why there was so much interest in military affairs?

Watt: I don't know. It just was one of those things. If they came along and we had reports or information from newspapermen, anonymous letters, letters of complaint, and from other senators, we pursued it. And some things were referred to the subcommittee from other committees. I don't know what the answer is. It was during Vietnam, of course, so there was more interest in military affairs. The TFX came about from the fact that that company in Washington State . . .

Ritchie: Boeing.

Watt: Boeing bid on the contract and Senator Lyndon Johnson's state got it General Dynamics of Texas. That's where it all came about. The first we heard about it, Senator Jackson was in

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Honolulu and he called Senator McClellan long-distance to ask him to start an investigation. That's where it started.
Ritchie: I wondered if Jackson had a general influence on the military interests of the committee, since he was on the Armed Services Committee and had a lot of interest in aircraft and military policy.
Watt: He came to one hearing, the opening hearing of the TFX probe, and that's the only time he came to one of those hearings. He didn't take any part in it whatsoever. He did call to ask Senator McClellan to open the investigation, and then he was long gone. Then again, it was very political. President Kennedy was trying to stop it. He had Senator Daniel Brewster of Maryland, who was on the committee when it started, and they were sending questions to him from the White House, to ask at the hearings. Then Senator Edmund Muskie started, he was close to the White House. They had somebody up there sending down questions all the time. In fact, they tried to get Senator McClellan to stop the hearings.
Ritchie: How?

Watt: They came up and asked him. Secretary Robert McNamara came up. Bob Kennedy who had been chief counsel came over from Justice. I remember the day they were over there, I'll never forget it because I met them at the elevator and Bob came along and gave me a kiss--after asking them not to hold the hearings. I remember because here were all these VIPs and I thought, "My gosh, what's going on?" I said, "Bob, what are you doing here with Secretary McNamara and all these people?" But he was just himself.
Ritchie: What did Senator McClellan think about all this pressure?
Watt: Senator McClellan never would bend to any kind of pressure. He just ignored it.
Ritchie: Did it annoy him that they were trying to pressure him?
Watt: I don't know. He didn't show it. He never said anything. He might have and I didn't know it, but I wasn't on the inside track on that like the professional staff, the lawyers and so on. I wouldn't know unless I heard comments, which I did not.
Ritchie: I've heard that McClellan had no use for McNamara, that he didn't care for him at all.

Watt: I never heard that. If he did it didn't show.
Ritchie: He certainly pursued that TFX investigation diligently for a long time.

Watt: Well, it was such a hard thing to get into, and there was so much controversy. Remember that Secretary of the Navy?
Ritchie: Fred Korth?
Watt: No, it was another one, someone high up in the Navy. Someone tied in with the Navy end of the plane who said what he thought, that it was not workable. He got replaced and was given an ambassadorship to somewhere. He got transferred. Of course, the Department of the Army was all for it. The whode Defense Department was involved.
Ritchie: But McNamara was the principle target. They thought that he had made the decision to give the contract to General Dynamics.
Watt: It could have been. I don't remember that. I remember all the witnesses we had, day after day after day. Korth I remember very well because he was romancing somebody, according to the papers!
Ritchie: There were a lot of rumors about Lyndon Johnson's role in the TFX.

Watt: Well, I think that made sense. I don't know anything for a fact, but there were all those rumors that came out.
Ritchie: That he had influenced the contract?
Watt: Well, wouldn't it make sense to you? At that point he certainly had more influence than Senator Jackson, because Jackson was not that well known and Johnson was a household word at that time, so it made a lot of difference.
Ritchie: Did Bobby Baker get involved at all with the investigation?
Watt: Not that I know of. No, Bob was not involved because he was into politics and this was a committee hearing. I've read his book and I don't believe he mentions it.
Ritchie: President Kennedy, when he was in Fort Worth, just before he was assassinated, made a speech about the TFX. What impact did his death have on the committee?
Watt: As I remember it, we had a hearing on Friday before and recessed for a week. He died on a Friday, and we had hearings scheduled for the following week, but they were just cut off completely until the late 1960's. Then they came up again.
Ritchie: What happened?

Watt: I don't know. I never heard.
Ritchie: They just dropped it?
Watt: Yes, for the time being, and then they came back to it. I can't remember what year we came back to it, but we wrote another report. It was the F-111 then instead of the TFX. That was four or five years later.
Ritchie: It was in 1970. By that time, Johnson was out of the White House. So in effect they dropped the investigation during his presidency.
Watt: I don't know if it was by design, because I hadn't heard anything about it. I never thought much about it, to tell the truth. Of course, I didn't get into the

politics of things too much anyway, or think about the reason why of things unless it was right out in the open.
Ritchie: But as far as you know they didn't do anything on that investigation during that period? They just packaged everything up?
Watt: Charlie Cromwell worked on that and I don't know if he stayed around for the second series of hearings, because he went to the Armed Services Committee after he left us. He had a scientific mind and he could go into the science of the thing, because it was a very complex thing. There was so much discussion

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of the model and the mechanics of how it worked, and overload and balance, and everything else. It was all in executive session, you see. The transcripts were sent over to the Defense Department for sanatizing before they were made public, they would take out material. Some of it needed to be taken out and some of it didn't. Our official reporter had an office on the third floor, and they never went out of the building, they just went to the Department of the Army for sanitizing. They transcribed and copied them on the third floor and then they went right to the Army and then came back there, so there were no security breaks. They were carefully handled.
Ritchie: During the 1960's the subcommittee ran up against a number of scoundrals, like Billy Sol Estes . . .
Watt: Oh, he's back in jail again. That was a political one, too, and it was very sad really because there was one of the witnesses who had been appointed by Senator Ervin, and Senator Ervin was very protective of his people. Up until then he and Senator McClellan had been very close, but then after that there was a politeness but nothing more.

Ritchie: Because they investigated his appointee?
Watt: Well, they came to grips somehow, I don't remember now just how it was. They had confidential--you know me, I never make little mistakes, I make big ones--they had an executive session on this and a confidential Department of Agriculture report was put in, and they were very careful of the thing, there were only about three copies in existence. It was one that pertained to Billy Sol Estes, just spelled it all out. Well, we had the executive session and the next day nobody could find the report. They went everywhere and they accused everybody of taking it. They never found it. About four or five years later I was cleaning out my safe and there it was. It had been an executive exhibit and I had put it away and completely forgotten about it.
Ritchie: Well, at least it didn't get out to the press.
Watt: There was a staff member that used to write poems that pertained to all the funny things that happened on the committee, and I remember that because he made a big thing out of the Billy Sol Estes report being hidden in my safe all those years.
Ritchie: Estes never came to testify, did he?

Watt: I can't remember, it seems to me that he did.
Ritchie: Or did he testify in executive session?
Watt: I can't remember. That doesn't ring a bell at all. Of course, I've read so much in the papers since about what a scoundral he was.
Ritchie: I know he didn't testify during the public sessions.
Watt: No, I don't think he did, and yet it seems to me I saw him. Maybe I saw him on television.
Ritchie: That was another case where Lyndon Johnson's name came into the picture again, and I wondered if there was any pressure from the administration.
Watt: I don't think so, unless it came through Senator Ervin, and I don't know if it came through there. I say that because he had his people from North Carolina and he was being protective of them.
Ritchie: What was the relationship between McClellan and Lyndon Johnson? Were they friendly?
Watt: I guess they got along all right. Senator McClellan went to the White House once in a while, and Mrs. McClellan and Lady Bird had been good friends when they were in the Senate Ladies Club together, and I think they had some other social contacts.

Ritchie: I remember that those two investigations both seemed to effect Johnson and there was a lot of talk back in 1963 as to whether he would continue on the ticket the next year, in part because of his association with Bobby Baker and Billy Sol Estes and the TFX.
Watt: Of course, he was involved in anything to do with Texas. General Dynamics, Billy Sol Estes, and whatever else. I don't remember anything about that at all. At the time I might have, but it didn't stay with me very long, if it did. I remember there were so many papers and documents--there were more documents than we ever had put in the record than in any other hearing, during the Billy Sol Estes investigation. There were boxes of them, and I couldn't keep track of them. Ordinarily, I could remember the important ones so that if they asked for one I could hand it to them, but we got so many that I was completely overwhelmed with them. There were just too many, hundreds of them.

Ritchie: It seems interesting to me that Senator McClellan, who had been so close to Robert Kennedy, and also to John Kennedy, wound up investigating members of Kennedy's administration,, like Orville Freeman in the Agriculture Department, Robert McNamara in the Defense Department, and by implication Lyndon Johnson. I wondered if that didn't create some tensions with the White House.
Watt: I don't think so, necessarily, because from the beginning there was not that closeness between the Kennedys and Senator McClellan. He used to go up

there, I know, for conferences, but he was chairman of a committee and they all did. But I know that earlier Senator McClellan and President Truman were not that close, they didn't see eye-to-eye, but that was probably from something that came up while they were both in the Senate.
Ritchie: He was just an independent man.
Watt: Very. He was his own person, and I don't think anybody ever influenced him. He knew what he was doing all the time. I think he had a great deal of integrity. It was nice to work with somebody like that. Of course, the others are probably the same, but he was on the

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committee for so many years that I got to know more about him. He was chairman for eighteen years. And I knew his staff so well, and you can tell by a senator's staff, too.
Ritchie: Another colorful character who testified before the committee in the 1960's was Joe Valachi.
Watt: Joe was something else! He was not a well man. He'd been in jail and we got him out of prison and kept him under police protection. But at noontime I got a cot from the superintendent over in the Capitol, and got blankets and a pillow, and Joe used to go down to one of our rooms, down by 159, and he used to have a nap every day between sessions. I don't know what his problem was, but he was not a well man.
Ritchie: How did those hearings ever come about? How did they begin?
Watt: Somewhere along the line we must have gotten his name, and Duffy handled those hearings. He would know.
Ritchie: I was wondering if Robert Kennedy had anything to do with them.
Watt: He was Attorney General then, because he was our first witness in those hearings. There's that picture of him testifying. But we had

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Joe Valachi in executive session three times I think and we got a lot of material before we went into open hearing.
Ritchie: He was sort of a strange character. Do you have any impressions of him now, thinking back?
Watt: He was very protective of his family. We never knew who they were or what their names were. He had a wife and children. He went to several prisons because they the mob kept catching up with him and his life was in danger. You know he killed somebody by mistake in prison thinking they were after him, and it was a person who was not after him but he hit him with some kind of a blunt instrument thinking he was going after him. Because he knew the kiss of death was on him because of this Mafia thing. Then he told us all about the "Cosa Nostra," which is the official name for the Mafia, which we had never heard before. It means "Our Thing" in Italian.

Then he was finally in a prison in Texas or New Mexico, and Duffy used to go down to visit him periodically. Valachi was writing a book. Duffy used to go down to talk with him, and I think may have helped him out

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with his book. He was on the top floor of the prison, isolated completely. He had his television and all the comforts of home, but he was in isolation in prison for life. He died of cancer, didn't he? I remember they were even consulting with him and asking him questions about things as late as when we had the SEC hearings, because Eugene Anguilla, who came to work with us on loan from SEC, went down to see him about something officially from the committee, and I remember it was the night before he died.

Ritchie: Was he a good source of information?

Watt: Apparently.

Ritchie: I know there was a lot of ballyhoo about him at the time. It was a very well publicized event, but I never could quite figure out what it all led to.

Watt: Well, I don't know if we had any legislation from it, but at least we knew a lot about the Mafia and different individuals in the Mafia that we didn't know before. Of course, I think the biggest mystery of all time is the Jimmy Hoffa mystery.

Ritchie: The disappearance?

Watt: Yes.

Ritchie: Did the committee ever consider investigating that?

Watt: It was very unfortunate. They had a lead from some witness who said that he could tell where he was buried and all. It was all relayed from one state to another and it was a real cloak and dagger thing. This witness, that last I heard was on the West Coast somewhere and two of our investigators went out. Then they came back to Detroit, or outside of Detroit. What their information was I don't know, but the next day the papers said they were out in the field digging, and there was a lot of ballyhoo about it. It gave the committee a real black eye. They were all for letting one of the men go, and the other one was not mentioned. But it didn't work that way because the one they wanted to let go was a person who had been hired by Senator McClellan. McClellan said, "Why should he be fired and not the man who was hired by the present chairman?" There was a big to-do about it at a subcommittee meeting.

Ritchie: So they didn't let either of them go?

Watt: No. But the fellow that Senator McClellan had hired, several years before'. was never given another assignment. He had one assignment after that, but that's all he had.

Ritchie: So they had been suckered into it by the witness?

Watt: Apparently, but the rumor I heard was that he was killed.

Ritchie: The witness?
Watt: This person who was the informant. Now who it was, or anything else about it, I don't know. That's one reason why we had to be so careful about our long-distance telephone calls, because that would have been a real source of information for anybody who wanted to find out who was telling what to whom.
Ritchie: Did you ever have any worries about having your phones tapped?
Watt: Our phones were checked every so often and Senator McClellan's was checked every week during the Rackets Committee because it was bugged during the Rackets Committee. Also, his phone at the Fairfax Hotel. Of course, he had threats to him at the time too during those two years. I never knew about them at the time because he didn't talk about them, but I've heard since that there were threats. I don't think Senator McClellan would have ever paid attention to a threat, though. It would just make him mad and he'd go all the way out on the investigation. That was the impression I got.

Ritchie: Did you have any trouble with Valachi in terms of security, and putting him up and taking care of him while he was testifying?
Watt: Well, you see, in a case like that, where he was a prisoner, the Department of Justice hand led all of that. He had around-the-clock protection from the United States marshalls who protected him whenever he was staying. Welve had other people like that. They passed a law a few years ago for immunity for people who would talk., and we had several of those. We had to go through a court process to get them, and then the Department of Justice would put them up and protect them.
Ritchie: Later on in the 19601s, the big hearings that you had from 1967 to 1969 were the civil disturbances investigations. They started out with riots in the cities, particularly in the South, and then eventually covered a wide area including college campuses, and the staff was considerably expanded again.
Watt: I think we hired six additional people just from government agencies on loan, because it was a temporary thing and people weren't going to leave another just to come for a period of six months or so. I think we had four or five

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different agencies that sent us people on loan. We hired a couple of people who were not working, but they didn't prove to be that good.
Ritchie: At the beginning there was a jurisdictional debate over who was going to get that investigation. Senator McClellan seemed very determined that he wanted the Permanent Subcommittee to investigate the riots. Was there any particular reason why he was so adamant on that?
Watt: Not unless it was that we didn't have anything else going at the time. Or else they were persuading him. Because many times the other senators would persuade him to take something that he wasn't that keen on.
Ritchie: Other members of the committee?

Watt: Well, just senators in general. It wouldn't necessarily be just from our committee. I remember I had to go and get approval from the full committee, and we had to poll the committee, because Bob Kennedy was a senator already at that point. When I went to his office I had to wait such a long time for him because he was tied up. I had to get a majority of the signatures from the full

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committee in order to get a resolution in to get authority for the subcommittee to conduct these hearings, because it was outside of our general authority, and also for the extra $150,000.

Ritchie: When you say it was outside of your general authority, most of your investigations were about government agencies and their activities.

Watt: Initially our function was one little sentence in the reorganization act of 1946, Public Law 601, that had the jurisdiction of the Committee on Expenditures on Executive Departments, which was the name of the committee at that time. The subcommittee was set up on the basis of that to investigate wrong-doing in the executive departments, that was what it boiled down to. That was the only jurisdiction we had for quite a few years, but it covered quite a bit! All the executive departments., and it also pertained to all subcontractors for the government. I think the 5 percenters hearings were covered in that way.

Ritchie: But these were investigations of civil disturbances in municipalities.

Watt: Yes, but we had to have a special resolution to hold them, because we already had incorporated

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other areas. We even had to have a resolution when we investigated homosexuals in government, why I don't know. They had added the Rackets Committee authority when that wound up, that was incorporated in our resolution. Then after the riots hearings were over, that was incorporated in our resolution, so that gave us all that added authority. I don't know why we got it, but he must have had persuasion somewhere along the line.

During the riot hearings we had one conf' ence on the aftermath of the riots here in Washington. It was just a conference. There we-re a lot of things going on at that time, and it was not easy to get senators to attend. I know Senator McClellan sat in on it, but at that point it was not official because we only had one senator. I remember we had the chief of police of Washington and we had Ramsey Clark who was Attorney General then, as we had a lot of people who were involved in the Washington government. I remember that Ramsey Clark was so arrogant and disrespectful to Senator McClellan that I turned off on him completely. He was very arrogant in his replies to Senator

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McClellan, as if he looked down on him, and I was very indignant that he treated a United States senator like that--I still am! Another one was that Patrick Murphy, the former police chief who is back in New York now, he was there. But I remember that conference because I was so incensed to think that anybody could be that rude to a senator. We had an all day conference, I think it was made public later. As a result, this law suit that is still pending came out of that.
Ritchie: The McSurely case--what was the story behind that?
Watt: Well, we had the criminal court case, I testified during that. But in the civil case I haven't been involved. We had a John Brick, who was a writer but not an investigator, but he wanted to get into investigating. How it came about, I don't know, but he went to Kentucky and served a subpoena and got a record of these people from the county or from the state.
Ritchie: It was from the local police chief.
Watt: Or somebody, yes.
Ritchie: They had been organizers.
Watt: Yes, down in Kentucky. That's how it all came about, and the civil case goes back to the fact that they claim--and Senator McClellan asked me

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but I didn't know anything about it and didn't want to know--but the main thing they were basing it on was that they claimed that Mr. Brick went through the files that he brought back and read a letter, supposedly a letter from Drew Pearson to Mrs. McSurely. And they claim that he put them up to ridicule because he showed the letter around. Well, the way I understand it is that he showed it to Senator McClellan and Senator McClellan said, "You put that away and don't show it to anybody." And that was the end of it. That was the story I heard. They brought that up in the criminal case, too, which had nothing to do with it.
Ritchie: Did you have to testify on that?
Watt: No, they didn't ask me about it, because I knew nothing about it. I had to testify about the fact that Mrs. McSurely was subpoenaed to produce some records. When she came she said that she didn't have them or wasn't going to give them, or something. Anyway, Senator McClellan said, "You come back here next Friday in this room at 10:30 and produce those records." So then I went up and sat in the hearing room--knowing full well that she wasn't going to show up, but I had to do

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it because it was a result of a subpoena--and I was to call if they showed up with the records. I was to call Senator McClellan,, whose office was right next door. I waited there until 12:00 or 1:00 o'clock, so we would make illegal. Then I had to testify that they never showed up. That was my reason for giving an affidavit. They have all those files for this case, apparently, because I turned everything I had over to them.
Ritchie: The original files were returned to the McSurelys, weren't they?
Watt: I don't remember that. I imagine they were.

Ritchie: The case really was that the committee had acquired the files from a local officer illegally; and it's been ten years in the courts, hasn't it?
Watt: Since 1967, twelve years. It came up again recently. They even put it to the Supreme Court who referred it back to a lower court.
Ritchie: Was there any other case affecting the committee like that?
Watt: Not that I know of.
Ritchie: Usually the committee would have subpoenaed the records from the people themselves, rather than from the local officers.

Watt: That's right; and the funny part of it is that the original complaint was to all of the senators on the subcommittee for a million dollars, or whatever the amount was. Then it got down to Senator McClellan, and our chief counsel, Jerry Adlerman, and John Brick. And then Jerry died, John Brick died, and they were tying up their estates, which was not much, but Senator McClellan died and his estate is still tied up. Then they had Don O'Donnell come down from New Hampshire and give a deposition--this was in the early 1970's. I understand they sent for him again just the other day. They tried to get a hold of Bob Dunne who had nothing to do with it. He's over in France, and he called us all upset wanting to know what it was all about. But they are just dragging it out. So then they tried to get a hold a Don again, but he just sent a letter back unclaimed when he saw the signature on it. Evelyn Adlerman is an invalid, she lives down in Florida,, and they were trying to get in touch with her. They called me to find out if I knew where any of these people were. Most of those people just worked in government all their lives, they don't have anything.

The sad thing, the part of it that was so strange and coincidental was that John Brick's wife works and did work for a psychiatrist. who was treating this McSurely woman. It was just coincidence, but somewhere along John mentioned that his wife worked there, and of course,, she made a big thing out of that, that he held her up to ridicule also because she was seeing a psychiatrist. So it's pretty sticky all along.
Ritchie: Was that the only occasion when John Brick worked for the committee?
Watt: Oh, no. He was a regular. He first appeared--he was a very brilliant writer, had a best seller, and was a historical novelist, he'd written some childrens' books, too, I was very fond of him--but he had helped Senator McClellan write his book.
Ritchie: Crime Without Punishment?
Watt: Yes, he had put it together for him, did the research and so on. Then he was teaching in a college in Dayton, Ohio, and he decided he wanted to come back. I think he got in touch with Margie Nocholson, secretary to Senator McClellan. He was not on the committee while working with Senator McClellan on

the book. He was bring paid by the publishers--but he was interested in getting into investigating. He was one of the most devoted husbands that I've ever seen. He and his wife were so happy. It was just a heartbreaker when he died.
Ritchie: The whole riots investigation seemed so different from the rest of the investigations that the committee held. There were no charges of corruption or mismanagement . . .
Watt: Well, they were trying to find the causes. They wanted to get to the bottom of them so they could maybe stop them.
Ritchie: Did they have some sense that there was an organized movement there, rather than just spontaneous erruptions?
Watt: Well, some of the cities had them at the same time, so it had to be organized. But I don't even know what they were about now, it's been ten years. I remember the riots on the campuses, but I don't know what they were about.
Ritchie: Do you think there was a sense of bewilderment on the part of the committee, to try to find out why this was happening? Or did they have a theory about what was going on?

Watt: I don't know. They called the presidents of several colleges. One day we had several presidents, professors, and Al Capp, the cartoonist testified! The scariest part of the while thing was that day that they were burning all those places in Washington and all the smoke was coming down here. We thought they were going to burn the Capitol down. That was a scary day. Were you here then?
Ritchie: I was working at the Library of Congress that day.
Watt: Then you were here when all that smoke was drifting on down, when Hecht's was on fire, and Landsburgs.
Ritchie: All of 7th Street and Blandensburg Road.
Watt: Yes, and 14th Street all the way out to where I used to live.
Ritchie: How did this news reach the committee?
Watt: We had our radios on all day.
Ritchie: You stayed at the Capitol through the whole day?
Watt: Yes, we went home the usual time. Of course, we went by the Southwest Freeway. We moved to "Virginia in 1967 and this was in 1968. We had a maid who had worked that day, and she was petrified because she lived down right in the middle of where it was all going on. She

was just scared to death. But I think she had a sister who lived in Virginia and she went out there. I've never seen anybody so petrified in my life. She lived on 6th Street not too far from U Street, in that area.
Ritchie: Some of the testimony that I've read from those investigations was pretty violent in itself. There was a fellow named Frederick Brown with the S.N.C.C. in Nashville who talked about the need for violence. The committee members seemed quite shaken up by that.

Watt: Then we had the Black Panthers from Chicago, that was a scary thing, too. They told about this church, and how they had their meeting in the basement, a dungeon under the church, and all the arms they had down there.
Ritchie: From out of this grew the investigation of the Office of Economic Opportunity and its funding of various groups.
Watt: We held hearings on that, but I think that was pretty much mismanagement.
Ritchie: It seemed as if the committee felt more comfortable dealing with the mismanagement of a particular government agency like the O.E.O. than they did in trying to deal with social causes.

Watt: Oh, yes, because you knew the government wasn't going to disrupt it at any moment, and they were supposed to be responsible people at the head of it. But we still had difficulty getting files from them. They were sort of fending off and not giving the right information. It was not a very satisfactory investigation on the O.E.O.
Ritchie: Because they couldn't get material from them?
Watt: We didn't know really what was going on there--maybe they didn't either. But I remember that it was not all that satisfactory.
Ritchie: Did the committee have any connections with the Kerner Commission that was also investigating the riots?
Watt: No. I doubt very seriously that we got any information from them. It's the same with House investigations. The House and Senate are jealous of their prerogatives, and frequently the House will carry on an investigation the same time the Senate is. Once in a while we've said, "Let's get this going before the House side takes it on." And two or three times they beat us to the draw! So there was duplication.

Ritchie: The last big investigation under McClellan was into the PXs in Vietnam. That also got a lot of public attention at the time.
Watt: Senator Ribicoff chaired those, as I remember. He went over to Vietnam with Duffy, they went over to get first-hand information and a look at it. I think Duffy was over there a couple of times. There were a lot of shennanigans, there's no doubt about it.
Ritchie: There's a line in that letter you showed me from Carmine Bellino . . .
Watt: That's right, he was there, too.
Ritchie: He said that it was the same old story "the line officers run everything until a Congressional committee finally looks into what they are doing."
Watt: That's why I thought it would be interesting for you to see that letter. It brought the war a little closer to you, the reality of it, It showed how they were in danger zones.
Ritchie: Well, it was different type of work than the committee was used to doing, under front-line conditions.

Watt: Yes, that's right. Later on, after Senator Jackson took over, we had one day of hearings, on some of those people who were involved. I

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think one changed his story, if I remember rightly. But there was just one day of hearings. Four of the main people came back and testified.
Ritchie: It's listed here in 1973: "Fraud and Corruption in the Military Club System."
Watt: That was the year that Senator Jackson took over as chairman.
Ritchie: The work of the subcommittee seemed to diminish during the last couple of years when Senator McClellan was chairman. The number of investigations declined. Was his attention being diverted elsewhere?
Watt: Yes. Also Jerry Adlerman, who had been with us for years, he came on the committee a few months after I did and became chief counsel after Bob Kennedy left, he retired in September of 1971. We got a chief counsel who had been on the committee during the Rackets Committee, who we thought would be good. But he was a complete wash out. He was impossible. He came over from the House side. We thought he was going to be great, we just greeted him with open arms. Well, it turned out that he was scared of his own shadow. We had one little hearing the whole time he was on the committee.

Ritchie: He lacked the confidence to initiate an investigation?
Watt: Well, I think he spent more time thinking about the staff. I would go in and he would say, "I'm going to fire so-and-so today." The next day he was going to fire somebody else. Of course, he didn't have the authority to fire anybody, but kept tempers stirred up all the time. I was pretty unhappy at that time. In the meantime, Senator McClellan was not around. We were like step-children because he was tied in the primary. He was in a run-off for his job in the Senate.
Ritchie: For the nomination?
Watt: Yes. So he was in Arkansas all the time. He didn't have time for the committee. So in that period we were just step-children, really, because we had a chief counsel that we had no confidence in. Poor Jerry was upset because he had recommended him, but Jerry didn't know because he had seemed like a great guy. But he just didn't have it. I think the House side sluffed him off on us because they wanted to get rid of him. I've always had that feeling. He had been on the Roads Subcommittee on the House side, a nucleus of five went over

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from the Rackets Committee when it wound up, to join that committee over there.
Ritchie: Which committee was that?
Watt: It was a subcommittee of Public Works, roads and highway subcommittee. Anyway, he went over there with Walter May, and George Martin, and George Kopecky, and Jim Kelly and others. But there were a bunch from the Rackets

Committee that went over there when the committee wound up. Then the Senator came back, after the run-off but none of us would tell him anything because we figured it wasn't our business. I wasn't about to tell him. But anyway, John Brick finally told the Senator about all the problems we were having. Everybody on the staff was saying that part of John Brick's problem was that counsel.

Ritchie: What happened then?

Watt: Then in January of 1973, Senator McClellan gave up the subcommittee. He stayed on the full committee. He stayed on the subcommittee, but gave it to Senator Jackson. Then Senator Jackson hired a new chief counsel, but the outgoing counsel kept insisting on getting a top job in the State Department. Well, they worked and got him one,

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"kicked" him upstairs in May. He was just on the payroll until then, and then Howard Feldman took over as chief counsel, and everything changed then. Senator McClellan had been chairman for so many years that I had forgotten there had ever been another chairman. Then I started saying, "I wonder if so-and-so would like this the way I've been doing it." Because everybody has different ideas. So I just completely forgot anything I'd ever done before and checked on everything, no matter what I did, to make sure it was what the new chai=an was going to want. And held been on the committee since 1953, so he was not new to me.

Ritchie: Did McClellan continue to have an active interest in the subcommittee after he stepped down as chairman?

Watt: He came to the meetings and they all looked to his expertise and experience for the conduct of the meetings. He came once in a while to the hearings if we couldn't get a quorum. There was one time when there was somebody testifying who he was particularly interested in, but the rest of the time he stayed away. Well, to begin with, Senator Jackson rarely came and I think he felt that, "If Jackson

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didn't come to the hearings for me, why should I go to them for him?" I think that's the way he felt. So, anyway, I had heard rumors for two or three years that Senator Jackson was going to get rid of the whole staff when he took over. Of course, that didn't concern me because I could have retired any time after my twenty years, and I already had about twenty-five years by then, they had a big party for me on my twenty-fifth anniversary in 1972. But he didn't let anybody go.

Ritchie: He didn't?

Watt: There were a couple of people who had retired and were on retired status but had moved back, whom he let go. He didn't think we needed them. And gradually people left. They were so independent they didn't want to do what the new chief counsel wanted to do, so they quit. When you get a new chief counsel

and chairman you've got to adjust. You're not going to tell them what to do. So we lost about three or four people that way.
Ritchie: Didn't they drop the file clerk who kept that elaborate card index?
Watt: No, they just didn't send the files down to her, so she retired.

Ritchie: She just quit?
Watt: Sure, because they weren't giving her filing to do, she was all upset. Howard didn't believe in that much filing. So for all that period the only things we have are those that Sally Olson, his secretary, kept in her file. So you had to go through the whole thing to find out anything you wanted. After a hearing was over the papers would be boxed up and sent to the National Archives.
Ritchie: We talked to the file clerk and she was saying that after 1973 the card system stopped, and now they are trying to fill in the gap.
Watt: You mean Frances Cresswell? It was funny, her father and mother were friends of our, he's a doctor. Frances is the youngest of six, and the others are all lawyers and doctors, and she was sort of the tail-end of the family. She had just graduated from college and the family decided it was time that she got out on her own. I mentioned that the committee might have an opening, and my husband said, "Well, Frances is looking for a job, why don't you have her come in?" I said, "They don't want anybody for a couple of months." Anyway, Watt called her and Frances came in. I have never

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met her before, but I talked with her and told her that, "They aren't even going to interview for this job for a couple of months, but I'd like to take your application." Thert I went in to Duffy, who was acting chief counsel because Owen Malone had left and they hadn't appointed a new one yet. I said, "Duffy, I have a girl out here who's very nice. I don't know her, but I know her parents. She's interested in a file job. Do you want to talk to her, or should I tell her to come back in a couple of months?" He said, "No, I'll talk to her." So I took her in, and when she came out I went in and Duffy said, "Let's hire her, she's got class." So they hired her on the spot! She came to work the first of the next month.
Ritchie: And she's putting the card system together again? That's great.
Watt: Yes, she just graduated from college and never had a job of her own. Now she's had to get out on her own. But she's doing all right. She's got a mind of her own.
Ritchie: I think it would be good to stop at this point, and next to take up the period when Senators Jackson and Nunn were chairman. I would also like to do a little retrospective, looking

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back over how things have changed over the long period.
Watt: Yes, I was thinking the other day about Jimmy Hoffa and how he went on down through our lives until they were trying to dig him up out in Detroit! There

were a lot of spaces in there, but the fact was that he was back-and-back before the committee.
Ritchie: When we talk about the more recent period, we can consider that a "Part III" of the oral history, and put that under restriction.
Watt: Yes, because there were some things that turned me off, that I would like to talk about, but I don't want them released now.
Ritchie: You can speak freely, but we can keep the transcript closed for whatever period you would like. But we can do it in a way that the earlier material can be made available.
Watt: Because I'm afraid I will be apt to be pretty critical of some of the things in the last ten years.
Ritchie: That's fine. Actually, one thing we are interested in is assessing how successful people, and committees, and programs were; and failures and mistakes are just as important as successes. So we do want to look at

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the problems, where things went wrong, as well as the high points.
Watt: Yes, because some of the behind-the-scenes things were so political, and I've always kept away from the politics. Whenever things get real political they get sticky, as far as I'm concerned.
Ritchie: But even your assessment of your counsel who was too nervous to begin any investigations, I think it's important to recognize that.
Watt: I told everybody he was nuts, he was off his rocker. I thought he was. I have a strange way of showing my displeasure. When I used to get mad at him I would slam drawers. When I got mad at Howard Feldman I slammed doors! Everybody on the staff knew when I was mad at the chief counsel!

Watt: When they were making the movie "Advise and Consent," I've forgotten what year it was, it was the year we were going to Las Vegas, and President Kennedy was in the White House, that had to be about 1962, the author Allen Drury had covered our hearings for years, and of course I knew him. One Saturday morning they asked me to come in to advise them how to set up the Caucus Room for a hearing. I remember I came in and Henry Fonda was sitting in the witness chair; anyway I made some remark to him about, "this is the witness chair, and this is where so-and-so sat," and he just gave me a cold stare, as if I had a nerve talking to him. That sort of left me cold. But when I got in there I had a white blouse on and somebody from the movie company said, "Oh, you can't wear that white blouse in the picture." I said, "I'm not going to be in the picture. I'm leaving on vacation tomorrow." They said, "Well, we had planned on you doing what you do at the hearings." I said, "Nothing doing, I'm not going

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to give up my vacation for $25.00 a day"--back then that was not bad pay. But I wasn't going to give up my vacation, we were going to Las Vegas!
It was almost a free trip because Congressman James H. Morrison of Louisiana, who was then chairman of Post Office and Civil Service on the House side used to do things like that for his staff and for people from Louisiana. Macel McGilvery who was Senator Russell Long's secretary asked if we'd like to go on the trip. All we had to do was pay for our round-trip plane fare, the rest was all free, because everything was taken care of. So I wasn't about to give that up, because I had never been anywhere west of Chicago. So I called Gladys Montier who had worked with us, and she was chief clerk of Senator Philip Hart's Judiciary subcommittee. So she took the part, The movie showed her reaching for papers and all that stuff at the hearings. But I thought it had been interesting that I'd been invited to be in a movie! It was one of those things that happen on Capitol Hill that you don't expect.
We've had a lot of movie people up here. Helen Hayes was at one of our hearings. I

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didn't even recognize her, but my husband came in and said, "Ruth, Helen Hayes is sitting in the audience toward the back, and she's very hard of hearing." So I went over and asked her if she wanted to sit down in front. But I wouldn't have recognized her because she had dark glasses on. Then Ralph Bellamy came when he was playing in "Sunrise at Campobello." He came and sat in on some hearing, it may have been the Valachi hearings, but I'm not sure. Then Joan Crawford and her husband, when he was head of Pepsi Cola, they came to our hearing one day and she sat in the front row. Then James-Whitmore, who played Truman at Ford's Theater; then I went up to see Gary Cooper when he was playing in "The Courtmarshal of Billy Mitchell," that was up on the fourth floor, 457 in the old building. I met Bob Cummings up in Senator Goldwater's office and had my picture taken with him. So that was the extent of my dealings with the movie crowd. You know, a lot of people get impressed with people around here, but the movie stars are exciting to us because we don't see them that much.
Ritchie: It is interesting that people think of politics as being very glamorous, but if a movie star

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shows up in Washington they get much more attention than the politicians.
Watt: Oh, yes. And Dick Powell came to the Rackets Committee hearings with his wife June Allyson. Senator got them seats because he was from Arkansas.
Ritchie: I remember reading an account of the filming of "Advise and Consent," which said that some of the senators even came and stood in the crowd to watch the filming.
Watt: Yes, that was mostly in the Caucus Room. That is such an interesting room, and of course, I could claim legal residence there as many hours as I've spent in there!

Ritchie: How did the committee decide when to hold a hearing in the Caucus Room? Was it just that there own hearing would not be big enough?
Watt: Too small. And many times during the Labor Rackets hearings, which were such big things, and we had some presidential contenders, we met in the Caucus Room. The publicity was better, and the room could handle the crowds. We had standing room only every day. Our hearing room--we had just moved into the new building which wasn't even finished--and 357 held about fifty people at the most. So I reserved the

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Caucus Room for the duration of those hearings. If anybody wanted it they had to come to me. If we weren't using it we would release it, but otherwise even the Senate Ladies had to reschedule their annual luncheon for Mrs. Eisenhower. They made arrangements to have it in the Supreme Court room because we couldn't give up the Caucus Room. And they had had it reserved way ahead, but we took precedence. I was quite surprised because usually the senators' wives get precedence, but I think Mrs. Nixon worked it out (he was vice president at the time) so that they took another room, but they had used the Caucus Room for years.
Ritchie: We ended last week at the time when Senator Henry Jackson took over as chairman of the subcommittee, when Senator McClellan became Appropriations chairman. I get the feeling from your previous statements that Senator Jackson had not been a very active member of the committee. Is that true?
Watt: As far as meetings were concerned he always came, but he'd never been all that active. He kept a hand in, but the ranking minority member was always much more active than he ever was. But he was next in line and he held on to the

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subcommittee because he had the seniority to take over as chairman. Two or three times Senator McClellan said he was going to give it up and then didn't. I had heard rumors from uptown that Jackson had said he was going to clean house and get rid of the staff when he did take over, which didn't happen--it was probably just rumor.
Howard Feldman came in as chief counsel, smart young man, inexperienced but smart. He didn't quite know how to handle people when he was under pressure. I liked him very much, but I used to get furious at him because under pressure he was difficult to deal with. He had made me promise to stay as long as he did, when he first came, because here I was teaching the "ABCs" to the new ones coming in. Some people just can't take pressure, and he was only about twenty-nine or thirty years old and didn't have much experience. But I think a great deal of him.
He went into that law firm--they set up their own law firm--and before the first year he'd bought a hundred-thousand dollar house. They have contracts with oil and gas companies. When they started out there were three of them,

and now I think the law firm has at least fourteen people in it, and that's only three years later. So they're doing very well. Bill Van Ness who was chief counsel on the Energy Committee--it was Interior then--he went, and another from the Commerce Committee, and I think there was a fourth from the House side, they started the firm. They've really got beautiful space; they've got all of one floor in a new building near Dupont Circle. Then Owen Malone came along after Howard.
Ritchie: You said that the ranking Republican was more active on the committee than Jackson was. Is that true in general, that the ranking Republican is the next most active member of the committee other than the chairman?
Watt: As a rule. Of course, on some of these committees you've got subcommittee chairman and if they've got a subject that's real newsworthy they get it, since they are chairmen of subcommittees. So the ranking sometimes is and sometimes isn't. Now Senator Mundt was very active. Senator McCarthy was first minority, and he was pretty active. fie and Senator McClellan got along well. Senator Mundt was very conservative, and after Senator McCarthy

died Mundt was ranking minority. He was very active, and he and Senator McClellan had the same conservative philosophy.
As a matter of fact, the day that President Kennedy was assassinated, Senator McClellan and Senator Mundt were airborne over St. Paul when they got the news. Senator McClellan was on his way out to a testimonial dinner for Senator Mundt in South Dakota. Senator McClellan got off at St. Paul and came back. Senator Mundt went on, he couldn't very well do anything else because of the dinner. But there was that closeness. They sort of thought alike, being of the same philosophy, ultra-conservative.
Then when Senator Mundt gave up the subcommittee--for a while he was incapacitated with that bad stroke--Senator Javits became the ranking minority. He was pretty voluble in seeing that he got a staff member and no matter what report we wrote, he always had a minority report. That was just his policy. The others haven't done that. Then they had a choice, they could only be ranking on one subcommittee, and Senator Ribicoff's subcommittee on reorganization was planning to

reorganize the whole government that year, so Senator Javits had to give up ranking on the Investigations Subcommittee if he wanted to be ranking on that. So he gave us up, thinking they were going to be very active reorganizing the whole government. So Senator Charles Percy moved up to ranking minority member on our committee, but in the meantime Senator Ribicoff's subcommittee didn't do all that much that year, so Senator Javits didn't have that much to do. I don't know how much of a disappointment it was to him, you would never know because he's so busy on the Labor committee anyway, and Foreign Relations. See,

he came under the "grandfather clause" for Governmental Operations. When that became a major committee it meant that those who were on at that point could stay, but they couldn't get another one. They had two major committees and this was now a third. During this last reorganization I think they eliminated that; they eliminated the "grandfather clause" so Muskie gave up the committee. I think he was the only one because Senator Jackson and Senator Javits, and maybe Senator Ribicoff, those three got

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special permission to stay on after the reorganization. Senator Javits had interest in government reorganization which another committee does now, he's still on our subcommittee. Senator Jackson was going to be chairman of the subcommittee and naturally he didn't want to give it up. He has Armed Services and he's chairman of the Energy Committee. Those two had been under the "grandfather clause," but there was one on each side, so it was evened off and was apparently no problem in doing that.

Ritchie: What about Senator Percy, has he been an effective member of the subcommittee?

Watt: Very, very active. He's more active than any of the others have ever been. He had a good staff. Senator Percy is the kind of person who if he wants something he goes after it, and if there is an objection to it he still persists. I admire him for it, of course at times it's difficult on the majority people. He gets one-third of the salary money that the majority does. But they have a certain allotment and if he wants to pay less money to people he can get that much more. He had Stuart Statler who has gone to the Consumer Protection Agency, but I just had a great deal of admiration for him a smart young man.

Senator Percy just was able to find people. I suppose a senator has to take his counsel's word for things because he can't do it all, but he was gathering these newly graduated students from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, from out in the West, all these bright young men coming in on his staff. If they made out really well they stayed six months to a year and a half and then would move on and somebody else comes. He just has a bunch of brilliant young men over there, but they get so that they want to run the place, and I used to run into that. I had them come in and tell me how to run the hearings! But they were young, and when you're that age you know everything.

Ritchie: I notice that Senator Percy chaired at least one hearing on the hearing aid investigation.

Watt: That's right, and he's running the hearings they have right now. Now Senator Nunn chaired it, but the minority did all the work on it. I think there was part of one day that Senator Nunn couldn't be there that Senator Percy chaired. It's unheard of almost for a minority member to chair a hearing.

Ritchie: That's what I was going to ask; I didn't think that the committee had a practice like that.

Watt: But I think you will find that Senator Nunn was there most of the time. He was in and out.
Ritchie: Is it because Percy was the one who really wanted to hold those hearings?
Watt: They did all the work on it. His minority staff did every bit of the work on it. Of course, the chief counsel wrote the opening statement for the chairman and the press release, but now every press release that goes out is a point effort of the chairman and the ranking minority member, Nunn and Percy, before it was Jackson and Percy.
Ritchie: Senator Percy seems to have a very good sense of public relations. His hearings lately had a masked witness and steering wheels of cars which were bound to attract newspaper and television coverage.
Watt: Yes, before I saw it on TV I knew it was coming up, I heard about it when I was in a couple of weeks ago. He can go ahead and do things that they can't do in the Senate and get paid for--I was in and had to tell them that there was no way they could do it. Myra, my replacement, had to tell them, but being new she really didn't know. Of course, she goes to the Rules Committee the same as I always did. They just

say, "We have to do this!" Well, you can't do it, you can't spend government money for things that are not legal. But they got around it somehow, I'll have to ask Myra how they finally got around paying for his expenses.
Ritchie: Of this masked witness?
Watt: Yes, because they put him up in this big, hotel. You can't pay hotel bills for witnesses! One time we did have a witness who was in prison down in Florida and we paid for the witness and the matron--it was a woman, a murderess--to appear before the Rackets Committee. We also paid for the matron, to make sure the witness didn't run away. So there are certain things you can do, but everything is set out in the law, what you can do and what you can't. If you didn't limit it there would be many things that people would take advantage of.
Ritchie: You said that when Jackson took over as chairman he didn't change the staff dramatically the way it had been rumored, but were there any changes at all? What was the difference between Jackson as chairman of the committee and McClellan as chairman?

Watt: Jackson's favorite was the Subcommittee on National Security, which merged with us. He was greatly interested in foreign policy, the Russian grain sales and all that. So that was his main interest with that part of the subcommittee, and they worked closely with him. They had an office right next door and they were part of us, but they weren't; they were a separate entity

actually (except that I paid all the bills). He had Richard Perle and Dorothy Fosdick, who are both brainy, brilliant people. The others were sort of incidental.
Ritchie: Did the subcommittees really merge, or were they really two separate entities that just happened to be under the same chairman? Did they work together?
Watt: Not really. We had one fellow, Elliott Abrams, who worked closely with them. I think probably he and Richard Perle were friends before when he was a practicing lawyer in New York. Then there were two or three that he employed from Washington State that worked very closely with that group. But with the regulars that had been on there before there was very little contact. If the girls couldn't do the work, Dickie (Dr. Fosdick) would bring it over to

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me to get somebody on our staff to do it. Or we'd go over there, once a year Richard Perle would dictate and we'd send one of the girls over, because they only had a couple of part-time people over there. But as far as the work was concerned, Dickie kept abreast of all of it, but she didn't really participate. If we had an organization meeting or something, she was there. Or if we went to the Rules Committee to get money and all that sort of thing. But as far as the actual things we were working on, no, they had a separate operation.
Ritchie: When Jackson left the committee, did that subcommittee leave as well?
Watt: He's still vice chairman. I think there are a few--Richard Perle and three part-time people on our subcommittee payroll. Dorothy Fosdick works out of that office, but she's on Senator Jackson's payroll, just transferred. They get pretty good salaries and I think Senator Nunn would like to have that himself, to pay one of his people, because as I said that operation is not one that he takes part in that much. They only have hearings every one or two years, but they write

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reports and they do an awful lot of work with the State Department and so on. You don't necessarily have to have hearings to be active.
Ritchie: Senator Jackson had a bright staff around him and he had a lot of interest in international affairs and energy and military policy, but was he a very effective chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee?
Watt: He had hearings that he chaired on energy--and we had joint hearings with the Interior Committee, before it became the Energy Committee--we had several Cabinet level people up to testify, at one time we had witnesses who represented all the big oil companies in the country--we had that in the Caucus Room, I remember them all lined up the width of the room--that was the year he was running for President, so he was pretty busy anyway. Then we had hearings on grain for Russia, those were the things he was interested in, the international picture and energy. The other hearings we had he farmed out to Senator Huddleston who chaired them. Then Senator McClellan asked Huddleston, who was at the end of his first year, Senator McClellan was just very much impressed with

him and asked him to go on the Appropriations Committee, so Senator Huddleston had to give up Government Operations. Then Senator Nunn took over chairing. The only one that Senator Jackson chaired was the one hearing a year that was the National Security hearing. Of course, I handled them all, but that was just at the clerical level.

Ritchie: So he was something of an absentee chairman?

Watt: He was around and took an interest. He always had all the information that everyone else had. But he had two other big committees that were very active; Energy Committee had hearings every day; Armed Services Committee is a very active committee. So actually it was a time thing.

Ritchie: What about his presidential race? Did that eat into his time on the subcommittee?

Watt: Not really, I think it would have been the same. For instance, they had a special train that went to New York when he was in that primary, that's the only one that I remember. When he was running he got the Washingtcn legislature to vote that if he didn't get the presidential thing he could still be elected to the Senate--they'll do that,

you know, Lyndon Johnson did it. I don't think it ate into his time that much. We knew he was running, because they had a special committee for the presidency and I know there were people on it, one girl from National Security who was on our payroll left and went on that payroll, and there was one man from his office that had been there for a long time, who had been chief coulsel of Post Office and Civil Service when Olin Johnston of South Carolina was chairman, and then Jackson had him in his office-he's now mayor of Harper's Ferry, his son-inlaw was on our staff until recently, Keith Atkinson.

When you talk about staff staying, Bob Dunne had already made a commitment to teach in a school in England but they did ask him to stay on. Paul Kamerick had been there a long time and he was not that active during the period of the last year's of Senator McClellan's chairmanship. We had that counsel who sort of queered everything, so Paul Kamerick retired. We had two people reimbursable from GAO, they retired and we were paying them the difference, one of those retired annuitant type of

things. He got rid of them because he didn't think they were needed, they really didn't do that much anyway. He got rid of the ones who at that point weren't very active. Of course, Howard Feldman was the one who made the decision, because the Senator had no way of knowing who was who or what kind of work they did. John Brick got sick and died, that was that first year when Jackson was chairman. Now the girls were the same, the staff editor was the same.

Al Calabrese had been on the subcommittee since 1955, and he was an investigator. He was a little quick tempered and some little incident happened. lie was down in the cafeteria having coffee and they wanted him. Howard got a little upset that he was down there so long, and Howard called him on it, so he quit, got mad and retired.

Then we had the GAO people and had to let them go. For years we had them free, with GAO paying. So any of them that were still on had to go back, we had about three of them that had been on for quite a few years. We didn't take them on, but they didn't want to transfer to our payroll because of the fact that the insecurity was so great at that point.

We didn't know how long Senator Jackson would be there, we didn't know if he wanted to keep people--see he had some of his own people he wanted to hire. So that's about it. Right now there are only three people on the staff who were there when McClellan was, one since 1953, the other since 1956. I was the oldest in terms of service for many, many years. Now Lavern Duffy and Rosemary Kennedy are the two longest serving. There is also Roland Crandall, but he was with the Government Printing Office and worked with us while he was on their payroll, when Senator McClellan was there, so that makes three.

Ritchie: Right after Senator Jackson took over in 1973 the Watergate scandal began to appear. It seemed surprising to me that a committee like yours which was so interested in corruption in the government really didn't get involved in the Watergate investigation very much. Was there any particular reason for that?

Watt: I'm not sure that we had the authority.

Ritchie: Wouldn't it have come under your general authority to investigate executive malfeasance?

Watt: But this thing started with political parties, it was a break-in at the Democratic headquarters.

That was what it was all about. The fact that the President and the people around him were involved harked back to the political thing. I don't think we had the authority. We didn't want it anyway, because the full committee could have taken it. But you see, Senator Ervin was chairman of the full committee at that time, and he became chairman of the Watergate investigation. And as a result they did nothing on the full committee for all that time, just sat around doing needlepoint. So I don't believe there was anybody on that subcommittee that would have wanted it. It almost had to be a select committee.

Ritchie: Why don't you think anybody would have wanted it?

Watt: Well, to begin with, you have almost as many Republicans on the subcommittee as you have Democrats. There would have been just a battle, a fistfight. That's the way I feel about it. For instance, on that committee we had Javits, Percy, and Brock (who is now chairman of the Republican National Committee). But I don't think it would have been the right forum for it.

Ritchie: The subcommittee did investigate Robert Vesco, who was peripherally involved with Watergate.

Watt: Well, that was because we were having hearings on the SEC, and it came about through his SEC involvement. There was a lot of corruption there with the SEC, and then his name came into it. Then of course they tried to make a little political hay out of it.
Ritchie: Who did?
Watt: The Democrats, which was natural. I don't know how much there was on the Senate level, but on the staff level it was certainly a political thing.
Ritchie: On the staff they saw that as a good political move?
Watt: Well, it could have been from the top down, but I don't know that. I just know what. was going on at my level.
Ritchie: What in particular was going on?
Watt: Oh, they were following up all these leads. And you remember we had Elliott Roosevelt come back from Portugal, and there was this whole big tie-in.
Ritchie: You never got Vesco to testify, did you?
Watt: No, he never came back to the country, because he would have been slapped in jail. Right now he can't come back, although they would like

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to get him back. They even tried to involve him in the White House now, in the Carter administration. Somebody tried to bring him into that, and how much there is I don't know. I've seen pictures of him, and he keeps popping up in different spots, not only on the Republican side, but on the Democrats side, too. And somehow there was a tie-in to narcotics traffic. It's all very much in the shadows, in the gray area.
Ritchie: So would you say that the Vesco hearings were mostly to raise some publicity at the time? They couldn't get him back or prosecute him, but they could get some publicity.
Watt: I'm not sure how important that was. It kept popping up, but with a name like that you can't help but get publicity. The same thing happened with the Murray Chotner case, they tried to make political hay with that. We had executive sessions, and they went to California in 1956. They had his brother and him both. Later Murray came here and was killed in an automobile accident; he had the most beautiful wife--boy was she pretty. But it was those gray areas where you are not sure whether it was political or not.

Ritchie: During that whole period there were certain high points in terms of getting attention, like the Vesco case, or the Russian grain deal, and the fuel shortages. But my general impression is that the subcommittee didn't get the same kind of press attention then that it had gotten in earlier years.

Watt: No. Well, there were so many other subcommittees that had sprung up, even the subcommittees of Governmental Affairs were investigating some of the things that we had the authority for. Senator Chiles has one that we could very well go into. They all have different names now, and I don't recognize them, but thank goodness we're still Investigations. There are many things that other committees have gotten that we could have done, but you have got to have someone who is chairman that's not too busy and will go after these things, and say to the counsel, "You get your staff and go after this and get ready for hearings." You've got to have an interest at the top. There might be an interest, but other things will take priority. Of course, national security and energy are topmost in people's minds now, especially in Senator Jackson's.

Ritchie: I would have thought that Jackson, with his presidential ambitions and good staff, Would have been able to generate more publicity through that committee.

Watt: He was not that interested in investigating wrong-doing and so on. He was interested in energy and the armed services. Now, of the things he could do on that committee, he did have energy hearings and the Russian grain deal, but that was the only thing. The other things we went into really weren't of a political advantage to him, except that one senator said at one time that he would get his name in the paper, good or bad, he didn't care as long as his name was in the paper so people didn't for get. Anyway, I remember back when Truman was on the committee, his name was on the front page of the papers every single day, so his name was a household word when he became vice president under Roosevelt. And that was all good, he had a good publicity man, press man.

Ritchie: Didn't Jackson have his own public relations man?

Watt: Yes, Brian Corcoran.

Ritchie: Did he handle public relations for the subcommittee as well?

Watt: Not really. He would go over the press releases that we gave him, and once in a while he would add something. He would come over to the hearings and see what was going on. Seeing that I was handling all the press distribution, there was really nothing for him-to do, Unless the press wanted some special information that the committee didn't have. But he was there to see that the press got things, and I had done that for years so he didn't have to worry about it. The circulation was there.

Ritchie: Did Howard Feldman have good relations with the press, too?

Watt: Yes and no. He would have a little conference with the press before a hearing, but if a call came in and he wasn't there, he was not good about calling the press back. Let's put it this way: he was not with publicity. I think he thought Corcoran should do it. Now Jerry Adlerman, Frip Flanagan, Bill Rogers, Bob Kennedy really went all the way out to be nice to the press. After that we didn't

have the same relationship because the chief counsels were more intent on getting the investigations going and they were not that

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interested in the press. Up till then every one of our chief counsels was really good about the public and the press.

Ritchie: Was the same true about Owen Malone?

Watt: Owen Malone didn't want to talk to anybody in the press, as far as I know. I don't think he was interested. I don't know if he didn't want to handle them, or didn't have the experience to handle them, or if he just didn't want any part of it, but he saw very few of the press. Most of the time we used to have reporters in and out all the time, and after a while we didn't have anybody from the press come in. Individuals make a lot of difference with the success of a committee. I think this new man is going to be great.

Ritchie: Who is that?

Watt: Marty Steinberg. He came after I left, but he's a real smart young man, has a nice personality. How he operates, I don't know. They've been having hearings all week, but of course the minority did all the work on it--they've been working on it for months.

Ritchie: One other point, I understand that before the Army-McCarthy hearings one senator coul& hold a hearing by himself.

Watt: There's a resolution setting forth what a quorum for a hearing is. In most cases the committee sets what the quorum shall be. Well, up until that point you could have a hearing with just the chairman present. When the three Democratic senators left the committee in July of 1953, and then came back in late January of 1954, one of the stipulations was that there would be at least two members present at any hearing where there were witnesses being sworn, open or executive. That went on for two or three years, maybe more. In about 1957 or 1958 we had a great deal of trouble holding hearings because we couldn't always get two members. So then they put a stipulation in that two members would have to be present unless an authorization was signed by the chairman and the ranking minority member that a one-man qporum could conduct a hearing, open or closed. That was repeated each year in our rules for about five years. And then they just dropped that and made it a rule in the Rules of Procedure which were approved by the subcommittee, which made it legal.

Ritchie: That's something that always surprises me whenever I go to a committee hearing that there often is just one senator there.

Watt: There are so many committee hearings, and the senators are on so many subcommittees. There are very few Democrats now who aren't chairmen of subcommittees. Even this new reorganization has enlarged the subcommittees. They were trying to cut down, but they cut down on the full committees, and of

course, the subcommittees are more expensive than full committees, because they are allowed a certain number of people on the full committee. If you appropriate money in a budget . . . for instance, we were appropriating money for a staff with the minority, because they get a third of the staff and a third of the salary money. Last year when I made the budget up we made it for thirty-eight or forty people. On the full committees the maximum that you can have is twelve, including the minority. So that's quite a difference, and actually they are not saving any money. They are going to have these committees one way or another.
Ritchie: Does it affect the work of the committee in any way that only one or two senators show up for committee hearings?
Watt: The staff does all the work anyway. The staff briefs the committee members. We used to have

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a briefing for the senators before a hearing, and then it was up to them if they came or not. Frequently, they would send a representative from their staff; some of their staff was assigned to the committees. Of course, now they have that special resolution that they passed two or three years; ago, where one person is hired to work with the senator and all of his committees to keep him up to date. They work out of his office, and it's a separate fund and it's not paid by the committee.
Ritchie: Do the staff members prepare the questions for the senators to ask?
Watt: Yes.
Ritchie: For senators other than the chairman?
Watt: What we do is to make up a folder for each senator on the committee. The ranking minority chief counsel gets all the material that's being prepared in advance and then he takes it to the ranking party members. It's mostly the ranking minority member and the chairman who are the most religious about coming. In that folder we put all of the statements of the witnesses for the next day, all the questions that have been prepared by the staff based on

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interviews plus the statements (a witness is supposed to present his statement to us forty-eight hours ahead, or the day before anyway). Sometimes the staff works way into the night on these things because they kept revising them. Then there's the witness list and the opening statement of both the chairman and the ranking minority member, and any other pertinent information like exhibits that they might be interested in and would be put in the record later. Each senator gets a folder like that. I think that the subcommittee has probably always been better prepared than most subcommittees and committees.
Ritchie: Did they handle the Bert Lance hearings?
Watt: No, that was the full committee, but there were two or three of our staff working on it.
Ritchie: There was some criticism at that time that the senators themselves didn't ask very good questions, and that the answers evaded their questions.

Ritchie: There's been some comment that senators working out of prepared questions aren't very good at thinking up follow-up questions when the answers aren't to the point.
Watt: Well, the chief counsel is sitting right there and he's worked on the hearing for months. Our staff has not had that problem, I don't believe. One time, during the time when Senator Jackson was running for president, he had Senator Huddleston and sometimes Senator Nunn chair the hearings. Senator Huddleston worked for two years I guess, he chaired all of our hearings because of Senator Jackson's involvement elsewhere and he did a good job.

Ritchie: What was it about Huddleston that made him stand out?
Watt: I don't know. Just his interest and his personality. But he was well-prepared and did his homework. And he had Carolyn Fuller who worked on committees for him; she worked for a Virginia senator at one time. She worked right along with him and kept him briefed. She came down to the committee and got all the information for him, as if she was on the committee staff. And she worked with the chief counsel and minority and the people who were working on a particular hearing. He was, as well prepared as any chairman that we ever had. Because he had someone to look out for him; and apparently she did the same thing for him with the Agriculture Committee--of course, they were in committee all the time! But I was very much impressed with Senator Huddleston and liked him very much.
One day we were going to hold a hearing and couldn't get either Senator Huddleston or Nunn, so Senator James Allen chaired it. Of course, he was so busy on the floor of the Senate and in the Agriculture Committee that he had not been to the hearings at all. One

of our staff who had worked on this particular investigation went up and in a half an hour briefed Senator Allen. He came and chaired that hearing, and you would have thought that he had been there and knew everything about it. It was just astounding. What a brilliant mind he had. And to see him you wouldn't get that impression. But that was a brilliant hearing and he had only a half an hour's briefing.
Ritchie: He had a very retentive mind for detail.
Watt: Yes. He could just glance at something and take it in. But it was beautifully done.
Ritchie: There have also been considerable changes in the size and functions of the staff to help the senators.
Watt: About three years ago they hired extra people, not on the committee payroll, but they were on a special payroll working in the senators' offices. They held up on our resolutions until that went through. A staff member would maybe

personally handle maybe four committees or subcommittees for the senator, because they figured they weren't getting enough out of the staff of the committees

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themselves. And I guess they did need people like that, because there's so many hearings going on--there's just too much. I don't know how they do justice to them. And they complain that the senators don't do anything. They ought to come down here and follow any one of them around for a week. The more you do, the more they expect of you.

For instance, Senator Walter "Dee" Huddleston, was acting chairman of the subcommittee. I never saw anybody work so hard. Of course he was on Agriculture Committee and on Government Operations, but Agriculture was meeting all the time at that point. He was just on the go all the time. And he was a freshman senator. Now Senator Nunn is on Armed Services and that's a full-time job in itself, and he's chairman of a subcommittee. He's on the full committee, and they have many hearings.

I was talking to the staff editor of the full committee the other day, and he said that in July--now there are about six subcommittees of Governmental Affairs--they had one hundred hearings in the month of July, that includes the full committee and all those subcommittees,

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that he has to do the editing for. Stop and think of that, that's just one committee! That's just an example of the volume of work that goes on in committee. Senator Ribicoff has been more active, so far as hearings are concerned, than any other senator since I've been here, in Governmental Affairs, except that he's farmed the hearings out to the chairman of the different subcommittees. Then when it comes back to the full committee, why sometimes he has them chairing them, too. I think he's on Finance too, if I remember rightly. So it's been a more active committee than it has ever been, during the time that he has been chairman, because he has concentrated on that committee. For instance, Senator Ervin had Watergate, so nothing went on while he uas chairman of the committee. Someone else might have committee hearings, but we didn't have all that many. Watergate was the Main thing then.

Ritchie: There is one story that I have been looking forward to asking you about since we began these interviews. Could you recount your celebrated encounter with the Architect of the Capitol?

Watt: Oh dear, that's a whole story in itself. Let's see, in January 1976 one icy morning, I used to drop my husband off around by the elevator entrance and most of my driving was from there around to our parking place where the gate by the senators' driveway is, where they have outside parking in the old Russell Senate Office building. I park right between the two entrances, because they had

asked us years ago to take that place because Senator Milton Young wanted the parking place we had--it was a favor to take it, but of course it was the best place in the Senate. The nurse parked next to us, Mrs. Hall. Jonsey the police man used to cover the area and was very protective of us, saw that nobody took our parking place.

Well, this one morning, Jonsey was directing traffic out in the street and I came around the corner and into the parking space and there was ice and the car slid into the iron gate. A piece of the gate, one little piece like this, fell out. Jonsey dashed up and turned the ignition off. I'd gotten out of the car with the ignition on because I was so shocked. Then I called my husband and then they

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sent the accident squad. There was some man who was new, he had been on night duty. He came along and said, "Come on, sit in the car and I'm going to get all of this information." I looked at him, you know it was a cold morning, and I said, "Well, you come down to my office and we'll sit in my office. I'm not going out in your car." I felt like a criminal the way he addressed me. So he took this information down--of course, all the staff were agog, but they're all very good, they never interfere in anybody else's affairs, which I think is unusual in a staff not to be prying into other people's private lives. Then I called the Architect's office and made an appointment to go over and report. There was one fellow over there that Watt knew, and then there were the lawyers. So I told them the story of what had happened; then Attorney Tyler came over and got a statement from me and went back and apparently recommended to the Architect that they drop it; there was no point, there had been ice there and it was not my fault. They hadn't sanded or anything. But the Architect decided no, he was going to follow

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this thing through and I was going to pay. Then Watt got the insurance company to come out. Their man looked it over and he gave a statement that there was no way that they could pay because of the ice.

Ritchie: There wasn't any damage to your car, was there?

Watt: Just $1.75 for a little rubber tip on the bumper. Then I got an affidavit from the mechanic, how much he had paid for the rubber to put on it. Then the Architect got estimates from the iron works to replace the gate for something like $9,000 and they sent me the bill!

Ritchie: What did you think when you received that letter?

Watt: I couldn't believe it. It was on my birthday and I was sick in bed with the flu! I said, "I can't believe it!" of course I never had anything like this before. I was all at sea, and Watt was furious, but he stayed out of it pretty much and let me handle it. Then one day I was over in Senator McClellan's office and I said, "I need some advice." I've never asked a senator for any help, just advice. I told him about what had gone on, and he was quite perturbed about it. The next day, as I remember he told me about it, there was a

meeting of the full Appropriations Committee, and while they were waiting for them all to get together, he was discussing the case and telling the Appropriations Committee all about it, and how ridiculous it was for the Architect to act that way. Then Mr. George White the Architect of the Capitol sent the case down to the Justice Department to sue me.

Ritchie: You hadn't paid and said you weren't going to pay?

Watt: No, I ignored the letter; I had no intention of it. Well, what the heck, there was ice there, it wasn't my fault. Maybe if I'd been a better driver I wouldn't have gotten on the ice, but I didn't see the ice. Then Senator McClellan told Jim Calloway Chief Counsel of the Appropriations Committee to have me write a memo and discuss the whole thing. In the meantime, the people who had come to repair the gate said the only thing holding the gate together was "rust and dust." Of course, that was in the memo, the whole thing was put in the memo. I had one of the lawyers on the committee write it for me, because I wanted to be sure it was the way it should be.

Then Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, who was chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that handled the funds of the Architect of the Capitol, got the memo. I don't know who talked to Mr. White, but Mr. White called Jim Calloway and asked, "Is Senator McClellan serious about pursuing this thing?" Senator McClellan had threatened to go to the floor of the Senate if Mr. White didn't drop it, because he thought it was a crime for one poor little person like me to be sued for $9,700! All the while I was upset, this was going on into May. Jim called the senator, he was in a meeting somewhere, and. said the Architect was on the phone and wanted to know if he was serious about following up on this thing. Senator McCellan used a couple of swear words and said, "You're darn right I am! I've never been more serious in my life."

At that point, the Justice Department came up and interviewed me, and Jonsey, and other people. Senator McClellan had a friend at Justice and he told him, I don't want this thing put in a back drawer. I want you to have somebody come up here and investigate it. I

don't want any favors, I just want this investigated thoroughly." So that's what they got. A lady lawyer--lovely lady--came up and interviewed me. In the meantime, after that telephone conversation, apparently Mr. White must have called the Justice Department and asked to withdraw the complaint. But if there had been anything on it, once it goes down there they have to pursue it no matter who wants to withdraw the complaint.

Then I got a copy of a three-paragraph letter back that they had decided to take no further action regarding the case. It said they based their decision "upon the high probability of the United States being found contributorily negligent for failure to place salt on the area; the vast difference in the amount requested by

our claim ($9,900.00) and the amount of damage to the Watt vehicle (approximately $2.00), and the request by your office for no further action." So that was over, but every day from January through May something was going on with this thing. It was really an unpleasantness, especially saying they were going to sue me for $9,900.00 and the Justice Department was going after me. It

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was a really traumatic thing, not having any dealings with the law before!
Ritchie: But it was nice to have the chairman of the appropriations Committee on your side.
Watt: Yes. One of the things the Justice Department lawyer asked me was how many people knew about this. I said, "Everybody I know, and I know everybody in the United States Senate." Every day people would stop me and say, "What's the latest." I had to give a running report on what was going on with this thing. Even when Senator McClellan was in Walter Reed hospital he would have Jeannine Ragland, his private secretary, report to him every day on the progress of the case. Not everybody has an experience like that! Someone in the Architect's office later told us, "Boy, they tangled with the wrong person when they tangled with Ruth Watt!" But I didn't do anything, I just told everybody what was going on.
I had told Stuart Statler, who was a young smart lawyer with the minority on the Permanent Subcommittee, about it and he wanted to go to Senator Percy so he could go after the case. I said, "No, don't do anything." Because I had already asked Senator McClellan for his

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advice, and if one other person had gotten into it, he would have dropped it. You know, these senators don't want somebody else working on something they're working on. But if Senator McClellan hadn't acted, why I'm sure Senator Percy would have, because Stuart was so incensed at the whole thing.

WATT: Senator Percy is so nice. I've heard about how thoughtful he is. Anyone of his staff if they were going away or were sick, he's always concerned. Of course, having lost that daughter I suppose made him that much more sensitive, but I think he is just naturally a kind person. He would have all of his staff out to his house at Christmas and at different times, and was always doing nice things. I was so surprised when I retired, I didn't have any of the senators on the list to be asked to my retirement party and Stuart was quite upset because I hadn't made sure that Senator Percy was asked. Well, I didn't think that they knew me that well. All that they had ever seen me was at hearings. I wasn't even sure that they knew my name. Of course their staffs did, because I had so much contact with them. But Senator Percy called me over to his office

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and told me what a great job I'd done all those years, and had my picture taken with him. He's the one that put that statement and resolution about me in the Record. He was so kind. I was very much impressed with that because as you know I never made a point of walking into senators offices, I never felt I needed to as long as my job wasn't in jeopardy. I did my job and could fight my own battles pretty well, at least until this came along!

Now Senator Jackson was so busy with other things, you just couldn't get that close to him. I could go anywhere and get him to sign a subpoena, he was always available, if I could find him, for an emergency. He was, of course, always in a hurry because he had so many things going, he was so backed up with everything. But anytime I wanted to get to him I could, and I did when it was necessary, especially getting a letter or a subpoena signed, or putting people on the payroll.

Now Senator Nunn was not chairman long enough for me to judge. He became chairman in January and I left the end of May, and in the meantime I was just a retired annuitant. To me he is very much like Senator McClellan in his approach to investigations.

I will say one thing for Civil Service, I told the committee I would stay on for a thousand dollars a month plus my retirement, I retired the end of February and went off the payroll the end of May. So I was getting retirement money for March and I got my check the 16th of April--and I've known people that waited six months before they got their first check. How I got through that fast I don't know. I couldn't believe it. But it's a pretty darned good retirement. Except for hospitalization it's all gravy now, but wait till April of next year then I'm going to have a bite out of it for taxes! Watt and I were paying forty-seven percent taxes when I retired.

Ritchie: Well, all together you worked for the Senate for thirty-two years.

Watt: In the same office, 101 Russell S.O.B.

Ritchie: The Senate must have changed a lot over the years you were there. Looking back, what were the most noticeable changes?

Watt: It got so much bigger. Every year it would get bigger. They would make changes to economize

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but it would get bigger. When they started out with the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, Public Law 601, they set up just certain committees, I think there were fifteen of them. I came in February of 1947, right after that reorganization. That was to economize and get it streamlined. Well, then they started setting up subcommittees of the standing committees. There was one committee, a small surplus subcommittee of Expenditures in Executive Departments, which was the name of the Committee which is now Governmental Affairs, that merged with us. We had their authority plus the malfeasance, etc., from the War Investigating Committee, and that was all the authority we had back then. There was a Surplus Property Subcommittee that was set up in 1947,

Senator Ferguson was chairman, and in January and February of 1948 they set up the Investigating Subcommittee and merged the Surplus Property and the funds, which was about $5,000, and the staff, a small staff. Salaries then were so small. And we had that one authority.
The Senate as a whole was all housed in one building. No offices off somewhere, just

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the present Russell Building. Everything was in there. There were some little offices over in the Capitol, but they were small and not that many. We had one carry-out kitchen and a dining room on the second floor where the Commerce Committee is, just below the Republican Policy Committee. That was the cafeteria then and we used to gather there in the morning. Everybody knew everyone in the building. We would go up there and have a coffee klatch in the morning. It was like a social club, at ten o'clock in the morning for a half an hour or so. We still got all our work done.
There weren't as many people, so less people did the same work they are doing now. The highest ceiling on salaries for staff was $10,000--and they're now making $50,000. The chief counsel was making $10,000. When Bob Kennedy came aboard it was just a little over $10,000, he was making that himself. I remember that on the full committee there was only one person who could get that salary. Our staff director on the full committee, Walter Reynolds, was very upset because Bob got it and he didn't. But only one person could

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have it. They weren't doing much on the full committee because Senator McClellan was chairman of both and his concentration was on the subcommittee. I started off at $3,600 and I felt like a millionaire. When I left, with the extra annuitant money, my salary was listed as $36,0OO. I was making $32,000 or $33,000 when I retired but the difference as a retired annuitant raised the gross I was supposed to get. So that shows you the inflation. I had very few raises over those years, it was mostly the legislative increases. I had some raises but not that much. But that shows you how much the cost of living went up.
When Senator McClellan first took over, or maybe when Senator McCarthy was chairman, our gross appropriations for the full year was $86,000. Now the monthly payroll is that. And that originally covered everything, including salaries, travel, witnesses, stationary, everything. And we always turned money back. The increase from 1947 to now has been unbelievable. I can remember when cab fares were 20 cents no matter how many people were in the car. Gas must have been 5 cents a gallon!

Ritchie: You mention the growth of the size of the Senate, do you think that the growth has made the Senate more productive, or has it gotten in the way of productivity?

Watt: I think it's gotten too top heavy. Some of these committees I think could be consolidated, or at least the subcommittees. Now the thing is to let every majority senator have a subcommittee chairmanship, because he gets publicity and prestige that way. There are a lot of them that could be consolidated. Of course, you have to realize that the population explosion has contributed to this a lot. You've got so many more people that have turned of age. The whole government has gotten top heavy, it's not just up here. I don't think we've really been able to keep up with the times, they've gone so fast. But I'm just philosophizing from my own observations.
Ritchie: What about the senators, how have they changed? How would you compare the senators today to the senators when you first came here?
Watt: To me they were older then, because I'm older now and they seem like babies today! Thirty two years ago my chairman was sixty years old, Senator Brewster, and I was thirty-seven. He

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was old as far as I was concerned. Now looking back I'm almost seventy and I'm looking at these senators who are thirtysix, I'm in a different position! My gosh, Senator Brewster would be way up in his nineties if he were still living.
But I'm not so sure that they've changed all that much. The moral fiber of the senators and the people around them I can't tell you, because I don't know-what goes on now. I know what went on then, behind the scenes. But I'm not sure that there's that much difference. I think human nature is the same no matter what era you are in. Of course, I thought the senators were great, they had a great deal of stature. The first few years I worked here a freshman senator was seen and not heard. Now they start off the day they come, making the splash.
The first year I was here we had Kenneth McKellar, who was really up in years. He had to have help going around the corridors, he held onto somebody's arm. We had Senator Vandenberg who was quite a famous person as chairman of Foreign Relations. I had a great deal of admiration for Senator Ferguson. I'm

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trying to remember who was chairman of the Labor Committee. I rarely went to hearing--I think I went to four hearings that weren't my own committee's during the thirty-two years I was there. One of them was John L. Lewis' testimony before the Labor Committee in the Caucus Room.
Ritchie: Was Senator Robert Taft the chairman?
Watt: I don't remember. I remember that Senator Tobey was there, because he was always spouting the Scriptures, and Senator Bricker was there, I remember him because he was on our committee. I remember that John L. Lewis made those senators look like jackasses. He had all the information right at his fingertips. They were going after him and really weren't prepared. My mouth was just wide open, I couldn't believe that anyone could do that to a senator. But he really was a powerful man.

I went when Frank Costello testified before Senator Kefauver's Crime Committee, that was an evening hearing, the first live televsion coverage they ever had. Then I went to Bob Kennedy's hearing before the Judiciary Committee for Attorney General. Maybe there was a fourth but I don't know what it was.

Those were the only times I ever went to a hearing that wasn't ours. Even the Watergate hearings, some people tried to get me to go to those, but I said, "Uh-uh, that's like taking a busman's holiday to go to another hearing." I wasn't that interested in somebody else's hearing, you could see it on television at night.

Ritchie: Were the senators more formal in the past than they are now?

Watt: I think they were more formal. I know that Senator Brewster was a very dignified man, and Senator Ferguson was. We had people like Senator Carl Hatch who later became a judge, who was in his cups some of the time. And Senator Tom Connally from Texas who was six foot four, I remember him on the Senate floor staggering down the aisle.

I remember Senators Millard Tydings and Burnet Maybank and some of those people had their own little bar up on the fourth floor. We were having an executive session one time and they were in the back room--we had borrowed Tyding's office when Senator O'Conor was on the committee--and we could hear the tinkling of glasses in the room next to us, when Maybank

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and Tydings and those people were back there. That made quite an impression on me!

Speaking of drinks, one time when Senator George Bender of Ohio was on the committee, he was an unusual person, let's put it that way. He came over from the House and he was well know, you always heard about the Bender Committee. Well, one day when we were having hearings in 357 Senator Bender called his secretary and she came in with a tray of glasses with ice and bourbon in every one of those glasses to the hearing. He was going to serve the committee! Of course, none of them would drink it--Bender might--but they had desks with drawers in them, so every senator put his glass in the drawer, and the place smelled like a brewery! So after the hearings were over, Watt and I had to go around and clean all those glasses of booze out. That was the first time I had ever seen that, but Bender didn't care what he did. His secretary works on the House side now, she said, "I admire him, he does what he feels like doing. He doesn't follow the rules the way all the other senators do."

Ritchie: How much effect would you say that television has had on the Senate?

Watt: I would say in some cases a great deal, especially when they are running for office and need that exposure. They're going to come to the hearings because they know they're going to get that free exposure. It can't help but effect them.

Ritchie: When did television really begin to cover those committee hearings?

Watt: There were some about 1955, because I can remember Bob Kennedy calling some of the senators saying, "We're going to have television today." Sometimes we had trouble getting a quorum, and that would help. But before that even--of course, McCarthy never had any trouble getting publicity, until after he was censured.
Ritchie: You say that it was easier to get a quorum when the hearings were televised. Did you notice the senators playing to the cameras and did that change the nature of the hearings in any way?
Watt: I think they asked more questions. Of course, the committee staff always has prepared questions for everybody and they can divide them up. They did the footwork. Now we have so many minority staff that the minority works up their own questions, but they each compare

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them so there won't be any duplication of questions. If a senator goes in cold to a hearing he has the questions all prepared in front of him; sometimes you could tell if they were prepared and the questions they asked were their own.
People like Senator John Kennedy, and Senator Allen, and Senator Muskie, they were seasoned senators and knew what they were doing. But the younger ones are not always--I remember one hearing we had last year with a couple of new ones who asked questions that were not pertinent and pretty innocuous. The press is pretty with it too because they will concentrate on a senator if he's brilliant and has some substance, whereas if you get one who is doing this just to ask questions they won't even bother to photograph. him. They turn their cameras off. Most of the time it's newsreels anyway and they have to cut it way down. They take a lot of footage but then they use maybe a minute or two deperiding on how interesting he is. Of course, the Mafia people, they got coverage because they were colorful and made good news. Sometimes the important things don't get in there because they are not that newsworthy. You go through a

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paper and look at the headlines, if it sounds interesting you read it, and the rest of it you don't bother with, because you can't read it all. Especially the *New York Times* on Sunday!
But I think as a whole they haven't changed that much, it's just that to me they're younger. But some of them are more knowledgeable than the older ones were. And things have expanded so, we didn't have all this electronic world then. They had the first subcommittee on aviation when I came on the Hill, because I took the minutes of it, they hadn't gotten a staff yet. Senator Brewster was going to be chairing it as a subcommitteE of the Commerce Committee. That was the first aviation subcommittee in the Senate and that was 1947. So you see how much the Senate has enlarged, and that's one reason why it has become so top-heavy, because you have all these different areas that you didn't have then.

We had very little television back in 1947. 1 think I had my first set in 195O, it was black and white. I saw the first television when it was just local at Mark Lansburg's. He was on the staff at Children's Hospital. We

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went to his house for a meeting and I took the minutes., and he had a little television, which picked up just local stations, it never went beyond Washington because the system wasn't expanded that much. Just a little picture screen-I couldn't believe you could get pictures over the air. I can also remember the first radios they were making in 1920, so in my lifespan there has been the greatest progress in everything that you could ever imagine. The splitting of the atom and all the atomic stuff, everything has just come along so fast.

Ritchie: You talk about all the changes in the Senate in general, what about specifically the Permanent Investigating Subcommittee; how different is it from the committee you first joined in 1948?

Watt: The subject matter is entirely different, Then we were investigating just government agencies, that's all we had the authority for. Then the next thing was labor rackets, and that was a separate select committee. I don't know if I told you how the subcommittee got that authority. It was very interesting, the way things operate up here behind the scenes. Senator McClellan had made up a resolution

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to continue the Rackets Committee or to have it incorporated in the authority of the subcommittee. Well, there were seven senators on the subcommittee and they voted it down, 4-3. 1 think Senator Jackson was the deciding vote, he didn't want it continued by the subcommittee. Senator Goldwater was running for president and there was another whole group in the Labor Committee, and I think they decided that the committee had had enough.

Senator McClellan thought it ought to be pursued because of Jimmy Hoffa and other matters that were still up in the air. Senator Hubert Humphrey had a subcommittee of Government Operations, and I'm not sure if it was the one that Senator Ribicoff later got on government reorganization, but there was some controversy about it. Back then each subcommittee resolution was passed on its own, not as part of the full committee's resolution the way it is now. They had held up on Senator Hunphrey's subcommittee, so Senator McClellan went to Senator Carl Hayden who was Chairman of the Rules Committee and they put a rider on Senator Humphrey's subcommittee resolution, Section 5, and incorporated all the labor authority and

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indicated it should come back to the subcommittee. In order for Humphrey to get his they had to pass that, too. So he got his labor racket authority and I had to make up two payrolls every month and had two different funds. Senator Humphrey didn't know what had happened to him, it was already put in, but he

wanted his subcommittee. I suppose a lot of things like that do happen. You can't outfox these senators who have been around a long time.

Ritchie: One final question I'd like to ask is when you look back over your thirty-two years with the Senate, who would you say was the most out standing person that you dealt with, a senator or any other?

Watt: Senator McClellan was chairman for so many years that I forgot we ever had another chairman, he was chairman for eighteen years. He would be my choice for the outstanding senator, and he was, really. The most outstanding person on the staff that I ever worked with was Bob Kennedy. He stands out in my mind because of his personality and the way he worked. They would be the two.

[End of Interview #5]

Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

Interview #6:
Chairman Jackson and the Changing Senate
(November 30, 1979)
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

Watt: When they were making the movie "Advise and Consent," I've forgotten what year it was, it was the year we were going to Las Vegas, and President Kennedy was in the White House, that had to be about 1962, the author Allen Drury had covered our hearings for years, and of course I knew him. One Saturday morning they asked me to come in to advise them how to set up the Caucus Room for a hearing. I remember I came in and Henry Fonda was sitting in the witness chair; anyway I made some remark to him about, "this is the witness chair, and this is where so-and-so sat," and he just gave me a cold stare, as if I had a nerve talking to him. That sort of left me cold. But when I got in there I had a white blouse on and somebody from the movie company said, "Oh, you can't wear that white blouse in the picture." I said, "I'm not going to be in the picture. I'm leaving on vacation tomorrow." They said, "Well, we had planned on you doing what you do at the hearings." I said, "Nothing doing, I'm not going

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to give up my vacation for $25.00 a day"--back then that was not bad pay. But I wasn't going to give up my vacation, we were going to Las Vegas!

It was almost a free trip because Congressman James H. Morrison of Louisiana, who was then chairman of Post Office and Civil Service on the House side used to do things like that for his staff and for people from Louisiana. Macel McGilvery who was Senator Russell Long's secretary asked if we'd like to go on the trip. All we had to do was pay for our round-trip plane fare, the rest was all free, because everything was taken care of. So I wasn't about to give that up, because I had never been anywhere west of Chicago. So I called Gladys Montier who had worked with us, and she was chief clerk of Senator Philip Hart's Judiciary subcommittee. So she took the part, The movie showed her reaching for papers and all that stuff at the hearings. But I thought it had been interesting that I'd been invited to be in a movie! It was one of those things that happen on Capitol Hill that you don't expect.

We've had a lot of movie people up here. Helen Hayes was at one of our hearings. I

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didn't even recognize her, but my husband came in and said, "Ruth, Helen Hayes is sitting in the audience toward the back, and she's very hard of hearing." So I went over and asked her if she wanted to sit down in front. But I wouldn't have

recognized her because she had dark glasses on. Then Ralph Bellamy came when he was playing in "Sunrise at Campobello." He came and sat in on some hearing, it may have been the Valachi hearings, but I'm not sure. Then Joan Crawford and her husband, when he was head of Pepsi Cola, they came to our hearing one day and she sat in the front row. Then James-Whitmore, who played Truman at Ford's Theater; then I went up to see Gary Cooper when he was playing in "The Courtmarshal of Billy Mitchell," that was up on the fourth floor, 457 in the old building. I met Bob Cummings up in Senator Goldwater's office and had my picture taken with him. So that was the extent of my dealings with the movie crowd. You know, a lot of people get impressed with people around here, but the movie stars are exciting to us because we don't see them that much.
Ritchie: It is interesting that people think of politics as being very glamorous, but if a movie star

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shows up in Washington they get much more attention than the politicians.
Watt: Oh, yes. And Dick Powell came to the Rackets Committee hearings with his wife June Allyson. Senator got them seats because he was from Arkansas.
Ritchie: I remember reading an account of the filming of "Advise and Consent," which said that some of the senators even came and stood in the crowd to watch the filming.
Watt: Yes, that was mostly in the Caucus Room. That is such an interesting room, and of course, I could claim legal residence there as many hours as I've spent in there!
Ritchie: How did the committee decide when to hold a hearing in the Caucus Room? Was it just that there own hearing would not be big enough?
Watt: Too small. And many times during the Labor Rackets hearings, which were such big things, and we had some presidential contenders, we met in the Caucus Room. The publicity was better, and the room could handle the crowds. We had standing room only every day. Our hearing room--we had just moved into the new building which wasn't even finished--and 357 held about fifty people at the most. So I reserved the

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Caucus Room for the duration of those hearings. If anybody wanted it they had to come to me. If we weren't using it we would release it, but otherwise even the Senate Ladies had to reschedule their annual luncheon for Mrs. Eisenhower. They made arrangements to have it in the Supreme Court room because we couldn't give up the Caucus Room. And they had had it reserved way ahead, but we took precedence. I was quite surprised because usually the senators' wives get precedence, but I think Mrs. Nixon worked it out (he was vice president at the time) so that they took another room, but they had used the Caucus Room for years.
Ritchie: We ended last week at the time when Senator Henry Jackson took over as chairman of the subcommittee, when Senator McClellan became

Appropriations chairman. I get the feeling from your previous statements that Senator Jackson had not been a very active member of the committee. Is that true?

Watt: As far as meetings were concerned he always came, but he'd never been all that active. He kept a hand in, but the ranking minority member was always much more active than he ever was. But he was next in line and he held on to the

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subcommittee because he had the seniority to take over as chairman. Two or three times Senator McClellan said he was going to give it up and then didn't. I had heard rumors from uptown that Jackson had said he was going to clean house and get rid of the staff when he did take over, which didn't happen--it was probably just rumor.

Howard Feldman came in as chief counsel, smart young man, inexperienced but smart. He didn't quite know how to handle people when he was under pressure. I liked him very much, but I used to get furious at him because under pressure he was difficult to deal with. He had made me promise to stay as long as he did, when he first came, because here I was teaching the "ABCs" to the new ones coming in. Some people just can't take pressure, and he was only about twenty-nine or thirty years old and didn't have much experience. But I think a great deal of him.

He went into that law firm--they set up their own law firm--and before the first year he'd bought a hundred-thousand dollar house. They have contracts with oil and gas companies. When they started out there were three of them,

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and now I think the law firm has at least fourteen people in it, and that's only three years later. So they're doing very well. Bill Van Ness who was chief counsel on the Energy Committee--it was Interior then--he went, and another from the Commerce Committee, and I think there was a fourth from the House side, they started the firm. They've really got beautiful space; they've got all of one floor in a new building near Dupont Circle. Then Owen Malone came along after Howard.

Ritchie: You said that the ranking Republican was more active on the committee than Jackson was. Is that true in general, that the ranking Republican is the next most active member of the committee other than the chairman?

Watt: As a rule. Of course, on some of these committees you've got subcommittee chairman and if they've got a subject that's real newsworthy they get it, since they are chairmen of subcommittees. So the ranking sometimes is and sometimes isn't. Now Senator Mundt was very active. Senator McCarthy was first minority, and he was pretty active. fie and Senator McClellan got along well. Senator Mundt was very conservative, and after Senator McCarthy

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died Mundt was ranking minority. He was very active, and he and Senator McClellan had the same conservative philosophy.

As a matter of fact, the day that President Kennedy was assassinated, Senator McClellan and Senator Mundt were airborne over St. Paul when they got the news. Senator McClellan was on his way out to a testimonial dinner for Senator Mundt in South Dakota. Senator McClellan got off at St. Paul and came back. Senator Mundt went on, he couldn't very well do anything else because of the dinner. But there was that closeness. They sort of thought alike, being of the same philosophy, ultra-conservative.

Then when Senator Mundt gave up the subcommittee--for a while he was incapacitated with that bad stroke--Senator Javits became the ranking minority. He was pretty voluble in seeing that he got a staff member and no matter what report we wrote, he always had a minority report. That was just his policy. The others haven't done that. Then they had a choice, they could only be ranking on one subcommittee, and Senator Ribicoff's subcommittee on reorganization was planning to

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reorganize the whole government that year, so Senator Javits had to give up ranking on the Investigations Subcommittee if he wanted to be ranking on that. So he gave us up, thinking they were going to be very active reorganizing the whole government. So Senator Charles Percy moved up to ranking minority member on our committee, but in the meantime Senator Ribicoff's subcommittee didn't do all that much that year, so Senator Javits didn't have that much to do. I don't know how much of a disappointment it was to him, you would never know because he's so busy on the Labor committee anyway, and Foreign Relations. See, he came under the "grandfather clause" for Governmental Operations. When that became a major committee it meant that those who were on at that point could stay, but they couldn't get another one. They had two major committees and this was now a third. During this last reorganization I think they eliminated that; they eliminated the "grandfather clause" so Muskie gave up the committee. I think he was the only one because Senator Jackson and Senator Javits, and maybe Senator Ribicoff, those three got

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special permission to stay on after the reorganization. Senator Javits had interest in government reorganization which another committee does now, he's still on our subcommittee. Senator Jackson was going to be chairman of the subcommittee and naturally he didn't want to give it up. He has Armed Services and he's chairman of the Energy Committee. Those two had been under the "grandfather clause," but there was one on each side, so it was evened off and was apparently no problem in doing that.

Ritchie: What about Senator Percy, has he been an effective member of the subcommittee?

Watt: Very, very active. He's more active than any of the others have ever been. He had a good staff. Senator Percy is the kind of person who if he wants something he goes after it, and if there is an objection to it he still persists. I

admire him for it, of course at times it's difficult on the majority people. He gets one-third of the salary money that the majority does. But they have a certain allotment and if he wants to pay less money to people he can get that much more. He had Stuart Statler who has gone to the Consumer Protection Agency, but I just had a great deal of admiration for him a smart young man.

Senator Percy just was able to find people. I suppose a senator has to take his counsel's word for things because he can't do it all, but he was gathering these newly graduated students from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, from out in the West, all these bright young men coming in on his staff. If they made out really well they stayed six months to a year and a half and then would move on and somebody else comes. He just has a bunch of brilliant young men over there, but they get so that they want to run the place, and I used to run into that. I had them come in and tell me how to run the hearings! But they were young, and when you're that age you know everything.

Ritchie: I notice that Senator Percy chaired at least one hearing on the hearing aid investigation.

Watt: That's right, and he's running the hearings they have right now. Now Senator Nunn chaired it, but the minority did all the work on it. I think there was part of one day that Senator Nunn couldn't be there that Senator Percy chaired. It's unheard of almost for a minority member to chair a hearing.

Ritchie: That's what I was going to ask; I didn't think that the committee had a practice like that.

Watt: But I think you will find that Senator Nunn was there most of the time. He was in and out.

Ritchie: Is it because Percy was the one who really wanted to hold those hearings?

Watt: They did all the work on it. His minority staff did every bit of the work on it. Of course, the chief counsel wrote the opening statement for the chairman and the press release, but now every press release that goes out is a point effort of the chairman and the ranking minority member, Nunn and Percy, before it was Jackson and Percy.

Ritchie: Senator Percy seems to have a very good sense of public relations. His hearings lately had a masked witness and steering wheels of cars which were bound to attract newspaper and television coverage.

Watt: Yes, before I saw it on TV I knew it was coming up, I heard about it when I was in a couple of weeks ago. He can go ahead and do things that they can't do in the Senate and get paid for--I was in and had to tell them that there was no way they could do it. Myra, my replacement, had to tell them, but being new she really didn't know. Of course, she goes to the Rules Committee the same as I always did. They just

say, "We have to do this!" Well, you can't do it, you can't spend government money for things that are not legal. But they got around it somehow, I'll have to ask Myra how they finally got around paying for his expenses.
Ritchie: Of this masked witness?
Watt: Yes, because they put him up in this big, hotel. You can't pay hotel bills for witnesses! One time we did have a witness who was in prison down in Florida and we paid for the witness and the matron--it was a woman, a murderess--to appear before the Rackets Committee. We also paid for the matron, to make sure the witness didn't run away. So there are certain things you can do, but everything is set out in the law, what you can do and what you can't. If you didn't limit it there would be many things that people would take advantage of.
Ritchie: You said that when Jackson took over as chairman he didn't change the staff dramatically the way it had been rumored, but were there any changes at all? What was the difference between Jackson as chairman of the committee and McClellan as chairman?

Watt: Jackson's favorite was the Subcommittee on National Security, which merged with us. He was greatly interested in foreign policy, the Russian grain sales and all that. So that was his main interest with that part of the subcommittee, and they worked closely with him. They had an office right next door and they were part of us, but they weren't; they were a separate entity actually (except that I paid all the bills). He had Richard Perle and Dorothy Fosdick, who are both brainy, brilliant people. The others were sort of incidental.
Ritchie: Did the subcommittees really merge, or were they really two separate entities that just happened to be under the same chairman? Did they work together?
Watt: Not really. We had one fellow, Elliott Abrams, who worked closely with them. I think probably he and Richard Perle were friends before when he was a practicing lawyer in New York. Then there were two or three that he employed from Washington State that worked very closely with that group. But with the regulars that had been on there before there was very little contact. If the girls couldn't do the work, Dickie (Dr. Fosdick) would bring it over to

me to get somebody on our staff to do it. Or we'd go over there, once a year Richard Perle would dictate and we'd send one of the girls over, because they only had a couple of part-time people over there. But as far as the work was concerned, Dickie kept abreast of all of it, but she didn't really participate. If we had an organization meeting or something, she was there. Or if we went to the Rules Committee to get money and all that sort of thing. But as far as the actual things we were working on, no, they had a separate operation.
Ritchie: When Jackson left the committee, did that subcommittee leave as well?

Watt: He's still vice chairman. I think there are a few--Richard Perle and three part-time people on our subcommittee payroll. Dorothy Fosdick works out of that office, but she's on Senator Jackson's payroll, just transferred. They get pretty good salaries and I think Senator Nunn would like to have that himself, to pay one of his people, because as I said that operation is not one that he takes part in that much. They only have hearings every one or two years, but they write

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reports and they do an awful lot of work with the State Department and so on. You don't necessarily have to have hearings to be active.

Ritchie: Senator Jackson had a bright staff around him and he had a lot of interest in international affairs and energy and military policy, but was he a very effective chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee?

Watt: He had hearings that he chaired on energy--and we had joint hearings with the Interior Committee, before it became the Energy Committee--we had several Cabinet level people up to testify, at one time we had witnesses who represented all the big oil companies in the country--we had that in the Caucus Room, I remember them all lined up the width of the room--that was the year he was running for President, so he was pretty busy anyway. Then we had hearings on grain for Russia, those were the things he was interested in, the international picture and energy. The other hearings we had he farmed out to Senator Huddleston who chaired them. Then Senator McClellan asked Huddleston, who was at the end of his first year, Senator McClellan was just very much impressed with

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him and asked him to go on the Appropriations Committee, so Senator Huddleston had to give up Government Operations. Then Senator Nunn took over chairing. The only one that Senator Jackson chaired was the one hearing a year that was the National Security hearing. Of course, I handled them all, but that was just at the clerical level.

Ritchie: So he was something of an absentee chairman?

Watt: He was around and took an interest. He always had all the information that everyone else had. But he had two other big committees that were very active; Energy Committee had hearings every day; Armed Services Committee is a very active committee. So actually it was a time thing.

Ritchie: What about his presidential race? Did that eat into his time on the subcommittee?

Watt: Not really, I think it would have been the same. For instance, they had a special train that went to New York when he was in that primary, that's the only one that I remember. When he was running he got the Washingtcn legislature to vote that if he didn't get the presidential thing he could still be elected to the Senate--they'll do that,

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you know, Lyndon Johnson did it. I don't think it ate into his time that much. We knew he was running, because they had a special committee for the presidency and I know there were people on it, one girl from National Security who was on our payroll left and went on that payroll, and there was one man from his office that had been there for a long time, who had been chief coulsel of Post Office and Civil Service when Olin Johnston of South Carolina was chairman, and then Jackson had him in his office-he's now mayor of Harper's Ferry, his son-inlaw was on our staff until recently, Keith Atkinson.

When you talk about staff staying, Bob Dunne had already made a commitment to teach in a school in England but they did ask him to stay on. Paul Kamerick had been there a long time and he was not that active during the period of the last year's of Senator McClellan's chairmanship. We had that counsel who sort of queered everything, so Paul Kamerick retired. We had two people reimbursable from GAO, they retired and we were paying them the difference, one of those retired annuitant type of

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things. He got rid of them because he didn't think they were needed, they really didn't do that much anyway. He got rid of the ones who at that point weren't very active. Of course, Howard Feldman was the one who made the decision, because the Senator had no way of knowing who was who or what kind of work they did. John Brick got sick and died, that was that first year when Jackson was chairman. Now the girls were the same, the staff editor was the same.

Al Calabrese had been on the subcommittee since 1955, and he was an investigator. He was a little quick tempered and some little incident happened. lie was down in the cafeteria having coffee and they wanted him. Howard got a little upset that he was down there so long, and Howard called him on it, so he quit, got mad and retired.

Then we had the GAO people and had to let them go. For years we had them free, with GAO paying. So any of them that were still on had to go back, we had about three of them that had been on for quite a few years. We didn't take them on, but they didn't want to transfer to our payroll because of the fact that the insecurity was so great at that point.

We didn't know how long Senator Jackson would be there, we didn't know if he wanted to keep people--see he had some of his own people he wanted to hire. So that's about it. Right now there are only three people on the staff who were there when McClellan was, one since 1953, the other since 1956. I was the oldest in terms of service for many, many years. Now Lavern Duffy and Rosemary Kennedy are the two longest serving. There is also Roland Crandall, but he was with the Government Printing Office and worked with us while he was on their payroll, when Senator McClellan was there, so that makes three.

Ritchie: Right after Senator Jackson took over in 1973 the Watergate scandal began to appear. It seemed surprising to me that a committee like yours which

was so interested in corruption in the government really didn't get involved in the Watergate investigation very much. Was there any particular reason for that?
Watt: I'm not sure that we had the authority.
Ritchie: Wouldn't it have come under your general authority to investigate executive malfeasance?
Watt: But this thing started with political parties, it was a break-in at the Democratic headquarters.

That was what it was all about. The fact that the President and the people around him were involved harked back to the political thing. I don't think we had the authority. We didn't want it anyway, because the full committee could have taken it. But you see, Senator Ervin was chairman of the full committee at that time, and he became chairman of the Watergate investigation. And as a result they did nothing on the full committee for all that time, just sat around doing needlepoint. So I don't believe there was anybody on that subcommittee that would have wanted it. It almost had to be a select committee.
Ritchie: Why don't you think anybody would have wanted it?
Watt: Well, to begin with, you have almost as many Republicans on the subcommittee as you have Democrats. There would have been just a battle, a fistfight. That's the way I feel about it. For instance, on that committee we had Javits, Percy, and Brock (who is now chairman of the Republican National Committee). But I don't think it would have been the right forum for it.
Ritchie: The subcommittee did investigate Robert Vesco, who was peripherally involved with Watergate.

Watt: Well, that was because we were having hearings on the SEC, and it came about through his SEC involvement. There was a lot of corruption there with the SEC, and then his name came into it. Then of course they tried to make a little political hay out of it.
Ritchie: Who did?
Watt: The Democrats, which was natural. I don't know how much there was on the Senate level, but on the staff level it was certainly a political thing.
Ritchie: On the staff they saw that as a good political move?
Watt: Well, it could have been from the top down, but I don't know that. I just know what. was going on at my level.
Ritchie: What in particular was going on?
Watt: Oh, they were following up all these leads. And you remember we had Elliott Roosevelt come back from Portugal, and there was this whole big tie-in.
Ritchie: You never got Vesco to testify, did you?
Watt: No, he never came back to the country, because he would have been slapped in jail. Right now he can't come back, although they would like

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to get him back. They even tried to involve him in the White House now, in the Carter administration. Somebody tried to bring him into that, and how much there is I don't know. I've seen pictures of him, and he keeps popping up in different spots, not only on the Republican side, but on the Democrats side, too. And somehow there was a tie-in to narcotics traffic. It's all very much in the shadows, in the gray area.

Ritchie: So would you say that the Vesco hearings were mostly to raise some publicity at the time? They couldn't get him back or prosecute him, but they could get some publicity.

Watt: I'm not sure how important that was. It kept popping up, but with a name like that you can't help but get publicity. The same thing happened with the Murray Chotner case, they tried to make political hay with that. We had executive sessions, and they went to California in 1956. They had his brother and him both. Later Murray came here and was killed in an automobile accident; he had the most beautiful wife--boy was she pretty. But it was those gray areas where you are not sure whether it was political or not.

Ritchie: During that whole period there were certain high points in terms of getting attention, like the Vesco case, or the Russian grain deal, and the fuel shortages. But my general impression is that the subcommittee didn't get the same kind of press attention then that it had gotten in earlier years.

Watt: No. Well, there were so many other subcommittees that had sprung up, even the subcommittees of Governmental Affairs were investigating some of the things that we had the authority for. Senator Chiles has one that we could very well go into. They all have different names now, and I don't recognize them, but thank goodness we're still Investigations. There are many things that other committees have gotten that we could have done, but you have got to have someone who is chairman that's not too busy and will go after these things, and say to the counsel, "You get your staff and go after this and get ready for hearings." You've got to have an interest at the top. There might be an interest, but other things will take priority. Of course, national security and energy are topmost in people's minds now, especially in Senator Jackson's.

Ritchie: I would have thought that Jackson, with his presidential ambitions and good staff, Would have been able to generate more publicity through that committee.

Watt: He was not that interested in investigating wrong-doing and so on. He was interested in energy and the armed services. Now, of the things he could do on that committee, he did have energy hearings and the Russian grain deal, but that was the only thing. The other things we went into really weren't of a political advantage to him, except that one senator said at one time that he would get his name in the paper, good or bad, he didn't care as long as his name was in the paper so people didn't for get. Anyway, I remember back when Truman was on

the committee, his name was on the front page of the papers every single day, so his name was a household word when he became vice president under Roosevelt. And that was all good, he had a good publicity man, press man.
Ritchie: Didn't Jackson have his own public relations man?
Watt: Yes, Brian Corcoran.
Ritchie: Did he handle public relations for the subcommittee as well?

Watt: Not really. He would go over the press releases that we gave him, and once in a while he would add something. He would come over to the hearings and see what was going on. Seeing that I was handling all the press distribution, there was really nothing for him-to do, Unless the press wanted some special information that the committee didn't have. But he was there to see that the press got things, and I had done that for years so he didn't have to worry about it. The circulation was there.
Ritchie: Did Howard Feldman have good relations with the press, too?
Watt: Yes and no. He would have a little conference with the press before a hearing, but if a call came in and he wasn't there, he was not good about calling the press back. Let's put it this way: he was not with publicity. I think he thought Corcoran should do it. Now Jerry Adlerman, Frip Flanagan, Bill Rogers, Bob Kennedy really went all the way out to be nice to the press. After that we didn't have the same relationship because the chief counsels were more intent on getting the investigations going and they were not that

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interested in the press. Up till then every one of our chief counsels was really good about the public and the press.
Ritchie: Was the same true about Owen Malone?
Watt: Owen Malone didn't want to talk to anybody in the press, as far as I know. I don't think he was interested. I don't know if he didn't want to handle them, or didn't have the experience to handle them, or if he just didn't want any part of it, but he saw very few of the press. Most of the time we used to have reporters in and out all the time, and after a while we didn't have anybody from the press come in. Individuals make a lot of difference with the success of a committee. I think this new man is going to be great.
Ritchie: Who is that?
Watt: Marty Steinberg. He came after I left, but he's a real smart young man, has a nice personality. How he operates, I don't know. They've been having hearings all week, but of course the minority did all the work on it--they've been working on it for months.
Ritchie: One other point, I understand that before the Army-McCarthy hearings one senator coul& hold a hearing by himself.

Watt: There's a resolution setting forth what a quorum for a hearing is. In most cases the committee sets what the quorum shall be. Well, up until that point you could have a hearing with just the chairman present. When the three Democratic senators left the committee in July of 1953, and then came back in late January of 1954, one of the stipulations was that there would be at least two members present at any hearing where there were witnesses being sworn, open or executive. That went on for two or three years, maybe more. In about 1957 or 1958 we had a great deal of trouble holding hearings because we couldn't always get two members. So then they put a stipulation in that two members would have to be present unless an authorization was signed by the chairman and the ranking minority member that a one-man qporum could conduct a hearing, open or closed. That was repeated each year in our rules for about five years. And then they just dropped that and made it a rule in the Rules of Procedure which were approved by the subcommittee, which made it legal.
Ritchie: That's something that always surprises me whenever I go to a committee hearing that there often is just one senator there.

Watt: There are so many committee hearings, and the senators are on so many subcommittees. There are very few Democrats now who aren't chairmen of subcommittees. Even this new reorganization has enlarged the subcommittees. They were trying to cut down, but they cut down on the full committees, and of course, the subcommittees are more expensive than full committees, because they are allowed a certain number of people on the full committee. If you appropriate money in a budget . . . for instance, we were appropriating money for a staff with the minority, because they get a third of the staff and a third of the salary money. Last year when I made the budget up we made it for thirty-eight or forty people. On the full committees the maximum that you can have is twelve, including the minority. So that's quite a difference, and actually they are not saving any money. They are going to have these committees one way or another.
Ritchie: Does it affect the work of the committee in any way that only one or two senators show up for committee hearings?
Watt: The staff does all the work anyway. The staff briefs the committee members. We used to have

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a briefing for the senators before a hearing, and then it was up to them if they came or not. Frequently, they would send a representative from their staff; some of their staff was assigned to the committees. Of course, now they have that special resolution that they passed two or three years; ago, where one person is hired to work with the senator and all of his committees to keep him up to date. They work out of his office, and it's a separate fund and it's not paid by the committee.
Ritchie: Do the staff members prepare the questions for the senators to ask?
Watt: Yes.

Ritchie: For senators other than the chairman?
Watt: What we do is to make up a folder for each senator on the committee. The ranking minority chief counsel gets all the material that's being prepared in advance and then he takes it to the ranking party members. It's mostly the ranking minority member and the chairman who are the most religious about coming. In that folder we put all of the statements of the witnesses for the next day, all the questions that have been prepared by the staff based on

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interviews plus the statements (a witness is supposed to present his statement to us forty-eight hours ahead, or the day before anyway). Sometimes the staff works way into the night on these things because they kept revising them. Then there's the witness list and the opening statement of both the chairman and the ranking minority member, and any other pertinent information like exhibits that they might be interested in and would be put in the record later. Each senator gets a folder like that. I think that the subcommittee has probably always been better prepared than most subcommittees and committees.
Ritchie: Did they handle the Bert Lance hearings?
Watt: No, that was the full committee, but there were two or three of our staff working on it.
Ritchie: There was some criticism at that time that the senators themselves didn't ask very good questions, and that the answers evaded their questions.

Ritchie: There's been some comment that senators working out of prepared questions aren't very good at thinking up follow-up questions when the answers aren't to the point.
Watt: Well, the chief counsel is sitting right there and he's worked on the hearing for months. Our staff has not had that problem, I don't believe. One time, during the time when Senator Jackson was running for president, he had Senator Huddleston and sometimes Senator Nunn chair the hearings. Senator Huddleston worked for two years I guess, he chaired all of our hearings because of Senator Jackson's involvement elsewhere and he did a good job.

Ritchie: What was it about Huddleston that made him stand out?
Watt: I don't know. Just his interest and his personality. But he was well-prepared and did his homework. And he had Carolyn Fuller who worked on committees for him; she worked for a Virginia senator at one time. She worked right along with him and kept him briefed. She came down to the committee and got all the information for him, as if she was on the committee staff. And she worked with the chief counsel and minority and the people who were working on a particular hearing. He was, as well prepared as any chairman that we ever had. Because he had someone to look out for him; and apparently she did the same thing for him with the Agriculture Committee--of course, they were in committee

all the time! But I was very much impressed with Senator Huddleston and liked him very much.
One day we were going to hold a hearing and couldn't get either Senator Huddleston or Nunn, so Senator James Allen chaired it. Of course, he was so busy on the floor of the Senate and in the Agriculture Committee that he had not been to the hearings at all. One

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of our staff who had worked on this particular investigation went up and in a half an hour briefed Senator Allen. He came and chaired that hearing, and you would have thought that he had been there and knew everything about it. It was just astounding. What a brilliant mind he had. And to see him you wouldn't get that impression. But that was a brilliant hearing and he had only a half an hour's briefing.
Ritchie: He had a very retentive mind for detail.
Watt: Yes. He could just glance at something and take it in. But it was beautifully done.
Ritchie: There have also been considerable changes in the size and functions of the staff to help the senators.
Watt: About three years ago they hired extra people, not on the committee payroll, but they were on a special payroll working in the senators' offices. They held up on our resolutions until that went through. A staff member would maybe personally handle maybe four committees or subcommittees for the senator, because they figured they weren't getting enough out of the staff of the committees

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themselves. And I guess they did need people like that, because there's so many hearings going on--there's just too much. I don't know how they do justice to them. And they complain that the senators don't do anything. They ought to come down here and follow any one of them around for a week. The more you do, the more they expect of you.
For instance, Senator Walter "Dee" Huddleston, was acting chairman of the subcommittee. I never saw anybody work so hard. Of course he was on Agriculture Committee and on Government Operations, but Agriculture was meeting all the time at that point. He was just on the go all the time. And he was a freshman senator. Now Senator Nunn is on Armed Services and that's a full-time job in itself, and he's chairman of a subcommittee. He's on the full committee, and they have many hearings.
I was talking to the staff editor of the full committee the other day, and he said that in July--now there are about six subcommittees of Governmental Affairs--they had one hundred hearings in the month of July, that includes the full committee and all those subcommittees,

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that he has to do the editing for. Stop and think of that, that's just one committee! That's just an example of the volume of work that goes on in committee. Senator Ribicoff has been more active, so far as hearings are concerned, than any other senator since I've been here, in Governmental Affairs, except that he's farmed the hearings out to the chairman of the different subcommittees. Then when it comes back to the full committee, why sometimes he has them chairing them, too. I think he's on Finance too, if I remember rightly. So it's been a more active committee than it has ever been, during the time that he has been chairman, because he has concentrated on that committee. For instance, Senator Ervin had Watergate, so nothing went on while he uas chairman of the committee. Someone else might have committee hearings, but we didn't have all that many. Watergate was the Main thing then.

Ritchie: There is one story that I have been looking forward to asking you about since we began these interviews. Could you recount your celebrated encounter with the Architect of the Capitol?

Watt: Oh dear, that's a whole story in itself. Let's see, in January 1976 one icy morning, I used to drop my husband off around by the elevator entrance and most of my driving was from there around to our parking place where the gate by the senators' driveway is, where they have outside parking in the old Russell Senate Office building. I park right between the two entrances, because they had asked us years ago to take that place because Senator Milton Young wanted the parking place we had--it was a favor to take it, but of course it was the best place in the Senate. The nurse parked next to us, Mrs. Hall. Jonsey the police man used to cover the area and was very protective of us, saw that nobody took our parking place.

Well, this one morning, Jonsey was directing traffic out in the street and I came around the corner and into the parking space and there was ice and the car slid into the iron gate. A piece of the gate, one little piece like this, fell out. Jonsey dashed up and turned the ignition off. I'd gotten out of the car with the ignition on because I was so shocked. Then I called my husband and then they

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sent the accident squad. There was some man who was new, he had been on night duty. He came along and said, "Come on, sit in the car and I'm going to get all of this information." I looked at him, you know it was a cold morning, and I said, "Well, you come down to my office and we'll sit in my office. I'm not going out in your car." I felt like a criminal the way he addressed me. So he took this information down--of course, all the staff were agog, but they're all very good, they never interfere in anybody else's affairs, which I think is unusual in a staff not to be prying into other people's private lives. Then I called the Architect's office and made an appointment to go over and report. There was one fellow over there that Watt knew, and then there were the lawyers. So I told them the story of what had happened; then Attorney Tyler came over and got a statement from me

and went back and apparently recommended to the Architect that they drop it; there was no point, there had been ice there and it was not my fault. They hadn't sanded or anything. But the Architect decided no, he was going to follow

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this thing through and I was going to pay. Then Watt got the insurance company to come out. Their man looked it over and he gave a statement that there was no way that they could pay because of the ice.

Ritchie: There wasn't any damage to your car, was there?

Watt: Just $1.75 for a little rubber tip on the bumper. Then I got an affidavit from the mechanic, how much he had paid for the rubber to put on it. Then the Architect got estimates from the iron works to replace the gate for something like $9,000 and they sent me the bill!

Ritchie: What did you think when you received that letter?

Watt: I couldn't believe it. It was on my birthday and I was sick in bed with the flu! I said, "I can't believe it!" of course I never had anything like this before. I was all at sea, and Watt was furious, but he stayed out of it pretty much and let me handle it. Then one day I was over in Senator McClellan's office and I said, "I need some advice." I've never asked a senator for any help, just advice. I told him about what had gone on, and he was quite perturbed about it. The next day, as I remember he told me about it, there was a

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meeting of the full Appropriations Committee, and while they were waiting for them all to get together, he was discussing the case and telling the Appropriations Committee all about it, and how ridiculous it was for the Architect to act that way. Then Mr. George White the Architect of the Capitol sent the case down to the Justice Department to sue me.

Ritchie: You hadn't paid and said you weren't going to pay?

Watt: No, I ignored the letter; I had no intention of it. Well, what the heck, there was ice there, it wasn't my fault. Maybe if I'd been a better driver I wouldn't have gotten on the ice, but I didn't see the ice. Then Senator McClellan told Jim Calloway Chief Counsel of the Appropriations Committee to have me write a memo and discuss the whole thing. In the meantime, the people who had come to repair the gate said the only thing holding the gate together was "rust and dust." Of course, that was in the memo, the whole thing was put in the memo. I had one of the lawyers on the committee write it for me, because I wanted to be sure it was the way it should be.

Then Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, who was chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that handled the funds of the Architect of the Capitol, got the memo. I don't know who talked to Mr. White, but Mr. White called Jim Calloway and asked, "Is Senator McClellan serious about pursuing this thing?" Senator McClellan had threatened to go to the floor of the Senate if Mr.

White didn't drop it, because he thought it was a crime for one poor little person like me to be sued for $9,700! All the while I was upset, this was going on into May. Jim called the senator, he was in a meeting somewhere, and. said the Architect was on the phone and wanted to know if he was serious about following up on this thing. Senator McCellan used a couple of swear words and said, "You're darn right I am! I've never been more serious in my life."
At that point, the Justice Department came up and interviewed me, and Jonsey, and other people. Senator McClellan had a friend at Justice and he told him, I don't want this thing put in a back drawer. I want you to have somebody come up here and investigate it. I

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don't want any favors, I just want this investigated thoroughly." So that's what they got. A lady lawyer--lovely lady--came up and interviewed me. In the meantime, after that telephone conversation, apparently Mr. White must have called the Justice Department and asked to withdraw the complaint. But if there had been anything on it, once it goes down there they have to pursue it no matter who wants to withdraw the complaint.
Then I got a copy of a three-paragraph letter back that they had decided to take no further action regarding the case. It said they based their decision "upon the high probability of the United States being found contributorily negligent for failure to place salt on the area; the vast difference in the amount requested by our claim ($9,900.00) and the amount of damage to the Watt vehicle (approximately $2.00), and the request by your office for no further action." So that was over, but every day from January through May something was going on with this thing. It was really an unpleasantness, especially saying they were going to sue me for $9,900.00 and the Justice Department was going after me. It

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was a really traumatic thing, not having any dealings with the law before!
Ritchie: But it was nice to have the chairman of the appropriations Committee on your side.
Watt: Yes. One of the things the Justice Department lawyer asked me was how many people knew about this. I said, "Everybody I know, and I know everybody in the United States Senate." Every day people would stop me and say, "What's the latest." I had to give a running report on what was going on with this thing. Even when Senator McClellan was in Walter Reed hospital he would have Jeannine Ragland, his private secretary, report to him every day on the progress of the case. Not everybody has an experience like that! Someone in the Architect's office later told us, "Boy, they tangled with the wrong person when they tangled with Ruth Watt!" But I didn't do anything, I just told everybody what was going on.
I had told Stuart Statler, who was a young smart lawyer with the minority on the Permanent Subcommittee, about it and he wanted to go to Senator Percy so he

could go after the case. I said, "No, don't do anything." Because I had already asked Senator McClellan for his

advice, and if one other person had gotten into it, he would have dropped it. You know, these senators don't want somebody else working on something they're working on. But if Senator McClellan hadn't acted, why I'm sure Senator Percy would have, because Stuart was so incensed at the whole thing.

WATT: Senator Percy is so nice. I've heard about how thoughtful he is. Anyone of his staff if they were going away or were sick, he's always concerned. Of course, having lost that daughter I suppose made him that much more sensitive, but I think he is just naturally a kind person. He would have all of his staff out to his house at Christmas and at different times, and was always doing nice things. I was so surprised when I retired, I didn't have any of the senators on the list to be asked to my retirement party and Stuart was quite upset because I hadn't made sure that Senator Percy was asked. Well, I didn't think that they knew me that well. All that they had ever seen me was at hearings. I wasn't even sure that they knew my name. Of course their staffs did, because I had so much contact with them. But Senator Percy called me over to his office

and told me what a great job I'd done all those years, and had my picture taken with him. He's the one that put that statement and resolution about me in the Record. He was so kind. I was very much impressed with that because as you know I never made a point of walking into senators offices, I never felt I needed to as long as my job wasn't in jeopardy. I did my job and could fight my own battles pretty well, at least until this came along!

Now Senator Jackson was so busy with other things, you just couldn't get that close to him. I could go anywhere and get him to sign a subpoena, he was always available, if I could find him, for an emergency. He was, of course, always in a hurry because he had so many things going, he was so backed up with everything. But anytime I wanted to get to him I could, and I did when it was necessary, especially getting a letter or a subpoena signed, or putting people on the payroll.

Now Senator Nunn was not chairman long enough for me to judge. He became chairman in January and I left the end of May, and in the meantime I was just a retired annuitant. To me he is very much like Senator McClellan in his approach to investigations.

I will say one thing for Civil Service, I told the committee I would stay on for a thousand dollars a month plus my retirement, I retired the end of February and went off the payroll the end of May. So I was getting retirement money for March and I got my check the 16th of April--and I've known people that waited six

months before they got their first check. How I got through that fast I don't know. I couldn't believe it. But it's a pretty darned good retirement. Except for hospitalization it's all gravy now, but wait till April of next year then I'm going to have a bite out of it for taxes! Watt and I were paying forty-seven percent taxes when I retired.

Ritchie: Well, all together you worked for the Senate for thirty-two years.

Watt: In the same office, 101 Russell S.O.B.

Ritchie: The Senate must have changed a lot over the years you were there. Looking back, what were the most noticeable changes?

Watt: It got so much bigger. Every year it would get bigger. They would make changes to economize

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but it would get bigger. When they started out with the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, Public Law 601, they set up just certain committees, I think there were fifteen of them. I came in February of 1947, right after that reorganization. That was to economize and get it streamlined. Well, then they started setting up subcommittees of the standing committees. There was one committee, a small surplus subcommittee of Expenditures in Executive Departments, which was the name of the Committee which is now Governmental Affairs, that merged with us. We had their authority plus the malfeasance, etc., from the War Investigating Committee, and that was all the authority we had back then. There was a Surplus Property Subcommittee that was set up in 1947, Senator Ferguson was chairman, and in January and February of 1948 they set up the Investigating Subcommittee and merged the Surplus Property and the funds, which was about $5,000, and the staff, a small staff. Salaries then were so small. And we had that one authority.

The Senate as a whole was all housed in one building. No offices off somewhere, just

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the present Russell Building. Everything was in there. There were some little offices over in the Capitol, but they were small and not that many. We had one carry-out kitchen and a dining room on the second floor where the Commerce Committee is, just below the Republican Policy Committee. That was the cafeteria then and we used to gather there in the morning. Everybody knew everyone in the building. We would go up there and have a coffee klatch in the morning. It was like a social club, at ten o'clock in the morning for a half an hour or so. We still got all our work done.

There weren't as many people, so less people did the same work they are doing now. The highest ceiling on salaries for staff was $10,000--and they're now making $50,000. The chief counsel was making $10,000. When Bob Kennedy came aboard it was just a little over $10,000, he was making that himself. I remember that on the full committee there was only one person who could get

that salary. Our staff director on the full committee, Walter Reynolds, was very upset because Bob got it and he didn't. But only one person could

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have it. They weren't doing much on the full committee because Senator McClellan was chairman of both and his concentration was on the subcommittee. I started off at $3,600 and I felt like a millionaire. When I left, with the extra annuitant money, my salary was listed as $36,0OO. I was making $32,000 or $33,000 when I retired but the difference as a retired annuitant raised the gross I was supposed to get. So that shows you the inflation. I had very few raises over those years, it was mostly the legislative increases. I had some raises but not that much. But that shows you how much the cost of living went up.

When Senator McClellan first took over, or maybe when Senator McCarthy was chairman, our gross appropriations for the full year was $86,000. Now the monthly payroll is that. And that originally covered everything, including salaries, travel, witnesses, stationary, everything. And we always turned money back. The increase from 1947 to now has been unbelievable. I can remember when cab fares were 20 cents no matter how many people were in the car. Gas must have been 5 cents a gallon!

Ritchie: You mention the growth of the size of the Senate, do you think that the growth has made the Senate more productive, or has it gotten in the way of productivity?

Watt: I think it's gotten too top heavy. Some of these committees I think could be consolidated, or at least the subcommittees. Now the thing is to let every majority senator have a subcommittee chairmanship, because he gets publicity and prestige that way. There are a lot of them that could be consolidated. Of course, you have to realize that the population explosion has contributed to this a lot. You've got so many more people that have turned of age. The whole government has gotten top heavy, it's not just up here. I don't think we've really been able to keep up with the times, they've gone so fast. But I'm just philosophizing from my own observations.

Ritchie: What about the senators, how have they changed? How would you compare the senators today to the senators when you first came here?

Watt: To me they were older then, because I'm older now and they seem like babies today! Thirty two years ago my chairman was sixty years old, Senator Brewster, and I was thirty-seven. He

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was old as far as I was concerned. Now looking back I'm almost seventy and I'm looking at these senators who are thirtysix, I'm in a different position! My gosh, Senator Brewster would be way up in his nineties if he were still living.

But I'm not so sure that they've changed all that much. The moral fiber of the senators and the people around them I can't tell you, because I don't know-what

goes on now. I know what went on then, behind the scenes. But I'm not sure that there's that much difference. I think human nature is the same no matter what era you are in. Of course, I thought the senators were great, they had a great deal of stature. The first few years I worked here a freshman senator was seen and not heard. Now they start off the day they come, making the splash.
The first year I was here we had Kenneth McKellar, who was really up in years. He had to have help going around the corridors, he held onto somebody's arm. We had Senator Vandenberg who was quite a famous person as chairman of Foreign Relations. I had a great deal of admiration for Senator Ferguson. I'm

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trying to remember who was chairman of the Labor Committee. I rarely went to hearing--I think I went to four hearings that weren't my own committee's during the thirty-two years I was there. One of them was John L. Lewis' testimony before the Labor Committee in the Caucus Room.
Ritchie: Was Senator Robert Taft the chairman?
Watt: I don't remember. I remember that Senator Tobey was there, because he was always spouting the Scriptures, and Senator Bricker was there, I remember him because he was on our committee. I remember that John L. Lewis made those senators look like jackasses. He had all the information right at his fingertips. They were going after him and really weren't prepared. My mouth was just wide open, I couldn't believe that anyone could do that to a senator. But he really was a powerful man.
I went when Frank Costello testified before Senator Kefauver's Crime Committee, that was an evening hearing, the first live televsion coverage they ever had. Then I went to Bob Kennedy's hearing before the Judiciary Committee for Attorney General. Maybe there was a fourth but I don't know what it was.

Those were the only times I ever went to a hearing that wasn't ours. Even the Watergate hearings, some people tried to get me to go to those, but I said, "Uh-uh, that's like taking a busman's holiday to go to another hearing." I wasn't that interested in somebody else's hearing, you could see it on television at night.
Ritchie: Were the senators more formal in the past than they are now?
Watt: I think they were more formal. I know that Senator Brewster was a very dignified man, and Senator Ferguson was. We had people like Senator Carl Hatch who later became a judge, who was in his cups some of the time. And Senator Tom Connally from Texas who was six foot four, I remember him on the Senate floor staggering down the aisle.
I remember Senators Millard Tydings and Burnet Maybank and some of those people had their own little bar up on the fourth floor. We were having an executive session one time and they were in the back room--we had borrowed Tyding's office when Senator O'Conor was on the committee--and we could hear the tinkling of glasses in the room next to us, when Maybank

and Tydings and those people were back there. That made quite an impression on me!

Speaking of drinks, one time when Senator George Bender of Ohio was on the committee, he was an unusual person, let's put it that way. He came over from the House and he was well know, you always heard about the Bender Committee. Well, one day when we were having hearings in 357 Senator Bender called his secretary and she came in with a tray of glasses with ice and bourbon in every one of those glasses to the hearing. He was going to serve the committee! Of course, none of them would drink it--Bender might--but they had desks with drawers in them, so every senator put his glass in the drawer, and the place smelled like a brewery! So after the hearings were over, Watt and I had to go around and clean all those glasses of booze out. That was the first time I had ever seen that, but Bender didn't care what he did. His secretary works on the House side now, she said, "I admire him, he does what he feels like doing. He doesn't follow the rules the way all the other senators do."

Ritchie: How much effect would you say that television has had on the Senate?

Watt: I would say in some cases a great deal, especially when they are running for office and need that exposure. They're going to come to the hearings because they know they're going to get that free exposure. It can't help but effect them.

Ritchie: When did television really begin to cover those committee hearings?

Watt: There were some about 1955, because I can remember Bob Kennedy calling some of the senators saying, "We're going to have television today." Sometimes we had trouble getting a quorum, and that would help. But before that even--of course, McCarthy never had any trouble getting publicity, until after he was censured.

Ritchie: You say that it was easier to get a quorum when the hearings were televised. Did you notice the senators playing to the cameras and did that change the nature of the hearings in any way?

Watt: I think they asked more questions. Of course, the committee staff always has prepared questions for everybody and they can divide them up. They did the footwork. Now we have so many minority staff that the minority works up their own questions, but they each compare

them so there won't be any duplication of questions. If a senator goes in cold to a hearing he has the questions all prepared in front of him; sometimes you could tell if they were prepared and the questions they asked were their own.

People like Senator John Kennedy, and Senator Allen, and Senator Muskie, they were seasoned senators and knew what they were doing. But the younger ones are not always--I remember one hearing we had last year with a couple of new ones who asked questions that were not pertinent and pretty innocuous. The press is pretty with it too because they will concentrate on a senator if he's

brilliant and has some substance, whereas if you get one who is doing this just to ask questions they won't even bother to photograph. him. They turn their cameras off. Most of the time it's newsreels anyway and they have to cut it way down. They take a lot of footage but then they use maybe a minute or two deperiding on how interesting he is. Of course, the Mafia people, they got coverage because they were colorful and made good news. Sometimes the important things don't get in there because they are not that newsworthy. You go through a

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paper and look at the headlines, if it sounds interesting you read it, and the rest of it you don't bother with, because you can't read it all. Especially the *New York Times* on Sunday!

But I think as a whole they haven't changed that much, it's just that to me they're younger. But some of them are more knowledgeable than the older ones were. And things have expanded so, we didn't have all this electronic world then. They had the first subcommittee on aviation when I came on the Hill, because I took the minutes of it, they hadn't gotten a staff yet. Senator Brewster was going to be chairing it as a subcommitteE of the Commerce Committee. That was the first aviation subcommittee in the Senate and that was 1947. So you see how much the Senate has enlarged, and that's one reason why it has become so top-heavy, because you have all these different areas that you didn't have then.

We had very little television back in 1947. 1 think I had my first set in 195O, it was black and white. I saw the first television when it was just local at Mark Lansburg's. He was on the staff at Children's Hospital. We

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went to his house for a meeting and I took the minutes., and he had a little television, which picked up just local stations, it never went beyond Washington because the system wasn't expanded that much. Just a little picture screen-I couldn't believe you could get pictures over the air. I can also remember the first radios they were making in 1920, so in my lifespan there has been the greatest progress in everything that you could ever imagine. The splitting of the atom and all the atomic stuff, everything has just come along so fast.

Ritchie: You talk about all the changes in the Senate in general, what about specifically the Permanent Investigating Subcommittee; how different is it from the committee you first joined in 1948?

Watt: The subject matter is entirely different, Then we were investigating just government agencies, that's all we had the authority for. Then the next thing was labor rackets, and that was a separate select committee. I don't know if I told you how the subcommittee got that authority. It was very interesting, the way things operate up here behind the scenes. Senator McClellan had made up a resolution

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to continue the Rackets Committee or to have it incorporated in the authority of the subcommittee. Well, there were seven senators on the subcommittee and they voted it down, 4-3. 1 think Senator Jackson was the deciding vote, he didn't want it continued by the subcommittee. Senator Goldwater was running for president and there was another whole group in the Labor Committee, and I think they decided that the committee had had enough.

Senator McClellan thought it ought to be pursued because of Jimmy Hoffa and other matters that were still up in the air. Senator Hubert Humphrey had a subcommittee of Government Operations, and I'm not sure if it was the one that Senator Ribicoff later got on government reorganization, but there was some controversy about it. Back then each subcommittee resolution was passed on its own, not as part of the full committee's resolution the way it is now. They had held up on Senator Hunphrey's subcommittee, so Senator McClellan went to Senator Carl Hayden who was Chairman of the Rules Committee and they put a rider on Senator Humphrey's subcommittee resolution, Section 5, and incorporated all the labor authority and

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indicated it should come back to the subcommittee. In order for Humphrey to get his they had to pass that, too. So he got his labor racket authority and I had to make up two payrolls every month and had two different funds. Senator Humphrey didn't know what had happened to him, it was already put in, but he wanted his subcommittee. I suppose a lot of things like that do happen. You can't outfox these senators who have been around a long time.

Ritchie: One final question I'd like to ask is when you look back over your thirty-two years with the Senate, who would you say was the most out standing person that you dealt with, a senator or any other?

Watt: Senator McClellan was chairman for so many years that I forgot we ever had another chairman, he was chairman for eighteen years. He would be my choice for the outstanding senator, and he was, really. The most outstanding person on the staff that I ever worked with was Bob Kennedy. He stands out in my mind because of his personality and the way he worked. They would be the two.

[End of Interview #6]

Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

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