

Stafford King
Narrator

Lucille M. Kane & Lila M. Johnson
Interviewer

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State Administration Building, St. Paul, Minnesota

Stafford King **-SK**
Lucille M. Kane **-LK**
Lila M. Johnson **-LJ**

SK: Air conditioning because they're inaccurate. The building leaks.

LK: Oh it does.

SK: Particularly in the parking and that's not too important, but the important thing -- a building like that. And revamp at a cost of a million and a half or old office. To provide permanent offices for members of the legislature who only serve 120 days every two years. I can predict to you what will happen which is this. The additional cost of reconstruction will be substantial.

The cost of furnishings and refurbishing will be substantial, but they will also want a permanent staff and each committee chairman will want his secretary and maybe the secretary will want a secretary and so on and. So your cost of government is going up for no acts of necessary reason, they could have adjusted it much better if they had build a new building for them.

LK: Didn't they have committee rooms and offices before the remodeling?

SK: Yes, but not enough. You want to start back here as to who I am.

LK: Right. The name of your father and mother, if you could just start.

SK: Well my people on both sides of the family came to the United States before the revolution. My mother's people settled in Vermont and my father's people settled in Pennsylvania. My father's people subsequently immigrated to old Virginia that's before West Virginia was cut off. And mother's people came into Ohio and then in 1853 my mother's people, the Cooper family came to Minnesota and settled in what is now known as Cooper's Corners which is up here on 65 near Bethel.

One brother settled there and one brother settled in St. Cloud. My father's people came here in 1857 and settled in Wright County. My mother, Mini May Cooper was born in Fairhaven, Minnesota and my father Cyrus Murdock King was born in what is now Howard Lake. He was the first white child born in Middleville Township. He was born in the usual log cabin in those days down on the east end of Howard Lake. I was born in Fairhaven incidentally in the same house that mother was born in.

And we lived after I was born in Fairhaven for two or three years and then moved to South Haven which is in Wright County, Fairhaven is in Stearns County where dad having started at 16 as a school teacher and having completed his law work as an apprentice in the law office at Howard Lake, hung out his shingle and practiced law and managed a hotel, the old Sofia House. In the area in those days was a great recreational area and the city folk used to come up there to hunt and fish. They hunted quail and fish bass, but there were many other forms and games that they got.

Mother was taken ill along about 1903 and the doctors instead of giving her the usual modern drugs which they now use didn't know about them in those days and said that she must have pine air. Dad the son of a frontiersman took advantage of the opening of new lands in Itasca County for homestead. And so we moved from South Haven to 160 acre homestead lying generally 10 or 11 miles northwest of the present town of Bigfork.

We went in there into the homestead cabin which dad had built on the 2nd of April in 1903. Incidentally I think my father built the first prefabricated house in the United States and what he did was build a small frame house in Fairhaven and then cut it down in sections and moved it up there, the winter before we moved in and set it up. So we had the first frame house.

LK: How did he move it?

SK: Well he shipped it up by a train to Deer River, transferred it from the Great Northern to the Minneapolis and Rainy River Railroad which was a logging railroad run by the old Joyce Company and on these logging trucks that they used for cars that had carried the logs and the house has moved up to Bigfork. And then it was moved by a team in the snow along an alleged road which was called Kearney Trail for about 14 miles.

And then dad and the men that were with him, Trump the head of the team and they moved the house in another five miles by tramping down the snow along what was called bum and hook; there was no road in there of any kind. But this creek was bordered by small tagolder bush instead of trees. So it was not a particular problem, but it was very difficult to do and the house was a magnificent structure consisting of one room above the 12 by 14 and a very sharp pitch on

the roof. Clearly being that this extraordinarily steep grove was necessary to keep the weight of the snow from crushing it down.

We lived there for five years, not quite five years and in the beginning we had no roads at all. I mean just exactly that there were no toll roads even within four miles of our house. And we walked from neighbor to neighbor and our closest neighbor was a mile and a half by following the section lines. We had no church of course in the township and no school. A designation of the township was 6226 and we had the southeast corner of section 18, but dad was very much of the opinion that I and all the youngsters in the township ought to have some schooling.

And mother was just as adamant that we ought to have a church. So the people living in there, the Fred Johnsons, Majan Ryes, Hobbie Deccan, old Captain Winurs and Knells Philips, all of the people gathered together to build the school house, we had a bee. And they cut down poplar trees and used them very roughly and set up a school house 16 by 20 and they chinked the walls with mud and that was our school house, our first school house. Known because of dad's interest as the King School.

They thought they were building it on a school section 16 but they made a mistake and got over the line and built it in some other section, but it seemed to work just as well being built in 16. So here then is where I had all of my preliminary education with the exception of about a year that I had put in kindergarten prior to that.

LK: How many children were in the school?

SK: I think that we had 24. The Ryers and the Philips' and the [Gutheries] walked four miles and a half to school. The Johnsons and the [Goldbergs] walked only two miles and a half and I had the easiest distance, I only had a mile and a half and still we had no roads.

LK: What about the teachers Mr. King?

SK: Well we had no teacher and we had no equipment. So Fred Johnson went down to Bigfork and carried in on his back three pieces of blackboard about the normal width and about six or seven feet long. And these pieces of blackboard were nailed up on the wall. And since we had no teacher and since dad was a teacher and despite the fact that the school was not accredited, despite the fact that no money was available to pay a salary, dad taught school for one year before we received any recognition as a school.

And we had I think 24 pupils. Incidentally I believe that out of that school house, out of that first class and something like 20 of them went out and in their day they taught a school somewhere. Well then the next year dad inspired the county commissioners to authorize a small procreation

to clear a road; the road ran north from Deer River to the junction of an old road going over to Northholm and it was called then and still is called the King Road.

And again that was a question of the people who lived along the road to do the work and they went out and chopped the trees down and saw them down with crosscut saws and we had no dynamite, we didn't know how to use dynamite in those days, and we didn't have any power saws. So this was all manual labor. In the first year we were all so proud of the fact that we had cut out the right way and I can remember very well running races from John Cullen's house.

He lived only about a mile from the school with his daughter Eleanor and of course the boy always feels that he can run faster than a girl and so I used to challenge her to a race down that winding road through those stumps at the school and every morning she would beat me. She could run like a deer. Well then it came time, dad was of the opinion and mother agreed that I should have an opportunity to go to high school. I was an only child and my brother had died before I was born and so mother and dad had only one idea and that was to see that I was given an education.

And we moved into Deer River and I think that was in 1907. Dad became a superintendent of the school in Deer River. And I went to that high school for three years and graduated and I have thought almost all my life that I was a graduate of a high school in Minnesota, but I found out these last few years that at the time I graduated from Deer River it was not yet an accredited high school. We took examinations which were sent there by the department of education here. But the credits which I received were sufficient to enter me in the university. I have to go back just a little bit.

It's interesting to know that mother's desire for a church also was fulfilled because we found an itinerant preacher who had entered into some kind of an agreement with a watch seller from Grand Rapids. The watch maker's and watch vendor's name was Nezebeth. And the itinerant preacher was known as the "Lumberjack sky pilot," in other words the two of them toured together with a dog team composed of Setters, German Shepherds and so on. It was a modally outfit but they headed to Bouldin -- what?

LK: Frank Higgins?

SK: Higgins, yes Higgins the Lumberjack sky pilot. And so we got him and they would travel from one logging camp to the other and Nezebeth would sell his watches and Higgins would preach and take up a collection. And we got him to stop at our school house. So we held our first church service. Incidentally when I was going through that school everybody carried a gun of some kind, a shotgun or a rifle and many [partridge] has been that the folks had for supper had then killed on the way to school that morning and then we had deer as far as that's concerned.

The only thing I remember one morning I was coming along and dad said, "Come up here and shoot this deer." I was carrying a rifle and the deer was lying at the back of a log and so I shot it. And he said to me and Mike Gutherie, he said, "You fellows dress this out" and he said, "You only got half an hour and you get to school on time." And what had happened in that case the reason that Mike was with us is because it was very difficult for these kids to slog through the snow and break trail over a four mile and a half area.

That meant that sometimes they had to leave home as early as 6 o'clock after storm to get to school. And dad had told old man Gutherie, "Why don't you send your boys over to our house and they can stay there?" Well the result was that Mike Gutherie and his brother and his sister and the two Philips' boys came to live in our little house, of course there was no place first, but they made room for the girls to lay downstairs with mother and dad.

And they -- dad cut a hole through the roof of the building and nailed cross pieces along on the two by fours so we could climb up and get to the loft and us fellows stayed up there. And the next year we build another little house, another log house which took care of us. So we came to Deer River and we had no organized athletics. We had no organized recreation as such, we had no music department.

And therefore for the first time in my life I was taught by somebody else except my father and mother, but even there dad was the superintendent. I may suggest right here that being a son of a superintendent of schools is not the most satisfactory position that a boy can be in. Because just as sure the devil, if anything happened in that school dad would punish me and then make investigation as to who had been actually responsible.

LK: I imagine he expected you to do well with your studies.

SK: No, I don't think he did. Dad -- I suppose that dad and I were closer than most fathers and sons because of the very fact that he had no other one to associate with, no other male to associate with in those years upon the homestead and I had nobody else, and so we were father and son yes, but more than that we were pals and friends. No matter how it sounds I say now in my 75th year that I think my father was probably the only truly great man that I ever knew. He was magnificent.

For instance, dad died in 1922 and just recently within the last six or seven years they built a new school house in Deer River and dedicated it in his name, which shows if nothing else the abiding significance of their respect for him over all these years. He was the first president of the Minnesota Good Roads Association and then in that capacity he worked on the building of the plan auto which has come our truck highway system in Minnesota. He was [unclear].

[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

LK: Did you and your father talk very much about what career and your work at all?

SK: Oh yes. Strangely enough dad was of the opinion that I should be an attorney. My mother was of the opinion that I should be a preacher. So at that point they had one area of agreement, I should learn how to talk and my practice was dad would put me on a stump about 100 feet from the chicken door and he would sit on a stoop and I would stand on the stump and talk to him and all the trees about any subject that he my dad would suggest to me. Well we didn't have too much of a variance of subjects because I had nothing to read and everything, the Bible, Shakespeare, Burns and Gulliver's Travels.

Those were my own books and I read them all the time. And then dad was a stickler for history to such a degree that on this blackboard that I told you about he had started back in 878 and he had set down a series of significant dates relative to the world, the discovery of America and our government. And everybody in school was required to learn those dates. I understand that the method of teaching history has long since been determined to be wrong, erroneous, impertinent, but it worked.

And so we knew when all of our presidents were born and we knew three or four things that happened in every one of their administrations and we knew the stories of George Washington and of Grant and of Lincoln and of Lee. These things in the modern history were close to dad because his people and my mother's people had been involved in the Civil War in which 15 blood relatives of mine were killed, eight on the confederate side and seven on the northern side so that history of the Civil War was almost a current history to dad.

He was born on the 2nd of August 1860 but even as a small boy growing up through those five or six years of war, it was close to him because of his father's association and so on. And so dad would pick out some historical character and he'd ask me to tell him about General Grant or he would ask me to tell him about George Washington and I never will forget how amazed I was when right in the middle of my talk about Washington.

"You said what about this Washington cutting down a cherry tree, is that true?" And of course I argued very vociferously and I was quite disappointed with dad and with history when I found out that there was no evidence that that actually had happened, this was sort of a myth. Well that-

LK: He'd comment on your speeches, when you gave your speeches --

SK: Oh yes he always criticized me for, mostly for tone and accent. And then he had a very fundamental basis of public speaking. He said, "Stafford you must know what you're talking about. Then you must stand up. Then you must say what you know and then you must sit down." And that was his theory of making a speech and sometime he told me something else that has been of tremendous value to me. He said, "The time will come when you will probably have some public association of one kind or another and you will go places.

Maybe it's over to a square dance, maybe it's to a governor's reception." And of course that last was so far away that I can hardly envision it. And he said, "If you're the kind of man that I think you're going to be, people will want to hear from you, so never go anywhere without being prepared to say something." And then he added this one which I've never forgotten. "The best extemporaneous speech is the one into which has gone the greatest preparation." Of course that's an Irish bull but it's really true.

Well when it came graduation time from high school I put in an application for entrance into the university as a prelaw student and I came into the university on September 1910 when I was still 16. And that was too early for me; it was too early for most boys. But I was tremendously handicapped by having had no social activities of any kind. I didn't know people and I had developed a backwards timidity which resulted in a, well a prideful arrogance.

For instance I was named Stafford after the Reverend John Stafford who was one of the founders of several Methodist churches in this state. Dad and mother were very fond of him and so they named me Stafford. And I talked to dad one day and I said, "Why is it that everybody's got a nickname but I don't have any?" Well he said, "That's the reason we gave you that name. It can't be -- they can give you no nickname." So I was proud of my name and I came into the university and amongst others of my classmates was a young fellow by the name of Bill Gamble from Rochester who subsequently became a very prominent doctor in our day.

And one day, Bill said to me something and called me Staff. Now this back rigidness of mine showed itself and I flared up and told him that my name is Stafford and I wouldn't propose to have him or any other city slicker insult me. The immediate result of that was that we all went back to the old YMCA building on the campus and killed our codes and fought it out and the result of that was wonderful because Bill and I became very good and very close friends for the rest of our life.

But my point here is that a youngster who comes in from that kind of an area is not mentally and probably not physically capable of competing with the rapid pace of a sizeable university. So I didn't do well, I didn't know how. I was there a full year before I learned how to study in such a way that I could follow the class assignments. So I was in school then through prelaw and then went in to the law school until June of 1916. In the meantime, I had been working summers on

road construction gangs because all of western Minnesota was busy with the building of roads in those days.

And I had gone out to North Dakota on a job which gave me my first experience as an accountant. The Northern Pacific was building a branch line north from Mandan, North Dakota. And an old hard blow lumberjack by the name of Hulbert had received a subcontract to do three miles of Phil. Hulbert was not an educated man and when he got his crew of these lumberjacks all picked he had a crew of men who could chop and saw and shovel, they could work and they were proud of their ability to work.

But none of them could read a gauge stick and none of them could keep just a normal set of books. And he got the idea that I could do that for him and he asked dad -- mother and father, mother objected of course, but I went out there on my first job as the pine keeper for this construction crew. And I worked out there all in the summer, but I had a friend, I still have. Mike Guthrie, he's one of the kids that had come to stay at our house up there and we had lived together, he'd come with us down to Deer River and went down to university with me.

But when this happened I told Hulbert, "Well all right." Dad had given his approval and so I said, "All right I'll go but you've got to give a job to Mike too." So Mike went out as a bull cook. Now if you don't know what a bull cook is I'll tell you that he's the end of the kitchen that does all the dirty work. He builds the fires and carries the wood or shovels the coal and he peels the potatoes and washes the dishes and so on.

And Mike was hired at a salary of \$30 a month and board and I was hired at a salary of \$35. And the job of running that crew and seeing that the materials came in and collecting the partial payments as we completed portions of the Phil kept Hulbert pretty busy and sometimes he wasn't around camp. And so when the first payday came around he wasn't there and so I computed what these men had coming having the deducted the pair of socks and the smoking tobacco and the snuff and the corn cob pipes that they bought out of the wanigan.

And I computed my own and I wrote the checks and to me it was absolutely unreasonable that I should get a check for \$35 and Mike only 30. So the next months the same thing happened and so I made up my own check for \$35 but I raised Mike \$5 a month to make it \$35 and Hulbert came back I told him he said, "Well that's all right." And then the third month I raised him for \$40 a month, so after three months he and I earned exactly the same amount of money and we came home with every single dime.

So that money went into my beginning at the university and the money that I earned working on the highways and when I got to university I got a job washing dishes for my board. As I told you I had trouble the first year I was in academic and I was required of course to take up science.

And in those days a university taught sciences on an individual basis. You actually could have a course for instance in zoology, you could have one in botany, you could have one in chemistry.

And I had never had any chemistry in high school and so I signed up for this botany class. I'd lived with trees and flowers and plants all my life and I did reasonably well. And over in the algology department was Miss Josephine Tilden who having come into the university at 16 was still there at about 55 or 60 and was a specialist in algology. And she had convinced the university and the British Museum and the Smithsonian Institute to send her as the head of a botanical expedition into the South Pacific.

And the Daily, the Minnesota Daily came out with a story about this and amongst other things it said that Miss Tilden will hire the natives to collect the plants. And that she will stay a month in Tahiti and then she'd go to Rarotonga and then she'll go to New Zealand and then she'll go to Australia and I read it. I had my heart set on doing something, going somewhere and this looked to me like an opportunity. So I went to her and told her that I had thought that their planning was bad and she couldn't expect to teach the natives, in any 20 or 30 days how to handle a [plant press], and that it would be cheaper and much more efficient if she would take me down to do that because she would show me once and that would be all to it. And strangely enough she agreed, she said, "Well, Mr. King, now that's a very good idea, and I'll do that provided that you can get the approval of the head of the Botanical department." And so I said to her "Will you make the request or do you want me to?" She said "I'll make it." And that satisfied me.

So she made the request and I was called in the next day and discovered then what my marks were in botany I had not known up to that time, I had known that they were good I didn't know what they were. And they were straight A's right through, but still the old dean wasn't so sure about an immature individual who I was to go on, I must be sure to have the approval of my parents. I wasn't worried about that, but there was a man in the class Fred Tryon who was a book worm if you know what I mean, he studied all the time and he was brilliant. And I knew that despite the fact that the records didn't show I knew that Fred Tryon knew much more about plants than I did.

And so I thought it would be a very good idea if I could convince Miss Jolene to take Fred along, and so I went back to her and told her that I was all set, but that I had seen rather unreasonable that one man would be doing all of this and that two could do a much better job and she agreed. So in 1912, that's before I got into law school, Fred and I took off from San Francisco with Miss Jolene and we were gone about seven months down in the South Pacific picking flowers. And we picked them root, stalk, leaf, blossom 65,000 different species, we took the fruits and there were a lot of bogus fruits, dreadful things like that. And we put them in the five gallon cans and then we filled the cans with formaldehyde and we sealed them, and we shipped those back to the states and when they got to San Francisco the inspectors not willing to take the certification on

Miss. Jolene as to what was there opened every one of those cans and the formaldehyde evaporated and every single one of those fruits was destroyed, but the plants that we had pressed finally reached their proper designations and I think some of them are still on view down in Washington at this Mausoleum.

LK: Did you keep record of the trip?

SK: Oh yes, we kept records of where we were, where the flowers were going, what kind of soil, what the moisture contents of the atmosphere was and so on, I know all of those things I have none of them here but they went to Miss Jolene accidentally as a result of it she brought herself a vanilla plantation, in Tahiti which she had put a number of years, she died a few years ago down in Florida.

LK: How old were you then Mr. King when you went down this extensive trip?

SK: Well I was 18, that's an interesting thing, the years go by all too fast and not so long ago I was down in Washington and called into – I had then re-enlisted when I was in World War II and I was called in to the officer -- to the general's office, General Ryan, and he thanked me for having undertaken the situation that had taken me six weeks, and he said "King, I want to make you a proposition." "I said what's that?" He said, "I would like to have you stay here with me in Washington and if you do you will be a full legal colonel within six months." Well I said, "Sir I don't want to stay in Washington I want to get overseas my boy is overseas and my daughter is overseas I want to go there."

Yes, he said, "I understand that you are unhappy here" and I said, "No I'm not unhappy I'm just dissatisfied", "Well where then do you want to go?" And I was in the intelligence service, and I knew of some difficulties that they were having getting officers and men who volunteer for the African run on our airplanes, believe it or not the fellows were scared to death. Of the stories that came out of there about the tsetse flies, they weren't worried about the enemy but were worried about the tsetse fly and they got the idea that if one of those flies bite them they would die. And so I told them I will take that African run, the Karachi run, well he said, "You were down in the South Pacific weren't you?" Yes, how long I told him, he said, "Did you meet any natives down there?" I said, "Yes I met a lot of them." Where?" Well I said, "I met them in Tahiti, and they were in Congo and Fiji." "How did you get along with them?" "Fine." He said, "Did you learn any of the languages?" I said, "Yes I could talk a little when I got back home", he said, "I can help send you down there" and that is how I happened to be assigned as an intelligence officer for the United States Air Force in the South Pacific, and it all centered around this silly little flower picking job that I had when I was a kid.

LK: This is quite a change...

SK: When I came in to the University, I found some things that I disliked very hardly and incidentally maybe in view of what's happening these days I did not riot above them I just objected and went on and tried to do my best. And I found some things that I enjoyed very much, this was the first time in my life that I had had an opportunity to have any direct to the athletics. Swimming was a sport but not an official contest at the university. But I enjoyed that pool so very much and I learned how to swim and I won two or three intercollegiate contests which again didn't count for instance for an M and I took gymnasium.

And the reason I took gymnasium was because Dr. Crook made me mad. When I came in to take my physical to come in he asked me to go over and chin myself twice I could only chin myself twice. He said, I don't understand that, he said you got a fine pair of legs on you and you got a fine chest good lung power, but he said you are physically inept...

So then he directed me and I joined and became a part of the gym class and that did me a world of good. I had had a little trouble with the inevitable Tom bully who thumbed his nose physically and verbally at me when I left, and said that the university wasn't for sissies. And so when I discovered that for \$25 I could get a course in boxing I took a course in boxing and had a tremendous satisfaction of going back home that next spring and licking this fellow.

And so as far as boxing was concerned I went on and won the welterweight championship at the which coincidentally didn't count for an M. I won an M, but I got it because of the fact that of all things I was elected that was my first political venture because I was elected to be Rooter King in 1914. But what I liked most I think was a required military drill and I worked hard at it, and I enjoyed every bit of it and finally was promoted to be a sergeant and by and by I got a commission.

So that when 1916 came around then the United State got into this ruckus on the Mexican border I was home during vacation and I was firing on a walking dredge a floating dredge, nights. I got three dollars a shift for that, it was a 10 hour shift. And I shoveled coal into this boiler to give it enough power to dig through the swamp, it was an interesting thing because in the first place I didn't know how to spread the coal when I started and I burned the grate out of the boiler and the engineer threatened to take the cost of a new grate out of my pay which he didn't do. And then I never could tell if I had enough water in the water gauge or not because as the shovel came around here and took a whole to come up the dredge would trickle and the water gauge would come over and then I had to swing around and dump over here and to get back and then it would run dry.

So I finally had to learn to put in a little water every little while in order to keep it from blowing up. And I got a letter from Art I already knew he was a fraternity brother of mine I had joined the

legal fraternity, he got an RV by the way our senior judge was a dean at the house at the time I retired. That house produced a lot of fine lawyers and judges. Jake, Judge L. Pearson and so on, I never made it. Art wrote and told me we are going to the Mexican border and there is room for you, so I waited in water up to my waist away from the dredge over the higher land which was about a mile and a half, walked 10 miles more into Deer River, came down to university and enlisted in old battery, the first Minnesota Field Artillery.

And we went down to Mexican border in June, not as a second lieutenant by any means, but as a high private. Reynolds who subsequently became an excellent gentleman Minnesota was the commanding officer of the battery and I will never forget this because it seems to me that all my life I have found myself in a position that I didn't like and that I sort of being lucky in a way I've bulled through. I didn't like the idea of walking behind harsh drone equipment in the mud, in the rain, now they are on the boarder and so I went to the old man. And I said, "Sir how do I get a horse?" And he laughed and he said, "Well I'll tell you. You show me that you can handle one of our sections and I'll make you a section chief and then you will ride a horse" and by gully I showed him and I got my horse.

So I was there on the boarder and we came home just before – we came home in time theoretically for us to go back to school, but I had had small pox just before I went home and then here I was I had lost this whole summer and I hadn't gone to summer school, and Eddy Morgan who was my advisor at the university in law school had said stuff I think it will be just as well for you to wait a quarter and then come back. Because he said it's very doubtful whether you can pass the examination that you need to make up this loss of time. I spent six weeks in the old Minneapolis pest house out in St. Louis Park and before this period was up here we were in World War I, so again I left home and came down and enlisted.

Wound up in officers' training camp out at Fort Snelling and was commissioned in November 1917 that was a second lieutenant provisional, this only advised that colonel [unclear] he said I will give you permission of the captain and a reserve or the second lieutenant provisional in the regular army. And I assumed that reserved meant that I would stay home so I wasn't enthusiastic about this despite the fact that it was a higher rank. An enquiry brought forth the fact that a enlisted man could come in as a provisional second lieutenant and if he worked out alright on a provisional period, then his commission was made permanent. So I accepted the provisional second lieutenantancy. It was shortly made permanent, three months after that I was promoted to first lieutenant so that when the Armistice I was the first lieutenant in a regular army, and then I discovered that it was harder to get out of the army than it was to get in it.

Dad had suffered a very severe injury. Again he was working for somebody else who was interested in this tide water canal, didn't always in existence he had to come – and he had gone down the lake, he had eaten his dinner, came back into his cabin, sat down on the lower board

and hit the back of his head against the upper board. And suffered a bad injury, paralysis type thing, question was whether the blow had caused this or whether he had suffered a heart attack and had it cause the blow.

But it subsequently killed him and I received all of this information from mother and she just begged me, the war is over and you aren't needed, come on home. So I put in my resignation and after 1700 endorsements it seemed like to me they granted it. That probably was a very serious mistake and I look back now and I think I should have stayed in the general was right he said you are fitted for military service. I know two fellows in my class, same rank I had, they stayed in, both of them were retired as major and general, 20 years ago, so then I came home.

Bertha and I had been married on the 30th of June in 1917 and I came home and suddenly realized that I was a married man and that I had some responsibilities and I had no job, and I had no education, but I wanted to finish the education so I got a temporary job with the State Department of Conservation as a patrol man. It was \$60 a month, the last entry in my diary comes back even now to haunt me, the boys were having a lot of fun about it, we were required to keep a daily diary of where we were and what we did my last entry was: Any man that worked for the state of Minnesota for a lousy \$60 a month ought to be fired. I quit.

And then I – in order to be close to the St. Paul College of Law I got a job with the state bonus department as a clerk, and I worked there for \$125 a month, lived in Minneapolis along Grand Avenue and went to law school at the university at the St. Paul College of Law. The American legion was being organized I had organized a post in Deer River. I had helped organized a Grand Rapids and that's when I came down here and transferred my membership in Post 8 which was the largest post in the state at that time. I met Dr. Van Dyke. Van Dyke was a dentist, he was a brother of Carl C. Van Dyke and Carl C. Van Dyke and my father were close political friends because both were Jeffersonian democrats. That may sound funny to you that I was raised a democrat but I was.

I never regretted it, not one single bit. Because the good republican today is the same kind of an individual with the same theories and philosophies that the Jeffersonian democrats had. Jefferson wouldn't turn over – if it is true that a dead man turns over in his grave when he sees his ideals abused Thomas Jefferson must be whirling dervish because the present Democratic Party doesn't even express a conception of his idea of government which was that you know that government is best which governs least. Well, Van Dyke was elected though. I had been involved in the first American Legion Convention, incidentally this year is our fiftieth year, so today I'm a 50 year member of the American Legion, I was a delegate to the first state convention which we held here in St. Paul and the first national convention which was held in Minneapolis on the 10th and 11th of November 1918.

And in due course of time Van Dyke was elected state commander. I had gotten a better job and I had moved out of the bonus department and I was a claim investigator for the city of St. Paul and the days when Larry Hudson was mayor and Hart Nelson was city attorney and in those days the commander appointed the adjutant of the legion. And somehow this old practice that I had had on the stamp up on the woods began to bear fruit and I had talked at both the national and federal conventions. A matter of fact in those days I was so enthusiastic whether it was almost impossible to shut me up. If you had a place that somebody talked I talk at the drop of the hat and I would drop the hat of course, but Van knew me and he asked if I would be his adjutant, I accepted it so I went to work for the American Legion in 1921, and stayed there as adjutant for about five years.

LK: This was a regular, paid position?

SK: Oh yes, the best paid job that I had had up to that time, in other words it gave me \$300 a month which was a lot of money believe me, by that time I had two babies, incidentally we were living in an old hat factory on Blaire Street we were paying \$60 a month for that. I can remember many days when Mrs. King would go down corner grocery and buy one orange because we couldn't afford two and bring it home and cut it in two so that Betty could have the juice from one half and Stanley could have it from the other.

LK: Those were the good days.

SK: Yes, it was.

LK: But you have another appointment.

SK: Well and we've run over. Now you are just kind of letting me get warmed up thus far, so come back when you can...

LK: Yes and I suggest this time if it's alright with you start back on the Mexican experience.

SK: I got my back broken down there, you know they told me I would never walk again.

LK: How did you do that?

SK: That was my horse that I was telling you about. I was permitted to have a horse and we did a shipment of train load of horses from the west and the rule is that the horses must be broken when they are sold to the army. So this bronco buster gets on him and if he can ride him for three minutes they are broken. And this horse was one of the most beautiful things you ever saw, he was just gorgeous, coal black, stood about 16 and a half hands high with maybe 1200 pounds oh

gosh it was beautiful and there wasn't a blemish on him. Our stable sergeant was an old regular army sergeant of the Philippine by the name of Con Fredrickson and subsequently became game warden here and Con was one of the very profaned fellows ya know, he would damn the army about anything, anytime and usually but if you did it he would fight you, and he was my friend. So when this car load of horses get out I said to Con who was going to get these horses, that's the one I want right there. He said don't be silly, he said you are the low man on the totem pole, you will be lucky if they let you ride that jackass over there. I said why, he said don't you know how this is done I said no, he said the colonel that was Leach he will get the first choice, then his adjutant gets a choice, and then the majors get a choice, and then the captains get a choice and then the first lieutenants get a choice, and then the second lieutenants and then the sergeants and then you.

Well I said Con they wouldn't choose that horse, unless he was fit, Con said what the hell do you mean? Well I said if he was limping or something like that, no he is going to choose him and he said I suppose not, so I went over and pulled a hair out of the horses tail and lifted the hair up around his hoof and tied the hair around tight and Con said you know I could be court marshaled for letting you do that, but he said you are a smart kid and I think it will work. So when he led the first horse off the thicket line the next morning he could hardly work it had already stepped on it, it had cut the circulation off, the hair and you couldn't see it. Colonel said to Con he said sergeant what's the matter with that horse, well sure he said I haven't had any chance to look him over and well we got him yesterday and he said he was certainly is pretty lame today. Well what is it? Well it could be ring bone or maybe he hurt himself on the train. He said I haven't had a chance to look him over. So the general, then the major and the captain looked him over and everyone else.

And so I went over when no one was looking and cut his hair off, and then I spent the next hour rubbing his leg down and he was my horse, then we saddled and he threw me three times and George Crunch who knew more about riding than I did came a long and said let me ride him, so George rode him for half an hour and then I rode him, he was just full of life, as he did just fine. And two morning after that at day light he was sent south to the river on cross hike patrol and this is within the country down there with a cactus grow high as this ceiling and spines on them like this and we were going down on all the roads which incidentally had been cut off with old Andrew Jackson in the Mexican War and it was not a road it was just a rough country road not even a road just a rut had been cut back in most places but sometimes it had grown up pretty close to the rut and this fellow was siding around and he sided over into this cactus and one of those spines cut him right in his hind flank he put his head down between his knees and he galloped like a bull. I had no pride grabbed his saddled and I grabbed the rains and I hang on the saddle really close and I went over his head and then he jumped on my belly.

I was crippled on this mud that had splashed up out of the rut and hardened in the sun. And I think he would have killed me if Crunch hadn't road in. Crunch rode in and he hit that horse twice right between the eyes with that thing and the second time he knocked him down and when he got up he was bleeding through his nostril. Then he lowered me in a dump wagon, carried me back to camp and put me on the straw pallet on the floor on the ground in a tent and I laid there for four weeks. And the doctors came, they came up from... what's that town down in...? south eastern Texas, Corpus Cristi and they had a board and they sat on this case and then regimental doctor came to me and said I've got some bad news for you and I felt something had happened to dad and he said it was about you and I said what about me? Well your back is broken. I said I know that, and he said you will never walk again. And he never came to see me after that.

I saw him years after the war was over after World War I, and he said I never felt so miserable about anything in my life that is what I had to tell you, and old Frederickson, the old stable guy he wouldn't accept it and he made up some kind of a concoction that he used to put on the horses you know ashes and creosote, liniment and made this kind of stuff and when my back healed up, it had been pretty well skinned all the way down from my shoulder to my buttocks.

I know the doctor would cut off chunks of skin and all that way and in those days they didn't speak anything about any construction. Con would come down that was compounded mixture and he would get down on his knees and sit alongside me laying there on the floor, and he would rub and he would curse the army and the president of the United States, and wars and generals and but he would rub. And I wore that brace all through World War I. As a matter of fact I wore it for 12 years.

It's a funny thing I told that story to a young fellow he was paralyzed down here and you know he quit, he gave up and so I walked in and told him my story, he said you are lying Mr. King. I said I'm not. Well he said you think I can get out of bed I said sure if you want to lay here just do what you please, but he walked on crutches for a while so I got up and went walking on a cane I came home on a cane. I came home weighing 116 pounds and I was just about to -- the color of this desk the color of this desk, I was full of Yellow Fever.

LK: That was a preparation for World war I.

SK: I guess it was. Of course as a matter of fact I am more and more of the opinion that the only reason they were called out on the boarder by Wilson was by the advice of his general staff was that he knew he needed troops that had some field training for World War I which he knew was just around the corner.

We took advantage, I mean the government of the Unites States took advantage of a very unpleasant situation. [unclear] was regaining strength and he didn't have food and so he raided

across the border, he didn't want to raid in Mexico because that was – wouldn't give him any prestige amongst his own people.

So he raided the gringos and it was really miserable. He came across the border, cut down a goodly number of our regular army cavalry and obviously we had to do something about it as far as line in that border with national guard troops all the way from one end to the other that was... but it was good training for us. We learned how to build camp, we learned how to take care of ourselves, we learned how to handle our equipment and everything of course was mule drawn, we learned that.

LK: Was an agonizing time for Wilson?

SK: It must have been.

LK: Yeah because he was so anti-war, completely anti-war at that time. Maybe we come back next week.

SK: If I'm here sure, just call up and plan up and I'm not doing too well.

LK: You are not doing well?

SK: You know what happened to me, do you? Well I had a stroke...

LK: No...

[Break in recording]

LK: The last time we finished the Mexican War and you sort of skimmed over the First World War and your employment. Were you overseas during the First World War?

LJ: No, I wasn't. I had come out of the woods in northern Minnesota and gone into the university just before I was 17 years of age and being young and enthusiastic about things and having been raised in the family that prided itself on its war time service, of its ancestors. I was one of not too many students of the university who was pleased with the opportunity to take military drill. The university has an original land-grant college was required in those days to have a course in military science and tactics.

So as a member of the Cadet Corps of the university I had two years of military training which gave me some basic information on soldiering as such. And I had an attack of smallpox which put me into the old test house of St. Louis Park and eliminated any opportunity I had of taking

my mid season examinations. So I was home at Deer River working as a choir man on a floating dredge, digging ditches, at...

LK: This was when you were in law school, this part?

LJ: I was -- yes. In 1916 when this border trouble began, so I left the job, walked 12 miles into town, came down to St. Paul, Minneapolis and enlisted in old battery. That was the first Minnesota field artillery and went down on the Mexican as an enlisted man. So that I was there and back home as a result of having been here at the time World War I broke out. And I discovered that they had a training camp for officers and so I made an application for admission and I was accepted.

And because of this military training which I had had at the university and on the Mexican border, I discovered that it helped me tremendously in my work as an officer candidate. So along in November 1917 having completed that course and the second officer's training camp at Snelling. I was given a choice of commissions, a captaincy on the reserve or a second lieutenantcy provisional in the regular army. I was apprehensive about the captaincy in the reserve although I was proud of course to have the -- to me then very high rank of captain offered, but I was afraid that the word reserve meant that I would stay home and never get overseas.

And Major Terrell, a regular army man who was in-charge of the camp convinced me that the army was for me and he felt that I would in time become a good officer in the regular army and he suggested to me personally when we discussed this that I accept the second lieutenantcy provision, which I did. Then after a few months the provision appointment was made permanent and within about three months after that I was commissioned as a first lieutenant in the regular army. I think that came on me about the time that I was 23 years of age.

I was assigned to the machine gun company of the 40th infantry at Fort Cheriton. Machine guns were not integrated in an organization the way they are now, but in those days the machine gun was new. Its use was new and it was established as a separate company or battalion. The machine gunner in those days was known as an individual who belonged to the suicide squadron, because the machine guns were supposed to be set out in front of the infantry and protect them from frontal attack.

And while I was so assigned a new military weapon having been developed by -- under the old Browning patents came to us, a single piece known as the Browning light, a 30-caliber automatic rifle that you could shoot from the hip or from the shoulder. Nobody knew anything about it. But somebody in the outside had been digging around through my 201 records and discovered that the last civilian job that I had held before I went into service was that a school teacher.

Actually I had taught school one winter in a little rural school at the request done with a special appointment by the superintendent of the schools largely because of the fact that the youngsters were pretty sizeable and some of them were a little rough and they had run a little female school teacher out and therefore they had to have some young fellow like me to take over on a disciplinary basis. If nothing else incidentally I think I learned more while I was teaching school than I fought.

LK: Where was that school?

SK: That was the Old Hill School in Itasca County about 10, 11 miles west of Deer River. It was within a mile and a half of a piece of land that I had homesteaded and was living on. So I taught there and did my own janitor work, walked a mile and a half to and from school and was paid \$50 a month and this was all a matter of record.

So when they wanted somebody to lecture on the use of nomenclature of the Browning 30 light, they chose me and they came to me and the colonel sent his aid over and I went to his office and he said, "King at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning you will lecture for one and a half hour before the officers of this organization on this particular weapon." I had never seen it, but I went over and got it, I brought it over to my quarters and I sat up all night with the manual.

And I took it down and put it together again until I knew something about it and then the next morning I lectured on it. And apparently the lecture was satisfactory but the result was not the active service by any matter, I mean because I wound up then instructing. I instructed this particular weapon and then the heavy weapons and the use of grenades, bayonets. As a matter of fact, when they had a class and they couldn't find anybody else they gave it to me.

I wound up my last assignment during the war, I wound up as commanding officer of a cadet school at Jefferson College, Louisiana and this is about 40 miles upriver from New Orleans. It was a Jesuit Mission and boys' school and I was there the winter of 1917. No that must be in 1918. Then after the armistice I was assigned to the 43rd infantry at Camp Travis, Texas.

[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

LJ: President -- district -- sorry, sorry. District commander of the American legion in the fourth district.

LJ: Jurod Lee.

LJ: J-U-R-O-D Lee, he's a barber over here on [Wright] Street, and...

LJ: You said the first Negro.

LJ: And he's just a marvelous guy. Well now where was I? Back around...

LJ: How much longer did your active military career continue during the World War I?

LJ: Well, here's what happened. I was as I told you in the regular army and along in the -- it must have been February or March. My father had been injured on a trip that he was taking in connection with the then anticipated building of the tide water canal in Duluth. And he was hurt aboard ship and laid up in a hospital in Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal.

I received letters from mother saying that dad was dying and I must get out and come home. And then I discovered that it was harder to get out of the army than it was to get in. But after going through all the necessary prerequisite steps my application for a resignation was accepted and so I left the regular army about the 31st of May 1919 and came home, and I had no more federal military service until World War II, but in the meantime I served I think two or three years as a captain in the Minnesota National Guard in the reorganization that took place after the sensational hostilities on the 11th of November 1918.

LJ: Have you ever had any regrets you didn't pursue a military career?

LJ: Not really, but hindsight being what it is I've had some little envy for some of the fellows that were with me started the same way I did. Received almost the same kind of commissions and who stayed in, Gullquist for instance stayed in and 20 years ago he retired as a major general. If I had had the good fortune in securing the promotions that he did, I suppose I might have retired at the same time and lived the life of [rarely] ever since.

But I came back home and went to work, got into politics and then when World War II came along all facetiously they felt -- they found I was warm and took me back again. Actually what happened was that I wanted to go back, my boy had gone into service, my daughter had gone into service. My boy had gone in for the Air Corps and served honorably and well and with substantial distinction and Stanley lost a leg and he was invalid at home subsequently.

That's Stanley, Dr. Stanley King in Minneapolis now. And Betty, our daughter, went in to the Red Cross, she had punctured the retina of her eye when she was a small child and they wouldn't take her into the army as such but she went into the field service of the American Red Cross, served overseas during the war in London all during the Blitz and subsequently in Germany and in Guam.

I think her total service was some six years. But I went over to Minneapolis where I understood my old friend Frank McCormick was handling an officer procurement program. And I walked over and told Frank that I wanted in and he looked me right in the eye and said, "Well you're too old." Well this wound up in a little personal repercussion. I explained to him that he was no older than I was and that a national football player of some prominence notwithstanding I could lick him the best day he ever saw, but I got nowhere with him.

I didn't try to lick him by the way and I'm glad I didn't because he probably would have ruined me, but in any event I wrote to Congressman O'Hara from [Glenco]. Joe is a long time personal friend of mine and he said that there was nothing that he could do about it but that maybe if I came down to Washington I could find some place. So I went to Washington and I walked from one office to the other offering my services, everybody was grateful for the offer but they just didn't have any place for a man as far over age and grade as I would have been.

I think it was a funny thing I walked into a procurement office and talked to the major and it was a little dark in there. I could see that he was a major but I wasn't particularly interested in who he was or what his rank was or what service he was in. And he held forth at some length about the military police service. Well my association with the military police during World War I was such that I didn't want to have anything to do with that particular branch or service; I found out afterwards that their duties were entirely changed.

But he offered me a -- well at least subjected my ability to pass a physical examination. A majority in the military police and I very profanely said to him, "Who the hell wants to be a major in the military police?" and then I realized that the man I was talking to who was a major in the military police. So that ended that. But the next day again walking the streets I found a type thing set up along the sidewalk and it said officer procurement.

I went in, was nobody there but a young second lieutenant who grinned at me when I came in, asked me -- announce my entrance by saying, "Oh another retread." Well I said, "Call it anything you want." Well he said, "You want back in?" And I said, "That's right." He said, "Would you mind filing out the application blank on that table?" And I said, "No," so I filled them out went over and handed it to him and he said, "What was your branch of service in World War I, what was your rank?"

And strangely enough he asked me not what I did, but asked how much money I had made each year for the last three years and I told him and he said, "All right, you're in." And he gave me orders which brought me back here to Fort Snelling where I took and passed a physical examination and then was assigned first, I was assigned to the Army Air Corps intelligence at the rank of captain. And sent to the first officers, combat officers' school that they'd ever had for air

intelligence at Harrisburg, where I underwent six weeks of the toughest training that I had ever seen up to that time.

We started with some 240, 245 men in the test and a 100 of us I think, 98 was I believe were subsequently graduated and I was one of them and then I was assigned to the South Pacific where I served for 31 months during World War II.

LJ: What kind of unit were you in the South Pacific?

SK: In air intelligence.

LJ: And you were discharged as a major or...?

SK: No I was discharged as a lieutenant colonel, lieutenant colonels as you know are a dime a dozen. So that's a brief background on military service.

LJ: How did you first get into politics?

SK: Well in the first two weeks after the armistice and that applied to me after I got back out of service in June. The newspapers were filled with stories about this new organization of the American legion. We didn't know of course exactly what it was. But this was an organization of veterans, I knew that so I made enquiries and discovered enough about it to satisfy myself that I wanted some share in it. Enquired as to what should be done and proceeded to do it relative to the institution of the first American Legion post in Deer River, Minnesota which was my home.

And we organized the Louis Lequier post number 122 at Deer River and I was a charter member and it's first commander. That's the reason that this is the year that I get my 50-year-pin for 50 consecutive years of service. Then I helped to organize the Dan McVeigh post of the American legion at Grand Rapids. Then I came to Minneapolis and lived there one year while I worked as a clerk in the old Bonus Board in the state capital.

Then we moved to St. Paul and I still retained my interest in the legion, transferred my membership from Deer River to St. Paul Post 8 and was a member of St. Paul Post 8 and had been -- I think I had been commander at the time that Dr. Van Dyke was elected state commander of the legion. And in those days the state commander appointed his adjutant and Van Dyke had met me, he had known of some of the work I did, had heard me speak about the legion on occasion and he was quite sure that I was the man that he wanted and so I accepted that appointment and I went in there in 1921.

Now during the time that I was adjutant some four or five years, four years I think, these were still the organization days of the legion and so I spoke in every town of over 500 people in the state of Minnesota during that four-year period. As a matter of fact, I didn't see my babies awake at any time during that four-year period except that it might be on a Sunday that I was at home or that they would wake up in the middle of the night with a calling or something, because I was gone from early morning until late at night.

Now that gave me an acquaintanceship with the people fairly widely spread around the state. And we were talking then hospitalization for the disabled, we were talking about education for the children of widows, we were talking about better facilities for discharged veterans. And the result was that I was talking about a non-controversial program and the result was that I was well received and I established a state wide acquaintance that provided the background of my political progress.

Subsequently I went out of the legion and accepted the job as director of the first department of soldier welfare which had been created by the legislature under the jurisdiction of the then existed border control. And in 1925 the gossip was that [Rich] Hayes would not run for reelection a state auditor would -- but would be a candidate for governor. And the fellows came to me and insisted that I run for state auditor. Their argument was that here we were eight or nine years after World War I and no World War veteran had been elected at any state office.

And that someone should be if for no other reason than to give prominence to veterans' programs and I was the man to do it. Incidentally I remember as we finalized this thing I had gone to [Rich] Hayes and asked him whether he was going to run again and he said, "No." And then he asked me, "Why do you do enquiry?" And I told him that I was thinking about filing. And he charged me definitely not to do that. That it was agreed that Henry Ryan with a background of state controller and state treasurer and all the time politician and the editor of the Kanabec Times had been slated for this by the republican hierarchy.

But I didn't know anything about politics so I wasn't fighting at this situation and as we finally agreed that I was to file the situation was this, Jerry Keyon who ran a furniture store and was the editor of the Montgomery News I think, came into my office with Tom Streissguth who was a young attorney at New Ulm. Tom subsequently went on to serve as an associate justice of the supreme court in his day.

Both of these men now are dead. But I had laughed at their insistence that I file, it was now time to file for office and I said to them, "Well if it's a question of filing I haven't even go the filing fee." The filing fee in those days was \$50. So they looked at each other and grinned and each one of them reached in his pocket and each one of them came out strangely enough with \$5 bills, \$25

a piece which they gave to me and now said, "Here take this towards secretary of state's office and file," and I did. That's the way I got in the politics.

The way I won the first election was because I got more votes than my opposition of course. But the reason that I got more votes was because of the rather amazing comradeship that had come to me out of the American legion. My religion, my politics were well known, but despite differences of religion and difference of party politics, the veterans of this state organized their own King [unclear] clubs in their own communities, financed them themselves.

And Jew and Gentile and Catholic and Protestant and black and white talked to their friends about this man King. The result was that while I had one denomination against Henry Ryans by something less than 700 votes I won the fall election against Henry Tigern who was the first farmer-labor congressman from the state of Minnesota. And they had brought him back from Washington to run for this office because they assumed that he could be elected. And I beat him by 125,000 votes that fall.

LJ: Which was the year...?

SK: That was the fall of 1930, incidentally that was the year that Floyd Olson having run twice before was successful in his candidacy for governor and he became the first farmer-labor governor in the state of Minnesota. At that time we had three parties you see, the Farmer-Labor Party, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

LJ: In subsequent election staff, and you've had a lot of them, have any of these elements of your support be effective and any won election?

SK: No. The old timers have stayed with me come hell or high water year after year and where in recent years they no longer live, the results show that they have talked to their children and their children's children until it is not only gratifying but it is just amazing at the reasons given by individuals as to why they vote for Staff King for state auditor. And in many cases as I have campaign for instance in this last election, a mature woman will come to me and say, "Mr. King, you knew my grandfather, you helped him organize the legion post down here or you did this for him, you helped to get him into the hospital or to settle a claim." So strangely enough for more than a full generation and a half, this amazing help from the little fellow has retained me in this position. The same thing was true when I was a candidate for state commander of the American legion in 1928 and I think there were five of us running. And all of the large delegations had been pledged to a particular candidate before they went to the Austin Convention. And still as the role was started to be called Staff King from Deer River, the little town of 900 people, he got the first ballots from Edah, a town of about the same size.

The little fellows stuck with the little guy and made me what I am. If I were to live 1,000 years I will never forget this just absolutely magnificent. Practical application of comradeship which has come to me from my association with veterans in general and the legion in particular.

LJ: Tell us about that first campaign. I remember the first campaign for state auditor

SK: Well we...

SK: I remember you telling me one time that you campaigned with Olson; you gave speeches at the same place?

LJ: Yes, I spoke from the same platform with Floyd Olson several times during the campaign. Our association was one of friendliness. He never criticized me and I didn't criticize him. We were friendly political enemies. I didn't know his people and he didn't know mine but that didn't make any difference because we were talking to those who came at a certain occasion to hear political talks.

And of course, my mistake was that in 1932 having been elected in 1930 and taken office the first Tuesday after the first Monday in the following January, my term was four years. Every other individual elected, the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, treasurer and attorney general term of office was two years. So 1932 then was an off year as far as running for office was concerned by the state auditor. But after I was elected and during these first two years that I held office, young, naïve, inexperience as I was I permitted some of the older heads in the party who I am now firmly convinced were more actuated by personal selfish motives than my welfare.

I let them convince me that I was the greatest leader of the Republican Party that the world had ever seen and in the midst of my egotism I agreed to give a keynote address at St. Paul Convention of Republicans in 1932. Well, Floyd Olson had seen no military service although he was of lawful age and I had watched him work for two years and I had not agreed with many of the things he did. And so believing that that was the way to do it I proceeded to criticize the governor and deny his right to re-nomination and re-election for about 40 or 45 minutes over the radio.

We didn't have TV in those days. I thought I had made a pretty good political talk, nevertheless I was astounded the next morning when I walked down the corridor in the capital and I met the governor. Floyd was quite a profane man with his lips, but I never saw that he was at heart. And he said to me, "Staff that's the best damn campaign speech I ever made anybody make."

And I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "That speech you made last night down before that Republican group. That was a honey, boy I just wish you were on our side." "And so I had made some remark well coming from you that is a real complement." And he said, "But I'm sorry that you made it because it will cost you." I said, "What do you mean?" Well he said, "We sat down at headquarters in the [unclear] and we listened to you and when you got done, we set up a budget of \$50,000 for the purpose of beating you at the next election."

Now that situation, believe it or not, I had never thought of. I was so naïve that that never occurred to me, but here it was formally announced. And so I said, "Well, I don't think you set aside quite enough money," and we went out way. And strangely enough my prediction was true but by the skinniest margin because they assigned as their candidate Jack Lyons. And Jack came within something less than 650 votes of beating me on a total vote of something over a million and a quarter.

But I was ahead in the official count and was given a certificate of election which he promptly questioned and brought a recount which went on oh I believe along into the following December, January before it was finally recounted and settled and at that time I had lost votes here and picked up votes there but the result was some 1,200 votes. That was a political lesson that I learned and I have never since made that same mistake, I have never become involved in a primary campaign be it for or against my friends.

I submit that there's no more dangerous procedure for an individual than to become so involved that is always detrimental in his own progress. Incidentally Lyons opposed me in 1938 and I won handily this time. And then when the election of 1942 came along I wasn't here, I was gone on a leave of absence. But the filing had been made for me and so I was a candidate and when I came back after having been elected, incidentally I carried every county in the state during that election and to show you the humor of the situation I got a letter from my friend Ray [Commons] who always handled my finances, and Ray wrote me and told me in substances dear Staff at the November we re-elected you by 150,000 or whatever the margin was, his letter went something like this: Dear Staff you've been gone now about four months and we have re-elected you by 125,000 votes if you will guarantee to stay away for four years we will make it 500,000. But when I came home I found that Jack Ryans, himself a veteran, a very decent and understanding picky of type, that he had gone down to his own convention and said, "Staff King has gone into service and under no circumstances will I be a candidate against him for election as state auditor. And further than that I don't think that this convention should endorse anybody as a candidate against any man who has voluntarily done the things in which King has done", so he was not a candidate, and the convention produced no candidate, and the opposition that I had at that election came from some chap whose name I've forgotten an Irish man from Minneapolis.

LJ: Would you give us your estimation of Olson as mayor politician together?

SK: It is is always difficult to assess an individual. Fred Olson was a big man physically, husky and apparently strong, of course we did not know in fact that he was being eaten apart by cancer even when he was successful at his first election.

But I think in a way he was a genius, a veritable genius and his ability to combine and coordinate decent. The dissenters even from his own program having talked with him became converts, he had that amazing personality and as we see what's happened politically in both parties since the death of Floyd Olson it can now be said in truth that he was way ahead of his time and his timing relative to the humane and social programs that we now have as an everyday proposition.

[Talking on the phone]

Olson had a – was a product of decent himself, he had been born and raised upon the North side, in Minneapolis where even now they have more social turmoil than in any other area and even Minneapolis or St. Paul. He was pretty much a self-made man, a good trial attorney, three times I think county attorney, three times I believe or at least I think he was three times county attorney and one term president of the county attorneys' association. His presentations of cases were clear, direct, he cursed a little bit along the way, he became the sense of humor, he didn't have too much respect for the opinions of his colleagues, he had complete confidence in his own ability, I never knew, I never found out who his advisors were. As such we always think that every governor has a kitchen cabinet of some type, I never found out who it was, his associates knew of course. But Floyd planned, maybe it was a vice, maybe it wasn't, but the most irritating thing about him was that having made up his mind then he drove through and he trampled friend and foe alike as he went on to the achievement of his particular thing.

And I'll never forget the day that he flared up at Mike Holm. I have never heard that language used before that time. I have heard it used again in the Benson administration, but the proposition was that the state buy a sizeable number of 100 acres along the Mississippi -- along the Minnesota river between Shakopee and what's this town right down here?

LJ: Savage?

SK: Savage, and established a camp for indigent aged men and for unmarried mothers. This was a startling thing to have suggested, the acquisition and the development of this project required the approval of the members of the executive council, the use of the money which might have been available required that.

Now it is not necessary to have the anonymous approval of both – amongst the five members of three to two is sufficient. We had discussed this for several meetings and on this particular

occasion governor said, “Well I think we’ve talked long enough about this and I want to put it to a vote and as far as I’m concerned I vote I.” Julius Small who on his own way was just as hardnosed as Olson was, was State treasurer, he said, “I vote no”, Harry Peterson was the attorney general, he voted I, King voted no and then the four of us waited. For Mike Holm to say what he was going to say...

My experience with Mike has been – as fine outstanding man as he was, he was always hesitant about entering into controversy or making a controversial decision. Whether the governor had had some more intimate conversations with Mike before the meeting or not I don’t know, but finally Mike said, “Well everything considered Governor I’ll have to vote no” and the whole physical body of the governor just stepped in the back of the desk and he popped out of his chair up on to his feet and frankly he swung around Mike and he said, “God damn you Mike” and then almost as he said it, he relaxed and said, “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that. Alright gentlemen if that’s the way it is that’s the way it is, the motion is lost.” But his flare up of temper probably explains as well as can be how he disliked opposition, how he fought against opposition and I will say this for him that politically in his own party he took care of those who took care of him and there was no compromise with his enemies... they were given an opportunity to come in and explain and talk and if they were still adamant in their position he went right on without them. Now Harold Stassen had that same kind of an attitude.

So I would say as we go back looking over the different governors that I had known that Floyd Olson had a substantial element of facing greatness in his character, visionary, determined and ahead of his time.

LJ: What were the relations between his office and yours were they...?

SK: Very good, very good. Now the Farmer Labor Party was new, it had come in to being during the dissident days prior to and right after World War II and it was a sort of morganatic misalliance between the failing members of the old Democratic Party, associated with one or two radical labor leaders in Minneapolis and from the stand point of agriculture the ‘townlayites’.

As a matter of fact into the party came all of this IWWs that was Independent Workers of the World, and so on, but it was while it drew that kind of membership that was conceived honestly and hopefully for the best interest of the little fellow. I know something about that because my father as an old Jeffersonian Democrat feeling that the democrats were no longer in any position of positive action in the state because of their lessening memberships helped to organize it.

LJ: [Unclear].

LK: I'd like to hear more about Olson. How did he keep these dissidents around, was it his charm or?

SK: Well I think it was a combination of practical job security on the one hand, but mostly by just the dominance of his own personality, he was the leader of the party and accepted that without any restrictions and he told these people what to do, and if they did it successfully he paid them for it in one way or another, by giving them some kind of a job, task, raising their salaries and so on. Bad thing about that particular era was that in Floyd's administration was started the system of political contributions, financial contributions by employees of the state, believe it or not on a mandatory basis. There was creative and that which was known as the Farmer Labor Education Association, and each state employee and in those days remember they were not protected by civil service; they hold their job to a political appointment, each one of them was required to contribute a percentage of his monthly salary to this organization.

I do not know exactly what the divisions of the contributions were but they ran about a dollar a month on a \$100 salary and two dollars a month on the \$200 salary and so on. And in order that nobody evaded this payment the day after payday a man, believe it or not, with an inevitable little black bag walked into the office and collected from each individual employee. They didn't collect in my office because I wouldn't permit him in, this thing went on and became so bad that after Floyd was dead and after Hjalmer Peterson as his successor had served a few months and was defeated by Benson for election as governor, that the immorality involved and the length itself to the building of a program by which every contractor who established contracts with the state of Minnesota had to do so on a basis of the percentage cut back, pay back.

And it was that corruption incidentally which led to the defeat of Elmer Benson by Harold Stassen in 1938 and it was that situation in the Farmer Labor Party that Humphrey and Naphtali now with some merit take so much credit in destroying and the reorganized Democratic Labor Party which now has such strength in the State. I have always felt that Floyd strong man as he was if he had stayed in office, that this secondary corruption would never have happened, but as you know he died unexpectedly and left the party and the state in rather a turmoil.

LJ: How radical would you say his personal political philosophy was?

SK: I don't know and I've never have thought that Floyd Olson was a radical, he was instead, if there is a difference and I believe there is, he was an outstanding liberal. I believe that the man felt that the government was in fact created for the purpose of taking care of the people, to that I do not personally subscribe, but I think that's what he believed and I think he felt that the State should raise its taxes and provide additional programs for the benefit of the people. I think that's the reason that he introduced this idea about the proposed camp down along the Minnesota river. There were a dozen other things that were radical that he introduced. He was the father of for

instance of the income tax program in the state, because he wanted to get additional moneys, these monies could be used and then to be of help to the people of the state and could increase the prestige of his party.

He told me, you spoke a minute ago about relationship, Floyd had as a result of the type of men that associated with him during this campaign, he had a group of individuals many of whom were irresponsible. And so he himself although he had appointed them did not have complete confidence in them, he chewed tobacco and in those days there were these great, tall, brass cuspidors in every office in the capital. I don't chew tobacco and never did. But it was a furnishing of each office and so he used to come in, frighten my people in the outer office half to death but just storming in with never announcement, never an announcement of any kind, just hallo and he walked right on through, come into my private office, kick the door shut, pull up his chair, pulled his spittoon which he referred to as a gaboon and then ask his questions.

Time after time there were this type of enquiries for the staff, so and so over in the controller's office tells me that we've spent this amount of money out of our procreation and that we've got X amount left, now what the hell is he doing lying to me, you give me the facts. Here he exercised the constitutional right and privilege of the governor to make enquiries concerning this very thing that exists now, the law, the constitutional law and directions still exists, but he exercised it in a very, very informal way, he wanted to know something about a particular thing and he would walk into my department or any other department and ask, in a friendly way.

LJ: Would you care to comment on other governors that stand out in your mind?

SK: Well let's do that at some later day.

LJ: That deserves a whole section.

SK: Just between you and me I don't know so many of them.

LJ: How are we doing on time Staff, you want to break it off?

SK: I suppose that we should...

LJ: We really the Auditor's office too. Maybe I could ask you one. Cecil Newman told me some years ago that when an appeal was made active sometime after World War II for the state to hire more Negroes, or to hire Negroes that you were the most responsive and that you hired the greatest number for the size of your department. Is that accurate?

SK: Well that may be true. I have had Negroes from time to time, employed in this office, don't misunderstand me I have never hired a Negro because he was a Negro, my attitude relative to public service is that as far as I'm concerned as state auditor, as the head of the department which handles, receives, and accounts for and pays out the money my first job is to render public service, and my attitude towards the employment of my people prior to the passage of the civil service act, which I followed in the re-organization after 1939, is this, I must therefore if I attempt to fulfill my own responsibility I must get the best man I can for the particular job.

This is evident for instance. I had a magnificent old friend in Northern Minnesota who was Finnish as fine and kindly an old gentleman as I ever met. He came into my office one day and he said, "Stafford I came to see you because despite all the help that I've given you in your political campaigns prior to this time I'm surprised and a little disappointed to find that you have nobody of Finnish background in your employment." And so I said to him, "Mr. Radamar I understand that situation, but I haven't realized it because I never ask anybody what his background is, but in order to be helpful to you I will agree. You send me a man or a woman who can do a particular job better than the individual that I have in there now and I will hire them."

Because I honestly felt then and I still think, that the best type of employee is none too good than the handling of the states activities. If I were to have a criticism of civil service, it is that we get people who are qualified to pass an examination, but we are never told and we are given no assurance that their character and their philosophy is such that they can associate with people who don't know whether they can get along with people, we don't know what their physical habits are. So I'm not criticizing civil service, I'm saying that's a result. Incidentally these days we are getting mostly a group of clock watchers. Particularly the youngsters getting out of high school they look at the state as a place where they can go and have a salary for a period of time until they can learn a little something more and the practical application of their education and then they go on to something else. They are more interested in what time it is than above anything else. More interested in a 15 minute coffee break, than in 15 minute of application to work, so I suppose both ways of choosing people have their benefits and their handicaps. I don't remember when I hired the first Negro that I had in here, but it was early in my 38 years of service.

Not that it is very important, but I don't find them any particularly different from anybody else, they look different I mean they are darker in complexion. But they are competent or incompetent, lazy or industrious, just exactly the same as a white man is. I've had two or three people in here that they're work has been so good that it was really a personal as well as an official loss when they left. You take a man like Billy Williams, the work that he did in the governor's office over there under perhaps nine different governors, was so outstanding a job of public relations that I doubt whether anybody ever would be able to duplicate it, so you have the

outstanding ones. No, I have no particularly claim to fame on this thing except I believe that this is a republican form of government and as that the basic law is the constitutional of the United States and the constitution says that all citizens of the United States are equal under the law, it doesn't say that they are equal in capabilities, in size, or weight, or looks, but it says they are equal under the law, and I have always felt that a Negro should be given an opportunity to work and that he should be given an opportunity of staying on that job, if he shows his ability to hold it. I see no reason why you should hire a white man, who is incompetent; I see no reason why you should a colored man who is in competent.

LJ: One more quick question Staff topic of the day, how do you think this race will turn out for president?

SK: Never before in my time has a Republican Party been given by the Democratic Party a better opportunity to elect the president – but my experience has been that if the Republican leaders can find any way to lose the election they will do it. It is just a little sickening to see Rockefeller today. That Johnny come lately in the political contest of the current period spending his time criticizing Nixon, criticizing Regan.

We never learn, we never learn that a political campaign is against the candidate of the other party. If a man can't be a candidate for office, and come out of it friends with those who disagree with him in his own party he is not a fit candidate for office and he should not be elected. And many times it happens that way, so this year is going to be a year of social, physical, financial turmoil brought on by the negligence, poor judgment, of the present Democratic administration. Mr. Humphrey, the architect of the programs of the Democrat Party for the last 20 years or if not architect at least a very vociferous and loud supporter will probably receive the democratic nomination, probably. But I do not see that Humphrey can disassociate himself with the very causes of desent which are now laid right at the feet of the president of the United States since he himself has shared in them, so I contend that any good man elected, nominated on the republican ticket can win provided that his own people don't prevent it.

Never is a history of the United States shown a condition in our country like we have here. It is much more than physical decent and revolt in our colleges, and in our schools, and in our ghettos. It is a loss of respect of the United States by every other government in the world, we do not have a single friend left in all the world, we have allies, allies of convenience. But our allies undercut us, by trading with our enemies, giving them aid and assistance, there's no exception to that. And the reason for it is we have misbehaved ourselves in our international councils, we have devalued our own money, we have attempted to buy friendship with dollars, we have attempted to sit... to set ourselves up as those only who know the best kind of government in the very name of the opportunity of the average man to choose his own government we walk in the one country after the other and say go ahead you be free, you have a general election and you

elect this your own people, but you elect them to follow this kind of a governmental program, our program.

We are almost completely senseless to the personal needs and ideologies of our friends around the world, of our – not friends of our associates around the world.

LJ: Well thank you Staff.

[Break in recording]

LK: December 12th 1968. When you're ready to start.

[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

SK: The assignment of duties to the state auditor have to do primarily with the pre-audit of all bills, claims, invoices that maybe presented for payment out of treasurer's cash. No money can be paid into the state treasury except that it be accounted for and directed into the proper fund and account by the state auditor. No money can be paid out of the state treasury except after an appropriation and then only after pre-audit by the state auditor and upon a warrant of the state auditors. This is an example of the application of checks and balances as between the treasurer and the auditor's office and it has worked beautifully.

It has been particularly effective since the reorganization after 1939 which established for the first time additional controls in the use of appropriated funds. That law established allotment controls by the commissioner of administration and encumbrances of those allotments by the state auditor. This again is an application of the theory of checks and balances. And the result has been that since 1939 Minnesota has been to all practical intents and purposes on a cash basis. But there are other things which the auditor does as directed by both the constitution and the legislature.

Under the constitution as amendment, I think in the early '30s the auditor is a member of the State Land Exchange Commission which is composed of the governor, the attorney general, and the auditor. And the auditor is the secretary. The function of that commission is to act upon any and all applications for the exchange of state lands as between an individual and the state, the corporation and the state, and/or the federal government and the state. And corresponding any that has the duty and responsibility of giving authority or withholding authority to or from the federal government whenever the federal government wishes to buy privately owned land. All of this stems from both the federal and state constitutions which prohibit the federal government to acquire lands in any state except for certain predetermined purposes such as federal post offices, immigration offices, military fields, hospitals, etcetera.

LK: You have been mainly with the highways?

SK: No, we have nothing to do with highways as such. One of the things which the federal government can acquire without action of the legislature or the Land Exchange Commission is right of way for federal highways. In that connection the federal government together with the Federal Bureau of Roads together with the State Department of Highways determine the feasibility of a road, establish the line of its rider way and proceed on a corporative agreement basis to the acquisition of the lands involved.

And on federal highways now, the federal government reimburses the state 90 cents on a dollar. Now if the state is acquiring highways for itself under the old Trunk Highway Act the federal government reimburses the state 50%. But that's done on the basis of a corporative agreement.

[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

LK: Have there been any other significant changes you mentioned the change in 1939?

SK: You mean in the office?

LK: In the office, yeah.

SK: Yes. Volume wise the work in the office has multiplied many times. I haven't checked out the exact figures but I'm sure that the handling of 40 or 50 millions of dollars as a total annual budget is above where we were in 1930 when I was first elected to be state auditor. Frankly I remember the astonishment of everybody in the state when the legislature passed one authority for the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$20 million. The amount was so extraordinary high that it was just startling. But the legislature did, passed that for the payment of soldiers' bonus to the veterans of World War I. But now dollar wise the volume of our business as I say has increased many [fold] until last year, the fiscal year ending June 30th 1968. The auditor accounted for receipts from all sources of more than one billion eight hundred and sixty-two thousand dollars. And correspondingly he paid out for various purposes a billion eight hundred and seventy-one millions of dollars. So here then we have increased our activities dollar wise in the last 40 years from some 40 or 45 or 50 million to well over three and a half billion.

And this does not mean that all of these moneys are new moneys as such; but they – the amount of our work has been inflated every single time that we have received the federal aid for any or all purposes. And every time that the legislature has directed the creation of a new activity and financed it, because there is enough to purchase a lead pencil or the building of a trunk highway that is not reflected in the financial records of the auditor's office. Now the auditor has certain

other activities too, under the constitution he serves as a member of the State Board of Investment. This is a group that was originally created by the constitution for the purpose of investing the moneys which the state earned by the sale, use, or other disposition of educational lands, granted by the federal government to the state at the time we became a state.

We thought of it then and we think of it now as our educational trust fund, our public school fund. But since the institution of that original authority the legislature has given to the board of investment extended responsibilities and has increased the items which we can buy into our investment portfolio. Until today the State Board of Investment handles the investment of all moneys belonging to any and all department of the state including but not limited to trunk highways, retirement groups, trust funds, and treasurer's cash. That amount literally to – from 500 million to \$700 million a year. And the fluctuation on that amount is reflected almost entirely in treasurer's cash. After I got back from World War II, I presented to the legislature a proposition to give to the Board of Investment the authority to invest cash which the treasure had on hand but which was not currently needed. The bill incidentally was defeated in the '40 – 1945 legislature, was defeated in 1947 but was passed in 1949.

And at that time I predicted that the state could earn a million dollars a year if it had this right to invest cash in the hands of the treasurer not currently needed. Since then, our investments of treasurer's cash, not at any one time, but through a given year will run to 400 or \$500,000. And the result is that we earned interest on that, receive it and deposit it to the credit of the General Revenue Fund. And the total which we have received from that one activity since the 1st of July 1949 is well over 50 millions of dollars. And it is cost nothing.

LK: Why was this defeated twice? What was the conversation?

SK: Frankly it was defeated because the bankers in whose hands the state had its deposits, and who paid nothing for the use of that money didn't want to lose the free use of the money and they had a lobby sufficient to kill this off. But it has worked out before and I notice through these last several years that the budget department is much interested in it and it is now used in the development of each annual's budget. They have an anticipated amount which they'll get into – get a revenue fund from invested treasurer's cash and they always compute that amount, estimate it and actually use it.

The state auditor is the pay master. Direct appropriations are made by the legislature to him out of which for instance he pays the salaries, travel, incidental expense, and returns of the Supreme Court, the district court judges. And more recently the legislature has given to the auditor the responsibility of handling the retirements of the legislature itself. The widows of probate judges, the judges and their widows at the district court level as well as at the Supreme Court level. And the last thing that they have added to this administration of the retirement is the retirement

benefits established for members of the executive branch of government. For the first time in history, the 1967 legislature created retirement benefits for the three members of the Railroad and Warehouse Commission and for the governor, the lieutenant governor, the secretary of state, the treasurer, the auditor, and the attorney general. It seems unreasonable that they should have waited all through these years to do that but that's what they did.

Now the auditor serves as a member of the State Gifts Commission. People being human want to do something from time to time for the state, so they give the state gifts. Sometimes however the inspiration for the gift is to save taxes or for some other reason to evade responsibility for the taxes or the maintenance cost of a piece of property. And so the legislature has created Gifts Commission composed of the governor, the secretary of state, the treasurer and the auditor which views the gifts. And having determined that the gift is acceptable in the best interest of the people it is then accepted.

Incidentally the auditor serves as member of the Executive Council of the State Highway Department – a state – sorry, a state historical society. He is a member of the State Archives Commission. And this is a commission which has been established for the last several years, but because of the very nature of its duties and responsibilities it cannot provide any very startling activity with the result that the legislature has not supported it appropriation wise as it must be supported. Probably the most cumbersome thing about government at any level is the accumulation of records. I understand that in Washington DC the single largest commercial business is the sale of waste paper. And Minnesota is fast approaching that situation.

Every department and every individual that has anything to do with the administration of a department or an account or an activity or the building of a building wants a copy. And so we have copies, most of which are needed at a certain time. But the object having been completed, the goal having been reached; there is no need for keeping it. Now Archives is a commission which was originally established for the purpose of microfilming basic state records. And since all financial records of the state in their primary condition are filed in the office of the state auditor, the auditor of course was immediately involved. Now the activities have been extended until the State Archives Commission has the authority to receive, store, destroy, or preserve records from every one of our municipal subdivisions, school districts, cities, villages, towns.

It needs more public understanding and it needs substantially more support from the legislature before it will be ever be able to catch up. The microfilming of a record is not a difficult task. The choice of records to be microfilmed and preserved is the difficult task. The state auditor is a manager of the state bond fund which management begins with the authority given to him to issue and sell state bonds for any purpose and for all purposes. Keep the necessary records, establish the dates of maturities and accept the rate of interest.

And see that the principle and interest is paid as it comes due. Never during my term of office, has the state been late or delinquent in the payment of any of its obligations. And I'm just a little bit proud of that because now Minnesota has one of the finest credit ratings of any state in the union. The auditor serves also as a member of the three largest employee retirement funds, the fund which covers state employees as such, the fund which covers municipal employees as such, and the fund which covers state teachers. The reason I say state teachers is because in the cities of the first class, has been established their own retirement programs for their own teachers.

So it is the responsibility of the state auditor to serve on those boards. And I think probably that the reason that he was put on there was to advise the boards about the investment of their moneys as they accumulate. If that is the sole reason and to me it appears to be that the auditor should serve on those boards then that reason no longer exists because we have improved the status of our Board of Investment, now we have a separate and distinct agency for that purpose staffed by competent individuals and headed by an executive secretary who is experienced in the investment field. And to the board the legislature is given the opportunity of extending portfolios of investment to include both stocks and bonds as well municipals. And probably the 67 or the 69 legislature or the next one shortly I would think that the auditor probably will be relieved off this responsibility to serve on these boards.

LK: The teachers' retirement or you know --

SK: I mean the teachers' retirement and what we call the SERA and PERA. Now then in 1967 a new board was created, State Employee Insurance Benefit Board. This was the result of legislation which for the first time in history established an insurance program paid for by the state as an employer for its employees. Probably we can think of it as a fringe benefit to employments. And the auditor is a member of that. Now as we think about these activities you must remember that the centralization of state accounting lies in the auditor's office. And he not only develops his annual and quarterly reports to the governor, to the legislature, and to the press; but he gives to each agency of government every month a statement of their balances. And these balances, although in theory, result from the use of a specified sum of money appropriately actually changed particularly where the department has the authority given by the legislature to use receipts. The auditor keeps a record of all of this and gives that information to the individual departments.

It is through the auditor's office on one hand and the internal accounting records of the individual department or agency or division of government on the other that gives to the public examiner who acts as post-auditor, the facts upon which he can make a report saying that these moneys have been properly or improperly accounted for. So there is a close association between the office of state auditor who is the pre-auditor and that of the public examiner who is the post-auditor.

LK: If there is a discrepancy or its found that a department is using money properly. Is that – whose responsibility is it?

SK: Men and women are human. None of them are perfect therefore they all add each to error is human, is correct. So if an error is found in an account, the first thing that must be determined is whether the error was just that, just a human error or whether it was a deliberate error for the purpose of cheating or wronging or defrauding the state. If it is as most of them are simply a human error and now as we go into computerization the machine error, and believe me they happen, then it is the responsibility of the department in which the error occurred to correct it under the supervision and direction of the public examiner and the state auditor.

If it is however an error which is in fact committed for the purpose of stealing or cheating, then that is a matter of prosecution in the county in which the error occurred. And that means almost in every case in Ramsey County. What actually happens is that a public examiner will make an investigation determine that John Smith has misappropriated, misused \$1,000 or whatever the amount may be. He makes a report of that to the state's attorney general and the attorney general then proceeds to the institution of the necessary prosecution. And that's an interesting question you asked. I suppose that a very substantial amount of the time of the state auditor and his 50 employees is devoted to the correction of error, because errors are so easy to develop. I could cite you a dozen instances. Let's take the application of this sales tax. 1967 a legislature passed in its special session chapter 32 which created for the first time a named sales tax. We've had sales taxes of course for years; sales tax on gasoline, sales tax on tobacco, sales tax on liquor, on beer and so on. But this was for the first time that any attempt have ever been made to be completely frank about the manner.

And so they passed this chapter 32 extra session laws of 1967 and amongst other things, levied 3% sales tax on certain sales, not across the board, but on certain sales. So at that point it was the duty of the auditor to see that when these moneys were collected and deposited in the state treasury that they would be set aside in a specially developed fund which incidentally is 263. And used for the purposes set forth in that chapter 32. Now one of those purposes was covered by certifications. The law says in substance that the county auditors shall certify to the state auditors the amount of taxes which under the provisions of chapter 32 have become no longer effective.

The bill of course was introduced for the purpose of reducing taxes on real and personal property because it is long since established that Minnesota has an unreasonably high burden of taxation resting upon real estate. And so the law says these county auditors will prepare a statement showing how much money they are losing from the loss of this particular real estate tax source. Send that to the state auditor and the state auditor will reimburse them, that amount. That is not

an easy task for the county auditors to do. First they have to divide their mill rate as between personal property and real property. Then they have to determine the real property tax after they have eliminated the homestead exemption.

Then they have to add to this whatever the addition taxes of a municipal subdivision like a town or a city or a village or a school district maybe. And to complicate things still more, many school districts in the state do not lie all in one country. So the determination of valuations by the county assessor and the resulting computations by the county auditor are complex and complicated then confusing. So when the law was passed, representatives of the attorney general's office and of the department of taxation and of the County Auditor's Association came at my request to this office and we talked. And we talked and we worked for weeks.

And then we took the results of these talks to the state convention of the county auditors in Minneapolis in January 1968. And we went all over it again so that every single man and woman in that convention knew exactly what the problem was and knew what the solution was. And then I had prepared and gave to each one of them the necessary blanks upon to which to make their certifications to me. And I had suggested down at the bottom of each one of these blanks a method of computation. I thought that it was foolproof. We got 87 counties, 31 of those counties made a mistake; they added all of the values in an overlapping school district where the administrative officers, the school district was in their county. They certified the whole valuation of the school district. And that was part of the error; part of it was where they did not reflect the state tax. For years we've had a small real estate tax but in 1967 we cut it off because that was the purpose of chapter 32 to discontinue this.

[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

SK: And now it has taken us almost as much time to go into each one of these counties and check and find out why. Now there wasn't a man involved in this that was dishonorable or dishonest, not a single one that was insincere, not a single one wanted to do what he thought he had been instructed to do. But that's the reason that the job is so much taken up with a correction of error.

LK: I found an article some place that mentioned you as a possible candidate to run against Olson in 1932, did you consider running against him?

SK: No. It was talked about. It's an interesting thing. What did you say to me? You said, "I found somewhere an article that mentioned the possibility that you would run against Olson in 1932." What you have done is to repeat to me a newspaper article. And you remember this; Metropolitan Newspapers are not run for the purpose of giving people news; they are run for the sole purpose of selling next day's issue. So they suggest, they institute, they develop a thought or

a criticism. And they always overemphasize the error and a counter distinction to proving the successful thing. And in politics many times newspapers are used to develop a trial balloon, an ambitious man holds one office. Now he thinks maybe he ought to be a candidate or could be a successful candidate for some other office. So more or less directly he suggests to one of his friends, a newspaper man, well you know just maybe I might do that. So then the newspapers come out with an announcement that this is probably going to happen then the potential candidate gets the reaction that he wants.

On the other hand, every single time that an individual raises his head successfully in any political party his people, his friends and his enemies clamor about what he's going to do next. So just don't pay too much attention to what you read in the newspapers about politics. They are never unbiased. They are constantly speculative and they are very seldom right.

LK: In your case it was just speculation went out --

SK: Oh Completely. So what had happened was that everybody had been surprised at the political strength which this man came young, unknown, raised a democrat. This young fellow had come in and had beaten the then existing Republican hierarchy for the nomination and just surprised everybody by winning his first election without any money, without any organization by about 125,000 votes.

So the reaction appeared to be that this young fellow must be a political genius of some kind. It wasn't true at all. I just had a lot of friends on both sides of the political party or all three sides because we had three parties in those days. And these young fellows irritated that veterans had no representation of any kind in the State, never having been taken in to any political party as such, never having been given a political task or asked to share in a political activity they knew this man came because he had spoken to them in their hometown many times in the five years proceeding this and he had talked to them about the care of the second disabled veteran, the widow, the orphan.

They believed he was right and so they and that constituted my political strength when I became State Auditor and to a very large degree it constituted my political strength the last time I ran, old friends, old comrades. But the Republican Party, which I defeated in the primaries in order to -- I say the Republican Party. Let's put it this way, the Republicans who appeared to be able to control a nomination and who had controlled nominations for many years prior to 1930 said that Henry Rines of Mora wants to be given the nomination for auditor.

I didn't know that he couldn't be defeated so I ran and by a very close vote, I won in the primary election. And then the Farmer Labor Rights put up their most prominent man outside of Governor Olsen against me. He had been their first Congressman. His name was Henry Teigen

and both they and the Republican stalwarts were reprimanded to see that I won by some 125,000 votes that fall, and so there was gossip. King can be a good man to lead the party, be a good man to be governor, how about United States Senator, that kind of stuff, just wishful thinking on the part of some people and no sentiment on the other side. No I never thought of running for governor in 1932.

LK: You ran for governor in '48 against Randall wasn't that you?

SK: Was it '48.

LK: It was one of Randall's campaigns.

SK: That's right. I'd filed in anger and was rightfully defeated in the primary. No man can run for office on the basis of personal affront, anger, frustration and win. At least he shouldn't. I didn't.

LK: Would you like to talk about why you... The newspapers put you as a conservative...

SK: It had nothing to do with conservatism and liberalism. It had nothing to do with it. No, I don't think I'll talk about it, but it was purely personal.

LK: Oh. Also when you ran against Elmer Andersen was that a similar situation?

SK: Then I was a little better inspired. I thought that the State was not properly run and I honestly thought that I can do a better job than Elmer did. Elmer is now and was then quite a man, but he was extraordinarily timid. I don't mean that he was afraid, but there is no question in my mind about what he labored under a rather amazing inferiority complex. He would not make up his mind. He was indecisive. Now, an indecisive leader actually can't lead and doesn't. And so it was determined by some of the other leaders in the Republican Party that he should be, somebody else should take over.

It wasn't so much that he should be defeated; it was that they wanted what they thought would be a stronger candidate and so I filed and was defeated in the primary. It's interesting, I've thought about it many times. Why have the people in Minnesota given me such amazingly satisfactory majorities with one exception, every time I've run for State Auditor, but wouldn't nominate me, my party wouldn't nominate me for governor? And some day, not now, I will tell you what I think is the reason for it.

But for instance after I had been defeated in the primaries in an off-year, you see the governors were running every two years in those days. The auditor had a four-year term. So I was auditor when I filed against Youngdahl, I was auditor when I filed against Anderson. I was defeated in

the primaries each year. I retained my job as auditor and when I came to run the next year I was given an amazing majority vote. It's an interesting thing to think about in the practical politics of Minnesota.

LK: Would you like to be Governor?

SK: Not now.

LK: I think people within a political party would like to have someone they can control...

SK: In what office?

LK: Office of Governor instead of office of Auditor.

SK: I don't know. I don't know. In this matter of this word control is a difficult word to interpret, difficult word to apply. I think that the people want a governor in whom they can believe. In his honesty and his integrity, in his intelligence and in his ability to lead and I'm sure that's kind of a man, an individual they'd like to have for governor. Sometimes they get such a man, sometimes they don't, mostly because of our partisan political programming.

I remember when I was a young man I think that's what inspired me to run for auditor, I just took it for granted. Anybody can run for auditor for if he wants to it's a free country. He's got the filing fee and I had the filing fee which was given to me by -- it was \$50 in those days. J. Teon gave me \$25 and surprised Tom Streissguth gave me \$25 and that was my filing fee. And I thought that was it, you file for office and you went out and told the people you wanted to be elected and they voted for you and you were elected. It had never occurred to me I'd be defeated. It never occurred to me. I just took them for granted. I had so many friends, that they'd take care of me and they did.

LK: For this did you file before the Republican Convention? What happened?

SK: Yes. I filed before the Republican Convention in 1930.

LK: And then, did you seek their endorsement?

SK: I had and that's one of the difficulties of being elected to public office. You have to stand for nomination before your own party primary. Now, that means that instead of having 3 million people involved in your choice, you have only the representatives of your party so that if you have a convention with 900 votes, 451 of them can give you the nomination. Well it is much easier to secure the endorsement of a majority of a convention than it would be to secure a

majority of the endorsement of all the voters of the State. So very often we do not have the best man as a candidate. Mostly we have a compromise. I think that's true and rather startling and vividly evident in our national campaigns for president. All through the years we'll find three or four distinguished, confident and qualified individuals as candidates on a Republican ticket and the same number on the Democratic ticket, but they subject themselves to this nomination procedure and very seldom does anyone make any serious objection to when he comes in and gets the nomination on the basis of trades and compromises made on the floor of the convention or prior to the floor at the end of District Caucuses out of which the representatives go to a convention.

So you will find that Abraham Lincoln was such a successful candidate and if you check back in the histories you will find that the men that he defeated probably were in their day more qualified to be president than he was, but he was a compromise, and even down the current days you'll find the Democrats compromising on Humphrey, the Republicans compromising on Nixon. We say that we have a popular election of our president. In fact, we do not. And to a lesser degree that applies to the executive offices in the State of Minnesota. The people very seldom get the best man. They simply get the man who gets the most votes. Sounds like an Irish blowlem, that's probably what it is.

LK: Did you have the endorsement the first time you ran?

SK: No, after the primary yes.

LK: After the primary.

SK: Because then they were tied in. I had all of the program except for the procedures and now I go 600 or 700 more votes in the primaries than Ryan's, but he had the endorsement of the convention and I didn't. So what is a Republican going to do? He was opposed to King. He told his representatives when you vote at the Convention don't you endorse him, but I went out into the primaries, and as I say, I got about 700 more Republican votes than Ryan's got so then I became the Republican candidate, then I had to run against the opposition representative.

LK: You mentioned occasionally we have had good leaders, which of the men you served with qualify as good leaders?

SK: Well if you say governors I have served with. I came in of course with Floyd Olson, but I had been in State service for quite some time before that. When I got out on the 6th of January I will have had 43 years of continuous service in one capacity or another in the State government. And I suppose that amongst the Republicans who have been governor in my day probably Theodore Christianson was the most outstanding man. He was beautifully educated. He had a

great native pride in his own State. He had served in the legislature long enough to know and understand the legislative processes out of which appropriations were made which had to be paid for by taxes.

He had a rather magnificent background of experience and he was an honest, earnest man. So I would think Christianson was the most outstanding of all of these Governors and then about in this order and I think you must put Harold Stassen second. If for no other reason that under his direction was passed the Reorganization Act of Government of 1939 which undoubtedly is the single finest and greatest bit of legislation that has ever been put on the Statute books of Minnesota.

Youngdahl was a great leader in his way, but he brought in religious support. He brought in the church. He brought in the Lutheran Church and the Lutheran vote carried him in this State. But his service as governor was not as outstanding as Christianson's, not as outstanding as Stassen's. And when you come to think about it, I don't think it was as outstanding as Floyd Olson's. C. Elmer Anderson was a governor. Rolvaag was a governor. Neither one of them was outstanding. Elmer Anderson had his true moments of leadership.

LK: Mr. Stafford, Elmer L. Andersen is he --?

SK: Elmer L. Benson was a failure. Hjalmar Petersen was a rather magnificent governor for the short period of the few months that he served after Floyd Olson died. In other words, the man actually worked to clean up the disreputable financial mess in which we were at that time.

LK: I think that really you haven't mentioned Thye, Orville Freeman and Harold LeVander.

SK: Who?

LK: Edward Thye, Orville Freeman and Harold LeVander.

SK: Well it is altogether too early to make any determination relative to LeVander. Freeman. Freeman was a governor who, in my opinion, spent too much of his time playing partisan politics and to a lesser degree so was Rolvaag. I think both of them wanted to be good governors and Freeman within his likes was perhaps a little bit more successful than Rolvaag although if I had to rate the two I would rate Rolvaag above Freeman.

Ed Thye was just a magnificent character and completely honest and dedicated to this new responsibility he had to the people of the State. Enjoying it, wanting to do the very best thing, but not as alert or as aggressive, for instance, as was Youngdahl or Stassen or Theodore Christianson

or Youngdahl for that matter. He kept the ship on an even keel. But he didn't change its direction very much.

I don't suppose when all is said and done that any of these men, I don't believe any of them were bad men. When you try to rate them on the basis of competence, you can't forget them -- the errors that they made. In the Benson administration Minnesota almost went bankrupt by the overloading of the Highway Department and the Game & Fish Department by incompetent members of Benson's Party. Graft inclusion became a normal standard of procedure in the handling of State contracts particularly in the Highway Department with the result that after many weeks of investigation by the Public Examiner and the Highway Department paying some \$5 million short in its ability to pay claims for work done, materials already received resulted in the indictment, I think, of six men including the Commissioner of Highways. One of those men committed suicide awaiting trial. The Commissioner left the State and the rest were convicted and sentenced to various terms and still are.

This resulted from an unreasonable, an unjustified practice of kickbacks. The Farmer Labor Party was new. It had to have money to work with and instead of providing it by gifts and grants from the individual member; they developed this system of kickbacks. You paid contractors, for instance, who did \$100,000 on a contract.

The proposition inevitably was, we'll give you the contract but you'll give us \$10,000 or he would bid \$100,000 and they'd say to him, "Raise your bid to \$125,000 and we'll give it to you and you give the \$25,000 back." And this is not Staff King's opinion. These are the facts that were brought out during the investigation and the subsequent trials. Then in the meantime under Floyd Olson, and for the same reason of supplying of partisan funds, they developed a practice which was so direct and that is, I think back now it seems completely unrealistic, but this is what happened.

They assigned individuals who carried little black bags and after pay day in every single department of this State, except the office of the State Auditor they would come in and they would walk up to you and any other clerk or stenographer or secretary or accountant or engineer or a maintenance man, whatever you were and they'd look -- they had already prepared slips that they had and they'd say, "Your name is such and such and you're being paid \$200 a month. You owe me \$2." You're being paid \$400 a month, you owe \$4. The employee was not protected by civil service and so they paid. I tried to make an estimate one time of how much they took. This money, by the way, went into the Farmer Labor Educational Program. There has never been an accounting of it, but I think that while they were running that thing they collected something over \$4,500,000.

LK: So these are all people that they had gotten jobs for?

SK: They had either gotten jobs for them or they had carried them over. These were the people who were doing the work of the State of Minnesota. There was no exception from them. From the janitor up to the Head of the Welfare Department, for instance, and so on. They paid a percentage which had been computed by the hierarchy. They paid that percentage and I remember how surprised this fellow was who came into my office with the little black bag and walked around the counter and said, Terry Wilson you owe so much and Wilson said, "What are you talking about, I don't owe anything. I don't even belong to your party."

And this fellow wasn't as experienced in this racket as he might be and he'd forgotten where he was and so he insisted and when I took him by the neck of the neck and the seat of the pants and threw him out through the door and he slid across the floor and bumped his head on the wall on the other side, when he got up he was the most surprised and confused individual you ever saw but he didn't come back. Now and that kind of a thing conceivably could arise under any administration, but the fact is that it did arise, this salary contribution, was willfully, knowingly and deliberately set up in the Olson administration. Now Floyd Olson was a strong man, he was a strong leader and he could keep it reasonably well under control and follow the law. From a political standpoint what's wrong? What's actually wrong in an individual contributing a little bit of his salary to the fellow that gave him the job or who is keeping him in.

On the other hand, it is a form of coercion, there is no question about that. But when Olson dies and the Farmer Laborites discovered that they couldn't control Hjalmar Petersen, that he was too honest, too dedicated they chucked him aside and they elected Elmer Benson and Elmer was just weak enough so that he didn't know what was going on and it was only a thin short step from the coercion of the employee to a comparable coercion or kickback from the individual contractor.

Then Stassen came in and he cleaned that up, which was good that he secured the passage of the Reorganization Act which was better. And in the Reorganization Act, and at my suggestion, we introduced for the first time Civil Service. We entered in the pack. And they developed this program of allotment and the program of encumbrance so that now if an individual were asked to pay into a political campaign it's not only a violation of the Federal Hatch Act, if he's a Federal employee, but it's a violation of our Civil Service laws and Civil Service rules and regulation. So the individual who was employed in the State of Minnesota now is protected and he does have job security. He doesn't have to worry when LeVander succeeds Rolvaag or Wendell succeeds LeVander because the job is not a political football. That's very good, and then allotments of course limit the use of appropriations uniformly to acquire a license. That means that an individual who headed the department just couldn't jump off at the deep end and spend all of his money in the first three months or in any other period. It has to be spread over the period of need which is under the appropriation, at least 12 months, from 1 July to 30 June. That was good, then when they added this encumbrance. As it is applied it means this, no contract I don't

care what it's for, how big or how little it is, how much money is involved or what. No contract is valid until after it has -- the amount thereof has been allotted by the Commissioner of Administration, it has been approved as to form an execution by the Attorney General, signed of course by the two contracting parties and then comes to the State Auditor's Office who after an investigation of the appropriations and the allotments previously made can determine and who then certifies that if, as and when the obligation involved in this contract becomes due moneys are available to pay it. And that's one of the finest things that ever happened to the State.

LK: I have taken up an hour and a half of your time.

SK: Well that's all right. I hope I have given you something that you can cut and put together that will be worthwhile. I may say to you that I know me pretty well and because I do know me I told you no when you asked me to discuss politics differences with Youngdahl. I'm quite sure that whatever I would say you would be substantially biased and I mustn't do that.

LK: That has to be expected of people. They'd have to make their own impressions of things.

SK: Will Rodgers said, "I had never known a man I couldn't like" and that's about the way I feel. But when I -- I suppose these things will be laid away in the archives.