

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

DATE: 30, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: John Connally

INTERVIEWER: Robert Dallek

PLACE: Governor Connally's office in Houston, Texas

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C: --everything being in writing, and about making memos of everything, and consequently, I have not, during my entire career, reduced to writing a great many things that probably I should have. I have, also, as a matter of practice, not duplicated any government files or papers. A great many people in government service, you know, as navy secretary, they'd duplicate damn near everything that came across their desk, and in the Treasury the same, and I have not done that. Obviously, there are a great many papers from that service and out of the Governor's Office, but not really a third or perhaps even a fifth of what there could have been and perhaps should have been. But I just never did; I never kept diaries in the sense of anything other than just an appointment book. I never dictated memos, I relied almost solely on memory, because while I don't remember any specific incident, but early on in Washington I realized that I was a very young, unsophisticated fellow in a jungle. And I became very wary very early of putting everything in writing.

D: This was as early as 1939? You said in Washington.

C: Yes, 1939. I was twenty-two years old.

D: What was it like working for a congressman, working for Johnson? That staff--

C: Well, you know, in those days it was an exciting time. In the first place it was exciting to have a job. When I got out of law school, jobs were very hard to find, and lawyers were

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going to work for \$125 a month to \$150. I started, as I recall, at about \$175 a month working for Johnson. I was happy to get a job. I had rarely been out of the state of Texas before--as a matter of fact I think I'd only been out one time, and I had never been to Washington before I went to work for him in the fall of 1939. And it was an exciting time.

We worked awfully hard. He was a prodigious worker, just incredible energy--mental and physical. We had a relatively small staff in those days. In those days Congress stayed in session only about five months out of the year, six at the most. They'd be home by June. Most of them had left their families at home, they didn't establish residences in Washington, and the whole atmosphere was entirely different. In those days a lot of our mail was from people who were trying to get hospitalization or veterans benefits out of World War I. So we would talk to people all day long who came in the office, on the telephone, then roughly at five or six o'clock in the evening, we'd start writing the mail. I had taken shorthand and typing my last year in high school and had become quite a good typist, fair on my shorthand, so I'd take notes from him, Walter Jenkins and I would, during the day, as well as Dorothy Nichols and Herbert Henderson. And then we'd work at night when the office was basically closed after six o'clock, and write the letters. I would at times write as many as eighty letters a night myself, typing them, in order to answer all the mail that day. And it was exciting, although I lived in the basement of the Dodge Hotel and for that six weeks during the so-called neutrality session of Congress in 1939 I never toured the Capitol.

D: You were so busy.

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C: And I walked right by it twice a day. I was so busy. But at night when we went home it was too late to do it. When I came to the office in the morning I felt it was too early, I had to get to the office--

D: So you'd be working till midnight, and then get in at seven or eight in the morning?

C: Oh yes, yes sir. We sure did. And that went on for the entire time we were there during that so-called neutrality session of Congress.

D: When you get into 1940, of course one of the fascinating things in that year is that Lyndon Johnson becomes an important figure in the congressional campaigns of that year.

C: Congressional campaigns. Well, they had a fellow named [Victor] "Cap" Harding who was the head of the Congressional Campaign Committee. And Cap was an old hand and, as far as I know, a nice guy, but basically lacking in imagination, lacking in initiative, lacking in the dynamism and drive that Johnson had. And Johnson really tried to circumvent Cap Harding, but obviously it was going to create quite a problem, so we in fact set up a separate, almost an *ad hoc* Congressional Campaign Committee, and we went downtown and took offices in the Munsey Building, and raised our own money.

D: Now, raised your own money, wasn't a lot of that money raised by Sam Rayburn?

C: Rayburn, yes, oh yes. And Johnson was working with a lot of different people. Rayburn helped raise money, yes, he did.

D: And was it money from Texas?

C: Most of it. But it was from New York, it was from California, it was from various places. Different people, Floyd Odlum gave us some money, a man named [Paul or Cornelius?] Shields in New York--an investment banker--gave some money, and a number of

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different people around the country gave money. But most of it, as I recall, came out of Texas.

But you know, we're not talking about money now in terms of what you think of today. I remember, and files will certainly reflect this, we were sending out contributions to these various congressmen. I remember Nan Honeyman from Oregon. We'd send her \$250 and she just thought it was a huge contribution. And we sent money all over the country, into Ohio and other states.

D: [With] a thousand dollars you'd run a campaign.

C: Oh, listen, a thousand--I don't recall that we ever sent anybody a thousand dollars. We'd send a hundred dollars, two hundred, two hundred and fifty--maybe we put as much as a thousand dollars in one campaign, but I don't recall any. It was really donations in the hundreds in those days. And the files should reflect that these various congressmen were saying, "If I had two hundred dollars for some printing," "If I had this," or "If I had a hundred dollars." It was an entirely different type of operation. So we raised a lot of money for those times, and we distributed a lot of money for those times. But in today's world, it would be viewed as minimal, as peanuts.

D: As peanuts, yes. And Johnson rode herd on this whole thing.

C: Oh, yes. We had an office, and rode herd on it, we handled every penny of it ourselves. Did all the communicating, raised the money, handling the bank accounts, writing the checks, distributing the money.

D: Who decided who would get what? I mean, after all, there must have been a hell of a lot of congressmen competing for that money.

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- C: Basically Johnson and Rayburn and it was an *ad hoc* group, as I say. Cap Harding still had his official campaign committee going, but--
- D: And they must have been making judgments as to who they could really help or have an impact on and--
- C: Oh, yes. We spent our time trying to evaluate the various races, which ones had a chance, which ones had a chance to win, would we be justified in putting money into the race. And, obviously, looked at the records of each one of them and whether or not they'd been supportive of the leadership in the House. This was all done with Speaker Rayburn's knowledge and his assistance and his help, and the other leaders in the House as well.
- D: And you, of course, had the gratitude of FDR for that campaign--
- C: Yes, the President was very aware of it. So it was a going operation, although there were only about three or four of us that were involved in it.
- D: What happens in 1941? You get over to 1941 and Johnson decides that he'll run in that--
- C: Well, I had left Washington and come home to practice law in February of 1941. Had opened my office in the Brown Building in Austin, had bought me a small library. And then shortly thereafter, I've forgotten the dates, I'll have to refresh my memory, or you can, in--
- D: May.
- C: April or May, May, I guess, Morris Sheppard died. Johnson immediately came home and started conferring with a lot of his friends, and ultimately decided to get in that Senate race. So I immediately closed my law office and went to work in the Senate campaign in 1941.

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The significant thing of the 1941 campaign, which I think everyone needs to understand, is that Johnson, in my judgment, won that race. We were convinced of it.

The *Dallas Morning News*, ran the Texas Election Bureau, which was an unofficial reporting service for elections, and they did an excellent job of it. On Sunday morning the *Dallas Morning News* conceded the election to Johnson, said that he was approximately 15,000 votes ahead, and that there were only about 15,000 votes outstanding.

D: This was the day after the primary.

C: Yes. The primary was on a Saturday, this was the Sunday morning edition of the *Dallas Morning News*, and they were quoting the Texas Election Bureau. The Texas Election Bureau was an unofficial agency that had correspondents in every county in Texas. So for years, in all the races, they had people as soon as the polls were closed and the results were known that called in the returns to the Texas Election Bureau. And this was where the *Dallas Morning News* got its information.

So we assumed that the race was over and that Johnson had won it. And we firmly were convinced of it. But Sunday afternoon, more reports started coming in, Monday the vote started changing, Monday afternoon, Tuesday, Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday morning, finally Wednesday afternoon, the following week, enough counties reported changes in votes to where [W. Lee] O'Daniel then got ahead by 1311 votes. This was after a meeting Saturday evening in the Driskill Hotel between Coke Stevenson, Pappy O'Daniel, and Jim Ferguson, the former governor. And there was a great brouhaha about it because some of the counties in East Texas where all these vote changes occurred actually voted--as I recall one of them voted 107 per cent of their registered

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voters. And the average across the state was about 17 to 20 per cent of those who were eligible voted. Their answer in those counties was, well, these were the old people who didn't have to register who made up that difference. And I think clearly that election was stolen from Johnson.

D: Yes.

C: No great big deal was made of it. At the time we thought seriously of contesting the election. It was a special election, though, to fill the unexpired term of Morris Sheppard and the winner had to run again in 1942.

D: Right.

C: So we thought by the time you got through a contest, it would be a hollow victory if you won it, because you'd have to turn right around and run again in 1942, probably would never even get seated. You'd have a pyrrhic victory. And then we considered the cost, the energy, everything that would be involved, and so we decided not to contest the election but to go ahead and make up our minds to run again in 1942.

D: Let me ask you a couple of questions about this election now that I've come across things in my research. In those three or four days when that vote is changing, when the erosion is setting in, was there some concerted effort to respond to that?

C: No, there really wasn't. There really was not. What had happened, and I'm at fault for it, about eleven or twelve o'clock on Saturday night I had a call from a number of the counties in South Texas. We had our headquarters in Austin. I had a call from those counties in effect saying, "We've got the votes, we've got the totals, shall we report them?" Well, at that time we thought we'd won the election without any question. I said, "Yes, report them." So they reported their total votes, and obviously the opposition then

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knew precisely how many votes they had to have in order to win. And that's a mistake we didn't make in 1948. We did the reverse. I again had been responsible for telling those counties, "Under-report your returns."

D: In 1948.

C: In 1948. We thought we'd won the election in 1948 by in excess of 250 votes, because we think we knew more about those votes than anybody. We were on top of it, we had people then in 1948 in every county at almost every box, watching those things like a hawk, because we knew it was going to be a very, very close election.

D: In May of 1941 when the campaign had just begun, I found in Harold Ickes' papers, there is a memo from Oscar Chapman. He I guess had been Under Secretary of the Interior before Alvin Wirtz became Under Secretary--no, after.

C: After.

D: After, that's right, because Wirtz came back to Texas to help Johnson with the election.

C: That's right. Oscar Chapman was general counsel, I think, when Wirtz was under secretary.

D: I see. Well, in this memo Chapman says, "I had a call today from Alvin Wirtz, and he was upset because an FBI agent," or a couple of FBI agents, I forget which, but clearly FBI, "had come around and they wanted to interview Johnson." And this is May, at the very start of the campaign. And Chapman says that Wirtz told these FBI fellows that they couldn't see Johnson, he was in the hospital with a bad throat, and that he wasn't available to see them. Wirtz is upset and he wants to know what all this is about. And so [the] next thing you find in Ickes' papers is a memo from the Solicitor General, Francis Biddle, who says that he's looked into the question of what this is about and he attaches a

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memo from the FBI explaining what this is about. Well, that memo's not there. So I'm left with this, and what I can speculate on is that maybe they were doing some inquiries about the campaign financing in 1940, because, of course, there were a bunch of grand juries that were set up in early 1941 to look into campaign financing around the country. On both parties, I mean, from both sides, because there were lots of questions raised about where the Republicans were getting money for that [Wendell] Willkie campaign, and where the Democrats got money--and you know better than I do on that. But the campaign laws on this campaign financing at this time were--well, who could sort it all out? I mean, what I find in the Johnson papers is that he had a hundred and one legal opinions as to what was the appropriate interpretation of the law at the time. But do you know, do you remember that? Was there anything that registered on you about that episode, about the FBI trying to talk to him or what it is they were after?

C: No, I don't. I frankly don't remember. It possibly had some connection with the building of the Marshall Ford Dam or the building of the naval base at Corpus Christi--

D: Corpus Christi.

C: --by Brown, Bellows & Columbia. And perhaps contributions tied into the Johnson campaign in 1941.

D: Well, of course, that material about that whole tax case and Wirtz and Johnson going to FDR, I mean, that stuff is pretty out in the open. In fact, I found--and I'm sure it shouldn't have been there--but in the [Henry] Morgenthau papers up in Hyde Park, New York, is a group of files called Confidential Files, and in there you find all these reports coming from the IRS on the investigation of Brown and Root, and the Brown brothers, and of Bellows, and the money that was being laundered by the corporation to go into the--and

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then of course the interview at the White House with Wirtz and Johnson present, getting FDR to--so, I mean, that is pretty well out in the open. I don't think there's any great--

C: Yes, but other than that, I don't know of anything in connection with the campaign that they were particularly--

D: See, I thought it might have gone back to the 1940 campaign, because this is at the start of the Senate campaign in May, about May 5 or 4 or something like that. Just at the start of the 1941 Senate campaign.

C: Well, I don't know of anything in 1940, though, that created any furor. That was when we were, again, involved in other people's races all over the country but, frankly, I don't remember what it could have been.

D: Well, maybe it'll turn up somewhere, I don't know. But I've not been able to trace anything down about that.

What I'm also interested in is that we get to Pearl Harbor and, of course, both you and President Johnson go into the Navy. And for the first, oh, three or four months of 1942, as I recall, both of you I guess are on the West Coast, you're doing a lot of work for [James] Forrestal's office, and that really is sort of a blank in the record. Now, what you find in the record there are some itineraries where you're traveling and going up to I guess the naval base in Washington--Bremerton, was it?

C: Yes.

D: And going to San Francisco and down to Los Angeles, and trying to find ways to speed production of aircraft and ships.

C: Basically, we were there, we were running from San Diego to Seattle, attached to Forrestal's office with Dr. [Joseph] Barker, who had developed a training program for the

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shipbuilding, basically working with both the navy shipyards and the private shipyards of [Henry] Kaiser and so forth, working with them and setting up training programs to build ships. That was the whole purpose of it.

D: Do you remember, I mean in some detail, how long you were out there?

C: Well, we were out there until Johnson was shipped to Australia to join [Douglas] MacArthur's staff. Generally six months, roughly six months into 1942.

D: And did you live together? You lived at hotels?

C: Oh, yes. Stayed together, traveled together, constantly, all up and down the coast.

Tom Clark was then an Assistant Attorney General on the West Coast stationed in Los Angeles.

D: I didn't know that.

C: We saw him a lot. Ed Weisl came out; we saw him a lot. The publisher of the *Denver Post* was Palmer Hoyt. We saw him, and I think he was also--I've forgotten who was publisher of the *Portland Oregonian*. It seems to me it was owned by the *Denver Post*, but I could be wrong. But anyway, we were up and down that coast, again, that's about all I can tell you.

D: But he must have been struggling also at this point with the question of what to do about 1942, and should he--

C: Oh, yes, he was. Oh, we talked constantly, you know, about--even though we were both in the Navy, we'd gone in as reserve officers. A man named Quigley had recruited both of us in 1940, early 1940. Johnson, as a member of Congress, was made lieutenant commander; I was a young ensign in the Navy.

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D: Yes, how did that happen? I mean, they were recruiting people to become reserve officers on the off chance there'd be a war and they could--

C: Oh, yes. Well, they all thought there would be a war.

D: Yes.

C: And they were actively recruiting us. Quigley came up there and talked to Congressman Johnson a number of times, and talked to me fifteen or twenty times, trying to recruit us both to join the Naval Reserves, which we did. Then right after the 1941 campaign I got called up and went to 90 Church Street in New York for an intelligence school for about six weeks, and then was discharged, and came back to Texas. Then was home about six weeks and then Pearl Harbor hit so I went back in.

D: (Laughter) Oh, it was like a merry-go-round.

C: Oh, it really was. It was a real merry-go-round.

But no, Johnson and I kept up the contacts on the West Coast. We obviously were trying to do our job in this training program and institute training programs in these shipyards, but we were certainly maintaining a relationship with other people as well.

Then when Johnson left, he was undecided about what to do, and he filled out the papers to run for the Senate, and he filled out the papers to run for Congress, and left them with me.

D: I didn't know this.

C: And he said, "You talk to Senator [Alvin] Wirtz. You talk to Lady Bird. You talk to this one and that one, and then you make up your mind which position you want to file me for."

D: Because you were staying in the States, on the West Coast, and he was going off to--

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C: Yes, but I was back in Washington at the time.

D: I see, in Forrestal's office.

C: Yes, in Forrestal's office.

D: And he was going to the South Pacific?

C: And he was going to the South Pacific.

D: I see. And what finally tipped you in your decision, do you remember that?

C: Well, I talked to a great many people. There were a lot of people who--Charlie Marsh, it's a long, long story. Charlie Marsh, who was the publisher of the Austin paper and the Waco paper, [was] very determined that he run for the Senate, wrote the President--I'm sure you've seen that letter that he wrote the President. I didn't think he'd sent it, I thought he was pulling my leg. So I called Missy LeHand and asked her if she had--I said, "I don't want to be presumptuous, but have you gotten any reaction from the President to Charlie Marsh's letter?" was the way I put it. She laughed and she said, "No." She said, "[As a] matter of fact I'm going to show it to him now."

D: This was the letter urging the President to push for Johnson to run for the Senate?

C: Push for Johnson to run for the Senate, and to tell me to, because Marsh knew I had the documents. But the President felt that he shouldn't, actually. That was not the deciding vote, Johnson had indicated to Jimmie Allred that if he [LBJ] didn't run in 1942, he'd support him [Allred]. And Jimmie Allred had resigned from the bench, the federal bench, to run. A number of other people were gearing up to run. I felt, ultimately, after talking to Senator Wirtz and Mrs. Johnson and everybody that--none of us knew how long the war was going to last, at that time we didn't know whether the members of Congress would stay in the service; we assumed they would. That if Johnson stayed in

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the service till the end of the war, even if he was elected he couldn't really function and serve as senator, and neither could he as a House member, for that matter. But to try to run a campaign *in absentia* against strong opponents, even among his own friends, would be a mistake. And to run for reelection would be a relatively easy thing to do.

D: For the House seat.

C: And that was the basis on which I ultimately made the decision and filed him for reelection to the House. Then of course Allred did run, and a number of others ran, against O'Daniel, and O'Daniel was again successful in being reelected.

D: And then Johnson, of course, goes off to Australia. Did he ever talk to you about his meeting with General MacArthur there and that whole experience. I mean, I've read--he has a diary in the Library describing some of it, but it would be wonderful if you--

C: Yes, when he came back--we had no communications during the time he was over there, except I think we got one or two telegrams or telegraphic messages from him, one of which asked what he was running for. He didn't even know.

D: (Laughter) There you are all those thousands of miles away.

C: We got word to him down in Australia or New Guinea, somewhere, that he was running for reelection.

D: For the House.

C: Well, he saw MacArthur, and I think he was impressed with MacArthur, but he was not in awe of MacArthur. He thought that MacArthur had an incredible vanity and ego, which I think he did. But he would, nevertheless, praise MacArthur, and thought that he was supplying a high degree of leadership to the troops of the Pacific. But he never spent a great deal of time with MacArthur.

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- D: When he came back, he was fired up about helping the Pacific front, wasn't he?
- C: Oh, yes, sure. He came back, then Roosevelt--see, so many of them were going in the service, so many congressmen: Warren Magnuson from Washington, Maggie and Johnson, and oh, there were scores of them. Like forty or fifty House members, as I recall, had gone into the service. President Roosevelt, in that fall of 1942, made a policy decision in effect calling on them either to return or resign their seats. Return to their seats in Congress or resign their seats. And so nearly all of them had to come back. And that was, I've forgotten, September, maybe, of 1942.
- D: It's in January of 1943 that the Johnsons buy the radio station, KTBC. And one of the interesting things I find in my research about the whole radio business thing is the extent to which the Roosevelt Administration was very concerned about having too many conservative newspaper publishers buy up radio stations around the country. There was a long memo, memorandum, in the Jimmy Rowe papers, James Rowe papers, up in Hyde Park, that actually [have] just become open, available. And in there he writes a long memo to FDR telling him about their concerns as to these radio stations. Now, what I found is that there was a political dimension, of course, to the acquisition of that KTBC by the Johnsons. And I'll remind you, in particular, of a memo that you sent a copy to Mrs. Johnson and a copy to the Congressman in the summer of 1943. It had to do with Elliott Roosevelt. And Elliott Roosevelt was raising, according to your memo, and if I can quote your words correctly, "a hell of a fuss" about the fact that the Johnsons had gotten the radio station, and he was threatening to go and tell his father, according to your letter to the Johnsons, that the Johnsons were doing something that had injured his, Elliott Roosevelt's, interests. Because I guess he was part of the Texas Broadcasting--

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C: Texas State Network.

D: Texas State Network, at that point.

C: Elliott was putting together the Texas State Network.

D: And you say in your letter/memo to the Johnsons that "I tried to explain to him that this wasn't done in any way to injure him or undermine him, but that in fact what he needed to understand was that either you," meaning the Johnsons, "were going to get that radio station, or it was going to fall to hands of some conservatives. And that it was much more in the interests of the Roosevelt Administration for the Johnsons to have it." Do you remember that whole contretemps?

C: Yes. This wasn't in 1943, though--1942, it must have been.

D: Didn't they get the station in January 1943?

C: It may have been, but I was gone, see, I went to North Africa in 1943. So it wasn't in the summer of 1943. It could have been in early 1943.

D: Well, I may have my dates wrong, but you get to writing your book and I'll bring that memo to you. All these things, I'll be happy to share them with you.

C: Yes. Well, Elliott was living in Fort Worth. And, matter of fact, he was raising money up there, was a great friend of Sid Richardson's, was one of Mr. Johnson's good friends and one of the fellows who had helped us raise money in 1940, for the congressional campaigns of 1940. And the Johnsons, though, bought the--

(Interruption)

Well, the Johnsons bought that radio station from the Wests. And I think what irritated Elliott was that he wanted to buy it. I don't think it was a question of him thinking that the Johnsons were going to be a threat to his Texas State Network, necessarily. Maybe I

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wrote that in the memorandum, but my memory is that Elliott wanted to buy the radio station himself, and the Johnsons bought it before he got his hands on it.

D: So he saw it as a loss for him personally.

C: Yes, he just saw it as a lost opportunity. And he may have assumed that the Johnsons were getting ready to build a network or something to compete with him, but there was no justification for that, because they had no other radio interests at the time.

D: Yes. But there was a political connection to the FCC. I mean that FCC was politicized, there were--

C: Oh yes, no question about that.

D: I mean, being candid, Governor, what you find of course is that President Johnson would say, "Well, I don't go near that FCC because it's"--but, you know, Tommy Corcoran--

C: As I'm sure the files will reflect, for years the Federal Communications operated to be sure that, particularly with respect to the television station, that the interference lines were drawn in such a way that Austin only had one television station for a long, long time, until the FM television became profitable enough to where daring souls could get FM stations. But when they opened the television station after the war, they had all three networks, as you know. And did for many years.

D: Yes, there's got to be some political clout behind the--

C: Well, the Federal Communications Commission would deny there was any politics to it, but nevertheless, he was fortunate in that the FCC--

D: (Laughter) He had some friends.

C: --designed the coverage areas of various frequencies to where Austin just happened to be without competition in the band that was the profitable band of television in those days.

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D: I have a wonderful piece of writing from a memoir from a fellow named Arthur Stehling. You know Arthur Stehling?

C: Oh, sure, I know Arthur Stehling.

D: A fellow down in Fredericksburg. And in this memoir he describes how he was trying to get a radio station, he and a partner of his, and he wrote Congressman Johnson. And the Congressman wrote back and, in essence, said, "Well, you know, I can't do anything over at the FCC about this." And Stehling says, he read between the lines of that letter, he went on up to Washington and got into Congressman Johnson's office, and the Congressman said to him, "Well, Arthur, I guess you read between the lines of my letter." Which Stehling said, "Yeah, I sure did." And Johnson said, "Sit down," and told his secretary, "hold my calls for a few hours." And Stehling said he gave him a description of how to handle the FCC which was brilliant. He said he described every one of the commissioners, how to approach them, how to talk to them, how to deal with them, who to stay away from. And Stehling said, three weeks later he had his license for that radio station. This man was a brilliant politician.

C: Oh, yes, no question about it. No doubt about it.

D: But, *apropos* of Elliott Roosevelt, before I forget, in FBI files, in particular there is something called the Official and Confidential File of J. Edgar Hoover, and in there in 1955 the FBI is making inquiries about Elliott Roosevelt. They are trying to find out whether there has been any IRS investigation, and there is a discussion of having the IRS investigate the Johnsons. And they're talking about their television and radio properties. Now, you know, these memos are often very cryptic, and it's hard as hell to figure out just what's going on. And one speculation that I have, because the Attorney General

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[Herbert] Brownell, is very interested in this, as you can see from these memos. And the one who is squelching on it in fact is J. Edgar Hoover. He doesn't want to see this turned loose. And in fact what they say in one of the memos is, you know, if you get the local IRS folks trying to look into the Johnsons' business practices, they're going to know instantly, because, after all, he's not a senator from Texas for nothing, and he knows what's going on in his home state, in his backyard. And Hoover, in essence, tells them to cut it off.

The only thing I can speculate on here is that Brownell had some tie to Allan Shivers in 1955-1956, and that maybe this was a residue of that bitter fight between Johnson and Rayburn on the one side and Shivers on the other for control of the Texas Delegation to the National Democratic Party Convention which, of course, at which you gave that keynote address putting Johnson's name in nomination. Was there anything-- and why Elliott Roosevelt?

C: In 1955?

D: This is 1955. And I can't sort out why Elliott Roosevelt? What does he have to do with them at this point? They're trying to find out whether he owns an interest in the Johnson radio and television properties, this is what they're asking, and then that's tied to the question of whether they'll do an IRS investigation of the Johnsons.

C: I don't know why. I can't answer that. I don't know why they were looking--Elliott was still operating down here.

D: That late?

C: In 1955?

D: Yes.

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C: Not really. In 1955 I was in Fort Worth with Mr. Richardson and Perry Bass, working for him--had been since 1952. And as I recall, Elliott was gone by then. And I don't know of anything that would have--

D: Triggered.

C: --triggered the FBI relating to Elliott Roosevelt and the Johnson ownership of the radio station.

D: But the Shivers-Brownell connection--

C: Well, that hadn't started. The Shivers-Brownell relationship I think was good, but that didn't really start till 1956. So if you're talking about memos in 1955, there must have been some other reason for it. And I can't at the moment think what it might have been.

D: Well, just staying on this TV-radio business for a minute, in 1946--you mentioned before about KVET. Now one of the things I found in that Tommy Corcoran wiretap in, I guess it was late 1944, maybe it was early 1946, Congressman Johnson calls Corcoran and tells him that he is very concerned about the fact that NBC in New York is talking about putting in a radio station of--I forget the power, but it was going to be a very powerful station in Austin. And he tells Corcoran that he is very concerned that it will present some very tough competition for KTBC, his station, which of course is a CBS affiliate. And he is asking Corcoran if he can help him with the FCC and get that squared away for him. Now, the impression I get, putting things together, is that KVET, for him, is the alternative to having NBC come in and put in a radio station that--I mean, he kept saying, if you're going to have competition I want it to be good competition. And it was--

C: I think he felt that there was going to be competition, and I think he certainly encouraged us to do it. And he said, "There's going to be another radio station and maybe more, and

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y'all ought to do it. I think it's a hell of a good investment." He encouraged us to do it. No question about that. Now, it wasn't--the kilocycle band was 1300 kilocycles. We only got a thousand watts of power at the time, and it was basically a local station. We got no encouragement from NBC or any of the networks to go in for a high-powered frequency. We made a search of the frequencies that would work in Austin, and the 1300 would work. It was a good channel. But we wound up with a Mutual Network, not ABC or NBC. We wound up with Mutual Radio Network.

D: Did Johnson--I mean, he was interested in what you were doing, it was a concern to him. That radio station was important to him financially. Did he have any interest in KVET?

C: No, no financial interest in it.

D: Was there an agreement that you folks would sort of focus on sports, and I'm just pulling something out of the air, and that he would focus on news, or that there would be a--

C: No. There was no agreement or anything like that. We were merely trying to, because we had the Mutual Network, the day we opened the station we came on with the World Series, because Mutual at that time had the World Series. And we kind of gravitated to sports.

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C: But we also emphasized news and, you know like all radio stations then and now, they searched for a niche, somewhere, and at that time KNOW was there. It had been there a long, long time, one of the stations, incidentally, that Charlie Marsh had owned, along with the newspaper. And KTBC was there. We were the third station just entering, so we were trying to carve out a niche of interest for ourselves. But there was no agreement with respect to programming at all.

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D: Okay, well, that's hopeful.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the--what is your time like?

C: I'm going to need to go here in a little bit I think, before twelve, but--

D: Okay, because I don't want to--not that you'll be shy and won't tell me to--

C: No, no. Well, I want to make some calls before twelve, and maybe I can spend a little more time after that.

D: Good. Well, I wanted to ask about 1948 and that campaign. That was a tough, tough campaign. Of course, it turns out to be so controversial and I'm convinced that we'll never learn exactly what the final vote was. I mean, who could possibly tell with all the back and forth that went on.

I want to ask two things about that. One was the financing of that campaign. Now, of course, the campaign law at the time said, well, ten thousand dollars for a primary. But some of these things, of course, you might as well put it in the category of humor rather than reality, because who could run a Senate campaign in Texas on ten thousand dollars in 1948 and cover the state with the kinds of things that you had to do with radio and transportation? Now, some of the stuff I found is how your campaign was scrambling for money, that you were very hard pressed at points. Some of the oral history interviews I've read, people say, "Well, we didn't know if we were going to get paid"--the office staff was going to get paid--"from one week to the next." But there was an awful lot of expenditure on things like that helicopter and advertising. And of course charges were being thrown back and forth about all the excessive spending here, excessive spending there. But of course Coke Stevenson was doing every bit as much, it seemed to me from what I can read, as the Johnson people were. Where did the money

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come [from] in that campaign? Did Brown and Root put a lot of the money into that again?

C: Oh, a lot of people did. A lot of people, it wasn't any single source or just a few people, we got money--my God, we spent, like all campaigns, we spent the majority of our time, it seems to me, just raising money. And it was an expensive campaign. The helicopter, the travel, the automobiles, the literature, the radio, everything else that we used, it all cost money. We were constantly scrambling for money. No doubt about it.

D: Would you make a guess as to how much was spent on that campaign, could you estimate?

C: I don't know, it would be unfair, I guess, to guess at it, but we're talking about peanuts. We're talking about maybe a quarter of a million dollars.

D: Stevenson later said that he thought the Johnson folks spent a million dollars on the campaign. That may be high?

C: I don't remember. That, I would think, would be high. I would guess maybe the outside would be a half a million. You know, each of us accused the other one of--

D: That's the name of the game, isn't it?

C: Yes, of spending more than we actually did. But I'll say this, we were trying to raise and spend everything we could.

D: You mean because it would be an effective way to run the campaign.

C: Yes, but I don't remember--we filed some--have you found any reports that were filed or any--?

D: Oh, well, you know, those reports show that nine thousand dollars was spent, or--

C: Really?

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- D: You're talking about things that supposedly [inaudible].
- C: I think we spent more than nine thousand dollars.
- D: (Laughter) They're showing \$9785, you see, we didn't spend ten thousand. We're within the law. Of course, the campaign law had gaps in it that you could drive a Mack truck through. You set up a committee, and the committee--I mean, that's the way they were financing the helicopter--
- C: That's right.
- D: --is a committee. And you do it that way, and that was no violation of law.
- C: No, I don't think we violated the law. I think, as you say, there were loopholes that you could drive a wagon through in the law, and there was no strict enforcement even of it at that time, because there wasn't that much money. There was not that much emphasis on money, because there just wasn't that much spent in campaigns. Now, Johnson was an expensive operator, no question about that. And so we were never flush with money.
- D: He wanted to win.
- C: That's right. We spent everything we could get our hands on and everything we could raise. And I think we spent more than Coke Stevenson. I don't think there's any question about it.

But I really think, in fairness, we were highly organized in 1948. We went through the 1941 campaign, which I've already explained to you, and in 1948 I had a great many of my friends that I'd gone to law school with that were all over the state, and I had recruited them. They were basically the backbone and the foundation of Johnson's strength across the state at the working level. So we had these young lawyers and his friends all over Texas. As I said a moment ago, they were watching these elections like a

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hawk. I mean, individual boxes. We were out hawking down to the precinct level, and we think we knew at that time we knew more about what was going on in the state, county by county, precinct by precinct, than anybody including the Texas Election Bureau or anybody else. Because we set up an organization to get those reports ourselves, we were getting reports ahead of the Texas Election Bureau about 80 per cent of the time, and where we detected any delays whatever in reports being filed with the Texas Election Bureau we sent people out there. Loving County, for instance, where nobody lives, we sent a guy forty miles one night at eleven o'clock at night to get a box, because it was--

D: You were worried that it was going to be--

C: Well, we didn't think there was anything wrong, but we wanted to know precisely. We didn't think there was anything wrong in Loving County, but you know, it's a sparsely populated county in West Texas, and we just wanted to know what the results were.

D: Were the Stevenson folks doing--?

C: Well, they weren't organized the way we were. They were doing some of it, sure.

D: Yes. But less effective.

C: But nothing like the organization we had.

D: Yes, that's the impression I have from reading the record, that it was a super-effective organization.

C: Oh, yes. I mean, we had a lot of people and we knew what those votes were. We knew what the votes in the Valley were, we knew what every one of those counties were, Box 13 or Duval County and Jim Wells and Brooks and Jim Hogg, and all the rest of them.

D: Well, what about then, the Duval County thing, the Alice business, I mean, the--?

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C: I don't know. All I know is that for fifty years those counties had political leaders that basically controlled the vote. No question about it. Just a question of how hard they worked at it and how many people they got to the polls on any given election day.

D: Was there any, after the returns came in, and that--?

C: Not to my knowledge. Now, this Box 13 in Jim Wells County has always been a mystery to me. I was at a loss to understand all that because we had very effective leadership there in a fellow named Lloyd.

D: Yes, Ed Lloyd.

C: Ed Lloyd, who knew what he was doing, he was a lawyer, he was an honorable guy, and they didn't have to engage in those kind of tactics. But you have to remember that long before we got into this, as I recall, back in the 1920s, Senator Archer Parr, George Parr's father, represented that whole area in the state senate. And the state senate had an investigation about fraudulent voting in that part of the world, in Duval County. So they were going to hold a big hearing in Austin, and they brought all these people up as witnesses. And so they got these Hispanics up before the committee and they said, "Mr. So-and-So, did you vote for president?"

D: "Si."

C: "Si, señor." They said, "Well, who did you vote for?" They said, "Señor Archie Parr." And they said, "Oh, you voted for him for president?" "Si." "Well, who did you vote for for senator?" "Señor Archie Parr." "Well, who did you vote for for sheriff?" "Señor Archie Parr." And so you have this kind of a situation that existed down there for a long time, and it was a pure question of how many people these various political leaders got to the polls on any given day.

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D: Yes. Well, what I was thinking of was this business at the last minute when they needed more votes.

C: Yes, that I don't know, that I don't know.

D: And so your feeling is Johnson didn't know that--

C: No, no. He did not know it, had nothing to do with it. As a matter of fact, we think we knew how many votes were in that county and without those votes in Box 13, we knew how many votes were in Duval County. Now, they weren't initially correctly reported to the Texas Election Bureau, and this is where some of the trouble arose. Because later they reported it to the Secretary of State the actual returns, and they had more votes when they reported to the Secretary of State than they had reported to the Texas Election Bureau. But that was deliberate, we understood that. And it was by design.

D: Yes. Holding back.

C: Because we knew it was close, we weren't going to--I am personally responsible for it because I'm the one that gave away the election in 1941.

D: This was a tactic.

C: I'm the one that told them to go on and report their votes in 1941. In 1948 I said, "Under-report your votes. Do not tell them how many total votes you have, just say it's incomplete."

D: Don't give them a target to--

C: Don't give them a target. Report your votes, but tell them it's incomplete. Well, then that's where a lot of this talk started about the add-ons. Now whether or not that was true in Precinct 13, I don't know. But I have no evidence that it was. They obviously claim now, and apparently with some justification, that a lot of them were in the same

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handwriting. So I'm not going to necessarily--I'm not going to defend it, but I'm sure not going to admit that we were aware of it at the time, because I remember very, very well that we think we won the election not by 87 votes but about 265 votes. And that counts the 200-vote change that they had in Eastland County.

D: Well, after this vote thing, of course, it gets into the courts. And there's a sharp court struggle. And of course the thing is finally decided by Hugo Black throwing out the appeal and that Abe Fortas advises Johnson that they're on very sound grounds in challenging the idea that the federal courts should determine this thing. The thing should have gone into the state courts. Now, one thing I found that interested me, I wanted to ask you about it if you knew anything about it: one of Johnson's attorneys--I can't remember his name at the moment, I could find the letter for you--writes and says, "Alben Barkley and Sam Rayburn should go in to see Chief Justice [Fred] Vinson before the case gets to the Supreme Court." And he's proposing that they do it that way. In the Tom Clark papers in the Truman Library, it's clear to me that Clark and Johnson had a very warm and supportive relationship--

(Interruption)

C: --and there may be memos and letters.

D: So you could be safe in saying that they explored every possibility and considered every possibility in terms of approaching people on the Supreme Court.

C: Yes, sure. Now whether or not they would approach Fred Vinson, I would think they'd be very cautious about approaching Fred Vinson.

D: There's no evidence that they did.

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- C: Or Hugo Black, either one. Because I think any lawyer would be extremely reluctant to approach either one of those men, *ex parte*, on something like that.
- D: Black--I'm just finished reading, there's a new book coming out on Abe Fortas called *The Rise and Ruin of a Supreme Court Justice* by a fellow named [Bruce] Murphy, and in there he has a very interesting anecdote about Justice Black, and that Black went to Senator Lister Hill from Alabama and urged him to go against Fortas' confirmation as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. And now where he--I forget the notes, I mean, where he dredged this out from, so I guess Black could be political himself--
- C: Yes, oh, no question but what both Black and Fred Vinson were political animals. But they also were fellows of deep conviction, and capable, if you should hit either one of them wrong--if Black, for instance, felt that an *ex parte* approach was inappropriate, you could really get yourself in deep trouble with him. So I just don't know whether or not there was any such approach to him or to Fred Vinson. I would be surprised if there were not memos, and I certainly would not have been surprised at conversations among these lawyers about every possible attempt. I don't think there's any question about that.
- D: Yes, but there's a difference between--
- C: Whether or not--yes, there's a difference between conversations and performance. And I don't know many lawyers that have the guts to approach a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States on a purely political basis to try to--
- D: Arrange.
- C: --plant a thought or to create a path for him to follow.
- D: Well, we get to 1949, and Johnson enters the Senate and you go up there, go back, and essentially set up his office. Could you give me a word picture of what that was like?

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What it was like working with him at that point, what he looked like, what your memories of that office were and how it operated and--?

C: Well, I didn't want to go back up there.

D: I know.

C: I had been there. And I had been thwarted for years about practicing law, and I really wanted to start practicing law and had agreed to go with Senator Wirtz in his law firm. So I went back and I finally agreed to go to help him set up his office, hire his staff, and so forth. Well, it was sheer chaos, as I knew it would be again, because I hired Horace Busby and I hired Warren Woodward, and of course Walter was there and Dorothy Nichols was still there. But it was chaotic because Johnson, first, was plagued with all the results of the election in 1948. He was suffering under what he thought was a stigma of a close election, and so he immediately wanted to show that he was a man of substance and of capacity and of ability and action and that he deserved to win. And so again, he was a hard-driving taskmaster. He was involved in everything; he had incredible mental and physical energies. And a lot of people don't give him credit for being as bright and as intelligent as he was. You know, particularly people in the North and East who always viewed him, even in the presidency, as pretty much of a hick from a small town college who lacked the erudition and lacked the poise and lacked the grace of the intelligentsia. And in some ways he did, but in other ways he was so damn much smarter than any of them that they weren't even in his league.

D: He wasn't sitting up there in Washington all those years dealing with the smartest attorneys in that city because he was some kind of dolt.

C: That's right. He was not a lawyer, had never studied law, but--

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D: He was amazing, he was an amazing fellow.

C: He really was. So he set about, from the day he hit there, to ingratiate himself with his colleagues in the Senate.

And I know the first big battle we had, as I recall, in the Senate, was the confirmation of Leland Olds to the Federal Power Commission.

D: Yes.

C: In which he took a very active role. And, my Lord, in addition to everything else, and because of the close election, because of all the publicity, we got an enormous amount of mail during that period of time, and he was adamant that the mail be answered every day, every letter be answered every day. And so again, the people working twelve, fifteen, eighteen hours a day. The number of people coming in was enormous, he generated traffic. And of course it was a time of excitement for all of us because we had been operating on the House side, and on the Senate side he was a new man in the Chamber, and we were not there under the benevolent wing of Speaker Rayburn. He had to hoe his own row. And so he immediately began courting the Walter Georges, the Dick Russells, the Harry Byrds and those leaders of the Senate.

D: The Leland Olds case, what did he hope to gain there? I mean, you said he took a very active part in that.

C: Well, I think first he wanted to show that he was representing the State of Texas, and that he felt that Leland Olds was going to be responsible for greater control of the oil and gas interest through the Federal Power Commission, which indeed he had been and which he would do. And so Johnson felt that--one of his problems was that, as a result of the 1941 campaign, the conservatives in the state and even a lot of the moderates were still

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suspicious of him, and they thought of him as a New Dealer, and the Leland Olds appointment gave him a chance to do something for the oil and gas industry in the state, which he thought was right and proper. And it also put him on the side of the conservatives in the Senate where he thought the power was and where his future lay.

D: What I find fascinating with that episode is that at the same time, he's getting a lot of flak from some of the liberals in Texas, he writes back and he tells them, "Well, we may not agree on this Leland Olds thing," but he shows them how he's voting for a number of Harry Truman's Fair Deal, for federal aid to education.

C: That's right. So he was proving a lot of things with the Leland Olds thing.

D: Now you were gone by then, you were gone by the fall of 1949, and so, did you stay in touch with him on matters relating to how he became whip, how he became majority leader.

C: Yes, I was constantly in touch with him throughout his entire political career, including the White House. Now I wasn't there actually in the White House, but--

D: Yes. And of course you were central in that 1956--

C: Yes, the 1956 thing, and the 1960 campaign, and then of course the assassination, and after the assassination. And then every time he came home we were constantly on the phone during the time that he was president. So I maintained a very close relationship with him. I didn't always agree with him, but--

D: Well, I'm torn between--I know you've got to go momentarily, and there are all these other broad-gauge topics about how he became whip and majority leader and the 1956 campaign and the 1960 campaign. Maybe what I could say is, perhaps I could come back

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at some point and take another hour or two of your time and try and go into these issues,
because, I mean, it's rich, it's the story, it's the--

C: Yes, because if you really want to go into them, we're talking about three or four hours.

D: Yes, I think it's better to wrap this up here.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Special Interview

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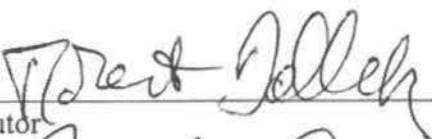

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JOHN CONNALLY, recorded by Robert Dallek

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