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Bob Brown: We're interviewing Allen Kolstad today. It's the third of June, the year 2005 at the Republican State Convention in Great Falls. Allen is currently the Republican National Committeeman from Montana, but he served in both the state House of Representatives and the state Senate and as lieutenant governor of Montana. I believe that you began your legislative service in 1968?

Allen Kolstad: That's correct, Bob, 1968.

BB: What motivated you to run for the legislature?

AK: Liberty County has always been a very Democrat county. I ran, in fact, three times before I was elected. Once losing by 20-some votes. Once I lost on one Indian reservation. Then we were in the midst of reapportionment, but it was a real challenge in Liberty County. I happened to be the first Republican that was successful in being elected to the legislature since our county was formed.

BB: So you ran unsuccessfully in '60, '62 and '64 or something like that?

AK: Sixty-two, '64, and '66.

BB: So you made it on your third try.

AK: No. I made it in '68.

BB: Oh that's right.

AK: It was an interesting campaign. Since that time, Liberty County has been Republican. I'm not taking credit for it, but we had so many people that worked hard for us and we had some old traditional Democrats that had served there. In fact, they served there very well. Dave James and Walt Laas, some of those guys were there. So it was a real thrill for me to win that.

BB: They tended to be fairly conservative Democrats and the conservative people in Liberty County are now voting more Republican than Democrat.

AK: That is correct. They voted Republican ever since.

BB: Now do you remember any issues or anything that were important then?

AK: Of course the sales tax was an important issue the first time I served in the state House of Representatives. Jim Lucas, of course, spearheaded that. Consequently I guess it was his political demise.

BB: So the 1969 session, the sales tax was an important issue.

AK: Yes it was.

BB: Speaker Lucas, the Republican from Miles City was the leader. Did you support the sales tax?

AK: Actually, yes I did, as a matter of fact. Jim Lucas was not the Speaker in '69.

BB: Oh, [James] Felt was.

AK: Yes. That's correct. I think it was the following session that Jim Lucas was Speaker. Outstanding man.

BB: There was a vote on the sales tax in your first session?

AK: Oh, yes, there definitely was.

BB: That couldn't have been popular in Liberty County.

AK: Well, in Liberty County, it was pretty split at that time. Most of the people in Liberty County are property owners. They supported the sales tax for that reason because they thought maybe we'd have some property tax reduction.

BB: We'd have some new revenue from the sales tax that could be used to hold the line and maybe even reduce property taxes.

AK: That's correct.

BB: Then of course you were elected to the House again in 1970. That was my first session there—was '71 was when we served together.

AK: That's correct.

BB: Then didn't we go into the Senate together in '74?

AK: We did. We went in the same year.

BB: Now you were also actively involved during that same period, I think Allen, in the Ronald Reagan movement.

AK: Yes, very much so, Bob. I was very active in the Ronald Reagan election. I remember in 1968, I was a delegate to the Miami Beach National Republican Convention. Of course Ronald Reagan was a candidate. We had 14 delegates at that time from Montana. Eleven of them voted for Richard Nixon. Three of us voted for Ronald Reagan. That wasn't the popular thing even with Governor Babcock at that time. That is kind of off the record. I'll never forget the morning after the vote. There were 11 bottles of fancy hooch in 11 rooms. I still give Tim a bad time on that one.

BB: Do you remember offhand who the other two were?

AK: Verna Green from Bozeman and a gentleman who was with the Union Oil. His name was [Lowell] Torkelson.

BB: Yes. He was also from Bozeman?

AK: No, he was from Great Falls. We were kind of outcasts in that group.

BB: Of course, Governor Babcock was the first Republican governor, wasn't he in '68 to endorse Nixon? Rockefeller sort of had the governors lined up. So I suppose it was important to Babcock.

AK: It was important to Tim. Tim was a personal friend of Richard Nixon's. I could understand that. We didn't have a committed delegation. We could vote any way we wanted. It was preferable if we voted for Nixon. Of course, Ronald Reagan lost that race as you know.

BB: You maintained—was there a nationwide Reagan organization that kind of developed out of that?

AK: Shortly thereafter there was. In fact, it was a very widespread organization. They had people from all 50 states.

BB: Did you attend any meetings?

AK: Yes I did. I went to some meetings in North Carolina. I believe we went to a meeting in Phoenix. A gentleman from Cut Bank, Frank Whetstone, was kind of the spearheader in Montana. I served as state co-chairman for the "Reagan for president." Then also the agriculture chairman for that campaign, those campaigns.

BB: And of course Reagan was a serious contender in 1976.

AK: Very much so.

BB: There was quite a convention in Montana that year.

AK: We had a locked in delegation that year. We still had the 14 delegates. Now we have 20. We were committed to vote for Ronald Reagan at that time.

BB: So that convention in 1976 sent a pledged delegation for—

AK: Yes, they were pledged and sworn in.

BB: You attended that convention and of course it was close. Do you remember any of the details of the convention?

AK: I remember some of the people that were involved.

[Brief interruption]

AK: They had a very well organized group at that convention. They had their headquarters outside, as I recall, in a trailer, outside the convention headquarters.

BB: The Reagan people.

AK: Yes, the Reagan people did. Of course they just didn't miss any bets. They were in every state delegation speaking. They really barn-stormed that place and made it work.

BB: Yet Ford of course was the incumbent, sort of. Nixon had resigned in a humiliating kind of a circumstance. His vice president had had to resign before him.

AK: That's correct.

BB: Representative Gerald Ford, the Republican Minority Leader from Michigan, had been nominated by President Nixon to replace Spiro Agnew as the vice president. I think that happened, according to the constitution. Ford was confirmed. So he had only been vice president for a short amount of time, and by appointment.

AK: Yes.

BB: So he was kind of a tenuous incumbent, but he was more or less a unifying figure in the Republican Party.

AK: He definitely was.

BB: There was a real battle and Reagan nearly lost it. I remember something too about Reagan having announced early on that Governor Dick Schweiker of Pennsylvania would be his running mate. There was some suspicion on the part of the Reagan people that President Ford may have hinted to a number of people that they would be his running mate. So I think the Reagan strategy had something to do with making a motion on the convention floor to require that both candidates announce before the balloting for president who their vice president would be.

AK: That's exactly what happened.

BB: The Ford people defeated that motion by just a few votes and I think the Reagan people felt at that point that the handwriting was on the wall.

AK: That is correct. That was a turning point, actually.

BB: Then Gerald Ford went on to choose Bob Dole, the Senator from Kansas, as his running mate. They lost to Jimmy Carter. Then of course we heard from Bob Dole again afterwards.

AK: That's true.

BB: The exciting involvement.

AK: Oh, it was a very exciting time.

BB: You went on and you were a delegate again in 1980 when Reagan was nominated?

AK: No, I wasn't a delegate that year. We had some personal business that wouldn't allow us to do that. That was the exciting convention.

BB: Allen, did you ever meet Ronald Reagan?

AK: Oh, very many times, several times.

BB: Describe him. Tell about him.

AK: Ronald Reagan was a very personal man. He just had a personality that wouldn't quit. He came out here once to Helena and I remember he cut me some tapes. I was running for the state Senate at that time. He cut me some tapes for the radio. I wish I would have kept those tapes. I didn't do it. Then when I ran for the U.S Senate, I went back to California and met him in his office. He also cut me some tapes there. At that time, he was just starting—his health was just starting to fail. He had a beautiful office there up in the 20th story of one of those buildings in Los Angeles. He was a very personal individual. I remember when he came to Cut Bank and got stormed in there. He couldn't fly out of there. They had to wait for several hours at the little

Cut Bank airport. Ronald Reagan left his mark on the United States and definitely left his mark on our state.

BB: But you would describe him personally as warm, kind—

AK: Very much so. He was very down to earth. On another occasion, he was speaking at a bankers' convention in Big Sky. I was asked to go down to Belgrade and pick him up to take him to the airport. He was just a real, common, down-to-earth gentleman. He was a gentleman. He was an excellent president.

BB: He'll go down in history I think.

AK: He should and he will.

BB: You served in the legislature a total of how many years?

AK: Twenty. I had to resign in November to become lieutenant governor, but it was just from November to January, less 20 years.

BB: From '68 through '88. You were elected lieutenant governor in '88.

AK: Yes.

BB: Allen, that's a long time. I remember you served in leadership for a major portion of that time. In fact, I think you were the president pro tem of the state Senate three consecutive terms. I'm not sure anybody has ever done that, at least in my memory they never have.

AK: Well I was very pleased to serve as president pro tem under three excellent presidents; Bill Mathers, Jean Turnage, and Stan Stephens. Of course, I worked closely with two of the other presidents, and that was Jack Galt and yourself. I was always very proud of the people that served as president of the Senate during those years.

BB: Allen, were there legislators in your experience in the House—let's first begin there—who particularly stand out?

AK: Yes, there are. Jim Lucas, of course, stands out in my mind probably first and foremost. He was just an excellent leader and a great public speaker. He organized the House in just the greatest fashion. I also served with Joe Mazurek, who I have always thought very highly of. He's on the other party, but he was a great, great leader in both the Senate and House. There were several others, too. Bob Ellard was more of a quiet person.

BB: Representative Bob Ellard from Bozeman.

AK: Yes. He still made his mark in the state House of Representatives. He did an excellent job. Of course, I'll never forget Representative Gary Giesick. It seemed like if there was any Democrat plan that was ridiculous, he was able to shoot it down better than anyone I know.

BB: He was from Billings.

AK: Yes.

BB: He was kind of a heavysset man, as I recall.

AK: Yes, a little bit so.

BB: In fact, I remember once representative [Lloyd] Sonny Lockrem—we both served with Sonny too—he described Gary as weighing just a little more than an eighth of a ton.

AK: An eighth of a ton, well, that's correct. I had the privilege of attending his funeral. I've never seen a casket that large. It was double. Jack Rehberg told me that it took two cemetery lots. Anyway, they called me to be a pallbearer. I told my wife, "I hope they cremated him because six people couldn't haul him." They had 15 pallbearers and 12 of them packed the casket. He'll always go down in my memory as a great person. I liked him a lot.

BB: He had a great, sunshine personality.

AK: Oh, you bet, he was happy about everything. And he had such a lovely wife. Linda was just a very special person. They were happily married until his death.

BB: Someone else we served with, you and I both did in the House as well as in the Senate in the other political party, but someone who made several waves while we were there was representative and later Senator Tom Towe.

AK: Yes. Tom Towe. You and I both served with Tom most of the time he was there. He made his mark in the legislature, that's for sure. He always extended the legislature about four days with his oratory.

BB: He had lots of comments on lots of bills.

AK: They did. And they were lengthy comments.

BB: Harold Gerke.

AK: Harold Gerke, you bet. He was also a leader in the House during the time that I served.

BB: A Democrat from Billings.

AK: Yes. I always had a lot of respect for Harold. I think he was an honorable man.

BB: Then in the Senate, of course, you were there most of the time that you served in the legislature.

AK: Yes.

BB: Are there any members of the Senate that stand out?

AK: Oh, definitely. All of the Senate presidents that I mentioned earlier have to stand out in my mind. And I mentioned Joe Mazurek earlier. I had a lot of respect for Joe and still do.

BB: Joe was a Democrat who had an ability to reach out to Republicans.

AK: He really did. He had a lot of charisma. He was liked by both parties. Then Larry Fasbender, another great politician as far as I'm concerned.

BB: Democrat from Great Falls.

AK: I'll mention that from now on. Of course Big Ed Smith from Dagmar, a Republican.

BB: What was there about Larry Fasbender that kind of sticks in your mind?

AK: I thought Larry was very convincing. People believed what he told them. He was a great debater. He came from a farm out here at Fort Shaw. I just liked his mannerisms. I thought he did an excellent job. In fact, I was surprised that he never did run for higher office.

BB: He was defeated for re-election to the state Senate.

AK: Yes, he was.

BB: There was a fellow by the name of Gary Lee.

AK: Yes, he was my seatmate. Gary Lee was from Great Falls, another great guy. I liked him a lot. He added a lot to the state Senate. I mentioned Big Ed Smith. Of course Ed got a lot of things done too. Of course he was one of the real leaders in the sales tax movement. He was opposed to it. Of course, his country where he's at in eastern Montana, people thought very highly of him because of that. It wasn't only because of that. He ran a real close race for governor also. He got 47 percent of the vote I think.

BB: That was in 1976. [It was 1972. Smith got 45.8 percent of the vote against Tom Judge.]

AK: Yes.

BB: When you, I, and Ed served in the House together in 1971, as I recall, we had a narrow Republican majority. [Republicans had 55, Democrats 49.] Speaker Lucas was trying to get a sales tax proposal of some kind out of the House of Representatives. Ed was one of three Republicans. The other two were Lou Perry from Malta and Gary Marbut from Missoula. Who managed, by the three of them voting with a united Democratic Party, to keep that proposal bottled up for a long time in the House of Representatives.

Because new taxes are generally unpopular anyway, you can argue at infinitum about whether they were confused or understood the real facts about the sales tax. Ed actually benefited himself politically. I think there was a common feeling that because Jim Lucas was a brilliant and beautiful orator and a wonderful leader, that he almost certainly would be the Republican candidate for governor. I think largely due to the sales tax, Ed Smith, the maverick who voted against it, got the Republican nomination and Jim didn't even contest it with him. Then he went on and nearly won the general election.

AK: He did for sure. He ran a very, very fine race. He was underfunded, like most Republican candidates are. I haven't seen Ed for quite a while but I call him on the phone and he calls me occasionally. We get together on the phone. Another good Democrat leader was Terry Murphy. I understand he has since switched parties.

BB: He became a Republican?

AK: Yes. I never really could understand why Terry was a Democrat. He was a leader in their party as a matter of fact. Mainly it was because he was president of the Farmers Union. That was the only way he could go at that time. There were several people in the legislature that really stood out. Bill Norman, another one. J.D. Lynch—

BB: Senator Bill Norman from Missoula.

AK: Yes, and J.D. Lynch from Butte.

BB: What do you find most memorable about J.D. Lynch?

AK: Well J.D. Lynch is a good personal friend of mine. We worked together on a lot of different issues. I thought what I really appreciated about J.D. Lynch was when the Republicans were really in a bind, especially on a vote that would affect industry, he would always get on board. Always. Of course, his oratory in his Irish manner could always be distinguished from anywhere in the capitol.

BB: He'd do his Nixon and Churchill impersonations.

AK: He did the impersonations and he had a pretty good following there. He served a long time, way over 20 years.

BB: Now Bill Norman, you mentioned him also, switched parties.

AK: Yes, he did.

BB: He became a Republican too.

AK: Bill Norman switch parties and it was a real surprise to me to see him at a Republican convention here a few years ago. Bill was a great Senate president. He did a good job. Things were different at that time. I mean, you didn't have the hate that you have now between the parties.

BB: I think term limitations have made it impossible for members of the legislature to come to know each other as well.

AK: I agree.

BB: I think that's probably been a factor.

AK: Yes, and the leadership hasn't had the experience that they used to have to have. Several things have changed. Term limits has a lot of negatives, in my opinion.

BB: Allen, I can remember when you and I served in the Senate in the '70s and '80s, it wasn't considered bad to see a couple of prominent Republican senators having lunch with a couple of prominent Democrat senators.

AK: That is correct.

BB: Most of the rest of us thought, "Well, some progress will probably result from that meeting." I think generally it did.

AK: I think it did.

BB: Now that's a little no-no.

AK: You never see that anymore. You used to go down to Jorgenson's or wherever for lunch and they would all be eating together and breaking bread together. That does not happen anymore.

BB: Jorgenson's is of course a restaurant near the capitol building in Helena.

AK: That's correct. And kind of a meeting place for the legislature, especially at lunch.

BB: Lobbyists: any of those stand out in your mind?

AK: Several lobbyists stand out in my mind. When I first went to the legislature, I was a little bit taken back by the lobbyists. I met so many good ones and so many honorable ones. Without the lobbyists, a legislature really can't function because we have 1,000 or so bills. You can't be knowledgeable about every bill. I remember Crippen, for example, would always—Lloyd Crippen from Butte and the Anaconda Company. I had a lot of respect for him. Ev Shuey from—

BB: How was Crippen effective? What did he do?

AK: Crippen was more effective outside the capitol than he was inside the capitol, I thought. He had a great personality and his wife Lois didn't hurt that any. She was always real bubbly too. They'd have a group of legislators out to their home. If you ever had a question or something that you really didn't understand in legislative work, Crippen could always come up with an answer that was satisfactory.

BB: He would put you in touch with someone or help you with something?

AK: He would always do it in that way. If he didn't know the answer, he would recommend someone that did. They were always honorable people that you could trust. Ev Shuey from Butte, also another—

BB: Montana Power Company.

AK: —very good lobbyist. He did it in more of a quiet way, I guess, than Crippen. He was still extremely effective and people from both parties revered his knowledge on legislative business. I always appreciated him very much. There were a lot of other lobbyists too. In fact, I guess I really never met a lobbyist that I didn't trust. Most of them, at that time anyway, knew if they ever lied to you once, that would be it. So most of them appreciated their jobs. They were pretty straight.

BB: Allen, was Boo McGillivray still there when you got there?

AK: Yes, I do remember him. He was more forceful. He twisted some arms pretty good.

BB: He represented the Montana Power Company. I don't remember him as a lobbyist, but I had an interesting visit with him after he had more or less retired from being a lobbyist for the Montana Power Company. He was appointed, I think, to the State Historical Society Board of Directors. He was in Helena for a meeting of the Historical Society board. Another lobbyist, Bill Kirkpatrick, whom you may remember, had a visit with me. He said, "Bob, I know you love history. I want you to meet Boo McGillivray." We'd had a real interesting conversation.

AK: He was very knowledgeable, especially about history and other things.

BB: Colorful character for sure.

AK: Oh, he was. Of course John Lahr; everybody remembers John Lahr.

BB: Montana Power Company; usually lobbied the Democrats.

AK: Usually lobbied the Democrats. In fact, they had a perpetual meal ticket with John Lahr. He married one of my neighbor's daughters, Congressman LeRoy Anderson's daughter. Then he farmed not too far from me out near Ledger. He farmed on LeRoy's farm. He raised registered bulls. We used to buy bulls from him. He used to say, "You can never forget when I'd come over to buy bulls, my antennas would be flying," he said. "I would be driving in and the dust would fly. I'd buy a few bulls and go home." Oh, he was something else.

BB: What do you remember about LeRoy Anderson?

AK: Congressman from Conrad. Of course, I never appreciated LeRoy Anderson's politics. His politics and our politics were totally a reverse. He started a barley malt plant out there at Conrad. Of course, I guess I was one of the first suckers he got to invest in it. I wrote him a check for 7,500 dollars and of course, that was the end of things. I think it went into his campaign, which is even more disturbing. That was a failure. As a businessman, LeRoy Anderson was a disaster. I think he followed through on that with his congressional service as well.

BB: Do you remember Jim Battin?

AK: Oh yes, I remember Big Jim Battin. He was a great, colorful leader in our state for many, many years. Of course, he was in Congress during my early years in politics. I knew Jim personally, but I didn't have any personal dealings with Jim Battin. But I always had a lot of respect for his ability and the way he carried himself.

BB: Of course, Senator Mike Mansfield was a legend in Montana history.

AK: Right, right, and a very good one.

BB: Most of us met him, knew him a little bit. Do you have any thoughts or recollections?

AK: Well, I do. He was kind of a soft-spoken Senate Majority Leader. I understand he served longer than anyone else.

BB: As Majority Leader.

AK: As majority leader in the United States Senate. I always questioned the real good that he did for Montana in his position. But I had a lot of respect for Mike Mansfield. I happened to be chairman of the centennial as lieutenant governor. Of course, we invited Mike Mansfield to be one of our main speakers.

BB: Even though he was no longer in the U.S. Senate. This would have been what, in 1989?

AK: Yes, when he was involved in Japan as ambassador. I was taken back a little because Mike Mansfield, whom I thought a lot of, spoke at our centennial. He never mentioned Montana once. It was all Japan. This is our centennial. I thought that was pretty poor taste. I heard a lot of comments about that. He served Montana well and he deserves his place in history.

BB: Senator Lee Metcalf, any recollections of him?

AK: Not a lot. I met him several times, and I believe that he got there the first time by beating Rankin.

BB: Wellington D. Rankin.

AK: Wellington D. Rankin, by 800 votes. That was for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1952. Of course, if I remember correctly, he beat him by 800 votes. From then on, he was there.

BB: Now Allen, I think I remember a conversation that you and I had some years ago, which I asked you if you had ever met Wellington D. Rankin. You told me something to the effect that he had come up to Chester to buy cattle from your dad.

AK: Horses.

BB: And that Rankin and your dad were in the backseat of the car and you were driving. You were like 16 years old or 14.

AK: I wasn't real old, that's for sure. I was probably a teenager.

BB: You described a little bit of your recollections of your dad having a conversation with this legendary Montana politician Wellington D. Rankin.

AK: My dad and Wellington D. Rankin were very close friends. In fact, my dad sold his Hindsdale Valley County ranch to Wellington D. Wellington D. didn't even come and look at it. It was a 100,000 acre ranch. He flew over it and bought it. But what I remember about him, I used to go with my dad and visit him in his office in Helena upstairs right across from the Placer Hotel. It was the junkiest office that you'll ever see.

BB: You got there in some kind of an old rattle-trap elevator?

AK: Oh yes, it was a rattle-trap elevator with an old saddle in it and part of a harness for some horses. Anyway, the Sunday afternoon that he came up to our place to buy horses was the day that Ruby shot Oswald. That was the very day and I had the radio on. That was the first we'd heard of it. Soon as they announced that fact, Wellington D. said what a wonderful case that would have made for some attorney.

BB: That's what he said?

AK: That's what he saw in it.

BB: Of course he was a legendary trial attorney.

AK: And an excellent one. He really made his mark in Montana. I guess he was a National Committeeman for our party. That's probably as far as he got.

BB: Republican National Committee. I think he served at one time as attorney general.

AK: Yes, he was attorney general once.

BB: And he was on the Supreme Court briefly. He ran unsuccessfully in close elections for the U.S. Senate maybe a couple of different times and for the U.S. House once critically close.

AK: A magnificent man.

BB: He was a big impressive sort of a guy?

AK: Yes, he was, he was. Sure.

BB: Did he have a sense of humor?

AK: He had a dry sense of humor but he did have a sense of humor. He and my dad were real buddies as I said earlier. My dad really thought highly of him. A lot of the ranchers in Montana that he neighbored didn't have that kind of an impression of him because, well, he ran pretty roughshod over every operation. Of course, most of his employees came out of Deer Lodge when they were paroled.

BB: They were recent parolees from the prison system. He would give them jobs when they came out.

AK: That's correct. He had to promise the warden that they had employment. They would release them and he would meet them at the bus station or have one of his men meet them. Jack Galt, of course, was one of his foremen.

BB: Senator Jack Galt.

AK: Senator Jack Galt was from Martinsdale. He was one of his foremen. Of course, he ended up marrying Louise, who was Rankin's widow. They still live on the '71 ranch in Martinsdale.

BB: Of course, Jack is someone I'm going to interview.

AK: That would be great.

BB: I also interviewed Jim Lucas, who we've talked about.

AK: Wonderful.

BB: And Bill Mathers.

AK: And probably Jean Turnage?

BB: Yes. I've talked to Jean about it, but we've had difficulty scheduling a time.

AK: I see.

BB: Now Allen, in 1988 state Senator Allen Kolstad from Chester teamed up with state Senator Stan Stephens from Havre. Stan ran for governor and you ran for lieutenant governor. You made the great race and you were successful. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about what led up to that and a little bit about the primary election and maybe a little bit about the general election.

AK: I will. Stan and I of course were longtime personal friends. Many people said that you couldn't have two candidates from the same area, practically the same district. Each of us had half of Havre in our Senate districts. He had one half and I had the other half. We rented a home together in Helena for 16 years of our service in the government.

BB: Eight legislative sessions.

AK: Eight legislative sessions, we did, and we always rented a home together. In fact, interesting enough, we rented two very popular Democrats' homes. Louise Kingsberry; we stayed in her home once. In fact, for a couple, three sessions she was the National Committeewoman for the Democrat Party for many years. Louise made her mark in Montana history too in a different way, I guess. She was a very colorful individual. She's since passed on but I remember Stan and I got to be quite close friends with Louise Kingsberry. Of course, we took care of her home very well. I'll have to tell you this one story. I've told it to you before.

I went there to rent her home, to move into her home the Sunday afternoon before the legislature started. I rang the doorbell and I could hear a loud, low, booming voice say "Come in!" So I walked in and no sign of anyone, no noise, no nothing. So finally after a few minutes, I wondered where she was. So I said, "I'm here. Is there anyone home?"

"Yes," she said, "I'm back in my bedroom packing my bag." She was going on a worldwide cruise with her sister.

Well I said, "Do you want me to come back and help you load your bags?"

"Yes, hell, you might as well."

So I came back there and much to my surprise, there she stood with her bra and her panties on and that was it. She'd had plenty to drink. I helped her load her bags.

She showed me the way around the house and different things and how the different electrical deals worked. We were upstairs and looked at one of the chandeliers and she said, "This chandelier is one of my real prized possessions." She says, "I got it in Italy." We went on and saw the different paintings she had on the wall. Everything went well. She took off for her worldwide cruise with her sister. Stan came in that night. He was my roommate there, I guess you would call him.

So anyway, the second day of the legislature, Stan and I came back to the Kingsberry and the chandelier was splattered all over the table and on the floor. It had fallen down. I said, "Stan what will we do? This is her most important possession?"

He said, "We'll just torch the place." He doesn't like this story.

I said, "Well, we better get some of our stuff out before we do it."

Anyway, I called a lighting company in Helena. It just so happened to be the lighting company that hung the chandelier. They hadn't put in the proper number of screws. There wasn't one crystal broken on the chandelier. He re-hung the chandelier. Years later, Louise was lying in her deathbed—

BB: Louise Kingsberry or Bernice?

AK: Bernice, excuse me. Stan and I went up to visit her in her home. She was on her deathbed in her room in the home we rented. I told her that story and I think it was probably the first time she laughed for a long time. That was interesting. Anyway, we became very close friends of Bernice. One time we were up there and she said, "Oh, you're all dressed up. Where are you going?" I said, "We're going over to the mansion. Tom Judge is having a big deal over there."

BB: Governor Tom Judge.

AK: Governor Tom Judge at the governor's mansion. Well, she said, "Strange, I wasn't invited." She was a very close friend. He totally omitted and forgot to call her. So we called him from someplace else, and we told him.

He said, "Oh my goodness. I've got to handle this." He said, "I'll call her immediately. If you two will escort her to the mansion, I'd really appreciate it." And we did. We waltzed in there with Bernice Kingsberry. You should have seen the look on the faces of the people. But anyway, it was interesting.

Another home that Stan and I rented for many, many sessions was Joe Reber. Joe Reber, of course was the National Committeeman for the Democrat Party for years and years. Joe Reber was from Helena and Butte, a local plumber. He had a very nice home up on Floweree. So we had some really good times there.

BB: I remember, Allen, that you and Stan used to invite groups of legislators over for dinner every week or so. I can remember having some wonderful dinners there.

AK: We had an excellent lady that cleaned our home that would come in and cook dinners. She was just a super gal. I remember very plainly one night when we had a dinner there. Max Baucus and John Murphy crashed our party. Of course, we had to kick them out because they weren't welcome.

BB: Max Baucus went on to be a U.S. representative and senator. John Murphy and Max were both young state representatives at the time.

AK: Yes. Max only served one term, as you know, in the state House of Representatives. Then he went on to Washington. John Murphy was in Great Falls for many years and I don't know where he is now.

BB: You remember his nickname was Mudslide Murphy?

AK: Mudslide Murphy, and also Landslide Murphy. He put both signs up on his desk. Somebody got him a toy phone so that he could act the part.

BB: As I remember, he was elected in '72 or '74 to the House. It was following reapportionment of the legislative district lines. Somehow or other, he was in some kind of a multi-district situation. It ended up, even after the recount, as a tie vote.

AK: That's correct. He and I were in the same district. He and Bud Aspevig from Rudyard tied. Of course, Forrest Anderson chose Landslide.

BB: What the constitution read then, and I think still reads, that in the case of a tie, if it's an irreconcilable tie, the governor can make the appointment. So Governor Anderson appointed the Democrat.

AK: Right, and he wasn't compelled to nominate or select either one.

BB: There is some irony there too because I served with Bud and I know you did too, as a Democrat in the legislature. Bud Aspevig was a conservative Democrat and switched parties and ran as a Republican and lost out on that tie situation. I think he later was killed in a plane crash.

AK: He was killed in a spraying accident up by Rudyard.

BB: He was a cropduster.

AK: Yes, he was.

BB: So you and Stan enjoyed this long relationship together. You decided to run for governor and lieutenant governor. Of course there were people that thought that was a little bit unusual because generally what you try to do is find someone from the western part of the state and someone from part of the eastern part of the state.

AK: And from more of a populated area as a rule.

BB: So you were both from rural parts of Montana, basically the same rural part.

AK: Same rural part. He's from Havre and I'm from Chester. We ran a real tough campaign. I guess all state campaigns are tough as you can probably attest to. But this one was really tough. We were running against former Governor Tom Judge.

BB: But Allen before then, you had a tough primary.

AK: Yes, we had an extremely tough primary. We survived that.

BB: Jim Waltermire and Cal Winslow.

AK: They were the two.

BB: Waltermire was the Secretary of State. He was killed shortly before the primary election in a plane crash. Winslow was a young state representative from Billings.

AK: That's correct. That was a very difficult and hard fought, and not too pleasant of a primary as a matter of fact, as most primaries aren't. You found that out. I was in Choteau the night Jim

Waltermire was killed, to their shrimp deal they had there, the Republicans, every year. Jim's wife spoke in Choteau that night on his behalf. She gave a great speech. Because I understand he was in Glasgow, as I remember. On my way back to Helena, of course I heard this news on the radio, which wasn't a nice thing at all. It was a difficult primary. We had to mend a lot of fences after you do, in all primaries. Sometimes you get it done and sometimes you don't.

We had an interesting campaign for the general election against former Governor Tom Judge. Tom has always been my friend. And he still is. We've been invited to dinner parties at his home in Arizona. We associate with each other back and forth somewhat. But it was a difficult general election. In fact, shortly prior to the general election, they came out with a poll. This was just two or three weeks before, maybe as many as four weeks. Tom Judge was ahead of us by 15 points, as I recall. What that does to a campaign, first of all, it dries up your funds. No one is going to donate any more dollars. They aren't going to waste any more bucks on the loser. So from that day forward, we really went to work without any additional funds. In fact, we put in a lot of 18-hour days. They were difficult. But the outcome was successful for us. I guess we were as surprised as anyone. But it worked.

BB: You won a narrow victory in 1988.

AK: Yes, it was a fairly narrow victory.

BB: Now Allen, the Democrats had held the governorship for 20 years.

AK: That's correct.

BB: There'd only been one Republican U.S. senator elected for one term by a popular vote.

AK: In the history of our state.

BB: Entire history of our state until in 1988. Then the young fellow broke the Democrat hold on the office of attorney general. His name was Marc Racicot.

AK: That's correct.

BB: So Stan Stephens and Allen Kolstad, Conrad Burns, elected to the U.S. Senate, and Marc Racicot elected attorney general.

AK: It was a banner year for Montana Republicans.

BB: It was a real breakthrough.

AK: Yes. And I think it showed through for many years.

BB: Burns is still in the U.S. Senate.

AK: Yes. Racicot went on to be governor. He retired with a crown. He did it all. It was a significant year for Republicans.

BB: When you look back over your life, any thoughts or overall impressions of your life in politics or public service?

AK: I guess probably the greatest memories I will always have as far as serving in politics are concerned, are the wonderful people that you meet from both parties. Really, you establish some lifelong friends from each of the 56 counties in our state. That's what I probably enjoyed the most about politics. I didn't enjoy some of the press that we got as governor and lieutenant governor because it wasn't really fair and it wasn't good. I'll never forget when we were trying to buy a governor's airplane. We did some shopping around. At that time, in fact they still do, confiscate airplanes on the Canadian border for dope and certain things.

BB: Airplanes used in criminal activity.

AK: Yes.

BB: The government can confiscate them.

AK: Yes, and the government can buy them. We could have bought a real nice Queen Air airplane for about ten cents on the dollar.

BB: The state of Montana.

AK: The state of Montana could have bought that airplane. The headlines in the *Great Falls Tribune* the next morning read: "Governor Negotiates With Drug Dealers For Airplane." I took that headline in to Stan and he just about had a cardiac on the spot. We abandoned that idea. We got an airplane that probably cost about 800,000 dollars more for the taxpayers to spend. These are some of the things that the press do to help Montana. And I'll never forget that. They still have the same airplane that we purchased at that time for the governor's airplane.

BB: After you served as lieutenant governor, you remained active in Republican Party politics. I think two years ago, you were elected Republican Party National Committeeman.

AK: I was. This is just the second year.

BB: So that means you serve on the Republican National Committee.

AK: I do.

BB: You've been to what, two or three meetings?

AK: Yes, two. As a matter of fact, we're having another meeting in early August in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

BB: You've probably heard the president speak?

AK: Yes, we have two or three times. I had a nice chance to visit with him at our last meeting.

BB: Any impressions of President George W. Bush?

AK: Oh, I just think he's a fine man. He's just a very honorable, honest type of individual that can speak and talk to anyone. He's very down-to-earth. During our last national committee meeting, each of the state's 50 delegations—which consist of a National Committeeman, National Committeewoman, and state chairman—each of those 50 states had their picture taken with George and Laura. We haven't received that picture yet, but I'm still looking forward to getting it. I tell everyone that I think Laura had her arms around me, but I'm not sure. I'll be able to prove it when I get the picture. George Bush is a real bit of fresh air in Washington following his father. His father was an excellent president as well, whom I even knew better than his son.

BB: You had met and known President George H.W. Bush?

AK: I did. When I was chairman of the Montana Centennial during my days as lieutenant governor, we invited him to come out and he did. He also came out on my behalf in Billings when I was running for the U.S. Senate. He gave a really great talk. At that time, I had the opportunity of flying down to Boise and flying from Boise to Billings in Air Force One with President Bush. That stands out as one of my real special memories.

BB: What's the interior of Air Force One like?

AK: They still have a couple, three, Air Force Ones I guess. This one is much different than a regular commercial airplane. The front part is separated off from the back part where the press sits. They have a couple of dozen press people back there. The president has a special room of his own, a suite. It's towards the front of the airplane towards the right. It's just a real nice suite. He invited me in there—

BB: Stuffed chairs, tables?

AK: Yes. He invited me in there to visit with him during that trip. Then we had an excellent steak dinner on the airplane on the way.

BB: Where the press rides, is that more just like conventional airline seating?

AK: Yes, it's pretty much just coach seats. The other seats are quite plush. I got some memorabilia from there, some nice napkins and decks of cards, and a few things that they gave me. I remember we were sitting in his private quarters as we flew over Laurel. He said, "Is this Billings?" I said, "No, this is Laurel. It's just 20-some miles out of Billings." He looked at his watch and he said, "Well we're about 15 minutes early." And he said, "This plane can't touch down until 3:30. The wheels have to touch the runway at 3, 3, 0. They have to be very precise about that." So we flew around. I don't know if we went into North Dakota or what.

We came back and we touched down right at 3:30. Of course, his entourage was in the other airplane. That's where the limousines were. They wheeled those babies out. We rode downtown in Billings, which was a memorable thing for me. I'll never forget it. I remember asking President Bush on our way down to the hotel, "How thick are these bullet-proof windows?" He said, "Roll one down and check it out." They are about an inch and a half thick. You can't believe it. And you can't tell that by looking out. Governor Stan Stephens and First Lady Ann were with us in the car. My wife had just driven in from Great Falls. She joined us. I'll never forget what she said, "Mr. President, I can't believe it. Four hours ago I was buying dog food for our hired men in Great Falls. Now I'm riding with the president of the United States."

BB: That's what Iva told him?

AK: Yes. She doesn't like that story either.

BB: Now we want to be careful here. She wasn't buying dog food to feed the hired men.

AK: No, no. I want to make this clear. Actually, we have a very good relationship with our hired men. We have two men on our ranch that have been there a total of 76 years. They are brothers. Neither one of them have been married. They have been with us that long. They are definitely part of our family.

BB: Iva was buying dog food for their dogs?

AK: Yes, for our cattleman's dog. The president got quite a kick out of that. I don't think Stan Stephens did. I know Iva doesn't like to hear the story either. It worked okay for the president.

BB: Anything else? Any concluding thoughts?

AK: One other politician that I knew quite well was Arnold Olsen. Arnold Olsen was our legal counsel for an organization I belonged to. In fact, it was a mining company out of Helena. We had some interest in that, my dad and I.

BB: This was in the fifties when he was a congressman?

AK: This was just when he was getting ready to run for Congress. The reason I remember that is because he said, "You know, I'm looking at a new car. I'd really like to get a Cadillac. But he said, of course, you can't have one when you're running for Congress." Arnold was a good person. I liked him a lot. He did a lot of good things for us as our legal counsel. I'll never forget the time he was running against J. Hugo.

BB: Arnold Olsen was attorney general and while attorney general, ran for governor against Hugo Aronson in 1956.

AK: Right. I remember a speech that Hugo made in Shelby, Montana. He said, "I remember Arnold Olsen as a promising young attorney. The S.O.B is still promising." I'll never forget that statement. You couldn't get by with that now. But at that time, it worked.

BB: I remember I had a good experience with Arnold Olsen too while he was a congressman. I was a college student. I was back in Washington, D.C. He was very kind to me.

AK: He would be. He was a kind person. I liked Arnold a lot. I didn't agree with his politics, but we were still good friends.

BB: Did you continue to know him when he returned to Montana after he was defeated?

AK: Yes, I did, to a degree. He was a district judge in Butte for a while. He was a very personable guy. He had a lovely wife, really nice gal. That's kind of the synopsis of where I have been in politics. I really enjoyed politics. It's been good to me. It's been kind of something else to do besides run a large dry operation wheat farm. We made so many friends, as you know. You make such great, great long-standing friends in politics. It's a friendship that's lasts for a lifetime. And I appreciate that.

BB: You're still here.

AK: We're still walking around. Barely, but we're walking.

BB: I'm sure proud to call you a friend, Allen.

AK: I'm proud to call you a friend too, Bob.

[End of Interview]