SPECIAL INTERVIEW

DATE: December 15, 1986

INTERVIEWEE: EDWARD CLARK

INTERVIEWER: Robert Dallek

PLACE: Mr. Clark's office, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

D: First off, do you remember your first meeting with Lyndon Johnson? I know we're talking about fifty years ago or longer.

C: I first met him when he was an active secretary; I met him in Washington. He was Congressman Dick Kleberg's secretary, and he organized all the secretaries up there and got elected president of it and was making a big to-do of that.

D: The Little Congress.

C: It didn't amount to anything, but that was the first place I ever met him, in Dick Kleberg of the King Ranch office. He was secretary there. Senator Alvin Wirtz, who lived here in Austin, had gotten him the job with Dick Kleberg.

D: Do you remember much about his early relationship to Alvin Wirtz?

C: Yes, it was always very close. No one, no one was any closer to Johnson than Senator Wirtz. He was a fine lawyer and had been a politician. But he had a great deal of influence with . . . And he was very mature, dignified. Mr. Johnson didn't impose on him or treat him like a hired hand. He never did me, either. I wouldn't take that. Most of them, you

know, he was just hell on them, just terrible, and then he was real sweet to them and gave them everything in the world but the--

D: You mean the way he treated his employees, the people who worked for him?

C: Yes, and then other people that were less important. Little people he just--he was going for big fish. He treated Mr. Herman Brown and Mr. George Brown with respect, great consideration, and didn't argue. It would be a hell of a note [if he had]. But he tried to move fast and make friends just a hundred per cent.

But, really, the first occasion where Johnson became close to him [Brown] as a friend and saw him, talked to him from time to time was [when] he was here with a job as [state director of the] National Youth Administration, just a little bureaucratic job, nothing. It was just one of those programs that they had going. He had left the Congressman's office, resigned and came back to Texas to head up the National Youth Administration. He got into that up there in Washington; he promoted himself into that NYA deal.

He was down here and Congressman [James P.] Buchanan who had been the congressman of this district for twenty or thirty years--he was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, had that much seniority--died. And the leading candidate, the man that everybody said [would win and] most of the politicians were supporting was a man named [C. N.] Avery here in Austin. He had been the man that everybody saw. If they had a problem with the Congressman, you saw Mr. Avery. He was his [Buchanan's] manager. He could take care of it.

I was up in the Capitol as secretary of state and James V. Allred was governor. He was the only liberal governor that we've had here in this state. The next one for being

liberal, the number-two man to him in the past sixty years, would be the man that just got defeated, Mark White.

He [Allred] noticed that there were about twelve people running for the vacancy in Congress and he took note of the fact that all of them were anti-[Franklin Delano] Roosevelt. All of them were pounding hell out of Roosevelt and charging him with packing the Supreme Court. He told me--I don't know how he knew--that he knew I knew Lyndon Johnson, had seen him, and we'd talked about his ambitions, and he was very active, and in addition to his NYA thing, he was obviously interested in running for public office. He said, "Well, is he was for Roosevelt?" I said, "Yes, he sure is. He's for Roosevelt; he's supporting him across the board. All the rest of them are not." So he said, "Get him up here. I want to see him and talk to him and see if I can't help him."

So I got in touch with him and he came up there and so I remember Governor Allred told him that he was going to help him. He said, "I'll contact all the appointees that I have in this district and I'll urge them to support you for Congress." He said, "Where did you get that little jelly bean hat?" Johnson said, "I got it in Washington." He said, "Well, that's not a hat to run for office in." He said, "What size hat do you wear?" I think he said 7 and 1/8. He said, "Oh, hell, goddamn, there goes another hat from me." He got his hat, tried it on; it was a fine, hundred-dollar hat, not a big hat but a Texas style that's called Open Road, trade name of a hat made by Stetson. And he said, "This is a hat that I got for you to wear running for office in Texas. And you can tell anybody if they're a friend that I'm supporting you and I gave you a damn hat to run in." So he made a big deal of throwing his hat out and then telling them that Governor Jimmie Allred gave him that hat.

(Laughter) But he once got a plurality.

D: You helped him in the campaign by raising funds for the campaign?

C: Yes, I sure did. And the biggest check I saw came from Mrs. Johnson personally.

D: For ten thousand dollars?

C: It was ten thousand dollars and then her father gave twenty-five thousand. That was damn near half of the money that we raised. It wasn't big money.

D: In other words, she gave ten thousand and her father gave twenty-five thousand?

C: Yes, sir, you got it damn right.

D: Now, that's interesting. I had never heard that before.

C: Well, I'm telling you.

D: Damn right, that's good. I'm happy to hear that because--twenty-five thousand dollars he gave? And you think that campaign cost, what--about fifty thousand dollars?

C: Seventy-five to a hundred thousand.

D: Seventy-five to a hundred thousand.

C: My best estimate. There wasn't anything to spend much money for, wasn't any television, and they weren't hiring any of these damn poll takers that they just spend a lot of money on and don't change a god-damn thing, don't get any votes, just hangers-on. Two guys here in the [race for] governor, one spent thirteen million dollars and reported it and the other one, ten and one-half million, that's--this PAC [political action committee?], in my book, by God, is legalized bribery. Legalized bribery. I clipped this out of the paper; Stanley Marcus, a very good friend of mine, of Neiman-Marcus, said only the public can end the PAC game. And he says the amount of money, the corruption that money leads to will

destroy this nation. I agree. It's the worst problem, worse than--

D: Do you have any idea how much the other candidates spent in that campaign, because I've read that Polk Shelton spent between forty and fifty thousand dollars in that campaign?

C: I don't think Polk Shelton--and I knew him real well, he was a friend of mine, a criminal lawyer--I would not think he spent over twenty thousand dollars. And I would say Mr. Avery, he just had it going away, just thought he had it won, but I imagine he spent thirty-five, forty thousand dollars, maybe fifty.

D: Maybe fifty.

C: But a fellow named Merton Harris, M-E-R-T-O-N, he hung a nickname on him of Mutton, M-U-T-T-O-N. That kind of killed him off. (Laughter) From Smithville, he was a prominent district attorney down there.

D: If the Johnson campaign had seventy-five to a hundred thousand dollars and we didn't have television and the kind of hoopla that we go through today, how did they spend that money? It was done on what, barbecues?

C: Oh, I don't know the details of it, but they got ads in the paper, hiring people to write letters, and travel expenses for Johnson and some of his workers. I'd say, probably of all the money that was spent, more was on newspapers than any other way, and getting some placards and posters to put up. I think they had some signboards, I really don't remember that.

D: Would you say that that was an extraordinary amount of money at that time for such a campaign?

C: That was big money.

D: Big money. And the others you think at most spent maybe forty or fifty thousand dollars, not nearly as much as him.

C: The reporting didn't amount to anything, if you look at the reports, they didn't report anything.

D: Oh, I know, Mr. Clark, I've read the report over in the Johnson Library, you know the report? They showed they spent about twenty- five hundred dollars in the campaign. (Laughter) I looked at that and I laughed. Because I know that's nonsense.

Do you know anything about the connection to Elliott Roosevelt in that campaign, that there was some allegation--

C: He was a friend of Governor Allred. He didn't know how to do anything; he couldn't do anything. He was talked to and he knew that Johnson was the only one that wasn't lambasting his father. He made a trip down; he'd visit with the Governor. Governor Allred appointed him on some damn board, I've forgotten what it was, some school board, A&M or something, I've forgotten. [Board of Regents, Texas A&M University]

D: Polk Shelton has an oral history memoir over at the [LBJ] Library, and Polk Shelton says that one night some fellow came in to see him in a hotel, a fellow he had never seen before and has never seen since, and this fellow said to him, "If you give me five thousand dollars, I'll get Elliott Roosevelt to endorse you in this campaign." And Polk Shelton in this interview says, "I didn't have the money, and I wouldn't give it to him anyway because I was against Roosevelt's Court packing." So the interviewer asked Polk Shelton, "Did they approach anybody else in that campaign?" And Polk Shelton says, "Yes, I heard a rumor they approached somebody else." And he wouldn't say who. Now, does that suggest that

the Johnson campaign may have given Elliott Roosevelt the five thousand dollars?

C: Oh no, no, hell, no.

D: No way?

C: No. The Johnson campaign knew that Elliott Roosevelt's endorsement wouldn't have been worth three votes, because he was a jerk. He is now. I think he's still alive.

D: He is. So it wasn't worth the money to bother with him?

C: No, it wasn't, no. The Johnson campaign wouldn't have given him five dollars.

(Laughter)

D: Well, that's interesting. Okay, that's important to know.

C: And I'm sure no one else gave him--

D: Well, Polk Shelton certainly didn't give him anything.

You were helping to get money for the Johnson campaign, though.

C: I sure was.

D: And how did you do it? Who did you go to? Was it significant businessmen?

C: Local people here that were Democrats, mostly friends and appointees of Governor Allred. I was Allred's number-one man and they knew it. And they knew if the Governor says he'd like for you to make a contribution, they knew that had become a must; that was a command from the Governor.

D: And they would make small donations?

C: Yes.

D: Were there any big--?

C: And then some business people. The Browns were not supporting [Johnson]. Herman

Brown was supporting Mr. Avery; he wasn't supporting Johnson in that campaign. He was a great friend of mine. One of the few pictures I've got--my brother-in-law's up there [and] Herman Brown. Best friend and benefactor I ever had in my life. I'd known him since 1923 and after the race I introduced him to Johnson and worked on cultivating that friendship and they became great friends, Herman did, of [Lyndon Johnson].

D: Then they, of course, got into this business of building the dams--

C: Yes. Yes, sir.

D: --and that's where the relationship bloomed, didn't it? Can you tell me much about that? I mean those were millions and millions of dollars that were coming in to that Brown and Root. That was really the--

C: The number-one man in that deal was Alvin Wirtz; everybody else was just farting around. That was his deal, the LCRA [Lower Colorado River Authority]. He was the LCRA, Alvin Wirtz.

D: He greased the skids and set that thing going; he was central to that. And then from then on the Browns were principal contributors to Johnson's campaigns.

C: Oh, yes. Anything he wanted. They were good people, good friends.

D: Yes. In 1940 there was a bitter fight here in Texas over Roosevelt's third term, and of course Johnson was strong for Roosevelt, and Johnson, of course, ran a big congressional--

C: Hell, I was chairman of the goddamn third term for Roosevelt! I had more hell than I ever had in my life, political people, good friends of mine jumping me about being against Mr. [John Nance] Garner. I said, "Well, I'm not against that old gentleman; he's not running. He's already fallen out with the President and he's opposed to it. He's not in the race."

Tom Miller and I, we went all over the state making speeches for Roosevelt for a third term and saying, why, hell, the damn people got a right if they want to elect somebody for two [three] terms and break the tradition if you think you got a good man.

D: And in that year, as I understand it, Lyndon Johnson ran a congressional campaign fund for Roosevelt, for the White House, that he collected money and distributed it to a lot of congressmen around the country to help them win their seats back. Where was he getting that money? Who were the principal donors to that?

C: Just anybody he was friendly with. He could raise money from business interests and just people, supporters. Most of it, Houston money.

D: Houston money. Sid Richardson?

C: Yes, he was--

D: And the Browns?

C: Yes. Clint Murchison. (Laughter)

D: Clint Murchison. As they say, politics make strange bedfellows, right? That was 1940.

Then we get over to 1941 and Lyndon Johnson, of course, runs for the Senate the first time and loses to Pappy [W. Lee] O'Daniel. Of course, that was a campaign, as I understand it, in which Pappy O'Daniel gets the ballot boxes stuffed at the last minute and takes that victory away.

C: No, he won that race. There wasn't anything. He didn't have--Hayfield [?] didn't have the slightest conception about changing the results of an election. There wasn't anything to it. They didn't try to steal a vote, Pappy didn't, he just flat-ass won by fifteen hundred, two thousand votes, something like that. And just won. He had never paid a poll tax, never

voted in his life, didn't know anything about government, just a--

D: A real demagogue.

C: Yes. And didn't know enough about it. He'd just say [when asked], "You got a platform?" "Yes, the Ten Commandments, that's my platform, that's what I'm running for governor on."

D: And then he won the Senate seat with that kind of program, too. That campaign in 1941, of course, generated a tax case against Brown and Root, remember, in which the government, the IRS, was saying that Brown and Root owed them a million and a half dollars which, in those days I guess, was real money. And in January 1944, as I understand it, Lyndon Johnson and Alvin Wirtz went to see FDR, and Roosevelt agreed to put that tax case, if not aside, he dropped it down to a penalty of about three hundred thousand dollars and they closed it off. Now, as I understand things, Johnson and Wirtz convinced FDR that the tax case was inspired by anti-New Dealers in Texas, that they were--

(Interruption)

C: He would hug up an enemy that didn't speak to him, shake hands, walk across the street. And a lot of them he won back were very much against him and hated Roosevelt. And he'd laugh, he'd talk to me about somebody and say, "Oh, he used to be very mad and said real bad things about me, just terrible. And I just kept working on him and I'd make him speak to me. I'd just go up there and put my arm around him and tell him, 'Now you're a good man and I want to be friends.'" And he said, "I got him straightened out and he's a loyal friend of mine now. We're working together."

D: And yet these people in his office who worked for him like Bill Deason or some of those

others--

C: Bill Deason was quiet, and Johnson was very fond of him. He treated him better than he did most of them.

D: L. E. Jones?

C: He'd give [John] Connally hell, just blast him, cuss him out. And Warren Woodward, he'd do the same thing; he'd get after him. He'd get awful mad, but he'd get over it and then he'd just be more generous and just do more for his people that he'd been hammering at and cussing and blaming everything on, accusing them of not doing a good job.

The best thing he ever did for himself was marrying Lady Bird. He married up. The Johnsons were lower middle class, damn low middle class; the Taylors, upper, upper middle class. Captain Thomas Jefferson Taylor, Lady Bird's father, he was somebody, and they were way above the Johnsons financially and socially and every other way. She knew about his weaknesses and misbehavior sometimes, but when she made a decision on something, she could bring him around, she could bring him around. He had to have respect for her, just had to. He saw her way of doing things and the way she treated people was first class. She understood business, much better business person than Mr. Johnson, President Johnson.

See, he was highly emotional. He'd get mad and he'd get some thing and he would kind of want to run a business deal on a political basis. Well, that won't work. The Johnson estate, the Johnson money, has done much better since Mr. Johnson passed to his reward, and Mrs. Johnson, with the television and radio business, she can make better decisions.

D: Great successes, yes. What about the radio station which they acquired in 1943?

C: Ever goddamn penny--I was right involved in it--came from Mrs. Johnson. That was Taylor money. Shit, yes. Johnson took a lot of interest in it and I don't know whether he helped or hurt with the things he was doing, but he tried to be helpful to it. But the people that ran it, worked for it, they liked to discuss their problems and get their orders from Mrs. Johnson more so than from Johnson.

D: Was there, do you think, any political dimension to their acquisition of that station? The reason I mention that is because I've been reading the James Rowe [papers]. Remember Jimmy Rowe, James Rowe? Well, his papers are up now in the Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park. And up there you find a bunch of memos in which they're talking about how unhappy they are that conservative newspaper publishers are taking over radio stations around the country and they were concerned to see some good New Deal folks take over radio stations. In fact, I have a memo from John Connally to Mrs. Johnson from the Johnson Library in which he says that the choice was between that radio station going into the hands of some very conservative interests or going to the Johnsons. Now, do you think there was any--?

C: Oh, it wasn't that, wasn't that, that's afterthought, that's bullshit. The thing was generally that the people that had had it had a lot of money, but didn't know a thing about running it. We knew about it and were talking to the Johnsons about it and somehow President Johnson got awful interested in it and bought it for nothing, twenty or thirty thousand dollars or something like that, no money at all. And Mrs. Johnson took [it] out of her funds. Her father was a rich man. He owned ten thousand acres of the best cotton land when cotton was king, in East Texas. Hellfire!

D: So he could readily afford to put that twenty-five thousand dollars in Johnson's 1937 campaign, I guess.

C: Oh, hell, yes. Mrs. Johnson referred to him and said, "If you need any more I can get it from Daddy.

D: A very successful man.

C: That's exactly what she said to him, "Now, if you need any more money here for this campaign, I can get it from Daddy. Just let me know."

D: Would you say that Lyndon Johnson was a pretty good New Dealer? I mean he had a strong reputation with these people up in Washington like James Rowe and Tommy Corcoran.

C: Yes, he was a populist, an out and out populist. Maybe I'm part of that, too. See, I've been a professional Democrat on the state things, but of course I voted for Roosevelt four times and then I voted for Kennedy. I wouldn't have voted for Kennedy except Johnson was on as vice president.

And I'll tell you something right there that might be of interest to you. When that damn campaign came up I was out there, [at the convention]. Tom Miller and I went out together to California. After Johnson's flame went out for president and then they started the movement there to make him vice president, I was unalterably opposed and so was Mayor Miller for him to take [the post] opposite [Kennedy]. "You stay in the Senate, you've got a safe seat there. You're a powerful man." I said, "Hell, vice president ain't nothing." I told him out there, "You know what Mr. Garner said? He said it's worthless as a pitcher of spit." But anyway, he went on and took the vice presidency, and before that I

just said, "Well, hell, I'm leaving." And I got my family, my wife, and we went up to San Francisco. I left the goddamn convention. I said, "I don't want any part of it, this vice president thing."

Then it came down to the assassination. Right up until the last, Johnson had not been invited to join the President when he came to Texas. Hell, no, he had not been invited. So Johnson cooked him up a deal, I talked to him about it. He was going to come to Fort Worth, then to Dallas, then they were going to come to Austin for a night meeting. Well, Johnson as vice president; Bobby Kennedy was after him, you know. So he was going to go down to Mr. [Garner's]. That day that the President was being in Texas, Johnson was going to relieve himself of embarrassment by going and getting out some publicity that he was down celebrating Mr. John Garner's ninety-fifth birthday. Well, about one or two days [before], they heard from the White House. Johnson immediately got in touch with me and said, "Ed, that's a command. I've got to go to Fort Worth and meet the President and then come to Dallas and be here in Texas." So he said, "You've got to step in and I've got this hundred-dollar hat." And he had a lot of other things, five or six presents for Mr. Garner, and he had a speech that he wanted me to read there for him, just go down there and say, "The President ordered the Vice President to go with him in Texas today and I've come down here to represent Senator [Vice President] Johnson who expected to be here and preside at this deal."

Well, I was there at Mr. Garner's house when the word came [about] the assassination. I remember Mr. Garner said, "Well, I never did know anything about that fellow Kennedy, that young fellow, didn't think much of him. We can get along all right

without him. Lyndon will be all right; he's been around. He's had pretty good experience and exposure. He knows what make things tick in Washington. He'll be all right." I remember that day I said, "Well, I hope President Johnson makes a good president. I believe he will. But I promise y'all one thing. He'll attend more funerals than any president of the United States has ever attended." If you'll check the record you'll see he did. Oh, he was hell on going to funerals and politicking and shaking hands with everybody. (Laughter) He loved to go to funerals.

Now, listen, up until that day he told me a hundred times, a hundred I'm sure, and we would talk for hours about it, he said, "Ed, you were right and I was just as wrong. It was the biggest political mistake I ever made to take that vice presidency. Now I know they are not going to put me on the ticket. Bobby's going to see to that. I will not be the nominee for vice president."

D: In 1964.

C: "I want to get back in the Senate. Now, let's work on that. How can that be done?" Well, we talked about different ways, arrangements, but I'm telling you if we talked about it a hundred times [before], after the assassination he never one time ever mentioned to me anything about the vice presidency being a flop for him. He never mentioned it again until he died. He never mentioned it again. He was talking about it, but when he became president, he just reassessed himself and said, "Well, hell, I was throwing eleven; I didn't crap out. I did take care of everything. I couldn't have ever thought about this. This makes up for being out of the Senate."

D: Fascinating. Did he ever talk to you about the 1960 campaign? I've come across some

material in Tommy Corcoran's papers in which Tommy Corcoran says that in 1957, I think it was, that Joe Kennedy asked Tommy Corcoran to help him run Jack for the presidency. And Corcoran said to Kennedy, "No, it's not a good idea. Let's run Lyndon Johnson and Jack as vice president." That is Corcoran who says this. And Corcoran says that Joe Kennedy agreed to this in 1957.

C: I don't know a thing about that.

D: Never heard anything about that?

C: I never heard of that.

D: Well, it's a pretty far-fetched--

C: Yes. As long as he lived, a lot of things that I did know about, when Tommy would tell about [them], that wasn't the way it was. (Laughter)

D: Did Tommy Corcoran have a role in helping arrange the vice presidential nomination for Johnson? He claims that he had a role; he claims that he was central to it, urging Johnson to accept Kennedy's offer of the vice presidential office.

C: Not that I know of. I don't think he had that--I have no recollection of that, but Corcoran and [Benjamin] Cohen and [inaudible] had been influential there in the White House with [Roosevelt]. But after he was out, most of it was pretty thin bullshit. He was promoting around, making some money, getting employment. He would undertake to get anything done. Any damn thing that anybody thought about getting done in Washington, Tommy would damn sure take a fee to help them when if he knew anything, he knew that it wouldn't walk, it wouldn't go.

D: What about Charles Marsh? Did you know him?

C: Intimately. He was a newspaperman here. His son just died a couple of weeks ago here in Austin. He was a brilliant, unusual man, strange, eccentric as he could be, but he was a friend who always had a great deal of influence with President Johnson. He was a fellow that, different places, could raise a good deal of money and he did. I just don't know any individual maybe that raised any more money for President Johnson through his political life than Charles Marsh. He could do it; he had money himself, he made a lot of money and he made Sid Richardson. He was as broke--he didn't have thirty cents and Marsh put together some properties and turned it over to Sid to develop it and he made him a billion and a half.

D: Marsh made--?

C: Yes, Sid Richardson.

D: Fascinating.

C: Yes, sir.

D: Did you ever go out to Longlea, that estate out in Virginia where Lyndon Johnson would visit Marsh? Were you ever out there?

C: Yes, I've been there a number of times.

D: Did you meet this Alice Glass?

C: I knew her before she left Texas when she was working up here in the Capitol. I didn't have to wait till up there; I already knew her. From Marlin, Texas.

D: I didn't realize that. So you knew her before she was even in--?

C: Before she went to Washington. Hell, yes. She was here in Austin. She was a real refined high-class whore. (Laughter)

D: So, is it true about Lyndon and her?

C: I never saw them screwing.

(Laughter)

But she was in that business.

D: Well, there are letters between them after he left the White House, between him and Alice, pretty chummy letters, that are still around, still available.

You, of course, served as his ambassador to Australia during [the Johnson Administration].

C: Yes. And then he appointed me the American executive director of the Inter-American Development [Bank]. I slowed down giving that money away to those bastards in Mexico and Central America. I changed that up, didn't lend any money, not a dime, to crooked politicians down there. I lent it to the government on full faith and credit of the government and tried to see that it went down to the needy people there. But [inaudible] so what I think about the South Americans and the Mexicans. In the banking business we had a hundred million dollars of Texas Commerce Bank in there lent to South American countries. And they said, "Do you think they will pay back?" I said, "Yes, by golly, if the taxpayers lend them the money. They're not going to pay a goddamn dollar unless they get the money from the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund or the American Development Bank. No, they'll pay it back, but it'll come out of the taxpayer's hide." I still think that, too.

D: When you served as ambassador to Australia, that was during the Vietnam War.

C: Yes. I always told the President--he called me up and wanted me to go up to a summit in

the Philippines somewhere and--

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C: --the Philippines somewhere and meet him and so forth. I said, "Mr. President, let me tell you again, you know I've told you I don't know how we got into this war and I don't know how to get out of it. I'm listening and I can advance your views there." I said, "I laugh about some of these damn things that they send me from the State Department."

(Interruption)

He couldn't take a walk on the streets in Washington and he just didn't think he could make a campaign. I thought he could and still--the thing, when you're in a war like that, the people are very supportive, they've come down a long ways; they've come down a long ways.

I've been keeping books on the presidents of the United States for about thirty or forty years. Now, I've had to move some of them around. I moved Johnson up from where I had him, and I have moved Truman up, but I've taken the President [Reagan] down during this year. I've taken him down two notches. I was down there yesterday and somebody asked me something about the Chemical Bank. I said, "I don't know a damn thing about the Chemical Bank except this, I'm always researching, reading everything on the presidents to rate them. I know the Chemical Bank, by God, was founded by Teddy Roosevelt's grandfather. Well, there wasn't a damn person in the room that had ever heard that.

Give me my presidential list. (Asking someone outside the room)

(Interruption)

I've changed nearly everybody on here except the greatest, shit, has got to be, with me,

Washington because he had no precedent; he could have been king or he could have been president. I have kept him always as greatest.

D: That's number one.

C: The two that I put weakest, at the bottom, by God I've kept them there; I put them on there when I rated them the first time. And that was Jimmy Carter. Now you see I've got LBJ up there; I had him at one time down here. I started him [Reagan], when he was president, above average and I moved him up there and then I moved him on up there.

D: But now he's back down. And you know what? He's going to fall further. Before he's done he's going to fall further. You saw the news this morning about this whole business with Colonel [Oliver] North and funneling money into this right-wing group. Did you hear about this?

C: No, I didn't.

D: Oh, my god. This is--

(Interruption)

I don't want to hold you too long. Let me ask you one or two other things. What would you see as the--I mean, you knew Lyndon Johnson all his life and you followed his political career; you were a central figure in this whole thing.

C: I enjoyed it; it was a great experience. I was young, growing up. It was a good thing for me, you know. I just come from a small town down here, over in East Texas, fifteen hundred people.

D: And it opened these doors. What do you think accounts for his success? I mean, he was an extraordinary politician, wasn't he?

C: No. Hard work. He could work and would work eighteen hours a day, just day in and day out. At times when things were going on, when it was election time in Texas, every morning he would be in Washington, at six o'clock the telephone would ring. I'd look at my clock and it was six o'clock. I'd tell my wife, "This is LBJ. Go get me a cup of coffee and bring it in here while I talk to him." And I'd talk to him thirty minutes or an hour. And he was saying, "Well, what do you think needs to be done or who's performing and I ought to be thankful what they're doing?"

But I would say his industry, tenacity, determination. Hell, he just wouldn't quit. He wouldn't take no for an answer. That plus the fact that all people politically minded, it got out early in the game that if you did Johnson a favor, he damn sure would do you one. He was waiting; he would send a cab for you to bring you to where he was so he could do you a favor if you'd done him one. By God, the loyalty, political loyalty, that was what made his success, in my book.

D: But he must have been also a man who was enormously charming.

C: Oh, he could be utterly charming. He could to women and men both. Now, he wasn't a good speaker, you know, out in a crowd, but if you could get him in a group with five or six or ten men or women and let him, he would capture the whole thing and on that basis tell them about his plans and his hopes and his dreams. Oh, man, he could sell it. Well, of course, [he was] best on one-to-one. He'd get right up to a person that he was talking to and he'd get that close to his nose or right up in his face talking to him and have his arms around him and talking and telling him about what he wanted him to do and what he would do.

D: Convince them.

C: He was the best ever on that type of small group or better still, on a one-to-one.

D: Of course, after all, he went up to Washington in 1937 and in nothing flat he's got these ties to Jimmy Rowe and Tommy Corcoran and Harold Ickes and Harry Hopkins and Maury Maverick, which goes back a while. He established all these relationships with these people. I mean, there must have been some kind of extraordinary charm and talent there that was unusual.

C: And he was practical. Take Maury Maverick, he was a big liberal, impractical as hell, finally got his ass beat, lost his seat in Congress. He'd gone national, got too big for San Antonio, Texas.

D: But Johnson paid attention to the district, didn't he?

C: Oh, you better believe he did. And, listen, from the time he went up there he never [failed to]. I have seen him--right after he was elected by a very close vote down here; that was 1948, I believe. He went back up there, he got his staff, he got enough help that he ran his office [well]. He wanted to make good; he wanted to get friendly, and he wanted to write everybody and he wanted every letter answered fully. I never saw anybody with a political office that--but he had three sets of employees in his Senate office, three sets. They worked twenty-four hours a day there. I saw it; I witnessed it and talked to him about it.

D: A John Connally group and a--three sets of employees. Fascinating. Walter Jenkins was one of them?

C: He was a loyal . . . Tragedy.

D: Yes.

C: He was a loyal friend, dependable friend, and Mr. Johnson didn't keep any secrets from

Walter Jenkins. He was the only one ever that worked in his office there that was permitted to forge his name--John Connally, never.

D: Jenkins was the only one.

C: Only one.

D: Interesting.

C: He was the only one.

D: [Who] could sign for him.

C: And Johnson, for him to perform, Johnson was smart enough, he knew he had to tell Walter everything about what his goal was, what his plan was, what he was trying to do, what he was trying to get. He was a hundred per cent loyal and faithful.

D: In the fifties he serves in that Senate seat, and he becomes a great advocate of a civil rights law, civil rights legislation. Was this part of his vision of running at a national level and was it also sensitivity to the problem of civil rights in the country?

C: Oh, yes. Hell, Mr. Roosevelt just talked about it. By God, he [Johnson] went on and passed it with the help of Mr. [Sam] Rayburn. He had a close friend and Mr. Rayburn just loved Johnson.

D: Did they have any kind of falling out because of the 1940 campaign? You know--well, as you told me, you were at the center of that--in 1940, Rayburn, of course, had lined up more or less with John Garner. And Johnson, of course, was strictly for the Roosevelt third term.

C: They didn't have any falling out at all.

D: With Rayburn? They were able to--?

C: Any falling out. He just explained to him that Mr. Garner had reached the end of the road, he was coming home. He wasn't going to seriously run for anything. But he just wasn't for a third term, honestly, sincerely wasn't.

D: How did he feel about Truman? I mean, he wasn't nearly as close to Truman as he was to Franklin Roosevelt. Truman was a kind of distant figure for him, wasn't he?

C: Who, for Johnson?

D: For Johnson.

C: Oh, no.

D: Were they close?

C: He seemed to be the first person that knew there was a hell of a lot more to Mr. Truman. And I know he was the first that said, "They laugh at him about being a little broke shoe salesman, but he's got something. He's a self-educated him." Johnson would tell me, "Ed, he knows as much history as any damn professors out there with PhD degrees in history. He knows the history of this country; he knows the history of this government. He's a good man." And he tried to get him down here and did get him down here in Texas when he was a senator and he was bragging on him about his committee that he had up there, the Truman Committee. But Johnson saw that--well, so far as, in my book, he first saw the worth, the strength, the determination, that Truman could do a good job and that he had courage and loyalty. Johnson could understand that he had been the beneficiary of a political boss there, but that political boss had never asked him to do anything crooked.

D: Yes. He was clean in his own right.

C: But now on my list of presidents, man, I had Truman way down here. Twenty years ago I

had him way down here, twenty-five years ago [he] was just average, and now I've got him up to great.

D: Yes. I think historians agree, historians agree. He was a great president.

C: And history will be more kind to him as people, good writers, research what he did. Well, he was such a good man, plain man. By god, he decided that the thing to do was to end this damn war and he dropped the bomb, had it done. He said, "No, I thought I did right. I never have worried about it, never lost a minute's sleep over it. That's behind me and I thought that it would save a lot of lives. It killed a lot of Japs, but overall they would have lost more lives than we killed in order to do the job, end the war."

D: Let me ask you a couple of specific things. One is that Corpus Christi Naval Air Station that Johnson was so instrumental in arranging. I know he had to fight like hell to get that commitment from the federal government to do that, because they were talking about using a Baltimore--

C: He got in there. I remember that he got Mr. Jesse Jones--Johnson got a good relationship with Mr. Jones and you know of course he owned the *Houston Chronicle* and it was as friendly to Johnson. The *Chronicle* was about as friendly as any paper in Texas. Most of them [were], but really the only one--and he got straightened out and had Amon Carter, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, a hundred per cent for him. Always the *Dallas News*, they never really embraced him. They'd compliment him on some little thing, but they were skeptic.

D: Johnson had to deal with the oil interests in the state. They became increasingly important. And he, I know in 1943, got into a lot of trouble with them, because he voted against

boosting up oil prices.

C: (Laughter) Yes, I remember that.

D: And they were after his hide, weren't they, in the 1944 election and the 1946 election? They ran this fellow Hardy Hollers against him in 1946. How did he come around to--because, I mean he managed to accommodate them, didn't he? How did he come around to do that?

C: Just by really acquainting himself with their problems and getting where he could talk to them and be helpful to them. He just kind of accidentally got crossways with them, but he worked out of it and got to where, I'll say the leading oil men and the major companies were quite friendly with him. They didn't try to cause him any trouble, or going out hunting up people to run and to finance against him.

D: Well, this Hollers fellow, this Hardy Hollers who ran against him in 1946, who was behind his campaign? I mean, he ran a pretty tough campaign, didn't he?

C: Yes. He carried one county out of ten. Just one.

D: One.

C: There were [inaudible], which Johnson was aware of, but he didn't take it for granted. He came down here and put on a campaign. But he could have ignored--Hollers was a local lawyer here with no particular connections. He was just a conservative lawyer; he had not held any offices or had not been prominent at all, not well known. But he carried one of the [counties]. I believe he carried Washington County, or maybe it was another county.

I remember the next year there was a fellow named Buck Taylor running against him and Johnson said, "I want to be damn sure and carry all the counties. I want to beat

Buck Taylor." He was a humorous newspaper writer that everybody liked. He had no business in Congress, or no business, period. So Johnson got concerned about Lee County, Giddings, [going] for Buck Taylor and he said, "How do you think we ought to go about it?" I said, "Well, we've got some friends down there. We'll finance a big barbecue and you go down there and have a thousand people because they know there's a barbecue. And have plenty of barbecued meat for them to take home to their wives and children, to give them to take out, to take home: 'Got plenty of beef for everybody to take some home.'" And it was during the time it was hard to get beer, and I said, "[We've] just got to have beer down there. It's scarce, it's hard to get, but, by God, if you can give those people down there all the beer they can drink, you'll get all the votes. They haven't got any principle involved. Buck Taylor doesn't have a platform; he's just messing around, having fun." So he said, "Well, I can get that beer from Anheuser-Busch. Gussie [August] Busch is a good friend of mine." And I said, "Well, now, if you can't get a hundred cases, you just better not get any. We damn sure got to have a hundred cases there." I said, "I can get some beer, some other brands."

(Interruption)

D: And that was against Buck Taylor in Lee County?

C: Yes.

D: That was in 1944, wasn't it? Because the Hardy Hollers campaign--

C: I believe it was. It was after the Hardy Hollers campaign. But Hardy Hollers never had a campaign. He had some money that the Republicans gave him, the conservative oil people, but [he] didn't know how to spend it.

For some reason, with his social program LBJ could make a speech that would bring the blacks and the Mexicans [together]. But he knew how different they were [and] could work them together. They don't work together at all; you can't even have a small meeting and have a black and a--you've got to have your business with your blacks separately and with the Latins separately.

D: He was instrumental in building that first Austin housing project, remember, back in 1938-1939. And that's what they did there, also. They had a black bunch of units and a bunch of Hispanics and then the whites. That was an accomplishment he was proud of, wasn't it?

C: Johnson never had any trouble out of the blacks or the Mexicans. What do they call them now? They got a new name for them?

D: Chicano.

C: Hispanic.

D: Hispanics or Latinos or Chicanos.

What about the Taft-Hartley law? Remember, back in 1946 he voted for that. Do you remember him ever saying anything about that, or remember ever talking to him about some of that legislation in the late forties?

C: Oh, he thought it was a good thing, and the excesses of--he was for labor and thought there was a place, but he was well aware that some of the labor leadership was crooked, corrupt. But he could defend it and it never caused him any trouble. I'll say maybe voting for the Taft-Hartley Act in this district, I think it helped him. He had a majority approval.

D: On that vote?

C: But he knew the Taft-Hartley bill and what it did and didn't do. It didn't put the unions out of business; it just regulated them a little bit.

D: Did he ever talk to you much about his work on the Naval Affairs Committee with Carl Vinson? Did he ever talk to you anything about that?

C: Yes, when he first went on there he talked a lot. Mr. Roosevelt was down here and Governor Allred took LBJ with him to see the President; I don't think he had met him. As a matter of fact, he had been elected, he was going back to Washington and Allred called him over in East Texas at Lady Bird's country, her home and told him to come back to Austin. And he had a picture that came out of there of Allred and President Johnson and President Roosevelt, and Johnson used that picture more than any picture anywhere for years and years. They went to see him and got to talking and in that first meeting, Roosevelt told LBJ that he wanted him to go on the Naval Affairs Committee. He said that was of particular interest to him and he said, "I can get the Speaker"--whoever was speaker, I don't remember--"to appoint you on the committee." And Johnson said, of course, well, he would like to be on the Appropriations Committee.

(Laughter)

C: But the President said, "Well, maybe that will come in time, but this is a starting place. You have to go along and get along up there; seniority counts."

D: Johnson didn't raise anything about being on the Agriculture Committee, did he?

C: I don't think so. He was not really interested in agriculture. Later on, after he got the [LBJ] Ranch up here he got interested in cattle a little bit and so forth but he wasn't--

D: Yes.

C: --real interested in knowing the cattle business at all. He didn't know farming. None of his folks had ever done anything, ranching or farming.

I knew Lyndon's father when he was here in the legislature. I went to his funeral.

D: The father's funeral?

C: Yes. I suggested to Governor Allred, I said, "If you're interested in this young fellow, you ought to go with me up to Johnson City to his father's funeral." So he said, "Well, all right, we'll just do that." So we go up there, didn't give any notice of it, and we went to the church, went in and were walking down. Lyndon was down there with his family and so forth. Man, he got up real quick and came over to see and hug the Governor, you know, and took him down there and seated him right with the family.

See, I knew he was a funeral man; he was big on funerals. And, oh, he could put on a show, and he was ready to talk; he was ready to testify on behalf of the deceased. Yes, just glad to, didn't have to be asked a second time, if he could get a chance to speak on "our recent loss," he would do it. And he'd get worked up and he could work up tears pretty quick. He was a very sentimental sort of person, and a lot of things that would happen or he'd hear of a friend dying, he'd cry, tears just run down his cheeks.

D: What do you make of this stuff that Billie Sol Estes has been putting out?

C: Nothing, absolutely nothing.

D: A lot of crap?

C: Listen, first time that Johnson heard a little something about it, and he said, "Ed, who is this Billie Sol Estes?" So I told all about him, I said, "I wouldn't have anything to do with him," and so forth. He said, "I never have met him." I said, "Mr. [Vice] President, that's not

exactly true. You have met him." "Well, hell," he said. "Where did I meet him?" "Well," I said, "it was when you were inaugurated. The reason that I know it, he just annoyed me at your house there." Johnson had a party for everybody from Texas. I said, "He just annoyed me, wanting to talk to me and I told him I didn't have any damn interest in it and I walked out in the yard and damned if that son of a bitch didn't come out there in the yard. And I told him, 'Now, Estes, I haven't got anything to do with your deals or what you want to do. You just have at it. I'm not interested. My boat's loaded.'" And I said [to Johnson], "I'll tell you this, there at your house"--no, I said, "at your office there at the Capitol." I said I was there and some girl that was kind of [inaudible] that didn't know me came over and insisted that I come over and sign the guest book. Well, I went over there and just about the time I looked behind me, here was Billie Sol Estes and I said, "He signed your notebook. If you'll just check up on it, you'll see his name on your guest book." So he said, "Well, hell, I don't know him." And I said, "I know that you don't know him, but I'll tell you the rest of the story. The fellow that's been messing with him and talking to him is Cliff Carter, that works for you. I have warned Cliff about this fellow, but he's hard to warn. I think that Cliff Carter maybe accepted some money from--

D: Estes.

C: But Johnson has not, never consciously, and after that he never saw him, never had a thing in the world to do with him, because he was red hot.

All that stuff that his daughter put in a book, that's just crap with no basis for it at all. He's just in and out of the penitentiary; by the time he gets out they put him back in for something else. He's, I would say, an out-and-out mental case.

D: Yes. Can't trust a word he says.

Mr. Clark, let me ask you one last question, one last question and we'll go. How would you rate President Johnson as a president? You are interested in this whole question of presidents.

C: Overall, for everything, his program that he passed, I rate him as a great president. I rate him along with Teddy Roosevelt and Truman--

D: And FDR?

C: --Lincoln and Jackson, and Monroe and Jefferson. I rate him as a great president.

D: And where does John Kennedy stand on your list?

C: Well, let me see here now, let me look. I've got John Kennedy average.

D: Average?

C: Yes. I got McKinley, Coolidge and Kennedy as average presidents. He was great in talking, but he didn't do anything, he didn't pass any thing, and he screwed up the Bay of Pigs. Shit, that was terrible.

D: Was there as much bad blood between Bobby Kennedy and LBJ as--?

C: You're damn right, Bobby Kennedy hated him and, by god, I'm sure up till the minute that either one of them died, they hated each other more than they did anybody else in the world. Johnson, until he [RFK] went to the Kennedy grave, he hated Bobby Kennedy for the way he treated him. He was just against him and just--

D: He felt that Bobby was going to push him off the ticket in 1964?

C: Oh, yes, that he'd be able to keep him off and the President would not overrule him, that he--

D: Would control it.

C: But after Kennedy was dead and Johnson was president, he didn't worry about Mr. Kennedy anymore. It wasn't long, you know, before Bobby was assassinated. And when he was assassinated Mr. Johnson didn't shed one tear, but he had to go around telling, "What a great loss."

D: There was just so much tension between them.

Well, Mr. Clark I want to thank you. You've been very kind to give me all this time.

C: Well, I just tried to fill you in. There were some things that I know that I am not in a position to tell you about, just not, but--

D: Well, let me ask you something. Do you have papers, do you have materials that you're going to leave eventually to the Johnson Library?

C: No, I'm leaving all my papers and things to Southwestern University.

D: Oh, yes, in San Marcos. [Georgetown]

C: The oldest university in Texas and I went there undergraduate. I put a lot of stuff over there.

D: So there are a bunch of papers over there already at Southwestern Texas [Southwestern University]. Any relating to these materials with Johnson?

C: All that I've got, most of them are already over there. But I didn't have too much.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Special Interview

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of

EDWARD CLARK

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Leila Wynn of Greenville, Mississippi, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted by Robert Dallek with my late father, Edward Clark of Austin, Texas, on December 15, 1986, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

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Leila Clark Wynn — June 15, 2004
Donor — Date

[signature] — 7-6-04
Archivist of the United States — Date

Gift of Papers or Other Historical Materials

of

ROBERT DALLEK

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms, conditions and restrictions hereinafter set forth, I, **Robert Dallek**, (hereinafter referred to as the Donor), hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America, for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, my papers or other historical materials (hereinafter referred to as the Materials) which are described in Appendix A, attached hereto.

2. Title to the Materials shall pass to the United States of America upon their delivery to the Archivist of the United States or her delegate (hereinafter referred to as the Archivist).

3. Following delivery, the Materials shall be maintained by the United States of America in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, administered by the National Archives and Records Administration in accordance with the pertinent provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and provided that at any time after delivery and subject to the provisions of paragraph 5, the Donor shall be permitted freely to examine any of the Materials during the regular working hours of the depository where they are preserved.

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Robert Caro
Donor

8/4/93
Date

Pursuant to the authority of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, the foregoing gift of papers or other historical materials of the Donor is accepted on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms, conditions and restrictions heretofore set forth.

John W. Carlin
Archivist of the United States

11-11-03
Date

APPENDIX A

(Attached to and forming part of instrument of gift of papers and other historical materials, executed by **Robert Dallek** and accepted by the Archivist of the United States on .)

The papers of Robert Dallek consist of footnotes, released FBI material, oral history transcripts, and tape recordings, used in the preparation of his book, **Lone Star Rising.** 6 inches, 4 cassette tapes.