**Interview with Karl Rolvaag**

**Interviewed by Mark Haidet**
**December 11, 1978**

**MH:** Today is December 11, 1978. This is Mark Haidet interviewing former Minnesota governor Karl Rolvaag in Deer River. Mr. Rolvaag, I think that an appropriate place to begin would be with a brief description of your family background and your early life in Minnesota.

**KR:** Well, Mark, my father was a college professor at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. He was, by all reports that I get, a rather distinguished professor of Norwegian language and literature and a special scholar in the area of the dramatist Henrik Ibsen. I still run into people who studied under him. He was also a novelist of significance; wrote in his native Norwegian language. He emigrated, incidentally, to the United States when he was 20 or 21 years of age. He never felt at home in the English language to the degree that he could write easily. He said he always thought in Norwegian.

Northfield was a small community and St. Olaf College was at that time a rather small college. I graduated from Northfield public school system and started St. Olaf College in 1931. My father died that fall. I left home and came back in the fall semester of 1932. I then left home again and came back and graduated in 1941, receiving my diploma in one hand and my greetings from the President in the other. I entered military service through Selective Service in 1941. I don't know what else you want to know about the early years. We can cover anything that you wish.

**MH:** To what degree were Norwegian customs practiced in your home?

**KR:** Oh, we practiced a good many of the Norwegian customs and traditions. My father insisted that we be bilingual or hoped that we would be bilingual; so we spoke only in Norwegian at home until we began school. My sister and I participated in the round table family discussions which were held in Norwegian. As a matter of fact, I don't think I spoke any or very little English when I started school. We attended Norwegian church services a great deal. My sister was confirmed in Norwegian and I in English. She's only a year and a half older than I, but that change came rather rapidly in the old "Norwegian Lutheran Church," as it was called in those days. We observed the Christmas holidays and the religious holidays as they do in Norway. We sang Norwegian hymns. We always read the Bible in Norwegian. Norwegian literature was a common denominator in the entire community as far as that's concerned. We were very much Norwegian and I'm glad we were.

**MH:** Well, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

**KR:** All told I had two brothers and one sister. My older brother, Olaf, I don't remember at all. He died apparently from an attack of peritonitis when he was six. I suppose I was three or four. He was a rather gifted child according to all the reports that I got; showed some signs of talent in drawing particularly. My younger brother, Paul, drowned when I was in first grade. It was a very tragic happening. Our neighbor a couple of doors down the street had an outdoor cistern. In those days they collected rain water and gather it in cisterns. This cistern was no longer in use, but had been covered up. Paul had apparently crossed the cistern. The boards had rotted out and he fell through. I remember that he was missing for two or three days and can remember very clearly the day that my father came walking up the street carrying this child in his arms covered by a burlap bag. It was a tragic event in our family. It has been often said that it was one of the incidents that triggered my father into doing a good bit of creative writing. He had done some writing before, but I guess this tragedy really struck a chord in him. He spent a lot of time writing as a result of that incident. My sister and I are close today. We have been close all through the years. She's living up in Roseau, Minnesota and carrying on the family traditions. She is very active in Norwegian language and culture. In fact she's teaching Norwegian language at the present time in adult education. She has done a lot of teaching at Bemidji State College as a fill-in; they often call on her to come down and fill-in a course for a quarter or so. She has taught at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, as well as for a short time at the University of Minnesota.

**MH:** Now, the years when you were going to school. You started in school and then you left and then you came back. What did you do during those years when you left? I read some accounts where you tried logging for a while.

**KR:** Oh, I spent a good deal of time out in the woods. I was a lumberjack. I worked in the short log country in Idaho and eastern Washington. I worked on the cattle ranches in central Washington. I worked for a while in some mines in the panhandle of Idaho, right up on the Canadian border. I drifted. I worked in the harvest field and in the wheat fields. Those were the depression years and they were very trying and very difficult, but it was a learning experience for me. I know I learned a good deal about life during that period of time.

**MH:** Would you care to comment on that?

**KR:** Well, I did all the things that drifters do. I learned manual labor. I learned a great deal of self-reliance, perhaps too much independence, maybe not enough concern for others. That's not correct either. I'd have to strike that. I saw the seamy side of life. I got to know the whores, the pimps, and the gay community, as well as a lot of the really fine things in life. I spent a great deal of time alone. I worked for the Forest Service in the summer time out of Missoula, Montana up in the Lolo National Forest. I was what they called a smoke chaser sent out by lookout towers to put out the smokes before they developed into fires. So I

learned to live alone and enjoy life. I was in good health, good spirits. Thank God I came back to college and finished my education.

**MH:** When you came back to school you majored in history, correct?

**KR:** Correct. I was a major in American history at St. Olaf. Well, as I said, I got my diploma in one hand and my greetings from the President through Selective Service in the other. My draft number, incidentally, as I recall, was 152. So it was low. I was deferred actually because I was a senior in college and about to graduate. You asked about my education. I took honors in the field of American History. I wrote a paper on Abraham Lincoln and his handling of the question of *habeas corpus* during the Civil War. I've lost all track of that paper. I'd like to go back and review it and look at it now. Maybe some day I'll find it amongst some of my accumulations in some attic.

**MH:** Well, from what I have read, it was at St. Olaf that you won your first election. Would you care to go...

**KR:** Well, that's right. I had been placed in nomination for the office of the president of the student body. The only organized campaign activity by the student council was to have each candidate speak for five minutes before the student body assembly. It came my turn and I had my notes. I walked to the podium and was stage struck. I couldn't utter a single solitary sound. I was frozen. I walked off the stage in total humiliation. I lost the election and quite appropriately so. But as compensation, some of my backers had assured me that they would see that I was elected president of the senior class. The chief proponent was a fellow by the name of Don Eastwold. Some of my Republican friends will remember Don Eastwold who later became the attorney general for the state of Washington. He has become a land developer and quite a controversial character. Last I heard, he had fled to Mexico and was involved with some legal dealings with the Mexican government; they were trying to collect some several million dollars from him. But be that as it may, Don Eastwold finally organized the write-in campaign. He had slipped up on the proper filings and whatever was required to have your name entered as a candidate for senior class president. Anyway, Don organized the write-in campaign and I won that election quite handsomely, quite easily. I don't know whether my peers, the students, thought it was kind of a good joke or...I don't even remember who I defeated. I don't have any idea. But anyway I won that election and that was the first election that I won. I still was stage struck. Incidentally, I've never thought about this before, but it is customary for the senior class president to preside over one of the event during the graduation weekend. I recall now that I deferred that to some gal, Doris Saltnis, who was secretary or vice-president of the class. I couldn't face the audience. Times have changed quite a bit.

**MH:** What were some of your interests in college other than class work or history?

**KR:** Writing. I did quite a bit of writing. As a matter of fact, I wrote several short stories

that were published in the college magazine. I was business manager of the college literary magazine. I was a reporter for the Associated Press, covering college events, athletic events, and events in the city of Northfield. (I had thought some about going into journalism). I played some football until I suffered a shoulder injury that finished my career as an athlete. I was busy. I was active in student groups. They had no fraternities; instead they had what they called societies at St. Olaf. I was active in one of the Greek letter societies. I was active in intramural athletics. I kept very busy. Met my girl and my future wife, Florence Boedeker. She came from Dallas, Texas because she wanted to get away from her home. She lived in Dallas and was a student at Southern Methodist University. She had a friend from Dallas who was attending St. Olaf. This gave her an opportunity to get away for a year and find out something about life outside of her own community.

**MH:** Well, then, your military career was a distinguished one. Would you are to describe your activities in the army during World War II?

**KR:** I said I got my draft notice in one hand and my college diploma in the other. That's almost literally true. As I recall, I got my notice to report for military duty on Friday the thirteenth of June 1941. And I believe it was on the twenty-third of June that I was inducted into the service. I went first to Fort Snelling and then to Camp Polk, Louisiana into the Fifth Armored Division. I must tell a little story about my days at Fort Snelling when I learned one of my first basic lessons. I can do this in oral history; it's hard to write it. We got the essentials and the rudiments of close order drill. In my squad with me was a Swede from St. Paul by the name of Holmberg. I ran into Holmberg several times in the ensuing years when I was in the service. He had a speech impediment. When he talked he didn't move his lips. It was much like he was tongue tied, see? And in this close order drill, we had a regular army sergeant who was a strapping, handsome 6'2" with a big, bulging chest and slim waistline. As a matter of fact, the barracks room gossip was that he wore a girdle. His name was Sergeant Fisher and he was an American Indian. He was a meticulous sergeant. We'd had about ten days in the army at the time. Close order drill was: "Hut, two, three, four...to the rear...harch...to the rear...harch." We had what they call counting in cadence when the whole squad does that. The squad was counting: "Hut, two, three, four...to the rear...harch...to the rear...harch." Sergeant Fisher suddenly stopped us and he said: "Mr. Holmberg, I ordered you to count in cadence and you weren't counting. You weren't saying anything." Holmberg said: "Yes, sir. I sure was. I was too saying something." And Fisher snapped at him: "When I say you ain't talking, you ain't talking. See?" I've often thought about that. That was the old regular army and poor Holmberg was utterly immobilized. Just because he couldn't speak clearly, he was getting dressed down.

Well, that was kind of a way stop. We got to Camp Polk, Louisiana and we had to take some kind of elementary examinations to find out what our qualifications were and where they could best place us in the service. They gave us an MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) number. On paper it's a fine idea and works well, but it didn't work very well in practice. My MOS number came out and nobody knew what it meant. Nobody knew it.

People at personnel couldn't figure out what in the world that was. Well, I was just fresh out of college and I went and got a couple of the military army books and looked it up. It was a public relations specialist, but since none of the assigning brass could figure it out they put me in the line company. So I never got to be the public relations specialist that my MOS number called for. I went to C Company of the 81st Armored Regiment, the Fifth Armored Division. That was a medium tank battalion. There were no tanks. The armored force was just in its infancy. This was the Third Division that was being activated. All they had was a skeleton of some 15 or 20 men in the company. The army was building so fast then that they were taking anybody and everybody.

I was at Camp Polk, Louisiana for a very short time between June and Labor Day. I must tell you another story that I think should be recorded. I've heard people deny that it existed, but I saw it. There were two little towns right near Camp Polk. One was Leesville, Louisiana and the other one was De Ridder, Louisiana. I believe it was in De Ridder that I was on a pass one night and saw the sign on a yard: "Dogs, Niggers, Soldiers -- Stay Off The Grass." Louisianians have since denied that existed, but it was there. I saw it. I'm told that after Pearl Harbor the sign read: "Dogs and Niggers Stay Off the Grass."

But I was in C Company of the 81st Armored Regiment. The supply sergeant -- his name was Powell -- couldn't read or write. He was looking for somebody who could read and write. Sergeant Powell was of the old regular army. He was a fine fellow, a real gentleman, by the way, but he was helpless in this new position of being a buck sergeant who couldn't count the sheets and do his records. He wanted somebody to do the record keeping for him. He eyed me and he got me. So I began my career as a supply sergeant. Than after Labor Day 1941 they formed the Fifth Armored Division at Fort Knox, Kentucky. They organized a cadre from the Third Division. I went up to the Fifth Armored at Fort Knox in the cadre. I had asked the supply sergeant to get me out of that position and became a regular staff sergeant, which was a platoon sergeant in those days. That winter we went to Camp Cook, California with the division. From Camp Cook, California we went on desert maneuvers in the Mojave Desert that next summer. By this time I was discouraged and really kind of disgusted with the way the army was building then. The Division commander was Jack Herd. General Herd was a regular army officer who wore high cavalry boots and the pegged trousers of an old cavalryman...spit and polish. They said "Cactus" Jack Herd was 5'2" and 110 pounds when he was wringing wet. He never did go overseas, incidentally. He lost his command. Obviously, there was no room for that kind of mentality, but it was discouraging. I had applied for all kinds of transfers. I applied for the ski troops because I spoke Norwegian. They were organizing the battalion -- I think it was the 99th battalion if my memory serves me correctly. Anyway, it was a Norwegian-speaking ski troop battalion. I applied for armored force OCS (Officer Candidate School). The Armored force is the force in the American army that deals with mobile warfare -- tanks, armored cars, armored cannon, armored gun carriers. I always was in the tank outfit. I applied for the Signal Corps OCS. I applied for transfers to this and to that.

The first opportunity that was granted was a transfer to the armored force OCS. So I went to Fort Knox. I became what they called a 90-day wonder. This time I was a staff sergeant and I adjusted very well to the military life. At Fort Knox we learned the rudimentary elements of becoming an officer. I was commissioned a second lieutenant on, I think it was, the tenth of April 1942. Then I was assigned to the Fourth Armored Division which was then in training on desert maneuvers in the Mojave Desert in California. I stayed with the Fourth Armored Division until I was separated from the service many years later. I was sent to the 25th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized. I was in the light tank company of that unit.

Our company did the reconnaissance for the division when we got into action in Europe. We saw a lot of action. We went overseas at Christmas time 1943 and were stationed at Treaubridge, England. We were on maneuvers a good deal of the time while in England. We went over to France shortly after D-Day. I went through the breakthrough campaign out of Normandy. We slashed across France. My company was doing the reconnaissance. We rode point, first vehicle in the Third Army all the way across France. The day I got hit we had a mission to cross the Rhine River. We had been held back by a shortage of gasoline and fuel at that time. When we started out again ten days after we had stopped, the German forces had regrouped and regathered. The division was hit in the flank by two or three Panzer divisions and my platoon was called back from its reconnaissance mission. That night I was hit by artillery fire. To this day when I see our squadron commander Colonel Goodall, he says it was American artillery. Whether or not it was, I don't know, but he says that we were under fire from American artillery. He called the commanding general, General Wood. General Wood tried to call off the artillery and the artillery officers said: "There's no way that any of the American forces can be that far ahead of us." Well, this is not an unusual happenstance. It happened frequently. But that's a different story. That's something else again.

**MH:** Do you want to go into that though?

**KR:** Well, it's a sidelight on American history. We were strafed by American planes from time to time. We had to put on special panels on the back of our tanks to identify us as American forces. As I recall, it was almost a blaze orange that we had to put on our vehicles somewhere. We carried forward observers from the air force with us very frequently. We carried forward observers from the artillery with us from time to time. We moved fast across France. As a matter of fact, we were in almost complete safety except for pockets of resistance. When I got hit I had over 1,000 combat miles on my tank and the identification plates had been hit once by a piece of shrapnel. We had suffered some casualties when we started out in Normandy and from time to time, if we got into a little village or some place, we might suffer some casualties due to mines. But in almost every instance we outran the opposition and took them by surprise. We captured German officers who had been sent to take positions that we'd overrun several days in advance. Looking back on it now, the genius of General Patton and the officers who he instilled with that same fervor is that they

used the armored forces in the same way that "Jeb" Stuart of the Confederate forces used the cavalry. It was like some of the famous raids of the Civil War and the Indian wars -- raiding, riding, driving. Actually there's no question but we could have taken the war in Europe several months earlier if we hadn't run out of supplies. We just outstripped our supplies. We sat in a little wooded area near Aracourt, France for ten days. We just couldn't get gasoline.

They tell a story; I don't know that it's documented or not. General Patton sent a convoy back and stole some 300,000 cans of gasoline. That would be a million, five-hundred thousand gallons. That couldn't be. Maybe it was 300,000 gallons of gasoline. Anyway, General Eisenhower made him take every cotton-pickin' can back, and properly so,. He stole them from the First Army. The Fourth Armored Division sent a convoy back and we stole 30,000 gallons from the Third Army dump. And of course General Patton had us take every can back. We had to guard our supply train. We weren't worried about the enemy; the supply enemy was the American forces. They were gonna take the stuff that we got back. I remember very well that the man who was in charge of that was Lieutenant Henchiss who was also the organist who played at my wedding. That's why I remember it so clearly. He was in charge of the details that had to go back and escort our supply trains back to our areas. I don't know where we were, Mark. I got waylaid.

**MH:** Well, I was going to proceed with another question.

**KR:** Hope you keep me on track here a little. I'm wandering all over the lot.

**MH:** OK. Well, you received several awards and medals during your period of service. Would you briefly describe what they were and the reasons for your having won them?

**KR:** Oh, I got the Silver Star when we broke out of Normandy. Anybody who is interested can look up the details in the army records. I was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross. The squadron adjutant called me back to headquarters one day and said that he was sorry I couldn't get the Distinguished Service Cross since General Wood had gotten the Distinguished Service Cross for that action. They didn't award a Distinguished Service Cross to two men for the same action policy. I received the Purple Heart, Unit Citation, Presidential Unit Citation, the French Croix de Guerre, the Belgian Croix de Guerre, and battle stars for the campaigns in France.

**MH:** Well, then, when the war was over what did you do?

**KR:** Well, when the war was over it didn't end right away for me. I was wounded on...as I recall it...the 27th or the 28th of September 1944. The medical records show it was late September; the squadron records show that it was in early October. Which is right, I don't know. I was severely wounded. I was hit in the shoulder, the upper body, my face, and my chin. I had my tongue cut in half and some teeth knocked out. I was sent to the hospital at Nancy, France, and from there over to England. I was in England then until February or

March of 1945. I then came home to Harmon General Hospital at Longview, Texas. I was then retired for medical reasons. When you're retired for medical reasons the surgeon general of the United States army has to approve or disapprove. He's the final arbiter. When my papers got to the surgeon general's desk, the surgeon general said that with further surgery my shoulder and arm would be restored to normal function. So I had been put on extended leave in late November 1945, not finally separated from the service; I was still in uniform, but home on leave.

During that period of time I enrolled at the University of Minnesota in the graduate school. The following summer (1946) the surgeon general called me back. I was ordered back to active duty - and given the opportunity of either further surgery or immediate discharge. Well, under the circumstances I didn't accept the discharge. I went back to the service and was sent to Fort Knox where they tried to hold me. I was a captain by this time and the army was short of line officers. So they thought that they would just keep me for a while and let me run a company at Fort Knox. I had to call in the inspector general to get back on track. They then sent me to the general hospital at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. Camp Atterbury was closing. In the closing process, they prepared to send me to Battle Creek, Michigan. Now this is a true story so help me God. Battle Creek, Michigan was noted at that time as an amputee center. If there was anything wrong with you and you got to Battle Creek, Michigan, scuttlebutt in the service had it they were gonna cut. One of my friends in the hospital at Camp Atterbury was a first lieutenant from Michigan with a severely damaged leg. He came to me and said: "Goddamit, we got orders to go to Battle Creek. You're gonna wind up minus one arm and I'm gonna wind up minus a leg." Well, I doubt that would have happened, but we were in the frame of mind to believe that. He said: "I happen to sleep with a WAC corporal who types the orders that sends us out. If I can persuade her to change the orders (to cut fictitious orders in other words) sending us to Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado rather than Battle Creek, would you go?" I said: "You're damn right I would." So he went back to bed with the WAC corporal and just before we were going to Battle Creek the orders came out changing our assignments from Battle Creek, Michigan to Denver, Colorado and Fitzsimons General Hospital. I got to Fitzsimons and there they reviewed my case thoroughly and decided against further surgery. They then discharged me and turned me over to the Veteran's Administration. I finally got out in the middle of May 1947. So my military service ran from June 1941 to May 1947.



**MH:** Well, when and how did you decide to enter the First District Congressional race in 1946?

**KR:** I had enrolled in the graduate school at the University of Minnesota in political science with minors in history and in journalism. My graduate committee said: "There are things happening in Scandinavia. You speak Norwegian. We don't know what's happening in Norway and Sweden. We haven't got the information. It's not up to date. (Remember, this was just after the war). "Why don't you apply for a fellowship?" So I applied for a fellowship with the American-Scandinavian Foundation. I then got called back into military

service. In the spring while I was out in Denver, I got the notification from the American-Scandinavian Foundation that my application had been acted on favorably. So I was in the military service and had a fellowship to go to Scandinavia and study political science. Well, after some finagling I finally got out of the service and went to Norway.

Well, while I'd been home I had become involved in politics. Eugenie Anderson, who was later to serve as ambassador to Denmark under President Truman, assistant secretary of state under President Johnson, and minister to Bulgaria under Kennedy, was the first congressional district chairman. In 1944 the party had run a pretty good race in that Republican district in Minnesota. While I was at the University in those brief months, my former college professor, Dr. Kenneth at St. Olaf and Eugenie Anderson came to me one day and said: "You're studying political science. Would you ever consider running for office?" They wanted me to run for Congress. As I said, they had run a fairly good race in 1944 against the incumbent August Andresen. They were looking around for a Scandinavian. They were looking around for a war veteran. They were looking around for somebody who preferably had been decorated a little bit. I went home and talked to my wife about it. She said: "You're studying politics. Why don't you get into it and learn something about it first hand?" Anyway, I finally said yes. Well, I was called back into military service in the middle of that campaign. I went to Europe. Later that year I got a letter from Eugenie Anderson saying: "Come home, if you can, and run for Congress. General Eisenhower is going to be the Democratic candidate. Truman is not going to be supported by the Democratic National Convention." Well, I was naive enough to swallow that. I said I couldn't come home until the middle of August. So we had some correspondence on the subject. Well, to make a long story short, I came home and ran for Congress. They had filed somebody in the meantime. Under the election laws at that time, he resigned when I returned and I became the candidate. Then I had two campaigns under my belt. Of course, Eisenhower didn't run. President Truman did. But that campaign started my political career in earnest.

**MH:** Did you campaign actively during the two times that you ran for Congress?

**KR:** In 1946 I did not. In 1948 I did. I didn't know anything about it and I was completely ignorant. We had no organization. I did get a respectable vote for that district. If I remember, and this staggers the imagination nowadays, but if I remember correctly, I think I carried on that campaign with $750.

**MH:** That does stagger the imagination.

**KR:** Staggers the imagination completely.

**MH:** Especially with what was spent on this last senatorial race.

**KR:** Well, the amount of money that's being now spent doesn't need to be. It's foolishness.

It takes a lot of hard work, but that's something else again.

**MH:** OK. Well, when you ran for Congress these first two times the DFL was in the midst of a struggle between the followers of Elmer Benson and those of Hubert Humphrey. Now I know that you were out of the state most of the time, but were you in any way involved in the factional struggle and could you describe the struggle as you saw it, even if you were not involved? How were you affected?

**KR:** Well, I was involved in the struggle in 1948, but not in 1946 at all. Well, I should say, I wasn't a delegate to the state convention in 1946. I attended the state convention however. I happened to know one of the sergeant-at-arms at the convention. So I had access to the convention floor. That sergeant-at-arms happened to be a supporter of the so-called Elmer Benson faction. I didn't know there was an Elmer Benson faction as such. But in 1948 I was clearly identified with and aligned with Orville Freeman, Art Naftalin, Hubert and the rest of that group. We had differences of opinion and fought with them in succeeding years in 1950, '52, '54.

**MH:** You mean you fought with Naftalin and Humphrey?

**KR:** No, no, no, no, no.

**MH:** With the Benson...

**KR:** Yeah.

**MH:** OK.

**KR:** Principally on the issue of foreign policy. They didn't believe in the Marshall Plan. They didn't believe in the aid to Turkey, the aid to Greece. They were openly espousing the communist line at that time without any reservations. I got along with them personally. I always have. I didn't let my differences come to personal differences as some of the people did. In fact this conflict occurred in the labor movement at that time. It also occurred in the social movement. It affected the precinct caucuses. We organized the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] in Minnesota to take over control of the party.

**MH:** Were you at the 1948 convention that was held in Brainerd?

**KR:** No, I was not. I was in Norway at the time.

**MH:** Well, let me ask you what were your opinions of both Benson and Humphrey and also Freeman and Naftalin?

**KR:** Well, I didn't know Elmer Benson at the time. I've gotten to know him since that time

and have a good relationship with him from what little I do see of him. I was very close to Orville Freeman. I was close to Hubert Humphrey beginning in 1947 a little bit. Very close to Eugenie Anderson who was at that time right in the thick of it. I was also friends with Art Naftalin and Byron Allen. It was an unusual group of people -- talented, committed, skillful, durable, devoted.

I was elected state chairman in 1950 while that struggle was still going on to a large extent. Incidentally, Arvonne Fraser, Don Fraser's wife, was my secretary at that time. The party was in its infancy and we had no organization. People who think Minnesota is a Democratic state forget that Democrats never did control Minnesota until very recent years. We never had control of the legislature. Beginning in 1955 from time to time we had control of the state House of Representatives. We never had control of the state senate up until the Wendy Anderson years. It was difficult. This was a Republican state. I think it still is a Republican state in some respects.

**MH:** Well, then, in 1950 you became party chairman. And at the conclusion of your four year term in 1954 the DFL won what could be considered a smashing victory at the time in Minnesota. What did you do as state chairman to strengthen the party and to prepare it for the election of 1954?

**KR:** Oh, God...Jesus.

**MH:** It's a general question, but if you could just give a few ideas of what types of things were developed during that period of time that you took an active role in.

**KR:** Politically, I've often said that perhaps one of the beneficial sidelights of the defeat of Adlai Stevenson, if there be any, was that we got an infusion of new blood into the party. Adlai Stevenson attracted large numbers of new people. All of a sudden it became rather the accepted thing to become active in politics. It was no longer a dirty business; "good people" could participate in politics. And with the defeat of Adlai Stevenson, a large number of the old line patronage Democrats and patronage Farmer-Laborites left. They didn't leave, they just quit. County chairman, country chairwomen and those who had no real abiding interest in the issues. They were what I call patronage Democrats. We were out of office in the state. We were out of office nationally for the first time in a long time. They could no longer name the postmasters in their local communities. As a result, we got an infusion of new blood and that helped.

We started building strong county organizations. I traveled thousands and thousands and thousands of miles going out to counties organizing and setting up organizations. I think it was Art Naftalin who told me that the DFL had county committees in only 19 of the 87 counties in 1944 when the parties merged. The organizational process was still going on in 1950. There were still a lot of counties where we had no organization or only a paper organization. It was just the grubby, grimy business of going out to every county and finding

somebody who would serve as a county chairman, chairwoman, or officeholder. Many women came to the fore. Women's rights was of no concern because they were treated equally. Eugenie Anderson is the outstanding example. She was the head Democrat in Goodhue County. She was the district chairperson and the top Democrat in the First Congressional District in southeastern Minnesota. She was a national committeewoman. She held all those positions on her talent and her ability alone. It was the same with people like Dorothy Jacobson and many others. We found a great number of extraordinarily competent people around the state who pitched in and helped us build for the years ahead.

**MH:** What did they do in terms of finances during that four-year period?

**KR:** Oh, it was so minimal by today's standards. We have now the sustaining membership in the DFL which brings in several thousand dollars a month. We started that in the campaign of 1952. Orville Freeman had what they called the buck-a-month club. And as I recall, he had something like 3 or 4 or 500 individuals contributing a dollar a month during the campaign. At the end of the campaign in 1952 when I was state chairman, there were three dollars and fifty some cents left in the state treasury. Unlike today, I never deficit-financed in my political campaigns. I didn't do it personally and I didn't permit the party to do it while I was chairman. I never have had any deficit financing. I spent every penny that we had. I thought it was a sin almost to wake up on Wednesday morning and have $3.50 left in the DFL state treasury. But then I started the sustaining fund and it's become very successful. We had our Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners and a huge, tremendous dinner would be a thousand people at $25 a head. That was an outstanding success. We never had anything like $100 dinners, $500 dinners, or $1,000 dinners that they now have. That was unheard of. We financed the party through contributions. We had a finance officer. We never had an abundance of money. We didn't own any property. Now they have their own office building. We had no paid staff. I was to get $100 a week as state chairman. Remember this was back in 1950, but even at that, that was not a very big salary. And for months on end I'd go without any salary at all because the money just wasn't there. Aside from myself we had one, and sometimes two, girls in the office. Sometimes, but not always, we had a fella that we euphemistically called executive secretary. Most often that was Tom Hughes. Tom later became the administrative assistant to Orville Freeman when he was governor and also when he was secretary of agriculture. He's still in Washington. So it was a constant struggle. One of the big events that we staged during those years was the bean feed which really began in the Stevenson years. I shouldn't ignore labor. I am sure if we went back and looked at the records that we'd find that the bulk of the campaign moneys at that time came from organized labor. But we organized the bean feeds. We've had 20 to 25,000 people at the Minneapolis Auditorium with as many people outside the doors as inside. It was always a goal to do this and we put all our efforts into getting a throng. We have had it in Minneapolis, and St. Paul at the Hippodrome at the fairgrounds. John Kennedy was there at the Hippodrome once. We had that absolutely packed full with many thousands of people. If we raised enough money in a place like that to pay for a statewide television hook-up, we were enthralled. We thought we'd really scored.

Campaigning has changed so much since then. Campaigning in those days was personal appearances. We spent a great deal of effort and time on arranging tours for the candidates for governor and the United States Senate. Those of use who were running for minor offices always tagged along as a rule. I can remember one morning in October when Orville was running for governor and I for lieutenant governor. We started at Red Wing and crossed the state on Highway #19, winding up that night at Marshall. We made every town along that highway. Well, when you totaled up the dollars spent it wasn't very much money. Somebody would contribute the car or cars. We had a sound system. Our appearances were street corners. Before the day was over on that occasion we had the whole ticket with us. Senator Humphrey was along; he was running for election that year. We leap-frogged from town to town. I'd go out and Orville would come behind me and behind him came Humphrey. We had the whole town stirred up. We stirred up that whole segment of Minnesota from Red Wing to Marshall on Highway #19 that year. It was hard physically. Orv and I started out at 6 o'clock in the morning at the Red Wing Shoe Company and at the old Red Wing Pottery works. We went through the plants. It took a helluva lot of hard work, but not a lot of money. And I think that our candidates would be better off today if they followed some of that.

**MH:** Just a few more questions on your state chairmanship. What would you say were your greatest satisfactions during those four years? Say the greatest satisfaction or the top two satisfactions?

**KR:** While I was not state chairman at the time, the culmination of those four years was the election of Orville Freeman as governor. Of course I was very pleased, proud and happy that I came in as winner as lieutenant governor. We had built an organization. We had built a party. We did it sufficiently well so that we elected a governor, a lieutenant governor, a treasurer, an attorney general, and a secretary of state. We took control of the state house of representatives by a margin of 66 to 65. I would have to say that was the greatest satisfaction I had as state chairman.

**MH:** Well, one other question on state chairman. The state chairman was elected, right?

**KR:** Yes.

**MH:** Is he elected at the convention?

**KR:** He was at that time, yes.

**MH:** Was there any opposition to your elections in 1950 and 1952 to the state chairmanship?

**KR:** Not significant. I was part of the compromise at the 1950 convention. I was at that time

employed by the Department of Commerce and was under the Hatch Act. I had written a letter to Orville Freeman urging him to run for governor in 1950. I was living in Rochester at the time and Orv and Jane, his wife...Incidentally, Don Fraser, his wife, and a Minneapolis financier by the name of Frank Griswold drove down to Rochester one night to visit with us. I think I was partially instrumental in persuading Orv that he had to run. He put in his resignation as state chairman. So Orv was apparently kind of taken with me. He went to the convention in Duluth that year and didn't get the endorsement of the party for governor. That went to [Harry] Peterson who was Justice of the Supreme Court. But part of the compromise that was worked out was that the Freeman people would get the party officers and the Peterson crowd would have the candidate for governor. And that was it. I became the state chairman. There was some opposition. Cozy Marsh, a well-known St. Paul pharmacist within the DFL party, was a candidate, but not a very serious one. I had some opposition in 1952 from the younger element, but that was not very significant. I didn't have any trouble really.

**MH:** Well then, in 1954 you ran for lieutenant governor. When did you first decide to run and was there anything or anyone in particular who had helped to influence your decision?

**KR:** No. I decided that I wanted to do that. Freeman was certainly happy to see me. We were very close friends. By that time I had a wealth of knowledge of the state, as Orv did, too. The two of us, along with Senator Humphrey, knew as much about the state of Minnesota and its political leaders, counties, cities, and villages as anybody else did in the state. Orv had been state chairman and he'd run for office. But I decided that I wanted to be lieutenant governor.

Incidentally, there were a number of people who wanted me to run for governor and I said no. I said there was no way I could win. Bob Hess was one who came to me before the convention. Phil Neville, who was later to become a federal judge, was another one. There was a group of them who came to see me. I said Freeman was the only one who, in my opinion, could make it. There was some opposition to me at the state convention, but again it was not very serious. Bill Carlson, a St. Paul legislator who had been a candidate for the United States Senate against Edward Thye wanted to run for lieutenant governor in 1954. I just wouldn't back out. I made my decision at that time and I decided I was gonna run, and I did. I had no problem with the convention. Oh, there were a few of them who objected to my candidacy. Paul Rasmussen was a little sour at the idea, but that wasn't very significant at the time.

**MH:** You've already mentioned your campaign a little bit. But how actively did you campaign? Was it primarily touring the state with Freeman? And also how did you raise the money to run for lieutenant governor or was it raised by the party?

**KR:** It was not raised by the party. At that time, and I think to this day, the party doesn't raise any money for its candidates. I'm not sure about today. I shouldn't say that. But in my

experience up until...I have never, as a candidate, received any money from the political party. I have always contributed to the party. I'd raise the funds and contribute it to the party. Again, the campaign for lieutenant governor didn't cost me money - or very little --very, very nominal. I know I didn't have any billboards. I didn't buy any television or radio time. It was personal appearances. The name, of course, was beginning to be known. It was a good year to run. We had our ducks lined up, you know. It was just a good year and I was just lucky. I had some primary opposition, but came through okay.

I never did spend much money in a race for lieutenant governor. The money I received was $5 here, $10 there, some gas money here, and gas money there. Somebody loaned me a car. I didn't campaign just with Orv, but made a lot of personal appearances. Afterwards, he and I tried not to be together because it was too much of a concentration. And frankly, it didn't satisfy my ego to be out with the governor because the governor got the attention. We always figured that if we could split up, we were doing better because we could cover more ground. We tried to do this with almost all our candidates. Orv would be one place and I'd be another place. Miles Lord would be one place. Joe Donovan would be some place else. Very often we'd converge on one point at night for a rally, but during the daytime we could go to 10 or 15 radio stations. We'd get into those small towns and walk up to the radio station. They wanted to interview live. We weren't paying any money for that. It was news when Karl Rolvaag came to Mapleton, Minnesota.

I learned a good lesson in Mapleton. I was there one year in a campaign and I went to the county editor and said: "Why didn't you publish my release?" He said: "The *Minneapolis Tribune* carries your releases in the morning. I can't compete with them. When you come here, I'll put your picture and the fact that you were here on the front page of my weekly newspaper; but people subscribe to my newspaper to find out who had the babies that were born at the local hospital, who went here and who went there and what happened at the 4-H Club. We don't care what happened in the Twin Cities. We get that in the morning *Tribune* or WCCO radio. If I were you, I'd carry with me some canned releases that I was in Four Horse Junction and a newspaper mat that the county newspapers can use. You'll get there."

And I did. That was a good lesson. It didn't take very much money in those days to have mats printed up for every newspaper in the state. I'd go to the county newspaper and I'd give it to them. Though the editor might be Republican, and 99% of them were, the fact that I was in town was news in that little town. They published it and put my picture in the paper.

**MH:** What in your opinion were the major reasons for the DFL's success in 1954?

**KR:** Oh, a number of them. Ezra Taft Benson, the Republican secretary of agriculture, was notoriously unpopular. We hit heavy on that. Republicans said agricultural policies were not part of a state campaign. That's true, but we built an empathy. We understood rural America much better than Ezra Taft Benson did. We believed this, and the Minnesota farmers agreed with us. We made big issues out of agriculture in all our campaigns. We got the solid

support of the Farmer's Union, it's leadership, and almost every county committee that the Union had. We built a very good relationship with labor. Eisenhower was a popular figure, but not a very effective president in terms of guiding and executing and being decisive. We were running at a period when the Republican Party in the state of Minnesota had become complacent. There were beginning to be some outcroppings of mismanagement in state government and we capitalized on that. We found some mismanagement in the highway department and pointed that out. We were young, vibrant, enthusiastic and aggressive. One of the newspaper reporters, the late Gene Newhall, then with the Minneapolis papers and later with the St. Paul paper, was a very acute political reporter. He said one day: "Karl, you know you're gonna win." I said: "What makes you think that, Gene?" He said: "I came by your headquarters the other day at 2:30 in the morning, and the place was all lit up and people were in there working. I go by the Republication headquarters and they're closed up at 8 o'clock in the evening." That's what made the difference. Miles Lord was running against a non-entity for attorney general. Miles was flamboyant. A prisoner escaped in the midst of that campaign and Miles, within 24 hours, was talking to him on live television at the DFL state campaign headquarters of all places. The late Luther Youngdahl had been a very successful governor. He had resigned to take the offer of President Truman -- that's another story -- and Lieutenant Governor C. Elmer Anderson had become the governor. C. Elmer Anderson is a very fine gentleman, but he's not flamboyant at all. He'd won the one election, but could carry no real enthusiasm or fervor in the Republican Party. All these things added up. The nation was ready for the Democrats at that time. It was the year that Ed Muskie won. At that time the Maine primary elections were held in September and that's where they coined the phrase: "As Maine goes, so goes the nation." Muskie won that year in Maine and became the first Democratic governor I guess in the history of Maine. I don't know if they'd ever had a Democratic governor in Maine. I don't know. I remember Orv and I were elated because this was a strong omen.

There are pendulums that swing in the nation. As we're recording this, Mark, the pendulum is swinging the Republican way. It's just that way. And there's nothing we can do to stop it. We paid note to elections in England, Norway and western Europe. From the results we can get a better reading on what's gonna happen in Minnesota a couple months later. It's a fact that it does happen that way. We were just caught in the right pendulum swing. This last election the pendulum was swinging the other way. There's a rhythm in politics.

**MH:** Well then, would you describe the position of lieutenant governor during the period that you held the office -- its functions, its responsibilities, and its problems? Two problems that I am particularly interested in are: working with a conservative senate and also, at one time, working under a Republican governor.

**KR:** Well, do I get you now, Mark, that you want the functions?

**MH:** Yeah. What the functions were for you in the 1950s as lieutenant governor because they've changed nowadays.

**KR:** The functions of the lieutenant governor are and were then defined by statute. They are not the same now as they were then. At that time I believe the only thing that the lieutenant governor had to do was to preside over the state senate. That was a rather nominal duty; it wasn't mandatory. That was the only function of the lieutenant governor in addition to being around in case something happened to the governor. It's often been said rather jokingly that one had to get down and check the heartbeat of the governor every morning. Actually, both the functions and responsibilities are quite different. I should say they vary according to the relationship between the governor and the lieutenant governor.

Orville Freeman and I were very close personally. Our families were close. Our wives were close. Our children grew up together. We spent our vacations together. We complimented one another. I had a great deal of respect for him and I think he respected me. He respected my political advice. We had both been DFL state chairmen. We belonged to the same factions in the party. I accompanied him on many of his trips outside the state of Minnesota, particularly the governor's conferences where I got to know many of his colleagues. I did a great deal of work for him in the ceremonial sense. A governor is the head of his party. He is a ceremonial head of state and he is the chief executive officer of the state. I couldn't be the chief executive officer, but I did relieve Orville of a great many of his ceremonial functions, particularly outside of the city of St. Paul-Minneapolis. I had no defined responsibilities that kept me in the office. So I traveled a good deal for him. I was eyes and ears for him. I presided faithfully over the state senate. I tried never to miss a session. I developed very excellent relationships with the majority caucus of the state senate, even though we differed tremendously. I became very close friends with Senator Don Wright, Senator Val Imm, Senator John Zwach, Senator Gordon Rosenmeier, Senator Don Sinclair, Senator Robert Dunlap, and any number of them. They confided in me. When they had a message that they wanted the governor to get they gave it to me. I didn't violate their confidences. If they wanted to keep something confidential, I kept it. I honored that. I had very, very good relationships with them. I developed very good relationships with our own caucus. I understood the legislative process and I was, I think, a help to Governor Freeman in the legislative liaison. Seldom a day went by that I wasn't in the governor's office. Orville consulted with me on his appointments. Some I agreed with and some I disagreed with, but we worked together as a team with mutual self-respect. I enjoyed it.

At that time, the salary was low and, apart from the period of time when the legislature was in session, I had to have outside employment. So I was in the insurance business both in Rochester and later as an executive with Group Health. I helped establish the Group Health clinics. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons they brought me into that organization was to organize the first medical clinics of that nature in the metropolitan area. The Group Health clinic development today is something that I helped plan and organize in its very infancy. I did that when I was lieutenant governor. It was a good period in my life. I enjoyed it.

**MH:** What was it like being lieutenant governor under Freeman compared to being

lieutenant governor under Elmer Andersen?

**KR:** Oh, totally different...completely and totally different. I said earlier that scarcely a day went by that I wasn't in the governor's office as long as Orville Freeman was governor. But during the two years that Elmer Andersen was governor I was in the office but once and that was at the insistence of Joe Donovan, who was then the secretary of state. That occasion was the death of the archbishop. It's tradition in Minnesota that the constitutional officers attend the funeral of a high church person such as the archbishop in a group.

The constitutional officers were gathered in Governor Andersen's office to go down to the funeral and Joe Donovan observed that I was not present. It was his insistence that caused the governor's office to call and ask me to come down. This sounds as though I have a grudge against Governor Andersen. I did at that time to be honest about it. Since that time I think we have both mellowed a great deal.

When Orville Freeman was defeated I was elected for my fourth term. I set out then to run for governor. So there was really no love lost between Governor Andersen and myself. I carped at him. I criticized him. I again was in an enviable position -- I had a statewide office and no definitive responsibilities other than to be present during the legislative session. In the meantime, Elmer had to run the state. He had to be the governor. He had to be the chief executive. So there was no love lost between us at that time and I could understand it. I criticized him. I wasn't enabling him or complimenting him. They were kind of tough, nasty, demeaning years in a way but as I said, we've become....at least I have a considerable amount of respect for Elmer Andersen at the present time. Elmer Andersen was a better governor than he was given credit for by his own political party.

**MH:** I think there were factions within the party at that time.

**KR:** Yeah, yeah. He was not a forceful, decisive personality, and he had his back up against the wall. He did some good things as a senator.

**MH:** Having worked with the senate for several years, can you provide us with an insight as to how the senate operates? One thing I am particularly interested in is if there is a power group in the senate that actually runs the senate? And if there was during the time that you were lieutenant governor, who made up this group?

**KR:** Oh, there definitely is a power group. From long distance observation I'd have to say there's a power group at the present time. There was a power struggle within the power group. Senator Don Wright, who was chairman of the committee on taxes, was certainly one of the most powerful figures in the state legislature. Senator Tom Welch from Buffalo, Minnesota, was also very, very powerful. Those two worked very closely together. They were craftsmen. They were artists. Something that was imperfect in terms of structure of a

sentence or structure of a title of a bill offended them. I've seen either one or both of them from time to time take a legislative proposal that was improperly drafted and improve it, polish it, perfect it as to form and then kill it. They didn't even want to debate something that wasn't in good shape. They were very powerful, very knowledgeable and very skillful.

The other really powerful figure in the senate was Senator Gordon Rosenmeier from Little Falls. He was an extraordinary man, very competent, very gifted, a good speaker, and an unusual parliamentarian. I always knew when I was in trouble as a presiding officer. The senators usually carried their rule book in their upper breast pocket of their coat. In those days you always wore your "jacket" in the senate chambers. You always were properly dressed with a shirt, tie, and a suit coat. They kept the rule book in that upper breast pocket. They'd lean back in the chair and they'd pull out that rule book and start looking at the rules. And I knew that something would be happening. Wright and Rosenmeier both had their errand boys in the senate. I don't think it would serve any useful purpose to say who the errand boys were, but I could watch them. I'd see Don Wright pass a note to Senator so-and-so or see Gordon Rosenmeier call a page over and scribble a note. The page would go down to another senator and then the recipient of those notes or that message would get up and make the motion, but I knew where they came from. Very clever. Very able. Senator [Charles] Root, Senator [Robert] Dunlap, Senator [Donald] Sinclair were all in the power group. Senator [Val] Imm, who was chairman of the committee on finances, was not quite so much in the power group; Senator John Zwach, who later became a congressman, was not in the inside group. As a matter of fact, some of those in the inside group kind of snickered at him sometimes. The power group kept its power by appealing to a much broader segment. But the real powers were Wright and Welch and to a lesser degree Val Imm and John Zwach. And then of course Senator Rosenmeier who towered...never quite as openly as Wright or Welch, but always was there managing and handling. He was very clever, very talented and very able.

On our side of the aisle, always in the minority, Senator [Harold] Schultz was the minority leader. He understood the makeup of the senate a little bit better than some of his young cohorts did. Senator [Harold] Kaling, who later became Judge Kaling, and Senator Don Fraser, later a congressman, were active in the leadership roles. Senator Paul Thuet became the minority leader when Senator Schultz retired. Sandy Keith was never really a leader in the senate or in his caucus by any stretch of the imagination.

**MH:** Well, is there anything else that you'd like to say on the operations of the senate or on the lieutenant governorship that you feel can be useful to historians in the future?

**KR:** Well, no. Nothing specific. I can't think of a situation that has existed within my memory where the role of the lieutenant governor was as meaningful as it was when Orville Freeman was governor and I was lieutenant governor simply because of the close relationship between the individuals. It obviously didn't exist between me and Sandy Keith. It existed to some degree with Governor LeVander and his lieutenant governor [James

Goetz]. It certainly didn't exist with Wendy Anderson and Rudy Perpich. It doesn't exist today. It's hard to tell what'll happen with Governor [Albert] Quie now; but again it's obvious that they don't have the same kind of close relationship that Orv and I had. We were building together. Most often these relationships become marriages of convenience. Ours was not. It was quite different. I can't think of any place where that same kind of relationship existed. It hasn't in any other state that I know of. Of course I knew a lot of lieutenant governors and governors. So it was a good time.

**MH:** Well, you served with Governor Freeman for six years. How would you characterize his administration and Freeman as a governor?

**KR:** Orv was very forceful. He was innovative, opinionated. He built a good staff in the main. Tom Hughes was his administrative assistant and an expert political evaluator. Dorothy Jacobson was unusually gifted; she was on his staff. He had a few people who I didn't think so highly of, but those were the two principal ones. The governor's office in those days and in my day wasn't anything like it is now with the enormity of the size of the staff. We had some thirteen or fourteen people on our staff all told. Orv was a good administrator. He ran a tight ship. He was an intense competitor, an intense individual who worked hard and played hard. We relaxed a good deal together at the governor's cabin at Camp Ripley, the National Guard camp. We spent a lot of time in Florida together after our campaigns. I'd have to classify Orv as one of the small handful of truly good, if not great, governors we've had in Minnesota. I said opinionated. I mean that, but I mean it in a good sense. He was strong on his beliefs. If you caught him early you could persuade him, but once he had his mind made up it was seldom that you could change it. You knew where you stood. I don't say that with any kind of criticism at all. One of my regrets is that we sort of lost touch with one another. We correspond once in a while and get the Christmas cards off. That's about the size of it.

**MH:** At this time I'd just like to make a little note to any listeners who will be using the tape. Your recollections of the political events of the period from 1960 to 1966 are recorded in the project entitled "Minnesota Politics in the 1960s", which we'll be doing tomorrow. So the following questions on your career as governor are basically general ones. First of all, just a brief background of the campaign of 1962 -- the issues and just a brief summary of the campaign.

**KR:** Well, I don't know how you can summarize that very briefly.

**MH:** We'll be going into detail tomorrow and I just thought that for this project a brief summary of what were the major issues and of the recount...

**KR:** The major issues of course were those that were classical and separated the Republicans from the Democrats -- taxes, a sales tax, a lack of leadership, lack of forcefulness. The highway department became quite an issue in the last days of the

campaign. I'd have to go back and review I guess exactly. Taxes certainly were a big issue, as was labor legislation. We always tried to attach special significance to the national scene; at least I did. We tried to develop an empathy in the areas of agriculture between the DFL candidates and the plight of the farmer. I say plight advisedly.

Elmer Andersen made a few mistakes. In 1960 he'd taken a secret oath of office which was a very unfortunate thing. It's the kind of thing that Elmer Andersen wouldn't do today. I'm certain of that. Elmer Andersen had been elected governor and the governor daily makes appointments of notary publics. The state senate has to confirm those appointments. Literally hundreds and hundreds upon hundreds of them. Every day, it's a machine operation almost. You file a name and a fee and you receive a commission that you have been appointed by the governor of the state of Minnesota as a notary public. You pay a few dollars fee to get that appointment. Of course, the notary public validates all kinds of statements. When January came around Elmer Andersen apparently called Chief Justice Roger Dell long distance. Roger Dell came from Fergus Falls and was up there over the holidays. This is the way the story ran. Elmer Andersen wanted to become governor and couldn't wait. So he called up his friend, Roger Dell and said: "Roger, I want to go out to the Rose Bowl as governor. [Minnesota was playing in the Rose Bowl that year]. Why don't you give me the oath of office over the telephone?" Roger said: "Elmer, hold up your right hand and repeat after me." And so Elmer became governor of the state of Minnesota. Only two people knew about it -- Elmer Andersen and Roger Dell. Three weeks later it was headlines in the Minneapolis morning *Tribune*. It became an issue. The bonding company raised the question as to who was governor for the three or four days before Elmer Andersen took the oath of office before the joint session of the legislature and gave his inaugural message. Did Andersen become governor then or was it when he took the oath of office over the long distance telephone? The bonding companies raised the question as to who was governor. Were the appointments by Freeman to a notary public valid or were they made by a non-governor? Were the statements taken by those notary publics valid in a court of law? Raised all kinds of questions -- little subsidiary questions. The legislature finally had to pass a special bill validating the appointments of Orville Freeman. That didn't really become a very great issue in the campaign, but the story was told often enough that it sort of became a kind of thing that Elmer Andersen had a helluva hard time stopping. It was an actual fact. No denial was ever made of it. Why he did it, Lord only knows. Why Roger Dell participated in it, only Roger could say and Roger's dead now. It was not a very pretty picture by two rather distinguished Minnesotans. Roger Dell was a distinguished jurist; there's no questions about it. And Elmer Andersen is....as I said earlier, I respect him a great deal. That kind of little thing bothers one. We made something out of it.

Kennedy, of course, was the idol. We used every means we could to build an association in the public mind between John Kennedy and the man who was running for office on the Democratic ticket - meaning me.

**MH:** I remember he came to Minnesota.

**KR:** He came to Minnesota. We had a bean feed at the Hippodrome at the fairgrounds. I was invited to the White House on several occasions to meet with him. One of the little things that happened during that interim period was that I was invited to Scandinavia to lecture at the Scandinavian universities in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland by the State Department. Actually Humphrey arranged it. It was part of my campaign of building an image. These weren't issues in the campaign, but they were kind of issues, too. Instead of being just a non-governor, a lieutenant governor, and a carping critic of the incumbent, I became more of a reknowned, distinguished...whatever, you want to say, you know. So it was helpful. They weren't issues in the campaign, but they were part of the campaign.

**MH:** Well then, as governor what were the two or three most important issues confronting Minnesota during your term as governor?

**KR:** Oh, boy.

**MH:** I know reapportionment was a major one.

**KR:** Reapportionment was a terribly difficult one, just terribly difficult. It put me at odds with people like Senator Rosenmeier with whom I had very good relationships. I went out of my way to criticize Lloyd Duxbury, who was speaker of the House, for the first reapportionment bill they passed. The court had said we had a population deviation of 15%. I think that was the guidelines at that time. And in Lloyd Duxbury's district it was 35%. It was the biggest deviation of any district in the state. In my veto message, I pointed that out. I singled him out as the horrible example. Lloyd became so incensed that he refused to invite me to say goodbye to the House of Representatives, which had been tradition for 100 years in Minnesota. Both houses will send a committee to wait on the governor and inform him that the house is about to adjourn *sine die* and they'd like to have him come and say goodbye to them. He wouldn't do that. We were good friends before that and we've become very good friends since then. But that was very, very difficult and hard to work out. I guess I've strayed so far off the subject that I didn't even know the question. What were the issues?

**MH:** Yeah, the two or three major problems. Reapportionment was one.

**KR:** One of the major problems, which was not a legislative matter, was a natural disaster of 1965.

**MH:** The floods?

**KR:** The floods. It was just the most God-awful time. One of the most terrifying times in my life. We had the floods on every waterway in the state of Minnesota. The Red River running north into Canada and all the rivers draining there. The Red River was over 20 miles wide in parts of Minnesota and North Dakota. The Minnesota River was flooded

running south and east from Ortonville on the South Dakota border into the Twin Cities. The Mississippi was flooding all over the country. The St. Croix and rivers running into the St. Croix were flooding. Everything was flooded. Preceding that we'd had some terrible snow storms. St. Cloud had been isolated that year for three for four days. I didn't have the cooperation of the highway commissioner, General [James] Marshall, who was a hold-over appointee. He wouldn't run trucks. He didn't face the emergency despite the fact that he was a military man. The National Guard and the Civil Defense responded in that emergency. Then the cyclones and the tornadoes came right on the heels of the other disaster. There was a terrible one in Fridley and the northern suburbs. It was a ghastly period that whole spring.

Legislative-wise, education was important. The negotiations in setting up the junior college system, the creation of the Southwest State College of Marshall, and the expansion of the vocational training schools were all part of a big package. It required tedious, careful negotiations with the House and with the Senate. I received valuable support from the representative from Waseca, Rod Searle, who is now the leader of the Republicans in the state House of Representatives. He was very acute and very able...helpful to me. In the senate I negotiated with Paul Thuet, who was the minority leader, and Senator Zwach. It was very difficult.

Conservation was another issue. It was not then the Department of Natural Resources, but the development of a conservation program. We established the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation and Resources Commission, which wasn't a very good governmental way. It was poor government, but it was an effective way of answering some of the needs that had to be met. That was the only way we could do it at the time. People like Rosenmeier in the Senate wouldn't conceive of giving that kind of expanded program to the Department of Conservation. But we did a good job on it and got a lot of stuff done -- new parks and new trails.

**MH:** I believe the restoration of Fort Snelling came out of that program.

**KR:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm sure if I start thinking about it, I'd come to all kinds of things. I'd have to dwell on it a little bit. Appointments were also important. I take pride in the people I appointed to office when I was governor. I spent a lot of time on appointments. I was criticized at the time for cronyism. Editorial people had a field day, but they wound up writing editorials...If I sound bitter, I guess it's because I am. Talking about how good a highway commissioner John Jamieson was, how good a conservation commissioner Wayne Olson was, how good a Commissioner of Corrections Ray Lappegaard was. As a matter of fact, the *Minneapolis Star* called me after I'd been defeated as governor and seriously proposed that Wayne Olson should be continued in office as a commissioner of conservation. He had taken a leave of absence to run for attorney general in that 1966 election. While they were writing the editorials about me and cronyism in the state government, here, after the election, they were calling me, wanting to use their good offices to go to Harold LeVander, the governor-elect. They told me they could guarantee me that if

Wayne Olson would accept that he would become the Commissioner of Conservation under LeVander. So, I felt good about my appointments. I made good judicial appointments. I think it was perhaps easier for me to make good judicial appointments than it would be for a practicing attorney. I think I made better judicial appointments than Orville Freeman did. I made better judicial appointments than Wendy Anderson did. I think I could view it from a different perspective than they did. They'd both attorneys. I appointed good judges and spent a lot of time at it. I interviewed them.

I spent a lot of time in the field of mental health, but particularly with mental retardation. Countless hours on it and many, many trips. I spoke at the State Association for Retarded Children at conventions and spoke at their local chapter meetings. We did a lot for Cambridge. I had a couple of people on my staff who were particularly capable in that area. Miriam Karlins, who was not on my staff but was in the Department of Public Welfare, worked closely within that area. Sally Luther, who was directly on my staff, did a lot of work in that area and in education. They were extremely helpful to me. We spent countless hours in the area of retardation particularly and got a lot of legislation passed. Not specifically so much in legislation as in terms of better administration, tidying up the administration in the state institutions, and increased funding. We never got enough, but we substantially increased it. We were able to do something, I think, about focusing public attention on all our state institutions -- prisons as well as the hospitals.

**MH:** Who were your key advisors as governor?

**KR:** Both in and out of government. Ray Lappegaard was very helpful to me, extremely helpful. Ray had been in personnel work and he had been Assistant Commissioner of Welfare. He was and is a brilliant man in private industry. I used him as a Commissioner of Corrections and as Commissioner of Administration. I relied heavily on him. Sally Luther was a brilliant gal and a good speech writer. She had served in the legislature and knew the workings of the house particularly well; knew the nuances, the plays, the forces, and the counter-forces at work. She was very strong in education and very strong in public welfare and mental health. I relied on her a great deal. Miriam Karlins in Welfare. I had a lot of respect for Morris Hursch who was Commissioner of Welfare since Orville Freeman's days. Morris had been brought back into state government from Wisconsin by Orville Freeman. Morris had a long history of being active in Minnesota politics and welfare organizations, both private and public. He'd served in the office of Governor Benson, which not many people knew. So he knew a lot about government and knew a lot about politics in Minnesota. Steve Quigley was my first Commissioner of Administration. Excellent man. He never got the credit due him. Steve wasn't the greatest politician in the world, but he was extraordinarily competent when it came to facts, figures, and documentation. Nobody could cross him up...if Steve would give me some figures, I could rely on them. Jim Rice and Bill Shovell, who held down the office of Executive Secretary, were helpful; but they were political animals and I relied more on my own judgment in politics than theirs. I had good relationships with a lot of party leaders. Ben Wichterman, who had served in the state

House of Representatives and had been chairman of the committee on education was a confidant. He came from northwestern Minnesota. Gerald Heaney was then a practicing attorney and now is a federal judge. Orville Freeman, of course.

**MH:** That seems to be a pretty good list.

**KR:** Hubert Humphrey and all his people were also important.

**MH:** Moving on then. What piece of legislation in your administration were you most proud of?

**KR:** I don't think I can specify any one piece that I was most proud of. I was very proud of what I did in education. I was proud of the junior colleges. I was proud of the college in southwestern Minnesota. I was never really convinced that we needed that college, but it was a fact of life that we were gonna get one somewhere, somehow, some place. I responded to that political necessity of life. I negotiated for the college. I negotiated with John Zwach for it. It was tied up directly with the junior college legislation which set up the state system. They ran hand in glove together. Then the MORRC, Minnesota Outdoor Resources and Recreation Commission, which I had specified with specificity during the campaign. I outlined that exact proposal in a speech to the Hibbing Chamber of Commerce in July chapter and verse. We got it through. Elmer Andersen had proposed the same legislation, incidentally. However, I made mine first. He copied his almost verbatim from mine. He came out with it during the campaign. In fact it was plagiarized. It was plagiarized and I say that advisedly. But when it came to the bill's introduction and consideration after the re-count, he had never proposed any financing for it. I proposed a tax on cigarettes. One of the first delegations that came to see me in the governor's office was a committee of conservationists who were interested in it and wanted to know how do we finance it? I said with a cigarette tax. They asked if I would sponsor it? I said yes. And we went out and got it just like that, just because I said yes. Elmer had equivocated on it. This is one of the places where he had equivocated.

**MH:** Well, another thing that happened during your governorship was the first time that the governor had an executive mansion. Is there anything you'd like to say about that?

**KR:** Well, there are a lot of interesting stories about it, but I don't think there's anything that's of significance historically speaking. Bill O'Brien was a legislator related to the O'Brien lumbering interests. It was some kind of relationship with the Weyerhausers. He was related to the Irvines. He came to me and said that they had this house and wouldn't it be nice if the governor had a place to live. I said: "Yes, it would be." We started the ball rolling and finally persuaded the Legislature. We did a lot of work in restoring it. My wife was particularly active. She got a lot of the older families in St. Paul and Minneapolis interested. The Daytons were very helpful. John and Betty Meyers -- he was the president of the Hoerner Waldorf Corporation and an ardent Republican, but a good friend -- were very

helpful in getting the place restored. Roger Kennedy, one-time candidate for Congress against Eugene McCarthy, and a number of others raised money to restore the mansion. The Legislature had not appropriated any money for it. We didn't have a staff at that time, but we managed. I think we put it to good use. I think it was something that Minnesota had needed for a long time. Governors ought to not live in hotel suites.

**MH:** Did you move into the mansion, then, after you had served as governor for a while?

**KR:** Yes

**MH:** You lived in a hotel suite?

**KR:** No, no. I had my own home in St. Paul. But anybody who came in from out of town had to live in a hotel or take a temporary apartment.

**MH:** Well, one final question today. Since you left office in 1967 you've continued to do a lot of things. You served as ambassador to Iceland, I believe, and you've been involved with other political offices in Minnesota. Would you like to just summarize all these up?

**KR:** Well, we could spend a lot of time at that, Mark.

**MH:** I realize that.

**KR:** When I left office in 1967, Vice-President Humphrey asked me what my plans were and would I like a federal appointment. I said: "Well, yeah." He was instrumental; but it was Norman Sherman, his press secretary, who was primarily instrumental. President Johnson talked to me a couple of times.

There was some discussion about being the ambassador to Sweden and some about being the governor of one of the territories -- Samoa or Panama. When the suggestion came that I go to Iceland I was somewhat nonplused. In fact I was almost insulted. Iceland's a very small nation; it's a mini-republic really. It was Norman Sherman and Hubert who said: "Don't reject it out of hand. Think about it. And remember that Iceland is a member of NATO and that as such the embassy has special problems and special interests." I thought about it and accepted it after consideration. I have never regretted it for a single, solitary moment. It was an exciting development in my life. It gave me an opportunity for new horizons. Iceland was an exciting place. It was an exciting assignment and one with which I felt very comfortable. I knew the traditions of Iceland; Scandinavian traditions are so strong and Iceland is part of the Nordic community. The Icelandic language is old Norse. They feel very close to the Norwegians, closer perhaps than to any other outside nation. I couldn't understand or speak Icelandic so I spoke Norwegian and they understood me well. Of course most of them understand English. It was a very delightful assignment for me.

**MH:** How long did you serve in Iceland?

**KR:** I was appointed in March 1967 and I came home in June or July 1969. It was a little better than two years. I probably could have stayed on for a while if I had chosen to or worked at it. But it's tradition....It's not only tradition, but our resignation is requested. It's a presidential appointee and all presidential appointees tender their resignation to the incoming president whether it be of your own party or somebody else as it was in this case. But I had several talks with Nixon's Secretary of State, Mr. Rogers. I think that if I'd wanted to, I could have stayed in Iceland for a while. I didn't feel that it was proper to do so.

**MH:** What did you do upon returning to the United States?

**KR:** I had an offer to go into the banking business and I joined the staff at the Franklin National Bank. I say the staff at the Franklin National Bank but actually it was the holding company Interfinancial Corporation, which owned the bank and several other interests. I was on the board of directors of the Interfinancial Corporation, the Franklin National Bank and a couple of leasing companies --LuMac Leasing, which is an automobile and equipment leasing company, Intermotel, the latter is another peculiar company, building transient rooms for transportation companies, mainly railroads, for their train crews. So I went there with them for a couple of years.

**MH:** And then later on you served as Public Service Commissioner.

**KR:** Oh, yeah. In 1972 I became disenchanted with what was going on within the DFL Party. I was particularly disenchanted with party management and not so much with the governor's office. But I decided that I wanted to do something about it and one of the ways I could do something about it was to run for public office. The state convention was held in Rochester that year. Here I was a former party chairman, a former lieutenant governor, a former governor, and I was denied admission to the convention floor. And I became irate and angry. I said in effect: "Well, by God, I'll show 'em." I talked it over and somebody said: "Well, the only way you can show them, Karl, is to run for office." The only office open that year was public service commissioner. I ran for it and won handily. I served for five years as public service commissioner.

**MH:** Did the party endorse somebody at the convention for that office?

**KR:** They endorsed a fella by the name of Bill Walker who became a friend of mine. I talked to Bill about it during the convention in Rochester and we talked about it afterwards. I said: "I may run. If I do run, I'll let you know." I did let him know. I told him that there was not a personality problem, but that I was gonna run for office and I would win. He said: "You probably will." And I did.

**MH:** One more question. Would you like to say something about your family?

**KR:** Oh, we haven't said anything about the family. I have a son, Paul, and a daughter, Kristin. Both are married. Paul is a purchasing agent with the White Farm Equipment Company, or White Farm Company. It's a subsidiary of the White Motor Company and makes tractors, heavy farm equipment, and stuff like snowblowers. He travels all over the country -- all over the world, as a matter of fact. My daughter is married to a metallurgical engineer, who's employed by Polaris Snowmobile for six months of the year and runs a resort on Bowstring Lake the other six months. My wife and I are currently separated. I don't believe I have anything more to say about that.

**MH:** I have to apologize. One more question. What is your evaluation of the present status of the DFL Party and what do you think it has to do to correct itself or to get on the right track again after this past election?

**KR:** Oh, man, what an order!

**MH:** What do you think might be happening?

**KR:** Well, the DFL Party as it's currently constituted...I should say the leadership of the DFL Party...when I say the leadership I'm talking about an amorphous mass. I'm not talking about Rick Scott individually, or the national committeeman or committeewoman, or the state chairperson or chair state associate person...whatever they call them nowadays. They've lost touch with the electorate. This is represented in the personage of Don Fraser. I say this with some difficulty because I have a great deal of respect for him. He's courageous. He's innovative. He's unrealistic. I said this with all seriousness during the campaign. The problem with Don and a lot of the people holding higher positions is that they believe that they're born to govern. Don had absolutely no chance of being elected to the United States Senate and I've said this for years. As a matter of fact, he was one of the persons that I could have appointed when I appointed Mondale to fill the vacancy created when Hubert Humphrey was elected vice-president. But he doesn't have touch with the broad electorate. He never did understand Minnesota outside the city of Minneapolis. This is symptomatic of the problem that the whole DFL has. The women's caucus in urging people not to vote for Bob Short, for example, was completely unrealistic. Short and Dave Durenberger were not far apart on the issues affecting the women, but their venom was such that they just couldn't accept the fact that Bob Short had defeated Don Fraser. Shortsightedness, completely unrealistic. I don't think Bob Short ran the best campaign in the world by any stretch of the imagination. Matter of fact, if he'd run a little different campaign, he probably could have won by a very substantial margin. Contrary to the belief of a lot of the pundits, it wasn't a Republican cross-over that beat Don Fraser. It was just the plain people who were voting for what Short represented; they had confidence in him. I traveled the state quite a bit during the campaign. Bob Short had been there. He'd shaken their hands. They didn't know Fraser. Fraser didn't get out. He can't mix; he doesn't mix. Bob Short can and does. You can't rely on electronic media only -- the way these people think you can.

The DFL Party as it's presently constituted is going to have some years of difficulty ahead unless they come to some... You don't exist just for the sake of being in control of a political party. Many of the very people who were engaged in the "Stop Short campaign," and they called it the Stop Short, were those who were opposed to me in 1966. Same names. Identical. They haven't changed one bit. They're as unrealistic today as they were then. Without a doubt they cost me my election. I accept that. They maybe didn't agree with everything I did. Maybe they didn't say so, but they were probably upset with some of my personal problems. I'm talking now about alcoholism. However that wasn't the controlling factor in 1966 by any stretch of the imagination. But the alternatives, you see, is what you have to look at. Because we had a Republican governor, we got a sales tax in Minnesota. We didn't need a sales tax at that time. We had money in the state treasury. We had more income than we had outgo at that time. We didn't need it. You find the same things happening today that happened then. It's their way or else. You can't make any achievements that way. Now we've got two Republican senators, a Republican governor, and an even split in the house. If the senate were up for election today, they'd have lost the senate without a question. I talked early about the pendulum theory. The pendulum is swinging and it's swinging against the DFL. I don't know if there's anything they can do to stop it. They certainly can't stop it the way they're going. That's an assured fact.

**MH:** Well, thank you very much.

**Interview with Karl Rolvaag**

**Interviewed by Mark Haidet**
**December 12, 1978**

**MH:** Today is December 12, 1978. This is Mark Haidet interviewing former Minnesota governor, Karl Rolvaag, at Karl's residence on Bowstring Lake. In 1960 Orville Freeman, who had been the dominant figure in the DFL Party in Minnesota for a number of years, was defeated in his bid for a fourth consecutive gubernatorial term. What, in your opinion, were some of the reasons for his defeat?

**KR:** Well, first of all, he had the three term sound barrier to break. No governor had ever been elected for a fourth term, and very few had sought it. So he was breaking tradition. Secondly, I've always maintained that he caught the anti-Catholic backlash in the Kennedy election. It was a very close election in the state, a very odd election, really. I'm citing these statistics now from memory from way back - almost 20 years - and I could be wrong a little bit, but the thrust is there. Senator Humphrey carried the state by 250,000 votes. Senator Kennedy carried the state by approximately 20,000 votes and perhaps a little bit more, maybe 22,000. Orville Freeman lost his bid for election by some 20,000 votes. I carried the state, if memory serves me right, by 140,000 or 150,000 votes. So here was a wide divergence of the approach by the electorate to the individual candidates. Kennedy was very popular. Orville had made the nominating speech for John Kennedy at the Los Angeles convention and clearly identified himself with Kennedy. He campaigned extensively for Kennedy, with Kennedy. Actually he did more campaigning, I think, for Kennedy than he did for himself. I'd have to go back and look very carefully at the schedules and the records to insist that was correct, but it certainly was there. During the closing days of the campaign, Orv went on a statewide television network and made an impassioned plea to the electorate to dismiss from their minds bigotry and anti-Catholicism. It was a very courageous act, and it certainly had a backlash as far as Governor Freeman was concerned. I think those are the two main factors. And, of course, you can't live in that governor's office for long and not build up a core of resistance. You do something for somebody, and you're gonna do something against somebody. Orv had been a good governor. He'd been there long. He was decisive and capable of making decisions. He didn't let things drag out. But I think those are the two main factors - the three-term tradition and the anti-Catholic backlash on Kennedy.

**MH:** What was your reaction to Freeman's defeat?

**KR:** Well, I was philosophical about it. We always recognized the fact that we might go to the well once too often when we're in politics. I was upset about it. I didn't know what kind of governor Elmer Andersen would make. I had some reservations about him. It

appeared not to be very pleasant to have a divided house in the executive branch such as that. I approached the election with some trepidation, some fears, anxieties; but you accept the decisions.

**MH:** When did you decide, then, that you were going to run for governor?

**KR:** The next day.

**MH:** The next day?

**KR:** Yeah. Immediately. My father-in-law passed away on election night. We got the notification of his death while we were listening to the returns up in the suite in the old Nicollet Hotel in Minneapolis. My wife and I packed up immediately and went to Texas. The day I came back I had lunch with the state chairman, Adrian Winkle, and Geri Joseph, who I think was the national committee-woman at that time. Yes, I know she was. She is now ambassador to the Hague. I served notice on them that I was running for governor. I had already made up my mind and that was it.

**MH:** For the next two years you served with Governor Elmer Andersen. What was your impression of the governor and his administration?

**KR:** Elmer Andersen was not a strong governor. He was a nice person, a kindly person, but not a decisive one. Odd because I would think that in his business life that he would have to be a very decisive, aggressive, determined decision-maker. He didn't come across that way as governor. He espoused some rather unpopular causes. He had been a good senator; he had been strong on civil and human rights. For example, he sponsored the Open Occupancy Bill in the state senate. He and I worked very closely on that bill, incidentally. But he must have been a "tough" decision-maker to be able to get the support of his party. It probably wasn't easy. I'm sure he had some good, hard competition to get the nomination. But when he got into the governor's office he took a different stance. He didn't come across as a strong, effective, determined leader of men and women. I didn't make life easy for him. I criticized him publicly. Probably did too much of it when I reflect on it. I became kind of identified as a carping, dirty, mean son-of-a-bitch, but that's the way the cookie crumbled at that time.

**MH:** I remember reading where Elmer Andersen said that he looked at government as democracy and he thought that the legislature should rule. Once he lost control and didn't exert leadership, he couldn't come back and regain it.

**KR:** Oh, he was openly criticized on the floor of the senate by his own party leaders. They referred to him as the "Little Boy Scout in the southwest corner of the Capitol Building." That was sort of symptomatic of his problems. He didn't manage the legislature at all. Well, you'd have to check; I don't know whether there were any vetoes

or not.

**MH:** Well, then, going back to the previous question led to another question. When you informed these people - Geri Joseph and the others - that you were going to run for governor, what was their reaction at the time?

**KR:** I don't remember what their reaction was. We had lunch at the Anglesey Cafe on Hennepin Avenue. I don't know if it's still even in existence. My decision was not unexpected. They weren't shocked, surprised, or dismayed. They probably thought that I was making a rash decision too early. But I got along well with Geri Joseph and Adrian Winkle and most of the party leadership at that time.

**MH:** Well, what action did you take, then, during the next two years - 1961 and 1962 - to secure the party endorsement in 1962?

**KR:** I used my office as lieutenant governor as a center-point, center stage. Everybody was always welcome. That was nothing new; I'd been doing that for years. I traveled extensively. Without exception, if I could possibly make an invitation, and I always got dozens of more invitations to speak than I could possibly get to, I did. But I traveled night and day. I tried to maintain the posture of being a working lieutenant governor during the legislative sessions. I mentioned yesterday, I think, that the trip to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland which was sort of an image-building event. I worked very closely with Labor. Labor had a vast influence in our party. I think at that time more so than they do now. I always had been comfortable with organized labor leaders. We had an exceptional group of very fine men at that time. I knew John Kennedy and was several times at the White House for working luncheons with him and other governors, as well as social functions. I made the most of those kind of appearances. Kennedy was a very popular figure. I enjoyed my association with him and with his staff, Kenny O'Donnell and the rest of the so-called "Irish Mafia" from Boston.

**MH:** For a brief period in 1962 a group of DFLers who opposed your candidacy attempted to persuade Walter Mondale to declare his candidacy for the governorship. What was your reaction to this movement and its leaders?

**KR:** Well, yes, I'm not even sure to this day I know who all the leaders were. I didn't believe and don't believe now that Mondale really had very much of a show. I had delegation after delegation tied up around the state. There were some young, local, able, talented attorneys who were for him; but I wasn't really overly concerned about that. I remember one incident with Chuck Bannister, for example. Chuck was the head of the culinary trades in Duluth. In fact he was the president of the Culinary Trades Council of Minnesota. He later became my campaign manager. Just before the state convention of the AFL-CIO the year before the election (we both attended the convention). Bannister called me in and said that he had some money for me. He said, "With your permission,

I'm gonna call Mondale in, and I'm gonna give you the money (I forget now what the donation was). I'm gonna tell Mondale that if he decides that he is ready to run for governor, he doesn't get a goddamn dime from organized labor, if I got anything to say about it." And he did that in his very blunt way. He just told Mondale he wasn't gonna get any support. Bannister was president of the Duluth Trades and Labor Assembly, one of the top labor leaders in the state and very influential. That was just one little episode of the kind of support I had in organized labor.

**MH:** Well, then, at the 1962 convention in Duluth Sandy Keith, who had earlier opposed your candidacy, was endorsed for lieutenant governor. From what I've been able to ascertain, apparently with your approval. How did Sandy's endorsement come about?

**KR:** Well, first of all, Sandy was not my first choice by an stretch of the imagination. I had talked to a great number of possible candidates. Paul Thuet was one. Freddy Gina was one. Larry Yetka was one. Larry's now on the Supreme Court of the state of Minnesota. Don Wozniak was one. Did I mention Paul Thuet?

**MH:** Yes. Skjervold?

**KR:** Paul Skjervold was after it, but I didn't really take him seriously. They all said no. Jerry Dillon, the printing executive from Minneapolis and candidate for mayor in Minneapolis several times, was putting on a good organized campaign; but I just plain didn't think Jerry had the tough fiber. I was very fond of Jerry Dillon, but I didn't think he had it. It wasn't until late in the convention that the delegation from Rochester, my friends, my supporters from Rochester came to me. They'd had a long visit with Sandy, and Sandy had said that he'd made a mistake and that he was sorry he'd said the things he had said. He also said that he was ready to accept me as the leader and accept me as the gubernatorial candidate all the way. I had some reservations at the time, but we were in a dilemma. So Sandy became the nominee.

**MH:** Had you met any time previously to that with George Farr and other party leaders to discuss...

**KR:** I don't recall

**MH:** OK.

**KR:** I don't recall. I'm sure the question had been raised.

**MH:** Well, what was your impression of the young senator at the time? Did you feel that the two of you could actually work together as a team?

**KR:** We could have, if his undying ambition hadn't stood in his way all the time. He was

emotionally unstable. I guess with hindsight the answer would be no, we probably couldn't have worked together. We didn't work together. I had no confidence in him. His ambitions got in his way. There's no question that he could have been the candidate for governor had he chosen to be after I got through. If I had won that election in 1966, that would have been my last term. Sandy would have been the logical one to be in line. But he was misled and misguided; he misjudged the situation. It's very analogous to what happened this last election (1978) in Minnesota.

**MH:** With Don Fraser?

**KR:** With Don Fraser. He spent too much time with his old supporters and not enough time with the general public.

**MH:** Well, then, Ronald Stinnett in his book *Recount* has characterized the gubernatorial campaign as having been rather bland prior to the Highway 35 issue. David Lebedoff state, "Each side sought desperately for some last minute issue that would tip the electoral balance." Do you agree with these assessments of the situation?

**KR:** I guess I do to a degree. I'm not quite so certain that we were... In the campaign you try to put together a winning formula, and I thought we had it. The Highway 35 matter was a mess. I don't think it did me any good at all. I think if we'd not gotten into that Highway 35 issue, there wouldn't have been a recount. I was right, as a matter of fact, on Highway 35. I was told so by the contractor after the campaign. I think we were looking around for issues. It's like a dream -- I don't remember parts of that campaign. It was a long time ago. I guess I'd have to go back and look at the records. Somewhere I have them. There was not a sharp cleavage, but I don't know when there is in the races for governor in Minnesota.

**MH:** You mean a sharp division between the two parties?

**KR:** Yeah.

**MH:** In voting totals?

**KR:** No, in issues.

**MH:** It seems like most of the time they're calling for similar ones. I'm doing a project on gubernatorial elections, and there's really not that much of a difference.

**KR:** There's not. There was a sharp distinction in 1958 when George MacKinnon ran against Orville Freeman. That was a nasty, bitter campaign. We felt that George MacKinnon was a junior Joe McCarthy. But usually there's very little difference on issues. The sales tax, of course. We used the sales tax issue very extensively in 1966. We

also used the sales tax issue in 1960 and 1962.

**MH:** Well, whether it was designed to be or not, the Highway 35 issue became a major issue in the last days of the campaign. Can you describe in as much detail as possible how the issue developed within the DFL Party?

**KR:** Well, first we have to distinguish that it did not develop within the DFL Party. It developed in my campaign structure and organization. I guess the problems have been pretty accurately reported. Concrete was poured under weather conditions when it was too cold. If I remember correctly, the quality of materials used wasn't quite right. I believe that was an issue. It came from inspectors on the job. And that's about the size of it. John Blatnik was very upset about it. He was on the Bureau of Public Roads. I don't know if he's become chairman by that time or not. I don't remember. He said he could have used it and would have used it. I guess that's the only way we... It came to our attention that the highway construction was improper, that concrete had been poured in conditions that were inappropriate, that substandard materials were used. Regulations were violated and we brought that out.

**MH:** Was there a division within the party as to its use? Were there people who objected to using it as a political issue?

**KR:** I don't recall that. I don't think there were. They might say now they did, but I can't really believe that they did. It was perfectly legitimate. If we believed those things to be true, it was perfectly legitimate, perfectly legitimate. If we had been convinced that they were spurious charges, that would have been a different matter. I was convinced then that they were true and, based on what I've heard since, I have to believe it to be true. And driving that highway, incidentally, I have to believe it to be true. They're still fooling around with that road around Hinckley.

**MH:** Do you feel that Andersen overreacted to the charges that were made? I know that's one criticism that a lot of people interviewed for this project have made.

**KR:** Well, he reacted so violently that one had to believe that there was something to it. I can't say whether Andersen overreacted or not. You'll have to ask him that question.

**MH:** Can you recall how you felt on election night and the subsequent days? It was a long time before even the initial vote totals were known because it was so close.

**KR:** I went to bed about three or four o'clock in the morning. I was about 20,000 votes ahead at that time... something like that. Something impelled me...some little voice said: Don't claim victory. Normally a person would. At that time, the voting machine precincts came in early - St. Paul, Minneapolis, and some of the suburbs. Owatonna and two or three other places had machines at that time. Usually, if you were 20,000 votes ahead at

two or three o'clock in the morning, you were the winner. But something said don't do it. And there was a tabulation error.

**MH:** I think it was in Edina.

**KR:** I don't know. Well, no, it couldn't have been that much. It had to be a transposition of figures statewide someplace. It was in one of the wire services. So I woke in the morning, and I was behind instead of ahead. I promised my wife that we were gonna take a vacation in Mexico win, lose, or draw. Well, we postponed it. Wednesday we didn't go, Thursday we didn't go, and Friday we didn't go. I think it was Saturday that we finally went. As I left the airport we caught something like a noon day flight or 1 o'clock afternoon flight. I picked up the first edition of the *Minneapolis Star*. The headlines were: "Recount likely. Rolvaag leads by one vote." That's a stimulating way to go on a vacation.

**MH:** Did you do any planning on your vacation?

**KR:** No, I just tried to forget the whole thing. They were still counting, recounting, and checking ballots. Leaving Mexico City ten days later, I called home. Of course I called frequently. I was about 300 -- the figure that sticks in my mind was 380 votes ahead. When I landed at Wold Chamberlain Field my campaign manager, Chuck Bannister, met me and said my 300 vote lead had evaporated to 80 some. They had a central committee meeting on that day. I went immediately from the airport to that central committee meeting. It was at that meeting that the process was set up over the objection of a good many of the party leadership.

**MH:** While we're on that subject, what type of relationship existed between you and the state central committee during the recount proceedings?

**KR:** Tenuous at best. I was very irritated. I didn't think that they were doing their job. When you say the executive committee or the state central committee, you've gotta reduce it to the leading figures. The DFL Party was broke. They hadn't given me any money and hadn't raised any money for me during the campaign. As a matter of fact, I paid telephone bills for them. I think it was a $5,000 telephone bill during the recount. Bill Kubicek, who had been a long-time, close, personal friend of mine, was undergoing some mental stress and strain at the time. He said we couldn't afford a recount. I said: "Bill, just get the hell out of my way and out of my life. We're gonna have it. We aren't going to sit idly by and surrender an election that I believe we've won." It was a very traumatic experience. George Farr was no help at all. It had to be a personal effort. I assembled around me a group of people. This is where Clayton Nelson, a New Prague attorney, came to the fore. It was at that meeting that I met Clayton Nelson, incidentally. Syd Berde, a St. Paul attorney who had been active in my campaign, had started to set up the process. Syd was not psychologically geared to handle a recount like that. He was a

fine gentleman, and I have no quarrels or qualms about Syd Berde, but Clayton Nelson just arrived. He was God-sent almost. He took over with my permission and ran the show. A remarkable individual.

**MH:** Going back a little bit, initial returns showed that you were a winner by 58 votes, but several weeks later Andersen was certified by the state canvassing board. What strategy did you pursue during these weeks up to the state canvassing board meeting when Andersen was certified?

**KR:** Well, the strategy was very simple. It really was beyond our control. It was in the hands of the secretary of state. There were questionable ballots that were ruled on by the canvassing board. We tried to turn over every stone to get all the votes finalized. Of course we couldn't do it. We later found that out. We were talking about 80-90,000 ballots, and there was no way we could do that in the short time between the election and the canvassing board meeting. But insofar as we were able to, we checked all the returns. We checked the local returns for the very simple mathematical errors.

**MH:** What were your general feelings as the recount proceedings dragged on and on from election time in November until you became governor late in March? There was a four-month period there. How did you feel during those four months?

**KR:** It was a tense period, a frustrating period. I was convinced I'd won. Clayton Nelson had come to me early in the recount along with Tom Downs. Tom Downs was a Detroit, Michigan attorney who had handled two recounts for Governor G. Mennen, "Soapy" Williams in Michigan. When I saw that we were gonna have a recount, I called the Auto Workers. I called one of the Ruther brothers and said I needed help and I'd like to get Tom Downs. He had been on a retainer by the Auto Workers. They dispatched him, and Tom came and spent practically full-time here for two or three months. Clayton Nelson and Tom Downs came to me…Oh, I'd have to believe it was in December. They said: "There is no question in our minds but what you haven't won the election. You'll be governor sometime in late February or early March by a margin of 75 to 135 votes. If you want to take a different route and pursue the recount to the absolute final stages, your victory margin will be up around 7,500. You have to make the choice which way you want to go." I went home and I talked to my wife about it. We sat up all night and talked about it. When you're talking about an election determining who's governor of the state by a margin of 75 to 135 votes, it's pretty thin. I was depending entirely on volunteer help at that time. We had teams in every county seat in the state. We also had teams of lawyers traveling all over the state. As a matter of fact, they went to other areas of the country to interview and to take depositions and affidavits from voters who had voted in the election and moved. I didn't think that there was any way that I could hold a volunteer force of 150 people, devoting all their time, *all of their time*, to the recount. So I decided that we'd take the short route. Clayton was remarkably close to it.

**MH:** 91 votes.

**KR:** 91 votes.

**MH:** Well, what did he have in mind for the long route, the one that would guarantee a 7,500 margin?

**KR:** The handling of all the absentee ballots. Again, I'd have to go back and check on it. I dismissed it from my mind. It was impractical. I couldn't do it. So I've never dwelled on that aspect of it. I'm sure I have it in the records, but it was dealing with absentee ballots.

**MH:** Well, what problems…

**KR:** Incidentally, I should say this dealing with the recount. It was significant that the three judges ruled unanimously on every contested ballot and ruled unanimously on every point of law. That was important to me. It meant that there was really no recourse to appealing their decision. The fourth judge, Judge John Graff, who was the back-up judge, sat in on the same discussions and had the same feelings. He told me this later. It was unanimous, completely unanimous. And much to the credit of Minnesotans, there was no evidence of fraud…none. We believed, and I still believe, that there was one case of fraud in Washington County that would have amounted to about 31 ballots, the court decided that they would rather count a dishonest ballot cast than to eliminate an honest ballot cast. Pretty good judgment. So they threw that particular challenge out. To this day I think there was some tampering, but be that as it may, that's the only shred of evidence that you can really lay your hands on. I think it was 29 or 30 ballots out of 1,400,000 cast…1,500,000 or whatever it was. So it's pretty remarkable and it's a real credit to the people of Minnesota.

**MH:** What types of problems did you encounter during the recount proceedings? Were there any major ones?

**KR:** No. I didn't really have any problems. (pause) Yes, how do you get the damn job done? One rather ticklish situation that I had to face was to eliminate Syd Berde from his controlling position and put Clayton Nelson in. I didn't like to do that. That was difficult for me because Syd was such a thoroughly decent individual, but he just wasn't getting the job done. We had problems of fund raising. Massive campaigns to raise money. It came in in dollars, two dollars, five dollars, very gratifying. If we had used the kind of organizational effort in the campaign that we used in the recount, there would have been no recount whatsoever. It was beyond a doubt the best political organization that was ever set up in the state, bar none. Anybody can challenge me on it. Both sides had an excellent organization. It was the genius of Clayton Nelson principally and the dedicated work of some of my close advisors and helpers - Harold Kalina, Steve Quigley, Jim Rice, and any number of people. I have a transcript of the court records. I have never looked at them. I

suppose some day I will. One of the things I want to do up here on Bowstring Lake is go over and review that. Bear in mind now that I'm rambling around a little bit, Mark. I haven't thought about this since those days, you know.

**MH:** It's been a while. It's a shame that projects like this are undertaken so long after the event.

**KR:** One is always inclined to repress and forget the difficult. You remember the pleasant.

**MH:** I realize that and it's been about 16 years. It's been quite a while.

**KR:** And so much has happened in those ensuing 16 years.

**MH:** I can't even remember what I did 16 years ago. Well, what type of relationship had existed between you and Sandy Keith both during the campaign and the recount proceedings?

**KR:** Sandy Keith was not instrumental in the recount at all. I believe yesterday we talked a little bit about deficit financing. He was desperate; he wanted to go out and float a loan of $30,000 at the end of the campaign. I said absolutely not. I would be no part of it. He went his way and I went mine. The handwriting was on the wall then. He was not beneficial in the campaign. He was not helpful to me; he was helpful to Sandy Keith. He carried out a good campaign. I don't mean to suggest that he didn't. He did. He carried on a good campaign, given the resources that we had. The physical endurance alone is a real problem in those campaigns. But the constructive, suggestive basis. He was woefully lacking. After the election he just took off, went down to Florida. Spent some time around the swimming pool in a hotel in Florida. He happened to be talking - he was not aware of it - to the governor of Connecticut around that swimming pool. And of course the governor of Connecticut reported to me what were his attitudes. It was no surprise. Sandy is a strange entity. I told some newspaper man that he's a nonentity and he is. He completely dropped out of the whole body politic. He's apparently a successful attorney and that's what he's doing. He had great promise. Unfortunately we couldn't harness him.

**MH:** One question that I was interested in for interest's sake is: David Lebedoff writes that while you were waiting, Andersen continued as governor for three months. You had an office down in the basement of the capitol which he describes as very crowded and as "the broom closet." Is this an accurate description?

**KR:** Yes, yes. It was very tiny. I had persuaded Bill Shovell, a former legislator who had gone to Washington, to come back from Washington. He was in a pretty good position in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. He came back to serve as my administrative assistant then and if I got to be governor. I forgot the question.

**MH:** About the office; just a description.

**KR:** As a matter of fact, there was a television crew. We had television all the time in there from ABC, CBS, and NBC. They came from Chicago, Washington, and New York. It was Bernie Eisenberg. Well, it was an ABC producer who came with a crew from Chicago one day. He labeled that the "broom closet" and it stuck. It would have no bearing on the outcome of the recount, but I certainly became the underdog. I had popular support largely as a result of that little phrase. That room was just large enough for two desks and some filing cartons is all. It was very tiny. It couldn't have been 10'x 6' or something like that.

**MH:** Small.

**KR:** They had offered me another room which incidentally was the women's restroom on the first floor of the capitol. The toilets, of course, were in a separate room, but this was their retiring room. I just shook my head t that. I could see the outcry that would come if Karl Rolvaag took over the women's restroom on the first floor of the state capitol. I opted for that broom closet. It was a good option. during that period we followed the legislation very closely. We were saddled with Elmer Andersen's appointments. That was another story.

**MH:** Would you care to go into that?

**KR:** Well, I didn't think it was proper. I thought it was an abuse of power. Apart from that, I didn't think it was legal. The Supreme Court later did say that when a governor sends an appointment down to the Senate for confirmation that it then becomes the property of the Senate and is no longer the property of the Governor or the governor's office. When I did take the oath of office, I tried to recall those appointments and tried to send other appointments down of my own. But it didn't work that way. So I was saddled with them. We made something of the midnight appointments. And of course the partisanship of the senate came out very clearly.

**MH:** Republican-controlled?

**KR:** Yeah.

**MH:** Finally on March 25 you left your basement office to become Governor of Minnesota. How did you feel at that time in relation to the program Andersen had brought up in the Legislature and just overall that you had finally become governor?

**KR:** Well, I guess there's only one word to describe it – elation. I had become so thoroughly convinced of the fact that I'd won the election that I felt great about it. I had

some concerns about how I would be accepted. I couldn't refer to the ringing mandate of the electorate. But I found it really made no difference. A governor is a governor, whether he wins by 25 votes, 100 votes, or 100,000 votes. He's governor. I had the power and I exercised it. It really didn't cause me any problems. There were some unhappy people as a result of it, but there are a lot of unhappy people about any election. So it was a big day.

The Legislature was so far down the road that it was well nigh impossible to change the course of legislation very much. Appropriations committees were beginning to mark up their appropriation bills. Tax bills were being looked at. They can always be changed in the last minute, and they often are; but long-range programming was almost out. It wasn't completely. We did get the MORRC legislation through. I had the immediate problems of putting together a staff. I hadn't really given a lot of thought to that. Certain people stuck out as naturals. I think we managed all right when you look backwards. I was satisfied. We did a good job. I don't even remember the particularly controversial pieces of legislation. Reapportionment came up the second session.

**MH:** I can't really recall either.

**KR:** Reorganization of the Conservation Department came up the second session. I vetoed the Sunday closing bill. I don't remember whether that was in the second session or the first session. Very controversial piece of legislation, incidentally. It's hard to believe that it created such a furor given the present situation when all the stores are open on Sundays, but at that time all the big retailers were trying to forbid sales by law. There was somewhat the same emotional attitude on that issue at that time as there is about abortion today. Daylight Savings Time was an issue; it always was in those days. There was no way you could win on that one, no way. That was very uncomfortable. That's gone away now.

**MH:** Moving on. From what I've been able to ascertain, some party leaders were very critical of certain aspects of your administration. For instance, a lack of support for liberal legislative candidates in the 1964 election; poor communications with party officials; and criticisms of your staff. Do you feel that these criticisms were valid?

**KR:** No, no. I had a liaison with party officials. I was in close contact with George Farr. Are you talking now about the 1964 election, the 1966 election, or the whole period?

**MH:** No, the 1964 election for the legislative candidates. After 1964 people had some criticisms of you for not actively supporting liberal legislative candidates.

**KR:** I can't remember a time when I refused to support a DFL candidate for the legislature. In northwestern Minnesota, my closest advisor was Ben Wichterman, and he was in the legislature. On the Iron Range, I had nothing but the best relationships with the Vukelich brothers, Tom who was in the senate; Fred Cina; Larry Yetka. I had good

relations with Earl Bestor, who was not in the legislature, but was on the state central committee. He was head of the steelworkers on the Iron Range and was very active politically. In St. Paul, I was in constant contact with Harold Schultz, who was the minority leader in the senate. In Minneapolis, there was no question, no problems. I don't know where that stems from. I don't think it was true.

**MH:** What was your feeling towards George Farr throughout the four years and the party leaders? Do you feel that there was a good working relationship with them after what had happened during the recount proceedings?

**KR:** No. I think we drifted further and further apart, though I did talk to George Farr frequently. I felt that they were significantly, notoriously and inappropriately absent from the legislative halls. I remember very distinctly one day calling George Farr and getting hold of Jim Peterson, who was then the executive secretary. I was just lacing him, dressing him down something awful because they weren't over at the capitol. And poor Jim was, I suppose, doing his job. The bureaucracy of the DFL became more of a bureaucracy to defeat itself than it did to win elections and support people in office. Unfortunately that was true.

When it came to the matter of the appointment of the United States Senator and Attorney General, we mentioned Dave Graven yesterday. I've often said that Dave Graven was one of the people at Sugar Hills who had a legitimate complaint; erroneous, but legitimate in his eyes. When it came to the appointment of the attorney general I had a number of people to consider. One was the man who did get it, Bob Mattson, Sr. He was a recommendation of Walter Mondale, Miles Lord, and John Blatnik. But I was also considering Dave Graven. I had been put in the position of asking people whether or not they would accept an appointment if it was tendered to them for commissioners. Then they promptly went out and held a news conference saying that they'd been offered it. I called George and we sat outside the governor's office in my car. I said: "George, I want you to go to Dave Graven and find out whether or not he would accept the appointment if it was tendered to him. I'm not offering it to him, but find out if he would accept it if I tendered it." So he said OK. Dave Graven interpreted the subsequent conversation with Farr as an offer of the job. And of course he was shocked when he didn't get it. He wanted it. I had to believe that George Farr was astute enough to know better. He's no dummy. George was a good white suit man, or the life of the party, but state chairman has to be a little bit more than that.

They were biting the hand that fed them. I paid their bills, literally paid the bills of the party. It came out of my campaign funds and the funds we raised for the recount. George is not an organizer. I had pretty good relationships with Geri Joseph. I don't know whether she thinks so but I thought so. I devoted a lot of time to mental health and mental retardation, and she had gained a reputation for herself in that field when she was a reporter for the *Tribune*. So I often talked to her about the problems in that area. I think

Lebedoff makes the point that I had none of the experienced political leaders and state executive committee members around me. Well, that's a far cry from the truth. Mike McLaughlin was a county chairman, a district chairman, and my campaign manager. He was close to me. Steve Quigley was on the state executive committee. Gerald Heaney had been Democratic national committeeman. He was very close to me. The finance director of the party was very close to me. I was responsible for getting George Farr elected state chairman. I say that advisedly. Humphrey didn't want Farr; he had his own man. I wanted Farr at the time. I was lieutenant governor. We got him. Farr had worked in my office when I was lieutenant governor. [pause] I think it's true that I probably handled what I knew best the poorest. I didn't handle my relationships with the party very well and I'd been there. I'd been state chairman; I had organized the state; I had traveled countless thousands of miles. But I didn't handle it. I don't know how I could have done better, but I didn't handle it right. I guess that's true, but what is right? I was running down some of the figures and faces. Dave Neiswanger, editor of the labor paper in Austin from the packing house workers, was a dear friend and close advisor. He was the First district chairman. In the Second district, I was very close to Gordy Spielman and Tom Kelm. Gordy was the district chairman. It was the only district I had that consistently supported me at the 1966 convention. The Third district was up for grabs. I didn't have the best relationships there. The Fourth district was good. Bob Hess, Mike McLaughlin. Bob Hess was a difficult one to figure out.

**MH:** Why was that?

**KR:** Why was he difficult to figure out? You'd have to ask Bob Hess. Bob, for example, was very strong on Bill Shovell. Before I asked Bill to come back from Washington to work for me during the recount in the "broom closet," I checked it out with Bob Hess. He said: "By all means. He's a very good guy, extraordinary, good liaison with the Legislature." Bill Shovell was chairman of the House Appropriations Committee when he was in the house. I couldn't not have good relationships with the legislature. Sally Luther on my staff was a long-time member of the state Legislature.

After the convention at the Lexington Hotel when Sandy received the endorsement, Sandy became nervous and ill. Bob Hess came to me one night. He called and asked if he could come over to the mansion. He had gotten Sandy Keith to agree to withdraw from the race.

**MH:** He told me about that.

**KR:** Sandy did.

**MH:** No, Bob.

**KR:** Something happened and Sandy had some second thoughts. Bob told me that he was

so sick, literally, that he was throwing up. Bob could see what was coming.

**MH:** This was before you had declared that you'd run in the primary?

**KR:** Yeah, yeah. I toyed with that some time. There was never any doubt in my mind. But I sort of loved the chance for the exposure a little bit. I milked it for all it was worth. I predicted what would happen after Sugar Hills when I met with him. I told him what was gonna happen.

**MH:** When you met with Hess?

**KR:** Well, I met with a group from Sugar Hills.

**MH:** Oh, right. OK. I had a question about that later.

**KR:** Forget that one, OK.

**MH:** Do you want to say anything else on that?

**KR:** I guess we could go on forever on it. I don't know where we were and where we're going.

**MH:** I have a question to start us out again. Did Sandy Keith at one time come into your office and promise you that he would not oppose you?

**KR:** Yep.

**MH:** …if you decided to run for re-nomination?

**KR:** Yep.

**MH:** Can you recall that occasion?

**KR:** Yes, very clearly. It was late in the afternoon and Sandy came down from upstairs. It was just he and I. He said there'd been a lot of talk about his running for governor and that he was down to tell me that he was not going to do it. He said I had been a good governor and his running would tear up the party. He said that if I'd like, he'd put that in writing. My answer was: "Sandy, if it has to be put in writing, then it's not worth a damn. If you believe what you say and are gonna do what you say, that's OK; but putting it on a piece of paper isn't gonna make that much difference." I probably should have done it. It would have been embarrassing to say the least. But there are always ways of getting around that. I didn't believe him at the time.

**MH:** When did you become aware of the idea that Keith was going to run for governor? Was this shortly after you became governor?

**KR:** Almost immediately after the election. This is not secondhand. It didn't happen to me, but it was told to me. Keith went into Mondale's office and told Mondale: "I'm gonna be the next governor of Minnesota."

**MH:** That was right after the election?

**KR:** Yes, that was after the election. And that's what he essentially told the governor of Connecticut down in Florida. One thing about Sandy is he just couldn't keep his mouth shut.

**MH:** Well then, in late July 1965 party leaders met at Sugar Hills for what was supposed to be a legislative workshop. But eventually they got around to discussing your standing among party members, various interest groups, and the state's voters. Were you invited to this meeting?

**KR:** Yes. As a matter of fact, George called me and talked to me about the meeting. I think it was originally scheduled for the weekend before. I don't know for sure. I said I can't do it because the governors are coming into town. So then they changed it and put it the following weekend. We still had some governors around. One of the things we'd done was to provide an opportunity for each one of them to go to some resort.

**MH:** It was in this area, wasn't it?

**KR:** Well, all over northern Minnesota. That got interfered with because President Johnson…the president traditionally comes to the governor's conference and speaks to the governors. This was just the time that the Viet Nam War was escalating and Johnson sent Air Force One out. I've often thought about this and shudder when I think about it. We packed on 50 governors on that Air Force One and brought them into Washington. They didn't all travel that way. Nelson Rockefeller had gone home early; John Chafee of Rhode Island didn't believe in airplanes and went by train. But there must have been 45 governors on that aircraft. Supposing something had gone wrong. Johnson briefed us at that time in the White House, and that sort of broke the conference. That ended it really. All the eastern governors took that opportunity to go back home. Two or three of them came back to go on that fishing trip. Cliff Hansen of Wyoming, Ed Breathitt of Kentucky, Orval Faubus of Arkansas, and maybe one other went up to a lodge near Park Rapids and spent three or four days. DFL leaders were meeting then. I had told George that I couldn't meet that week because we were socially entertaining the governors and it wasn't possible. Yeah, I knew it was there. I sent Sally Luther and Bob Goff.

**MH:** When did you first hear about what was discussed at the meeting?

**KR:** They called me.

**MH:** Bob Goff called?

**KR:** No. Well, Bob Goff called me, but George Farr called first. He had been delegated to call.

**MH:** What was your reaction?

**KR:** Anger. Hurt. Dismay. They were going to meet with me the following Monday. We met on the tenth floor of the Capp Towers in St. Paul. We had lunch in a hotel suite. George Farr, Bob Hess, Betty Kane. "Spot" Reierson. I'm sure Sally and Bob were there. Probably Bill Kubicek and Geri Joseph. I'd have to go back and look at my notes. They told me the decision and the problems I had. I was way down in the polls at that time, as I recall. It didn't look good. I told them: "If ever I've been handed a campaign to win a primary election in Minnesota, this is it. You met at Sugar Hills in secret and decided my fate. All I have to do is run against the party bosses and the labor bosses. I'll win hands down." I just knew that. Instinct told me that, you know. You just don't do those things. Open covenants, openly arrived at. Well, would I accept a job in the federal government? Would I? None was offered. Would I accept an ambassadorial post? None was offered. They were talking, but not doing anything. If somebody had come along and said: "You served well and faithfully. I think we can get you a job in the Hague, Sweden, Norway, or Belgium," I might have said yes. Who knows? But by this time I was drawing on my fighting mitts. I'm sure that you probably have a list of those people who were there at that luncheon.

**MH:** I'm not sure if Bill Kubicek was there.

**KR:** I'm not sure that he was either.

**MH:** And I think…

**KR:** Bill was going through some rather traumatic experiences about that time. Shock treatment for one thing. He had just sort of disappeared out of my life. We were extraordinarily close at one time.

**MH:** I'm not sure if Sally Luther was there. I think everybody else you mentioned was.

**KR:** I think Sally was there. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. She was working for me anyway.

**MH:** Well, after this meeting was there a change in your relationship with the central committee or with the party leaders?

**KR:** Oh, sure. Oh, certainly.

**MH:** Would you say total antagonism between the party leaders and yourself?

**KR:** Oh, certainly. Yeah. They had met and decided that I was *persona non grata*, that I hadn't been a good governor. I'm sure it was a difficult position for them. They really believed it. You don't take these things lightly. They said: "Oh, don't worry about that. It's secret." I said: "Well, you can't keep secrets in politics, not when 30 or 40 people have been involved." A few days later the press had it.

**MH:** I think it was about six or seven weeks.

**KR:** It was at the State Fair when it broke, but they knew about it. They were putting the pieces together.

**MH:** Right. I've interviewed Frank Wright and he said it took a long time to piece the story together.

**KR:** He knew the story. But when they take that on, they've got to be damn sure they're correct. So they were putting the pieces together and that takes time. Frank "Wrong" we called him.

**MH:** Well then, both you and…

**KR:** He calls me the crusty, old man [laughter].

**MH:** Well then, both you and Keith declared your candidacy and began to secure delegates to the state convention. How did you organize your side of it? Who did you rely on and what strategy did you use?

**KR:** Well, I relied on the people that I knew and those who working for me – Jim Rice, Steve Quigley, Sally Luther. Bob Goff had left by this time with tears in his eyes as did Rudy Perpich. He came down and said he couldn't support me. He had tears in his eyes and said I'd been a good governor, but I couldn't win.

**MH:** Was it at this time that you arranged to have Michael McLaughlin work for you as campaign manager?

**KR:** Approximately. It might have come a little later. And we were misled. We believed what we wanted to believe. We thought we were ahead in the delegate strength. We weren't.

**MH:** Do you think that Rice and some others knew what the actual situation was in reality? Citing Lebedoff's book—maybe Lebedoff has it wrong here – he states that you were extremely disappointed with the first ballot results but that your staff members, and he cited Jim Rice specifically, "exulted in the news." It was as if you had done better than they thought you were actually going to do. Do you think that this assessment is correct or do you think Lebedoff is wrong on this point?

**KR:** You'd have to ask Jim Rice. I don't know. I can't imagine them being exultant. That might have been the facade they put on. It might have been the facade they put on, but I can't imagine that they were exultant or exuberant. It's possible. It's possible. Jim Rice is seldom wrong when it comes to counting noses, *seldom wrong*, but he was this time. Jim Rice has many faults, but many attributes. I think he wanted to believe it so much that he was taken in by his own beliefs. We all were.

**MH:** Well then, what was your general impression of the convention – it's mood and also in terms of its operation?

**KR:** It was a steam roller. It was brutal, tough, mean, nasty. No consideration for how it appeared on public television, or they certainly wouldn't have done the things they did.

**MH:** I believe that was one of the first conventions that was televised, wasn't it?

**KR:** I'm sure it was. It was probably *the* first. The TV people were there from start to finish. I was booed when I came to the floor. They tried to shout me down when I tried to make some remarks. It was pretty heated. But it all inured to my benefit in the primary. Sandy Keith came across as a boor. I didn't stay till the end of the convention.

**MH:** You had to take off for a meeting in Ohio.

**KR:** In Cincinnati, yeah.

**MH:** Well then, as the convention became stalemated there was a lot of talk about a compromise candidate, and there were several names that were mentioned. Were you at any time willing to step down for a compromise candidate?

**KR:** No, no. The realistic alternative never came. I can't imagine that I would have by this time. There was some talk about Don Fraser and probably about others. No.

**MH:** Would you say, then, that Lebedoff … Lebedoff states that at one time you suggested that if Bob Short was endorsed …

**KR:** No.

**MH:** I'm just trying to clear up some things.

**KR:** No, no.

**MH:** OK. Were you at any time involved in the meetings that were taking place on the 14th floor between what they term "The Washington Group?"

**KR:** Sure.

**MH:** Can you recall what was going on?

**KR:** No, I can't Gene McCarthy kept urging me to run … hang in there. Blatnik was of no help; he never was of any help at a convention. That's just his nature. Also, he was so full of venom about the senatorial appointment. Alec Olson, who was just then finishing his first term as congressman. Right?

**MH:** I'm not sure.

**KR:** I think so.

**MH:** That might have been.

**KR:** Anyway, Alec kept urging me to hang in there and run. I can't remember Humphrey playing any role in it.

**MH:** How about Mondale?

**KR:** I don't know if Mondale was even there.

**MH:** Do you think that Lebedoff in his book gives too much emphasis to the role that the Washington politicians played?

**KR:** Yes, always, always. If you're a congressman, a senator, a cabinet member, or holding a high post in government in Washington, you, *per se*, automatically lose touch with your home base. It's a rule of thumb. You can put it down. It's a fact. Humphrey couldn't control the DFL Party. He couldn't name its chairman. The role of the DFL Party was to protect Hubert Humphrey, not to take their marching orders from Hubert. There is no way that they could be in close touch when they're 2,000 miles away. There's just no way possible. As a matter of fact, there's no way possible that you can really remain in touch when you're governor. I saw the same thing happen to Freeman when he tried to meddle into the affairs of the party and name who was gonna be national committeeman. They called a meeting of the district chairmen and went to see Freeman. They said: "You're governor and a goddamn good governor, but, Orville, you keep your nose out of

this. We're running the party, not you." I remember that very clearly. It was over the selection of a national committeemen. Orv and I wanted Gerald Heaney and they didn't want Jerry. But there's no way that if you're in Washington … In fact, Lyndon Johnson came to me in 1955. He was a patient at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. He was then majority leader in the Senate. He didn't know what kind of an operation this DFL Party was; he had no idea. Humphrey had been a Senator for only six years and was just in the process of joining the inner club. Lyndon's doctor at Mayo was Jim Kane, who's a fellow Texan and a very renowned internist. He asked Jim if he could get me to come down. I lived in Rochester at the time. So Jim called and one Sunday I went down to the hospital to see Lyndon. I had a long visit with him. And he hammered at that. He said: "Your job is to protect Hubert Humphrey. Humphrey can't do it. He's down in Washington. He can't take care of the mundane problems of the state party. Every senator that's tried to do it has gotten in trouble. And Humphrey is just joining the club. He's going some place that young man, but you gotta protect him." He made quite an impression on me, obviously. I found it to be true later on.

**MH:** You mentioned a realistic alternative never came up. What do you consider would have been a realistic alternative?

**KR:** A definite proposal, something concrete. Have you ever attended a convention, Mark?

**MH:** No, I haven't. I'd like to, though. I've watched them on TV.

**KR:** Rumors by the score. He said, she said, who said, you know. They never come together and say: "Here is Joe Doakes and here's Herbert Kluse; they have a proposition to make." Nothing concrete. Well, was Fraser around? Would he accept? What's gonna happen? Who takes his place? No. Short? No. They couldn't have won, but the possibility existed that I could. There were no proposals made to me. I'm not saying they weren't around, but there were none made to me.

**MH:** Now, as I recall, you proposed after about the tenth or twelfth ballot to just let the nomination go and let the primary decide it.

**KR:** Yeah.

**MH:** And the party turned that suggestion down?

**KR:** Yes.

**MH:** What was your reaction at that time?

**KR:** I thought they were being foolish.

**MH:** Did you feel that it would go to a primary automatically at that time?

**KR:** Well, I was certainly hinting at it. I don't remember the specific incident, no. I remember the frame of mind that I was in at the time. I don't know at what stage in the convention it was made. You say about the tenth ballot. Well, what was happening at that time on the floor? Who was saying what? Yeah, if they'd gone to an open primary a lot of my campaign fodder would have been dismissed.

**KR:** That's an election I should have won.

**MH:** You were away from Minnesota for several weeks following the convention. In terms of the Minnesota political situation, what were you thinking about during this period and what led you to finally decide to enter the primary?

**KR:** Well, I have to correct something. I don't know that I was gone for several weeks.

**MH:** You were back in the state part of the time, but you...

**KR:** I went to Cincinnati for two or three days. I came back from Cincinnati and went on a fishing trip up at Crane Lake. But I was around the state, sure. I was here.

**MH:** Then you went to California for a while.

**KR:** Governor's conference, that's right. That's three or four days.

**MH:** That's what I mean.

**KR:** Yeah, yeah. What were my thoughts?

**MH:** Right.

**KR:** Well, I can't imagine them at that time as being anything but: You dirty s.o.b., you know. If that wasn't my thoughts at the time, I don't remember. Then there was something radically wrong with me. As I said earlier, I was really kind of enjoying it. I don't mean to appear cocky, but I thought I had that primary election. I think that I saw the handwriting on the wall. Just the way people approached me, the looks on their faces, the waves of their hands, the smile on their faces. You can tell. Several events stick out. I was just home last weekend and brought some packing boxes up. One of them had pictures in it. One picture was of a car my wife and I rode in in the Aquatennial parade that summer. As I rode down the streets of Minneapolis, I knew I was gonna win. The kind of applause: "Hey, Karl! Atta boy! Go get 'em!" Nothing deprecating. It was wholesome, enthusiastic, responsive. So I was dismayed at the outcome of the

convention, but confident that I was gonna win that primary.

**MH:** Did your advisors and Michael McLaughlin know that you were determined to enter the primary or did you keep this to yourself?

**KR:** Oh, I think I probably kept it to myself, but they knew what I was gonna do. I don't think there was any question in anybody's mind. I tried to create an aura of suspense, but I don't know how realistic it was.

**MH:** One other question going back to the convention. How did you feel about the endorsement process at the time? What were your feelings towards it? I read a couple accounts where you really believed in the endorsement process.

**KR:** Yeah, I've believed in the endorsement principle, but not as a beginning and end-all, not an alpha and omega. It's a very handy, useful, meaningful, political tool if it's used right with caution. I've always been a supporter of the endorsement policy in theory – that those who do the endorsing are those who know the candidates best, most intimately. But it's certainly not demeaning to say that it's infallible. I never said that. The great electorate can make mistakes too. I didn't feel, for example, in this last election between Bob Short and Don Fraser that Bob Short made proper use of the endorsement. Had I been Bob Short, I would have gone to that convention and sought the endorsement knowing I couldn't get it. Then I would run. But that's a different matter. Had I been Bob Short when the party refused to put me on the sample ballot, I would have gone to court. Bob didn't -- hoping that he could salvage some good feeling out of it. But the die was so thoroughly cast at that time. I never lost sight of it, and I hope I never will lose sight of the reason why we have a primary. It's because our forefathers decided very properly so that they were going to get away from a boss-governed convention where the dictates of a handful of people are going to decide who shall be the candidates of a major political party. People don't understand that. Independents certainly don't understand a primary. When I tell them that they have no business voting in a primary, they just throw up their hands in horror. It's un-American to say you're not supposed to vote. But it's reserved for the adherents and members of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, as such, and they can make a decision.

**MH:**
Well, when did you actually make your decision? What I'm trying to do here is verify something that's been said before. Was the decision made on an airplane trip back from California?

**KR:**
I can't remember when the decision was made even. To say it was made on a trip back from California. . . that was a governor's conference some time in July.

**MH:**
I think this was another trip. I think that you took some of the people who had helped you

prior to the convention to California. Michael McLaughlin had mentioned this. He was telling me about an airplane ride on the way back from California. He said you finally drew up your speech – "Let-the-People-Decide" speech. He said the governor of Iowa was in the plane, too, I think.

**KR:** Harold Hughes?

**MH:** Maybe it was another state. I don't think that was the name mentioned.

**KR:** It probably would have been Bill Guy of North Dakota, Harold Hughes of Iowa or John Reynolds of ... It wasn't John Reynolds of Wisconsin at that time. It was probably Harold Hughes. It could have been Frank Morrison from Nebraska.

**MH:** Morrison. I think that was it.

**KR:** No, that was coming back from the governor's conference.

**MH:** Oh, OK.

**KR:** No, I may have said that I had made up my mind or something, but the fact of the matter is that I had pretty well made up my mind long before then.

**MH:** OK. I was just seeking verification. Well, then, how did you feel about Bob Short and others joining with you to form a ticket? Did you want to run independently or did you like the idea of running with a ticket?

**KR:** I accepted the idea of running with a ticket, yes. I wanted Wayne Olson to run for attorney general. I wanted that in the very worst way. I'm not sure if I'd been asked that question right after the convention that I would have said that. But I think that the experience of the time was that I would have wanted a team ticket. The ticket around Sandy was awfully weak, awfully weak, *just awfully weak*. Bob Latz was the only one of any real competence. I shouldn't say that, but Sandy didn't exercise good judgment.

**MH:** Earlier in this tape you had mentioned that Bob Hess had tried to convince Sandy Keith to drop out of the race. Is there anything else that you can add in regard to that story?

**KR:** No.

**MH:** No. OK. Well, then, your primary campaign was an enormous success. What was your campaign strategy?

**KR:** You're speaking of the primary now?

**MH:** The primary campaign.

**KR:** I guess it was the Southern cavalry officer General "Jeb" Stuart – I think it was Stuart -- or was it Forrester, who said: "You get there the fastest with the mostest." Few people realize how exhausting physically a campaign like that is – to be every place, to do everything, to stand hour on end at places like the state fair or county fair, shake hands, get calluses literally. I got calluses on the right hand from shaking hands. The knees swell. You get to be a robot almost. I had a record to run on that Democrats couldn't quarrel with. They couldn't quarrel with what I'd done for education. They couldn't quarrel with what I'd done for mental retardation. They couldn't quarrel with what I'd done for conservation. So I had that record to run on, and I made the most of it.

**MH:** What was your impression of the Keith campaign?

**KR:** I wasn't very impressed by it. All he could say is: "I want to be governor." He didn't have a platform to run on. That was sharply different from mine. He didn't say I could do things better. He started a whispering campaign that didn't have any effect. I wasn't singularly impressed with it. I think it was David Lebedoff who talks about how I had all the money

**MH:** Right. That you received endorsement by most of the labor unions.

**KR:** That's true. But I took the labor endorsement away from the leadership.

**MH:** Right.

**KR:** We went to the floor. If it had been left to the AFL state executive committee I probably wouldn't have gotten their support. I had some very strong support amongst the building trades in St. Paul and some very strong support in most of the building trades in Minneapolis. The auto workers were a little bit inclined to be Keith supporters. I had the culinary council and service trades. They couldn't take that away from me. I'd lived with these people. I'd fought with them. I had fought for them. I died in the ditches with them ever since 1950. I can talk their language. They knew me. I was reliable. I had given them strong consideration when it came to appointments affecting labor. I called them together. There came to the point in the middle of a search for a state labor conciliator that I called all the labor leaders together – some 20 of them – and said: "Now who do you want? If he's honest and capable and good, I'll appoint him, but I'm not gonna appoint some jerk." They gave me the appointment. I appointed Pete Obermeyer. That's just an example. That sort of stuff came back to reward me. The culinary council was so strong for me, and they're influential in the labor movement. Little things that I had done, but I did them out of conviction. For example, the Holiday Inn by the Capitol at that time was brand new. It was unorganized and labor was just having one helluva time with the management there.

Anti-labor, anti-union. So I just laid down an edict that there would be no state meetings held at the Holiday Inn. It was a natural. We have luncheon meetings, dinner meetings, birthday parties, going-away parties, retirement parties. That was the most logical place in the world to have them. I said no more. It was something I couldn't have enforced, but the state employees lived up to my edict. The culinary council was eternally grateful to me. I did it out of conviction. The president of the Holiday Inn organization called me from New York and pleaded with me to change. I said no. He said: "You know, we don't control that. It's a franchise. We don't control it, but it's hurting the business. It's hurting the name." I said: "That's tough. That's your business, it's not my business. We're not going to go to an anti-union place. Unorganized is one thing, but anti-union is a different thing." Labor loved it. My supporters loved it. I did it out of conviction. Little things like that came back to help me.

**MH:** Your primary election victory was really an enormous one. To what would you attribute your overwhelming success in the primary?

**KR:** "Let the people decide." It's that simple. It's that simple. It was an effective campaign. I should have kept on with that vein. I should have kept on.

**MH:** In the general election?

**KR:** Yeah. That was the one big mistake that I made. I don't know if you're prepared to go into that or not.

**MH:** Yes, go right ahead. I've got a few more questions, but we can come back to them.

**KR:** I was persuaded to embrace Sandy Keith. I think it was best told by a cab driver whose passenger told me this story some time later. This gentleman caught the cab at the airport and came into downtown Minneapolis. He said: "How's the campaign going?" "Oh," he said, "Rolvaag's gonna lose." He said: "Why is that? He just won that big primary." "Well," the driver said, "he turned out to be just another politician. He couldn't wait to get his arms around Sandy." It was a normal reaction. I didn't get the support of the organized political party in that campaign. They mouthed it, but they didn't do anything. If I had kept on with the trend that I had established so clearly – that the people are gonna decide this things and not the political party – I would have had a better chance to win the election. Of course, we had the whole nasty bit of the American Allied Insurance scandal and all that. But there were ways to continue on with that theme of letting the people decide. Sandy Keith didn't do anything in that election, not one, solitary thing, except submarine it. After the election he openly bragged in Rochester about the fact – and this doesn't come second-hand, this is first-hand – that he voted a straight Republican ticket in that general election. And this is what happened in the Fraser campaign. They wouldn't let the people decide. If the Kingsley Murphys and Sandy Keiths and all that group had come in and come in hard early, we probably could have

won that election. It was close as it was.

**MH:** Would you say that you made efforts to try to unify the party at the time and it would have been better not to have done it?

**KR:** Yep, that's what I'm saying. That's kind of a cold answer on a hard question, but I guess essentially that's true. How do you unify a party in six weeks time when you've developed the deep anger and bitterness? I've often said that the period of time between our primary election and our general election is far too short in Minnesota. You don't get the time to pour the oil on troubled waters that you should have. I think we should have a primary in July.

**MH:** You've already alluded to this a little bit, but how would you compare your primary campaign to the general election campaign in terms of problems, strengths, weaknesses, issues and strategy? Essentially what I'm after is anything that was different from your primary campaign.

**KR:** I guess I've alluded to it. I got off the issue, if you please, that had the most impact, and that was letting the people decide. If I had come across as a hard-bitten independent, don't give a damn individual who only wanted to do what was right. But I didn't do that. I softened the approach when I embraced Sandy Keith. I remember one particular time when I did it. It was at the bean feed in St. Paul when he was sitting out in the audience. It was called to my attention and I said: "Come on up, Sandy. You belong up here on the platform."

That bean feed, incidentally, was a total disaster. There's no way that you couldn't help but get more than a couple thousand people in an auditorium. By the standards of yesterday, it was an absolute, dismal failure and it reflected itself.

**MH:** Who do you think was responsible . . .?

**KR:** George Farr. They just didn't get their heart into it. I'm not saying that he deliberately did it. People have said that, but I don't think he deliberately did it. But he avoided putting his heart and soul and all his effort into it. That's a mammoth undertaking. Any time you get 10-15,000 people out at a meeting, it's not just happenstance. It's not just happenstance. There's a helluva lot of work that goes into it. And they didn't put the work into it.

**MH:** Did you have any financial difficulties in the general election campaign?

**KR:** Sure, sure. I don't know how accurate these figures are, but the Republican Party and the Democratic Party outspent me ten to one by their admitted receipts and disbursements – the records that they have to file. It approximated something like two

million to 200,000. That's tough to overcome.

**MH:** Now, are you saying that Keith had more money in the primary than you did?

**KR:** I'm saying that from the beginning of my campaign to the end of it, I raised and spent something like $200,000. The opposition, Keith and the Republicans, spent over two million. That's a disparity. And by today's standards it's small. But we carried on a good campaign.

**MH:** One of the things that you had mentioned to me yesterday was the victory train. Lebedoff doesn't portray that correctly. Could you go into that?

**KR:** Elmer Berglund, a former state legislator from Bemidji, was the chairman of the legislative committee of the railroad brotherhoods; that's the organization that raises and dispenses the political money. Elmer was absolutely a die-hard when it came to the use of the rails, as all railroaders are. They don't accept the modern technological developments at all, but that's a hog of a different snout. They came with this proposition that we had to have a campaign train. I didn't think it would be a success. It was costly and it took time and effort. The only reason for doing it was that we would have the press with us and the radio with us. Arv Johnson and Frank Wright would be along and their by-lines for two or three days would be aboard the "Rolvaag for Governor Express." That's the only reason there was for having it. I was persuaded against my better judgment to go along with it.

**MH:** Was the train a success?

**KR:** No. President Truman was successful in 1948, but this wasn't 1948. It wasn't a national election; it was a state election. Those things are passé. I'll never forget Herman, Minnesota. A high school football team came out. I guess the coach was a Democrat, and they had been practicing alongside the tracks. We had some nice rallies in the evening at Fergus Falls and at Fargo. We got a few hundred people out at places like Benson and Willmar, but we could have spent those four, five, or six days to a much better advantage.

**MH:** What is your evaluation of the LeVander campaign?

**KR:** Well, it was a winner. I guess I can't quarrel with it. They won. I thought they abused common sense and consideration when they used the American Allied Insurance scandal in the manner in which it was used. We knew it was gonna be used, but it was certainly used in an unfair way. After all, we did put the company out of business; we chased it out of the state of Minnesota. The Republicans pictured all the horror, the screeching of brakes, and the car hitting the little girl. Very effective, very effective, but it was really kind of hitting below the belt. I suppose they say I hit below the belt, too. I don't know. I predicted the sales tax and we got a sales tax. Harold LeVander could have vetoed it and made his veto stick. After all, he had both houses of the Legislature with

him. He had the House of Representatives, didn't he?

**MH:** I think so.

**KR:** Yeah. That was in the works. I left the state with bulging coffers – 170 million dollar surplus. No, the LeVander campaign had to be a good one because it won. And the polls showed me a winner.

**MH:** Yeah, I was gonna say that the final *Tribune* poll showed that you were leading LeVander by a 50 to 46 margin.

**KR:** Yeah.

**MH:** And this was the Saturday night before the election.

**KR:** Yep, we got word when I was in Bemidji or Brainerd.

**MH:** According to Lebedoff, Hubert Humphrey read the results and that nobody else had heard them before that.

**KR:** Yep.

**MH:** What was your reaction at that time? Did you feel that you were going to win the election?

**KR:** Yes, yeah, yeah. I have said facetiously that . . . Well, here's the point that I gotta take a departure with David Lebedoff. He talks about my vote getting ability. He hammers away at that quite often by innuendo and direct statements. The fact of the matter is that I have been in fourteen statewide elections and won thirteen of them, and that's a pretty damn good record. So I felt comfortable with that 50 to 46 margin. It was one of the few times also that I'd been ahead in a poll. I was seldom ahead in a poll when I won these elections. They didn't take a poll every time I ran for lieutenant governor by any stretch of the imagination. But I thought I had that one won.

**MH:** What was your reaction on election night?

**KR:** Well, as I said earlier, you're philosophical about it. You go to the well once too often. I knew that we had a divided party. I knew that I hadn't been successful in healing the breach. A few of them did come across. Wendy Anderson was one of the ones who really came out and went to work for me; he'd been a Keith supporter in the primary. Wendy came over and enthusiastically went all the way. But all too many of them were lackadaisical, didn't appear at all, or were openly antagonistic. So I knew we had troubles, but there were straws in the wind that would seem to indicate that we might

make it. People who are not practicing politicians find it difficult to believe that politicians are as philosophical about defeat as they are. We all know that sooner or later we're gonna go there once too often, especially when we get into races for governor or the legislature. Congressmen and Senators are a little bit different. If they keep their fences mended and answer their mail, they can stay in office a long time because you vote for appropriations and against taxes. It's that simple. There are people who make a fetish of that. But an executive office is a little different. As for secretary of state, attorney general, state treasurer, state auditor, it really doesn't matter who is the auditor, treasurer, or secretary of state. Those administerial jobs are not policymaking ones. Once you get elected you seldom get defeated unless it be some particular case like Bob Mattson, Jr. The voters of Minnesota will rue the day that they named Arnie Carlson.

**MH:** What effect, if any, do you think the political events of 1966 had on the DFL Party?

**KR:** Well, nothing permanent, no permanent damage. After all, four years later they were back in the saddle. As so often happens, they came out with better candidates than the Republicans did. Wendy Anderson fit the new era. He came across on television like a gangbuster; A clean-cut, all-American boy with no scars. They were running against a non-incumbent, and not a very good non-incumbent at that. There was no permanent damage to the DFL Party. We've suffered a lot of reverses over the years. We'll be back in the saddle again in a few years. I've a speech that I make about the Democratic Party. It's the oldest political party in the world, bar none. It was founded by Tom Jefferson in 1803, when he took a botanizing trip up the Hudson River and put the mechanics and the farmers together. They've suffered their ups and downs, but they'll go on. They'll come back.

**MH:** Well, then, I would like to ask you your impressions of the books that have been written on the period, if you've read them. Tom Roeser has come out with a book called *Ingenious Deceit***.**

**KR:** . . . I haven't read Tom Roeser's book.

**MH:** OK. And Ronald Stinnett's book *Recount*. Have you had a chance to read it?

**KR:** I haven't read all of Ronald Stinnett's book. I'm not very high on Ron Stinnett. I don't think he was very accurate in his election work. I never was high on Ron Stinnett as a political activist, as a political leader, or political manipulator. He talked about bellwether precincts in that election. I had two that I could tell, and it was a horseback ballpark judgment. His was slide rule. You don't decide what people are thinking by a slide rule. I really haven't read Ron's book. I have read parts of it. Tom Roeser's book I know nothing about. I would expect it would be very partisan. I would expect that knowing Tom.

David Lebedoff's book is full of errors, just full of them. How a man could seriously sit down with you for 45 minutes and write a book of that nature is beyond me, especially when he brags about the fact that he never took any notes, which is a kind of a tip-off really. David Lebedoff is an extremely competent fella. It's too bad that he doesn't harness some of that competence, develop it, and put into practice some of the things he learned at law school. I never knew a lawyer who didn't sit down with a client and take notes.

**MH:** Do you have any specific criticisms of the book that you can recall?

**KR:** I would have to go back and look at my copy. I have a copy some place that's marked up. I can think of one. I guess I took offense about that business of not being a good vote-getter. I suppose every politician sort of prides himself on that, but I think the record speaks for itself in that case.

**MH:** And there's the instance of placing too much emphasis on Washington politicians.

**KR:** Oh, yes, yeah. This is a natural for David and his colleagues to do. Washington is a begin-all. This is one of the mistakes that Fraser made again. You can't get judgments in Washington on the Potomac. You don't know what's happening in Roseau County or on the banks of the Roseau River when you're on the banks of the Potomac. Just no way you can do it.

**MH:** Well, then, finally is there anything else that you'd like to say on the period, either dealing with 1962, your governorship, your relationship with party leaders, or the election of 1966 that we haven't covered?

**KR:** Well, I think there's one period that we haven't covered very much, Mark. That was a very difficult period when it came to the matter of making an appointment to the United States Senate. I looked at that very, very carefully and scrutinized it very carefully. First as to whether or not I should go. Again I had the problem of not placing any reliance on Sandy Keith. Secondly, I didn't think I was at the stage when I wanted to go to Washington. I would love to have been a United States senator, but not at that time. I seriously contemplated it in 1958 when Gene McCarthy ran. But I had a whole stable full of prospects. I looked at other states where the governor had arranged for his appointment, and almost without exception it was a disaster.

**MH:** I think it's something like one out of nine times, the governor was later elected.

**KR:** Recently it happened in Wyoming, South Carolina, Oklahoma, and several other places. It was just a disaster. That was one thing. Then the whole host of really top flight qualified candidates – Orville Freeman, Eugenie Anderson, John Blatnik, Miles Lord. Joe Donovan insisted his name be included. Walter Heller, Carl Rowan. I really toyed with

Carl Rowan. I don't know whether you Carl Rowan or not. Carl Rowan is a Black reporter and former head of the United States Information Service. He came up from the deep south, had a good education, and a very menial job on the *Minneapolis Tribune*. He became an outstanding reporter. He now writes a syndicated column which is published from time to time in the *Minneapolis Star*. They've bought it. I would have loved to have appointed a Negro to the United States Senate. It would have been fitting coming from Minnesota. I mentioned Walter Heller and Eugenie Anderson, Mondale, of course. It was excruciating, very difficult. Orville Freeman wrote me a long letter advancing his candidacy. Unfortunately Orville heard about the appointment of Mondale when he was in Philadelphia on radio, and that didn't set well with Orv for a number of years. John Blatnik to this day is upset. Universally, the people from the Range wanted Mondale. They'd all begin the conversation by: "Karl, you gotta go, but if you decide not to go, then you gotta appoint Mondale. We can't say this. Publicly I gotta say that John Blatnik is the best candidate, but don't appoint John." I kept good notes on all these conversations. I was looking around; I wanted somebody who was young, liberal, committed to the philosophy that I was committed to, was electable and re-electable, and could stay in Washington for some time. Mondale just surfaced; he was just logical. But it was a very difficult time for me.

**MH:** Is there anything else?

**KR:** . . . No.

**MH:** Okay. Thank you very much.