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Synopsis:

Martha Payne (1922-2014) was employed by Ernest F. Hollings when he was Governor of South Carolina and also the years he served in the U.S. Senate. She had worked previously in the S.C. Legislature and the S.C. Municipal Association. Mrs. Payne discusses her role and the work she did in Hollings’ gubernatorial office and later in the Senator’s Columbia office, as well as some of the other personalities who surrounded Hollings. Mrs. Payne retired in 1995.
Hartsook: Could you tell me a little bit about your background? Where you were born, what your parents did, where you were educated, just a real brief biographical sketch.

Payne: I was born in New Bern, North Carolina. My father was with what was then Standard Oil Company, now, of course, Exxon, but he was the manager. I came from a family of three brothers and one sister. My mother was just a down-to-earth, housewife type, Christian lady. We lived right across the street from our little Methodist church. My daddy was in the choir, and those were very fond childhood memories. We moved during the Depression. Daddy was transferred to what was Wake Forest and then from there, to Monroe, North Carolina, which is where I finished high school. Yes, I was in school with Jesse Helms. [laughter] I went to school at East Carolina, which was at that time East Carolina Teachers' College. Now, it's just "University," of course.

When I finished school, I went to work in Raleigh. My two older brothers were in Raleigh. One was working at the Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel and the other was with a state agency. That was my lure, I guess, to Raleigh. My first taste of politics was with this North Carolina Parole Commission, which is where I had my first job. Those were about the most fun years for me, because I got to meet lots of people. It was an education in itself, really. Because of the type of work we were doing, we got reports from every county in North Carolina, and I could tell you, at that time, who was the sheriff, who was the chief of police, and all that sort of thing, and knew what every county seat was and all of that, which has long since slipped my mind.

Hartsook: And what were you doing?

Payne: I was with the Department of Paroles, as a secretary to one of the commissioners. It was just a real fun thing, a lot of nice people and all. And then I decided I'd had enough of Raleigh and went back to Monroe and took a job with a law firm. One of the lawyers was the speaker of the North Carolina House. In North Carolina, they aren't reelected for any long period of time. A speaker is elected for the session and that's it. So then he took me back to Raleigh to work during the legislature, which was really a fun job. And that's sort of how politics got into my system.

Then, after that session, I was back in Monroe. One of my brothers was in service, and he was killed; he was a pilot. That sort of put an end to any outside work. I was the only one living at home at
that time, so I was sort of the bulwark of the family, so to speak, during those war years. And then I married. My husband was a Monroe native. His father was one of the old-time family physicians in Union County, North Carolina. We were married and moved to Columbia in 1950.

Hartsook: Why did you move to Columbia?

Payne: Well, at the time we were married he was in sort of a precarious employment position, and he was hired by one division of General Foods, and his territory was North and South Carolina and part of Georgia, and this was the most central location. So that's why we came to Columbia. Two of my children were born in Monroe and my youngest daughter was born in Columbia. All three of them finished Dreher High School here and have gone on to do bigger and better things.

[Mrs. Payne is reading and summarizing questions presented to her prior to the interview. Responding to the questions-- “How did you get involved in government? How did you first become acquainted with Senator Hollings?”]:

I started working first with a law firm. One of the members was on the desk in the House of Representatives, as assistant to the clerk. The other one was a member of the House, a member of the legislative delegation from Richland County. It just seems that everything I did was in some way connected with politics.

Muller Kreps sort of managed the campaign when he [Hollings] ran for lieutenant governor. Of course, I knew him during all of that time. I would say that Muller is probably the most politically astute person that I ever knew as far as being a non-office-holder. H[is] was the hands-on office, really, during all of the term of governor. He was responsible for my coming to work in the governor's office. I was on the desk at the State House. Inez Watson was...I think I must have been her cross. She was certainly my cross to bear. But Muller knew what the situation was, and there was a vacancy in the governor's office, and that's how I came to be on that staff, through him.

[Responding to the question-- “I believe you began working for Governor Hollings in 1960. What were your original duties in the Governor's Office?”]:

My duties in the governor's office...? I was secretary to the press assistant, who at the time I started was Leroy Harrelson. Then Roy left and John Altman, from Charleston, who was always in the
news on the school board in Charleston...a controversial figure all along, but anyhow, he was hired as press secretary and so I continued as his secretary until we went out of office.

Hartsook: What was Inez Watson like to work with, as a staffer?

Payne: Very hard to work with. She was a very demanding person, and she didn't put up with any foolishness. I had very difficult times at home during that period and she didn't help it any. So it was like getting out of jail to get away from that influence. [laughter]

Hartsook: You hear a lot of people described as "hard but fair." It doesn't sound like she's hard but fair.

Payne: Sometimes she was not always fair. She was hard, there's no doubt about that, but there were plenty of times when, in my opinion, she wasn't fair. She might have thought she was being fair, but it was hard, although I enjoyed the contacts with the members and all of that and it was very rewarding in a sense, because you got to know exactly how the legislature operated and how things were done that people probably never realize they were handled in those manners. And I don't think it's changed that much since I was there along those lines.

[Af]ter Hollings left office in 1963, you worked with the Municipal Association of South Carolina. How did you secure that position, what were your duties, and what kind of contact did you retain with Senator Hollings?]

So, anyhow, after Hollings was defeated and Russell came into office, it was just such a change, just a drastic change. During that period in the governor's office, there were so many people that would come in for various conferences, and board meetings, and that sort of thing, that I had met some of the city officials throughout the state. And that's how I came to be with the Municipal Association. They had offered me a job as soon as the Governor's term was up, and I certainly grabbed it.

Hartsook: I take it the Russell people did not offer you a job?

Payne: Well, they did at first. It was a strange thing. At that time, Fred Sheheen was on Russell's staff and was more or less the office manager, and he walked through one day. At that time,
there was like a pool of secretaries. We had our desks, there were about five of us, lined up in one little area. And he walked through one day and said, "Governor Russell is going to keep you, and you, and you, and you," you know. I thought, "Well, I'm not so sure I'm going to make this cut anyhow," and so I was not really disappointed when the time came for me to take off. It was such a drastic change from the way things had been before. The fun part wasn't there anymore.

Crawford Cook [Cook became Hollings’ first Senate Administrative Assistant] was with the Municipal Association and that's how I first came to know Crawford and, of course, through the years with his association with the Senator. The Municipal Association was sort of a stop-gap, because as soon as the Senator decided to run against Olin Johnston, he had already contacted Crawford and we had both decided that's what we wanted to do.

I took a leave of absence from the governor's office when he ran against Olin Johnston and worked in that campaign. That was also through Muller, because Muller was more or less the campaign manager. I was scared to death I wasn't going to be able to do the job, but I loved it. Of course, at the end, I maybe didn't do such a good job. [laughter] But it was a real exciting time. I remember so vividly the night of the election, when we had to walk over to the Wade Hampton Hotel and concede that election. That's the hardest thing Fritz Hollings ever did in his life, I'm sure.

**Hartsook:** And you walked over with him?

**Payne:** Most of the staff walked over, yes. And then the day after the election, I remember vividly sitting in the office with him, in the old campaign headquarters, and he had his little book with all the names and addresses and phone numbers and everything, and he'd say, "I can't believe it. He told me he had it sewed up," and this sort of thing. He just was absolutely dumbfounded that he did not win, because he was so sure he was going to.

**Hartsook:** I know The State newspaper, on the eve of the election, said that it was a toss-up, that they felt it was too close to call. What did you think that night, before...?

**Payne:** Well, of course, I thought we had it made. I mean, it never occurred to me that we weren't going to come out victorious. Of course, you didn't get the results as quickly then as you do now, and it was sort of a long wait to find out. But when the hammer dropped, that was it. It was a very frustrating experience, but that's the chance you take.
Hartsook: What did you do during the campaign? What were your duties?

Payne: Well, my duties were to assign other duties. I made sure that the campaign letters went out and I signed all of the correspondence. I got to be very proficient. If I had had a checkbook, I probably could have gotten rich. [laughter] I guess we had maybe five secretaries. Of course, back then there were no computers. We were using these automatic typewriter-things, doing that kind of correspondence. Muller would tell me what he wanted done, and then I would tell them what needed to be done. It was quite an experience. But that campaign, against Olin Johnston, and the Senate campaign in 1966, are the only two campaigns I ever really active in. After I was on the Senate payroll, of course, I didn't take any real active part in reelection campaigns.

Hartsook: It's obvious that you just love politics. What is it that you find so attractive?

Payne: I don't know. You know, I really don't know. I think when I got my first taste of it – when I was in Raleigh – my brother, who worked at the Sir Walter Hotel...the commissioner of paroles at that time was a bachelor, and lived at the hotel. And he and Linwood got to be friends, and so when it was time for me to look for a job, that was the first place I went. He hired me, and, as I say, the rest is history.

Hartsook: I just want to go back to something. You said you went to school with Jesse Helms. What do you remember of him as a school child?

Payne: Who's going to read this? [laughter] No, he was a very, very opinionated person even back in his high school days. He would monopolize the teacher's time in class, exuding all of these ideas and opinions and everything. I mean, he was a likeable guy, but all of that laid the groundwork, I'm sure, for where he is today. I never expected him to be where he is the United States Senate, I can tell you that. He came from a very humble background. His father was chief of police in the little town of Monroe. It was just not the type of background or environment that you would think would inspire some United States Senator for all these years. My later contact with him was during the war, when he was in the Navy but he was stationed in Raleigh as a public relations correspondent type thing, keeping up with news. He never was in any real active duty that I recall. He was a member of the high school band – played the tuba – and I can see him now, walking down that football field. And every now and then, he'd do that, wiping his nose. That's the one thing that's always stuck out in my mind.
**Hartsook:** What do you think are the qualities necessary to be a good staffer? You've talked about a keen memory, knowing all the sheriffs and the courthouses and things like that. I would assume that that's something that's necessary. And to know and like people, I would think.

**Payne:** Oh, definitely that. As far as a good staffer, I think first of all you've certainly got to have loyalty, and trust. I won't say that everything Fritz Hollings has ever proposed I always agreed with, but there have been very, very few times when I haven't thought that he was exactly right, and still do. That, I think, and the ability to accept people. There are so many people who have such different ideas and personalities, and to be able to overlook some of that and accept them for what they are and know that even though they might be something you might don't exactly approve of, the fact that they support Fritz Hollings is enough to enhance them in your opinion.

Actually, I guess, you have to put the Senator's thoughts and ideas first. I mean, somebody else might be able to say, "I don't agree with that," but I certainly never say to him, "I don't agree with that." I didn't ever feel that I was in that category to be able to say I wasn't in favor of some of the things.

**Hartsook:** How long does it take to earn his trust?

**Payne:** Well, Herb, you know, I'm not sure that the trust that he has in you is that reciprocal; and by that I mean I don't think that he feels that he has to instill [anything] in you; you just do it because you feel that strongly about him. I mean, you can feel very dejected and non-appreciated and all of this, and then he'll say one little thing to you and it just makes you feel like you're queen for a day. That sort of thing.

He certainly is not the most endearing person at times. Although he's never displayed any real temper to me, I have certainly witnessed it with other people and feel very fortunate that I haven't had to bear that brunt. But all in all, I don't think there's any doubt that he appreciates what you do. I think that sometimes it's just that he's always in some other direction and just doesn't take the time to let you know he appreciates it, in some instances.

**Hartsook:** I think everyone acknowledges that he's an extraordinarily demanding person, and that politics in itself, and government, is a demanding, very stressful job.

**Payne:** Oh, sure.
Hartsook: So how do you explain the fact that he has the reputation for having had a superb staff, and if you look at most of the staff members, they stay with him for extraordinary periods of time? You were with him, I think, longer than anyone. But you look at people like Mary Winton [Hughes], and Karen [Kollmansperger], and look at someone like an Ashley Thrift or a David Rudd, I think they stayed a very long period of time.

Payne: I think the reason for that is that he is such an extraordinary person and that you have to admire what he's doing and know that he strongly believes in what he's doing and that you want to be a part of it. I think that's certainly true in my case. I couldn't imagine not being involved in what he was doing, although I don't think I was ever hands-on involved as far as the legislative part and all of that, because that was certainly handled strictly in Washington. We sort of got the second-hand information on it sometimes. I don't know, he's just such a forceful personality, and, with his humor and his wit and all of that, you just feel like you're really working for [the] best.

Hartsook: If somebody had told you back while he was serving as governor that you'd still be a Hollings staffer in the 1990s, would you have laughed?

Payne: Well, no, I don't know that I would. Of course, I never imagined that he was going to be member of the United States Senate for all this period of time. I was certainly delighted to be able to hold on to that position all these years. But I think that you could tell from the way he functioned as a governor that he was certainly destined for bigger and better things.

I think the country missed a wonderful opportunity when they did not elect him as President. I think he would have made a wonderful President. Of course, that's my opinion, and I think there are a lot of people who share that opinion. I think if he could have just gotten it across a little better. I don't know all the factors involved in it, but I still say he would have made a wonderful President. The only thing about that was the President doesn't normally have a South Carolina office, and I don't know what I would have done from then on. With a family, I was not going to be going to Washington, I'm sure.

Hartsook: How hard was it to work in the office and raise a family?

Payne: Fortunately, when I started working my children were up enough – they were high school and junior high school ages – so it really wasn't like you had to be at home all the time. They, of course,
respected what I was doing. During that period of time, most of the time Rob was travelling. Well, he was not travelling when I went to work in the governor's office. He had, soon after that, gotten on with the Department of Corrections here in South Carolina, so he was home all the time. But it was just like any other thing, you do what you have to do. Putting three children through school and through college, it wasn't a choice of whether I wanted to work or not. It was a “must” situation.

**Hartsook:** In the governor's office, who set the tone in the office? Was it Hollings himself, or would it have been someone else?

**Payne:** Of course, I think he set the tone, but Muller Kreps actually directed what was done. Muller was one of the few people that could talk with him [Hollings] and bring him around to a point of view, more so than most anybody that I know of that he's ever been connected with. He had that savvy that he was able, in such a subtle way, to approach him and make him see that one way was not the only way. But as far as the actual function of the office, Muller, as administrative assistant, more or less carried out...I'm sure that the Senator told him what he wanted done, and he saw that it was done. But he also gave Muller a lot of leeway in how things were handled, too.

**Hartsook:** Is that a pattern that you think has held steady through...?

**Payne:** I think so. I know he has his ideas about how things are done, but he wouldn't call me and say-- "Martha, I want you to do so-and-so and so-and-so." That direction would come either from the A.A. [Administrative Assistant] in Washington or from the manager in the Columbia office.

**Hartsook:** What is your most lasting memory of serving in the governor's office?

**Payne:** Of course, the visit by John Kennedy, when he was campaigning and came to Columbia and was at the State House. We were more or less in charge of all that through the governor's office. That was certainly an exciting time, to be able to go over and shake his hand and listen to him. That was one of the most eventful things. And then, Dr. von Braun.

**Hartsook:** Werner von Braun?

**Payne:** Yes. I remember vividly when he came to the governor's office and we all got to meet
him. And I used to enjoy sitting in on the press conferences. That gave me a good rapport with the press that has been sort of a lasting thing. Bill Rone is still a good friend. And I was very disappointed to see Kent Krill retire, because any time I needed anything or wanted to discuss anything, I could always call and talk with him. That stemmed from knowing them through those conferences and everything.

[Tape 1, Side 1 ends, Side 2 begins]

Hartsook: What are your memories of the final days in the governor's office and the transition to Governor Russell?

Payne: It was a very bleak experience for me. I think that there were so many factors involved in the election itself and how Russell came to be governor. I mean, it was hard to look at him in the same light and to realize that for the next four years, he would be the one making the decisions. After being with such a dynamic personality, Governor Russell was much more subdued. I'm sure there must have been an element of bitterness of both sides. I don't think there's any way to avoid that sort of thing. Of course, Hollings could not have been governor for another four years at that time.

The candidates themselves, I'm sure, don't have any problem overlooking some of the things that went on during the campaign, but as far as I was concerned, it was hard to work for somebody that had, just a few weeks before, been saying such derogatory things about the former governor. That's fine, that's politics, and I'm sure that that is to be expected, but it was my first experience in that sort of thing and I was a little frustrated over it. I mean, the general public doesn't realize what the transition means, I'm sure, as far as changes that are made in the policy of things.

But all in all, it was, I'm sure, as smooth as it could be. I certainly missed the camaraderie with the staff that we'd had before. The welcome mat was newly out at the Governor's Mansion. You know, you felt very privileged to be included in things that were going on up there, and this was an entirely different set of circumstances.

Hartsook: When you joined the Senate staff, you've always worked here in Columbia, I take it. What were your original duties?

Payne: Mostly at that time all of us were kind of feeling our way around, because we'd never been involved in this before. I always was more or less the Senator's personal contact as far as any personal correspondence or anything like that. I didn't start out doing a lot of case work. In fact, I never really
cared for the case work. I liked the contacts and that sort of thing more than the nitty-gritty of Social Security and that sort of thing. But all through the years, I've always been sort of his personal contact here. I mean, any correspondence that went out on a personal nature was my territory. And [it was a] sort of reception/greeter-type thing because I sort of had the personality for that.

**Hartsook:** I know often when I called you would pick up the phone, and I just thought that was great to not get the newest person in the office. I always knew that you could speak and give me a definitive answer.

**Payne:** Yes, well, that was sort of part of it, too. I mean, I was more or less the major force, I guess, as far as the public was concerned. Sometimes it was kind of hard to keep your temper.

**Hartsook:** How many people were in the office originally here in Columbia?

**Payne:** Well, there was me, and Bubba Meng, and Claudia Cook, and one other. We started out with just four, and then eventually there were five. And then, at the time I left, there were six of us.

**Hartsook:** That's a fairly small number of people for all the work that you have to do.

**Payne:** Well, and then being the central office, a lot of things going to the Charleston office and the Greenville office sort of came in here to be cleared. While they did their own work there, it was always more or less approved or disapproved through the Columbia office.

**Hartsook:** Was Bubba the first home secretary?

**Payne:** Yes.

**Hartsook:** So really, there have just been the two, then.

**Payne:** Bubba and Trip [King], right.

**Hartsook:** What was Bubba like to work for? He would have been very young, I think?
Payne: I guess Bubba was in his late thirties or early forties. It’s hard to remember, it’s been so many years. Bubba was the type of person that would just greet you with open arms. If someone, a constituent, came in the office, I mean he didn't hesitate to get up and come out and shake hands and invite them in. You know, just take up the time with them. Everybody was crazy about Bubba. He just had that outgoing personality. And he, I will admit, was as much like Muller in his handling of the Senator as anybody else has been.

Of course, Bubba had had experience in Washington. It was strange that he had worked for Olin Johnston and then was hired by Fritz Hollings; but it certainly was a brilliant move to do that, because all of the Olin Johnston people came in, and Bubba was responsible for a lot of that. So he was a real asset.

Hartsook: Did you know Mrs. Johnston at all?

Payne: Just to meet her. I didn't know her well. I know [her daughter] Liz [J. Patterson] well, but I never was real close to Mrs. Johnston.

Hartsook: In our interview with Bubba, he had said that she called him in and said that she wanted him to go to work for Fritz, to show the Johnston people that she was supporting Hollings against Russell. That's just an interesting sidelight.

Payne: Yes, and then Mr. Bill Johnston, up in Anderson, was certainly one of the moving forces as far as Bubba's coming to work for Hollings, too. It was a good show of unity, which was good. But Bubba was one that didn't mind saying, “Martha, you take care of this,” and leave it to you to take care of. You kind of felt like you had some responsibility, even though you knew he was in charge.

Hartsook: And the home secretary pretty much does run the affairs within the state.

Payne: Yes.

Hartsook: What kind of changes have you witnessed since Trip has taken over? I mean, it seems to me they're very different in their personal styles.
Payne: For me, personally, it's been a change, because I haven't felt that I was free to express myself and do things that I thought needed to be done. Everything was cleared with Trip. That was something I wasn't used to doing. Trip is certainly not the gracious person that Muller was on a permanent basis. I mean, there are certainly plenty of people that Trip is very fond of, and it shows, but then he doesn't really like the hands-on constituent work as far as greeting people and that sort of thing.

Hartsook: How about the different A.A.'s that you've known? Again, he's only had a handful; I think five.

Payne: Well, there's Crawford, and Mike Joy, and Mike Copps. I would say that Mike Copps probably was the most intelligent and knowledgeable A.A., but he was more a college professor than he was an A.A. But he certainly knew what he was doing. I think Crawford set out to do just exactly what he had always said he was going to do. He got the exposure and experience and went out on his own, and did very, very, well. I think Mike Joy was a little – I don't want to say out of his element, he certainly knew how to handle people and all of this – but I always felt that he was always looking over his shoulder to see what he might do next or something like that. That might be entirely wrong, but I just don't think he had the managerial characteristics that some of the others had. Ashley Thrift; I was fond of Ashley. He was easy to talk to, and you felt like he was listening to you. Whether he followed through on what you wanted or not wasn't always evident, but at least he'd take the time to hear what you had to say.

Hartsook: Now David [Rudd] came into the state in the last campaign, didn't he, at the end of the campaign, and was very active here?

Payne: Yes. Things were apparently not going as well as they wanted them to, and apparently whatever he did worked.

Hartsook: Do you notice much change in the home office when there's a major change in the Washington staff, like a shift from Ashley to David, or is that pretty much blunted by the time the impact gets to Columbia?

Payne: I don't think there's a great deal of change overall. There certainly have been some changes. I had made up my mind when I looked at these questions that there were going to be two that I would not comment on. One was Trip and one was David Rudd. And I just really don't have much to
Hartsook: Okay. How about the press secretary in Washington? Does that person have a big impact on how things are perceived here in Columbia? Andy [Brack] just strikes me as so vigorous. I think he has created a lot of new systems for dispensing information, and I'm just wondering if that has a big impact here in South Carolina.

Payne: Well, I think there again, Andy is under the influence of David Rudd and Trip in some instances as to what they think should be done in South Carolina. I don't know enough about how they direct him to really know. I certainly think Andy knows what he's doing, but I think he has to clear everything. And I guess that's the way it should be.

Hartsook: I'm sure that you've witnessed significant changes in the types of requests that you've received from constituents and just the volume of mail and things like that. What changes stand out in your mind over the years in the home office, and how have those changes affected the way that the office works?

Payne: There again, I'm not really sure on some of that. The volume of mail, of course, depends on the issues that are at hand at that particular time, and the types of mail. I would say probably the biggest issue that we ever had as far as mail is concerned was the Panama Canal. I'm trying to remember the phrase, something "for dollars and not a penny for defense," or something like that. I don't know what the quote is exactly, but, anyhow, we were just swamped with letters from veterans with a penny attached. That was the first real bad experience on the Senator's position that caused so much controversy. I don't think anything actually changed the way the office was run overall, but it certainly gave us a direction that we hadn't had before.

I agree with the girls from Butler's office in that C-SPAN has certainly caused more input from constituents than anything prior to that, because these people, retired people, sit home and do nothing but watch C-SPAN all day long and call you immediately when something comes up that they don't agree with. [Responding to a comment that Congressman Butler Derrick staff members, in an earlier interview, had commented on the increase in issue-related mail and telephone calls received from constituents with the growth in popularity of C-SPAN.]

Hartsook: And what do you do with all those letters? Do you send a note to the Senator saying,
"We've received four hundred pieces of mail"?

Payne: No. What we normally did was – these things have changed with the computer age, too – we would acknowledge and say, “I appreciate your views and you can be sure that I will consider them carefully when this comes to floor of the Senate for a vote,” and that sort of thing. Then we normally sent those letters on up to D.C. If it was anything that needed to be done by the Senator himself, I would immediately fax it up, or whatever, so that he could handle it, or one of the Washington staff could handle it, on a personal basis. Legislation particularly. I was never real sure how to express what the Senator would want to express on those sort of things, so I kind of relied on the Washington office. Either they would give us a stock response and we would do it from here, or we'd send it up to them.

Hartsook: He [Hollings] does look at a lot of that mail, doesn't he?

Payne: He does. And I would recognize most of the time the things that I thought really needed to be called to his attention. There are a lot of things that you know that there's no point in even bothering him with, but there were a lot of things that I knew needed to be given a more in-depth response than what we would give.


Payne: He did. He really did. And what was strange about it was that during the days in the governor's office, he and Marshall Parker were such good friends. We just couldn't believe that he was going to take us on, and he sure did. I think that the Senator realized that he had been up there for that unexpired term and he knew what needed to be done, and he was determined he was going to continue to do it.

Crawford Cook was certainly a mainstay in that campaign. And the strange thing about it was that Crawford and Marshall had been such good friends before that time, too. That might be one reason that we did as well as we did, is that Crawford knew how Marshall Parker was thinking and he could counteract that. But it was a real strange situation, to have somebody that you had known and been such good friends with yourself, to have to get out and beat the bushes against them.

Hartsook: Are they close again? Do they have any kind of a personal relationship?
Payne: Not to my knowledge they don't. I've not heard of any contact, certainly not in recent years. I had an occasion to need to jog his [Parker's] memory about something and made a phone call and left a message, and I never heard from him.

Hartsook: The Senator's hunger tour and the resulting book [The Case against Hunger] received a great deal attention. Still do, as we saw an article in the paper just recently. His effort to focus attention on hunger and poverty seems quite bold, even today. What do you recall of the immediate public reaction to the tours and his testimony before the McGovern Committee?

Payne: I think there's no doubt that he endeared himself to the black community with that tour and all that publicity. He was amazed at some of the things he saw, which was brought out in the book. And the fact that he was willing to do that at the time it was done certainly showed a great deal of courage and a great deal of character on his part in my opinion. It was a human thing to do, and just, I think, made everybody realize that he wasn't this Charleston snob-type personality that people consider a Charlestonian to be sometimes. That he did have a soft side and a caring side and was ready and anxious to try to help where help was really needed.

Hartsook: Now of course, he got a lot of negative comment, too. A lot of people were just terribly upset with him.

Payne: Yes. And that shows you, I think, the need for it, the fact that there was so much opposition. Somebody needed to get out there and let people know what was really going on and how these people actually were living under such dire circumstances.

Hartsook: Was the office flooded with mail?

Payne: As I recall, not that much mail particularly. I think the press attached more significance to it in the opposing view than anything else. I mean, as far as the office was concerned, we didn't have a whole lot of people calling and fussing about what he was doing. Certainly the churches, the congregations throughout, were proud that they had somebody that was willing to take the lead in that role.
Hartsook: What other issues besides the Panama Canal really did excite a lot of interest that you recall?

Payne: Of course, the [Clarence] Thomas Supreme Court thing was really...that's when [we] started really getting ugly calls. I can't remember, there were so many. You know, you get from one to the other. By the time one thing was over, then there was something else confronting you. I really don't know that there was a whole lot. Of course, this thing with the budget and all, the changes in Medicare. We had a hard time convincing constituents that the Senator wasn't anxious to cut their Social Security, and that brought in a good bit of mail, particularly from senior citizens afraid that they were going to be out in the cold. But I can't remember all the issues, because, as I say, they sort of overlap. You get through with one and there was something else.

Hartsook: I was real interested in your talking about Crawford Cook and Bubba Meng; that you talk about their ability to go to him and bring him around to look at a different viewpoint on some issue. Are there people that he consults with? I know he's had people that have been very close supporters, people like a Henry Tecklenberg, John West, people whose opinion he values. But is there a small group of people that you're aware of that he goes to, to get opinions, or does he not need much help in making up his mind?

Payne: I think you've named the ones that I'm aware of that he relied on. I can remember very distinctly Henry Tecklenberg – at the time they were discussing Bubba Meng – that Henry was one of the ones who said it would be the best thing he had ever done. Henry Tecklenberg was one who could say just about anything he wanted to him. They had known each other for so long, and Henry was very, very, bright and very astute and very political, from the outside looking in. I don't think he'd ever imagined himself as a candidate for public office, but he certainly controlled a lot of input into the Senator's ideas. And I think his death was one the biggest disappointments and the biggest sorrows Fritz Hollings probably has ever experienced, the way it came about so quickly. You know, if he had been ill and all of this, it would have sort of given us a chance to accept the fact, but to have it just happen as suddenly as it did, it was really a shock.

I know he discusses things with John West. I know John West discusses things with him. I don't think John West would hesitate to call and say, “I want exactly the proof of this or that," or, “Let's think about this a little bit,” and that sort of thing. Not that he's always inclined to listen, but at least they make the effort. He's his own man, as you well know. I'm sure you have gathered that no matter what
anybody else might think, if he himself believes in something, he's going to stick to his guns on it.

Hartsook: How about protégés in state government? Are there people that are Hollings disciples?

Payne: Not much anymore. With the situation as it is, I don't know of many. Right now, there are very few people in state government left that were strong Hollings people in the past. They've sort of been weeded out.

Hartsook: I was going to ask about the relations with different governors and other public officials. Not his relations, but the office itself.

Payne: In my case, I always felt very close to the constitutional offices. Certainly with Grady Patterson, and with Earle Morris, and...

[Tape 1 ends, Tape 2, Side 1 begins]

Payne: I really don't know that there's any real strong connection now with the constitutional offices. It may well be that I'm not aware of it. It could be through the Washington office, but here in Columbia I don't think we've had that much input in that respect.

Hartsook: Was it a shocking change to go from a Democratic governor to a James Edwards or a Carroll Campbell in the relations with...?

Payne: I think so. For instance, during the McNair term and John West term, the staffs were such good friends and we knew each other very well. And with new people, you just didn't feel quite as free to call and ask for advice or ask for a favor or anything like that. I mean, Betty Bargmann, who is now still with John West and was on his staff as governor, we'd been friends since the days of the governor's office. It was strange not to be able to pick up the phone and call the governor's office and say, "Can you get so-and-so for me," or "do this for me," and that sort of thing, which I never felt free to do with either of the Republican governors. We had a good rapport with Riley's office, of course, but it's not the same now.

Hartsook: We talked a little bit about the Presidential campaign. When did you first realize that he
had national aspirations?

Payne: I might have been one of the last to know. [laughter] It was hinted, I guess, but never really verified to me until he actually made his announcement. I was delighted. Like I say, it was a very exciting time. I only wish that I had been able to get out and participate in some of things that were being done. But, like I say, if he had been elected President, I would have had to find another job. [laughter] I think maybe he could have found me one, though.

Hartsook: How do you evaluate Peatsy's role in his life now?

Payne: Oh, I think Peatsy is a very strong influence, and I think she's been very, very good to him and for him. He has certainly relied on her, in my opinion, a great deal. And she has made herself very valuable to him in lots of ways. I have a great admiration for Peatsy. I think she filled a void that needed to be filled, and that has done a great deal for him, to have somebody that was willing to go public and do the things that she does.

Hartsook: Now I know she has regular interests in the Washington office, things that she's involved in. Are there things that she does here in the state?

Payne: Well, I think they sort of overlap. I mean, things that she feels need to be done she doesn't hesitate to let us know about. And she has always asked me if we have done this or if we've done that for somebody that she thought it should have been done for. Peatsy's good; she keeps the staff on its toes as far as making sure that things that are necessary are done, from a personal standpoint.

Hartsook: Is that probably true for some of the other long-time staff members? I could see Mary Winton doing that kind of role as well.

Payne: Well, I think Mary Winton certainly has a strong role in what the Senator does, but I don't think Mary Winton's role can compare to Peatsy's in that regard.

Hartsook: Oh, I wasn't saying that. She just seems to be a very detail-oriented person that I could see having a broader role than what her title and duties would imply.
Payne: Yeah. Oh, I don't think there's any doubt about that. Mary Winton can certainly recognize anything that may have not been done that should have been done, and certainly would follow through, just to make sure that it got done. She and Karen both are very politically-oriented and see the whole picture much more than I would from down here. They're very valuable to him.

Hartsook: I do think it must be a tremendous asset to have people that have stayed for so long and have such long institutional memory and to have that continuity.

Payne: Uh huh. And the fact that they are there on a daily basis, they are certainly more capable of judging the situations and making sure how things are done than I would from down here. I mean like people that come into the Washington office – they know their backgrounds, and there [are] so many more people that they come in contact with that we wouldn't come into contact with down here.

Hartsook: I'm pretty much through with my questions. Is there any question I should have asked that I didn't ask, or anything that you'd like to add?

Payne: No. I don't know of anything, Herb. I went over these over and over again in my mind to kind of get a feel for what I could remember to tell you. And as I say, my role from the beginning has not changed a great deal, other than I did not feel quite as free to express myself or to take any leadership role in.... I think what prompted my retirement more than anything else, other than the fact that it was time for me to retire, was that I just wasn't computer-oriented, and that was getting to be the main thrust of what was to be done, and I just felt like it was time for me to let somebody else do it.

[Tape 2 ends, concluding interview]