

Interviewer:

Herbert J. Hartsook

Dates:

July 15, 1996, Tapes 5-6  July 10, 1997, Tapes 7-8

Location:

Governor West’s office, Seibels Bruce Headquarters, Columbia

Synopsis:

John Carl West (1922-2004), South Carolina Governor, 1971 to 1975, and U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, 1977 to 1981, reflects on his experiences growing up in Kershaw County, at The Citadel, and in the U.S. Army during WWII; his education at the U.S.C. School of Law and law career; and distinguished career of public service. West represented Kershaw County in the state Senate, 1955 to 1967, and presided over the Senate as Robert McNair’s lieutenant governor, 1967 to 1971. As governor, West led the General Assembly to pass bills that established mandatory automobile insurance for all drivers, the Interstate Mining Compact, the Coastal Zone Planning and Management Council, State Housing Authority, Health Policy and Planning Council, Social Development Council, and the Commission on Human Relations. This period also saw the reorganization of the governor’s office and departments of Labor and Wildlife and Marine Resources. Finally, West’s efforts led to the creation of South Carolina’s second medical school. His service in Saudi Arabia came at a critical time due to its importance as a source of oil and a calming presence in the Middle East. His close relationship with President Carter and political skills made him particularly well suited for this difficult assignment.

Transcribers:

LaBarre Blackman and Wm. Brian Newsome
Hartsook: Your father died when you were nine months old. Your mother [Mattie Ratterree West] obviously was an unusual and remarkably strong woman. She took over the family farm and played a man’s role in running the farm and making a go of it. What effects did that have on the development of your character?

West: She, of course, was the biggest single influence probably in my life, certainly in my early life. She was a very strong person, very strong-willed. She made the decision, as she often told us, that she could have continued teaching, but it would have meant leaving my brother [Shelton J. West, Jr.] and me with a caretaker or family maid or something, and she wanted to be there and raise us. She was a very hard worker, very determined, and of course she survived the Depression as a relatively small, what we termed a four-horse farm. Four mules and one horse is what it really was. We had “day labor,” as we called it, not “sharecropping.” They were all black, of course. We called them plow hands. It was obviously in the days of the Depression and in days of complete segregation, although I worked in the fields with the blacks, was raised with them, and always felt a kinship...looking back, maybe sort of patronizing in a way, or protective.

[Speaking about] Mother’s influence, she was strict in some ways. Her life’s ambition was to make sure that my brother and me were able to get a college education. She’d had one year at a small college in North Carolina, Linville, and she had been able to get a teacher’s certificate, but she felt a college degree was the ultimate gift that she could give us. Having been a teacher, she monitored our progress in the school. She took a very active part in the local school. She was president of the P.T.A., and also, if she didn’t like the way the teacher was teaching, she’d go and tell her. Sometimes she’d go and sit in the classroom just to see how the teacher was teaching, which I’m sure didn’t endear her to some of the [educators]. In fact, one superintendent in particular didn’t endear her to him.

She made the decision to take my brother and me out of the small rural high school, Charlotte Thompson, and send us to Camden. That was a decision made in 1935-36 and it was a momentous decision for her, because first of all, it involved buying an automobile. It was six miles from our home into Camden, six miles of country roads. They were not paved. She got substantial criticism from the community, because taking us out and sending us to Camden High School as she did was looked upon as a disloyal act, and she was accused in the community of undermining Charlotte Thompson High School. Well, the fact is that it did disappear. It was not up to the standards of the [Camden] high school. I started Camden High in the eighth grade. My brother was two years ahead of me, and a lot of the difficulties that he had in college we attributed to the fact that he did not get the basic underlying education. So I was fortunate in that situation.

Mother put the interests of us, her children, above everything else. She never remarried, she worked on the farm, and she worked very hard. She not only farmed, but she raised vegetables, chickens, and so on. We sold
them at the community club market, of which she was usually the secretary or something. It was a small tin building behind the then-post office, and the farmers from around would bring produce in on Saturday mornings and sell to the local people. It was fresh vegetables, chickens, some of them dressed and some of them not. I learned early on how to weigh a live chicken by putting its head under the wing and swinging it. So I learned the value of a nickel then by going out early on Saturday morning, picking flowers or sometimes picking vegetables, and taking them in to the community club market and selling them for whatever we could get.

Hartsook: You noted that your mother would actually go to school and sit in the back of the classroom. Do you recall any other mothers doing that?

West: I don’t, no. [laughter] She was the only one that ever did that in our rural community.

Hartsook: Obviously you felt like you missed something not having a father, but it sounds like she really did everything she could to be both....

West: She did. She was father and mother. And of course we were fortunate in having some good neighbors who sort of filled in to the extent that they could. One of my favorites was Alex Bruce, who lived just down the road from us. We called him “Squire” Bruce. He married a schoolteacher who boarded with us and they built a house within sight of Mother’s. Alex used to take me fishing as a little boy. And then Allen Murchison, who subsequently became my law partner, lived on the adjoining farm and he was very kind to me. When I was dating in high school, he would lend me his automobile. So I had a lot of people who recognized that Mother was struggling and did their best to help out.

Hartsook: She must have been making a pretty good go of it, because I was reading the memoir [Gov. West had begun a memoir of his life] and you talk about losing the farm and then she gets it back. And yet, trying to merge that with the image of you and your brother tooting off in your car to go to school...?

West: She had a lot of determination and we worked and she was very thrifty. She had saved a little bit of money from her school teaching and that was sort of a nest egg. But she was a very strong person, very much a survivor. And, of course, one of the proud moments we had, when I was inaugurated governor, it was the coldest day in the history of Columbia. It was freezing, but she stayed out on the reviewing stage. She was eighty-four then. And she stayed there until the last minute. Everybody else went in and got a warm spot [laughter], but she stayed on that reviewing stand. She wouldn’t move.
Hartsook: What core values do you think she instilled in you?

West: She instilled, first of all, a very strong work ethic. We had to work for a living. I used to milk the cows, so she gave me a part of the butter money. We would sell a pound of butter for fifteen cents or twenty-five cents and I think she probably gave it all to me. But we earned our money and we recognized that we had to work for what we got. So a work ethic was certainly instilled.

She also had high ethical standards. She was hard but she was fair. Particularly we saw that with the black labor. She used to go out and supervise the field hands as we called them. She had a horse named Trina, and she would ride that horse up and down the fields to make sure they were plowing or hoeing and so on, and she didn’t do regular work but she didn’t hesitate to pitch in with physical labor where it was required. In her dealings with the blacks she had the reputation of being fair. Not atypical was the white land owner [who] would take advantage of the black laborers, and she never did that. I’ve seen time after time where she would take food to a family or tell them to go in the smokehouse and get a piece of meat if she knew they were running short.

Hartsook: You and your brother seemed to have been very close. What was he like?

West: I used to say that he was the best of the two boys and everybody agreed on that. And there was a lot to that. Shell was two years older. He was, again, a protector, a father to me in many ways. The one great satisfaction that we had was that relationship continued very close until his death.

He, of course, went to The Citadel, and one of the questions I know you had in your outline there is why he went to The Citadel, and I can’t answer that. He just decided early on he wanted to go to The Citadel. No one in our family or none of our circle of friends had gone there. He simply decided that’s where he wanted to go, and he went there. As I say, he had a tough time academically, largely we think because of his lack of a basic high school education. In fact, it’s a family joke...at the time we both were there; you had to pass physics in order to get a degree, regardless of your major. He was a history major. Well, he took sophomore physics three times to pass. He finally passed it with a D the last year. He could not have graduated without it. And when we established a scholarship in his name at The Citadel after he passed away, why, we laughingly said we were going to give it to physics majors.

He was a very hard worker. As we used to say, he didn’t have a lazy bone in his body. I would prefer to stay in the house and read a book and he didn’t mind getting out and working in the fields. I would hate to admit that I was considered the lazy one in the family but I’ll put it in a positive way—he was much more industrious than I was.

Hartsook: What did he tell you about The Citadel?
West: He told me that he liked it. It was tough but he liked it and he enjoyed it. Of course, the reason I went was that I got a full scholarship there. Otherwise I would have gone to Presbyterian College. I had a scholarship there worth about $250 a year, which was about half of what it cost. And the scholarship I got to The Citadel was a full scholarship, so I really had no [choice]. I was happy; one of the happiest days of my life is when I got that letter from General [Charles P.] Summerall saying, “You’ve been given the Clark Williams Scholarship,” because, again, this was in 1938. I had an insurance policy with what is now Liberty Life. Mother had taken out one on my brother and me. It was one of these policies they had in the ‘20s that built up a cash value for college. So that had been part of the nest egg that paid for the first two years of Shell’s education, and that was the nest egg that I had. Well, when we found that I had a full scholarship we were able to take that money, and then both of us worked with the NYA, which was a government program, [the] National Youth Administration.

Hartsook: Was the scholarship something you had to compete for?

West: Yes. Colonel Clark Williams, who was a New Yorker who bought a plantation down near Camden, was a very well-to-do, wealthy individual who was a great friend and admirer of General Summerall, who was president of The Citadel. Colonel Williams had served under him or had some relationship with him dating back to World War I, so he established a series of scholarships at The Citadel called the First Division A.E.F. Scholarships. He had a student from each of the various regions, and then because he liked Camden, and because his local manager, Mr. W.W. Bates, had a son who wanted to go to The Citadel the year before I got the scholarship—he gave Bill Bates a scholarship—he decided to keep that scholarship, which he did until he died, giving a graduate of Camden High School a scholarship each year. Bill Bates went on and got a Ph.D. in chemistry. He just died a couple of years ago. Herbert Moore, who got the scholarship after me, became head of the engineering department at Penn State. So it was a great opportunity for those of us there. But to answer your question, there were three or four applications from Camden for the scholarship and I was fortunate enough to get it.

Hartsook: Do you look back at The Citadel as being a shaping experience for you?

West: Well, it was a shaping experience in more ways than one. [laughter] No puns intended on the “shaping,” but I have always had a little tendency to put on weight. So I was a little bit plump when I went to The Citadel, and that first “Knob Week” as they call it...well, in the first couple of months at The Citadel, I lost about twenty or twenty-five pounds. And I kept that figure until well after I got out. In other words, it shaped me up physically and took a lot of pounds off.

And of course, the mental discipline was excellent. It wasn’t as hard for me as for some because to me it
was a great opportunity. It was the only opportunity I knew I’d have to get what amounted to a free education, so it was never any question of me liking it or not liking it. I liked it from the day that I got there. It was tough. We had, of course, the usual freshman [initiation], and it wasn’t that bad. And, of course, my brother was there. He was very careful not to interfere because he knew that if he tried to show any favoritism that would react negatively. But the fact that he was there and he was extremely well liked—we ended up in the same company largely because we were the same height—actually he was a great help to me there.

Hartsook: Was it pretty rigorous academically?

West: Yes. They gave us a placement test and they put us in sections. I got in the advanced section of the liberal arts group, and most of the people in that section were graduates of the eastern establishment preparatory schools. You see, I had skipped a grade between the third and fourth grades, so I only had ten years of grade and high school. And most of the others in the class had an extra year, twelve grades. That was before our state system went to twelve grades with many of the other states. So I found that I was not as well prepared. In fact, I was relatively poorly prepared and that was reflected in my grades the first year.

I would have gotten an inferiority complex or lost confidence in my own ability except for one great professor that I had, Dr. A.G.D. Wile. He taught my freshman English course. He subsequently became president of Newberry College. He was one of the great teachers I’ve ever known. As a matter of fact, I liked him so much that I took all of my electives in English courses, and I found that when I finished The Citadel I had practically a double major in political science and in English. I took every course I could under Dr. Wile and I remember that he even made Chaucer come alive for me. He was a great professor.

Hartsook: You like words, don’t you? I mean, you like language and communication.

West: Yes.

Hartsook: Is that why you wanted to become editor of the high school paper?

West: I guess so. I enjoyed it and, of course, things you do well, why, you enjoy, and vice versa. I started working on the high school paper. We called it a paper; actually it was done on a mimeograph machine. My first job was turning the crank on the mimeograph machine. Then I learned to type, so I did the typing, and then my last year I became the editor. It was fascinating. In fact, I developed a love of journalism then and for many years, going through college, I debated between becoming a lawyer or getting in the newspaper business. I solved that dilemma when I was in Washington during World War II by going to night school at George Washington
University. My real purpose was to find out if I liked the law and [wanted to] go into that rather than journalism. Well, it turned out I liked the law, and of course I was very fortunate, because in my later years I became a principal in a string of newspapers, so I got to satisfy both of my original ambitions.

Hartsook: What are your sharpest memories of The Citadel?

West: I guess there were three professors who were probably the dominant influence on me. One was the head of the political science department, Dr. Carl Coleman. He was from Greenwood as I remember. He was a good professor but [also] a good philosopher. He gave me a feeling for the law, for the Constitution. A lot of people laughed at him because he was sort of a vague fellow in a way, but he was an inspiring person. And Dr. Wiles was head of the English department. Then there was a professor in the English department named Arlen Cooke. I think he has a son who’s a lawyer here. He was from New England. He was the best editor I ever had. I took some creative writing courses under him and he was a tremendous editor. He would make you get your language down to the bare essence. So I guess if I had to say, in terms of people, the best memories I have are of those three professors. Certainly they were a great influence on me.

In terms of the other activities, I became active in the Debating Society, and I guess for the first time I got a chance to test and develop my speaking skills. I became captain of the debate team my last year. I began debating my sophomore year, I think. We developed a debate team that went all over the state and in fact we made trips up and down the East Coast. We went to national conventions and so on. It was a very, very interesting and worthwhile educational experience.

Hartsook: An interesting group of leaders has come out of The Citadel. Your class was a remarkable class. Do you think The Citadel as a shaping force is partly responsible for that, or do you think it attracts people that are bound for leadership roles?

West: I think it would be hard to say any particular single item, but there was a series of facts. One, of course, World War II broke out during our senior year, and so we all graduated on June 1 [1942], and on June 10 ninety-nine percent of us went off to service. You look back on that service, [and] you recognize that it was a very dangerous sort of thing—you didn’t know whether you were going to live or die, and a lot of them died—but it was an unselfish service. You were giving something to your country, and as I told a class this morning, I just finished a couple of lectures today on the balance of power in the Mid East and I referred to World War II as the last “good war,” in the sense that it had practically unanimous support, contrasting with Desert Storm which of course had divided support.

We spent four years in public service of a very special but very demanding kind. And we realized that
there were satisfactions in public service. The four years that we spent, many of us had opportunities—Fritz Hollings, for example, in North Africa, I in the Pacific, including Japan with the occupation forces—[and] you were there on a mission that was an unselfish mission in terms of you weren’t working for yourself. You were working for a bigger cause, a cause that transcended any selfish motives. The only selfish motive was trying to survive, of course. So, I think that our class, and I look back at the group that came into our university law school in 1946, many of them entered public service, and a lot of political people: Jim Mann, Hugo Sims in the Congress, innumerable people in the legislature, and of course Hollings, myself, and others.

**Hartsook:** That’s fascinating. I’ve never heard anybody put it quite like that, but it makes a lot of sense.

**West:** Well, as you reach the end of life you look back over your life, the things that you do for others are the items that give you the lasting satisfaction. If you have the feeling that you’ve served others or that you’ve helped others, that’s the real satisfaction that you get in life. They’re the treasures that are stored within you and make you feel, “Well, I haven’t wasted my life on this earth.” And, as I say, we got our baptism literally in World War II.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE 1; BEGIN SIDE 2]

**Hartsook:** I want to go back to something we skipped over. You talked about your job with the National Youth Administration. How did you get that and what kinds of things did you do?

**West:** The NYA, as it was called, paid you thirty cents an hour and you could work no more than fifty hours a month and get paid for it, which was $15 a month, which was a lot of money in those days. Anyone who applied was eligible. It was one of Roosevelt’s programs and virtually [anyone] who wanted to work and could show the need...and we showed the need. I had the scholarship but my brother needed all the help. As I remember, my $15 a month was added to his. He worked in the armory for a Sergeant Raught. He cleaned rifles and stacked them and all that.

I worked in the public relations side. That’s again where I enjoyed working and got paid for it, too. I wrote a column called “The Citadel Parade.” It was published in the [Charleston] Evening Post once a week. It was a cadet column. One of my favorite stories is Tom Waring, who later became editor of the News and Courier, was the city editor then, and he was the one I gave the column to. When I finished school he offered me a job at the News and Courier for $15 a week. Of course, I had to go in the Army, but he made the offer. He and I often, in later years, would debate whether I was really going to be worth $15 a week. But I worked in the public relations department and the public relations director was a fellow [named] Edmensen, who was also a very
experienced newspaper type, so I got some good training there.

I made spending money by typing term papers. I had a portable typewriter and I would charge ten cents a page to type term papers, largely for seniors. I developed a pretty fast skill at typing. When I really put my mind to it, I could do six pages an hour. So I was making sixty cents an hour typing term papers, where I only got thirty cents an hour on the other [job]. So that typing skill was one that served me in good stead.

Hartsook: You graduate and you go to Camp Stewart for training. Then they ship you off to Boston. I imagine that would just be a terrible culture shock.

West: No, it wasn’t that bad. It was a nice shock because we went to Camp Stewart, Georgia, on June 10, 1942. We called it “Hell Hole Swamp” Stewart. We trained seven days a week then. The military judgment then, because the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred on Sunday, they said, “You work Sunday as well as all the others.” There was no day off a week. There was an urgency to the training. And it was hot. We had no air conditioning. We were out in small huts, as they called them, and of course we were out during the day. I kept a bottle of suntan lotion in my pocket and kept painting my nose because I was fair-skinned, and I had a perpetual sunburn.

In July of 1942 we were put on a troop train and we went to Boston. Our bivouac, or our quarters, was the community house of the Quincy Shipyards, right on the ocean. The breezes were blowing; it was cool. I’ve often said it was going from hell to heaven. My first job, speaking of the culture shock…in December of ’41, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, why, everybody panicked and they felt that the Germans were probably going to try to bomb the East Coast, so they sent in a New York National Guard anti-aircraft group I think. They went around and set up gun positions wherever they thought they should go. They didn’t bother to get approval from the landowners or anybody else.

Well, I arrived there in July of ’42 and one of my first jobs, I was detailed to go around with the “Right of Entry” form and get the landowner to consent to having the gun there that had [already] been there for six months. So it was again an interesting experience, because I got to meet a lot of New England people and also a lot of…for example, banks owned a lot of property. I immediately came to the conclusion that the Boston people were a lot like the Charleston people. They had a reserve there, but beneath that reserve a very pleasing, very warm personality if you broke that reserve down. And of course, I was a young lieutenant so it was a nice cultural experience. The weather change was really good. Plus the fact we had put in coffee rationing and that hurt the lobster fishermen, who had been great coffee drinkers, so my mess sergeant swapped coffee for lobster. I put on five pounds in six weeks there, eating lobster every night, fresh lobster. In fact, I can still remember it.

Hartsook: In your memoir, two of your remarks regarding your Pentagon service I [thought] were just particularly fascinating. You credit much of your success in law school to the intellectually demanding work that
you did at the Pentagon, and note that a criminal law professor named Kirkland at George Washington infected you with the “enthusiasm of a litigator.” I’d like you to comment a little bit more on those two remarks, and particularly I’d like you to define “enthusiasm of a litigator.”

**West:** Well, I’ll talk about that first. He was the practicing attorney, James R. Kirkland. I think he was fairly well known. I followed him later in the legal [literature]. He was a trial lawyer and he taught a night course there. He related his courtroom experiences and he gave us a flavor of what the law is in terms of litigation, in terms of the trial of cases. He taught criminal law but he had the experience and he used his personal experiences, his anecdotes, to flesh out and make his points. I felt it was very good. The other professor I had was a great professor. He was dean of the law school. He taught torts. Dean Van Vleck. In fact, I think the law school is named for him up there at George Washington, or there’s some monument to him. He was a great influence. After going through those two courses, I decided, well, the law is what I want to do.

Now to go back to the Pentagon experience, I think I told you in the notes I gave you how I got into the Pentagon. Intellectually, it was very stimulating because it involved the Ultra situation. We had broken the [Japanese communication] codes, and of course it was highly secret. We would intercept parts of messages and you would have to take those little…it sort of like a jigsaw puzzle with parts missing. After you got a certain amount of the message, you would have to make a judgment on what the message meant. We had top-notch people from Great Britain who came over to help who’d had experience with the German code breaking. There was a wing commander and a couple of squadron leaders. Of course, the real experts were Colonel Spencer, who had been a Japanese missionary, and the professor of international studies of Harvard. I’ll think of his name in a minute; I think it’s in the memoirs. He later became ambassador to Japan. They were good mentors. For the last year or so in the war it was a very demanding intellectual thing and so when I got back to the law school—and plus I’d had night school at [George Washington]—I had a huge jump on the fellows who’d been in the infantry for four years or the artillery for four years.

**Hartsook:** Was there a sense among the group that you were with in the Pentagon that you were kind of an elite group?

**West:** Oh, yes. We were an elite group because after the intelligence failure, or perceived failure, on December 7, Secretary of War [Henry L.] Stimson selected a New York lawyer, Hal McCormick, of the firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore, to come in and determine why the intelligence system failed. As a result of his report they commissioned him a colonel and told him to re-do the intelligence. He went to the Harvard, Yale, and Columbia law schools, got all the law review graduates of the past ten years and said, “I want these people.” He brought them all into the Pentagon and gave virtually all of them direct commissions. One was a PFC [private first class]
in China and by the time he got to the Pentagon he was a second lieutenant. In fact, I had a couple of my people get direct commissions, too. One of them had been working for me as a corporal and when I went to the Pentagon I was working for him for a time. He was a second lieutenant and I was a captain. But these were the brightest people. Several of them had been clerks to Supreme Court justices. Al Friendly was subsequently the managing editor of the Washington Post.

Hartsook: Governor, what was a typical day like in the Pentagon, if there was a typical day? What time would you get up?

West: We’d get there about 8:00 or 8:30 in the morning and we typically would not leave until six or seven o’clock. My wife was working at the Department of Agriculture and usually I would work until 6:30 or 7:00 and pick her up and go on to night school. It would be nine o’clock before we got through and we’d go home and have a bite to eat, and up the next morning. You had to be young to take that.

Hartsook: In referring to your apartment in Alexandria [Virginia], you refer to the “MacArthur Bird.” I was curious what that was.

West: The lady we rented from was a relative of General MacArthur. There was a bird, a bronze statue of a bird, in the back and we called it the “MacArthur Bird.” The general’s father had given it to her. I think she was a niece or something like that. So we laughed that increased the rent rather substantially, the fact that the MacArthur Bird was in the rear courtyard.

Hartsook: You really pretty much covered this in your earlier answer. I was going to talk about Bob Dole and his slogan, “One Last Opportunity” for his generation to serve. One thing I did want to ask you: contrasting my generation, the Vietnam War generation, and yours, and looking at the students that we see today, do you think there’s a qualitative difference in the willingness to serve between these generations?

West: I guess in fairness you would have to say yes. And again, I equate that not so much to the individual as to the circumstances. In other words, the Vietnam War was a bad war and a lot of the sensitive people didn’t want to go. It was a draft situation. Well, gosh, in World War II everybody wanted to go, and you didn’t admit you didn’t want to go, and there was never any opposition, no reason for there to be any opposition. You were a traitor [if you opposed]. I think the moral dilemma that was created by the Vietnam War had an effect on the moral compass of a lot of individuals: “We are being forced to do something we think is wrong and we don’t like that,” and it confused a lot of people, I think.
South Carolina Political Collections Oral History Project

West Interview, Page 13

Our generation was lucky because we had the purity of motive of public service. [In] the Vietnam situation, even those who wanted to go, and many of them did want to go, they went over there and they saw the fighting, the problems and so on, and I don’t know of any—I’m sure there may have been some—who came back with any enthusiasm for the war. It was a disillusioning experience. On the other hand, our generation had the good fortune of we won the wars, both of them, and then we were the magnanimous victors. As I say, I stayed three months with the occupation forces and I saw what General MacArthur started and saw Japan rebuilt.

There was an interesting situation that I commented on just a few days ago. I was talking to somebody from Stuttgart, and I said, “Did you see the statue of Jim Byrnes on the town square there?” They said maybe they had, they weren’t sure. I said, “Well, it’s right interesting.” Because I was at Stuttgart in the ‘60s—we were recruiting industry—and one fellow came up to me and he said, “I’m coming to South Carolina. I’m going to locate a plant [there].” And he did, in the Spartanburg area. He said, “The reason is because of Mr. Byrnes. We’re putting a statue up to him.” I said, “Why?” He said, “Well, he was Secretary of State and after the war there was a great question of what was to be done with Germany. You had defeated us. The Morgenthau plan was to reduce Germany to an agrarian community, never let us have any industry. Byrnes came over and made a speech, and he said that Germany would be restored to the family of nations and would become a full partner. I’d had a small machine shop that had been closed down by the war. The next day, I went out and reopened that shop and started hiring people.”

And when they had the twenty-fifth anniversary of Byrnes’s speech, they were having a ceremony and as governor I was invited to go over. I didn’t go. I think I sent somebody or I wrote a letter or something. But the point is that we not only had the satisfaction of winning, but then we had the satisfaction of being charitable to the losers and bringing them back into the full partnership of the world. So it was a morally uplifting life to have lived.

Hartsook: What are your most vivid memories of attending the USC School of Law?

West: My most vivid memories are of the people there and the classmates, many of whom were people we had known before the war. We were all glad to get back [from the war] and we were anxious, and of course we went straight through, finishing our degrees. Many of us, I included, took the bar examination very early. We were impatient. We felt that four years of our lives had been carved out. We were all poor as could be. We were on the G.I. Bill. Fortunately my wife was teaching and I had bought a house, so we were living better than anybody else. I bought a house down on South Edisto Street [for] $5,280, nothing down. Best investment I ever made. I paid nothing down, lived in it for two years, and sold it for $1,000 profit. It hooked me on real estate the rest of my life.
Hartsook: You said that in the memoir.

West: I’ve made a lot of money out of real estate. I’ve seldom lost and the real estate market has been very good to me.

Hartsook: How good do you think your legal education was?

West: It was excellent. I would say that for the purpose that I wanted, the purpose of becoming a lawyer in South Carolina, it was the best attainable. In hindsight, I would not trade it for Harvard or any of the so-called Ivy League law schools.

Hartsook: How important are the connections that you made in law school?

West: Very important. First of all, in terms of the getting things done in the trial of cases, and of course, in my subsequent political world it was a life saver, in my state-wide races. I would go back to my law school classmates and I can’t remember, and maybe I wouldn’t want to remember, but I can’t remember any who were not for me.

Hartsook: What qualities make for a capable courtroom lawyer?

West: Well, you’ve got to have a big ego and a big mouth. [laughter] No, you’ve got to be able to think quickly on your feet. Of course, the trial has changed substantially in the years, largely because of the changes in the civil rules of procedure. The one lesson that I learned early on was that preparation is the key to success, that if you prepare a case better than your opponent you’ll win most of the cases. Now today, you almost have to prepare the cases because of the discovery rules, and that is, if I’m a litigant I have to give my opponent a list of my witnesses and you take the depositions. Well, of course when I started practicing that was unheard of. You always wanted to surprise your opposition with a witness that could turn the case on them.

So you had to not only investigate your case but you also had to prepare for...as a matter of fact, I was the first lawyer at the Kershaw County Bar to prepare a legal brief before each case. It was unheard of, but when I got ready to try a case I would hand the judge a brief saying, “Here is our case, here is the legal basis, here are the legal points, here is what I expect to prove from the testimony.” That was unheard of, a trial brief. It wasn’t original with me; I’d seen a few other lawyers do it. But I realized it made me prepare and that’s how I developed a small law firm. I told all of the lawyers [at the firm], “If the case is worth trying, it’s worth preparing a trial brief, and it’s good discipline for you.”
Hartsook: It would seem to me that would be very effective, too, that the judge would be able to follow much more clearly your arguments.

West: Oh, I remember one particular term of court I had a lot of cases. I had I think a dozen cases on the docket, and I tried them all and won them all before Judge [James M., Jr.] Brailsford. Some of them were easy, some of them were maybe not so easy, but I had prepared every one of them better than the opposition. I had a trial brief. He commented that it was the first time he had every seen that many trial briefs in a term of court.

Hartsook: What lawyers and judges have impressed you over the years, either for their knowledge of the law of their skill and/or demeanor in the courtroom?

West: One of the first and greatest was Clint Graydon, C.T. Graydon of Columbia. He was a wonderful lawyer, a great philosopher, and a great friend. He associated me in a number of cases. He had a tremendous practice in this area and he would tell people, with complete modesty, that he was the best lawyer in South Carolina. He had that reputation. He associated my partner, Allen Murchison, then associated me in the cases he had in Kershaw County and then I would associate him. I learned a great deal from him.

Hartsook: Was he a mentor?

West: Yes. He was definitely a mentor. Spot [James P., III] Mozingo was another one. Spot was probably the best trial lawyer in terms of courtroom presence that I’ve seen. He and I tried a lot of cases together.

Hartsook: What kind of man was Spot Mozingo? I’ve heard people that loved him and I’ve heard one comment that he became “evil.”

West: Spot cultivated an image that belied his real ability. He would talk about fixing juries, about influencing judges, and so on. I tried a lot of cases with him, and the one thing that stands out is, sure, he would take advantage of every opportunity he had but it was his preparation that did the job. I remember one client one day… Spot loved to shock you, I guess, and the fellow came in with a case and was talking to him and asked him what his contingent fee was, and he [Mozingo] says, “Now it will be forty percent if you bring me the witnesses, fifty percent if I bring the witnesses.” [laughter] Well, the immediate [reaction was], “Spot, what do you mean?” He says, “Now that sounds like I’m trying to manufacture witnesses. I can’t do that, but I can go out and find the witnesses. And if he [the client] goes out and does that investigation, I can give him the difference in the ten percent. But if I have to go out and find the witnesses…” So he was a flip sort of a fellow with a word but I never
He did some terrific things one time. One of the great stories that showed how clever he was involves a case down in Orangeburg. He was suing the railroad. Mr. [Douglas, Sr.] McKay was on the other side. It’s a great legal story.

[END TAPE 1, BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

West: As I say, I tried a lot of cases with Spot. He associated me in a lot and I associated him. We worked very well together. I was not in this case, but I knew about it. Pat Murphy, the insurance commissioner, was indicted in the Richland County Court of General Sessions, and Spot was defending him. In the middle of the trial, a case came up for trial in the federal court in Orangeburg, a railroad case. Well, Lee Chandler, who subsequently became Chief Justice, and Benny Greer were Spot’s junior law partners. They were the fellows who did the work. And Judge Martin, Bob Martin, was the federal judge. He was a mean fellow. I mean he was tough. And he was a great friend of Spot’s, but he delighted in giving Spot hell. So Lee and Benny went down and asked that the case be postponed because Senator Mozingo was involved in another case. Well, this [the Murphy case] was a state case. Judge Martin says, “My court doesn’t recognize that that has any priority. You’ve got two lawyers here, you go to trial.” So they tried the railroad case.

Well, Spot finished the criminal case—he got Pat off, incidentally, who was probably guilty as could be—and he went down to Orangeburg after he finished the case. It was late one afternoon. They’d just finished the testimony in the railroad case. Spot appeared at the court the next morning and the judge greeted him, and it was time for arguments to the jury. Judge Martin says, “Who’s going to argue?” Spot says, “I am.” Douglas McKay, Sr. was the lawyer for the ACL [Atlantic Coast Line] Railroad. A grand fellow. His sons, Doug and Jay, are here now in Columbia practicing law, but he was a lawyer in Chesterfield. He always had a boutonniere and he was a smooth fellow. And he got up and he said, “But, Your Honor, please. Mr. Mozingo hasn’t been here. He can’t refer to the testimony. He can’t make an argument.” Spot says, “I’m counsel of record, Your Honor, and I wanted to be here and I have a right to be here.” So Martin says, “Okay, Mr. Mozingo, but I’m going to hold you to the rules. You can’t comment on the testimony that you didn’t hear. You be very careful.” Spot says, “All right.”

What Spot had done was when he got there [the previous] night, he got the court reporter and hired him to read all of the testimony. So his speech to the jury went something like this: “Mr. Foreman, gentlemen of the jury, you know I haven’t been here. I had a legal excuse, but I’m here to argue. I don’t know much about the facts, but I’ve tried a lot of cases with my friend Mr. McKay. He’s a great lawyer. I’ve sued the railroad many times. I’ve got a list of the witnesses here and their occupations. Now if Mr. McKay tried this case like he tries most of his cases, the engineer will get on the stand. And his testimony will go something like this....” And he says, “Now I wasn’t here, I didn’t hear it, but that’s the way his engineers usually testify. And usually when Mr. McKay is
trying a case, there’s one fellow that is a surprise witness who comes in and says, ‘The whistle didn’t blow, the bell didn’t ring, the railroad was in the right, and that poor devil was in the wrong.’ There’s one fellow’s name here and I don’t see an occupation, so I wonder if he’s the one Mr. McKay had.” Of course, the jury just ruined the railroad on that. [laughter] But anyhow, that was the cleverness of Spot. That’s just one of my favorite legal stories. It showed, though, Spot’s intuitive legal skills.

**Hartsook:** What skills do you have to have to be a really good courtroom lawyer? It seems to me that most of you that are really good in court are just terrifically competitive. You may not be on the surface, but you have that desire to win.

**West:** You have to do that, and of course you also have to be able to establish a rapport with the jury. When you look over a jury you try to find a floor leader, somebody you can talk to and convince of the rightness, who will get up first thing in the jury room and say, “Mr. West was right. Let’s turn the fellow loose.”

I’ll give you another legal story, one of my early ones with Clint Graydon. This was a case [in which] I learned a lot from Mr. Graydon. I hadn’t been out of law school a year, I guess, and there was a black man on the chain gang who was killed. There was a road scrape that had broken down and it had power steering on it. Well, the chain gang—we had chain gangs—sent a truck over, and it was going down a hill, just by a guide wire, and the guide wire snapped and the road patrol turned over and killed this fellow. His name was Tucker. So the family came to me and some of them went to Mr. Graydon. We said, “Okay, we’ll see if we can collect you some money.” The widow was a little black square woman named Zelmo. I’ll never forget her. Mr. Graydon said to me, “You get the case up for trial and I’ll come over and try it.” I said, “Fine.” You had to make a claim to the county commissioner. And that time, I think there was a limit—this was 1947—of maybe $5,000 or $6,000, something like that.

I made a claim and one of the county commissioners called me aside and said, “You know, we just don’t want to give that”—and they used the “n” word—“woman [money], because she’s got a bad reputation.” I called her from the office, I said, “Zelmo, you’re not running around with any men or anything?” “Oh, no, sir. I ain’t studying no man. No, sir.” I said, “Well, okay.” So we got her on the stand. Mr. Graydon was examining her. And of course, her husband had been sent up for rape. [Before the trial] Mr. Graydon said to Zelmo, “Now I know he was sent up for rape, but unless we ask you that, why don’t you [not] mention it. We don’t want to bring that out.”

Well, she was not the brightest young lady in the world, so [during the trial] Mr. Graydon says, “Your husband was on the chain gang...” [She replied,] “Yes, sir, he got sent up for rape.” Mr. Graydon flinched. He says, “I know he had a scrape of some kind, but let’s get on.” So he went through. He says, “Now you are the heir on the statute.” She says, “What do you mean by that, sir?” I hadn’t briefed her very well. [He said,] “Well,
I mean you are the wife and there weren’t no children.” She says, “You means by him?” [laughter] Mr. Graydon turned and he looked at me. He says, “No, I mean he didn’t have any children.” [She said,] “Ain’t none of them his, sir.” John DeLoach was the county attorney, and John was a very proper and dignified fellow. [DeLoach asked Mrs. Tucker,] “How many children do you have?” “Seven.” “How long has your husband been on the chain gang?” “Seven years.”

Oh, Lord, I just felt like I...and so we finished the case. We had a good case of liability. The county was clearly at fault. I was really down. Mr. Graydon said, “John, what do you think?” I said, “Mr. Graydon, I wish I had done a better job preparing, because if I had known she had all those bastard children I wouldn’t have selected the jury as we did. The fellow who is foreman of the jury is a leader in the First Baptist Church, Sunday School teacher. He is not going to give any money or anything like that.” He said, “John, he is going to be our floor leader.” I said, “Well, okay, Mr. Graydon.”

So Mr. Graydon made the speech the next day to the jury. It was a classic. He had sort of a high voice. He said, “Mr. Foreman, gentlemen of the jury, last night I went home after a hard day in this courtroom, going through the testimony you’ve all heard. There were some things that disturbed me about the case. When I have problems, I read myself to sleep. I have the Bible by my bedside and I open the Bible. I don’t try to read in any regular order, but whenever I feel that my mind needs quieting or my spirits need succor, I just open the Bible and start reading. You know, last night I was in that condition and I opened the Bible to an interesting section. It’s the only part of the Bible that indicates that the Lord Jesus was literate. There’s a great deal said about his birth, a little bit about his early life, but only [one] passage the scholars can say that shows that He could read and write. It’s the case of the woman who was taken in the very act of adultery.”

And he quoted the verse, Matthew so-and-so: “And Jesus looked down and wrote in the sand, 'Let he who is without fault be the accuser.'” He said, “That struck a tender chord in my heart. I suspect Mr. DeLoach here will get up in his concluding arguments and tell you that you shouldn’t give this woman justice, this black woman sitting in the very rear of the courtroom expecting white man’s justice, because she has sinned. But I say to you, Mr. DeLoach, let he who is without fault be the accuser. And I say to you, each member of the jury...” And he went on, on that. Well, we got a small verdict, but that was to me the essence of a great advocate.

**Hartsook:** Who else did you admire, judges or other attorneys?

**West:** Judge G. Duncan Bellinger was the resident judge. He was very, very kind to me. He was a tough fellow. He was particularly tough on pick-pockets because he’d had his pocket picked at the state fair years before. And he was tough on drinking because he was a reformed alcoholic. But he was a fair, good scholar. I thoroughly enjoyed him and learned a lot from him. He sort of took me under his wing and I just learned a lot from him. He was a great judge.
Then I came to know and respect Joe Moss. I got to know him as a circuit judge, later as a justice and chief justice. He was not the greatest scholar, but he had a human touch that — with excellent legal knowledge that just made him, I think, the epitome of what a judge ought to be.

Hartsook: Would you ever have liked to have been on the bench?

West: It’s interesting that you ask that. When Judge Bellinger retired in ’56, or ’57, or ’58, something like that, the custom there was for the legislature to elect a judge. Well, the fellow from Richland County who was running for the judgeship was not well thought of by the Columbia Bar and Camden hadn’t had a judge—we were in the same circuit—since 1918. I was approached by members of the Richland County delegation who said, “How about you running for judge? We’ll support you. We don’t want this fellow who’s running.” He’d had a liquor problem. Sidney Duncan was his name. A nice guy, but he already had a little bit of a liquor problem, and was not considered one of the bright stars of the Columbia Bar. That was a very attractive thing, because it was a lifetime appointment in effect, it was an excellent salary, much more than I was making as a lawyer, and it was a prestigious job.

But my closest friend in the Senate was Allen Legare, the senator from Charleston, who was again a mentor. He’d been in the Senate a couple of years when I got there. He told me then, and I’ll never forget it—I was then thirty-two, thirty-three, or thirty-four years old—“John, you don’t want to go on the bench at your young age. You’ve got a future ahead of you as a trial lawyer and as a legislator. Why don’t you wait until you’re fifty and then go on the bench? Then you can be a judge.” So I turned it down. I think I could have been elected. And I look back, and Allen gave me great advice. If I’d gone on the bench, I, of course, probably would have enjoyed it, but I wouldn’t have had the political opportunities.

I had another opportunity in 1978. I was in Saudi Arabia. Of course, President Carter was in, and there were several federal judgeships open. Ross Anderson, Falcon Hawkins, and Weston Houck were all appointed at that time. Of course, Senator Hollings did the recommending, Carter did the appointing. Well, I was a close friend of both. So I was called in Saudi by the judicial selection committee and asked if I were interested. That was in 1978. I really wasn’t tempted that time. I was enjoying the diplomatic service and I didn’t want to start over as a judge.

Hartsook: That’s interesting, because I can see you as a judge.

West: I would certainly have had a very, I’m sure, satisfying life.

Hartsook: It seems like, intellectually, it would be very stimulating.
West:  It would have been. I enjoy the law and enjoy the challenge of the law and reaching out to the outer edges of it.

Hartsook:  Let me jump ahead to a question that just kind of intrigues me. You note at one point in your memoir that you’ve been accused of lacking charisma.

West:  Yes. [laughter]

Hartsook:  Here you are, a man that’s held almost every position that the state can offer you, and by all rights you should be enjoying your retirement, and here you are trying to salvage Seibels Bruce [Insurance Co.]. How do you define charisma, and if you don’t have it, how do you achieve such success without it?

West:  [laughter] That’s a good question that I ask myself. Again, people said I was too intellectual, that I didn’t have charisma. And I said, “Well, what is charisma?” I don’t know what it is. It’s your personality. The old politician is the hail-fellow-well-met, and slaps you on the back, and so on. I guess if I had to categorize myself, I was a little bit lower key than that. You have to cultivate the capacity to go out and mingle. I’m sure I told you the problem I had when I first went out to politick. I didn’t know what it was. You were selling yourself. In the law, I was arguing a case for a client or being an advocate. But [in politics] you are selling yourself to the people, and that was pretty hard to do at first.

Hartsook:  When you think of charismatic leaders in South Carolina, who do you think of?

West:  I would say Hollings was certainly a charismatic leader, because he had the golden boy looks and was certainly a very eloquent speaker. Spot Mozingo had charisma. Of course, he had a substantial amount of political success. He had the quick retort and I would say he definitely had what the 1950s and ‘60s would have said was charisma.

Hartsook:  Maybank?

West:  No, not really. Burnet was not an eloquent [speaker]. Now I’ll tell you I thought one of the most charismatic speakers and politicians I’ve ever heard was Joe Bryson, Holy Joe Bryson, who was the Congressman from Greenville for years. He ran for the Senate in 1940 against Olin Johnston and Burnet Maybank. I remember to this day a speech that he made in the Township Auditorium. It was the final speaking [event] of that special
Senate election. I think Jimmy Byrnes had resigned and went on the bench, and I believe that was the year Burnet was elected. I’m not sure.

But I remember the speech. It was a hot August night and Joe got up there and he says, “My friends, as I look out over this audience, I am particularly happy to see so many ladies here. So many ladies, so fair of form, so beautiful of face, and so dumb, so dumb that you would marry me, a man.” [laughter] And he went on from that, and I said, “God, he’s the best.” That was a certain kind of charisma. He could mesmerize an audience with an approach like that.

**Hartsook:** Who do you think of when you think of leaders that have achieved great success without that kind of charisma?

**West:** I don’t know. Certainly Jack Kennedy had it. There’s no question he was a charismatic leader, and he, I guess, is probably the best example of any that I ever knew. I met him a couple of times. I never really was associated with him but I saw him enough to know that he was the epitome of the charismatic politician. I would differentiate between a political leader, a person who had been elected to political office, and one who had not. Now I think one of the great citizens of our twentieth century was Dean Rusk, who did not have charisma by the general [definition], but he was a great citizen, great Secretary of State. But he did not have the flamboyance that Kissinger has, of course. Edgar Brown had charisma. He was a charming, lovable, eloquent fellow on occasion. He had charisma. There was a charm. If I had to define charisma, and it would be an inadequate thing, it would be charm as much as anything else.

Fritz has it. The best example about Fritz [is] we were all sitting around the Governor’s Mansion one night. Walter Brown was of course a long time friend of ours, and we were sitting around there. Fritz had done something. I think he had criticized me, something I had done as governor, and we were all sort of cussing Fritz. And Walter says, “Look, fellows, you can cuss Hollings all you want and he’ll make you mad as hell. But he can walk into this room and in five minutes, he’ll say, ‘Bubba, do this.’ And you’ll say, ‘Fritz, what can I do to help you?’ He’s just that damned good.” And that’s true. So I guess that’s a phase of what we call charisma.

**Hartsook:** One of the things that interests me about him and his office is how long people work for him. To a person, when you ask them why they stay that long, why someone like Martha Payne would work into her seventies, they all say it’s just the love and respect they have and enjoyment they get out of being associated with him. I just think that’s very atypical [of legislative offices]. That “charisma” statement just kind of struck me when I saw it.

When I first came to work here [in South Carolina], I had a job at the state archives in 1979, and people very quickly tuned me in to who was who, and everyone said of you that you were the best friend the state
employee had ever had. Not a bad thing to have said about you.

**West:** Did I tell you about the reception Anne Agnew persuaded me to have? Anne Agnew was a leader of the state employees, a grand lady, and she was my political friend and helped me tremendously. Right after I was elected, she said, “John, you know the state employees, a lot of them have never been to the Governor’s Mansion. I think we ought to have a reception and invite them.” I said, “Well, sure, Anne. That sounds good.” She said, “Well, let’s take....” I think it was Washington’s birthday. She said, “We’ll furnish the refreshments and so on, but just invite the state employees.” So I went on to and told Lois, “We’re going to have a little affair here on Washington’s birthday [for the] state employees.” She said, “How many state employees do you have?” I said, “I don’t know. I hadn’t thought about that too much.” I called Anne and said, “How many people?” She said, “Well, we’ve got....” I don’t know how many thousands there were. On Washington’s birthday [laughter], thank goodness it was cold. The line started, and they had them in every hour shifts. I stood in line for eight hours shaking hands [laughter] with the state employees coming through there. It was true. Most of them had never had a chance to get in the Governor’s Mansion, so the fact that I was a friend maybe...

**Hartsook:** Or meet the governor, for that matter.

**West:** Yes. I hope that was not the only reason that they thought I was the best [friend they ever had]. We did do a lot for state employees. We put in various programs that were beneficial.

**Hartsook:** Your memoir talks very well about how you came to run for the state Senate. I wonder, though, don’t you think that public service for you in government would have come sooner or later?

**West:** It probably would have. What I really wanted to do was to, frankly, establish a law practice, which I was doing, and to get some financial security. Being a child of the Depression, you worry about security. I mean, you still do. That’s something that you worry about, your financial future. I think I told the story in the memoirs about being solicited to join the Republican Party and my answer was, “When I start lending more than I’m borrowing, I’ll become a Republican.” Well, I wanted to be secure before I went into politics. I think of the situation of my friend George Dean Johnson, who had one of the greatest potentials for public service. He was a Democrat, switched to the Republican Party, and I still had a great respect and liking for him. I used to tell him that he had the capacity to be governor. And he said, “Sure, but I want to make enough money so I can be financially secure.” Well, George is probably worth $100 million now but he has foregone any public service.

**Hartsook:** When you look at recruiting now for Democratic and Republican candidates, are you shocked at
how hard it is to get really capable, bright people to be willing to...

**West:** I’m not shocked. I’m concerned that we can’t. I’m not shocked at all. My children are good examples. None of them have the slightest inclination to run for office or have public service. The demands, the strains on the family are just too much. The sacrifices. I mean today, every act, every nuance, every thing you’ve ever said or done is subject to public scrutiny and the worst possible interpretation put on it. Clinton is going through that. People ask me, “Why don’t you have better people running for president?” Nobody in his right mind would run for president today.

**Hartsook:** It’s interesting that somebody like an Elliot Close would be willing to run for the Senate.

**West:** Well, he has the advantage, as does Steve Forbes... he hasn’t gone through that apprenticeship. He hasn’t created that record, and so it’s not as big a sacrifice. Plus he’s financially secure. That’s one of the dangers of politics. It’s to the point now, given the financial sacrifices and the personal sacrifices, you almost have to be rich to have a chance.

**Hartsook:** It’s shocking, too, to see how many really capable people are leaving government, like a Butler Derrick, [or] William Cohen, who was certainly headed for a...

**West:** Bill Cohen, and... well, thirteen senators. And some of them are outstanding. And gosh knows how many House members. Well, of course the partisanship is what, I think, more than anything else, and some of them have said that... I mean, gosh, when we were coming along, the Republicans were just getting a start but we had a lot of common ground we worked on. We never had the partisanship that is exhibited now.

[END TAPE 2, SIDE 1, BEGIN SIDE 2]

**Hartsook:** How did you initially envision your role as a legislator? There’s a mix between the constituent service, representation, and leadership.

**West:** I realized that all tied together. The state senator at that time was the county boss because the senator had to approve the appropriations bill, and the appropriations bill funded all of the county. We had a divided county: Clator Arrants, Donald Holland, and John Baker. Clator had run for lieutenant governor and was defeated, and John and Donald were both defeated by a different crowd. There were two factions and there had been factions for years over there but they were really... it’s right ironic, Hartha Jones was defeated for the Senate in 1950 by
Clator Arrants by thirteen votes [and] four years later I beat him by three votes. So that shows you the closely divided factions. I was the only survivor of, we call it, the “liberal” faction. And that’s not exactly a term but it’s as good as any.

So the first thing I knew I had to do was build some bridges. Fortunately, I had two good House members. One was Jim Sweet, the other was Doc Branham, L.P. Branham. Neither of them had any political experience and of course I didn’t either, so we decided we were going to work together for the county’s good. We started holding public meetings, getting people together and listening. I guess I knew my first obligation or my first survival situation [was] to heal the breaches between the factions in the county, so that’s what we set out to do.

Hartsook: Were there people that served as mentors to you?

West: Yes, there were. There was a fellow named Talmadge Bowen, A.T. Bowen, who was a very controversial fellow. He was sort of the dictator of West Wateree. He was very wealthy by conventional standards, very controversial, but he was one of the ones who had persuaded me to run. He was a client and a friend. He never asked me to do anything that I had any qualms about. He was a good mentor in the sense that he was older and had been through the political wars.

There were others. My then-law partner, Allen Murchison, was of course my friend and as close to a father as I had. He wouldn’t presume to give me very much advice, even in the law, but he had a lot of common sense, he had a lot of judgment, and he knew and he understood people. Did I say in the memoirs some of the things that he told me that I should always remember? One was never endorse a note for a friend unless you’re prepared to lose the friend and pay the note. And the other is you can be a drunkard and beat your wife; walk down the streets of Camden, and if you’ve paid your bills by the tenth of the month they’ll say, “How do you do, sir?” But you can go to church, not pay your bills, and people will look the other way when you go by. That was his philosophy. He was certainly a mentor.

Doug Montgomery, who was a friend that I had taken the law school bar with and was an older lawyer—we had adjacent offices—was a great friend and a great help. He had good judgment. He was about ten years older than me. In fact, we named our second son for Doug. So he was truly a friend and a mentor.

I’m sure there were others who helped, who gave good advice, but off the top of my head those are the ones mostly.

Hartsook: You’ve witnessed and figured in a period of great change in South Carolina. What do you feel are the major factors in the state’s development in the post-World War II era? Things like industrial development, the change from a rural to an urban based [society]....
West: Well, of course that [industrial development] was something that had to come. I give Fritz Hollings the credit for recognizing it and really starting that trend. His campaign for governor, of course, was [chiefly based on] industrial development. It was an idea whose time had come. The soil bank had made it more profitable to plant pine trees and to plant cotton or corn, automation had changed the whole farming system, had changed the textile system. A person with a strong back and a willing mind could no longer make a decent living for his family. Working from can-see [dawn] to can’t-see [dusk] wouldn’t make a living, given the change in the society, the technology advances. So we recognized that education, training, [and] skills were the key to the future. And I think we recognized it probably earlier than a lot of areas in the South.

Hartsook: Is it fair to look at Hollings’s gubernatorial service as kind of a landmark between the less active and what we now see as the activist government?

West: Oh, it was a watershed. It was the turning point. You see, Strom Thurmond on balance was a good progressive governor in many ways. He got sidetrackded in the presidential election, which drained a lot of his energy and gave him an image that probably was not helpful except in getting him reelected. Byrnes came in; Byrnes did some good things including starting the educational system, but it was for, in hindsight, a bad motive. It was to maintain segregation. He of course initiated the sales tax. George Bell [Timmerman] was a grand fellow, a caretaker type governor, but certainly not an activist. And Hollings came in and he was...

[TAPE 2 ENDS, TAPE 3, FEBRUARY 1, 1996, SIDE 1 BEGINS]

Hartsook: When we concluded yesterday we were talking about Governor Hollings and looking at his term as a watershed. Was there anything more that you wanted to say about that before we go on? I want to talk to you a little bit about the teams that he set up to help push legislation through. I wanted to make sure that we got everything that you wanted to say.

West: It was a watershed in terms of economics. It was also a watershed in terms of the race relations. Did I mention in the memoirs the speech he made in January of 1963 that was so significant?

Hartsook: I don’t remember reading that. I know that you hear that [speech] quoted all the time.

West: You mentioned Judge [Donald] Russell and that becomes a part of the story. Of course we had fought the segregation issue through all of the courts and it was the dominant issue, from ‘54 when Brown v. Board of
Education was decided, actually, until ‘70 and my election, and maybe thereafter. But in Hollings’ term there had been various implications by various blacks to attend various state-supported colleges and universities. To forestall that, or as a mechanism, there was a bill introduced, and I think it passed the Senate almost unanimously. It provided that if any state college or university is forced by a court order to admit a black student, that college or university will close its doors and the state college at Orangeburg will also close. I remember that very well because Bob Edwards, who was [President] at Clemson when that matter came up, said, “If we close Clemson College for one day we’re ruined forever.”

Hartsook: Ruined in terms of its reputation would be besmirched?

West: Yes. He said you can’t afford to close a college, particularly for that reason. Anyhow, I think there were three votes against the bill in the Senate. Lew Wallace was one, I was one, and I’m not sure of the other one. Lew was defeated in the next election. That was just sort of a sample of the emotions that were at a height at that time. Hollings had been defeated for United States Senate in ‘62. He ran as governor for the Senate against Olin Johnston and was defeated very soundly. He didn’t carry but one county in the state—it was Calhoun County. He lost Charleston, his home county.

So he was down and discredited in a sense. The court order came through from the federal courts to admit Harvey Gantt to Clemson. Well, at that time almost contemporaneously, if not exactly so, [Governor Orval] Faubus was standing in the college door in Arkansas, and [Governor George] Wallace in Alabama: “Segregation forever.” The governors were taking a stand. Of course, it had been a very bitter second race between Hollings and Russell in 1958. And of course the Doughty birds incident came after that. That’s another story that maybe we ought to record.

At any rate, a lot of Hollings’ advisors said, “This is a good one that you can leave for ol’ Russell. It’s a hot potato. He’s going to have to face it. That’ll be the first thing he’ll have [to address].” So Hollings took his own counsel. Actually, I guess I was one of the few people that... In fact, I helped draft his speech. He wouldn’t want to admit that now and I don’t want to make that claim necessarily. It was his speech. I did have a little input in it, as I recall. But he said, “I want to speak to the joint session of the legislature.” The legislature was all white, of course. It was very tense. If Hollings had said, “Go to war,” the legislature would have voted to do that. They had all sorts of ideas of massive resistance. Hollings got up and he said, “We are a government of laws, not of men. We have run out of courts. We have run out of time. Harvey Gantt will be admitted to Clemson, and there will be no disturbance. There will be no incidents.” Then he departed from his text. He said to Pete [J.P.] Strom of SLED [State Law Enforcement Division], “Pete, you make damned sure nothing happens up there.” Well, that was a turning point, and it was a stupid political move for the immediate situation, because there were no blacks voting in those days. It was really one of the most courageous and one of the most dramatic things I’ve seen in
public life.

**Hartsook:** Why do you think he made the speech?

**West:** Well, I think he made it because he thought it was the right thing to do. He was convinced that we shouldn’t go the route of the Faubuses and the Wallaces. And he was just stubborn enough to want to get himself on the record.

**Hartsook:** You characterize the atmosphere in the General Assembly as tense. Can you tell me a little bit more? Was there any hint as to what he was going to say before he spoke?

**West:** No. I probably had as much foreknowledge as anyone, and I certainly didn’t share it with anyone. Marion Gressette, of course, was the leader of the pro-segregation [forces]. He was chairman of the Gressette Committee [a special committee on education]. He didn’t know what he was going to say. He was prepared to back whatever Hollings said in terms of keeping the fight against integration going, I think. That was certainly my impression. The whole General Assembly was waiting for guidance from the governor, “What are we going to do?” And that [speech] simply deflated the strong pro-segregation sentiment.

**Hartsook:** For legislators of your generation, was that perhaps one of the most difficult balancing acts—your stance on race relations? You have someone like an Olin Johnston, who may be shouting “Nigger” on the stump. Then, when you actually look at what he’s done, he was remarkably liberal for his place and time. You have Fritz Hollings campaigning for lieutenant governor, pretty much sounding like an arch segregationist, and yet you look at what he’s done....

**West:** Yes. Well, of course, the best example is Strom Thurmond, who was the epitome of segregation, and he turned around. Another example is George Wallace. In fact, I got to know George very pleasantly. I’ve visited him a couple of times, one time in the not too distant past, when he was still incapacitated. It was right interesting. Right after I came back from Saudi Arabia, there was a black caucus of black Southern leaders at Hilton Head. Jim Clyburn asked me to attend and speak to them, I think. The black mayor of Birmingham was there and Wallace was running for governor again and he had his endorsement. I asked him what had brought it about. He said, “Well, Governor Wallace looked at me and he said, ‘I don’t want to die being known as a segregationist. I want another chance and I want you to help give it to me.’” He said, “I agreed to.” He was elected and, of course did make up for his [past], in terms of his considerations for the blacks.
Hartsook: One of Olin’s daughters said that she thought that was the hardest thing he was grappling with in the sixties, what he should do publicly, what stance he should take.

You and Marshall Parker, and Billy Goldberg, in the Senate, and Bob McNair, Floyd Spence, Rex Carter from the House side, helped tote the water for Governor Hollings.

West: Right.

Hartsook: How formal was that relationship?

West: It was formalized by the creation of the committee to study the needs of the State Development Board. As soon as he took office, he called us in and said, “We need to get this industrial development program going and I need a committee to map it out.” So those were his recommendations. Of course, the appointments had to be made by the Speaker of the House and the lieutenant governor, but generally, the governor had somebody he wanted. So he recommended the appointment of us and we became that committee. And that committee functioned, and it was, of course, a formal committee. We gave a total of, I think over a three-year period, three recommendations that we made, two of which allowed Hollings, McNair and me to take enough credit to get elected to other offices.

The first recommendation was to expand the membership of the Development Board to fourteen, one from each judicial circuit. There had been five up to that time. This really was the first step in getting a broader base for the industrial development effort. We were able to get people like Francis Hipp and Jim Self, the business leaders. The younger business leaders came in and were members of that board. Roy Pearce from here in Columbia. It was a great group of business people and they set the tone. For example, Hugh Lane of Charleston. I remember going on an industry-seeking trip with him. I’m not sure he was a member of the board, he may have been. We started making cold calls in New York on businesses to interest them in South Carolina. There was a lot of enthusiasm.

The recommendation that got the most attention was the bill to create the Technical Education Commission. Again, I’m not sure I put in the great story about Mendel Rivers. Did I put that in about Mendel Rivers introducing Fritz and Bob McNair and me?

Hartsook: Yes.

West: I thought I did. That’s one of my favorites. The other recommendation we made, and I still to this day regret that it didn’t happen. The research triangle at North Carolina was just getting started. And we determined that we needed an equivalent situation here. It was in the very, very beginning stage in North Carolina. We
determined that a research program should be established in South Carolina so we could explore the cutting edge of technology and so on. One of our mentors on that was Bob Edwards of Clemson. So we recommended and there was created a group called SOAR [State Organization for Associated Research]. We played a little cute with the term because we thought that was good. And we recommended that we start a state-subsidized program of research using the University [of South Carolina] and Clemson as the core group, but leaving [it] open [so] any other state colleges that wanted to [could] come into it, but obviously these were the two [key institutions].

Again, my recollections of the details are a little bit hazy, but we asked each school to submit proposals or research projects. I think we had an independent committee to evaluate them or we may have kept that responsibility, I’m not sure. I remember that the Clemson research proposals came in and Edwards was just tremendously supportive and enthusiastic about it. The fellow down at Carolina—God, who was it? He just wasn’t with it at all. So the first research programs, I think there were a dozen projects that were approved, and I think ten of them were at Clemson and maybe two at the University. They were approved for a year. Incidentally, the appropriation we got was the same thing we got to start Technical Education, $250,000.

At the end of the first year we got the reports and we wanted to continue and expand it, and we ran into a political bottleneck. The University had complained that Clemson was getting the major part of it. So the appropriation was then restricted. Half the funds had to go to Carolina, half the funds had to go to Clemson. That just killed the program because it just became another subsidy. There was no competition and so at the end of the second year we abandoned it. But I’ve always thought that if we had been smart enough or skillful enough to have developed that program as we originally contemplated, we’d have the equivalent of the research triangle.

Hartsook: It was an exciting proposal.

West: Yes.

Hartsook: Was that group Fritz’s inner circle?

West: Yes.

Hartsook: Throughout his term?

West: Right. We were the crowd that generated the ideas. I guess you would call us the floor leaders in both the House and the Senate.

Hartsook: Did you have something similar when you were governor?
West: Yes. Not in the same format. Jim Waddell was the person I depended on. I had a good group in the Senate and you had to play that sort of by ear, because you couldn’t offend the older heads, the Edgar Browns, and the Marion Gressettes, and the Rembert Dennises. I used Waddell more, but I had to be careful not to think that I was giving Waddell status. I tried to make each one of them think that they were my leader in their particular field.

Hartsook: I don’t know if you read it, but I gave you a Rembert Dennis quote [from the Dennis oral history].

West: I was very appreciative of that, yes.

Hartsook: I just thought that was intriguing. Of course, he says, “West didn’t need much help. West was very smart. He’s much smarter than Jim Waddell. Only thing West needed was help with the work, he had the ideas.” Not a bad epitaph.

West: That was very flattering and it made me feel good, naturally.

Hartsook: It says a great deal about how your service, and particularly your term as governor were perceived by at least one key player, and I imagine he speaks for the majority of the leadership in the Assembly. What’s entailed in exercising real leadership, especially of such a diverse group of...?

West: Well, I think it’s obviously getting people to work with you. I deliberately never use the term “working for you,” because people don’t work for you, they work with you. That was the key, if there was one. As I say, I tried to recognize that each legislator, or most of the legislative leaders, had carved out a niche or an expertise in a particular area, some more than one. To get something accomplished, you would first have to go to that legislative leader or leaders, and bat the ideas back and forth. Of course, the ideal way was to make them think it was their idea, and give them credit for it. That was the motivating factor. If you can let an idea germinate and a person takes credit for it, and you give him credit for it....

And let me say this, I learned that probably from Bob McNair. Much of his success as a leader has come from giving other people credit, even more credit than they were due. As lieutenant governor, he gave me a lot of opportunities. He gave me more credit in a lot of instances for accomplishments, and he could have taken credit for all or most of it. A lot of times more than I deserved. I saw that in practice with McNair and I copied it.

Hartsook: But for Orangeburg [in Feb. 1968 a student protest at South Carolina State College escalated into
a riot in which three students were killed], where would McNair be now, do you think?

West: I think even with Orangeburg he is being recognized as one of the better governors. McNair’s approach has always been low-key. Again, I associate myself with the same general category. We didn’t have the charisma of Hollings, shall we say, and we certainly were not modeled on the Russell mold, because, and I say this with all respect, I think the reason Russell wanted to take the United States Senate appointment is that he was frustrated with the governor’s job. The reason for that was he didn’t understand the system. He had never been a part of it.

I remember one clear instance that the circuit solicitor in the Charleston district, the Ninth District, I believe, resigned. And it was the governor’s appointment. It said, “In the event of death or resignation, the governor shall appoint with the advice and consent of the Senate.” Well, of course this was not a single county thing, it was a multi-county district. But the custom had grown up that the senators from those two or three counties, whatever it was, would be consulted and would generally recommend the person whom the governor would appoint. Fred Sheheen was Governor Russell’s chief of staff and chief lobbyist. He came over and said, “Well, you know Governor Russell is going to send up the name of a very well known Charleston lawyer”—I forget the name—“to take the solicitor’s job.” I said, “Well, has he checked it out with Allen Legare, the senator from Charleston, and Rembert Dennis?” He said, “Oh no. This is the governor’s appointment.” I said, “Now, wait a minute, Fred. You better back up.” He said, “Oh no. This man’s well qualified and outstanding.” I said, “Sure, I understand that, but you better not send it up until you talk to them.” He sent it up. The appointment was never confirmed.

That was just one incident that I saw. He did not adapt himself. Incidents like that, I just happen to know of that one—that one sticks in my mind, created a degree of frustration that he felt would not be present in the United States Senate.

Hartsook: You’ve served in the General Assembly as a member, presided over the Senate as lieutenant governor, and strived to set a legislative agenda for the Assembly as governor. In general, who wields true power, and what factors influence the passage or defeat of legislation?

West: Well, again it depends upon the players who are in place. Generally speaking, the Speaker of the House is a key man in any equation or in any circumstance in the House, sometimes more than others. The Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee in the House is a very key player, and again it depends upon his personality and his aggressiveness as to what real role he plays. Jim Aycock was there during my time, “Mr. Jim,” as we called him. A delightful fellow, but not a strong person in the sense that he would usually go along. He could assert himself, but he was not the strong personality that say, Edgar Brown was in the Senate, or Rembert Dennis, or any of those. The House Judiciary Chair usually was a key person. Committee chairmen, as a general rule, would be the key
players, along with the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate.

Hartsook: How do you settle on and promote your own legislative agenda?

West: Well, I used a system of legislative breakfasts. I found that if we could get people together in the mornings, you didn’t have to serve liquor. In fact, I started this as lieutenant governor for Bob McNair. We started it at the Wade Hampton [Hotel] and we’d try to get a sort of a little country breakfast. Sadie had a recipe for what she called oyster gravy. It was oysters in a brown sauce. We’d serve that. Then I had a favorite recipe called shrimp stew that we used to serve at the Governor’s Mansion. If I had a legislative matter that was controversial or new, I would call for a breakfast meeting.

I know after one time McNair and I had oyster gravy for breakfast that morning, everybody had a good breakfast, and was feeling good. We worked out a real difficult legislative problem and it came over in the Senate. It went through like clockwork. Lovick Thomas, who was a long time Clerk of the Senate, said, “I’ve always heard that oysters had magical qualities, but I never dreamed they would help pass legislation.” So, to answer your question, our strategy was usually to get a breakfast meeting of the key players. Then I had legislative breakfasts of the committee chairmen to set an agenda. We used the breakfast route very much.

Hartsook: As governor, who did you bounce ideas off of? Who would you consult?

West: I had the staff. Outside the staff, in the legislature, usually the first one I would turn to was Waddell. He spent a lot of time at the Mansion. I told him that he practically lived there. We were glad to have him. I would frequently go to Marion Gressette. Edgar had gotten a little bit above the fray. You see he retired in ‘72. Outside the legislature and the staff, I would talk to Harry Lightsey, Charlie Wickenberg, Joe Sapp, and Crawford Cook.

Hartsook: How about Mrs. West?

West: Oh, yes. Well, I talked to her every day. Her opinion was always very welcome and very good. She had an uncanny ability to sense how an idea or a program would be perceived by the public.

Hartsook: Is that kind of what Crawford Cook would do as well?

West: Yes.

Hartsook: Was he more political?
West: He was more political. Lois would be able to say, “Maybe you ought to do it this way or that way, because people won’t understand you doing this or saying that.” She had, and has, a great capacity. Paraphrasing what she has said over the years, as you go up the political ladder you find fewer and fewer people who will tell you what you need to know. Rather they tell you what you want to hear.

[END TAPE 3, SIDE 1, BEGIN SIDE 2]

West: ...and I can hear him now [saying,] “I can see ol’ Strommy Boy. He ain’t fit to be governor, and I can tell you why he ain’t fit to be governor. Ain’t got a wife to tell him how sorry he is. Fellow who ain’t got a wife to tell him how sorry he is ain’t fit for nothing, much less to be governor of South Carolina.” There’s a lot of truth in that.

Hartsook: How important is it to have a supportive spouse?

West: Oh, it’s extremely important, particularly if you run the office. We did a lot of entertaining at the Mansion and we found that to be a very effective tool in every field, particularly industrial development. You would get guests, industrialists, Fortune 500 people, who you wouldn’t think would be impressed. But if you had a dinner for them in the Governor’s Mansion, sent the plane to pick them up, if they didn’t have their own plane, made them your overnight guest, and had a dinner for them, it impressed them.

Hartsook: Did you and Mrs. West enjoy the entertaining?

West: Yes, and sometimes we’d have at least as many as three formal dinners going on at the same time. Not infrequently two, one in the Lace House, on in the formal dining room, and, on at least one occasion, one in the pool house.

Hartsook: You’ve talked about Jim Waddell. Didn’t he play a fairly substantial role in the hunger tours?

West: Yes. I think he did. It was his area and he knew the people. He was along, I know. Actually, I think he had managed Fritz’s campaign for governor, too.

Hartsook: I think that’s true.
West: So there was a continuity there.

Hartsook: Were you involved at all in Hollings’ first set of hunger tours in ’69?

West: No, I was not a participant in it. I can’t recall any real involvement in that.

Hartsook: And you had your own hunger tours while governor.

West: Yes.

Hartsook: How did those come about?

West: It was an outgrowth of the campaign, and the fact that we were concentrating as much on housing as well as hunger. Of course, we created the State Housing Authority as a result of some of those tours. One of the projects that came out of those tours was the “Privy Project.” A lot of the people did not have indoor plumbing. We designed an indoor facility that you could have even without running water, and we started a program to put those indoor facilities in the shacks that didn’t have them. As I say, I got a lot of kidding, I called it the “Governor’s Privy Project.”

Hartsook: When Hollings did his tours, he got a lot of criticism at first. People thought he was bringing unfair and unwarranted attention on a South Carolina problem that was national in scope. Pretty courageous thing to do.

West: It was. Of course, he wrote a book, *The Case against Hunger*.

Hartsook: What do you think the significance was of those tours?

West: I think it brought public recognition to a problem that most people preferred to ignore or to sweep under the rug. You know, people, particularly those who are reasonably affluent, don’t want to even imagine that there are people in our society, and close by, who don’t have enough to eat. And so they just don’t look at it, don’t recognize it. Now, again, I can’t relate the time situation to it, but I do know that food stamps were somewhat controversial. Recognition of the hunger plus the support of the small merchants eased the way for the food stamps. There was originally a lot of skepticism about food stamps.
Hartsook: Did you worry at all about negative political fallout from your tours?

West: No, I didn’t worry about that. I had a unique situation when I was governor, and I still reflect back whether the good outweighed the bad. I had made a more or less final determination that I would not run for another office. In fact, I tell the story—I’ve told it publicly—only half-jokingly, that my wife said that she would stick with me until I ran for governor. But after that, if I ran for another office, to get another wife. So when I finished my term as governor, there was talk about whether I’d run for Senate, and I used that statement. Most people felt that it was in jest, but there was a lot of truth in it.

To get back to the question, had I had future political ambitions, if I were going to run for a statewide office immediately upon the conclusion of my time as governor, I frankly would not have been successful in getting a second medical school here, because it was highly controversial. It alienated all of Charleston. In all honesty, I probably wouldn’t have done it if I’d been going to make another statewide race.

Hartsook: Did people know that you were not going to seek other office?

West: Certainly some of them did. I never made any public announcement until the end of my term. I didn’t make it in the absolute terms. I made it in sort of a flippant term. I had no ambition to go to any other office. My method of operation was to sort of learn by steps, doing the apprentice program. I started as a junior senator and worked my way up through the ranks, and so on. When I got out of the governor’s office I was fifty-three or four years old, so I figured that if I went to Washington as United States Senator it would take at least another ten to twelve years to get into a position of leadership where you had any real influence. That didn’t appeal to me, to go and work in a legislative system particularly, for a dozen years before you became a committee chairman or a person who could be a real factor in the system. So all of those things just caused me to not have any real political ambition.

Hartsook: Do you miss it?

West: Politics?

Hartsook: Yes.

West: Well, I’ll tell you this. I did miss it. I remember the first year I got out of the governor’s office. I’ll say this again, that much of what I’m saying is self-serving, but reasonably accurate. I had, I would say, a very successful law practice. I had made a very comfortable living. I was primarily a trial lawyer. I had four or five
lawyers in the office. My income had been not tremendous, but enough to be very comfortable. I’ll put it another way. I took a cut when I went into the governor’s office.

Hartsook: I’m sure.

West: And I severed all connections with my law firm and all that, obviously. Although it was not required necessarily, I felt it certainly was the only ethical and proper thing to do. Well, when I started getting ready to go out, I was going back to practice law. In the last year, particularly the last six months, a lot of people would come in [and say,] “Well, John, I know you’re going back to practice law, and I’m going to need a lawyer and I’d like to talk to you a little bit about a retainer.” Well, I took sort of a holier-than-thou view, and I may have offended some people. I said, “I appreciate it, but the day after I leave office I’ll be available to talk to you. I’d rather not even discuss it [now] because it might not be the right thing to do.” I don’t know how many, but I remember a good many of those.

When I got out of the office I took on a very ambitious program. I opened three law offices, one in Hilton Head, one in Camden, and one in Columbia, thinking that I could pick up immediately my old law practice plus the rest of the practice that I would have generated by having been governor for four years, and so on. Well, I learned an economic lesson. We were in a downturn economically. I found out what overhead meant, because I had three office overheads and young associates. I worked harder in the first year than I had worked in twenty years and made less money. I found that my old clients that I’d depended upon would come up to me [and say,] “Oh, John. Glad to see you back practicing. If I have anything really tough I’m going to come see you, but I’ve gotten young so-and-so while you were gone to handle my routine affairs, and I’m just going to keep on with him because he needs the work.” I didn’t want to tell them that I needed it probably as badly as he did. [laughter]

Anyhow, I got into a suit that I brought. A warehouse up in Chester leaked and a long-time client that I had, he was the owner, or the lessee, or had some goods damaged in it. I thought it was a routine claim for $50,000 or $100,000, or something like that. It wasn’t a big deal, but it was things that I handled routinely, and thought this was routine. Well, I got into the thing and it turned out that there was something wrong with the roof. Silatex Corporation had sold a three-ply roof which they’d said was as good as a four-ply roof. They’d sold a bunch of the roofs around and they didn’t hold up.

So I filed suit against the Silatex Company. I didn’t realize until later that they had a bunch of these suits, and they had a policy of not settling any of them. If they had started settling them, the amounts that they would have had to have paid would have, and subsequently did, nearly bankrupt the company. I had actually turned the case over to my son, Jack, thinking it was routine. You sue somebody, and collect damages. The damages were there, the roof was in the warranty period, why wouldn’t they pay? Jack kept coming back to me, “Daddy, I’m having a tough time. A crowd from Atlanta has come in.” I said, “What the hell are Atlanta lawyers doing in it?”
So I got into the picture then and realized that they had hired one of the leading law firms in Columbia and one of the leading law firms in Atlanta. It was purely a stalling situation. They were using all the technicalities and were taking depositions and so on. I said, “We’ll play them at their own game.”

So I started some depositions down in Florida. The lawyers on the other side, I’d asked them if they could reserve rooms for us, my son and me. They gave me a sorry motel with a sorry room. I caught a cold the first night. I went into court to take the depositions. It was obviously the most frustrating thing I’ve ever seen, or ever been in. I had not been in active practice for four or five years, and the lawyer would say, “Now, Governor, rule so-and-so, just enacted a couple of years ago....” They were taking -----. I sat down that night and I took a drink, and I thought, “Well now, hell. Here I am with a lot of experience in government and the law, and I’m spending my time, effort and energy trying to determine why a roof leaked. If I prove what I think is true, what have I proved? That the roof leaked and the composition was bad, and I’ve spent time, effort, money and energy. There ought to be some better way to spend the rest of my life.”

About that time, Carter was elected President. I had gotten involved. That’s when I said, “Well, I don’t want to go back in elective office. I don’t want to go to Washington.” But I’d gotten involved in the Southern Center [for International Studies], Dean Rusk’s organization in Atlanta, and that’s when I really made up my mind that I wanted to go into diplomatic service. That satisfied my desires. I say that the “political virus” is incurable. It can be put in remission, but it’s always there. Well, it had flared up. The Saudi Arabia experience put it back in remission.

Let me tell you the other end of the [Silatex] story. I made that decision and this case was moving along. I wanted to try it before I left. It was the one case that I had and I had told the court that I wanted to try it. Judge [Robert] Hemphill was the judge and he saw what was happening. I couldn’t get it tried. I’d been in Saudi Arabia about three or four months. Of course, there’s an eight-hour time differential, and the Marine guards were on the strictest [orders] not to wake the ambassador up, except for a major event. It had to be a crisis. I get a call at three o’clock in the morning. They said, “Mr. Ambassador, your son is calling.” I thought somebody had died or [there was] some sort of catastrophe. It was Jack. He said, “Daddy, I apologize, but Judge Hemphill told me to call you no matter what time it was. The jury just returned a verdict in our case and it was a huge amount.” The jury punished the hell out of them. It was the largest verdict that had ever been returned in the federal court at that time—several hundred thousand dollars. So I had the satisfaction later. However, the sad part about it is when I had my final settlement with the law firm I got virtually no consideration for the work done on that case because it was still not determined. So I didn’t make any money out of it. Anyhow, the next four years satisfied all of the ambitions that I had, because I did feel that I was playing a meaningful role in an important political situation.

Hartsook: You mentioned Hemphill. We have his papers as well.
West: He was a great judge, and a great Congressman.

Hartsook: He didn’t suffer fools lightly.

West: Oh, no. He was very blunt and very direct as a judge and as a Congressman.

…You mentioned something yesterday. You showed me a pen that was Marion Gressette’s. Did that pen have any history to it?

Hartsook: No. We got two of them, actually, with the collection. I think one had his name engraved on it. The other pen had a letter with it from you. It may have been used to sign a bill.

West: Yes, and the bill came to me yesterday when I was thinking about it. That was the pen that I used to sign the legislation making Winthrop [College] coeducational. Marion had been an ardent opponent of that. He had blocked it. When I was in the Senate we would disagree on that, my wife being a Winthrop alumna. In fact, there’s a great story on that. The bill to make Winthrop coed was almost as controversial as The Citadel, not quite as much. The first time it came up for a vote in the Senate I was a very junior senator. I’d maybe served one term, if that. Ex-Governor [John G.] Richards was the only person from Kershaw County ever to be elected governor, until I came along. He had, I think, seven daughters, most of whom still lived at Liberty Hill. They were all very strong ladies. Two or three of them never married. They were most ardent in wanting Winthrop preserved as a primarily female college.

The first day I voted on the bill, and voted to make it coeducational, they were in the gallery. There were at least three of them. Big, handsome, imposing people. They surrounded me, and said, “Senator, how could you vote for that bill?” With the meekest, mildest voice I could muster, I said, “Ladies, my wife finished Winthrop. She’s a loyal alumnus, and I live with her, and she told me to vote that way. That’s why I did.” [laughter] I never heard another word from them.

It culminated in the battle. Marion finally gave in. So we had a signing. I know at the time I gave him the pen, and we also gave him two lifetime passes to the Winthrop-Carolina football game. [laughter] So I wondered if that were not the pen.

Hartsook: I’ll see if I can find the letter and I’ll make you a copy.

Who were some of the important behind-the-scenes actors in the legislature? I’m thinking of people like Inez Watson.

West: Inez was never a factor with me as she was with Bob McNair. Inez and I got along very well, but she was
particularly close to Bob McNair because Katherine Wolfe, who was Bob’s chief of staff, was her niece, I believe. Bob had served in the House and I didn’t, so I was never as close to Inez as McNair was. I never really called on her for help. I called on Sol [Blatt], of course. Sometimes the Speaker, as we called him, was difficult to deal with. I even had a secret weapon with him. His son, Sol, Jr., was and is one of my closest friends. I had an agreement with Sol [Jr.] when I became lieutenant governor, that I would never criticize his father. I wasn’t going to get into a fight with him. I said, “If I get to a point where I’m at my wits’ end I’m going to call you to help me.” I don’t think I ever actually called him. I may have called him once or twice. But we never had a confrontation. We came close on several occasions.

To answer your question, in the House I had a lot of people there who helped. I don’t know, it’s hard for me to think back now to the exact names. If you mention names…Jim Aycock was never very aggressive. He was always generally very supportive. [Patrick] Harris, from Anderson, was the senior man there. There were just a lot of good people there, but there were none that come to mind as being a leader of the pack.

Hartsook: Today though, somebody like Frank Caggiano, is he pretty potent?

West: Oh, yes. Well, now, in the Senate, Lovick Thomas was the clerk and he was a terrific help, both as lieutenant governor and governor. He had been clerk there forever, practically. As lieutenant governor, he would give you all the rulings, whisper them to you. He knew Robert’s Rules and Jefferson’s Manual. I believe we went by Jefferson’s Manual rather than by Robert’s Rules. He knew the Senate. He knew the temperature and he knew where the bodies where buried.

Hartsook: Did you have to win his loyalty or did he give it automatically?

West: Lovick and I became friends early on as a young senator. The chemistry was always good.

Hartsook: I’d like to talk just a little bit more about the civil rights era. To what do you attribute the generally peaceful nature of the process in South Carolina?

West: Obviously it’s a subject that’s been on my mind a great deal. It was a major element. I look back at the very tense times that I personally experienced and observed. I can say that there was one underlying group that eased the tensions more than anything else, and those were the churches. The leaders, Howard McClain, the President of Columbia College, the churches, they came in and asserted themselves on the basic Christian concepts of brotherly love.

I used to tell this story to make a point. I had to be very careful where I told it. See, the blacks started
integrating the lunch counters. Then they started integrating the churches. That created a real dilemma for the older churches. I would tell this story about this Baptist church dominated by the staunch, old Southern segregationists. The question came up, “There are blacks that are saying they’re going to come to church next Sunday. What are you going to do?” The Board of Deacons held a session, and it was fairly obvious that there was no support for doing anything other than turning them away. But the young minister, seeing how it was going, before the vote was taken said, “Mr. Chairman, just one thing I want to say. If Jesus Christ were here at this meeting tonight, how would He vote?” The Chairman looked at him and said, “Preacher, I think I know how He’d vote, but that’s one time Him and me’d split blankets.”

I saw it in my own church over in Camden. There were black groups that indicated they were coming to church. I was on the Board of Deacons at the time, and the session said, “First of all, tell the black people that there is a black Presbyterian church just down the street. Maybe they’d like to go to that. If they say ‘no,’ then say that we have audio over in the Sunday school room. Ask them if they’d care to be seated there.” Then the discussion started. I said, “Heck, I’d take them down and put them in the front row to start with.” Later on that’s what we decided to do, to seat them without any problem. I was, of course, the liberal, because the litmus test of the liberal/conservative was purely the attitude on race. I found that more and more I was welcomed by the church groups and found empathy there or sympathy there that was very helpful to me, and gave me the courage to continue my so-called liberal stand, which today wouldn’t be liberal at all.

Hartsook: [Were] the Council on Human Relations and Alice Spearman a factor in this?

West: I think so. Alice Spearman?

Hartsook: Alice Spearman Wright. [Long time executive director of the South Carolina Council on Human Rights, later renamed South Carolina Council on Human Relations]

West: Oh, Wright. Yes. Very much so.

Hartsook: So you think they were pretty effective?

West: Yes.

[END OF TAPE 3, BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1]

Hartsook: Were you surprised when Governor Russell hosted his open barbecue to celebrate [his
West: Very much so. The interesting thing was the reaction of Russell’s supporters. I remember one, Mr. Claytor Arrants, who was ----, over at Gadsden. He was a big Governor Russell supporter, but he was also a very ardent segregationist. He just couldn’t believe that Donald Russell was going to open up the Governor’s Mansion to them. There’s another story that I guess I’ve put it in my memoirs, about I. DeQuincey Newman and the picture of him shaking hands with Russell. It’s a great story, but it shouldn’t be told until some time has elapsed. Deke Newman, as I called him—again, he was one of the great... When we’re talking about people who helped ease the integration crisis, DeQuincey Newman, more than anybody else, deserves that credit. He started out; he was the field secretary for the NAACP beginning in the early ‘50s. That was before we had to face the real integration problem, Brown v. Board of Education, and so on. Deke, as we called him affectionately later in years, he became quite involved in helping race relations, during the hospital strike for example, during McNair’s term. I was not involved, but it was a very bitter strike. Violence was there. According to one story, which was repeated to me by both, I think, McNair and Pete Strom, that DeQuincey Newman was seen as an “Uncle Tom.” Some of the violent blacks threatened bodily harm to him. But he was an astute politician. I’ll tell you two stories on that, one that affected me.

Hollings was running against Russell for the Senate [in 1966]. Russell was the incumbent senator, having appointed himself, [or, technically, having been] appointed by McNair. Hollings was running against him in the primary. George Wallace was running, that was in ‘66. Particularly in the upstate, in the textile area, the segregation was very much an issue, among the textile workers, particularly. Of course, the conventional way of campaigning for the textile vote was to meet the mill shifts. I was running for lieutenant governor, so I started meeting the mill shifts. Meet that two o’clock [a.m.] shift, shake hands with them and say, “I want your vote bad enough to be in at this time of the night.” Usually you would get a vote. Well, in meeting the mill shifts in Anderson County, particularly, I suddenly began to see these pictures passed out at the gate, of Governor Russell on the steps of the Governor’s Mansion shaking hands with DeQuincey Newman. I could recognize the people as Hollings supporters, although they would deny that they were representing Hollings, but it was a clear message. That struck my curiosity, so later on I asked somebody in the Hollings campaign who I knew would know, “Where in the world did you get that picture?” He said, “Well, Deke Newman gave it to us.” [laughter] He was supporting Hollings and he realized that it was a political asset for Hollings’ crowd to distribute it.

The other story that I want to tell about Deke, and every time I drive to Camden, it’s the I. DeQuincey Newman Highway there that’s one of the connecting routes. I bow my head in salute, because Deke, probably as much as any one person, helped me in my race for governor. It was a tight race with Albert Watson. Segregation was the issue. Polls showed I was getting ninety percent of the black vote. Well, all of a sudden there appeared a petition drive for two blacks to run for governor and lieutenant governor—Broadwater, and, gosh, I’ve forgotten
the other fellow’s name. Both of them [were] Columbia lawyers. I forget what happened, but the net result was that there was a court order that they be placed on the ballot.

Well, of course, I know it was a Republican scheme to split the black vote. And I thought it would work because the black vote was considered a black “bloc” vote, more or less. It still is to a degree, less so. But that meant black candidates running for governor and lieutenant governor would certainly get a substantial percentage. Deke Newman and Don Fowler—Don was the executive director of the Democratic Party—I met with them and said, “What can we do?” They said, “We’ll take care of it.” So they hit the roads, the highways, the byways, particularly the black churches. Newman’s speech went something like this: “Don’t be a fool. This is an insult to your intelligence, because this a Republican scheme to elect Albert Watson, to take away the black vote. If you fall for it you’re stupid.” He didn’t say it quite that way. [He said it] much more eloquently than I. That word spread and I don’t know what the Broadwater ticket got, but it wasn’t enough to make me lose. It could have been.

Hartsook: Interesting campaign. I was fascinated looking through your list of mottos for the campaign. In your papers there’s a two-page list of things that were being considered....

West: Yes. “West is best” is what we finally picked out, didn’t we? As I remember, maybe we had “Elect a good man governor.”

Hartsook: “Elect a good man governor.”

West: Did I tell in the memoirs my favorite story? I repeated it to the class this morning. In preparing one of the [campaign’s] brochures, Harry Lightsey and the staff had me down as a former professor of political science at the university. I said, “That’s not right. I taught there.” They said, “Well, let’s say ‘taught political science.’ That’ll appeal to the academia and get you some votes, break that image of just the lawyer-politician.” I said, “No. I don’t think so.” “Why not?” [I said,] “Well, my opponent was one of my students—Albert.” [They said,] “Better.” [I said,] “No. I gave him an A.” That’s a true story.

Hartsook: Did you and he stay in touch? Was there any personal relationship after the campaign?

West: Yes and no. It was a fairly bitter campaign. I’ll put it in another way. I don’t think he ever called to congratulate me. There was some rumor that he was took drunk for several days, but I don’t know that. He may have written me, but I recall for several days there was no concession and no perfunctory congratulations.

A strange thing happened, and my wife still laughs about it, and I tell her that I can’t fool her. I had a call
from Albert one day after I came back from Saudi Arabia, ten years after the election. He wanted me to do something which I could do very easily, and I did it. But I went home that night to my wife and I said, “I’ll bet you a thousand dollars, and this is a real bet, that you can’t tell me who called me today.” She said, “Really, a thousand dollars?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “Albert Watson.” I said, “Oh, my God.” [laughter] I don’t know what intuition she had, but she guessed it. Then he died just within the last year. He was a very eloquent fellow, and a very, very decent guy. His philosophy and particularly his views on race were just more conservative than mine.

Hartsook: And you think that he really believed all of that?

West: I don’t know. I think that, as most of us do, he tailored some of his statements and beliefs to what he thought his audience wanted to hear. I’ll tell you one interesting story that was a character challenge to me. Around July 4th of 1970, my campaign hit a low point. I don’t know why it was, but it was the hot weather, the segregation issue. My principal advisors said, “This segregation thing...” [Vice President Spiro] Agnew had come down several times for Watson. He [West’s advisor] said, “You’ve got to come off that a little bit. Maybe you can say something.” So we seized on an opportunity. The federal government had taken some position with respect to [South Carolina] State College. We worked out a statement that criticized the federal government for not recognizing that a segregated system there was designed to placate the ardent segregationists.

I wasn’t comfortable with it, but I put it out. I didn’t get a whole lot of reaction, but my friend and business partner, Clarence Ford…, who, I should mention, was one of my mentors. He was a good businessman and he and I owned a newspaper chain together. He was my chief fundraiser. He came into the office and said, “John, this doesn’t sound like you.” I said, “Well, Clarence, it’s not. I’m really not comfortable.” He said, “Damn it, if you ain’t comfortable, don’t do it. It ain’t worth sacrificing your character.” I thought about it and I said, “You’re right.” So I put out another statement that didn’t directly contradict it, but offset it. I made the determination then, and I adopted a slogan, “There are things worse than losing.” People would ask me, “What is it?” I didn’t go into the character thing, but I figured that I’d tailor my views to a degree but there was a breaking point somewhere.

Hartsook: Is it harder for a candidate of ideas to campaign and reach out to the people? I look at you, and you’re somebody that really wants to do things in government. You have a vision of where you could take the state. You look at some of the other people that campaign on just one or two key issues, Steve Forbes on his flat tax, Albert Watson on segregation.... We talked a little bit about charisma, and I’m just wondering, as somebody who is really an intellectual, somebody that’s studied government.... You talk about political sound bites, and catching that audience, and most people making up their minds in the last days of the campaign. How does
somebody like yourself reach out and really enthuse an electorate?

**West:** I covered the state. When I got into the serious campaigning for governor, I’ll always remember it, on my birthday, which was August 27th, in 1969, I told my law office, I got them assembled and said, “Fellows, I’m only going to come back to this office to collect a check. I hope you have the money to cover them, because I’m going to need them. I’m going to be campaigning for six days a week, maybe seven, from this point on. If you’ve got a major crisis, I’ll check in with you occasionally, or call me. But don’t count on me to try any cases or to get involved in any legal matters.” So I started the next day, or the day afterwards, and I mapped out a program.

I was going to every county in the state at least twice, forty-six counties. I was going to make every hour count. I got a program together of strategy. The strategy was to go out and meet the people, talk to them at every level, at every part. And I did that. I talked to every civic club that I could, every farm bureau. Went door to door, house to house, encouraged people to have fish suppers, and teas [for the] ladies. Many of them did. I’d get up and give a set speech. In that way I talked to a lot of people. Today’s campaigning is all the sound bite television, but my campaigning, and the success I had, was the fact that building on the lieutenant governor’s four years, I spent a solid year traveling this state from mountain to seashore, talking to people. I usually tried to talk to the leaders, the movers and shakers, and convinced enough of them to support me.

**Hartsook:** Going back to the civil rights [issue], in your memoir you talk about the citizens’ council’s “uptown claim,” [as contrasted to the Ku Klux Klan]. How would you characterize the membership and influence and basic tenor of the two groups?

**West:** The Klan was the violent group. They said they had no concern about breaking the law. The citizens’ council were generally law-abiding people who would not deliberately, or knowingly, break the law. But they were seeking by every legal means to maintain the segregated society. I guess that would be the major difference, and of course, there’s a lot of gray area in between.

**Hartsook:** Do you think there was much cross-over between the two groups in membership?

**West:** There was certainly some, yes. I don’t think it was as widespread, because most of the business people who would go to the public meetings, they would not go to a Klan meeting and put on a robe and a hood.

**Hartsook:** So there was some stigma.

**West:** Oh, yes, very definitely a stigma on the Klan and among the so-called “intelligent” people.
Hartsook: When the Klan threatened you, you took those threats quite seriously, but you really didn’t change anything you were doing. Do you know people that did buckle under?

West: I’m sure there were some who did, but I fortunately didn’t. I think I probably covered that pretty well in the memoirs. I’ll always be grateful to Pete Strom, who suggested that I carry a pistol and [that] my wife carry one. I did for at least two or three years. I carried a little pistol in this pocket. I probably couldn’t have hit anything at ten feet, but it gave me a feeling of security. The main thing was that Pete had bugged the Klan headquarters and gave me a report every Wednesday of what they did on Tuesday.

Hartsook: And Mrs. West carried a gun as well?

West: Oh, yes.

Hartsook: Now she could have hit something, from what you write in the memoir.

West: I’ve told about how she quieted Neil Siggers, the Grand Dragon, by saying, “I’m going to kill you.” And she would have. Those were tense times.

Hartsook: I think it’s really hard for people today to put it in perspective.

West: I think I recited the Guy Hutchins story. [He was] the band leader who was beaten. That’s the first time that the brutality and senselessness of the Klan.... The fellow was a friend of mine, and damn it, to see that happen and to see it in my county, I was the county boss, the county senator. The Klan said the county wasn’t big enough for both of us. Thank God I got rid of them.

Hartsook: Do you think a lot of people were carrying guns at that time?

West: I know the editor of our paper was, Clarence Ford, the co-owner of the paper. Clarence and Bill Culp went up to the sheriff’s office. The magistrate had a bunch of pistols that he had collected and they selected one each.

Hartsook: Who do you think were most influential leaders in the councils and the Klan, and their most eloquent spokesmen?
West: In the local Klan, and they were the ones that I had knowledge of, it was Neil Siggers and Curly Frith. Incidentally, there was one Bruce Smith, who was a boyhood friend and neighbor of mine, but who got very involved in the Klan. His grandson was in one of my classes this morning. Bruce was a very active member of the Klan. His grandson said, “Oh, yeah. My father was raised in [the] Charlotte Thompson [community] and often speaks of you.” Of course, I knew he was a member of the Klan. A lot of the members didn’t hide it very well. They didn’t conceal their membership. Many did.

Hartsook: How about somebody like a Maurice Bessinger?

West: Maurice was certainly recognized as the ardent segregationist. For years I wouldn’t eat Bessinger barbecue because of it, although his brother in Charleston was a supporter of mine in the governor’s race.

Hartsook: Isadore Lourie finds it funny—I won’t eat at Bessinger’s.

West: Is that right?

Hartsook: Yes.

West: Well, it’s only in the last few years that I’ve eaten out here at Bessinger’s. Now the Charleston Bessinger, yes, I’ll eat there.

Hartsook: Can you evaluate Governor Byrnes’ leadership regarding “separate but equal”?

West: Yes. Talked about that this morning in my lectures. They had several questions about it. Have you read the book, *Sly but [and] Able*? I think I would recommend it. It’s a fascinating book. It’s beautifully done on Byrnes. It’s got him characterized as I think I knew him. It’s very well done. Byrnes was, and I think that term, the title of that book—*Sly but Able*—says it exactly. Byrnes was very able but he was also sly. Clever would be a kinder word, perhaps, and almost as accurate.

Certainly his approach to the segregation issue was a very sound, legalistic one as I remember the situation and have read it. The law of the land was *Plessy v. Ferguson*, decided in 1898, that separate but equal facilities were constitutional. As long as you provided equal facilities it was not a denial of equal protection or due process. When the suit was filed in Clarendon County, I believe ----- *Briggs v. Elliott* was the title. It subsequently became *Brown v. the Board of Education*. Bob Figg was Byrnes’ lawyer. Bob was subsequently Dean of the Law
School. [He was] one of the great lawyers of our time. He advised Byrnes that there’s no way you can say the Clarendon County facilities are equal to the white. That’s when Byrnes recommended and got the state to pass the three percent sales tax on the theory that we were going to equalize the facilities. Of course, that’s the main argument in the United States Supreme Court.

John W. Davis was the counsel. He mentioned Fritz Hollings. I think he may have used that. He was one of the House observers and participants in that. In my lectures I equate the fall of the Democratic Party and the rise of the Republican Party to some major milestones, the first of which was Byrnes being denied the vice presidential position in 1944 at the Chicago convention. ----- ---- Sidney Hillman of the labor movement, Bob Hannigan, the Catholic chairman of the Democratic Party, and Bill Dawson, who was the only black Congressman. He was from Chicago, and those three persuaded Roosevelt, who had committed to Byrnes. The ironic thing was that Truman went to that convention with a speech written to nominate Byrnes for vice president. Byrnes did not get the vice presidency, and later he and Truman had their falling out. Although Byrnes did not take an active part in the ‘48 campaign, I don’t think he ever voted for a Democratic candidate for President again.

**Hartsook:** What are the other milestones that you think of in the rise of the Republican Party in South Carolina?

**West:** The other milestones were the segregation efforts, which included Judge [J. Waties] Waring’s decisions on allowing the blacks to participate. Of course, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and then Thurmond’s switch in ‘64 to the Republican Party, the Voting Rights Act of ‘64. When Lyndon Johnson signed the legislation he handed the pen to a Southern senator, and said, “We’re turning the South over to the Republican Party.” Those are some of the milestones.

**Hartsook:** How important do you think Bill Workman’s Senate campaign was? I’ve heard people refer to that as creating the basic framework for a statewide organization [for the Republican Party].

**West:** I think that’s pretty much true. That was what, in sixty—...?

**Hartsook:** Sixty-two.

**West:** Olin Johnston had defeated Fritz in the primary.

**Hartsook:** And there are some people that apparently think that Fritz was encouraged to run by Republican backers.
West:  Oh, I’m sure he was. Fritz represented the business element. Now I’m not sure about the ------.. Let me think for a minute.

[END TAPE 4, SIDE 1, BEGIN SIDE 2]

West:  Fritz is right. Workman was a newspaper correspondent. He was not the editor of the State then. He was a sound fellow. Everybody liked him. The Republicans had never put [forward] a statewide candidate for United States Senator or governor until that time. I had, fortunately, some friends in the inner circle of the Republican Party, one who is still my dear friend, who at that time was sort of a young “gopher” for the brass. He tipped me off to the fact that Workman was being considered, and was considering making the run as a Republican. What jogged my memory, we used to go up to Marshall Parker’s home area of Seneca. He had a group of friends there, they had a house on the lake and we’d go up and have dinner. Some of us would play golf and talk politics. Fritz was a part of that group. In fact, Fritz was trying to get Marshall to run his campaign for the Senate in 1962. He offered him the job. They had been very close.

I was driving up and Fritz was in the car. We were going up and there was somebody else, I forget. We were going up for a weekend up at Seneca with Marshall and his crowd. I had just gotten a call before I left from my friend who said, “I’ve got some political gossip for you. Bill Workman may be the Republican candidate.” I shared that with Fritz. He said, “What? Find me a telephone.” We stopped the car somewhere between ---- and Seneca. He got to a pay phone and called Bill. He came back and I said, “What happened?” He said, “I called him just to make sure he was going to support me. He weaseled. He is going to run.” [laughter] I’ll never forget that. I had forgotten that, but now you jogged my memory.

Hartsook:  How active a role did you take in that campaign?

West:  That was ‘62. I was running for reelection but I didn’t have any opposition. I supported Fritz very, very vigorously. Bill and I, strangely enough, had been real friends for many years. We went back to the ‘30s. As I told you, I worked in the NYA and one of my jobs was to handle the speaker system at the football game. I would give the scores. We had a telegraph in there. I’d give the substitutions. I wasn’t the chief announcer, but I’d say I was one of the ones who was sort of in charge. Bill Workman was the manager of WTMA, which was one of the rival stations of WCSC. There were two stations, WTMA was the newer one. Bill was a Citadel graduate. They didn’t have the wire service. WCSC had the wire service that gave the scores at the quarters and halftimes. Bill asked me and I would slip him information on the scores of the ball games, so WCSC wouldn’t have a complete beat on it. We were friends, then we were in the Army together.
Again, I’m going to have to go back. I believe I got Bill involved in a part of the U.S. Strategic Bomb Survey. Yes, I did. As I told you, I was an active part of the Bomb Survey group that went to Japan and determined the damage of the bombs. We sent a similar group to Europe. I was in the Pentagon then, and I think this is correct, that I recommended that they go back and get Bill Workman, who was a Major, to be a part of the German team. He had been over in Germany. I remember meeting with him down in Richmond, down at the headquarters there. I think that he went to Germany as a part of that and credited me with helping him go. I’m not absolutely certain of that, but anyhow, we were friends. It was not easy for me... Well, it wasn’t hard for me. Fritz was a classmate of Bill ----- who was a Democrat, and I was a Democrat. It was right interesting. Bill’s daughter, Dee Workman, who I still know very well, incidentally, [is] one of my strong Republican friends. She still delights in telling me that her father, as editor of the *State*, wrote the editorial endorsing me for governor. And he did. It was because of his terrible Alzheimer’s situation that he died.

**Hartsook:** The *State* newspaper, on the eve of the [1962 Democratic] primary, said that it [the Senate race] was too close to call. Was that your feeling going into the primary election, that Hollings actually had a good shot at winning?

**West:** Now, wait a minute....

**Hartsook:** I’m talking about the Senate campaign when he opposed Olin Johnston in the primary.

**West:** I wasn’t that involved. I was supporting Fritz, but I was not in the inner circle there and I didn’t have access. I thought Hollings would do a lot better than he did. He carried one county and that was Calhoun County. That’s another interesting political story. The reason he carried Calhoun County was Olin Johnston. When Kennedy became President, he [Johnston] was the senior senator, and he supposedly controlled the patronage. Olin had not been a supporter of Jack Kennedy early on. He, in fact, is one that, according to the press, voted against making the nomination unanimous. Olin just said no, even though that wasn’t recorded.

Well, Bob Hemphill, in the campaign of ’60, the Kennedy/Johnson campaign, that’s when he and I developed a real closeness politically. Nobody would make speeches with the Democratic Party, except Hemphill and me in this fifth [Congressional] district. I didn’t make that many speeches, but I spoke out. I remember very well that I had a bumper sticker for Kennedy and Johnson, and I’d go up most every Saturday to play golf at the country club. Every time that I came back that sticker would be torn off. Of course, many of the old line Democrats, including my friend Talmadge Bowen, couldn’t stand the idea of a Catholic going in. He was a staunch Baptist. So it was a lonesome situation.

Bobby Kennedy was the campaign manager and he was conversing with the South Carolina situation.
While I never had any direct contact with Bobby, Bob Hemphill did. It’s a long story, but the point is that Bob Hemphill wanted his university classmate, who was the mayor of a small town in Chesterfield County—he had been one of the basketball players at Carolina—to be appointed U.S. Marshal. Well, Olin promised the job to Babe [Theodore] Nelson, who was a member of the House and a very prominent, very nice guy. [He] made that commitment to Marion Gressette and to Babe. He said, “I’m going to make you the United States Marshal.”

Bob Hemphill went to Bobby Kennedy, who was the Attorney General, and said, “I want my friend to be the United States Marshal.” Bobby said, “Okay, he’ll be the United States Marshal.” Then Olin came in sort of ponderously, and [said,] “I want my friend....” Hemphill heard about it. He called Bobby. This is Bob’s relation of the conversation to me. He [Kennedy] said, “We Kennedys have many faults. One fault we don’t have. We make a commitment for a friend and we keep it. He [Hemphill’s friend] will be the United States Marshal.” He was the United States Marshal. Marion Gressette and Babe Nelson both felt that Olin had lied to them. So they went all out and carried that county for Fritz Hollings. That’s the only county he carried.

Hartsook: That’s a good story.

West: [laughter] It’s a true story.

Hartsook: How did you happen to become Edgar Brown’s campaign manager back in ‘54?

West: Another good story. I ran for the Senate. The fellow who had been the senator from ‘46 to ‘50 was Bob Kennedy, Robert M. Kennedy, Jr., from Camden. He was a very volatile, high-tempered fellow. He spent his four years in the Senate fighting Edgar Brown and Dick Jefferies. He particularly took after Dick Jefferies, because Dick was manager of Santee-Cooper and had collected a huge fee—his law firm had—and Kennedy for some reason had a personal vendetta against Dick Jefferies. Dick’s son had married Edgar’s daughter and so they [Jefferies and Brown] were lumped together.

Kennedy did not run for election, but he supported Arthur Jones, whom Clator Arrants beat by thirteen votes. Strange thing. Kennedy was the man who had recommended me for the Highway Commission in 1948 to settle a dispute that he’d had with Clator Arrants. I was a friend of both of them. I was a compromise candidate. Actually my law partner was a compromise candidate. He said, “I don’t want it. Give it to my young law partner, John West.”

Anyhow, Bob Kennedy was our client [and] my friend, but we began to differ on a couple of things, including a hospital issue over there that was a major issue, then, particularly, on the segregation issue. Bob was a devout Episcopalian. We had a young Episcopal minister who had just come to Camden. He came to the Democratic county convention of ‘48, I guess it was. A resolution was proposed by Kennedy, who was still the
state senator and leader of the Democratic Party. It was a routine resolution condemning the Fair Employment Practices Act, which was really the first of the civil rights acts. Everybody expected it to pass, but this young minister got up and said “I want to be heard.” Well, he was Bob Kennedy’s minister. He [Kennedy] said, “Certainly, Pastor So-and-so.” He made a hell of a speech. He said, “First of all, I want to ask you, how many of you have read that act?” Well, nobody had. Then he went on: “brotherly love,” “this is wrong.” Kennedy became insane. His face flushed. Of course the thing passed unanimously, except for that fellow’s vote. He [Kennedy] went that day and removed his membership from the Grace Episcopal Church and never set foot in it again. He prescribed that he was dead. [laughter] Nobody from that church would ever have anything to say.

Anyhow, he became my bitterest political enemy. He really started out as a supporter of Jones and he had supported -----, because I was supported by the Arrants faction. You get all my political stories. This ‘54 race, emotionally, was somewhat trying because a lot of people who had been my friends and legal clients of our firm, Allen Murchison -----, suddenly turned up not supporting me. One of them was a fellow named Usher Myers, who was chairman of the County Commission, a member of the same Presbyterian church. His son and I were classmates in high school. But he was a Bob Kennedy man, and those two became the brains of the Camden group supporting my opponent.

The race was very close. When the votes were counted the first night, I had a three-vote margin. Of course, there was a recount. It was all paper ballots. The managers were almost all of the Kennedy crowd, because they had controlled the Party and they designated the managers. The feeling was, “Well, John, on the recount you’re going to lose, because they’ll steal enough votes from you.” I was somewhat desperate. Edwin Boyle was a very prominent contractor in Sumter. He was a first cousin of my law partner Allen Murchison, and he had been mayor of Sumter, and was active in politics. He was a supporter. He saw the problem. He said, “John, you’ve got a problem here and you need some help. First of all, you need a good lawyer, because there are going to be irregularities. I’ll get you a lawyer.” So he got me two lawyers. One was Werber Bryan of Sumter, who was a member of the House. He had been the principal author of the revised election laws. All of the election laws had been wiped off the books in an attempt to keep the blacks out, you know, in ‘48, and there had been a new set of laws. The other was Mr. John Dinkins, who was a former senator from Manning, and was a very courtly, delightful gentleman, former chairman of the Democratic Party. So they came up to represent me and to make sure that there were no irregularities.

This is the part that, maybe, shouldn’t be written. They started recounting. Talmadge Bowen, who was my friend from West Wateree ---- ----- ----- around the courthouse. He suddenly came to me in panic. He said, “John, I just watched them steal thirty votes from you in this box. It’s a disaster.” I said, “Wait a minute. Call a halt to everything. We want a poll watcher. We want somebody on every box.” So I had enough friends there who immediately started watching. According to one version of the story, and I’m not going to admit it’s true, my crowd said, “Well, they stole thirty votes. We’d better steal them back, plus a few.” And that’s how I wound up
with an eight-vote margin instead of a three-vote margin. The other story, that I will not vouch for the accuracy, but it’s been told, that my friend Mr. Kennedy, who was a very nervous fellow, was counting. We knew he would steal, or we felt that he would. Honest fellow. I’d trust him with my pocket book but not with a ballot. Well, my wife stood right over him. He got nervous, and would occasionally fumble and a ballot would drop to the floor. My wife, it is reported by some, would put her foot on it and ease it back. A friend of mine named Tetterton would ease down and suddenly have to go to the restroom. He’d come back and say, “Flush one.” [laughter] Whether that’s true or not, that probably shouldn’t be told, but it’s a part of the lore and the legacy.

Eight votes, Thursday night. Recount. We had a big celebration. ----- ----- -----. Saturday morning an old fellow named Humphries...who was a roustabout, he worked at Usher Myers’ filling station. I had represented him on a drunk driving charge and gotten him off, and he’d never paid me. He was a good old fellow. He was a drunk, but he worked as a gas pump man down at Myers’ service station. Well, he called me that morning and said, “I’ve got to come see you Saturday morning.” I was in the office. He shuffled in and said, “John, I’ve got to tell you. You know, they’ve been meeting down at Usher’s office there. I listened at the window. They’ve got a plan to steal the election from you and you ought to know about it.” I said, “What’s that?” He said, “Well, they’re going to protest certain boxes in which you had a majority. They’re going to wait until ten minutes to midnight, the deadline for filing a protest, and they’re going to serve you with a protest. Monday morning the executive committee is going to meet and they’re going to allow the protest and declare Jones the winner.”

So I panicked. We went into a real planning session and in the process I called Edwin Boyle [to ask him] what to do. This bears on the Edgar Brown story. What we did actually that night was right clever. I had the support of the rural police force. The county administrator was a distant cousin of mine, Jim West. We checked the law real hastily, and the candidate himself had to be served. You had to serve the candidate and you had to serve the county chairman, who was John DeLoach. We prepared protests of certain boxes including the Kershaw box. We had affidavits that they’d let people vote; there were just a string of irregularities.

Well, I disappeared because you had to serve the candidate. So I went into hiding. I was at my friend Clarence Ford’s house. I’m trying to remember the exact sequence of events, but it went something like this. I had a police car right outside of Jones’ residence. At ten minutes of twelve they were supposed to serve him [with the protest] and call me back. They served him at ten minutes of twelve. They were looking for me, but they couldn’t find me. But you had to serve the county chairman, who was John DeLoach. He was secretly a Kennedy supporter, but his family lived next door to my wife all their life and they were lifelong friends. He was much older. The families were friends. He had lived just a block from my wife.

Lois—I still get a little emotional when I think about this. She stayed in the schoolhouse grounds, right across from John’s house, with somebody. I think it was probably my brother. At ten minutes of twelve, Bob Kennedy came up to serve the county chairman, John DeLoach. When he went up to John’s front door, and John was expecting him because the light was on, Lois came right behind him. I think he would have liked to have
disappeared in the crowd then. Monday morning they realized that I had not been served. Jones had, so the executive committee decided not to meet. But in the meantime, I had called Edwin Boyle. He called me back and said, “Don’t worry. I’ve talked to Edgar Brown. He knows what a son of a bitch Bob Kennedy is. If Kennedy steals it we’ll give it back to you.” So, fortunately, I wrote Edgar a note thanking him for his interest, telling him I looked forward to serving with him. Two months later I get a call from Edgar, “I need some help. I want you to be my campaign manager.” I had no choice.

Hartsook: I imagine that really impressed them, all the machinations that went on in your campaign and how you reacted to them. Don’t you think?

West: Yes. It was an interesting situation. I’ll never forget old man Humphries. As I say, I’d never worried about collecting the fee because the Lord will send you help. Things balance out. The old man, as I say, I had charged him something. He said, “I can’t pay.” I said, “Well, pay me when you can.” He slipped in there. Later I told him, “I don’t ever want to see your money. Anything I can do for you, I’ll do it.” He had listened at the window and had heard the whole plot. Another interesting thing, and I do get emotional about this, my mother was at my house. [She said,] “I’m going to kill him.”

[TAPE STOPS AND RESTARTS]

....Telling you later that if I’d been worth a damn as a campaign manager, I’d have won the election and he’d [Edgar Brown] have died. He was a grand fellow, I tell you he was.

Hartsook: Do you think he really received a satchel full of money to pull out of the ‘38 Senate race?

West: Oh, yes. There’s no doubt that he got some money. He never would tell anybody. He certainly wouldn’t tell me. He said, “I just got my expenses,” which was not an uncommon tradeoff then or now. You help the candidate who withdraws or supports you with “expenses.” He got the name “Satchel Brown” and it stuck to him in some circles until he died.

Hartsook: Governor, can you tell us the name of your Republican insider that let you know about Bill Workman’s intent?

West: [laughter] Yes, as a matter of fact, I can, I guess. In fact, I just had a call from him a few minutes ago, which I took while you were out. He’s my stock broker, Tom Kepley. Tom was, and is, an ardent Republican, but
has been my friend. He started out; I was one of his first....

[END OF TAPE 4, BEGIN TAPE 5, JULY 15, 1996, SIDE 1]

Hartsook: I want to talk a little bit about the 1960 Presidential campaign and what role, if any, you played in that.

West: Well, in 1960, I was in the state Senate. I did not go to the Los Angeles convention. I think I was elected an alternate. Frankly, I did not have the desire to go and didn’t have the finances either. Fritz Hollings had taken a very active role as a supporter of Kennedy. It’s interesting.... Bob Haynesworth, who had been Fritz’s roommate in college, had gone to Texas and had done quite well. [He was] a great friend of Lyndon Johnson. Lyndon was the other contender. He came in and tried to persuade Fritz to get on the Lyndon Johnson bandwagon, but Fritz was for Kennedy all the way. Kennedy was not a popular choice among many South Carolina Democrats or Republicans. I took a fairly active part in that.... Well, I remember one incident very clearly. We had a Kennedy/Johnson bumper sticker, and I kept one on my car. Every Saturday when I went to the country club to play golf that sticker would be ripped off, and I’d put it on again. There were very few political people who would be willing to make a speech for the Kennedy/Johnson crowd in this area. Bob Hemphill, who was the Congressman, and I made a couple of speeches around. But very few people wanted to be identified [as Kennedy supporters]. The fact that we carried the state by a small margin was a tribute, I guess, to Hollings as much as anything else.

Hartsook: Why do you think Hemphill backed Kennedy? Because he was the only House member, I believe, to formally go out and work for...?

West: Well, Bob was a.... If he was your friend, he was your friend. He would stand up [for you]. That was a part of his nature, and his makeup. He was an interesting character, a very strong character, and a very great friend of mine. In fact, his standing up for Kennedy gave rise to one of the more interesting political stories that I remember now. Kennedy was elected. It had always been the prerogative of the senator from the state, the senior senator usually, to recommend federal judges, federal marshals, and all that sort of thing. Olin Johnston had, at most, paid lip service to Kennedy. In fact, I believe at the convention he is alleged to have said “No” when they asked to make the vote unanimous.

At any rate, it came time for the patronage. Bob Hemphill had a friend who was the mayor of McBee, John—what was his last name?—who wanted to be U.S. Marshal. He had been Bob’s classmate at the University. He had been one of the ones they had brought in from Texas to play basketball in the ‘30s. Nice guy. Babe
Nelson, from St. Matthews, wanted to be the Marshal. Babe was Marion Gressette’s House member and protégé. They went to Olin and they had a commitment that Babe would be the Marshal. That became a real controversy, and I will always remember Bob Hemphill telling me this. He said that he went to see Bobby Kennedy when he found this thing out. Bobby said, “Look, Congressman. We Kennedys have many faults. But two things nobody has ever accused us of. That’s not being loyal to our friends, and keeping our word. Your man is going to be the Marshal.” He was the Marshal. When it came to the election of ‘62, when Hollings ran against Johnston, the only county that he carried was Calhoun County, because Marion Gressette and Babe Nelson thought Johnston had lied to them, and double crossed them. [laughter] It wasn’t that at all.

Anyhow, a lot of political stories go along those lines. Fritz only carried one county in the state. That was Calhoun County, and he carried it because Olin [had supposedly] lied to Marion and Babe. But he didn’t.

Hartsook: Ted Riley, in his oral history, talked a good bit about being cut at his country club, and people treating him poorly because he was wearing the Kennedy button. Did you ever have it out with anybody in the clubhouse?

West: They gave me hell in a general sort of way. What really disturbed me, I had one of my greatest political supporters, financially and politically, Talmadge Bowen, who was a staunch Baptist, get upset because of [Kennedy being] a Catholic. He just gave me hell. He had been my chief financial supporter and one of my chief backers.

Hartsook: And I take it that was smoothed over after the campaign?

West: Thank goodness, yes. But he was a very strong person. I remember he [asked] me, “How can you put a Catholic in there?” I said, “Well, us Presbyterians ----- ----- any of you Baptists.” But he just couldn’t see him as [President] because of the Catholicism. I remember that vividly.

Hartsook: Was that a tense time for social affairs?

West: Well, of course I had just been through the Ku Klux Klan thing, so there wasn’t any comparison there. Everybody just said, “Old John, he’s a Democrat, and we’ll put up with him.” I guess that was it.

Hartsook: How about in the Hollings campaigns? Did you work for him in the gubernatorial race, or his ‘62 or ‘66 Senate races?
West: Yes, although in each instance that Hollings ran, I was running a race, too. So that limited what I could do, particularly in the ‘66 race. Hollings helped me substantially in ‘70. In ‘66 I was running for lieutenant governor and he was running for the Senate, so there wasn’t much we could do other than exchange information, which I did with Crawford Cook.

Hartsook: Were you surprised when he decided to oppose Olin Johnston?

West: No. Everybody thought that Fritz was the new wave and Olin was the “old timer,” which he was, and that Fritz had done an excellent job as governor in terms of industry. I don’t think we had polling at that time, so he just…. I was not surprised, no, and I’m sure I was among those who encouraged him, although I was running myself. I was running but I did not have opposition in that primary. I can’t remember what I did. Obviously it wasn’t very effective, whatever it was.

Hartsook: Were you shocked at how effective Marshall Parker was as a Republican candidate in ‘66 and ‘68?

West: Yes, I was, although Marshall was, and is, a good campaigner. He was an attractive fellow. [He] was photogenic. He’s just a good campaigner.

Hartsook: Did it shock you when he changed parties? Because hadn’t he been part of that inner circle of up-and-comers?

West: Oh, God, yes. [laughter] Let me see if I can recount the story. In 1962, there was a question [as to] who should run for lieutenant governor. That was a stepping stone. I was the senior one in that little group, and I wanted to run, but I didn’t have the independent means and I did not have the office structured so that I could leave my law practice. Allen Legare was the senator from Charleston. He was sort of the leader of our group, or the senior advisor. He was not interested in running. Both Marshall and I had ideas of running. At that time, Burnet Maybank was the lieutenant governor and was running for Governor. He was Allen Legare’s close friend. Allen had committed early on to him. Well, McNair was talking about running against Burnet Maybank. That was the “talk.” So Allen insisted that Marshall and I had to make up our minds.

So we met at Kiawah. We all owned a place at Kiawah Island together—Marshall, Earle Morris, and Allen. We met there on several occasions. Allen said, “You’ve got to make up your mind.” One time Marshall said, “Okay, I’m ready. John, you can run if you want to. If you run, I won’t.” I said, “No. You go ahead. You’re ready.” So he started running. Then Donald Russell got into the race at the last minute. McNair
immediately dropped back to the lieutenant governor’s race. I had already committed to Marshall, so there was nothing I could do but help Marshall. Again, this was ‘62, and I did not have opposition that year. I was fairly active for Marshall, as was Allen. Of course, Marshall made a [mistake] at the municipal association, saying something [to the effect that] if the sales tax were raised, the counties and the municipalities should get a portion of it. McNair took that and said, “He’s in favor of raising taxes.” For whatever reason, that probably was the turning point in the campaign.

At any rate, Marshall lost. Two weeks later we met down at Allen’s house at Wadmalaw [Island], the Parker family and our family. Allen said, “Marshall, you ran a good campaign. You ought to start planning now for four years from now. You started too late.” So I said, “Marshall, you ran. Are you interested in running again?” He said, “No.” Allen turned and said, “All right. John, are you interested?” I said, “I am. I’m getting my office arranged so that I can spend some time. My financial picture’s a little bit better.” So the deal was that I ran.

Then several things happened. Donald Russell resigned, and McNair became governor. That really hit Marshall. I remember we were all in the Senate the day McNair became governor. It was really a blow to him [Parker] in many ways. We could understand that. We were all still very good friends and we had not really made up with McNair that much. Then the ‘66 election loomed. I started getting feelers from Marshall’s friends that Marshall might reconsider—he may want to run for lieutenant governor. I said to one of them, “Marshall and I have an understanding. If he wants to change it, he needs to tell me that face to face.” The next Tuesday night, Marshall was staying across the road [in] a motel. He said, “Come on over. We need to see you.” I said, “Marshall, I hear you want to change your mind. I’ve gone pretty far in my preparations and I’m not going to change.” He said, “Well, you definitely want to run?” I said, “Yes.” He threw an envelope down and said, “Well, here’s a campaign contribution.” It was $250-$300, which was not an inconsiderable amount. I said, “Thank you.” So I was relieved, because I certainly didn’t want to run against him. It would have been very difficult. Then I said, “Well, what are you going to do?” He said, “I don’t know.”

Then there was a press release that Marshall had said he was not going to run for reelection as senator from Oconee. I and Allen Legare called [Marshall] and said, “Marshall, what the hell is going on?” [Marshall said,] “Well, I don’t know. I’ll let you know Tuesday.” Marshall was supposed to make the keynote address at the Pickens County Democratic convention on Monday night. He called Earle [Morris], who was chairman, and canceled an hour before hand. Earle called me and said, “What gives with Marshall?” I said, “Heck, I don’t know.” So we tried to call Marshall. [He said,] “I’ll let you know tomorrow.” The Senate convened at noon and Marshall wouldn’t tell us. Crawford Clarkson was his chief advisor then. He said, “God damn, Marshall, you’re out? What...?” [Marshall said,] “Well, I’ll let you know. I’m having a press conference at one o’clock.”

The word came out that he was going to switch parties and run against Hollings. We walked over to the Palmetto Club for lunch. I’ll [never] forget. McNair came up in the Governor’s limousine. He got out and saw
me there. He beckoned to me and said, “I told you he was an S.O.B.” [laughter] I ran into Fritz, and the interesting part about that is that Fritz had asked Marshall to run his ‘58 campaign for governor. Marshall had turned him down after a great deal of debate. But Fritz was there and he was really in shock, because Marshall had been his great supporter. Then Marshall darned near beat Fritz.

Hartsook: How do you explain that? You would think, given the situation, he would have a hard time even running a mediocre campaign, let alone almost knocking off...

West: Of course, there was a residue of the Donald Russell crowd. You see, it was the first time the Republicans had run a statewide race, and Marshall was just a heck of a good campaigner. Have I told you the story of how Fritz sort of co-opted Marshall on the WIS-TV thing?

Hartsook: No.

West: That’s another one that probably shouldn’t be told for a good many years. The principal media then was WIS-TV. Every politician wanted the last thirty minutes of prime time. Well, it turned out that Marshall’s crowd got the last segment. Fritz had to go first. At the time it was felt to be very critical. Somehow, Marshall’s program was taped and the report is that Hollings got a preview of it. In his preceding thirty minutes, [Fritz] knocked down every point [made by Marshall]. Lee Ruef, who was the anchorman at WIS-TV, along with Crawford Cook, who was Fritz’s campaign manager, both went to Washington as aides to Fritz. A lot of people drew a lot of conclusions there.

Hartsook: Tell me again, what was Crawford Clarkson’s relationship to Marshall Parker?

West: Crawford Clarkson was Marshall’s close friend and political advisor. Marshall got a prominent role in state government by being chairman of the Tax Study Committee, which looked over and revised all of the [tax legislation]. Crawford Clarkson was a governor’s appointee. The chemistry was good. Crawford, dating back to Marshall Parker’s time, became a very avid Republican, Floyd Spence supporter. At the same time [he was] my close friend and supporter, too. Crawford is still one of my favorite friends. In fact, I got him to be a part of the consulting team with the University that surveyed Seibels Bruce. They gave us the recommendations that we’re following. I have great respect for Crawford.

Hartsook: It sounds like most people do. I’ve heard really good things.

I want to jump to 1972 and the textile mission to Japan. That was organized for executives of some of
South Carolina’s largest textile mills. They returned with large orders for things like carpets, upholstery and drapery materials. Can you talk a little bit about your role in that mission and the recruitment of industry in general and perhaps use that as your example?

**West:** Well, now, I did not go on that myself, as I recall.

**Hartsook:** But I thought you played a pretty big role in organizing it.

**West:** I organized it. Bubba McKissick and several of the textile people said, “Given the chance, we can sell our textiles over there.” I believe Earle Morris took that over. It was sort of a “selling an icebox to an Eskimo” type thing, but we got a lot of publicity out of it and they got a lot of orders. Whether they were one-time orders or not, we felt it was a major breakthrough because it proved that with American technology and the innovations that we had in the textile machinery and fashions, that we could sell it.

**Hartsook:** And wasn’t that mission your idea?

**West:** Oh, yes.

**Hartsook:** How did that come about? How did it even occur to you to try to do that, because, like you say, it’s “iceboxes to the Eskimos?”

**West:** I had become impressed with the technology that we had. Again, I give Roger Milliken and his group a great deal of credit for being on the cutting edge of technology. If you remember, I got involved in the textile machinery shows when I went over as lieutenant governor, to extend the invitation from the textile machinery show to be held in ‘72, I guess it was. It’s held every two years. I went over first in ‘67 with Dick Tukey. Then I went back virtually every year. It’s a fascinating thing. Roger Milliken had a cadre of probably twenty-five to fifty people there. I remember when the double knit came in. There was one manufacturer that had the latest, and he bought all of his production for a year.

**Hartsook:** Why did he do that?

**West:** That gave him the jump. This particular, I guess it was ----- ----- or one of the Swiss or German companies had developed this double knit machine that was far ahead of the competitors. So to stifle the competition, he just bought the whole production for the next year. I was very proud and impressed at the way our
textile people were modernizing, innovating and so on. I think it was Bubba McKissick, or maybe it was John Cauthen, who was saying, “We make the best textiles in the world and we can sell them anywhere. We’re cheaper now than anywhere in the world.”

[END TAPE 5, SIDE 1, BEGIN SIDE 2]

West: Fritz was running for governor in ‘58, and we had already formed this little clique and bought a house together at Kiawah, Earle Morris, Marshall, Allen Legare, and myself. We were great supporters of Fritz. Well, Fritz called Marshall. He wanted him to be his campaign manager. Marshall was talking to us about it, so we said, “Absolutely. That’s a wonderful opportunity. It will give you statewide [recognition], and so on.” Finally, he said, “No, I can’t do it.” We said, “Marshall, why the hell not?” So after a few drinks he broke down and said, “Well, let me tell you.” This Katherine Wolfe was working for Fritz. She was, and is, an attractive person. [Marshall] said, “The chemistry between us is just too great. I’m a married man, and if I go down there and spend a couple of months in Columbia, there ain’t no telling what’s going to happen.” [laughter] He said, “Because that attraction is strong both ways.”

Well, to [finish] the story though. Katherine was a damned good political person. She was smart. When Fritz went in he gave the top job to Betty Bargmann rather than Katherine, because Betty had been working for him. Katherine went back to the secretarial pool and was not happy at all. She was a good political animal. So, when Marshall was talking about running in ‘62, one of the first things that Allen told Marshall was, “Now, Katherine could be your perfect office manager.” [Marshall] said, “Yes, ----- if she’ll help. I’ve got no problem there.” She ended up running McNair’s campaign.

Hartsook: Did she stick with him?

West: Oh, yes. Then she became McNair’s chief of staff. That’s just a little.... No real scandal, because I don’t think anything ever happened there. But Marshall said, “It sure would’ve if I’d have been down in Columbia by myself working with her.”

Hartsook: Let me ask you some more things about recruitment of industry. We recorded earlier your comments about the Elgin watch company, which I think are just fascinating. You played a very personal role in recruiting industry. Can you give me another example of a situation that you developed? How it came up? How you realized there was opportunity?

[TAPE STOPS AND RESTARTS]
Hartsook: I was asking you about luring industry to South Carolina. I really just want to know, or better understand your personal role in developing that plan.

West: Well, I found that, particularly abroad, also in the New York area, governors were considered more important than they were in South Carolina. Being a governor opened doors. I like to think that much of the success we had was in Europe—Bayer, I remember we got them in Charleston. We had a lot of help from Willy Korf of Georgetown Steel. We would go and call on the major industries and meet with the executive boards. We capitalized on some changes in the German system. They started putting workers on the boards of directors in the early ‘70s. Of course, they were unionized, whereas we [in South Carolina] had the lowest percentage of union labor of any state in the nation. So we would go in and say, “If you run a good shop, you don’t have to worry about unions. We have the labor supplies.”

I may have already mentioned this. We were particularly able to show in the labor markets below the fall line, the prejudice against blacks didn’t exist in the European phase as it did in the United States. So we would show the availability of labor. If you go to the U.S. companies they would ask, “Well, how much of it’s black?” They had a built-in feeling that if you went into a black neighborhood in the South, it was [felt] first of all the workers weren’t as well trainable. Secondly, they were lazy, and third, they were susceptible to unionism. We didn’t have to overcome that in Europe. I found, again, in recruitment of industry in the United States, we use the jet airplane [to] go up, bring people back, keep them in the Governor’s Mansion. The mere fact that they would stay in the Governor’s Mansion meant a lot to them. We had a memento that we gave to each one. We had a numbered print of the Mansion, and we’d give that, inscribed “to so-and-so as a memento of the night you spent with us and the times you spent with us.” Those have become right interesting artifacts now. We had a good product to sell—the labor supply, the non-unionism, and our technical training. So I enjoyed the industry solicitation and we ran a continuous hospitality program at the Governor’s Mansion. I remember one night we had three dinner parties going. One at the pool house, one in the main house, and one at the Lace House, all industrial prospects.

Hartsook: Did Mrs. West enjoy that?

West: She did it. She did a great job. She was always gracious. We had a good staff there. It was a team effort. I couldn’t have done it without her.

Hartsook: I didn’t hear you say if she enjoyed it, though. I get the impression....
**West:** [laughter] I think, yes, she enjoyed it. Of course the favorite story which I told, they asked me if I was going to run for the United States Senate or something. I told them that my wife had told me that if I ran for another office after governor, to hunt a new wife. So that closed the door. But she went to Saudi Arabia and did a great job there. Not only that, but she was an awfully good campaigner. She hit the coffees, the teas. Everybody likes Lois. She’s got a heart of gold, and she’s very understanding. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have put up with me for fifty-four years now.

**Hartsook:** I do come away with the distinct impression that having a willing, participatory spouse is critical if you’re going to reach that top echelon of leadership.

**West:** It is essential. And, one of the dangers in the political world now is the fact that—and this is a generalization I shouldn’t make—many women feel insecure. When you’re in politics, a wife, quite understandably says, “Am I really first, or is politics first? Is that political rally more important than my anniversary?” My wife noted in one of my calendars, “Your son’s graduation from high school—attend or get a divorce.” I think she was half joking, but I attended.

**Hartsook:** [It’s] interesting that we’re, of course, competing for jobs with other states. Senator Hollings commented a little bit on his competition with North Carolina in particular. How active were you in trying to follow what other states were doing? And I’m not talking about espionage or anything like that, but....

**West:** Plagiarism is the highest form of flattery, we always figured. When Fritz started, he was elected on a campaign of bringing industry into the state. That was a critical time of transforming the state from an agricultural to an industrial economy. A committee was formed, of which I was chairman and Bob McNair was vice-chairman. Marshall Parker was on it, Billy Goldberg, [and] Rex Carter. We surveyed what we needed to do to get industry into South Carolina. I remember we took a plane out to Arkansas and met with Governor Faubus when Rockefeller was chairman of the industrial development program for Arkansas, before he ran for governor. We looked over that program, then we went to North Carolina, and then Georgia. What we did was we hired from North Carolina two key people who became director of the development board. Gosh, I can’t remember his name off hand [though] I should [Walter Harper], and [the other was] Wade Martin, who was director of technical training. They were the key people. Did I tell you the story about [North Carolina governor] Luther Hodges? I made a speech up there later in my term as governor. Luther Hodges, when he was on a trip to South America, we hired one of them. When he was on a trip to Russia, we hired the others. He allegedly said, “I’ve learned one thing. As long as John West and Fritz Hollings are in the industry, I’m not going to leave North Carolina.” [laughter]
Hartsook: In 1974, South Carolina was forced to reapportion the House into single-member districts. Of course, black representation grew significantly from three to thirteen members. What this really did, though, was destroy the old system that had placed great power in the hands of a few senior, often rural, legislators, a system that benefited you a great deal. Can you talk about how you feel that’s impacted on the state in the long run?

West: In my judgment, since their institution in 1974, single-member districts have been, in the long run or short run, depending on your perspective, the worst thing that has happened to South Carolina government. Prior to that time, you had a mixture. You would have black members of the large delegations. When you had to go to single-member districts, you eliminated the possibility of any consensus in the legislature. For example, we used to be able to go to the Charleston delegation, [or] Columbia, Greenville, Richland, and say, “Look, we want this program. It’ll benefit Clemson, or Spartanburg, or [the] Medical School, or The Citadel. We need a unanimous vote, or a near unanimous vote.” We would get it. Alec Grimsley said it very well. He said, “It used to be I could deliver a whole Charleston delegation if there was something of interest to The Citadel. Now I have only one person who represents The Citadel, and the rest of them say ‘So what?’” So the single-member district has created an individual interest, or concern that I don’t think has been good for the state government.

One of my favorite sayings is that there are two rules for success in politics. Nothing else counts. The first rule is to get elected. The second rule is to get reelected. Every politician is going to follow those two rules. Once you’re in there, you’re going to look after your particular constituency. Unless it’s something to benefit your constituency, either you don’t get involved or you vote against it. That has destroyed the legislative domination. What it has also done, though, [is to] create a greater necessity for a strong governor. The leadership is no longer in the legislature. You will not find the Edgar Browns, the Marion Gressettes, or the Sol Blatts. You still have the Speaker as an important figure, but when he could influence a whole legislative process on almost anything.... The single-member districts [have] destroyed any discipline. Now it’s been replaced, to a certain degree, by the discipline brought about by the Republican Party. It’s right amazing and I respect it. It has in one sense taken the place of the old consensus. I don’t think that the single-member districts have been helpful at all. I think it’s been a detriment.

Hartsook: Can you define the way you were using “discipline” just now?

West: Discipline? To get a group to vote for, or against, a particular item. [When] we go back to the days when we got the Spartanburg delegation to vote for the second Medical School, we promised them something at the University [of South Carolina] at Spartanburg. Today you can’t do that on a delegation basis, but the Republican Party has come in. The best example, which some of my Democratic friends use, [is the instance] when they were
voting for the public kindergarten. Not a single Republican—maybe two or three voted for it in the forum, yet as many as twenty had been cosponsors of an identical bill. They succumbed to the Republican Party pressure, whatever it was. A certain amount of party discipline is not bad, but the legislature, as I say, it is a different breed from what it was because of the single-member districts.

Hartsook: Can you talk a little bit about the veto and how you used that as governor? I’m curious how you viewed it as a tool.

West: As you know, I vetoed only one act during my entire time, except on constitutional basis. That was [regarding] capital punishment. The way I avoided the veto was I would go to the legislative leaders who had a bill coming up, and, [seeing] parts that I couldn’t live with, would say, “Look, fellows. I don’t want to veto this. Let’s change it.” We worked out the consensus before it got to the office. Looking back now, I can say with complete candor that on the issues [on which] I had to compromise [in order] to give the legislative view some effect, overall the net result was better because of the legislative input and the compromise situation. I never vetoed a single bill.

Hartsook: Did you go into office with that in the back of your mind, that [using the veto] was something that you did not want to have to do?

West: I had been a part of the legislative process and [as such] I appreciated and valued it. I certainly didn’t go in with the idea that I deliberately wanted to avoid a veto. It’s just one those things that sort of happened. It was my conciliatory style and I’m amused that the historians say that I was a weak governor because I didn’t use the veto. That’s an accusation I would accept. If that’s a sign of weakness, then I was weak. However, I don’t think anything went through, except the capital punishment [issue] which was overridden. I did use legal grounds, too, although that wasn’t the major one. The legal grounds was also upheld by the Supreme Court. That was not a problem. I think I told you the story about Jimmy Carter and the legislature, didn’t I?

Hartsook: Yes. Is that actually a criticism that’s been leveled at you?

West: I have heard or read it somewhere, I’m not sure where, that “he was not a strong governor because he didn’t veto anything.”

Hartsook: Because I would come at it from a different point. My follow up question was, do you think that you could do that because of your extensive experience in the legislature? [That you could] go through and bring
that consensus about, so that the bills that came across your desk were bills that you could sign in good faith?

**West:** Oh, yes. Actually, as lieutenant governor, I started having breakfast meetings of the key legislative committees on Wednesday, sometimes on Thursday. We’d have breakfast meetings because nobody wanted to drink liquor, or at least they couldn’t talk about it. We would get the key legislators in, House Ways and Means, Judiciary, Senate Finance, if we had a real problem. We’d sit down and have all the facts. Wilson Graves’ wife, Sadie, had developed a recipe called oyster gravy. It’s oysters in a cream sauce over grits. I remember as lieutenant governor, we had a thorny issue and McNair wanted it handled. It was in the Senate, and I got [them] over for breakfast at the Wade Hampton Hotel. We served Sadie Graves’ oyster gravy. Whatever it was we wanted passed through, and Lovick Thomas, who was the Clerk of the Senate, said, “I heard oysters had some effect, but I never thought they would pass legislation.” We did that in the Governor’s Mansion. We found that if you got legislators in a relaxed setting, and you could reason together and work things out.

**Hartsook:** [I’m] curious what role, if any, you played in the 1974 gubernatorial campaign.

**West:** I stayed out of it. Well, let me go back. The normal succession had been lieutenant governor to governor. Earle Morris was the lieutenant governor. Early on he had gone through this very unpleasant divorce situation, so the feeling was that was a major barrier and it opened the doors. Bryan Dorn wanted to run. Bryan had just helped us get the Medical School through his VA influence. Bryan was a grand fellow. Earle was running and Pug Ravenel got into the picture. Have I told you the Pug Ravenel story?

**Hartsook:** No.

**West:** Well, that’s an interesting one. Pug was a friend of Allen Legare’s from Charleston. Allen called me one day and said, “Pug’s interested in running for governor. Will you talk to him?” I said, “Sure.” Pug came up. He had made and put in the bank a million dollars in the early 1970s. He was working for Donaldson, Lufkin, and Jenrette. He was bright. He’d been to Harvard, a football player. He said, “Well, I’ve got one problem.” I said, “What’s that?” He said, “There’s a provision in the Constitution [which states that] you have to be a resident of the state for five years before you can run for governor. You were chairman of the Constitutional Revision Committee. What do you think of that?” I said, “Well, I don’t know. I’m not in the position of giving you opinions.” He said, “Well, I’ve got an opinion that it would not preclude me, even though I was not a resident and had been in New York.” I said, “Well, residence is a question of intent. I’d get the best lawyer I know to give me an opinion.” He said, “Who’s that?” I said, “Harry Lightsey is the best in the business.”

So I picked up the phone and called Harry. I said, “I’m sending you a client. He probably won’t pay you
anything, but see what you can do with him.” Harry called me later that day, and said, “I don’t think I told your friend what he wanted to hear.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “I told him he had a real problem there, and he obviously didn’t want to hear that.”

The next thing I know, Pug hires Heyward Belser, who had run for lieutenant governor against Earle and had run a very good race. Heyward was an outstanding lawyer here. Pug decided that he would get a declaratory judgment from the court. He petitioned Jack Grimball, who was the circuit judge here, and got some sort of declaratory judgment that he was eligible. I did not know all of the details at that time and still don’t. It’s a little bit vague.

The primary resulted in a second race between Bryan and Pug. Pug used television. Marvin Chernoff was his PR man. He did a great job, using the modern techniques. So he won by a very substantial amount in the second race. Shortly thereafter, a suit was filed in the Supreme Court by a couple of the people who were in the governor’s race. They were a couple of perennial candidates, one of whom was a preacher, whose name I don’t remember. Obviously the Republicans had picked them up, and they filed suit in the Supreme Court saying that Pug was ineligible to serve in the office of governor. That concerned me.

[END OF TAPE 5, BEGIN TAPE 6, SIDE 1]

West: I sensed after the lawsuit was filed, and the lawyers did a great job. They had Gene Blease from.... But he had some help. I read the brief and I got concerned. As a matter of fact, I called Harry Lightsey and he went in to argue the case. It turned out, and somebody told me this the other day, and I’m not sure it was even in the record, but Pug had voted in the ’72 elections in New York. I didn’t know this until Allen Legare told me just a couple of weeks ago. Judge Bussey, who was on the Court, said that there was some income tax question, and that Pug had given an affidavit that he wasn’t a resident of South Carolina, and wasn’t subject to income tax. The Supreme Court held that he was not eligible to serve.

Two things happened. He petitioned for a Writ of Cert to the United States Supreme Court. In the meantime he asked me to call a special session of the legislature to change that part of the Constitution. He got a petition with two hundred thousand signatures on it. If there’s one thing in the world that’s least persuasive, it’s a petition, because you can get people to sign a petition for almost anything. I told him, “Here’s what I need from you before I call a special session. To change the Constitution, we’ve got to have a two-thirds vote of the legislature, plus a referendum approving it, plus ratification. I don’t think it’s possible, but if you will get me commitments from two-thirds of the legislature that they will vote for a constitutional amendment, plus an opinion from a respected constitutional lawyer,”—I mentioned Huger Sinkler—“this could be done, and it would be effective. I will take the risk with you of the ratification. The ratification only requires a simple majority, and I assume that if the first two were done then the succeeding legislature would ratify it. I’ll take that risk with you,
but you’ve got to get me an opinion that this is legal.”

Nobody thought Jim Edwards had a chance, and that Bryan Dorn was the man. John Drummond was in the Senate then, and said, “Hell, no. I’ll filibuster the thing, because I want Bryan Dorn to be the....” We had more than a third of the Senate that would have voted against the constitutional amendment. I had to tell Pug that I wouldn’t do that. We had a very—in fact it will be in some of my notes—unpleasant exchange, because he was trying to pressure me on the thing. I didn’t react very well to that. He wanted me to go ahead and try it. I said, “I’m not going to put the state through the expense of a special session without that.” I thought that was the logical thing to do.

Jim [Edwards] was a political accident. In 1974 the Republicans held their first statewide primary. We Democrats had always castigated them for selecting their candidates in smoke-filled rooms. They decided they would eliminate that criticism by having a statewide primary. The powers that be selected General [William Childs] Westmoreland as their candidate, and he had no opposition. There’s another story about “Westy” that I’ll tell you, if I haven’t already. A couple of weeks before the primary, the Republican strategists—the Harry Dents, the Drake Edens, etc.—were saying, “If we don’t have a contest we won’t get any coverage.” [They were thinking this because] we had five people running in the Democratic primary. So they sought somebody to run.

I think this could be verified. Hugh Gibson, who was the correspondent with the News and Courier, interviewed Senator Edwards about his running for governor. He said, “Well, I’m not qualified to be governor. I’m just a junior senator now. I’m happy where I am. I’m flattered that my name [came up], but I’m not really considering it.” The Friday night before the qualification on Saturday the Republican political strategists said, “My God, we’ve got to find somebody.” So they went back to Jim, and said, “Now, look. You’re in your mid-term. You owe it to the Party to be in a statewide race so we can get the exposure.” So at the last minute Jim reluctantly agreed.

Of course the Republicans didn’t get much coverage. The Democrats, with Bryan Dorn, ----- -----, and all that. I think the results showed a total of only about twenty-five thousand [people] voting in the Republican primary. Eight thousand of those were what we call the “Charleston Crazies,” the right-wingers. They all voted for Edwards and he beat Westmoreland by a couple of thousand votes. There was a public opinion poll taken right after the primary. It showed something like Ravenel having seventy-five to eighty percent of the vote. Edwards had ten or fifteen percent, and the rest was undecided. The Democrats [were tearing] themselves apart. Pug would not endorse anybody until the last minute. The convention reconvened. Pug was still appealing to the United States Supreme Court. When [his appeal was] denied, the convention nominated Bryan Dorn. That weekend before the election on Tuesday, Pug said he would cast his vote reluctantly for Mr. Dorn, or something like that. It wasn’t a very gracious endorsement.

The interesting thing, though, and it might be worth verifying, Tom Smith, the senator from Florence County—a very bright, attractive young fellow—and Dick Riley... Pug had told each of them that they were his
choice, rather than Bryan Dorn. The reason I know that [is] Tom and his wife were spending the night with us at the Mansion during this time. Tom and Dick called each other, and Dick said, “Did he tell you that, too?” [laughter] He had led them both to think that if he was unsuccessful, he would support them at the convention.

It’s rather sad. Pug will be sentenced in the next week or so. He’ll go to jail for eighteen months. The real political question [is] had he run for governor in ‘78 instead of the United States Senate, he would have been elected in a -----.

Hartsook: Do you think he would have made a good governor?

West: I doubt it. Pug is a personable fellow [with] a lot of ability, but he just lacked that basic integrity, I guess. He was selfish. I tried my best to reason with him, [pointing] out a logical thing. He was so headstrong and so determined that he was not logical.

Hartsook: It also sounds like in a legislative state, he would have had a great difficulty not having participated....

West: He would have been worse than Donald Russell in that sense. His campaign theme was, “We’ve got to do it a new way. The old system is going out.” I’ll say this for Jim Edwards. I came to have a great affection and respect for him. I told him when he came in, “Governor, I’ll help you all I can. Anything I can do. For at least six months, no matter what you do I’m not going to say anything negative about you. You can count on that.” That’s all I said. He was the first Republican governor in a hundred years, and I suspected that he would come in and say, “My God. Everything’s wrong. I’ve got to change this, that and the other.” In the four years he served, I never heard him make a single negative comment about me. If he made one, he didn’t do it in public, or didn’t [do so] to anyone who told me. I really appreciated that.

Hartsook: Do you think that shift to the Republican Party was inevitable? I’ve got a note here. In ‘71 Lou Harris did a poll. Fifty-one percent of South Carolinians thought of themselves as Democrats, twenty-two [percent] as independent, and eleven percent as Republican. Do you think that...?

West: Well, to me the strength of the Republican Party came with the segregation issue. I still believe that had it not been the real motivating factor of Thurmond, Nixon, etc.... The best example was Goldwater. He was pictured as [being] against busing and all that, and Nixon played on that. I think the development of the Republican Party was inevitable, but it got its biggest boost from the perception that the Democratic Party was the party of the blacks, the white liberals, and the labor unions. The country club crowd was [solidly] Republican.
Hartsook: Home rule. I’d like you to talk pretty much as you did about the single-member districts [about] what you think the effects of that change for the long term are, both positive and negative.

West: I think it was good, and it was inevitable because during my twelve years as senator I was the “county boss.” The appropriations bill had to be approved by the senator, and if you controlled the purse, as the senator did, you could run the county. You could be as arbitrary and as obstinate as you wanted to be, but you were the boss for the time you were in there. Those who were smart used that power to build machines and coalitions that resulted in the Edgar Browns, the Marion Gressettes, and others who were senators forever. With reapportionment and the single-senator county eliminated, we knew we had to go back to a home rule situation.

I was chairman of the Constitutional Revision Committee and we were able [to] overcome what would have been an insurmountable barrier, namely the ingrained and entrenched state senators who did not want to give up that power, by saying, “Look, it’s gone anyhow. You’re no longer the senator from Horry County, or from Richland County, [now] you’ve got three or four senators from Richland County.” We deliberately provided a process of home rule, with various categories. The idea was to shift government back to the people.

I’m frankly distressed at this move in the General Assembly to limit home rule. I think that’s contrary to good government, and to what we want. The people’s attitude toward government is reflected by the kind of schools they have, the kind of law enforcement they have, the kind of garbage collection they have. The local government is what really colors people’s attitude toward government. The president doesn’t have a lot to do in terms of affecting our life on an immediate basis. The United States senators are involved in a lot of things, but very little when it comes to our quality of life. [That] is determined by the mayor, the police chief, the county and city council, etc. You can not give them that responsibility without authority. To me it’s a very simple thing. I haven’t followed too closely all of these restrictions, [such as] requiring a two-thirds [majority] vote to raise taxes, and that sort of thing. The restrictions should not be from the central government. If the people don’t like their legislators, or they don’t like their county councilman, get rid of them. You’ve got an election every four years at most.

Hartsook: That’s a great answer. We’ve talked a little bit about Mrs. West. Can you just tell me, on substantive or campaign issues, how closely would you consult with her?

West: Probably more closely than I would admit. She never told me what I had to do in the sense that.... I recall several instances. One is a rather amusing one. On the matter of Winthrop being made coeducational. Have I...?

Hartsook: Yes, we’ve got that.
West: Lois would let me know how she felt about things. Her political sense is as good or better than mine. Her judgment is excellent, even on business matters. I still talk to her on just about everything. If I have a business situation, particularly if it involves people, I’ll tell her the facts. Usually we agree, and [there are] times when she says, “Think about this or that approach.” She’s been more than a full partner.

Hartsook: The last thing I want to ask you, is, looking back on a lifetime of public service, what gives you the greatest satisfaction and pleasure?

West: It’s hard to say. I’ve often said that to be in politics, you’ve got to have a big ego. You wouldn’t have gotten into it [otherwise] because the only product you have to sell is yourself. If you didn’t have a lot of self confidence, translated into ego.... One of the great satisfactions is that you identify yourself with things that are good, things that are helpful. As I look back, and this is a very personal thing, every time I pass a technical education center, I can identify. I [can] say I had a part in it. I drafted that legislation. Look what it’s done. Each time I hear of the Medical School at Carolina, I’ve seen the results. The graduates of the University of South Carolina have filled the void. We had the lowest percentage of doctors per population of any state in the nation. Most of our graduates were going into specialties. Now a huge majority of the graduates are going into the general and family practice. I identify with that.

I guess, if I had to single out any one thing from which I’ve gotten the most satisfaction, [it] is the race relationship thing. That was a critical area when I was elected. We passed the Human Affairs Commission and I like to think that we broke that color blind[ness]. I’ve told you the story of taking Jim Clyburn to the first governor’s conference. I think I gave to the black community a sense of hope and of knowing that they could be accepted in all walks of life. I see black citizens who are successful now. I see the problems that other states have. It’s distressing to see the polarization of the states now, black versus white. At least in a fairly critical period we made a transition and changed a lot of attitudes. If I had to say one thing, that’s probably the most satisfying.

It’s worth saying again: looking back, I’m the luckiest fellow who ever got in politics. I got in when it was fun, got out before I lost an election while it was still fun, and before they caught up with me. [laughter]

Hartsook: Any single thing that stands out as a disappointment?

West: Yes. One of the great disappointments that I had [was], as a part of our technical training program, the so-called Hollings Program, we developed a research program. Again we plagiarized the North Carolina research triangle, which was just being developed. This was in 1959. We developed a program called SOAR [State Organization for Associated Research]. It was a cooperative program, primarily between Clemson and the
University, with other colleges, if they wanted to join in. We got an initial appropriation of $250,000 or $500,000, and we challenged the University and Clemson to come up with programs [for which] we gave out grants. Bob Edwards was the President of Clemson and this was a huge opportunity for him. They came up with a dozen or so projects, that more than ate up the money. The University came up with just a handful. We gave seven or eight out of ten or twelve to Clemson. Incidentally, I like to think that Clemson has a very strong research program now [because] of that program. The next year we got another appropriation, but Speaker Blatt, bless his soul, put a little rider on it, [saying,] “This money shall be equally divided between Carolina and Clemson.” That killed the program. There was no competitiveness. At the end of the second or third year we just....

John Palms, [the current President of USC] had asked me to talk to the lady in charge of the research effort at Carolina. I told her that story. One of the big disappointments is that if that had taken off [like] our technical training program, we could have a research program equivalent to the research triangle. It just didn’t happen. I guess that’s one of the major disappointments. For whatever reason we didn’t pursue that, and, as you know, the research programs primarily from the colleges and universities are the cutting edge of technology.

I can’t think of any other major disappointments. I’m sure there were many, but I was fortunate. I got most of the programs that I really wanted through.

[END OF TAPE 6 [recorded on Side 1 only], BEGIN TAPE 7, July 10, 1997, SIDE 1]

Hartsook: I would like to talk a little bit about the University [of South Carolina]. Late in January of 1974, Tom Jones resigned. You played a role in that. I noted in your diary that Sol Blatt congratulated you and remarked that the resignation was the greatest contribution you had made since you had been governor. In November, almost ten months later, you note in your diary that you were “evasive” in an interview with a Gamecock reporter digging into the Jones resignation. I would just like you to comment briefly about Jones—what made the resignation necessary, what steps you took as governor in encouraging him to resign?

West: Let me give you a little background. Tom Jones, of course, had a distinguished academic career [as], I believe, a professor at MIT, but he was not a people person. During his years at the University, he suffered in comparison with Bob Edwards at Clemson. That, probably, was the genesis of Speaker Blatt’s observation. Bob Edwards lived at the legislature. This was before the Higher Education Commission, more or less, put some discipline into the appropriations process. Of course, Edgar Brown, Speaker Blatt’s Barnwell colleague, was chairman of the Board of Trustees at Clemson. Bob Edwards just out-politicicked Tom Jones. Tom was not a leader of a university. He had real shortcomings, not the least of which was his wife, Mary. They called her “Bloody Mary.” I don’t know whether she had an alcohol problem or not. He was not well-liked, certainly [not] by a lot of the faculty.
It’s strange how you remember little things. I remember on one formal occasion where there was a dinner being served in the Coliseum, and the menu was tired roast beef. Everybody got a plate of the tired roast beef, except they brought Tom and Mary a platter of prime rib, rare, that everybody could see. That was not untypical of his situation. He had a lot of problems with the faculty at the University. I know one time, Dick [Richard L.] Walker, who was and is my great friend, had some differences with him. I don’t know the extent of them, but he [Walker] was about to resign or get fired. He was, in my opinion, one of the most valuable people there.

As to any specific role that I had in urging or in going forward [with Jones’ resignation], I don’t remember the details. I was fairly close to the University group there. Eston Marchant, I believe, was chairman of the Board during most of that period. Jerry Beasley was the public relations liaison. Of course, the University Board were all political people and had connections to the political establishment. I think it simply took a time to realize that Tom was not the man. I certainly came to that conclusion. Many others did too.

Hartsook: Throughout the diary, as governor and in Saudi Arabia, I sense that people issues—staffing issues, appointments—were perhaps the most painful thing that you dealt with. It seems like the intellectual problems that you had to work out were worked out and you came to a decision. But, the people issues seem to have caused you a lot of personal anguish. Is that a fair assessment?

West: That is eminently fair. I have been accused of being chicken in the sense that I cannot fire anybody. I have only fired one or two people in my life, certainly no more than a handful. It was always a painful experience to have to get rid of someone or to recognize that the relationship had deteriorated. Some of the most painful circumstances and incidents of my public career came with that very thing. The one that sticks out is the [Clyde] Eltzroth thing.

Hartsook: His name pops up time after time [in Gov. West’s diary].

West: I did another memo that I dictated just the other day, twenty-five years after, and I think I am going to send it on. The diary does not go into as much detail. The Wildlife Department had a state-owned preserve, Belmont, I believe. Down in Hampton County, there was an old mansion and hunting preserve, and the politicians used it, particularly those who were hunting. It was quite a thing. We had gotten a lot of criticism because it was a perk that the legislators and the Wildlife Commission people used for their friends. You could go down there and hunt and stay for two or three days. They had people cooking and there was no charge there.

With respect to Clyde Eltzroth, again my memory is a little bit vague on the exact circumstances, but he was and is a very autocratic, determined, fellow. Possibly he had an insecurity from the fact that he never went to law school. He was a self-made man in the sense that he passed the bar and so on. He started having an affair
with a lady who was a very prominent member of Governor McNair’s staff. That affair continued. It was fairly well known. Of course, none of this was ever documented in the sense.

Hartsook: Will the memo tell us who that person was?

West: No. Betty [Bargmann] said, “You have got to cut that out.” I have no hesitation about it, but you don’t want to embarrass people. Anyhow, there were some leaks to the press that he was using the Wildlife plane for frequent visits to Columbia and at the same time was putting in vouchers for transportation, none of which, or very little of which, was Wildlife business. That created some concern and a friendly reporter asked me about it before they broke the story. I called Clyde in and said, “Now, look, this thing could hurt your family, hurt you, and so on. I believe if you simply resign, it will go away.” He said he would think about it. He called back [and told me he] wasn’t going to resign. I said, “You know I am going to have to remove you.” I well remember Judge [Julius B.] Ness, who was subsequently Chief Justice, came in and we had a long session. I told him, “You have got to get him to resign. It’s going to ruin him and his family.” I didn’t know how far the paper would go in the personal aspects, but I got an opinion from the Attorney General that it was clearly illegal, false billing, and that was grounds to remove him. Finally, it got to the point where I gave him an ultimatum: “You either resign or I fire you.” He reluctantly resigned. Of course, he had a long memory.

He subsequently was elected a circuit judge, and my lawyer and judge friends said, “One thing you need to be careful about, don’t you ever go before Clyde Eltzroth.” Well, I didn’t. We did have a case at Hampton County, just within the last two years, involving Dr. [Rajko] Medenica. He was on the other side, his firm was. Hampton County, the Murdoch firm, of which he was a part, has a habit of controlling juries. I won’t say fixing them, but they control them. He sat there during that whole court and, obviously, a huge verdict was rendered.

What brought me to dictate the memo.... A few weeks ago, we had the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Marine Resources Department at the Wildlife Resources Commission. It’s been tremendously successful, of course. They wanted three of us to participate in remarks—Clyde, who had been chairman of the Commission at the time, Bob McNair, and myself. The ceremony was at Fort Johnson, six-thirty in the afternoon, it was out in the open. And, of course, the no-see-ums and the mosquitoes were ravaging us. No air conditioning. Clyde spoke for an hour. McNair spoke for ten minutes and I cut my remarks to four minutes. Lois remarked afterwards, “Clyde finally got even with you for firing him.” [Laughter] He had gone into great detail about how he had started it. He did have a good part in it, but he was making the record straight about what he had done for the Wildlife Department. So I dictated this memo. I think it’s in the papers that I haven’t sent you yet. I wondered if that were a little petty to put that down. [This memo is now a part of Gov. West’s Papers.]

Hartsook: Describe a John West show of temper. I rarely see it in the diary but you do remark on it every
West: I don’t go into a temper tantrum and throw things. I certainly wasn’t sitting in judgment on Clyde’s having an affair, but damn it, to charge the state for it was just more than I could tolerate. [When] I would get upset, I would usually be able to contain it. [My] face turned red. My friends and colleagues would see that I was upset, and leave me alone for awhile, most of the time. There are two things in politics, Herb, that you can’t afford, in life for that matter. You cannot afford to lose your temper, because when you lose your temper you say things and do things that are not rational. Second, you can’t afford to hate, or make enemies, and continue to hate them. I have often said hate is the cancer of the human brain. There’s a saying that I have often said and used to some degree: “Love your enemies, it will drive them crazy.”

Hartsook: Are shows of temper ever used as a management tool?

West: Yes, I’m sure it is. I’ve pounded the desk sometimes and said, “Damn it, why in the hell can’t we do so-and-so and so-and-so.” Sometimes that would get results. I think it would shake the bureaucracy a little bit.

Hartsook: Particularly in the Saudi diary, I see more references: “Well, I lost my temper and I think it did some good.”

West: Yes.

Hartsook: One constant in your diary for 1973 and 1974 was your effort for a second medical school. How important was that to the legacy that you wanted to leave South Carolina as governor?

West: It was certainly as important as anything that I accomplished. You may have asked me this before, but if I had to look back and say the things that I take the most pride in, certainly in a broader sense, the race relationship, but in the specific sense, I suspect it would be the second medical school. The background there, of course, was that health care delivery was the way I got involved in politics. We were constantly reminded in those days that South Carolina had the lowest life expectancy of any state in the nation. We had the highest infant mortality rate of any state in the nation, and we had the lowest ratio of doctors per population of any state in the nation. Several things sort of coalesced with those statistics to bring about my commitment to the second medical school.

I remember making the graduation address to the Medical University in Charleston in 1969. I was lieutenant governor and, in going over the list and talking to the people, I think there were sixty-nine graduates and only two were going into primary care medicine. All the rest were going into specialties. Of course, we did not
have residency programs and so we were losing them, certainly the tops. There had been various proposals for a second medical school in Columbia. There had been a committee studying it and so on. I made a speech to the Columbia Rotary Club, it was probably in 1969 or 1970. It was obviously a political speech, and I was telling them the things I wanted [them] to consider, that I thought the state needed to do. I said, “We need to seriously consider a second medical school here in Columbia.” Of course, that got a big headline and everybody wanted to hear it.

Bob McNair called me in, though, after the speech, and he said, “You know you’ve got to recognize one thing.” I said, “What’s that?” “You’ve got to have a first medical school before you can have a second medical school.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Read this report,” the accreditation report from the accrediting authority. That report said that this school is in horrible shape. If there were any other medical school in the state they wouldn’t give it an accreditation, and so on. Things had to be done. There had to be capital improvements and faculty improvements. They said there was an inbred faculty and of course the organization was not a good structure. The Medical School’s Board of Trustees, historically, were doctors. And, of course, the doctors developed relationships with their colleagues on the faculty, most of whom carried on independent practices in Charleston. It was almost an incestuous situation.

The legislature tried to address that in 1965. There had been criticisms. So they provided that no more than half of the people could be practicing physicians. There had to be lay people on there. What happened [was] that the other health care professionals started coming in, the dentists and so on. It was still a board dominated by the health care professionals. That was not a healthy situation. After I was elected, one of the first things I did before I took office, [I] called Bill McCord, who was the president, a grand fellow, a Ph.D., incidentally, not a doctor. I told him, “Health care delivery is a primary goal of mine. Here’s this accreditation report. You tell me what you need to make this a first-class medical school and you tell me how much you can increase the number of doctors.” The projection was we needed to probably double the size, and to develop residency programs that would keep them in the state. He came back very promptly with a huge capital expenditure program. In the first year and a half we appropriated and authorized bonds for more money than had been spent on capital improvements in the entire history combined, up to that time. We got into some real problems with the number of doctors that could be increased. I think there were eighty or ninety. It was a modest increase. I saw what I felt were the deficiencies in the program. The medical science was expanding. It was beyond just the physicians and the treatment and so on. All of the scientific research tied in. That is even more true today, but it was very evident [when] it was happening.

To have a really first class medical school, it needed to be a part of a university complex. Instead of a medical school, you needed a university complex. There was some talk about combining the College of Charleston and the Citadel and the Medical College, and trying to have a state complex there. But, politically, that just wasn’t possible. Fortunately, we were going through a period when we had surplus funds, and the possibility
of government support in terms of Veterans Administration subsidies came in. I went full-bore into the second medical school. It was certainly the most controversial issue. I used to say only half-laughingly that I was scared to go to Charleston. I had to get a permission slip from the mayor and maybe a police escort. The emotions were very, very high on it. But it was the right thing to do. One of the advantages of the medical school here, it has trained primary care physicians. You talk about costs, but how can you place a value on a life that is saved or a life that is prolonged with a quality of life factor in it? When you say you can’t afford it, then you can’t not afford it. So to answer your question, I guess that’s probably one of the things I’m most happy about.

Hartsook: Was Bryan Dorn a strong ally?

West: Oh, yes. Bryan got the Veterans Administration—he was chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee—a great veteran—there were a limited number granted throughout the United States. Bryan got that. We brought it all together and the Columbia hospital was very cooperative. It took a tremendous effort with a lot of people and a lot of cooperation. Without Bryan’s help it wouldn’t have happened.

Hartsook: Were you the right man at the right time?

West: I like to think so, but I faced down a lot of people who were my friends and who were my strong supporters. John Rivers, who owned the television station there and is a long-time friend of mine, wrote me a scorching letter. He was on the ETV Commission or something. I wrote him back that I was reappointing his commission despite his stinging letter. He had that framed on his wall. I saw it after I got out of office. Charleston has sort of a turfdom thing, and the word was that there were two kinds of medicine—there was Charleston medicine and there was medicine. That was said in a critical sense, but I think somewhat justified. The competition has been healthy. Jim Edwards has done a great job down there. He has expanded the facility. I think all in all, it’s been a good thing.

Hartsook: It’s interesting that Rivers would frame that letter. It hearkens back to what you said about not being able to lose your temper and make enemies. Do you think that the current crop of politicians understand that?

West: They obviously don’t, but that’s not the politician’s fault as much as the atmosphere. The whole political atmosphere has become so partisan and so personal. When you make the two P’s, personal and partisan, you make wounds in the debates that are very hard to heal.
Hartsook: Do you think that’s a phase that we will pass through and go back to a period when we honor our legislators more?

West: I hope so, although I don’t, unfortunately, see any end to the trend. One of the great benefits of our system is that it usually corrects things that are wrong, but sometimes, in the process of correcting it, goes too far. In the ‘50s and ‘60s, a political person’s personal life was not touchable—Jack Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and others. Then Woodward and Bernstein came in, got Pulitzer prizes, and became famous millionaires over investigative reporting. All of a sudden, many reporters saw this as an avenue of fame and fortune. With the increased communication and television and so on, the scandals and the details became the news bites or the lead stories for the seven o’clock news. I frankly think it has gone too far. The public is beginning to recognize that. The fact that Bill Clinton’s personal life is not such that would qualify him for the ministry, but the people re-elected him even knowing that there was certainly strong proof that he had extramarital affairs. This fund-raising probe is a ridiculous thing because that’s been going on forever. It does need to be corrected but the approach now is not necessarily the constructive way.

[TAPE 7, SIDE 1 ENDS, SIDE 2 BEGINS]

West: People have asked me why don’t we have a better caliber of person running for President, for example in the ‘80s, and the answer that I have given them: “Well, nobody but a fool would run for office.” One of my former gubernatorial colleagues who became very much a national figure was mentioned as a presidential candidate. One of his friends says, “You know old so-and-so says he found out that they knew about the girlfriend he had on the side, and that would have come out, and his wife would have killed him, so he said no more presidential aspirations.” I say only half in jest that I’m the luckiest fellow. I got in politics while it was fun, got out before I lost an election, [and] before they caught up with me. And I still feel that way because many of the things we did routinely would probably be suspect now. I never paid a green fee at a golf course in my life when I was governor. I’m told that’s questionable. The Forest Lake [Country Club] used to give honorary memberships to the governor. I used that. I asked Carroll Campbell about it. He said, “Oh, I can’t afford to play golf there. They don’t have any blacks as members.” It’s a different ball game, and it takes a thick skin and a lot of fire in the belly.

Hartsook: In 1974 you have an outsider, the atypical candidate, Pug Ravenel. I think you have very strong feelings about the way that campaign was run. I had the distinct impression that during the early phase of the campaign, you were an interested outsider that was happy not to be a participant and you were kind of enjoying being outside of the process. That you saw humor at times in the very large field of candidates. I also got the
distinct impression you ended up having very strong feelings about how the Democrats lost the governorship...?

West:  Allen Legare, who was my close friend and colleague, had called me one day, and he said, “Pug Ravenel is interested in running for governor. He’s a bright young fellow, not of the blue bloods of Charleston but a quarterback in the football team and a star at Harvard,” and so on. Have I told you this?

Hartsook:  What we didn’t talk about, what comes clearly across in the diary, is that you got pretty mad at Fritz.

West:  I got mad at Fritz, and again, I have been trying to remember the exact basis of that. Many of his friends, me included, have said sometimes, not infrequently, his mouth outruns his brain, and he says things before he thinks, and then he won’t back up. I resented I think two things. When the United States Supreme Court refused to overturn the state court, which everybody recognized was a long shot, he [Ravenel] then wanted me to call a special session of the legislature to pass a constitutional amendment that would be retroactive. I told him I didn’t think legally that was possible and to get me a lawyer’s opinion and so on. Instead of doing that, he went out and got petitions of two hundred thousand signatures or thereabouts, a huge amount, and gave me the petitions. To get a constitutional amendment through, it had to be passed by two-thirds of the legislature. The Bryan Dorn supporters in the Senate, John Drummond was one, said, “We’ll filibuster [and] it will never get through.” It was a political impossibility, but Pug insisted on going through [with] that. We even debated. The second thing is that he refused to endorse Bryan [Dorn] until the last week of the campaign. It was a weak endorsement. He said, “Well, I’ll vote for him.” I can’t remember the details; all of the Democratic establishment got mad at Fritz.

Interestingly enough, Pug, as you know, was indicted and pled guilty to some financial crimes for which he is presently in jail. Just before he was sentenced, he came to Hilton Head. I don’t think it was to see me specifically, but one of our mutual friends said he was in town, so we spent a couple of hours together. I was really impressed [that] he had pled guilty to this improper using the bank’s money, kiting checks is what it was in effect, and we philosophized. I said, “Pug, you know there was an unfortunate circumstance that you didn’t win the governorship in 1974, and had you won it, I’m sure you wouldn't be facing a jail sentence now. You could have won the governorship in 1978 without any problem. Dick Riley would not have run—he was your friend and supporter. But you elected to run against Strom.” He said, “Well, you know you make these decisions, and then you look back on them, and obviously both of those decisions were ones that were not good.”

Hartsook:  Do you think Riley would not have run?

West:  I know he wouldn’t have. You see, Riley was a big supporter of Ravenel’s, and as a matter of fact when
Ravenel finally gave up his legal fight, it was just a very short time before the election. I will always remember, I think it was sitting in the Governor’s Mansion. I had Dick and Tunky Riley as our guests, and Tom and Betsy Smith. He was the senator from Florence County. Everybody was wondering who Ravenel [would support] and nobody knew. When it came out Riley, and I don’t know that he ever did it, but he had led both Riley and Tom Smith to believe that he was going to endorse them. He had played a little politics there. But Dick would not have run for governor. Brantley Harvey was lieutenant governor, and Brantley you know was the odds-on favorite. Riley had only a five percent recognition factor. Dick and I had always been very close friends, and I show you the quality of my political advice—I talked to him about running for lieutenant governor. I didn’t think he could beat Brantley and that was the normal stepping stone, but he ignored it and I am sure that he is happy that he did.

Hartsook: You poke a little fun at yourself in [a diary entry in] November 1978 when you noted that you voted for Strom.

West: Yes. The reason I voted for Strom was because he because he voted for the F-15s. That’s not clear in the [diary]?

Hartsook: No.

West: Let me give you the history of that. I was still disillusioned. I thought Ravenel was a political opportunist. He had shown that in the way he had reacted [to his removal from the ticket in 1974.] But in 1977 and the early part of 1978, President Carter....

Hartsook: That’s very clear. It’s like the medical school. It’s a continuing thread about the F-15s. I do remember you talking about going to meet with Strom. It’s a rather humorous entry. You say something like “had a long pleasant meeting with Strom, as usual nothing much was said,” or some kind of little ending like that.

West: It was a very close vote. Even though the Republicans had made the commitment, [President] Jerry Ford had made the commitment, and Strom was a swing vote on the thing. So I went to Strom and gave the dog and pony show, and [he said] he’d think about it. We had a lot of other people, including Roger Milliken, [who] went to him, and he had a lot of pressure. Plus, the General Electric people, who had just put a plant in Greenville, had an order pending — I think it was completed — for generators for Saudi Arabia. The day before the vote, Warren Abernathy, I believe it was, called me and said, “The Senator wants to see you.” And Strom says, “You know, John, I’m going to vote for the F-15s because of you.” He says, “All of my Jewish friends in South Carolina, Sol Blatt, Sr. and so on, say they’ll never forgive me. But you have convinced me it’s the right thing to do, and I’m
going to do it.” So I, by the same token, said, “Well, Senator, I knew you’d do the right thing. You’re running for re-election. I’m going to vote for you [for the] first time.” And I did.

**Hartsook:** In your diary, on 31 July 1974, days after Ravenel had defeated Dorn in the primary, you noted you got Rembert Dennis in and suggested to him that he and Marion [Gressette] sponsor ethics legislation when the legislature reconvenes. Ravenel had said that he would publicly praise Dennis if that were done. Dennis accepted the suggestion and you felt this would heal a lot of wounds as well as do a great job for the state.

**West:** One of Ravenel's premises was [that] it was a good old boy system, that the system needed to be reformed, and so on. You needed ethics, and we didn’t have any real ethics legislation then. There was very little, if any, regulation. Ravenel had run against the establishment, in effect. He had come in, this bright young boy from Harvard. (Incidentally, Ravenel was with Donaldson, Lufkin, & Jenrette on whose board I serve now, and have since I came back from Saudi Arabia. When he got into all these problems the last couple of years, why, he went back to his old friends at DLJ and asked for money. They came up with a substantial amount for legal fees. I guess it was Dick Jenrette, or maybe it was John Charlsey, said when he left here in 1971, he had one of the brightest futures, said he had a million dollars in cash in the bank. He had it made financially [and] wanted to get into politics. And of course fifteen years later he was back asking his old colleagues to make up a purse of money to help pay his lawyers fees to keep him out of jail.)

**Hartsook:** You note during the last luncheon at the Mansion that’s where you talk about being upset with...

**West:** ...with Fritz...

**Hartsook:** ...with Fritz. There was talk that McNair might run against him. Was that seriously considered?

**West:** No, I don’t think so. I think that was just political talk.

**Hartsook:** In July of 1974 you note in your diary about meeting with prospective members of the new law firm, which you indeed formed in 1975 with offices in Columbia and Camden and Hilton Head. Could tell me who your partners were, how you came to associate with them, and what your vision was for the firm? Because you had no intentions of going back into politics, is that right?

**West:** No, I did not. At that time South Carolina did not have a major full-service law firm. I love the law, and of course I had success, [a] modest amount, or maybe more than modest in some ways, in the legal field. So I had
the ambition to form a top-notch law firm. I went back to the firm that I had. Ken Holland, who had been my most senior partner, was elected to Congress. Ken was a great trial lawyer, and he left Congress. Tommy Cooper was a remnant of the old firm there, and he was one of my partners from the early firm, he was the junior partner. My son Jack had finished school, and of course I wanted a place for him. Alec Beard, a Camden boy, had worked for me in the governor’s office and gone to Hilton Head, very bright, still one of the better lawyers in the state. Tom Bendorf was an unusual fellow. He had been our state lobbyist in Washington and [was a] very capable fellow. He had taken the bar here and passed it, and we had visions of an international practice developing. Harry Lightsey was one of the original persons. Harry has got the best legal mind of anybody I have ever seen, one of the best minds. He subsequently became dean of the [USC] law school and then president of the College of Charleston. Harry had been my campaign manager when I ran for governor and for lieutenant governor, and we were very close. Harry had some commitments. He said, “I will be of counsel to the firm. I don’t want to be a full participant yet.”

He was very wise, because I got out and had the disillusionment of my life. I opened three offices. I had a very lucrative practice, relatively speaking, in Camden as a trial lawyer. I had visions after four years in the governor’s office, everybody telling you how great you are, why, your ego and your capacity to think of you being very, very good is enhanced, to put it mildly. Well, I got out and I suddenly had a rude awakening. The year before I left office, people would come into the governor’s office and say, “Well, John, you’re going to be out in a year. Now, I’m going to need a lawyer.” I guess it was ethics—I’d say, “Well, you know that’s wonderful. Day after I leave office, let’s talk.” So when I got out, strange thing, I had expensive offices in Columbia, Camden, and Hilton Head, and my old clients would come up to me, “John, well, you’re back practicing law. You know, the four years you been out I used so-and-so over in this other firm. He’s handling my routine work. Get in something real big, of course I’m going to count on you.” Well, it’s not the big cases; it’s the little matters [that pay the bills]. The people who had talked about wanting to do this and that and the other, they sort of diminished. I worked harder in that first year and made less money than I had made in twenty years. It was a struggle. I had an overhead. I had an organization, and it was just beginning to really come about when I got this crazy idea to go to Saudi Arabia.

Let me go back. Bob McNair had the same idea of building a major law firm. I told Bob not long after I got out, I said, “Bob, damn it, I helped you get a lot of clients and now there aren’t many. You have got all the good ones, and I’m having to struggle.” And there was certainly some truth in that. Bob had the same vision that I had, and he had a four-year head start. By the time that I got out, it was still a competitive situation but not one that was unbeatable. The Mullins firm [Nelson Mullins] had not really developed. There was room for a major firm in the state, and I thought the rest of my life would be [developing] this major law firm. I had a son and I wanted to see it perpetuated.

You see, I was struggling and had a case up in Chester, a routine case with an old client of mine, old
lawyer friend from out-of-state that I had worked with. This roof leaked in the warehouse in Chester and did fairly substantial amount of damage. I turned it over to my son Jack, just thinking, “That’s a routine thing. The roof’s defective, and there are damages, and you’ll collect it.” And I was riding him pretty good. I said, “Son, what’s the matter?” “Well, daddy, I’m really having trouble with that case.” I said, “Why are you having trouble?” He said, “Man, a bunch of lawyers from Atlanta are in it. They are taking depositions and they’re just overwhelming me.” So, I said, “Let me get into it.” It was in 1975 or 1976, when the discovery procedures in law were just getting underway, and the corporate lawyers used it. In this particular case, the roofing company was advertising four-ply roofs, or a roof with a four ply, and they had a little gimmick said the four-ply was the standard. Two plus one equals four. They were saying that their roof was just as good. Well, it was a tremendous sort of a thing. Nationwide, a bunch of these roofs were becoming defective, and as it turned out, the company made a decision to fight all of them, and mine was one of the first, if not the first, so they were just papering us to death. I took over with Jack, and we decided to take depositions in Florida. The lawyers put us in a drafty motel, and of course I was not as sharp, and they would say, “Now, Governor, you can’t do this, you can’t do that.” I spent two miserable days struggling through what bureaucracy the law had become and also developed a cold from the drafty motel we were in. And I sat there that night and I said, “Now, you know I have been in public service and had the satisfactions, and here I have spent all this time, energy, and frustration determining what the hell makes a roof leak. Now, do I want to spend the rest of my life in that? Don’t I have something that’s more rewarding than that?” And about this time the Saudi Arabian situation came up.

Sequel to that is that the lawyers drug their feet. We had the case on a contingency basis, and so they papered us to death. I had told everybody I wanted to try that case before I left for Saudi Arabia. But they postponed the case. In August of 1977, I had been over there a couple of months, and I get a call one night at three o’clock in the morning. The guards have instructions not to bring my telephone unless it’s a dire emergency, and [they] said it was your son. So, my lord to God, somebody’s died or something like that. Jack says, “I apologize for calling you, but Judge Hemphill (who was the Judge [and] knew the frustrations I’d had) told me to wake you up and tell you that the jury just returned the biggest verdict, including punitive damages against those bastards, [laughter] and he wasn’t going to touch the verdict.” Sad part about it is that when I had severed myself from the law firm, I gave that verdict very little value so I got nothing out of it. But to answer your question, I decided then that certainly the law was not the satisfying thing that it had been. The bureaucracy had come in, the discovery process, and I was frustrated. It did not have the appeal to me that it had five years before or ten years before.

**Hartsook:** At that time, how lucrative were your newspaper and real estate interests?

**West:** Well, I’d had problems there. Clarence Ford [and] I originally bought the [Camden] Chronicle together,
and Clarence was the businessman and a great business fellow. He had developed a heart condition and also cancer. While I was in the governor’s office we had hired Fred Sheheen, who was from Camden, after he had an unsuccessful run for Congress in 1962 [or] 1964. Fred [was] as bright as he could be and had a lot of ambition, and we had started acquiring these country newspapers. Clarence and I had a chain of I think sixteen at one time...

[TAPE 7 ENDS, TAPE 8, SIDE 1 BEGINS]

...The newspapers were very lucrative. I drew an income from it while I was governor. It relieved any financial problems that I had.

Hartsook: They were that lucrative?

West: Yes. I can’t remember exactly, sub chapter S. I was drawing fifteen, twenty thousand dollars a year plus taxes, and so it was very, very, very good. But then Fred got in and Clarence resigned. Clarence sold to Fred and Allen Legare, my friend, and I stayed in. Clarence told me to get out but I wanted to stay in. Fred went crazy. He was not a business manager. He was and is a self-promoter, and I just sort of blithely trusted him. He bought additional newspapers, usually on credit bank loans I endorsed. They built a building for the newspapers, I endorsed the note then...

Hartsook: Was that 1111...

West: 1111 Broad Street [in downtown Camden]. And when I got out of the office of governor, I had retained earnings in the business of between fifty and a hundred thousand dollars that I was going to use as a cushion. I got out [and] it wasn’t there. They had already spent it. Then, the notes weren’t being serviced, and I got called on a million dollar note. Mr. Sheheen and I parted company right then, and I had to take over. My brother, fortunately, had come in, and so we took over running the newspaper business during this period. Fortunately, Clarence Ford came back in and really saved us. His health improved, and he came back spent a year with us. But for a year there, my brother and I were running the newspapers. I was trying to run the office. The anchor tenant in the building was the American Bank and Trust Company at Orangeburg. It went bankrupt. The building was vacant. They called it the tomb. It was a very difficult financial picture then.

Hartsook: It really is a very pretty building. You must have been very proud when it went up.

West: We were, but right after it went up, why, the permanent loan commitment was conditioned on the anchor
tenant’s lease, and the anchor tenant was taken over or went into bankruptcy. It was a real struggle. I was just getting out of it, but I had become disillusioned with the law. I still had this desire for public service. I didn’t really want to get back into elective office. But when Carter came in, and of course I had been an early supporter, the word was that he was going to tap me for a key position in the administration. I was interested and ready.

Hartsook: So, he approached you?

West: No. I haven’t told you that part of the story then, have I? I was the first political person outside the state of Georgia to endorse Carter for president. I was fairly active in his campaign, and the rumors published were that I would probably be in the cabinet, Secretary of Commerce, something like that. I had gotten, in the meantime, involved with the Southern Center for International Studies, which is a group that Dean Rusk had formed when he left the Secretary of State’s job. [It was] sort of a think tank, [and is] still in existence in Georgia. I was chairman of it that year, and we had a seminar right after the election in November at The Citadel. It was [about] the role of the Congress versus the role of the President in the making and implementation of foreign policy. I was the moderator. We had Dean and one more former Secretary of State. We had Howard Baker and Clem Zabaki [?]. I mean it was a blue ribbon crowd, and [at] the reception afterwards, Dean asked, “What position are you going to take in the Carter administration?” I said, “I haven’t been asked. There had been some rumors, but I haven’t been asked. I don’t have any specific plans, but I really don’t want to live in Washington.” I said, “The one area that really intrigues me, and you are partially responsible because of my service as chairman of this group, is foreign policy. What do you think about a diplomatic assignment?” He said, “I think that would be excellent.” He said, “There’s always this rivalry between the career diplomats and the political appointees, but I think political appointees serve a real purpose if they are the right ones.” Then he said, “Do you have any place you would like to go?” I said, “Only one. Saudi Arabia.” He said, “John, you’ve got to be crazy. No political appointee has ever gone, to my recollection, to an Arab country. Now, if you want to go, there are a lot of good posts in Europe, some even in South America.” I said, “Look, Dean, you know I’ve had all the titles I need. I have a living condition at Hilton Head and Camden that’s comfortable, but I think Saudi Arabia is where the action is with the energy crisis,” which I had gotten very involved with. He said, “You know, you’re right. If you’re willing to go there, I certainly would encourage it.” Well, it just so happened, and I didn’t know it at the time, President Carter said he wasn’t going to go through the normal political process of just picking ambassadors. He picked a panel to review prospective ambassadors. Dean Rusk was chairman of it, so the appointment came through.

Hartsook: What did Mrs. West have to say about that?

West: Well, we were sitting on our pond fishing one April day before the appointment, and the dogwood were
blooming, the fish were biting, and I said, “Lois, if you want to have me committed, I don’t believe I would have a defense to leave this and go to Saudi Arabia.” She said, “You are right, but I’m going with you.” We had a great experience.

Hartsook: The public relations program you recommended to the Saudis, was that your own concept?

West: Yes. It didn’t take a rocket scientist or a smart fellow to realize the public relations of the Arab world was just nonexistent. When I got there, I saw that in the case of Saudi Arabia, they were our friends. They were just good people, and they weren’t getting credit for any of the good things that they did. I equated much of this to the Arab-Israeli controversy. The Israeli government and Israeli system had put a premium on US relations, and they have used our political system extremely effectively. I saw the opposition that anything that might be considered against Israel’s interest engendered in terms of congressional support. So, I told them you have got to blow your own horn, and of course the answer I got early on was that it wasn’t appropriate. “Mr. Ambassador, we don’t believe in that.” I said, “Modesty is fine, but there are ways that you can do it in the modern world. You have got to.” It developed from that. The test of that came in the F-15, which was the first time that the Israeli lobby had been defeated, or had failed to block a policy, since 1956 when Eisenhower told them to get out of Egypt. After that, they concentrated on the Congress as well as the Presidency, but they had always had a sympathetic administration, including Truman. They had always been able to depend on [the] almost blind support of the American government for whatever they wanted to do. That’s an overstatement, but that was the attitude of the Saudis. I said the only way to do that is fight fire with fire.

Hartsook: I get the impression that your close personal relationship with President Carter was very important to you. I have the picture of you as battling the traditional, lifetime, diplomatic corps, and that your ability when needed to call, or threaten to call, [President Carter]...?

West: That was my strength. I did not fit the modern pattern of a diplomat. I did not have to use it but once or twice. I wrote the President at least once a month, just a handwritten letter, always sending Cy Vance a copy of it. He encouraged me to keep that up, and most of those are in the Carter Library now in Atlanta. It was just an informal sort of a thing, but the King, the Crown Prince, and the Defense Minister would frequently say, “Well, now, you just call your friend President Carter, and get him to do so-and-so.” And the fact that they felt that I could do that was a big advantage, even though I didn’t do it except very rarely. But I did threaten the bureaucracy time and again. I had an administrative officer early on who seemed to take a great delight in saying, “Mr. Ambassador, you can’t do this, we don’t have money to do that,” and so-on so. One day, I said, “You know, Chet, I’m tired of this ‘we don’t have money.’” I said, “We're a class one post now, and if you have a real
problem, you give me a memo. And you know Senator Hollings is chairman of the sub-committee of the Appropriations Committee that handles the appropriations for the State Department, and I’ll just call him and see if he can’t help us.” I never had another problem.

Hartsook: In September, you wrote of meeting all afternoon mostly with groups concerned with doing our intelligence survey: “I am determined that they will never be able to criticize us for not doing our best to determine what the Saudis will do in any given set of circumstances.” Can you elaborate on your participation in gathering and distilling that kind of intelligence, and whether your World War II service was [an advantage to you]?

West: Well, certainly my World War II service, and some say my love of gossip, all contributed, but my World War II service was a great training ground, excellent discipline in taking bits and pieces of information and fitting them into the whole. That was my job in the Ultra section of [the Pentagon]. We had these bits and pieces of intercepted code messages, and the job that I had was to take them and come up with a comprehensive analysis of what was going on. I think that did stand me in good stead. I used to enjoy getting information and calling the CIA station chief in and saying, “What about so-and-so? Would you check this?” At times, I had better information than the CIA. One of the ways that I did that was through my wife. It’s a segregated society [Saudi Arabia], and she would go to weddings and so on. The classic example is the death of a Saudi princess who was executed because she had committed adultery. Lois found out about that weeks before it was publicized, and I had asked the CIA. They did very fine, but I used to get, as my friend Archie Ellis would say, a satanic satisfaction out of asking the CIA to check something. They got back at me one time.

I was the only one that could get liquor into the Kingdom. I got it under diplomatic seal and labeled “ambassador’s personal effects.” The station chief [in] Jiddah came to me one day and said, “Mr. Ambassador, we’ve got a problem.” I said, “What’s that?” He says, “You know the way we operate, we have sources, and we have to reward them. You know money, unfortunately, isn’t a factor here. The only way I can really cultivate sources is to give them American whiskey. I find you are giving away, to the same sources, much more than I can afford to. Would you cut down on your gifts?” You could get Johnnie Walker Black label scotch for two dollars a bottle, Stoli vodka for a dollar and half, and so I could afford to be generous with my Saudi friends.

Hartsook: You say [in your diary, that] you want to ensure that “they” will never be able to criticize us. Who is the “they” that you fear that you didn’t want to be able to criticize? Is the “they” the career diplomats? It’s September tenth, meetings all afternoon, mostly with groups concerned about doing our intelligence survey. You’re new, you’re fresh....

West: That could have been written much later with more meaning. But the CIA was criticized very much for
not anticipating the overthrow of the Shah. It was a factor throughout, still is, how strong is the Saudi regime of the Saud family. So that was always one of our underlying questions—how do you, or do you, have a feel for the stability of the regime. It went back to 1969, you see, when there was an attempted coup. The CIA didn’t find out about it. That was always a major factor—how long is this monarchy going to last. It became quite an issue after the Shah fell.

Hartsook: In the diary, you’re giving it five years if they don’t deal with the pervasive corruption. And [they] surprised you, I think, by telling you that they were actually drafting a constitution and advisory legislation....

West: And, of course the constituent assembly and a constitution, I have had to laugh....

Hartsook: Did that shock you when they told you that they were already drafting...?

West: Oh, yes. It shocked me. Bandar is the one, I believe, that told me about that. That was an encouraging thing. But he said it had a lot of problems, how to implement it, and so on. To jump forward though, on one of my visits back to Saudi Arabia in the mid-eighties, maybe even later. I saw this huge new building and I said, “What’s that new building?” They said, “That’s the new constituent assembly building.” “Say, isn’t that nice?” I said, “When does it meet?” “Oh, we haven’t appointed it yet.” I went back the next year, [and] they put me in this guest palace right next door. I said, “Well, what’s this?” “This is for the constituent assembly.” “Have they ever been appointed yet?” “No.” But they did appoint a constituent assembly, they did adopt a constitution, but in the early nineties. So they moved slowly.

Hartsook: Would it be fair to characterize your ambassadorship as a super ambassadorship? I noticed you wrote in October 1977: “Prince Turki is concerned about my getting shot because of my help in promoting the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. I told them I was willing to risk that, that I was doing more than the normal diplomat might be expected to in encouraging the Saudis to undertake their public relations campaign, however the sole purpose is to get support for the President’s Mid-East policy, and as long as that is the objective, why, I have no hesitation about doing anything that is legal, legitimate and proper, even if it oversteps the normal bounds of the Ambassador’s responsibility.”

West: The constraints on an ambassador are the precedents, [and they] were just unbelievably stringent. When I went there, I was looked upon askance by the career ambassadors, and there was some resentment, understandably, because here I was, a fellow who didn’t speak Arabic, who simply knew the President, and I got the top job. They
had been laboring in the vineyards for fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years, and I was the boss. So, there was understandable jealousy or resentment. I had two friends, though, who really helped me get into the system. One was a black man named Jesse Lewis who had gone in in a minority thing, he had been a reporter for the *Washington Post*, and he was Economic Officer, and the other was a fellow named Skip Gnehm. Skip was a very young Foreign Service officer, native of Georgia, and he was head of the liaison office in Riyadh and became my friend. I almost became his protégé. He, incidentally, has been ambassador to Kuwait. He's been deputy to Madeleine Albright. He's great, and is now the Director General of the Foreign Service. He told me the way people get ahead, the way foreign service people get promoted, is they write memos and they never make any decisions. They cover themselves both ways. And, unfortunately, that was true.

Let me tell you a story which is interesting. President Carter made a speech in April of 1977 in which he said the Palestinians were entitled to a homeland. That just alienated the Jewish interests, but he was a determined fellow and politics be damned. So, when I went over there, it was with the idea of getting the PLO back in the fold. That was the whole idea. Carter’s suggestion had opened the door, and it provided a basis. The stumbling block came when [Henry] Kissinger, in his shuttle diplomacy, had broken the armistice that ended the 1973 conflict. He said he made a commitment to Israel that the United States would never negotiate or recognize the PLO until and unless they recognized Israel’s right to exist. That became the policy of the United States, and of course the Arabs, that took away all their trading stamps. I mean, the Arabs wouldn’t recognize the right of Israel to exist. If they did that, Israel had everything, and they had nothing.

That was the trading situation they were in, but it was obvious that a dialogue was needed. Secretary Vance came over on a mission in August and that was his primary responsibility, or his primary desire—to see if we could get the PLO and the Arabs, all of us, talking. There had to be a statement by the PLO that at least indicated that they were going to give Israel the right to exist, and there had to be a counter-statement on the Arab side. Well, we were doing the preliminaries to that and Prince Saud, who was the foreign minister and a Princeton graduate, we were playing with language. He told me, “Now, you get the State Department to tell you so we can transmit the minimum statement that they will accept, so as to start talking to Arafat.” Well, I asked the State Department for that and they said, “Oh, no, it’s not our policy to do that, and here are some general principles.” But they wouldn’t get the verbiage. Well, Jesse Lewis and I, [and the] DCM, who was a fellow I had to fire ultimately, we were flying up to at-Taif and I knew what Prince Saud wanted, he wanted the verbiage. I wrote out on a yellow pad three different statements that I felt were acceptable, given the general policy of the State Department. I said to Saud, “Well, now, the State Department will not give us that, but I have some suggestions, and I will read them to you,” and so I started reading. He said, “That sounds great, give me your notes.” So I did, and he said, “I think this will work.” I said, “Wonderful.” So the DCM, who was just a horrible bureaucrat of the first water, got back on the plane [and] said, “Mr. Ambassador, you know what you have done, don’t you?” I said, “No, what do you mean? I think we made a breakthrough.” Jesse and I were happy. “Oh, no, you have just
absolutely breached protocol. You have just created a hell of a problem.” “Well, what do you mean?” He said, “You cannot, as Ambassador, give a memo to a foreign country.” I said, “Well, that was informal, handwritten.” He said, “Doesn’t make any difference. I saw the same thing over in Egypt, it absolutely ruined”—he named the name, and I said, “My God.” “Same thing as you, he had some handwritten notes. He gave them to the Egyptians. Well, and it came out, and it just caused him some real problems.” I said, “Well, what happened to the fellow?” He says, “They sent him as ambassador-in-residence to the University of South Carolina.” I said, “My God, wouldn’t that be wonderful?” [laughter] So anyhow it didn’t work, because the Syrians came in and nixed it, and Saud got mad as hell about it. But it was the beginning of a breakthrough on that dialogue.

[TAPE 8, SIDE 1 ENDS, SIDE 2 BEGINS]

Hartsook: Was there widespread recognition in diplomatic circles, both American and foreign, that you were adopting an unusually active role...?

West: Oh, absolutely. I was known as an absolute maverick, and some of them loved it, and some of them hated it. You know a lot of the younger Foreign Service officers loved it and a lot of the others.... It took me about two years to get accepted by the bureaucracy, but I made enough friends. I never tried to embarrass any of them. If I was going around them, I would tell them that, and I never went around Cy Vance.

Hartsook: You and he were fairly close?

West: Yes. We were very close. I say very close, we were, and he was and is an absolute gentleman, a great public servant. I just did what I thought needed to be done. I knew it was unconventional, but the Saudis loved it. This is a completely self-serving story, but they had a series of ambassadors, and when Ray Mabus was appointed, Fahd told the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, “Send me another John West,” which was one of the biggest accolades I ever got. [He] said, “We want a political appointee, we don’t want a career diplomat.” Of course, they haven’t had one since. Clinton and Prince Turki were classmates at Georgetown, not that that meant a whole lot. Prince Bandar told me that too, of course, that Fahd was insistent. Skip Gnehm was designated as an ambassador to Saudi and the Saudis drug their feet on it, and the reason was they wanted a political appointee, someone who had access to the President. So it was a big asset that I had.

Hartsook: It also appears that your background in fostering industrial development here in South Carolina was a wonderful match for what you would be doing in Saudi Arabia. I wanted to ask you how much of your work revolved around American business interests involved in, or trying to gain access to, the Saudi economy,
and, of course, their need for that kind of expertise?

**West:** I had a major confrontation the first month I was there. One of the people in the bureaucracy, could have been the DCM, says, “It isn’t the American policy to get involved with these businessmen.” I called a staff meeting [and] said, “Now, let’s get one thing clear. When the American businessmen come in, they are our taxpayers, they are our boss. I want it clearly understood that any American businessman who has any legitimate request, we are going to honor it. If an American company comes in representing a company seeking a contract, if there is no other American seeking that contract, we go all out. We are going to beat the Japanese and the British and the French on it if we can. I’m going to tell each one of them when they come in, each businessman, that if you are the only American seeking this particular contract, we are your staff, we are on your payroll, you tell us what to do, and, if we can do it and it’s legal, we’ll do it well.”

Of course, that was such a change from the general State Department policy. In fact it went up, and Vance approved it. It just changed the whole attitude. Of course, these were the salad days in Saudi Arabia because the money was being spent for infrastructure; fortunes made overnight. The American companies were coming in. The Japanese, the French, and the British were coming in too. And it was highly competitive. I went the last mile to go and cajole and persuade and tell them what great friends we were and how we helped them in other ways and so on and so forth. They didn’t trust the French and didn’t trust the Japanese, generally. But, you are right, it was consistent with what I had been doing, and I enjoyed it, obviously.

**Hartsook:** Crawford Cook lands [in Saudi Arabia] and within a day or two you note in your diary that he was “amazed” at the way money was discussed. I’m curious if you were just talking about the immense sums [involved] or if there was something more to your comment?

**West:** I guess it was that money was really no object. If somebody wanted something, they paid for it, and they didn’t worry about the price. A hundred dollars to a Saudi would be like a dollar to us. Price was never a factor. People didn’t ask what the price was generally. I’ll qualify that by saying that you get into a trading situation—that’s different. But, one of the big problems, that I’m sure I mentioned, is the presents they would want to give you. There was a limit of a hundred dollars, and obviously I turned back many, many presents.

**Hartsook:** If I went into your home today, would I see a lot of the rugs and other things that [you and Mrs. West acquired]?

**West:** Yes. You’ll be in our home in Camden or in Hilton Head, you’ll see rugs. I still have them stored. When I first came back, at Hilton Head, when I would have a party, why we would put the Oriental rugs all around the
pool. I could cover the whole area and I still have them.

Hartsook: I was interested too, reading about your daughter [Shelton]. What is she doing today?

West: She went on and got her MBA from Kellogg at Northwestern and she is married a second time. She’s at Hilton Head. She’s working for the hospital there. She’s a strategic planner or something.

Hartsook: So, she didn’t stay with the stock brokerage...?

West: No. She didn’t stay with the stock brokerage. She liked that, but she decided to go back [to school] and got a chance to go to Northwestern and the business school. After that, she spent two or three years in New York with an advertising agency, and then came to Hilton Head. She’s happy.

Hartsook: Was it a hard time for you as a parent, being in Saudi Arabia? I can see it going either way, being very difficult or forcing you all to be closer.

West: Fortunately, all of our children were out of college. Shelton was just finished and she came over and spent a couple of years there. She enjoyed it, and it was a great experience for her. Our son, Jack, was practicing law, and he started getting involved. I had to be very careful to make sure there were no conflicts of interest, and occasionally we came close on that, I guess, but we always stayed within the letter of the law. But, he spent a lot of time over there, and still does a lot of business with Saudi Arabia. He’s made a lot of friends and clients there, so a good part of his practice is Saudi Arabia or the Mid-East generally. Doug, our second son, did not spend that much time with us. He was already off in business....

Hartsook: Very often I read [in the diary that] you had bought something and say, “Well, either I’ll keep it for myself, or I’ll send it to Doug....”

West: Yes, yes, Doug and Shelton and Jack, they visited us and enjoyed the experience, and, all in all, it was a great experience. But, Ray Mabus, who is the governor of Mississippi, who was the first political appointee over there by Clinton, [he] and his wife had two or three small children, and she wasn’t happy at all, so he stayed less than two years.

Hartsook: In November 1977, you described how word of Sadat’s planned visit to Jerusalem caused great consternation among the Arabs....
West: Oh, God, yes.

Hartsook: ...and you were supposed to pave the way and encourage Saudi support for Sadat’s mission, and you wrote that Saud was livid at the prospect of Sadat going to Jerusalem, and said that it meant the end of Arab unity, the only thing that could salvage it was success, and success could be measured only in two ways—first, some meaningful concession over and beyond the procedural matters by Begin, and, secondly, a new initiative by the United States reaffirming at a minimum two basic premises for peace—the withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries and the establishment of a Palestinian home. He also said that there were two hardening lines among the Arabs, one looking to the United States for leadership, and the other saying that the United States would never desert Israel sufficiently to bring about peace. That’s a quote from your diary. Could you use that episode, and this would be a good way to conclude today, as a model to explain how you, as ambassador, would develop a plan of action, and perhaps comment on the difficulties you would encounter in dealing with a people from such a different culture than our own?

West: I well remember that day. Saud called me to his home, or the home that he used there. It was his father’s old home. It was late one night and he was convinced that the United States knew about it and encouraged it, and of course we didn’t, and I couldn’t convince him otherwise. But, it was a major, major step, and I remarked to Saud at the time, I said, “Well, now, you didn’t know anything about it.” [He] said no. I said I had always understood that when major decisions were made, particularly in this culture, two people were usually consulted—one, the person’s wife, and the other, the banker. “Now, you’re the banker, you were Sadat’s banker, and you didn’t know anything about it. I’d like to know if Mrs. Sadat knew anything about it.” [laughter] Later, he told me that Mrs. Sadat said she didn’t, and he made it.

But it was a very tense time. You see, the procedural matters had been talking about a Geneva conference to try to get Arafat in the communication. He had been very active in that. That was a follow through on the August visit when we had talked about the verbiage that would be required, and so on. We had an awfully difficult time trying to convince Saud that we really didn’t know, and had not been a part of a conspiracy. The way I put it back, I said, “You are the ones that he’s closer to because you give him the money and he can’t exist without you. If he didn’t ask,” I said, “are you sure you didn’t find out about it?” I mean, I threw it back at him a little bit.

He was Saud, Prince Saud. I used to tell him he should have been on the Princeton debating team because he could get on a high horse and he was eloquent. He spoke English perfectly. He would just preach and preach and preach, and that was one of his times. But trying to reconcile that, there are many offshoots to it. We finally got to the point that we did. There was sufficient progress to at least give the Arabs some indication that it was not
all a failure or an ego trip of Sadat....

[TAPE 8 ENDS]