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ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE: John A. & Arlene Mmahat

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IDENTIFICATION: John and Arlene Mmahat were close friends of Gillis Long since the 1960s. They actively supported him in all of his campaigns.

INTERVIEWER: Gary Huey

PROJECT: Gillis Long

INTERVIEW DATES: August 16, 1986

FOCUS DATES: 1960-1985

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1729

John Mmahat describes practical joke played on him on a fishing trip; meeting Gillis Long for the first time in 1960 or '61 at a party thrown by Hale Boggs; Russell Long getting Gillis a job with the Small Business Administration; Russell Long asking him to support Gillis for governor of Louisiana; Gillis' opposition for the two-term amendment for governor; Arlene Mmahat recalls meeting her future husband and Gillis at about the same time; John and Arlene describe Gillis' personality, generosity, and demeanor; Gillis' friendship with Sargent Shriver; Gillis' ability to inspire loyalty in people and his drive to succeed; inability of Gillis to be one of Louisiana's "colorful" politicians; Gillis as a student at LSU; Floyd Long (Gillis' brother) and the 1971 gubernatorial campaign; Gillis' loyalty to his family and friends; supporting Harry Connick for district attorney of Orleans Parish; reasons lost his bid for governor in 1971; reasons Gillis lost the 1963 gubernatorial election; importance of the black vote; anti-Long sentiment in Louisiana; relationship of Russell and Gillis Long; Washington, D. C. Mardi Gras Ball; fund raising; inability of Gillis Long to project his charisma on television; importance of entertainment value of Louisiana politicians; McKeithen's use the issue of segregation to defeat deLesseps Morrison in the race for governor; Gillis's role in the 1963 gubernatorial election; reasons Russell Long's opinion of McKeithen; Gillis running for governor in 1971; describes G. Long's campaign platform.

Tape 1730

Gillis Long's 1971 gubernatorial election platform; high cost of administration; Gillis's belief in the importance of higher education and vocational education; voucher system for education; growing independence of state legislators; role of organized labor in state legislative election; labor leader Victor Bussie; end of Longism in Louisiana and rise of the two-party system; impact of growing two-party system on politics; complexity of Gillis Long; competence and loyalty of Gillis's congressional office staff; Gillis's stabilizing impact on the Democratic party; Super

Bowl; negative impact of extreme liberalism on the Democratic party and Gillis's attempt to bring the party back to the middle; keeping up Gillis's personal phone directory; War on Poverty; Gillis traveling to foreign countries to study their economic systems; Social Security; Gillis Long as a mentor; poor management leading to poor worker productivity; problems with management of American industry; Gillis's support for economic planning; describes Gillis's personality; Gillis attempting to protect the varied interests of his congressional district; Gillis's pragmatism; Gillis's refusal to vote for civil rights legislation; animosity between John McKeithen and Edwin Edwards; Gillis Long's discomfort with being on television.

Tape 1731

Gillis Long's heart problems; impact of his illness on his later political career; making provisions for his staff before his death; Gillis's decision not to run for governor in the election which put Dave Treen into office (late 1970s); Gillis Long's administrative talent; Mmahat voting for Dave Treen for governor; Treen becoming governor with the support of Democrats; primary elections were personality contests; black voters in Louisiana in the 1960s; bloc voting; legacy of Gillis Long; conflict between Gillis's staff and Cathy Long; Cathy Vick's election as chairman of the State Democratic party; Patti Tyson as Gillis's administrative assistant and getting job with the Postal Rate Commission.

TAPES: 3 (T1729, T1730, T1731)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 3 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 106 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Transfer and copyright to Gary Huey

RESTRICTIONS: None