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RECORDED INTERVIEW

OF

WILL ARTHUR

CONDUCTED BY

KAREN BREWSTER with MARY ANNE HAMBLEN

IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Part 3 of 3

UAF ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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Transcribed by:

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INTERVIEW OF WILL ARTHUR

(Beginning of Part 3 of 3 of recorded interview.)

KAREN BREWSTER: Okay. My last question was about your personal relationship with the Senator and what it meant to you to have worked with him and known him.

WILL ARTHUR: Personally, I viewed the Senator, and like I said, he was the same age as my parents and I viewed him more like a mentor. I accepted him. I understood his -- in some ways his life experiences. I related more to his life experiences.

I think during my time in the office, there were only one or two veterans in the office, and I was one of them, and that's one of the things we connected on, which seemed very odd to me.

Now, down in Defense Appropriations section, he had more veterans. So I related to him, like I said, he was like -- he was the age of my parents, he had been through a lot of the experiences like them.

He -- you know, he was very -- you know, he was sort of nice to me, for lack of a better term. I think he was nice to all of his staff. And occasionally, he'd yell at you, but you never took it personally. I mean, I never took

it personally. And I know I'd be driving him in the car and he would just be blowing off steam, we will be driving up and down the mall and say, "Yes, sir, no, sir, yes, sir."

But, you know, as I said, it was a privilege, and I know that sounds cliche, to work for him. You know, he gave me the opportunity to be exposed to something. He actually created the career that I'm in now. I wouldn't be archiving if I hadn't worked for Stevens.

And I think the fact that he had so much respect for his papers that it helped me to transition into that and work with it. So, you know, he made -- and for me, I was 40 -- 41 when I became a archivist, technically. And I still say I'm not an archivist, I go by the monicker guerrilla archivist. I've never been to school. And, you know, Karen Powell, recently, she's the Senate archivist, she says, "Well, you've worked in the field long enough."

And honestly, the signature event that, you know, when you -- Mary Anne was saying earlier that, you know, Karen speaks highly of me, is closing Stevens's office. I'm, like, for lack of a better term, the Grim Reaper of offices. When offices close, people come and see me.

If I'm walking through your office advising your office manager on how much space you need, start passing your resume around because your boss is about to resign or lose.

And, you know, it's opened up this whole field to

me, but it's also given me something that, you know, sort of made me overcome the lack of academic credentials in the field because I'm more of a field -- you know, I don't know what you'd call it.

MARY ANNE HAMBLEN: Field based.

WILL ARTHUR: Yeah. I'm a combat --

KAREN BREWSTER: Experiential --

WILL ARTHUR: I'm in combat archiving. People are throwing stuff at you.

So, I mean, he supported that. When we could not find anyone to replace Juliette, it was, like, two months, three months, and with her support, I put in for it. Both the Office Manager and the Chief of Staff were against it. And the only reason I got that job is because it happened that the Chief of Staff was travelling, and the Office Manager had a sick kid that day, so the senior person in the office was the press secretary, and we were standing as close as the three of us were, I handed it to the press secretary, my request, she initialed it, handed it to the Senator, he says, "Sounds like a good idea," and said, "make it happen," and handed it back.

So in a way, I went around the system because even though I had just basically gotten a job, the office manager continued to look for two weeks and found nobody. And I don't know why, but, you know, his faith in me to do a job

that I was not trained to do. Although I gave reasons why, you know, the experience and knowledge of the people, and you know, all that, technically, I didn't hold the credentials that they were advertising for.

KAREN BREWSTER: Well, it sounds like you spent time with the Senator as his Executive Assistant and got to know him and you guys became friends.

WILL ARTHUR: Yeah, for -- for -- to -- to a certain extent, I would say we were friends. I mean, you know, we weren't drinking buddies or, you know, things like that, but you know, I found him easy to relate to. And, you know, if he wants to call me amongst his friends, I'd be privileged to be amongst his friends. Most of his friends.

KAREN BREWSTER: Is that -- was that kind of rapport standard for all his staff or was there certain people that he had that kind of rapport with?

WILL ARTHUR: I think the longer you were with him the better off you were. And I think that was time.

When I first started driving with him, he was the worst backseat driver I have ever had. And it took two months, and then two months after that, he didn't even question where we went. I'd be driving in back alleys, he didn't care.

First time we had to go somewhere we had to go -- I mentioned earlier General Quinn's funeral, I was told it was

at National Cathedral. So we left, I said -- he says, "You know where you're going?" I said, "National Cathedral." "No," he said, "it's at Saint Albans." And he goes, "But don't worry, I can get you there." He led me all over D.C. I didn't know that Saint Albans was right next door to National Cathedral, and I ended up parking in front of National Cathedral, so it was the same place, but he liked -- I think in some ways he liked to be in control. And when he had a new driver, he didn't trust his new drivers, you know, it's like -- and for good reason.

I lived in D.C. at that point for two weeks. I never -- I still don't live in D.C. You know, I live 70 miles from here. So yeah, but I thought finding National Cathedral was easy. So he had a trial period where, you know, he didn't quite trust, you know --

MARY ANNE HAMBLEN: Sometimes you had to gain his trust.

WILL ARTHUR: Yeah. And once -- yeah, pretty much exactly. And once you were good at it, you know, you were fine.

I know I picked him up at the airport once, his plane was late, we are in Dulles, and they're holding the education bill on the Floor. Senator Lott was literally on the Floor holding the bill, and he would go back to the cloak room and call Stevens and say, "Where are you?" Stevens

said, "We'll be there in 15 minutes." We were at the airport, that's 40 miles from there, it's Dulles. And, you know, we got stuck in traffic.

So after awhile, I asked him, I said, "Do you mind if I try a few things?" And he was, like, "Go ahead." So I did stuff that I do when I commute, which is like cutting through parking lots, down alleys, he was fine with it. You know. He was, like, "Where are we going?" Don't worry, we're going there.

His big concern was he was wearing a turtleneck, which means he had to change his shirt and put on a tie before he could go on the Floor to vote, but they held that vote for about an hour and 40 minutes. And you're only supposed to hold it open technically for 15. He's, like, "I will be there in 15 minutes." I mean, it's 15 minutes from the White House. But he trusted me to get him there.

And, yeah, I think that took time. You know. Honestly, when I was sent out to Western Alaska with him, that was a major privilege, you know, because in the past he had always taken one of his LA's. And so it was, like, to take somebody who is not an LA, you know, and doesn't even handle issues was, you know, a big boost in confidence for me. Plus I think -- I think it was sort of manipulated -- DeLynn Henry, the Scheduler, sort of manipulated that. You know, you don't want to take an

attorney because every time you take an attorney, issues become involved, and by taking somebody that wasn't an issue person. So I think, you know, DeLynn and the assistant scheduler sort of conspired to let me go. So -- but, I mean, he didn't have any problem with that.

KAREN BREWSTER: Did he have a sense of humor?

WILL ARTHUR: He had a really good sense of humor. I mean, I -- when I was first there, I was sitting in an area that he would walk by my desk every day, and I will admit for somebody that held a title Executive Assistant, I type with two fingers. And I type slow. I'm accurate, but I type relatively slow. And he walked by my desk one morning, and he sat there and just watched me type.

And finally he goes, "You know, when I first went off to college, the first thing I learned to do was type." And I looked at him and I said, "Well, when I first went off to college, the first thing I did was found a girlfriend that knew how to type." He looked at me for a minute and he said, "I should have thought of that." And he walked away.

And he -- he had a good sense of humor, honestly. You know, it wasn't a -- you know, an outrageous sense of humor, and I don't think he shared it with everybody, but you know, I think most of the time he was, you know, as I said, he's got this curmudgeon perception, and I would say most of the time that was wrong. He was, you know, in a

pretty good mood.

You know, he had an agenda and he pushed his agenda and there were times when, you know, he knew, and like I said, anybody who dresses for the role knows they are playing a part, you know. If you're going to go out of your way to put on a tie, you know you're going to be arguing and it's going to be a courtroom. It's the same thing.

Now, there were other times when, you know, spontaneous temper, I think that was maybe more -- a little bit more realistic. As I said, I don't ever remember him chewing out a staffer for anything that was, like -- you know, if I was late picking him up somewhere, I could tell he was upset, but, you know, he also understood when you get stuck in traffic in D.C., you get stuck in traffic in D.C., you know.

KAREN BREWSTER: What would you say his national impact -- and this will really be the last question.

WILL ARTHUR: His national impact?

KAREN BREWSTER: Yeah.

WILL ARTHUR: Well, I mean, the things outside of Alaska, I mean, I know we have, you know, the lands issues in Alaska are big bills, but really, they are only -- they only deal with Alaska. You know, the fisheries bill, it focuses on Alaska, but it affects fisheries everywhere. You know. So, I mean, that, I think he -- you know, I think that

has a big impact.

I think his -- you know, obviously Title IX goes wherever, it's a bill that travels wherever there are women in this country. And now, I know that's a lasting impact. And the fact that -- that's another thing between the Senator and I, you know, he knew I went to Virginia Military Institute when it was an all girls school -- or an all men's school. And, you know, I don't think it really ever came up. I don't -- I never had a problem, you know, with women going there.

And my mother was a veteran of war, so I had my opinion of it, you know, but he and I talked about it once, and you know, I know he was very much for it. The same venue then, it's like, now we have women all over the military, you know, why should they not be going to school. And I agree with that. And I said, you know, I know a large portion of my alumni still -- you know, but then a large portion of my alumni are still mad about the Civil War, so they'll get over it.

KAREN BREWSTER: So anything else you wanted to add that we haven't talked about?

WILL ARTHUR: Not that I can think of. I mean, if you want to -- if you can think of anything in the future, you know, if you want to just write down questions and send them to me, I'll answer what I can. I hope I was helpful

to you.

KAREN BREWSTER: Thank you very much.

WILL ARTHUR: Yeah.

(End of part 3 of 3, end of recorded interview.)