INTERVIEW: John Waters

PLACE: Sevierville, Tennessee

DW: This is an interview with John Waters. We're in his office on Courthouse Square in Sevierville, Tennessee. Thank you very much, Mr. Waters, for allowing me to come in this morning and talk a little bit about Howard Baker.

JW: I am delighted to be with you and have you with me today.

DW: Would you describe for me the origins of your friendship with Senator Baker.

JW: Well, my first experience that I recall with Senator Baker was in [1947]. I had graduated from high school that year and was a Freshman at The University of Tennessee that fall. And Howard was in Law School. And I think maybe his second year in Law School, and had returned as a Navy Veteran. He had first gone to Tulane and was in Law School, and I met Howard in being involved in campus politics down there. Politics is kind of an interesting thing, and had student body elections—president of student body—and had always been controlled by a few of the large fraternities....on-line fraternities....and Howard and I happened to both—we were in the same fraternity—but both be in fraternities that were the smaller, more newcomer upstart so to speak, and we put together a political...campus political organization. I had a minor role in it myself, a very minor, because I was just a Freshman. Anyway, we elected Howard Baker the President of the student body. And I was just amazed in getting acquainted with him. He had the same attributes that I learned and tried to emulate much later in life.....but he could take a complex situation and boil it down into the hard facts and make a good analysis of it. He had a great analytical mind, and great vocabulary, and speaking voice, and I was just very impressed with Howard. There had been a family connection because my family had known the Bakers. My mother and father had known the Bakers. As a matter of fact Irene, Howard's stepmother, was a native of Sevierville, and just lived, born and raised just a few blocks from where we are here right now. And Howard Sr., Mr. Baker, as I always referred to him, was a good friend of my Uncle Cap Payne, and they went on trips and traveled together, and so I had a relationship there. But I just hadn't ever known Howard very personally. But I was impressed with him even as a young man. I
remember talking with my mother and father, and telling them about meeting Howard and who he was, and that I was convinced that he would some day be a very great man in the law and government and politics. And my mother and father mentioned years later they didn't realize I was that good a prophet, but it was my opinion, and I just felt that about him. He was a very considerate kind of person, even with me as a young Freshman. He was never the kind of person who tried to overshadow or be the big guy. And I think he carried those attributes all the way through being Majority of the United States Senate and Chief of Staff. He still had that human kind of characteristic that is very precious—and you don't see much of it in people that attain those high positions.

DW: In regard to that contest for Student Body Presidency, what do you recall about how Senator Baker went about the business of advancing his candidacy, and developing support. I assume there were various factions within the student body. How did he pull in the votes?

JW: Well, that's very interesting, because Howard, at that point in time, and as far as I'm concerned, he never was a “press-the-flesh back-slapper” that so many, many politicians that I learned later did very well. As a matter of fact, he didn't do that very well. You needed, if you were going to get Howard Baker—going to get somebody to vote for Howard Baker—they needed to spend a few minutes with him, because he didn't come on strong. He didn't walk in a room and take charge, like a Frank Clement, who was a master at doing that was. Or even an Estes Kefauver could do that so well. Howard would kinda' ease in, slip in around, but he would start talking to people, but when he did, he quickly would establish an element of sincerity and honesty. And usually a brilliant comprehension of what-ever subject he was talking about. And that went over very quickly. And he was just a young man. I know back then he had a very youthful appearance. There was a problem with this....it was a problem even when he ran for the Senate. I re-member the first time he ran in 1964, we finally sent him to New York to a photographer. And they put a lot of make-up and one thing, trying to make him look a little older, because here he was running for the United States Senate, and he looked like he was about 16 years old. Now that, you know....we didn't like that. As Howard has told me many times, he said, “Johnny, I have outlived that problem.” And he has. We all
have.

DW: So his campaign was a one-on-one campaign, in which he sold himself retail, as it were, to –

JW: Yes. And what he did was so good that if you wanted somebody to work for you, be active in the campaign, be a leader, be a manager or something. A few minutes with Howard and they became very sold on the job. Very committed. He would commit them. And he was very effective in that way. He was always, even later in the Senate campaigns, he would get people...just a few minutes with him and boy, they became committed to Howard Baker. They thought the best thing they could do for the country was help Howard Baker get elected. And he ran under that over and over and over.

DW: One reason I'm particularly interested in that race is a notion that has been advanced by a political scientist named James David Barber. I don't know whether or not you knew of his work.

JW: No, I don't.

DW: Well, he wrote a book that has gone through several editions called The Presidential Character, and he developed the theory that makes pretty good sense to me, that if you want to understand a president's leadership style and its origins, and it would apply to any political figure as well, go back and look at their first political success. And ascertain what their style was that led to this first political success. And he makes a pretty good argument that holds up under each president. So I'm sort of curious about the connection between Baker's leadership style, say, when he was the Republican Leader in the Senate, trying to bring in the support of his Senate colleagues, and the style that he employed when he was elected President of the Student Body at UT.

JW: I think that's a very interesting concept, because I never made any study of anybody else in those regards, but now that I look back on it....he never changed. He approached a problem the same, as I recall, during that campaign. I mean, we weren't dealing national issues, you understand, but we thought they were important. They loomed important in that campaign. But he approached it the same way, and I have always admired the way he approaches a problem. He definitely tries to get the best people he can get on both sides of the issue. And he's very careful. The first thing he will do is that he will decide when
he has to make a decision. This keeps him from shooting from the hip and making a
decision too quick, because you know we all....a lot of us tend to do that.....I certainly do.
He would decide, “I don't have to decide this until January.” In January, “What am I
going to have make this? What am I _____?” “Well, Senator, it was down there in that
campaign in a matter of weeks and days, you know. But we're going to need to decide
this.” Well, he would refuse to decide until then...which would give him the time to get
the very best people on both sides of the issue....look at it from both sides. And then he
had, really, as I said before, a great analytical mind, and still does, and he could pull this
issue together. And I have been in many rooms with him, not in the student campaign,
but later where there'd be 5 or 6, and he'd be talking about an issue, and he'd say, “What
do you think about this?” “Well, what if we did this, and what if we did that?” And he'd
go around and finally he'd say, “Well, David says this, and John says this, and Bill says
this,” and he'd kind of pull those things down together, and everybody was wondering,
“What didn't I say that? Why didn't I come to, why didn't I see it like that?” He put it
right down to a decision. And once he makes it, he's not a great one to look back, and he
stands. Which I learned later is a unique characteristic for so many....I saw so many men
in the House and Senate....you never knew where they stood.

DW: Right. Yes.

JW: They're liable to change it every day.

DW: Yes. Were you involved and did you continue to be involved in Student Government
during the year that he served as President?

JW: No, not much. After he was elected, and I'd come as an observer, but I was just a
Freshman, and I was not having a good or successful Freshman year academically or any
other way.....I was a poorly prepared young kid.....that in high school up here in Sevier
County during World War II. So I had my own hands full with my school work, and was
certainly never involved in any ranking position. I was later, but that was in college [after]
he was gone.

DW: Who were some of the people who were closely involved with Baker in seeing he got.....
Do you recall any of them?

JW: Yes. Uh-h....oh boy. There's the guy we were handling...in the oil business....I've drawn
a blank on the name. A very prominent man in Harriman. I'm sure I'll think of his name in a minute. Was very active in it. The guy from down in Mississippi who I think since died was very active in it. There was a.....what you did was you had the political party there was made up of fraternities and sororities. And each one of those had a representative...political rep. And they came and worked in the campaign, and you got to discuss the issues, and got the vote out, and that kind of thing.

DW: What about the Independents?
JW: We had the Independents with us. That was a big factor. Big factor. Austin Stubblefield, who lives here in Sevierville, was a leader in that, but I don't believe he was there during the Baker race. I think he came after that one. After that time. I'm sure he did.

DW: Well, when names occur to you, don't hesitate to let me know, and I'll jot them down. I'd like to talk to some of these folks. You said previously that you saw a potential for –

JW: Well, I'll tell you one down there—Gordon Sams. You may know Gordon.

DW: I know the name.

JW: He was involved in that campaign, and he would have a feel about it.

DW: Knoxville?

JW: Yeah, Knoxville. Big Democrat. Used to...well, he has kind of a public relations business.

DW: You commented previously on the potential you saw in Senator Baker. Did you recall perceiving any political ambitions on his part?

JW: Well, I guess I just kind of assumed that he was....I was always kind of interested in politics....fascinated with politics. And knew his father was, and just kind of assumed that he would always be interested in politics.

DW: I asked that question for the obvious reason, and also I was at the University of Texas in roughly that period of time....a little bit later....and was involved in the student body politics.

JW: So you know about that kind of.

DW: Everybody who ran for the presidency of the student body saw this as a stepping stone for becoming the governor of Texas. That was just a given.

JW: I don't think we were that sophisticated back in '47, but I bet they got to that later. Yes.
DW: But as far as I know, from say roughly 1953, when I started observing the process down there until the present, no one has ever made it.

JW: Yeah, few are chosen.

DW: Well, after Senator Baker left the University, when did your paths next cross?

JW: Well, there was a long time there that they didn't cross. I might run across him occasionally in Knoxville or somewhere. He was in Huntsville practicing law. I, of course, immediately went in the Navy...Korean War was on. I had not been in the service. I went in the Navy. I came back and then went to Law School. And so they didn't. Other than just occasionally seeing him....I knew that he was a good lawyer and that kind of thing, but didn't cross much until 1963, when Kefauver died. And that triggered then, you know. I had been, at that point in time, I had been the Member of the State Executive Committee. You ran for it back then. And I was a Member of the Republican State Executive Committee, and had gotten very active. And really, I had spent a lot of time with Howard Sr., Mr. Baker. Because every time we had a meeting, the Republican Executive Committee, Mr. Baker usually attended. And of course I had a great admiration for him. He was a true gentleman, too, and just a man that I admired, and totally different personality than Howard.

DW: How was he different?

JW: Well, Mr. Baker was a big kind of a gruff man, speaker of the old school, you know. Howard was the more intelligent, soft-spoken man. Mr. Baker was....he dogged an issue. Just hung in. He had been an Attorney General, prosecuting attorney, and you know, when a client had a constituent problem, he focused everything on that. And that was not Howard's style. He never was....and I always thought that's one reason he never wanted to succeed him in the House. He would not have done things the same job that his father would, and he would have been expected to, you know.

DW: So, you were talking about seeing Representative Baker at these meetings, and Kefauver's death, and then what happened?

JW: Well, what happened was I had been, as a Republican, I had been kind of a young Turk back then....anti-establishment. I thought that the Tennessee Republican Party had done a terrible job of advancing the Republican Party in the state. We had not taken advantage
of the Eisenhower years, and Kentucky had elected Republican United States Senators, and more Congressmen, and we just were sitting here. We had not done any of that, and I quite frankly felt like Guy Smith, who was Editor of *The Journal* and the Republican boss in the state then, and Carroll Reese had kind of...and this may or may not....I may have imagined this more than if it were true, as I look back. But I always thought they kind of con-spired with Ed Crump, the boss in Memphis, that they'd stay out of down there if he'd stay out of up here. So we had the little pickins up here in a third of the state, and they felt like two-thirds of it was Democrat and was never going to be any different, and they made no effort. And I felt like that was wrong. So I wanted us to....I was pushing for the Party to do more, and that's why I ran against Reese, of course, you know.

DW: That was 1958.

JW: That was 1958. But then after I came back and was practicing law then, in 1961-2-3, and then I was on the State Committee, and Kefauver dies. And Dan Kuykendall had decided....he was a Member of the State Committee, and I had been acquainted with he and Leah Donaldson and Winfield Dunn, and all that group out of Memphis. And Dan was going to run against Gore. This is Senior Gore. And I was amazed—surprised—that Kuykendall didn't switch and run for the unexpired term. But he didn't. He stayed on running. And he was running about the state doing a lot, and he came up here and was talking to me about the race, and I had gotten acquainted with Dan and what he needed to do in Tennessee. And I said, “Well, Dan, you know, the best thing that could happen in East Tennessee is a strong man to run for the Kefauver seat. And [put him down] from East Tennessee.” He said, “Yes, how do we get somebody to do that?” And I said, “Well, I am going to talk to Howard Baker, Jr. about that.” Of course he didn't know Howard Baker. He knew who Mr. Baker was....we all called him Mr. Baker. The Daddy. And he said, “That sounds _____ I'm glad you're going to do that.” So I had already planned to do that before I even talked to Dan.

DW: No other Republican by then a reasonable candidate had come forward.

JW: Nobody had even mentioned it. Even mentioned it. We were going to end up with somebody that would put their name on the ballot, you know, as some sort of a..... like we always done when we ran for Senate and governor....just to say you ran. No even no
campaign. We've done that for years in the Republican Party, and all Senate and
governor candidates. So I called Howard on the phone and went down to Knoxville, and
met him in his office in the Burwell Building. And that was early.....I'm not exactly sure
whether that was 1963 or 1964, but it was right in that time frame there.

DW: Now was his Father still living at that....his Father had died.

JW: Yes, his Father had died, that's right. But Irene was in the house. And I went down there,
and when I said, “Howard, I think you ought to run for the Senate. Don't run for the
House. Run for the Kefauver seat.” Well, he sat there, and we had a talk, and I could tell
he was interested, of course. And he said, “I want you to come back down here next
week.” We set a time and a date. “Because I'm going to talk to my family. I'm going to
think about this.” So I went back the next week. I never will forget it. And went up
there and sat down, and he said, “Well, I've talked to Joy, and I talked to my family, and
he said, “I'm willing to do this if you'll be my campaign manager.” And I know, I said,
“Howard, up to this point, I thought you had a pretty good chance. But if you're selecting
me as I'm the best you can get as a campaign manager, we've got a big problem.” And he
said, “Why do you say that?” And I said, “Well, you know, I ran against Reese, and Guy
Smith hates me. And you've [got to have] Guy as Editor of The Journal.” And he said,
“Well, you'll be surprised. I've already asked Guy if he would object, because I talked to
him about running. And I told him I wanted you to be in my campaign, and asked him if
he would object, and he said 'No.' He said you'd be a good man for it.” And I said, “Well,
I can't believe that.” And I never will forget. It was in the afternoon, and then the
custom, as it was back in those days....I miss these times, too, that lawyers in the mid-
morning and the mid-afternoon, or late afternoon, would grab a cup of coffee somewhere,
and people would go down to the Farragut Coffee Shop. I don't know whether you've
been.

DW: In the Farragut Hotel?

JW: Yes. There was a coffee shop right there on the side of it. And they'd have a cup of
coffee in the afternoon. So Howard and I walked down to the Coffee Shop. We were
setting there having a cup of coffee. Of course, obviously talking about running for the
Senate, and the race, and all this business. And George Morton was sitting over at
another table, having a cup of coffee, and he said, “You know George Morton?” And I said, “I know him by reputation. He's a good lawyer.” And I said, “I've met him, but I don't know too much about him.” He said, George is a good friend of mine, and I have a high regard for George. And I'd like to have him active in this campaign.” And I said, “Hell, let's ask him right now.” This was probably a role I've played lots of times, you know. Howard would be a little slow to push himself on people. And still is, you know. I just got up and went over and said, “George, come over and talk to Howard and I a minute?” And he said, “Yes.” I don't know whether he was with somebody or not, but I'm sure he was. But he came over and sat down at out table. And I said, “George, we're going to run Howard Baker for the United State Senate in the Kefauver seat. I'm going to be the State Manager, and we want you to handle East Tennessee.” And he sat there and agreed, and all of a sudden, by George, we had two people.

DW: And this was something that became big.

JW: Yes. Then we got Harry Welford in Memphis, and it just began to go one by one by one.

DW: Lee Annis, in his book on Baker that The University of Tennessee Press published a couple of years ago...I don't know whether you've seen it.

JW: I'm sure that I have. I'm trying to remember. What.

DW: Well, he dealt, in reference to that period of time, he reports that you and Kuykendall, and Ernie Koella together also went to see Baker at some point. Do you have any recollection of that?

JW: I'm sure we did, but it was after the decision was made. Way after the decision was made. Of course, we realized that Kuykendall was running a very aggressive campaign against Gore, and we considered that an advantage. So we worked very closely with Kuykendall....in the race. Now the Ernie Koella factor, and this is something I don't know whether I want you to print or not....you know...Ernie's dead.....Ernie was a real big doc....real doc guy, and doc had been elected in the House. And we had trouble always working down there. It's not anything to the doc...it's a thing I learned.. that if you're running for a statewide office, don't expect the Congressman in his district to throw all his support to you, because he's got his own race to run. That's just the name of the game. And Koella was very....Ernie was very pessimistic about the whole thing. And he kind
of became a late bloomer in it, you know.

**DW:** My recollection is that he was one of those who really thought what Baker ought to do if he wanted to run for something was to run _____.

**JW:** Oh absolutely. He mentioned that all the time. Absolutely, yes. You're right.

**DW:** Why do you think Baker said Yes?

**JW:** I think Baker wanted to run. He really wanted to be in the United States Senate. I think he had decided years before that, maybe. Maybe not years, but a substantial time before that...that he did not want to go in the House. The House didn't suit him; following his Daddy didn't suit him; they would have been different types...he didn't want to do this constituent service that you had to do in the House, that occupied 90% of your time. That wasn't his bag.

**DW:** What did you see on the political landscape in Tennessee.....what did Senator Baker see on the Tennessee political landscape that led—I assume both of you believe that this wasn't necessarily doomed to be a hopeless feudal camp for him.

**JW:** Well, [this] started out.....I've got a book that I should have brought over here. It's a little old ledger book. And I've been carrying it with me all the time. I write down names and telephone numbers and stuff like that. [I don't] know where that is. Anyway, we knew that this was an uphill battle. We weren't that naïve. We knew it was an uphill battle. What encouraged us was, though, from the day we started, we found more and more support. We would go into a town.....of course, I knew the Upper East Tennessee thing. And I'd take him up here....because I'd been in the State Committee, and I had a list of nearly all the leaders then. And as the State Committee, what I did was at the time we had him announce, I invited the State Committee to meet him in Gatlinburg. They had never met anywhere except in Nashville. And they accepted it. And met in Gatlinburg. And we brought in people from all over the state, and we were getting qualifying petitions for him all over the state. And we were just real pleased with the way these things were coming. People wanted somebody to run. And there was enough people that knew Howard to kind of spread the word, at least. He was a good man.

**DW:** And his father had run for statewide....

**JW:** That's right. And his father had kind of ploughed the ground for him. Mr. Baker was
such an honorable man...a man of such dignity and character and all. So that was a big help. And then, you know, his father-in-law was Everett Dirksen, and you know he was just a...he was kind of a natural. And we had him up there in this Gatlinburg meeting....about a 2-day meeting....and at that point in time I owned a little bit of the Hotel Graystone and Howard Johnson. And we had those patio units over there, which kind of had like a suite thing....put Howard over there in one of those units, and I said, “You just stay in here.” And I had people following people in and out to talk to him all the time. And it was very effective. I mean, every one of them left pretty much committed to him. And we got this upper end up here...the 1st and 2nd districts....organized pretty quickly. Then we go down to Middle and West Tennessee, and we go in there. You know, we'd go in there and we'd find a classmate, a fraternity brother of his, a fraternity brother of mine, a lawyer....you know...sometimes one person. We'd go into a county, and lots of times we'd go into....and I'd have one name. [Guess] who we were going to look to. And we'd talk to that person and we were amazed at the women....I think that was the first time they became active. It was amazing the women that wanted to support Howard Baker. And I had never seen that much of......and I don't think it had been that much in politics. And a lot of these women started having these coffees where they'd invite 10 or 15 people to come into their home at 10 o'clock in the morning, or 2 o'clock in the afternoon....fairly new thing. I mean you may find it hard to believe, but that just wasn't done much. Politics was still a smoke-filled room, you know, and the men with the cigars and bourbon, maybe, you know. And they were bringing their friends in, and we were getting a new type of supporter there. And it just began to grow and grow and grow. And I will admit that somewhere along the line, and I don't remember when this was, but Howard and I thought, “Hell, I believe we can win this thing.” We didn't, you know, but we thought that “This thing was going pretty well. I believe we can win this thing.” Surprisingly enough, we were getting some money. I have forgotten what it was.....$300,000 or something. Nothing compared to today, but we were having money. And Bob Gable....are you going to talk to Bob?

DW: Yes. He's on the list. I haven't contacted him yet.

JW: Bob came down from Kentucky to run the office.
DW: What is the origin of Baker's relationship to Gable? I know he was from Kentucky.

JW: Coal. Stearns, Kentucky. See, he was right over the...practically next door in Oneida and Huntsville there. And then whole family relation of coal, yes. See, Stearns.... Gable was....his mother was a Stearns. Stearns, Kentucky. Stearns Coal. Big, big, very wealthy people. Bob was kind of one of these nit-pickers. He came down, and you know, everything had to be exactly right in the office, and all, and we got Sam Newman, doing our public relations. Sam's dead. Did you ever know Sam?

DW: No.

JW: Great guy. Great guy. Great public relations....you know, unusual fellow, in that Sam is the guy that was called to Washington and sit for the sculpture of the half-dollar for John F. Kennedy, because he was just a perfect match for John F. Kennedy. Looked just exactly like him. Really did. Always called him Mr. President.

DW: Gable....did he help finance the campaign?

JW: He helped finance it, and he was County office....what he did was he was an office manager. He wouldn't let us spend money unless we had it, you know, and he kind of ran the office. Very much a detailed, nit-picker kind of guy. Gable is the kind of guy, you know, if you asked him how many bumper stickers we had, he would tell you 313. He was always exact, you know, about everything like that.

JW: And the rest of us were kind of....maybe it's 100 or maybe it's 300. We were all kind of loose. And he made a very important contribution in keeping this thing.

DW: Uh, Bill Swain was the finance man.

JW: Bill Swain was, of course, was....and Bill Swain's been the finance man for Howard Baker forever. Howard is not a man that....you know, money is a useful tool to him. He doesn't.....he's anything but somebody that's overly conscious of money. He wants it for what it will do. And yet he'll spend it, too. Let me tell you what. If he's in St. Louis, Missouri, and he's missed the plane, he'll say, “Charter a jet and let's go home.” He's not a kind of guy that's close. He loves to go first class and he spends his own money. He's not a...he's just a very generous kind of guy, but he likes it for what it done.....he's not a tight and stingy kind of a guy.

DW: Yes. Well, who were the other major players working out of Knoxville?
JW: Well, of course, we've got [Branson]....came on board real early. And Bob Campbell, and......now you're talking about anybody in that first campaign. And Ruthie Lyons....you sure need to talk to Ruthie. Boy, was there ever somebody [that would say their] say, you know.

DW: Her name comes up all the time, of course, but my impression is that her role was more than just doing the typing. How would you describe it?

JW: Yes, it was. Well, what happened was, and it would be interesting....I've never talked to Ruthie about it. I should have. I was with her last week at Howard's 4th of July party, but we never have talked about this in effect. But as I recall, we had this big room up there in the Burwell Building. I don't know what had been up there....big open space. And we had kind of set up a headquarters up there. We had no paid help. And we put in some telephones, and we had rented some desks, and scrounged up some stuff, and Gable was up there back there in the room, and 2 or 3 others. And there was a desk out front with a telephone in it. And Ruthie came in there to kind of help......the damn phone kept ringing. And she just started answering it.

DW: She came in as a volunteer?

JW: Came in as a volunteer. And first thing I know, she's setting out there in the front at that desk, and everybody's going in and out, was checking in with Ruthie, and Ruthie knew where they was going, and if you needed an airplane, Ruthie got you an airplane....and if you needed tickets, you needed this, whatever you needed, Ruthie'd just set there. And somebody'd say, “How did she get here?” And I think she just sat down and took charge. I mean there may be a better story than that, but that's the way I remember it.

DW: Had she had a previous connection with Senator Baker?

JW: You know, I don't think so. But now, that's a good question. And of course, she did that same job for him forever. And we just kept running on, you know...people like that.

DW: How did Hugh Branson come into the campaign?

JW: He was the first paid employee. We realized we had to have somebody that could write some press releases, had talent writing press releases....and he was out at Channel 13, which is that old UHF channel. And was a television person. And he came on board, and you know, did a great job for us.
DW: What did you spend most of your time on, once the campaign got underway?

JW: Well, I have described that before in kind of a way. One of the things that immediately became a concern to me is that at that point in time, the Republican Party had this tremendous distrust in the regions. The Party was beginning to go in Memphis, with Winfield and Kuykendall, and Louis Donaldson, and all that bunch down there. But they didn't trust guys from Memphis because they thought Guy had always sold them out, and they thought everybody in East Tennessee had sold them out. And East Tennessee said, “Those people down there....they're not Republicans. They ain't going to vote for you.” And this tremendous distrust. And I recognized right away that we had too few Republicans to have a feeling of any distrust. We've got to overcome this. So one of the main roles that I had in the campaign was running back and forth. And I'd go down to Memphis, and I'd tell them what a great job they're doing up here in East Tennessee, and we're going to, as they say, come across the mountain with a hundred thousand votes, and all these stories, you know. And they really felt good about it. And then I'd come back and tell these people up here, “You can't believe what they're doing in Memphis. They're having meetings down there, and they're organized, and really going to support Baker.” And I was the messenger for that. And that was a high priority of mine. A high priority of mine. Other than that, of course what I would do is, if we didn't have anything, I'd go to the County and put together whatever we had. And Howard would say, “What have we got so-and-so?” And so I'd tell him. We've got so-and-so, he's a lawyer, and this guy is an old Republican organization that's been fighting over who's going to be the rural mail carrier for years. We don't need to fool with him.”And sometimes I'd say, “Howard, we don't have anything. We're going to go. We're going to stop at the edge of town, main street, and we're going to walk through the business section to the court house, and we'll have a car at the other end, and we're going to build what we've got right there, and then leave it.” And he'd be surprised....literally surprised at how effective that was. I mean we would walk through there and the next day we were getting calls. Ruthie was getting them. You know, “Baker was up here yesterday or day before yesterday, or whatnot, and we're trying to....we need some bumper stickers....we need some literature.....or what can we do?” And people were working on it that had nevr taken any
interest in politics.

DW: And you were writing down names in your book.

JW: Oh yes, writing them down as fast as I could. And getting back to them, you know. And then, you know, we'd have somebody say, “Could you get us a little money?” That was always harder. And we didn't work the money like they do....we worked the volunteers. This was before money was the mother's milk of politics. It was then, maybe, but we didn't look at it that way.

DW: So you worked full-time on the campaign for roughly how many months?

JW: Well....full-time? Not really. I was still practicing law. But it was almost full-time. I mean, I had to plan my day. And if I had a lawsuit, I tried it. But I did something like that. But I had good partners, and they were helping me, and scotching for me, but I was doing just whatever......every Monday we met. And this was a strategy meeting. The campaign key people met on Monday.

DW: Who would be in that meeting?

JW: Oh, if we could get Harry Welford to fly up from Memphis, we certainly got him to.....he couldn't make every one of them. We brought as many people in from.... key people...managers as we could. When you talk about managers....this is a strange thing. Years after, I would run into people that I didn't remember. And they would tell me how, you know, and I had made them manager of a certain county, and I couldn't......and I said, “Well, I want you to know how much the Senator appreciates your good work.” After you're elected, you get a lot more people than you did at the time. But George, and Virginia Jennings....have you got her name down, up in Johnson City? And an old boy down in Chatt., well, Oliver Scroggins down in Chattanooga, and in Cleveland....boy, I'm getting old. I can't remember the old boy's name there. But there was just a few around every.... and Ernie Koella and people like that, that they were around. Bill Jenkins was active back in those days. Over in Nashville you had that little group going over there with Ken Roberts, who then ran against him later, but Ken was active in that first campaign.

DW: Where were these meetings held?

JW: Usually they were held in the headquarters there in the Burwell Building, but sometimes
they were held in Baker's home out in Sequoyah Hills.

DW: And then what would go on in the meetings?

JW: Just the strategy. We discussed strategy. How...you know, do this, do that. We'll get this group here; we're working on the farmers. You know, we were pretty much divided up into....back then the farm belt was good, and one of our huge, big, big steps forward was when they got York to support Baker.

DW: Clyde?

JW: Clyde York. York had been a big Democrat....had been Commissioner of Agriculture, and I knew a man in the Farm Bureau who was a big man, but not...he might have been a second tier guy, but anyway he was pretty [big]. Anyway, he called me on the phone, and said, “John, Clyde York wants to talk to you about Baker.” And I said, “Oh, my goodness. I certainly would like to talk to Mr. York.” I maybe had shook hands with him or something, but I didn't have any real recollection of him. He said, “Yeah, he wants to see you in the Executive Meeting Room at the Nashville Airport on a certain day.” So I flew down there and went up in this room. I didn't even know the room existed. And Mr. York was in there, by himself. He had some other people, but he was just in there by himself. And he said, “John,” he said” –

DW: Had you known him previously?

JW: No. I may have shook hands with him, but no, I didn't know the man at all. He said, “I think a lot of Howard Baker. I'm impressed with him.” And he says, “I'd like to support him for the United States Senate.” I said, “Well, Mr. York, that's the best I've heard today. I can't tell you how much your support with the farmers is...we're very interested in the farm vote.” He says, “Well, John, my problem is I want to know what Howard's going to say about burley tobacco. Can you tell me?” I said, “Yes, sir. I can tell you exactly what he's going to say. He's going to say exactly what you write down on paper and give to him.” We'd never even discussed, Howard and I neither one had a damn clue about burley tobacco, of course.

DW: That reminds me of a story....you may appreciate this. I'll take this out, because it's not really relevant. But did you know Bailey Guarde?

JW: Oh yeah! Knew Burley Bailey well.
DW: Well, you know, I understand that even after he had left Cooper's staff and gone to the staff of the Public Works Committee, about half the Senate depended on Bailey to tell them what to do when a burley tobacco issue came up because he was the only person around who seemed to understand it.

JW: Yeah, Bailey. Is he retired?

DW: Oh, he's been retired some years. I had a long interview with him about 4 years ago, and I haven't been in touch with him since.

JW: I knew him well.

DW: So, did you do a lot of traveling with Baker during the campaign?

JW: Oh yeah. We traveled.

DW: So it was Baker, you, and Hugh.

JW: That's a lot of it. A lot of it was Baker and Hugh. A lot of it was just Baker and me. See, back then you could bum a corporate aircraft....or a private aircraft. You didn't have the strict rules that you have today on those....so it was perfectly legal. And many, many times, I know one time I remember specifically, I knocked on Howard's door about 6:30 in the morning, to pick him up to go to the airport. And you can kind of tell some guy comes to the door fully dressed, and you can tell has he been up long. I said, “Have you been up, Howard?” “Yes,” he said. “I've been up since 4 o'clock.” And I said, “My goodness, what's going on?” “Well,” he said, “You know Mr. D.” He always calls Mr. Dirksen Mr. D. “Mr. D's been in the hospital.” And I said, “Yeah, I remember you telling me that.” And he said, “Well, I'm lying in bed asleep at 4 o'clock and the phone rings, and it's Dirksen. And he says, ‘Howard, I have decided that I'm not going to die...that it's time to be about the affairs of the nation.'” And he said he hung up. And he said, “It was such a profound statement, I couldn't go back to sleep.” So we went on out......maybe not that time. We did that several times...to the airport, and there we'd have a twin engine plane.....he would not fly in anything but twin engine.... with a pilot there that could have owned the airplane, or....we had a lot of Piedmont airliners that would fly for us on their day off. I have no idea who got that.....but Howard thought that...... He loves aviation. He's a pilot himself. And we got in this little old plane, and we were going somewhere, and he said...early in the morning....we were both tired, and he said, “I
don't know how I got in this. All I ever wanted to do was be an airport bum and hang around airports.” I said, “Well, I don't know why I'm at, either. All I ever wanted to do was learn to play the guitar, and I can't pick a note.” He said, “Some way or another, we've missed out here, John.” Because he did love airplanes, and he loved to just, as he said, been an airport bum. Of course, photography and airplanes and things like that are his hobbies. I know also, one time we were with a pilot, and Harry Welford.... we'd picked up Harry this time. And we were down in.....we landed at an airport down there, and it seemed somebody says, “Well, here we are.....” I guess the pilot said, “Here we are in Dyersburg.” Well, I'm reaching for my schedule, and I said, “No. We're in Union City.” “No. We're in Dyersburg.” “Well, we're supposed to be in Union City.” So everybody's looking at their schedule, and talking about it, and the pilot says, “Let me taxi over here and see if I can see a sign that says where we are.” And sure enough we were in Dyersburg, and we were in the wrong town, and had to get him somewhere else. But those were the kind of things that happen to you. You're on the go so much.

DW: How far in advance would his schedule be made?

JW: That's a good question. Some of it way in advance. If you had a real hot event, you scheduled, you know....maybe a month in advance. But I'd say a week to 10

JW: days would generally, when you firmed the thing up. You'd feel like, if you met Monday, you'd firm up next week's schedule...

DW: The following week's schedule.

JW: Yeah, the following week's schedule. You'd firm it up then, because you had to. That's when you'd fill in. You'd say, “Well hey, you know, we need to get back to Johnson City. And you're going to be in Mountain City up here at that speech on Friday. Let's come back Friday and spend the night in Johnson City, and let's have some people come in there at the old John Sevier Hotel,”....blah...blah...blah.

DW: Were you able to do much targeting of audiences and say....were you able to be selective as to the kinds of meetings he went to and the settings for his speeches?

JW: Most of it we just took it as [targets of opportunity]. You took advantage of what you....you did when you tried to. Obviously there are certain groups that you really wanted to meet with, and you worked at it very hard, trying to develop some of those.
DW: What would be an example of that?

JW: Well, anything that had to do with funding. Of course, funding, as I say, was not the problem it is today. But still, you had to have money. So you'd work on funding wherever you could. And like, for example, when you went to Nashville. Nashville is the money capital of Tennessee politics. I guess Democrat and Republican. Certainly Republican. And you went over there, you know, you worked on those big papers, and I remember well going over there with Howard when we met with every one of those three editors, or three people....who am I thinking about? That old guy that ran the shoe factory there....that had been owned the....what is that shoe that's made over there?

DW: Jarman.

JW: Jarman. Old man, yeah. Jarman, and people like that....those were the money... obviously money. And they were influential people. So you wanted their support for every reasons, but you certainly wanted it for money. And you go into *The Tennessean* and I've forgotten who was running *The Banner* then.

DW: I don't recall either.

JW: I'd have to go back and look. But you know, in a town, you had a daily news-paper, you never passed up that opportunity....to go to a town that had a daily newspaper and talk about it. And....that was his best campaigning. I mean, you just set him down with an editor that never heard of him before, and give him 10 minutes, and I guarantee you he votes for Howard Baker.

DW: Well, he certainly worked John Siegenthaler over....not so much in 1964.... When I talked to Hugh Branson, he placed a lot of emphasis in both the 1964 and 1966 campaigns, as getting on television in those cities.

JW: Yeah, because Branson was a television person, and he understood the....and, we knew television was powerful, but nothing like it's come since those days. But obviously, you took advantage of every....Branson was good at that. He knew who those people were, and he could pick an issue that you ought to talk about in Chattanooga on television, if they'd get you on there. But he was very good at that .....writing a press release, and.....

DW: And this was a good way to make an end run around those newspapers that weren't too sympathetic and weren't giving too much attention to the campaign.
JW: And, of course, you know a lot of that, if Howard went to Chattanooga, Branson came down for the press release [that] said, Howard Baker's was in Chattanooga yesterday and he said such-and-such. It didn't make any difference whether he said it or not. I guess all politicians do that.

DW: Let me turn this off.

End of Interview