

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Leo Coco and Gene Smith

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IDENTIFICATION: Coco and Smith were coworkers and friends of Gillis Long.

INTERVIEWER: Gary Huey

PROJECT: Gillis Long

INTERVIEW DATES: July 27, 1987

FOCUS DATES: 1970s-1980s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1756, Side A

Coco was in New Orleans finishing his masters when he applied for a job; Coco had never met Gillis before; Lindy Boggs; Carson Killen was Gillis' administrative assistant until 1985, when Gillis died; John and Arlene Mmahat; Coco hired for job with Gillis; Coco had to move to Washington; Bill Morgan; Gillis could not stand cigarette smoke; Smith says that Gillis had a good relationship with his staff; Smith was the third press secretary in a year and a half; Gillis had an excellent congressional staff; the staff worked on weekends too; the preparation the staff did was superior to others; Gillis had little patience with staff he didn't like; Gillis was very confident, but did not like small talk; Gillis expected a lot from his staff; Patti Tyson; Gillis spent less time at his congressional office; Gillis as Chairman of the Caucus; Claude Pepper; Gillis ran against Matt McCue[?] and Charlie Rhodes[?]; Gillis wanted to move the Democratic Party into the mainstream;

Tape 1756, Side B

Gillis Long was not good in interviews and was not a good television performer; Gene Smith as press secretary; Gillis liked the press, but he wasn't into schmoozing with anybody; Gillis was not on the legislative committee; Civil Rights Act; Rules Committee; Yellow book; Blue book; economic issues; Coco traveled with Gillis;

Tape 1757, Side A

Gillis' health; Howard Hughes; Gillis hated waiting for people; Smith and Coco never saw Gillis relax; Smith sent out pictures of Gillis when he was sick to people so they wouldn't be shocked when they saw him in person; Joe Ticheli; Gillis' strengths and weaknesses;

TAPES: 2 (T1756, T1757)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 48 pages

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RESTRICTIONS: None