

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: J.W. "Cotton" Merchant

COLLECTION: 4700.1192

IDENTIFICATION: Political ally and friend of Gillis Long

INTERVIEWER: Gary Huey

PROJECT: Gillis Long

INTERVIEW DATES: July 11, 1987

FOCUS DATES: 1960s-1980s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1739, Side A

Merchant's father helped the African-American population in Rapides parish and supported integration; Merchant considers himself to be a liberal; first worked with Gillis Long in the early 1960's when he (Long) was a congressman; Edwin Edwards; Eighth District; very close to Long; Huey Long; Earl Long; resemblances in the Long family; Long lost the governor's races in 1963 and 1971; Chip Morrison; John McKeithen; Jimmy Davis; Bennett Johnston; Gillis Long was short on money in the 1971 race and Merchant donated money; Treen was elected in 1971 and beat Louis Lambert; what Long stood for government is what attracted Merchant to him; Merchant really admired Long; McKeithen supported Speedy Long against Gillis for Congress in 1964; Long supporting segregation and civil rights; race issue used against Long when he ran for Congress in 1964; Long was elected in 1972; redistricting of the Eighth District; Long also received many votes from the white population; Joe McPherson; Ned Randolph[?]; family feud among the Long's; Long died of a heart attack; Long was interested in the tax structure to bring in industry and helped out with the federal highways; Long supported a strong military;

Tape 1739, Side B

Long never talked about Vietnam; he told Merchant that there is a need for a strong military; Long, despite a heart attack, continued to maintain a rigorous schedule; Merchant had a heart attack, but he rested well afterwards in order to recuperate; Dr. Lupin[?] helped Merchant; merchant believes that Long worked himself to death; Merchant has a bond issue to help out a school; concerned with education; Joe Ticheli; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization conference; Merchant was loved and known by many in Louisiana; Long helped out a young man who fought in Vietnam to get records in order and helped him get to school; Long worked with a lot of social problems; Merchant liked Long's ideas and philosophy of his government; the two had a good friendship; Tip O'Neill; Carson Killen;

Tape 1740, Side A

Merchant believes that if Long had slowed down and taken care of himself, he would have been Speaker of the House; Joe McPherson; Merchant had to bartend for Long at a convention and Long sent him a thank-you letter as a joke; Russell Long; Glenmora, Louisiana; Merchant's father was a mayor and was also for civil rights; John Breaux; Cathy Long;

TAPES: 2 (T1739, T1740)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 54 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Transfer and copyright to Gary Huey

RESTRICTIONS: None