

The Soul of the Senate  
Documentary Script  
Final

**Or use: Clip from WVU Archives  
1:57:03:06 “Control of the purse by  
the people’s representation in  
Congress. Thank God! By the  
people’s representative – your  
representative lies at the very  
foundation of our freedoms.”**

He never ran a race he didn’t win –  
whether for political office or a  
leadership post in the Democratic Party.

**(Clip from state archives (1:00)  
7:18:50-7:19:50, circa 1968  
“The constitution does not say that the  
President shall always have his way in  
the matter of nominations, nor does it  
say the Senate shall act as a  
rubberstamp...”**

**(Floor speaker)  
Mr. Byrd? Mr. Byrd “I.”**

State Archives  
6:39:23 Appropriations door  
opens, young Byrd walks out

He has cast more votes than any Senator  
in our nation’s history...

and penned the History of the United  
State’s Senate – a massive four volume  
set that took 10 years...and hundreds of  
legal pads.

Few men have sculptured the laws of our  
nation to the extent of Robert C. Byrd.

He will tell you he has served with, not for, a total of eleven United States presidents.

**Byrd: And so Mr. President according to the Constitution, while the president only can only nominate, the Senate cannot nominate. The appointment is shared by the president and the United States Senate.**

He has differed with them all. Particularly when he believed the chief executive was sidestepping the Constitution or encroaching on legislative powers.

**MMI-002--20:11:27:17 to 20:11:52:25 (:25)**

**“No president sends me to the legislature. No president can send me home. We have three equal, coordinate branches of government in this country – the legislative, the executive and the judicial. And we who are elected in the legislative branch should not look upon any president as king. We ought to be willing to disagree with him.**

But this man – who strolls the marbled halls of the capitol as patriarch of the Senate, began life on much less stable footing.

He was born in North Carolina in 1917. Before he could walk, the loss of his mother to influenza made him an orphan. Cornelius Calvin Sale was his name, but not for long. Less than a year old, he was sent to the coal camps of West Virginia to live with his father’s sister and her husband. They later adopted him and renamed him Robert Carlyle Byrd.

**Byrd: My name was Sale. My name was Cornelius Calvin Sale Jr. That was my name. And if I'd kept it, they'd have given me the nickname "Corny" wouldn't they? (laughter)**

Vlurma and Titus Byrd were stern, frugal parents who bought their only child books and pens and paper instead of toys. Affection, not just money, was hard to come by. Later in life, Byrd told an audience that he could not recall ever having been kissed by his mother.

The Byrds ingrained values in their son that would become hallmarks of his character. Reverence for God, first and foremost.

The importance of an education. Commitment to hard work. And perseverance and tenacity.

**BYRD WVA001#19 (:58)**

**19:26:40:17 to 19:27:38:20**

**They were not my natural parents, but they were all I ever knew. I didn't know they were not my father and mother at that time. And they were not educated but they were wonderful people. They were very religious. They were not of the Christian right or the Christian left. They were just plain, humble, God fearing, God loving, God serving Christians. They didn't make a uh "hoopedoo" over it. They simply lived that kind of life. My dad uh when he died. When he left this world he didn't owe any man a penny. I'd never heard him use God's name in vain in all the years that I was with him. He was just a humble poor farmer and coal miner. My mom was one of the hardest workers I ever saw and she was very religious.**

Their lives were his lesson books. The family bounced around the coalfields as Titus drove a team of horses, worked in the mines and tried to scratch out a living. Young Byrd concentrated on his studies...and an awakening interest in music. He picked up the fiddle before his teens –and mastered music the same as he did his schoolwork.

Byrd graduated in 1934 – as valedictorian of Mark Twain High School in Stotesbury, West Virginia. Poor as they were, college was out of the question.

Byrd took what work he could find – as a gas station attendant and later as a produce boy.

Three years after graduation, making 70 dollars a month, he married his high school sweetheart, Erma James, a coal miner's daughter.

Byrd says his interest in politics awakened during World War II. He spent those years as a welder in the shipyards of Baltimore and Tampa.

In 1946, he filed for a seat in the West Virginia House of Delegates. He was one of 13 candidates plying for three seats. At the time, Byrd was earning his living as a meat-cutter at the coal company store, a trade he taught himself by reading a manual. It was a step up from punching the clock as the produce boy. The promotion put some extra money in his paycheck -- money that went to support his family, which now included two daughters, Mona and Marjorie.

A piece of political advice, ironically passed on by a Republican lawyer, led to Byrd's trademark on the political circuit. "Make your fiddle case your briefcase," the man said. "Everywhere you go, carry that fiddle case. Make yourself a little speech, and they won't forget you because of that violin."

(music playing)

Sage advice. In his first run for public office, Byrd led the ticket, pulling more votes than even the incumbents. Over the years, his strength at the polls never wavered. He has never lost a race – and during the 2000 election, carried all but seven of West Virginia's 1970 precincts.

While he was serving in the state legislature, Byrd enrolled in college. It had been sixteen years since his high school graduation. Evelyn Harris was one of his teachers.

**(Harris on Byrd MMI002 1:02:02:06-1:03:04:25) (1:02)**

**And he was really an excellent student. He was always prepared, he wrote very well, he was an excellent speaker and this was interesting because I had over a hundred students in that class. This was right after the war and a lot of returning veterans and they were tremendously able students, very very able students. I always remember that he was prepared for class, he was always prepared for class. Whenever he was to give a report or answer questions when we had discussion, I would never call on him, except near the very end of the class, otherwise that was the end of my instruction at the class at the moment.**

It would be decades later before Byrd completed his undergraduate degree. Although his formal education was interrupted by his political career, his love of learning was not.

**Byrd: I think the poet said, “Heaven is not gained by a single bound. We build a ladder by which we rise from lowly earth to the vaulted skies. A mountain to its summit round by round.**

Byrd soaked up the ancient classics of Greek and Roman philosophers, he read poetry, studied the Bible and memorized large passages from them all.

**Byrd: I asked the violets sweet and blue sparkling in the morning dew, whence came their colors. Then so shy they answered looking to the sky. I saw the roses one by one unfold their petals to the sun. I asked them what made their tints so bright. They answered looking to the light. And I asked the thrush whose silver note came like a song from an angel’s throat, why he sang in the twilight dim. And he answered, looking up at Him.**

**Byrd: So I find that people like poetry and they’ll seat on the edge of the chair listening to poetry. And once in a while over the years, I falter or I miss a line or a word. And I just, I’m just quite natural with it. I just miss a word and I start over. And they almost, they almost grip their chairs, hoping I’ll be able to come through without missing it.**

After a move to the upper house of the state legislature, Byrd set his sights on Washington.

**Byrd: Last week the Senate committee on Banking and Currency conducted hearings on a resolution introduced by Senator Fulbright.**

His Congressional tenure in 1953 as a member of the House of representatives. Truman was serving out his final days....and Eisenhower was about to be sworn in. The swing of the political pendulum was the first of many that Byrd would witness.

He served 3 terms in the House before election to the United States Senate in 1958.

**(Clip from Man in Washington show)**

**FROM Marshall archives**

**MMI 002-9 :09:06:11**

**09:06:19:23 09:06:53:25**

**(:34) (Host)) Good evening ladies and gentlemen, we present tonight's Man in Washington- West Virginia US Senator elect-Robert C. Byrd, former Congressman of WV's 6th district.**

**Senator, we're curious to know what you'll carry with you up to the upper chamber now that you've had experience in the house. And what your feelings will be when you leave the members of that August body, that many times members of the House have challenged on one issue or another.**

**Byrd:**

**Well I will go with a lot of very pleasant memories concerning the house- the house membership and my service in it. But I'm also going in the realization that I'm stepping into a body, which carries a greater influence, perhaps, certainly one in which each individual member has a**

**great deal more influence and with that a great deal more responsibilities. I have, many times, as I've sat in the House said, "thank God for the Senate."**

Upon his arrival in D.C., and still without a college diploma, Byrd resolutely pursued a law degree. He began his studies at George Washington University, then transferred to American University. It took ten years, but Byrd completed all the requirements – and graduated cum laude in 1963. He accepted his degree from commencement speaker -- John F. Kennedy. Byrd is the only member of Congress to have earned a law degree while serving in office. His undergraduate degree was awarded in 1994 from Marshall University. A B.A. in political science, summa cum laude. An earned degree, not an honorary one.

**(BYRD WVA-001 #20) (1:50)**

**20:28:18:28 to 20:30:08:27**

**I never had any desire to practice law. Never had any intention of being a practicing attorney. I wanted the additional learning. I wanted the**

**classroom experience. I wanted to be required to read to have to read certain courses, certain books, certain horn books, certain text books, in the law of property or criminal law, constitutional law and by going to school I had to do it. And that classroom discipline helped. I wanted this additional learning. I wanted to make myself a better, more capable legislator.**

The law degree gave legitimacy to Byrd's education, much of it self-taught. His depth of knowledge about history, in particular, is formidable.

**U.S. Senator Ted Stevens soundbite MMI002-1 1:06:39-1:08:07:29) (1:28) I remember one time when we were cochairmen of the British American Parliamentary Conference and the Senator was chairman that year, we go back and forth depending on which party is in power. He decided that we should go down to West Virginia, to a place I think was called Mountaintop where we had dinner. The British... it was a beautiful spring evening and everyone was enjoying themselves very much. One of the Parliamentarians said it's a pity that you Americans don't know much about the history of the country from which you get your mother tongue. We share our language but you really don't know that much about us. Senator Byrd just sort of nodded and after dinner he stood up and he said. This person made this comment to me and I think I shall demonstrate to you that we know a little bit about your history. He preceded to tell us about the name of every king, when the king came to power, who was the queen if there was one, who were the consorts,**

**how they left power and the progression of the royalty of the British Empire from beginning to end. We listened and they were spellbound. And that Parliamentarian said I'll never make a statement like that to an American again in my life.**

**U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton: I really have enjoyed having a firsthand experience of his extraordinary knowledge of history. It is awesome to listen to him, uh, explain how something we do today is connected to the Roman Senate.**

His Senate speeches are laced with historical references and quotes from literature. Wisdom of the ancients. He is renown for his oratorical skills.

**FRAMM MMI002-1 (1:03)**

**03:09:39:10 to 03:10:42:01**

**There are some that say Senator Byrd in many ways seems to have walked right out of the 19th Century. He is**

**more of an orator, if I can use that word, than any of his contemporaries. His speeches can be very flowery. As I said earlier he can quote from the Bible, the founding fathers, poetry, he can tell you how many days old he is. He is very proud of the Senate and its traditions and can expound on them in detail and at length. And will use all of the above in effort to make his speeches more effective. There are some that think that he does that effectively and there are others who argue that in this MTV age of short television sound-bites that he is not one of the Democrats' more effective speakers.**

**Clinton (MMI002-1 05:08:06:23 to 05:08:36:16 ) He really does represent the best of the senate in so many ways because he is not a 30-second sound-byte person. He explains his position. He puts it into context and everyone who is willing to listen, and of course in our attention deficit times, people are not willing to listen to one another.**

**// (:26) 5:09:04 to 5:09:30:13**

**We want quick, easy, sound bite answers. And really in most walks of life and certainly in most of the problems that we confront here in the Senate that's just not possible, although our media drives us in that direction. And Senator Byrd holds out against that. He talks about important issues with the respect and frankly the complication that many of these issues call for.**

Critics contend that Byrd lost a key Senate leadership position – that of Majority Leader -- because he's a non-conformist to the constraints of the 30 second soundbite.

**Stewart MMI-002-6 (:51)**

**06:04:45:17 – 06:05:36:22**

**You know, that's certainly not true. I was in the room when Senator Byrd made the decision not to seek reelection of majority leader. Uh, had he chose to, he could have been reelected with no problem. It was his choice. Uh, he was a respected leader. Members, whether they liked what he was doing or pressing, they always respected him. And they always knew that he was extremely truthful. Um, there's one thing that the members know, that when you talk to Senator Byrd, you never get an "iffy" answer and you never get equivocation. He generally will tell you, right up front, what he believes and where he is on a particular issue. And if a member asks for his vote and he tells them he will vote for it, you do not ever need to come back and check with him a second time.**

During his tenure in the Senate, Byrd has held more leadership positions than any Senator, of any party. He is the longest

serving member, in history, on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Usually an appointment reserved for those who wield considerable political power, and for those who have “paid their dues.” Byrd snagged the coveted appointment his first year in the Senate. Lyndon Johnson was Majority Leader then, and when he asked freshman senator Byrd which committees he’d prefer, Byrd told him Appropriations. Then held out till he got it, refusing any other committee assignments.

Byrd himself was elected Majority Leader in 1977 – besting Hubert Humphrey for the job. As Majority Leader, Byrd was deeply involved in foreign policy. He negotiated the controversial Panama Canal Treaty, oversaw the SALT II Treaty, and regularly met with world leaders such as Soviet Presidents Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Gorbachev, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and Deng Xiaoping of China, to name only a few.

He served as Majority Leader until 1981, when Ronald Reagan took the White House and Republicans took control of the Senate. The swing of the political pendulum moved Minority Leader Bob Dole into the role of Majority Leader.

**DOLE MMI002-1 (:32)**

**7:04:00:15 – 7:04:32:15**

**I would even go to Senator Byrd when I was the leader of the Senate, not the minority leader but the majority leader and ask him for parliamentary advice, and he was the minority leader. Now this, I would say Bob you think I can do this. Now, he could say go find out for yourself, but he would**

**give me advice. I would go to him for advice even though I was the leader on Parliamentary, because no one knows the rules better than Senator Byrd and they didn't then and they don't now.**

**DOVE MMI002-1 (:36)**

**8:02:31:12 - 8:03:07:11**

**They are difficult to learn because you don't bring anything to the senate in terms of a knowledge base. The senate rules are unique to the senate. They are not Robert's rules of order, they are nothing like the house rules, so if you came from the house, that was not particularly helpful. They were written basically to enhance the power of individual senators. They do a very good job of that. But if a senator is going to learn how to be powerful, he studies how to use those rules.**

Powerful is a word frequently ascribed to Byrd. He regained the Majority Leader's post in 1987 and held it until 1989. In all, he was the Democratic leader of the Senate for 12 years.

**Joe Stewart MMI002-1**

**05:21:02:02 – 05:21:54:17**

**He was an extremely good leader. He was both majority leader and minority leader. When you are majority leader, as someone said, it's a job something like herding butterflies because you have your colleagues, assuming it's 52-54 and your leader. They're all elected in their own right. At the same token, you have to sort of work with them and also have to keep**

**them moving in a direction that is good for the country. And Senator Byrd has always done that. He was very effective if you go back and look at the accomplishments. I mean the war powers act, the budget reconciliation act that we use today. Most of that goes back to things that he implemented when he was majority leader.”**

Political leaders are favorite targets for the barbs of the press corp and Byrd certainly drew his share. His actions garnered a prodigious volume of media coverage -- much of it criticizing his substantial power. Power both admired and feared by his Senate colleagues.

**Graham MMI002-1-4 (:23)**

**04:15:55:13 - 04:16:18:00**

**He is a formidable opponent because, A –he’s smart. B-he knows the rules of the Senate and C- he has what any great Senator over time develops and that is people, uh, are afraid of him. And, uh, that’s a very good thing to have. //**

**4:16:56:09 – 04:17:41:02 (:45)**

**People go out of their way to not get in a battle with Senator Byrd- partly because he knows the rules better than they do, partly because he's relentless and I think there's a combination of respect and fear. And what did Machiavelli say, "in a choice as to whether you should choose to be loved or feared, that it's better to be feared than loved because people love at their own pleasure." (chuckles) And they fear at your pleasure. So, I think...that people admire Senator Byrd and they're a little afraid of him.**

Perhaps nowhere else is Byrd's power more effectively channeled than on the Appropriations Committee. In 1989, while he was Majority Leader, the position of Chairman opened up on Appropriations. By rights, it was Byrd's – if he wanted it, but it was an either/or decision. After a great deal of deliberation, and on the advice of many in West Virginia, Byrd decided he could do more for his constituents as Chairman of Appropriations. 1989 was also the year his colleagues elected him Senate president pro tempore – a constitutional officer – and third in line of succession to the United States president.

**Byrd: I would hope that the committee would vote to restore this language and I'm ready to go to a roll call vote if necessary.**

As chairman, Byrd unabashedly funneled billions into West Virginia – and even packed off a few federal agencies to the state. His vice grip on the nation's purse strings drew the scorn of news editors across the country and made him the caricature of scores of editorial cartoons. West Virginia, in turn, named so many highways, schools and buildings for Byrd, some even joked of renaming the state for him. Especially after the state legislature named him “West Virginian of the Century.”

(applause)

Criticism did not deter him. Byrd has drawn criticism for his actions since the beginning of his political career. One particular charge that has haunted him is his brief association with the KKK. Used perennially by his political opponents, Byrd has apologized

repeatedly for his youthful lack of judgement.

**Byrd: As to my advocacy of the spread of the Klu Klux Klan, my brief connection with the Klan was a quarter a century ago. And I believe a lot of young people will look back 25 years from now upon their association with certain radical groups today as having been a mistake. It was a mistake. I have said so a hundred times. I'm glad to say so again.**

The racial charges were fueled further when Byrd opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and opposed the nomination of Thurgood Marshall to the United States Supreme Court.

Marshall was the first African American to be nominated to the post. Byrd himself was considered for nomination to the Supreme Court, by President Richard Nixon.

**Byrd: I was very flattered by the President's nomination of me sometime ago for that position. As a matter of fact, after giving careful consideration to it and I think he was serious in it, I contacted John Conley, who was secretary of the treasury. And told him to get word to the President that if he had the slightest idea of naming me to the Supreme Court, not to do it.**

Byrd considered the nomination. Even though he had overwhelming support in the Senate, from Democrats, as well as Republicans, he ultimately withdrew from consideration. Of the three branches of government, it is not the one that commanded his attention.

**BYRD MMI002**

**20:21:51:11 – 20:22:48:18**

**(:57)**

**Oh, I like the Legislative Branch. It's the...it's the branch that's closest to the people. It's active. I had served in the State House of Delegates, State Senate, the US House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate - there's just no livelier place. I like to debate and to speak and I just thought I would like it better.**

**The other seat of course had some attractions. Life...one is appointed for life. The salary is good. One doesn't have to wage campaigns and go out and raise money in elections. There have been a few times that I would've liked to have been a Supreme Court Justice since then. But I, overall, have not regretted it.**

**DELLINGER mmi002**

**01:18:59:14 – 1:20:38:12 (1:39)**

***(Note: this is actually two bites. We need to pick the strongest one or pull from both.)***

**It's interesting to think of Robert Byrd as a potential Supreme Court nominee. It, it would've been Richard Nixon who would've nominated him. President Nixon probably would've made a big mistake from the**

**President's point of view. He probably thought of Robert Byrd as a southern conservative, law and order and the model of the justices Richard Nixon said he would appoint.**

**And I think it would've been a mistake because Robert Byrd's devotion to the text of the Constitution would've made him a strict enforcer of constitutional rights. I think he would've voted far more often that criminal convictions had to be overturned if rights were violated than President Nixon would've liked. And Robert Byrd had a sympathy for the underdog and a sense that we ought to think about how the law bares down on, on people from disadvantaged circumstances that I think would've made him more sensitive to those concerns than President Nixon's ideal justice. Robert Byrd would've been someone very much like Hugo Black of Alabama who spent 30 plus years on the court defending the rights against racial discrimination, strictly enforcing the 1st amendment. Uh, Byrd would've been a constitutionalist, that is, he would've**

**applied the constitutional rights even when it was uncomfortable or unpleasant for the government to do so.**

**Byrd: The genius of the Constitution may lie more in the collective knowledge of history, of human nature and of government residing in the minds of the framers their experience, their political savvy if you will. In 1787 the only written constitutions existing anywhere in the world were here – in English-speaking, North America.**

The United States Constitution. The Polaris by which the republic sights its course. Few, if any, would argue that Byrd is one of the nation's preeminent Constitutional scholars. Predators who prowl for power in the coliseums of Washington are met by Byrd, the gladiator. One of his fiercest battles – the line item veto. Many presidents throughout history have salivated for the power of the line item veto. It would allow presidents to strike out portions of bills sent to them by the legislative branch. In doing so, it would give the president the power to control how and where the federal government spends its money.

The framers of the Constitution, fearful of putting too much power in the hands of one person, even an elected one, did not allow for it.

Despite that, a groundswell of public support for the line item veto grew in the early 1990s. It was due, in part, to a run of contemporary Presidents who attempted to leverage their popularity for more executive power. President Bill

Clinton pleaded the case frequently and in 1995, a Democratic controlled Congress passed the measure, giving up part of its constitutional authority.

**Wheeling Jesuit tape 11:06:45**

**“It was self mutilation of its own power. The power of the purse, driven by popular misconception, driven by a lack of understanding about the people about the importance and history of the control of the purse strings. And driven by an amazing disregard of the Constitution of the United States. This was an act of sheer wrong, irresponsible, demagoguery on the part of senators and members of the House of Representatives and to a considerable extent, the President of the United States.”**

Outnumbered and outvoted, Byrd stood fast. He took his argument to the United States Supreme Court where the justices ruled in his favor. The line-item veto was ruled unconstitutional.

**MMI-002-20:09:25:29 to 20:10:51:24 (1:26)**

**“There are some members who just want to turn the power over to the executive branch. And all too often here, we have half of the members, I use the word half a little loosely, it may be a little over half or a little under half, but half of the members of the legislature will want to turn over this power to their, quote, their, close quote, their President – the president of their party. If it’s a Democrat that’s in power, then many members of the legislature are willing to turn over this power to the president of**

**their party. And if the Republicans are in power, they're great at doing that. They want to turn over everything to the President. They'll follow him right off a cliff. You'll only find one or two who'll stand against him. Now that's wrong! No person ought to be reelected if he's going to put the Chief Executive first. No person ought to be reelected to the legislative branch if he's going to put the Chief Executive ahead of the Constitution.**

**20:11:17:00 to 20:11:27:25 (:10)**

**And all too many people come to the Senate anymore and they put, they look up to the President as though he were king and we have no king in this country.”**

**MMI-002-04:04:46:12 – 04:05:42:09**

**Daschle**

**The line item veto was quite a historic and constitutional issue that I think historians will write about for a long period of time. I think that you would think somebody as fiscally conservative and responsible as Senator Byrd would naturally be inclined to be supportive of the line item veto. But he felt that it was an abrogation of the role of Congress to allow a president to take away some of the powers of the Congress as that president would make decisions with regard to spending. So he fought it all the way to the Supreme Court and won. It's a remarkable demonstration, I think, of tenacity, of a steward of good government and of the Constitution, but also of just the nature of Senator Byrd himself.**

Byrd has been fierce in his efforts to stem the erosion of legislative power to the executive branch. Following the events of 9/11, the administration of President George W. Bush lobbied Congress for the power to declare war – a power that is constitutionally vested in Congress. Byrd protested the grasp for power and the timing of the vote, just weeks before the 2002 election.

**MMI-002 (21:30:32:08 to 21:32:13:08)  
(1:41) Members of Congress were told that they needed a good vote, a big vote in order to impress the UN. And members of Congress were told that Saddam Hussein was a direct and immediate threat to the security of this country. That wasn't so. I knew it wasn't so. And said it wasn't so. But a lot of the members of the Senate were persuaded that it was so. And they were intimidated. They were afraid, politically, to take a strong stand against the President because he was so powerful in the polls. And a lot of the members, good many members of the House and the Senate I am constrained to believe, voted as they did because they were afraid of uh, being called unpatriotic if they didn't vote to support the President on that resolution, the resolution to giving the president the power to determine when and where and how to use the military forces in invading Iraq. I think, uh, many of our member were intimidated. I think they were afraid they'd be called unpatriotic.**

While his opposition to the war in Iraq led some to question his patriotism, his passionate speeches on the Senate floor resonated with a growing audience. His office logged 20-thousand phone calls and more than 50-thousand emails in the days following this address.

**(Clip from Senate Floor speech, Feb. 12, 2003 “To contemplate war is to think about the most horrible of human experience. On this February day, as this nation stands at the brink of battle, every American on some level must be contemplating the horrors of war. Yet, this Chamber is, for the most part, – ominously, ominously, dreadfully silent. Ah you can hear pin drop. Listen. You can hear a pin drop. There is no debate, no discussion, no attempt to lay out for the nation the pros and cons of this particular war. There is nothing. Nothing. We stand passively mute in the United States Senate today, paralyzed by our own uncertainty, seemingly stunned by the sheer turmoil of events. Only on the editorial pages of some of our newspapers is there much substantive discussion concerning the prudence or the imprudence of engaging in this particular war. And this is no small conflagration we contemplate. This is no simple attempt to defang a villain. No. This coming battle, if it materializes, represents a turning point in U.S. foreign policy and possibly a turning point in the recent history of the world.”**

**MMI-002 – 01:21:34:06 to 01:22:50:27  
Dellinger (1:16)**

**“He came to that opposition at a time when public support for going to war was overwhelming. It was well over 70%. Um, and, uh, support in both houses of Congress was overwhelming in votes to support the President’s decision. People thought the case had been made that this was a war we had to engage in. Senator Byrd was deeply offended by the failure of his colleagues and the Congress to exercise their own independent judgment about whether or not to go to war. He thought the Constitution made it clear that a decision to go to war was not to be entrusted to one man alone, but that the more directly representatives of the people had to make that decision or concur in that decision. Um, and he really spoke with great force and eloquence. And he was virtually alone. Uh, a role which did not intimidate him, indeed, a role which I think he relished, speaking truth to power. Uh, and his, the eloquence of his arguments against the war and against the constitutionality of giving the president a complete blank check were really quite, quite powerful.**

**Byrd: Not only does this President have that power, but his successor will have that power. Whether his successor is Republican or Democrats that successor will have that same power. And it will continue to his successor or her successor until such time as Congress terminates it.**

**Now what's happened to the good sense, just plain common sense of legislators when they are unwilling to control the shifting of that**

**constitutional power to a president of any party.**

**Byrd: I offered an amendment while that bill was before the Senate. And my amendment said, “Well if we’re going to be foolish enough to shift this power to one man, let’s at least put a termination date on it. Let’s at least say, well, within one year or at most 2 years. Not as easily written as that language. It had a clause in it, my amendment provided a clause that there would be a termination limit. There would be a sunset. And don’t you know how many senators voted for my amendment? 31 including my own vote. 31! Now I cannot understand why senators vote against putting in a sunset at least.**

**The Constitution of the United States has been undermined, undercut and it is under attack. It is the American people’s, your liberties...the American people’s liberties, your liberties that are in jeopardy. And that is why I wrote “Losing America.” I wrote this book you see, “Losing America.” to protect this book, the Constitution of the United States.**

For all his battles against the executive branch, at one point in his career, it appeared as if Byrd would trade his Senate office for the Oval Office. The year was 1976.

*Clip from State Archives, VHS tape 7, near the very end of the tape (no t.c.):*

**BYRD: “I’m continuing to pursue the nomination for the presidency. I hope to be on the national ticket. I realize it**

**is a long shot, but it is probably a long shot for most any other aspirant.**

**BYRD: MMI-002 – 20:24:05:09  
–20:24:45:00 (:40)**

**As President, you're one man, one man and you can get some things done. You can do some things that you can't do in any other position. So, I went around the country. I received the necessary contributions in 20 states to entitle myself to Federal monies. So I qualified for Federal contributions, but I did not accept Federal contributions. //**

**As I said it at the beginning, and I as I've maintained all the way through. It's a long shot for me and I have never indicated anything other than that. That it was a long way and a difficult one. And in view of that fact that I do have responsibilities as Assistant Majority Leader, which has to come first, that my chances are rather far fetched.**

**20:25:41:06 to 20:26:45:41 (1:04)**

**Running for president would've required me to go out and run the country more than what I wanted to do. I was the whip, the Democratic whip. I knew that my colleagues expected me to do the job they had elected me for and so I didn't want to leave the Senate and be absent a lot and go around the country campaigning and, therefore, not fulfill my responsibilities to the Senate. And...I knew that to run for president I'd have to give my whole self to it and go out and really put myself into full time. Whereas, here was a majority leadership right here and all I needed to do was wait until a new congress met in Jan. and I'd be Majority**

**Leader. The other was something perhaps beyond my grasp. At least it would've required a lot more of my time and effort. I'm not at all sorry.**

Instead of pursuing the presidency, Byrd stepped onto the national stage as Senate Majority Leader...and into the entertainment spotlights.

**Hee Haw: And now here with the whole Hee Haw gang our guest Roy Acuff and Ramona Jones, our very special guest from West Virginia, Senator Robert C. Byrd and Will the Circle Be Unbroken.**

**Song: Will the Circle Be Unbroken by and by Lord by and by.**

Joining him on the show was his wife, Erma. At his side, as she has been innumerable times and in countless places.

**music**

**I went back home Lord. I was lonely for my mother she was gone.**

Byrd's early interest in the fiddle is how he first met Erma. Her father was one of those who taught Byrd how to play. Their courtship has some treasured stories.

Byrd: Julius would come to school and each day he would bring some candy and chewing gum in his pockets. And I'd meet him. I was the first to meet him right at the school house door so he'd give me some of that candy and chewing gum. Well, I didn't eat the candy and I didn't chew the chewing gum. But when I'd meet Erma in the hall when the classes changed. I'd give you some candy and chewing gum that Julius had

given men. So I often tell people that when I'm speaking to high school groups and say that's how you court your girl with another boy's bubble gum.

**Possible MM1BYRD**

**17:11:24 to 17:12:45 (1:21)**

**She has been a real asset to me in my political career. She has been solid. She's there. She's understanding. She's just a very quiet, yet strong personality. And she's a coal miner's daughter. That means a lot. She was a coal miner's daughter when I married her. I grew up in a coal miner's home. So, we never had much. We grew up during the Depression. But we didn't miss anything because we never had anything. We never had any refrigerator. Of course, we married soon after sliced bread. Mechanically sliced bread came along in 1930. Orange juice, frozen orange juice first came along in 1947. Our first refrigerator was half of an orange crate nailed up outside the window.**

The Byrds have led a relatively quiet family life, shunning the trappings of the Washington social and political circuits. Rather surprisingly, this man who wields such power over the nation's purse strings, carries a brownbag lunch to work – usually a bologne sandwich...and turns the family pocketbook over to his wife.

**MMI-002- 17:14:18:27 to 17:15:50:28 (1:32)**

**On the day after we married in 1937, Erma and I went walking down the**

**railroad tracks in this coal camp. It was the only place we had to go. We had the Virginian Railroad on the one side of the creek and the C&O on the other. There's always a creek, a creek that ran through those coal mining communities and a road beside the creek. So, the next day after we'd married, was a Sunday and we walked down the railroad track and I had saved up three or four hundred dollars and I had it in a wad. And as we went down the railroad track that Sunday, I took out the wad and handed it to Erma. I said here's my pocketbook. I've saved up, I believe, 400 dollars. You keep the pocketbook. When I need a few dollars, I'll come to you and ask for it. And that's the way it's been now for 66 years. She keeps the pocket book. If I want to borrow money, if I need some money for a haircut, I go to Erma and she'll give me money for a haircut. If I want a few dollars to spend, I'll go to Erma and she'll give me the money to spend. I've never carried the wallet since we married in 66 years. And I think it's a good thing because she's saved me money.**

Byrd has not forgotten that a lack of money is what stood in the way of his college education. To remedy that for future generations, in 1985 he created the only merit-based scholarship program funded through the U.S. Department of Education. Congress later named it the Robert C. Byrd National Honors Scholarship. Initially it was a one year, 1500 dollar award to college bound students who demonstrated outstanding academic achievement. It has since expanded so that students who receive the first year

scholarship can apply for stipends of up to 6-thousand dollars for the following three years.

Byrd has been a champion of education and life-long learning throughout his many decades of service. When the Senate's in recess, he reads of Cicero...and Cato and the works of Shakespeare. He rarely watches television and frequently counsels young people to watch less and read more.

But it was Byrd who authored the resolution that finally opened the cloistered chambers of the Senate to the purview of television cameras – in 1986, seven years after the House began broadcastings its proceedings. He saw it as an opportunity to improve the standing of the Senate – and as fulfillment of the people's right to know and understand the inner workings of Congress. One more landmark Byrd has chiseled in the history of the Senate.

Byrd also has etched his name into the history books by casting more than 17-thousand roll call votes. Thousands more than any senator in our nation's history.

Kennedy: Bob Byrd personifies what our Founding Fathers were thinking about when they were think about a United States Senate. He brings the kind of qualities that the Founding Fathers believed were so important for service for the state and service for the nation.

Graham soundbite: MMI002-4  
04:23:53 - 04:25:00

**“I once was giving a tour of the capital to some students and over in the reception room we had some paintings of famous Senators. Five of them who were selected by members of the**

Senate when the room was being redecorated. And they're painted in little cameos. And I was asked by one of the students which cameo I thought was most important. And so I looked around and I pointed and said, "Those that are blank. The ones that have yet to be filled in." They're the most important because they show there's still history to be written and they show that there's still room for great men and women. I believe that Robert C. Byrd's portrait will be in one of those empty cameos someday. I don't have any doubt about it.

Clinton soundbite: MMI002-1

05:12:07:24 – 05:12:50:12

"Senator Byrd is one of the most personally gracious, collegial, warm human beings I have met and certainly one of the very best colleagues any of us can have in the Senate. He has an ingrained sense of decency and civility, but a spine of steel. He is not afraid to stand up to anybody, anywhere, anytime. I know that from my previous life as well as my service in the Senate. So he commands the respect and the admiration of us all and certainly the affection of most us.

Senator Rockefeller:

Public life is very, very tough. It's very, very tough. People underestimate it usually. They have no idea how hard Senator Byrd works. And he loves his work and he has just given himself wholeheartedly, other than to his wife Erma, to West Virginia. That is his legacy. For longer than any other person ever in our history he has resolutely, properly, with dignity, clarity and his moral

compass always right out in front of him, led West Virginia into the future.

### Music

It was battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time on the old violin, so he held it up with a smile. "What have I bid, good folks," said he. "Who'll start the bidding for me? A dollar, a dollar, then two on the two, two dollars, who'll make it three? Three dollars once, three dollars twice, going for three." But no. From the room far back the gray haired man came forward and picked up the bow. And wiping the dust from the old violin and tightening up the loose strings, he played a melody soft and sweet as a heavenly angel sings. The music ceased and the auctioneer in a voice soft and low said, "now what am I bid for the old violin," and he held it up with the bow. "A thousand dollars, then two, only two. Two thousand, three, who'll make it three. Three thousand once, three thousand twice, going for three," said he. The people cheered, but some of them said, "We don't understand what changed its worth." Quick came the reply, "the touch of a master's hand."