

**SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS
AND
UNIVERSITY
ARCHIVES
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY**



This oral history interview is part of the Richard J. Daley Oral History Collection at the Special Collections and University Archives Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It has been used to create content for the online exhibit, Remembering Richard J. Daley, <http://rjd.library.uic.edu> , published on July 20, 2015.

Special Collections & University Archives
Richard J. Daley Library
University of Illinois at Chicago
801 S. Morgan St.
Chicago, IL 60607
3rd Floor
(312) 996-2742

<http://library.uic.edu/special-collections>

Interview with Congressman Dan Rostenkowski

Date: 1 July 2004 Time: 12:05 P.M.

Location: Erie Café, 536 West Erie, Chicago, IL.

Present: Congressman Dan Rostenkowski and Dr. Robert V. Remini

(The interview has already begun)

Congressman Dan Rostenkowski: I think that'd be a great idea. In my opinion, having world mayors, that's not Chicago. What we really, in my opinion, ought to celebrate about Richard J. Daley is the fact that in the initial election of Richard J. Daley, they thought that we were going to go downtown with screwdrivers and pliers and take the doorknobs off of the goddamn building (RVR laughs). We had a meeting and I was the youngest member there. Daley always had faith in me because I was loyal. My dad, who was a friend of Richard J. Daley said, "Dick, the first ten years in office, put the money where they can see it. Collect the garbage, fix the streetlights, do the curbs and gutters. Have them say 'God, if this guy isn't a thief, he's really interested in the city.'" And it was my father's suggestion to put the money, spend the money. Get people working.

And as a result, Daley did all of this—Not that he wouldn't have done it without my father. But he did it for the people, so the people could see what he was doing, and where the construction of the city was magnified. You've got to remember, we were in such a long dormant stage with Martin Kennelly that you couldn't believe it—plus the fact that you had the scandals. You had the Paddy Bauler operation, you had the Charlie Weber operation. And we were viewed by the organization alone as though we could gain the confidence of the people to govern the city. And that's all that Daley wanted. Daley, as long as I knew him, Professor, was never interested in money.

Dr. Robert V. Remini: No. He was honest to the day he died.

DR: Power? He was insane about power. In some respects, he disappointed me because even to the littlest guy, he wanted to be almighty (RVR laughs). And you don't embarrass poor, little people. But in the beginning, Daley wanted to make every decision, from who put the light on and who flushed the toilet. He wanted to make every decision. But the

nice thing about Daley was that he had a cadre of people around him, and he would take advice. Now, Professor, that's a problem with anybody that increasingly gains authority with tenure and with power, because everybody that you become associated with in your initial activity of getting elected, they then branch off, and they're going to make their own life. So what happens is that you've got to be careful when you assemble the second generation of advisors. You've got to be careful that they aren't just "yes" men and "yes" women.

DR: Now, I think that could have been a problem with Richard M. Daley.

RVR: Yes?

DR: Well, when you acquire friends in the beginning of your service, a guy can walk in and say, "What the hell are you doing? Are you crazy?" And you'd sit there and say, "Why? What's wrong with that?" After you'd been there ten years, everybody's afraid to go in and say, "What the hell are you doing?" It's a whole new ballgame. It's not your peers anymore. It's the people that are aspiring to become as brilliant as you are. Now, it happened with Richard J. Daley, but it happened towards the end of his life. He was a builder. I mean, there was no question about it.

RVR: So tell me about your relationship with him when you were in Congress. Did he ask you to run?

DR: I initiated the format of coming in on Friday and going and sitting and talking with him. And Matt Danaher, who was his aide, was my personal good friend. As a matter of fact, Matt Danaher did more to help me become a prominent elected official. I mean, my dad put me on the dance floor when I ran for treasurer, but after I got to be congressman and ward committeeman, it was Danaher who was shooting the jobs to me, and I was building my organization. And Daley liked that. Daley loved Matt Danaher. This was before Matt went to this.

But I initiated the Friday afternoon sessions where I would come in. And in the Kennedy administration, I was asking to give me young people so that I could put them in positions in Washington. You didn't have to be a rocket scientist to see that all of the money was going to be coming from Washington in the next two decades. And of course, when Lyndon Johnson became president after the assassination, it was all Washington money, and Daley was very close to Lyndon Johnson.

And as a result, Johnson directed money to the City of Chicago under the State of Illinois like crazy. And of course, I was close to Lyndon Johnson because Daley gave me the assignment of handling vice presidents when they came into Illinois. And of course, with Lyndon Johnson, I was not for him for vice president. I was absolutely committed to Stu Symington (RVR laughs). And it was logical. Daley said, "You handle Lyndon Johnson." And of course, you couldn't get near Jack Kennedy when Daley was near him (RVR laughs). I mean, it was an Irish love affair.

RVR: That's why they wanted Kennedy for this symposium.

DR: Yes. Well, do you have any idea how many arguments I had with some of the Kennedy lower echelon? It was the upper echelon, but lower than Kennedy and Daley. It was about, "Dick Daley this." I said "Why you s.o.b.'s, you wouldn't be there without Dick Daley." I never heard Jack Kennedy make any disparaging remarks, but Jack Kennedy didn't like to come in to the political operations of things. But his underlings didn't mind it at all. They were kind of Boston politicians, and they were similar to us. But I initiated this summary with Daley and what was going on in Washington, and Daley liked it. Daley used to say, "You're drinking too much goddamned Potomac water (RVR laughs)! You're going Washington on me!"

That's because he did not originally want me to go to Washington. He wanted me to run for clerk of the Circuit Court here in Illinois. I said "Dick, I've been never anything but a legislator." And he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "First of all, they pay better (RVR laughs)." He said, "What about this?"—meaning the office of mayor. I said "Well, you're going to live forever, for Christ's sake. I'll be a legislator." And I constantly insisted that Daley send me young men to Washington, which he did not. And the young

man that he sent me, with Dan Ronan, died. But I used to come in, and on occasion I'd get, "Oh, you don't know what you're talking about."

You give me young guys so that I can put them in these secretariat operations, and we won't have to kiss anybody's fanny to get something. We'll just call our people there and say, "Hey, no pressure, just make sure that we're taken care of." And that's the way I operated when I finally got to the position of being the chairman of Ways and Means Committee in 1980. I mean, I'd put people in. Not then from Chicago, but people from all over the country that I knew. And that's how we got things for Chicago. Turn that off a minute.

(RVR turns off the tape recorder for a few minutes)

RVR: I think it hurt you with a lot of the young liberal Democrats in Congress who wanted to block your advance. I mean, you were well on your way to becoming Speaker.

DR: Yes.

RVR: You would have been Speaker if you hadn't done certain things, it seems to me, that doesn't make any sense. Why, for example, did you oppose Carl Albert's election to be Speaker?

DR: That is not true. I never opposed Carl Albert. Daley did.

RVR: Why?

DR: On a personal basis, I went to Carl Albert, and I said, "Carl, I want you to know something: I'm for you. But I've got a situation back home where my boss is saying, 'Wait a minute. Don't be in any hurry. Don't rush to judgment.' Eventually, we're all going to be with you." But what Carl was doing was looking for a steamroller, and Illinois would have been great. Frank Annunzio, Mel Price, and Morgan Murphy were very close to Carl Albert, and they pledged to him. Daley called me in and said, "I thought that you

were the leader?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Why are these guys pledging themselves to Carl Albert?" I said, "It's because he's going to be Speaker." He said, "Oh no, that's not the way you do it. Hold on." I said "Dick, you can't lose. I mean, this is crazy. Why not be at the front end of the train?"

Daley made me get Annunzio and Morgan Murphy to tell Carl Albert that they're withholding their endorsement. Daley made me do that. Well, Carl said, "What the hell is going on? I'm in a switchblade." So of course, Annunzio, Murphy, and Mel Price wouldn't tell Carl that it was Daley—It was Rostenkowski. Now, Carl knew that I said that I was going to be with him, but I'm telling you, I had a situation back home. Well, Carl never forgave me for that.

RVR: But why was Daley opposed?

DR: I don't have any idea.

RVR: My thought is that he didn't think that Carl Albert had any regard for city and urban problems and needs.

DR: Professor, Daley would at least once a month say to me, "What the hell is going on with you people down there?" I'd say, "What do you mean?" He'd say, "Mike Mansfield hasn't got as many goddamned people in his constituency in his entire state that you've got in your congressional district! Carl Albert hasn't got as many people. John McCormack hasn't got as many people as half of this state! What the hell is going on with you people down there? Why can't Ohio, Illinois, New York, California, and Pennsylvania—Why can't the five of you get together and run the fucking country?"

I said, "Because, Dick, those guys from the little urban areas, they can sit there and wait. They get re-elected, they get seniority, they make friends. They don't have to worry about civil rights. They don't have to worry about people rights. You've got a Paul Douglas. You've got a Scott Lucas. You've got everybody in the big states. Their tenure is gone. When was the last time outside of California that we had a leader with Scott Lucas? And he got beat. For Christ's sake, how many congressmen has Oklahoma got?"

How many congressmen is Mike Mansfield? There's only one congressman in Mansfield!" And he couldn't understand that. But that was his way of doing it. "You guys don't know what you're doing down there. You're drinking too much Potomac water." Now, that was the situation that Daley found me, and the end result was that we did not come out in the front for Carl Albert.

RVR: And he resented it.

DR: Yes. Carl Albert did. But Carl blamed me, and it was not my fault.

RVR: Even though you explained to him?

DR: Yes, even though I explained it to him. That's because it was an embarrassment that these guys should have endorsed him and they withheld their endorsement. I said, "I can't do anything. I've got to live at home." But that was the reason.

RVR: You see? These are the things I knew you could answer that just made no sense otherwise.

DR: I was chairman of the caucus. I mean, I was in the leadership. Carl Albert liked me. Then I got defeated by Tiger Teague, who voted for me. I saw him vote for me.

RVR: He didn't want it?

DR: No.

RVR: He got up and said, "I don't want it."

DR: "I don't want it (RVR laughs)." I saw him vote for me.

RVR: But it wasn't you. That was their way of getting at Daley.

DR: Right.

RVR: That was 1968, not...

DR: I don't know about that, but there was a lot of fermented jealousy there. John Dent of Pennsylvania thought that I was an upstart. And Mel Price wouldn't push that, because Mel Price was from downstate. There was a group in the Illinois delegation that thought that I was just moving too fast.

RVR: Right. And you were.

DR: Yes (RVR laughs). I was having a lot of fun.

RVR: Carl Albert then blocked your election to be...

DR: No, he blocked my appointment.

RVR: At that time you were appointed?

DR: You were appointed. Right. And Carl Albert was not for Hale Boggs. I mean, he was not against him, but he was not for him because Dick Bolling was in and everything.

RVR: Did Daley want him bailed out?

DR: Yes. Well, Daley didn't care about that. Don't forget that at that time, the money wasn't rolling yet. The poverty program and Lyndon Johnson's spewing the money out didn't take place yet. Lyndon Johnson told Frank Reynolds, who was a reporter from Indiana who was in Washington, "You've got one of the brightest kids in the world now. You guys don't know what the hell you've got." And the funniest thing is that at the beginning, Lyndon Johnson came here to Chicago and said, "Hey, you son of a bitch, you

don't like me, do you?" I said, "Why, Mr. President, it's not that I don't like you. I'm trying to put together a ticket that's going to get elected."

I said, "Lyndon"—Now this was after he was the vice president—I said, "Lyndon, you know, you always are suspicious of me (RVR laughs)." Let me explain to you the situation in 1960. Otto Kerner was a Mason. He was going to be endorsed by the *Chicago Tribune*. He was going to get elected governor. Jack Kennedy was a Catholic. We were going to get a lot of votes because he was a Catholic and a minority. I said, "Stu Symington is southern Illinois. Harry Truman will come in like crazy. Now, put it together: Kennedy is a Catholic, Stu Symington is downstate Illinois, Otto Kerner is a Mason who's being endorsed by the *Tribune*—We've got a winner."

I didn't think that Jack Kennedy was going to get elected. But with Stu Symington, we'd sure as hell carry Illinois. And then Lyndon said, "You son of a bitch." I said, "Now, it wasn't that I didn't like you. It was that I wanted to elect a governor in the State of Illinois." He said, "Holy Jesus! I never thought of it that way." I said "Well, that's the way that I thought of it, once you were named vice president." And I was in the room when Sam Rayburn told Lyndon, "You're going to run for vice president."

And Lyndon said "Well, damn you, Sam. Mr. Speaker, yesterday you told me that you never trade a vote for a gallon. You never trade a vote." He said, "What made you change your mind?" Rayburn looked him right in the eyes and said, "I'm a wiser man today than I was." Wonderful. Wasn't that great? "I'm a wiser man today than I was yesterday." Kerr walked in the room—from Oklahoma—He said, "Why, god damn you, are you going out there with all of them goddamn Catholics? You crazy son of a bitch!" Rayburn said to Kerr, "We want to have a vice president. That's what we're interested in. We're going to have a vice president."

RVR: Look what happened.

DR: Yes.

RVR: Okay, so you didn't become the whip?

DR: No.

RVR: Which would have put you...

DR: In line.

RVR: Right. And then later, when you could have been in line, you chose to be chairman of the Ways and Means.

DR: No. Just a minute. When we had the fight for the majority leader, Tip O'Neill was the Speaker—He was going to be elected Speaker. So he wasn't going to get involved in the fights between Bolling, McFall, and Udall. He wasn't going to get into fights. I went to Jim Wright. I said, "Jim, you've got to run for majority leader." He said, "Oh shit! I don't want to do that. With Public Works, I'm making friends." I said, "Jim, we can't let Bolling be the goddamn majority leader."

RVR: Oh yes (laughs).

DR: He said "Well..."

RVR: Why not (laughs)?

DR: Oh, Bolling was such an uppity. He said, "Danny, it's too late." I said, "Can we have Bolling be the majority leader?" He loved Tip O'Neill, and Tip O'Neill agreed. Tip O'Neill said, "Jesus, Bolling killed me." So we went to work. And we won that vote for Jim Wright by one vote. And it was Thomas Ludlow Ashley that walked into the chambers, and I ran up to him—I said, "You're going to vote for Wright, aren't you?" He said, "No, I'm not." I said, "Why?" He said, "Danny, is it important to you?" Ludlow's suite in the House Office Building was right across the hall from me. I said, "Ludlow, it's my life (RVR laughs)." There was Bolling and Wright.

RVR: One vote, and you voted for Wright.

DR: Now, you asked me how did I get back into leadership.

RVR: Yes. I mean, you were out.

DR: Wright came to me. He said, "Danny, you did more to help me get elected than anybody that I know."

RVR: This was when he was Speaker?

DR: No, this was when he was the...

DR and RVR: Majority leader.

RVR: Okay.

DR: He said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want to be Chief Deputy Whip." He said, "It's yours."

RVR: He said it was yours.

DR: "It's yours." Because he had the power of appointment, with the confirmation of the Speaker. He went to Tip O'Neill. Tip O'Neill said, "Well geez, no." I said, "What do you mean?" Wright called me into his office. He said, "Danny, we thought that you and Tip O'Neill were friends. He doesn't want you to be Speaker. He doesn't want you to be Chief Deputy Whip." I said, "Jesus Christ, that's strange." I walked into Tip's office. I said "Hey, you son of a bitch! What are you doing?"

RVR: Do you really talk to him that way?

DR: Exactly. I said, "You son of a bitch! What are you doing (RVR laughs)? I bust my buns to get Wright elected majority leader to protect you, and you don't want me to be...?" He said, "Danny, I was thinking of you." I said, "Don't think of me (RVR laughs)!" Jim Wright came to me and said, "Danny, I don't give a shit whether he likes it or not—You deserve the job. I worry about when you write something, whether you embrace it with a friendly son of a bitch." In other words, "Hey! What are you doing?"

RVR: I know, instead of it sounding like you...

DR: No. It was, "What the hell is going on here? Are you guys double-dealing me?" Well, he said because he got the Speaker, he got the leadership, he got the whip's job because I backed out. He didn't want to take it. I said, "Hey, you take it. I'd rather have somebody that I know—if I can't have it—to be there than somebody that I don't know. He said, "Okay, I'll take it." He didn't want to take it because they were screwing me (RVR laughs). Professor, that's what I love about maneuvering, conniving, and the suspense (RVR laughs). Well, I loved that. And the president says in his book that he's got out, "Danny Rostenkowski is the best."

RVR: Does he?

DR: Oh yes. If he didn't have the trouble that he had, it would have been a whole different story.

RVR: You were damn good. You really were.

DR: I was always testing myself. The one thing that I didn't want to be was a neighborhood politician that was only there because of the force of the machine. I wanted to be better than that. Now, the very thing I didn't want is what I am, and history will record it as such. But you'll find in the pleasant moments of your retiring after six o'clock—you'll find some things in there that are very interesting about what people thought of me.

RVR: Oh, I know. And they respected you.

DR: Even the Harvard Press (RVR laughs).

RVR: Tip O'Neill tells the story that you came to him to get him to run.

DR: It was to take the job as whip, yes.

RVR: He said that it wasn't his time.

DR: And I said, "I'm not going to get it." He said, "Well, have you got a deal?" I said, "You're goddamn right I've got a deal. But I'm not going to get it. You take it."

RVR: You said to him, "We've screwed you (laughs)," and then he came back and he said, "I didn't realize it but Danny was screwed (laughs) because they voted him out of his position as..."

DR: It was Democratic chairman.

RVR: We go back to the question of why you chose to be chairman of Ways and Means Committee, which is a powerful chair.

DR: What you've got to do now is that you've got to envision the big picture. Tip O'Neill was the Speaker. Across the country there was a Republican sweep. John Bredemus was going to be the majority leader. He was a whip. John Bredemus was defeated.

RVR: It was through the election.

DR: Now, I was the whip. John Bredemus was defeated. Across the country as we got to the closing of the polls, Al Ullman was defeated in Oregon. He was the chairman of

Ways and Means Committee. I was in line for both spots, whip and majority leader—not whip, but I mean chairman of Ways and Means Committee. Tip O’Neill called me and said, "Don't make any decisions." I said, "Shit. What are you talking about?" He said, "Don't make any decisions." I said, "Tip, you got Wright. You'll have Foley." He said, "No. Don't you make any decisions."

So for two weeks we went back into sessions. And I was sitting there and the press was on my case. They said, "What are you going to do? Are you going to take the chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee?" Sam Gibbons, who was my ranking member, was already picking out furniture on the Ways and Means Committee, and it teed me off to no avail. So I was sitting there listening to Tip. I went to Leo Deal, who was Tip's assistant, and I said, "You know, Mr. White Hair in there is always looking for the convenient thing to do. I'm going to start thinking about me, Leo." I love him—I've played golf with him, I've vacationed with him, I stayed at his house in Chappaquiddick.

And I said, "I'm going to make a decision here." Tip O’Neill said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Tip, I'm going to take the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee." He said, "Danny, there's nobody better at counting the house than you." I said, "Tip, listen to me. You're the Speaker. Jim Wright is the majority leader. If you quit, Jim Wright is going to be the Speaker. Jim Wright is young enough so that I'm going to get old being the whip or the majority leader. Where is the activity going to take place?" George Bush called me—forty-one.

RVR: As president?

DR: That was as vice president. He said, "Danny, you're going to take the chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee." I said, "George, I want to take it." Ronald Reagan and George Bush came up to the Capitol and went to the Speaker Ceremonial Office. Ronald Reagan walked in and said hello to Tip O’Neill, and George Bush grabbed him and pulled him over to me. And he said, "Mr. President, shake hands with Danny Rostenkowski, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee." I said, "Hey!" O’Neill looked at me and I shake hands with the President. "We're going to do some things together, you and me," Ronnie said to me.

George Bush and Ronald Reagan walked out. O'Neill said, "You son of a buck! Did you tell them you were going to be chairman of Ways and Means?" I said, "I didn't say a goddamned thing. That's what they want." He said, "Well, what do you want?" I said, "I want to be chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Everything that's going to happen is going to be in the economic area, and I want to be where the action is. Tip, for the next four years, they'll be talking about the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. They won't be talking about some goddamned whip."

RVR: That's true.

DR: O'Neill said, "Don't do this to me." I said, "Okay, I won't do this to you. I'll take the whip's job. But you've got Sam Gibbons as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee." He said, "Oh Jesus. He's a loose cannon!" I said, "There you go!" He said, "Take the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee (RVR laughs)."

RVR: You did.

DR: Oh sure! I was going to do it anyway. When I said Sam Gibbons, he's like, "Holy Jesus Christ!"

RVR: Except that that would eliminate you from...

DR: The chain. I was out of it. But, Professor, why would I want to get in a chain that was never going to break? Who thought that Wright was going to get in trouble with Gingrich?

RVR: That the whole thing would collapse.

DR: And I was quick about it. I was good to Tip O'Neill. In your analysis, if you get into the 1986 era with Ronald Reagan and the relationship, there was a young kid named Ari Weiss—He was the brains of the O'Neill operation. He was a little Jewish kid.

RVR: You mean Tip O'Neill's operation?

DR: He was a very, very orthodox Jew. He had a beard.

DR and RVR: Yarmulke.

DR: He was a delightful kid. And he drank (RVR laughs).

RVR: He was one of your people!

DR: Well you know, it does relax you.

RVR: Okay. I'd like to have your evaluation of several Speakers, starting with Carl Albert.

DR: I'll start it with Sam Rayburn.

RVR: Start it with Sam Rayburn.

DR: Well, Sam Rayburn was only there three years with me. And with Sam Rayburn, I thought that he was an old curmudgeon.

RVR: Oh yes?

DR: He was inflated with his power. But then again, how much really, Professor—How much was the federal government involved in our everyday lives then? It was very little. There was the post office, veteran's affairs, and Social Security. You didn't have Medicare. Those were the only three things. So the Congress, with respect to the relationship to the people in this room, there was Social Security, postal appropriations, and foreign affairs. That was it. Those were the only things. You've got to remember that

nothing happened in the social advancement of our generation, our population, until Lyndon Johnson became president. That's because Jack Kennedy ran on changing education and on bringing my education into the twentieth century with money that was going to flow from the federal government. But Johnson did it. Johnson incorporated and put into law all of the dreams of the Kennedy administration.

RVR: He was an extraordinary man.

DR: He was very ill-sorted by the faction of our Americans in the African community. They did not give him justice that they gave Kennedy. You don't hear anything about Lyndon Johnson. And yet, he laid the groundwork for every social change.

RVR: He was a great president.

DR: He will be next to Roosevelt when the analysis of history is made.

RVR: Yes. Right. It's just the damned Vietnam disaster.

DR: There's that, plus the fact that he wasn't eastern. He'd say, "Those sophisticated people that live in Chappaquiddick (RVR laughs)! George, I'm going to tell you something. Here are things I enjoyed about being a colleague. Screw California. Screw New York. Screw Texas." If I could do that in a day, my day was complete—bring Illinois alongside of those people. Plus the fact that I saw a deteriorating population. Everything was moving west and southwest. Roosevelt was evaporating. I'd make a good lecturer, wouldn't I?

RVR: You are (DR laughs). But you didn't tell me about your personal feelings towards Carl Albert. I want to do Albert and Tip O'Neill.

DR: I liked Carl Albert.

RVR: He was smart, wasn't he?

DR: Oh, he was very Oxford. He was a Rhodes Scholar.

RVR: I don't know. You should start with...

DR: Rayburn.

RVR: Yes.

DR: There was Rayburn, McCormack...

RVR: Right. All of those people. Being objective, but also personal, what's your evaluation of them as members of the House and as Speakers? How good were they as Speakers?

DR: Probably the brightest Speaker, and the individual that didn't fear controversy, would be Jim Wright. He did not fear controversy. Jim Wright was infatuated with himself a little bit as Speaker too, because he was a tremendous public speaker.

RVR: And he was arguably the best.

DR: Then again, you're asking me to evaluate.

RVR: Personally.

DR: Personally?

RVR: Yes.

DR: Well, I had very little to do with Sam Rayburn, because I was a freshman. As a matter of fact, let me give you my one personal experience.

RVR: Yes. Go Ahead.

DR: It was customary that the Speaker would have a photographer come in and take a picture of the freshman member—the youngest member—and the Speaker. And of course, I was a freshman, the youngest member. You've got to understand, painting the picture, I'm questioned about whether or not I can get into the chambers (RVR laughs).

RVR: Really? Were you?

DR: And I walked into the Speaker's hallway—the Speaker's lobby. There were two photographers standing there. The door swings from the chamber, and in walks from the Speaker's lobby Sam Rayburn. Then he was, "What? What? Take the picture, goddamn it! Take the picture (RVR laughs)!" And I'm standing there. I said, "Hi. I'm..." He said, "Yes, okay. Fine. Oh yes. Take the picture." What an asshole. Now, that's my first impression. In that same token, whenever there was a photographer and I was alone, it was, "What do you want me to do? How do you want me to stand (RVR laughs)?" I was kissing the photographer's poop. Rayburn would say, "God damn it (RVR laughs)!"

RVR: Do you know what I read? You were brand new. You weren't expected to say a word. But a colleague had died, and you were expected then to get up and make a memorial statement and that you did very well. And everybody said, "Hey, that's not bad for somebody that hates to keep his mouth shut."

DR: Tom Gordon was my predecessor.

(End of Side One)

DR: It was probably something prophetic (RVR laughs). There was John McCormack, followed by Tip O'Neill.

RVR: It was Carl Albert.

DR: I'm sorry. It was Carl Albert. I liked Carl Albert. I thought he was a brilliant guy. I don't mean to be unkind, but you know, there's something that people accept inordinately, with higher structure. Carl Albert was a little man in a big man's world. Although he was honest and sincere, he just didn't measure up. And his judgement was not as good as it should have been, particularly at the Democratic Convention here. Professor, I had to control the convention.

RVR: I know. And that was another thing he held against you.

DR: Yes.

RVR: Can you tell me what happened?

DR: At the Democratic Convention, the convention ran out of control. This was 1968. This was when the city went berserk.

RVR: That's right.

DR: The 1964 convention was in Atlantic City. I was in charge because I was chairman of the caucus—Speaker Albert appointed me. I took control of the convention. I recommended things to Carl Albert, like when all of these people were going goofy inside the hall, Ralph Metcalf walked in, black. See if they'll do it to him (RVR laughs). I adjourned the convention. But Phil Warden wrote an article for the *Chicago Tribune* that Lyndon Johnson called me and said, "Get Carl Albert out of that chair."

RVR: Now, Johnson was then...

DR: He was in Texas. He was the President. Yes. I said, "Mr. President, my boss, what were you doing?" Carl Albert got sick. He called me at the Blackstone Hotel and said, "You take the gavel tonight." I ran the convention. But Warden wrote a story that Johnson called me—that I wrestled the gavel away from Carl Albert, which never happened and I denied. But it was a good story. Reporters from all over the country got this thing and I denied it. Frank Annunzio, who was not my friend in the Illinois Delegation, kept on feeding this to Carl Albert.

RVR: So Carl Albert really took offense at that.

DR: Yes.

RVR: And that was part of the animosity.

DR: Yes.

RVR: We'll move then to Tip O'Neill. You and Tip had a good relationship.

DR: That's correct. You know all of the background for why I took the job. I wanted to make Tip O'Neill look the best. He was abused by everybody. The Republicans just couldn't help but say, "Big fat clown with a cigar. Boston Politician." I loved Tip O'Neill. But, Professor, most of the decisions that were made by Tip I forced on him with Ari Weiss.

RVR: Who was he?

DR: He was Tip's legislative guy—brilliant. He's in Israel now—a lawyer—and he's been there for twenty years. Now, when we would get the social issues, Tip O'Neill was never afraid to say, "I'm a total liberal." I don't like liberals. I mean, take Tip. Don't you think

people want to work (RVR laughs)? "Oh, you're a goddamned Republican." That's what he used to say to me.

RVR: Oh yes?

DR: Oh, always! That's because I worked with Reagan.

RVR: Oh yes. You did.

DR: Professor, I think that my obligation as a public servant is to sow promise. This governor down in Springfield right now is crazy (Rod Blagojevich). Now, he's okay to the blacks and to the poor. But you're bankrolling their kids into oblivion if you're going to do what he wants to do. Now, I'd make compromises to those of this world that say, "Hey, you can't do that." I'd say, "Wait a minute. Aren't we going to be better off if we make this contribution? Aren't we going to get a little bit?" I said to Bill Clinton, "Bill, take two baby steps. You don't have to make giant steps. Five baby steps is a giant step, so you get two this year and three next year. That's the game."

Social change, even in Social Security, is to benefit people. Old people do not accept change very easily, so you massage them. That's the way I played government. Now, Professor, you don't have to be a genius with a Rhodes scholarship to do all of that. You just move people along. Anyway, I'm going to conclude with Tip O'Neill at this luncheon. Then we're going to go on from there at another luncheon. But let me ask you. So many times, when you find out the jurisdiction of my committee, after you've read all those papers—I was in everything: taxes, Social Security, welfare reform, health, and Medicare. You couldn't stop me. I was harmful (RVR laughs), but having fun in that, "You can't do this." "Why can't you do this?" "It's classified."

I would get members of industry, just like I'm looking at you now, and I'd say, "Jack Welch of G.E., I'm going to hit you for some money. You really haven't been paying your fair share." And Jack Welch would say, "How can you say that?" I'd say, "Because you haven't. I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do with you, Jack. You put all of your people together, and you tell me how I can best fit you without hurting you as

much as you'd get hurt if I just do a paintbrush act (RVR laughs)." He'd say, "Oh Danny!" I'd say, "Jack, you're going to pay. The best way to do it is to tell me how to do it." Welch would come back and say, "Well, if you do this and you do that, let me analyze it."

I'd go in to my team room and I'd say, "Okay, here's what I want to recommend." They'd say, "Oh well, you can do this. This is great boss. This is fine." Now, why did industry and financial institutions like them say that? I'd say, "You're going to get it." The best way for me to do it to you is to tell me how, because you're going to get it. You don't have to be a genius, Professor. But Tip O'Neill was just a liberal Democrat. I'd say to him, "Tip, for Christ's sake, our job is to legislate." See, the Republicans started with Gingrich—all the hate, where he's sitting in the car with a cigar and white hair. They were saying, "Do you want this kind of politics?"

Tip O'Neill was a good Speaker. He wasn't the best, but he was a good Speaker. But then again, there was controversy. Today, legislators expect the full pressure of the executive to do something in their chamber. When I was there, particularly under John McCormack, it was, "Tell us what your agenda is, Mr. President. We'll do it." And if the administration stuck their nose into our business, that was insulting. John McCormack would say, "Stop that," when the Speaker would say, "Mr. President, you have no authority to come into my chamber. If you want something, do it." And that's exactly what I did as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and with the Budget Committee with Leon Panetta, who was chairman of the Budget Committee.

With Bob [inaudible], who was the original Joe, I'd say, "Tell me how much you want. Don't tell me how to get it, because if you're going to tell me how to get it, you're taking my jurisdiction. I put the packages together." Tom Foley said, "Danny, we've got all kinds of revolutions going on. They want to take you out." I said, "Tom, don't worry about them taking me out. I want to ask you something—Where are you in this thing?" He'd say, "What do you mean?" I'd say, "Are you with them, or are you with me? That's because that will make a difference. I want you to know something, Tom—If you're with them, you're going to have a bloody nose with me. But I want to ask you a question—Is there anything that you've ever asked me to do that I haven't done?"

I said, "No. If I told everybody that you wanted it done this way, they wouldn't be as mad at me—they'd be mad at you. I don't give a shit. I love it. I love being the focus of things because they can't do anything to me. I've got my members on my committee that all support me. But Tom, tell me—If you want to take me on and push me out, who's going to replace me? Can you get the legislation you want without me? Now, I'm not that good, but I've got a lot of experience." And he said, "Danny, I don't even know why I entertain this." I said, "Tom, you know I make your job easier. And I don't mind doing it. I love it. I don't give a shit whether people like me. I go to bed at night knowing that I've done something."

RVR: That's great!

DR: What's wrong with a lifestyle like that? You know, I was never a highlighter. Listen, I loved having fun with my job. But it's just like the Jack Welch story—I said, "Jack, I'm going to get so much money out of you, because you owe it." But in the long run, Professor, those guys are all my pals. That's because they knew that once I gave them my word, they could take it to the bank. That's why I had such a good reasoning with Ronald Reagan. We shook hands, and I said to him, "You know, Mr. President, I don't expect you to be the brightest guy in the world. I'm not the brightest guy in the world. But I want to understand something—If you don't understand something, you ask me. If I don't understand something, I'll ask you. But I want an understanding. Don't you say one word about my tax bill." He loved it. He absolutely loved it.

RVR: But you worked very closely with Reagan.

DR: Oh yes.

RVR: But he was a Republican. Why did you do that?

DR: He was the president. He wanted to run this. He wanted to lead something. And he was not an unfair person, he just didn't like the rich people paying as much in taxes.

RVR: That's true.

(The tape recorder is shut off momentarily)

DR: I mean, all of a sudden here, I'm telling you. Why would Rostenkowski have a reputation of being this, if you don't understand the reasons as to why he did it? It's like writing a tax bill. It's like coming in and saying, "Okay guys." And who would think? And that's why I don't find anything wrong with Cheney calling in all of the experts in the energy area and saying, "How do we do this?" They're the experts! The thing that they've got to understand is that they'd better be afraid if they fuck you around—that they're going to get screwed. And that's the one thing that I was not afraid to do. You screw me, I screw you (RVR laughs). Come on, I'll take you home.

RVR: Oh great! That would be wonderful.

*****END OF INTERVIEW*****