

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Carson Killen

COLLECTION: 4700.1176

IDENTIFICATION: Worked as Administrative Assistant to Gillis Long from 1977-1985

INTERVIEWER: Gary Huey

PROJECT: Gillis Long

INTERVIEW DATES: July 17, 1987

FOCUS DATES: 1967-1985

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1711, Side A

First met Gillis Long while campaigning for John McKeithen during the 1963 governor's race; offered project's director position by Long in 1975; Killen in Washington D.C. in 1967 as a capitol policeman doing volunteer work for Speedy Long; met wife in Washington during this time; left Washington but always hoped to return with a delegate from Louisiana; became Gillis Long's administrative assistant in 1977 until Long's death in 1985; describes Long as a driven man of vision; stayed because of Long's loyalty and compassion; Long's vote to enlarge the Rules Committee in 1963 hurt him politically because it allowed civil rights legislation to reach the House floor; pressured by President Kennedy to enlarge the Rules Committee but later voted against the civil rights legislation; both McKeithen in 1963 and Speedy Long in 1964 used his vote on enlarging the Rules Committee against him saying he was allied with northeastern liberals; Long's votes on social issues hurt him in his early political career; Long's time with the Office of Equal Opportunity shaped his understanding of the business world and voting on social issues; Long had a reputation of getting things done while in Congress; describes Long's staff as excellent and hard working; Long did not get involved in foreign policy preferring to defer to the expertise of the State Department; Long's vote opposing funding of the Contras and his worry over the fallout after Vietnam.

Tape 1711, Side B

MX missile vote as example of how Long would change a vote if given better information; voting record on foreign policy issues tended to be more from a national standpoint than a regional one; Long's voting shift from labor to business particularly with the oil industry; Democratic spending and Republican cost cutting; Long's Sunset program to put time limits on funding; Long's reluctance to promote himself; Long's role in solving appointed delegate issue at the Democratic Leadership Conference before Walter Mondale's nomination; Long's Committee on Party Effectiveness that gave young members of the Democratic party a voice in Congress; Long as a workaholic; Long instrumental in moving the Democratic party toward a centric position; Long's social ease with all groups; using a chicken coop as a home; how the

Long name helped and hurt Gillis' political career by giving him name recognition but also labeling him; first conversation with Russell Long was after winning student body president at Louisiana State University; Gillis' relation to Russell Long and why Gillis ran for governor in 1963 rather than Russell.

Tape 1712, Side A

McKeithen and Long both running as Long candidate in 1963 governor's race; learning from mistakes of early campaigns; as a pioneer in Louisiana in use of mass media in political campaigns; Long's ability as a fund raiser; Long's meager lifestyle in relation to his fund raising ability; thoughts on why Long did not run for governor in 1979 including his growing power in Congress; speculation on Long's ability as a governor; Long's loyalty to friends as a political weakness; national contribution of giving bright, new members of Congress a voice; Long's dedication to the people of Louisiana and his friends; explaining how Long was a man to fear but did not hold grudges; Long's campaign to destroy Ned Randolph's voting base.

Tape 1713, Side A

Long seeing Dick Gephardt's potential; concern over special interest group's control over the Democratic party; how Long came to know Jimmy Carter; fund raising for Carter's reelection campaign; demand for yes and no answers to questions; demands of life in Congress; Long's financial sacrifice to be in Congress; voting for Congressional pay raises to aid younger members; Long's financial benefit of losing elections early in his career; frustration of working for Howard Hughes; Long's personal touch with voters; an honest man in corrupt Louisiana politics.

TAPES: 3 (T1711, T1712, T1713)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 3 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 71 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Transfer and copyright to Gary Huey

RESTRICTIONS: None.