Reminiscences of President Lyndon Baines Johnson

August 19, 1969

Dallas has always been a nightmare for me. I've never discussed it and I don't want to think about it any more than I have to.

I was elected to the Senate in 1941 when I was 33 years old. That election was stolen from me in Dallas; they kept counting votes until W. Lee O'Daniel won. He was a nonentity and flour salesman.

We went to Dallas in the 1960 campaign. We were met by [Bruce] Alger and Tower [?]. They had whipped up a lot of mink-coat, fascist-type women. I was regarded as left wing in Texas. There was a great revulsion that I had joined the ticket with the Pope of Rome.

There is a lot of bigotry in Texas.

In 1960 I knew I couldn't get nominated. But there were lots who didn't think so. When I accepted the vice president spot I went to Dallas to speak, and the revulsion expressed itself. They spit on us. They knocked Mrs. Johnson's hat off and said a lot of ugly things. That is pretty commonplace now, but it was new to us then. And it was in Dallas that we learned it.

I decided I might as well find out now if it is safe for a man and a wife to walk the streets of Dallas, and so Lady Bird and I went ahead.

They did the same thing later to Adlai Stevenson.

I never wanted to go to Dallas in 1960 and things didn't get any better there by 1963.

Kennedy thought our election was in danger. I knew it was.

His purpose was to raise a million dollars and get enough identification with Texas to carry the state.

The popular image of Texas is of billionaires and people with dollar bills coming out of their ears. He wanted to raise one million dollars. I guess two or three times he talked to me about it and said we've got that four million-dollar debt to pay off.

He resented Ted Dealey of the ***Dallas Morning News***, who had come to the White House and made that remark about Caroline and told Kennedy he had to get some backbone. The President resented that and wanted to go over Dealey's head.

He had an appointment with [John] Connally. Bobby liked Connally and wanted to make him head of the CIA or assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs. Connally wasn't interested in either one. He was interested in being secretary of the navy, but then he decided to come back and save Texas. And he did save it. The Democratic Party was dominated in Texas then by super liberals—the hippies of that day who could command no following. [Barry] Goldwater got a big crowd at The University of Texas in those days. Connally did save the Democratic Party in 1962.

Kennedy wanted to identify with Connally—Connally's stock was high. Kennedy said to me, "We've got to put a lever on Connally to get him to set up those meetings in Texas."

Connally defeated the incumbent Governor and that's always hard to do. One handicap for him was that he ran against the slogan "He's Lyndon's boy, John." I didn't even want him to run.

Kennedy suggested that we come to Texas on my birthday. The vice president's relationship to a president is like the wife to the husband—you don't tell him off in public.

Kennedy mentioned four or five places he wanted to come to. Well, I've never raised a dime in Dallas in my life—never even carried Dallas. He felt each of those places could contribute $400,000.

Connally spoke up firm, clear, straightforward, "Mr. President, that would be the worst thing you could do. For the first thing, with you going in four or five places, everyone would say you are just interested in getting money. In the second place, that weekend at the end of August would be a bad weekend. All the rich folks will be up in Colorado cooling off and all the poor people will be in Galveston and down around the Gulf Coast." Kennedy wouldn't take issue with him. He said, "I guess that's right." That ended it and we went back to Washington.

The next thing, I heard Connally was in town at the Mayflower. It was about October 15 or November 1. And he had had a meeting with the President. In 1968 they said I had let the Democratic Committee down. They said that because I wouldn't shake people. Well, the committee was shoving Kennedy then to get money.

Kennedy called Connally and said, "Come up—I want to visit with you." I think Kennedy thought I was autocratic, bossy, self-centered.

After Kennedy told Connally what he wanted, Connally said he could work on it. Kennedy said, "Let's set a definite date." So a meeting was signed on. Connally came on out to my house, told me what had happened. I said, "Why didn't you tell me?" He said, "I assumed you'd be there." Connally told Kennedy "don't say anything about money. Make whatever speech you want to make anywhere in Texas and then just give one fund raiser in Austin." Apparently, Kennedy agreed. Then we all went to work to raise money. Kennedy put Bill Moyers in charge.

The President told me to take one 707—and he'd take the other—when we came down to Texas.

We had a good meeting in San Antonio. It was hot but it was pleasant.

Then we went to Houston. It was also a pleasant meeting. We went to the Rice Hotel. A great deal has been made that the President and Vice President had ugly words—difference of opinion. Those were the figment of unbalanced imagination. The wish was father to the thought.

I remember two things mainly about the Houston meeting: one—when we got off the plane the reception committee said Mrs. Johnson and I could ride in such and such a car. So we got in and when we did, someone said, "Senator [Ralph] Yarborough is supposed to ride here." So someone ran up to him and said, "You're supposed to ride in this car." Yarborough said no, he'd ride with Albert Thomas. Thomas was very anxious to be with Kennedy. Thomas jumped on the Secret Service car following the President. Then we came along. Yarborough rode with Thomas part of the way, not with us. I didn't care, but the newspaper boys went wild. It was the biggest ever since De Gaulle farted. There were headlines the next morning and all kinds of queries to Salinger: "Was it true that Yarborough would not ride with the Vice President?"

Shortly after we got to the hotel, Kennedy called and said, "I wish you would come down and have a drink with me." He had only his shorts on.

Kennedy had a scotch and water or whatever it was he drank. I had a scotch and soda. He told me, "They've asked Jackie to speak at the LULACS [League of United Latin American Citizens] and I want to know something about it. I told him it was an excellent organization. I said I would be glad to go with her. It was a fine thing for her to do.

Kennedy said he had been told about the incident with Yarborough. He said, "I told my staff people, tell him he either rides in the car or he doesn't ride." I said, "Mr. President, it doesn't make any difference."

He said, "Well, I just told them to tell him that."

The [William] Manchester book [***The Death of a President, November 20-November 25, 1963***] has it that we were heard to say loud words. Well, there weren't any. I went downstairs with Mrs. Kennedy and then afterwards we went to the Thomas dinner.

Then to Fort Worth.

I got up early the next morning for breakfast. Mrs. Kennedy didn't want to go to that breakfast. Her stomach was just not conditioned to raucous Texans so early in the morning.

At the breakfast President Kennedy said it took Mrs. Kennedy longer to get ready and he made his reference to himself and to me—no one ever could make anything out of us anyway. Then Mrs. Kennedy made her entrance and she sat by me.

When Kennedy left he said, "Come by my room." A lot has been said about the difference between those two rooms. Well, everyone knows that the president gets whatever room or whatever suite he wants. One of these suites was modernized and the other was old fashioned. They put me in the Will Rogers suite because Kennedy's Secret Service had picked the other.

I went up there. I had my baby sister and brother-in-law with me. She lived in Fort Worth.

Kennedy was once again in his shorts. He called me to come in. He was putting on his shirt, walking around and talking. He put his arms in his shirt. That was the way he always

dressed. He would put on his shorts and then put on his shirt. I would always dress the other way; put on my shorts, then put on my trousers. I had been raised to cover up that part of me first. I told my sister to wait in the hall.

He said, "How did you like that about us not taking any time to get ready?" He was looking for a compliment or a laugh about his little witticism. Presidents always look for that kind of thing and people always give it to them.

I said it was very nice.

He said it was a hell of a crowd.

I said it was.

I told him my sister was out there and he said, "Bring her in."

I took my sister in. He turned to her and said, "You've been awfully good to us in Fort Worth." He then turned to me and "Lyndon, there is one thing I'm sure of—it's that we're going to carry two states in the election if we don't carry any others, and those two are Massachusetts and Texas."

I took my sister and went down.

All that time, Bobby and his people had been putting out that I was not going to be on the ticket.

They'll be doing that to Agnew pretty soon. Next year there'll be 18 governors wanting to replace Agnew.

Bobby was against my being on the ticket in 1960. He came to my room three times to try to get me to say we wouldn't run on the ticket.

I thought it was unthinkable that Kennedy would want me—or that I would want to be on the ticket as vice president.

That night he called me and said he wanted to see me [this is 1960—H. M.].

He came in and said he wanted me on the ticket.

I said, "You want a good majority leader to help you pass your program." I didn't want to be vice president. I didn't want to be president. I didn't want to leave the Senate. But I told Kennedy, "If I hadn't given you a good run, they'd say the Catholics put you in." I asked him, "Who is going to run with you if I don't?" He said, "[Orville] Freeman or [Stuart] Symington," but that neither one could carry any southern state.

Rayburn told me the night before that he had heard they were going to ask me to run on the ticket. He said, "Don't get caught in that one." I said I had no plans to run—and that he must have been drinking to think that I had. So I told Kennedy, "Rayburn is against it and my state will say I ran out on them." Kennedy said, "Well, think it over and let's talk about it again at 3:30."

Pretty soon Bobby came in. He said Jack wanted me but he wanted me to know that the liberals will raise hell. He said Mennen Williams will raise hell.

I thought I was dealing with a child. I never did understand Bobby. I never did understand how the press built him into the great figure that he was. He came into public life as [Joseph] McCarthy's counsel and then he was [John] McClellan's counsel and then he tapped Martin Luther King's telephone wire.

I said, "Piss on Mennen Williams."

He said, "You know they'll embarrass you."

I said, "The only question is—is it good for the country and good for the Democratic Party?"

Prior to this, the President said, "Can I talk to Rayburn?"

Rayburn was against it because the vice president is not as important as the majority leader. The vice president is generally like a Texas steer—he's lost his social standing in the society in which he resides. He's like a stuck pig in a screwing match.

Kennedy talked Rayburn into it. He said, "Mr. Rayburn, we can carry New York, Massachusetts, New England, but no southern state unless we have something that will appeal to them. He asked him, "Do you want Nixon to be President? He called you a traitor."

Rayburn always thought Nixon called him a traitor. Nixon brought me the speeches and they contained a phrase "treasonable to do that" or something like that. I thought Nixon's version was more just—but I lost that argument with Rayburn. Rayburn came in that morning and said "You ought to do it." I said, "How come you say this morning I ought to do it when last night you said I shouldn't?"

He said, "Because I'm a sadder and wiser and smarter man this morning than I was last night."

He said, "Nixon will ruin this country in eight years. And we're just as sure to have it as God made little apples."

Mr. Rayburn said in 1932 we went around the country talking about what a great guy Al Smith was, "But the people just turned around and I just never got a look at their faces, because as far as they were concerned I was talking for the Pope of Rome. It will be the same this time. You won't be the majority leader and I won't be the Speaker. We'll be a minority group.

Tape Number 3:

The Governor came in. Bob Kerr came in. All the senators that supported me came in. They were all against it. Rayburn said, "I turned Bob Kerr around like a cow pony." [This means switching him around 180 degrees—H. M.].

Mr. Kerr came in smoking a cigar and said, "Mr. Leader, I don't know whether what I hear is true or not. I just want to say if it is true, and if you decide you should be vice president of this boy from Boston, I'm going to take a Winchester 33 and shoot you right between the eyes."

Kennedy was pathetic as a congressman and as a senator. He didn't know how to address the Chair.

Kennedy had the squealers who followed him reported. All of us have had squealers after us—the girls who giggle and the people who are just happy to be with you—but Kennedy was the only one the press saw fit to report on.

I never had any bigotry in me. My daddy wouldn't let me. He was a strong anti-Klansman. He wouldn't join the Methodist [? Check Dorothy Territo—H. M.].

The Klan controlled this state when I was a boy. They threatened to kill him several times.

Kerr was prejudiced against Catholics. He'd rather see me dead than on that ticket.

I was the Benedict Arnold of my state.

Kerr said that Rayburn's turning him around was "the most skillful operation I ever saw.

Rayburn just said, 'Well, Bob, I know how you feel. I campaigned for Al Smith.'" He told the story just like he agreed with Kerr. Then he said, "Bob, that's what we run up against. You're a candidate again this year, aren't you?"

Kerr was—and he knew that Mr. Rayburn knew he was. But Kerr did not intend to support Kennedy.

Mr. Rayburn said, "Well, Bob, when you get out there and start explaining, you can't possibly get elected going against the nominee of your own party. The man that does that is deader than slavery. I've thought all that out and I told Lyndon at 2 a.m. not to run. I felt just like you do. So you're right, Bob."

But then Mr. Rayburn said to Kerr, "I concluded this: I'd rather go to my folks in Bonham and tell them I don't know Kennedy or Nixon, but I am going to support Lyndon, and if you get him in there, he'll look out for us."

He told Kerr, "I don't know Oklahoma, but it seems to me better if you tell them you're going to support your desk mate and your neighbor from Texas and you're sure he'll look out for Oklahoma. That's what I'm going to tell my people."

And then Bob Kerr told Mr. Rayburn, "So am I."

We lost Oklahoma, but Kerr won.

We've moved ahead—even in Oklahoma—in civil rights and religious freedom since then.

We got to Dallas, got off the plane. Then I shook hands with the Kennedys when they got off their plane.

Yarborough got into our car, and everything was very nice. We started to go down to the center. I was very impressed and very pleased with the crowds.

Then we heard shots. It never occurred to me that it was an assassination or a killing. I just thought it was firecrackers or a car backfiring. I had heard those all my life. Any politician—any man in public life—gets used to that kind of sound. The first time I knew that there was anything unusual was when the car lunged. My grandson, when he saw his nurse go off in a plane, said, "Oga zoom." I never hear him say that but what I don't remember the way that car took off in Dallas [sic]. It zoomed. And at the same time, this great big old boy from Georgia [Rufus Youngblood] said, "Down!" And he got on top of me. I knew then this was no normal operation. Something came over the radio. No—I don't know whether I really heard this or whether I've just read it and it impressed me so much that I assume I heard it. Anyhow it said, "We're getting out of here."

Youngblood was tougher and better and more intelligent than them all. Not all the Secret Service are sharp. It's always worried me, that they weren't. They are the most dedicated and among the most courageous men we've got. But they don't always match that in brains. But the problem is, you pay a man four or five hundred dollars a month and you get just what you pay for. This fellow Kellerman who was in charge of all the Secret Service details—he was about as loyal a man as you could find. But he was about as dumb as an ox.

Youngblood put his body on me. He covered me with his body. He did that all the way to the hospital. When I got there and got out of that car, I had been crushed.

I was under orders from him all the way. In situations like that, they're in command, and you don't question them. "In this door—to the right—here." Just like it had been planned, every step of the way. When they're good—and Youngblood was good—they're the best you can find.

Mrs. Johnson wanted to see Mrs. Kennedy. And Nellie Connally. Then from there on, there were frequent conversations and pretty soon they came back and said he was dead.

It's all vague in my mind who said what, and where, and who it was.

But somewhere in my mind, I knew there might be more. I knew that this conceivably could be part of something even bigger. So I said let's get back to Washington as soon as we can.

We went in an unmarked car and I remember leaning over the back of the seat, all the way back.

We went in ***Air Force One***. Just as they told us to.

I called the Attorney General from the plane and I asked him if I should come back to Washington and take the oath.

He said he would call me back, but he thought offhand I should take it there. He was calm and unexcited.

K [I think this is Katzenbach—H. M.] came on. He didn't have the oath. The plane was full of people. We stepped into this room to take the oath from K.

I called a lawyer in Dallas, Irving Goldberg. He said he'd get Sarah Hughes.

Everyone was saying, let's get this plane off the ground. I said, no, we'll wait for Mrs. Kennedy.

She came on.

I noticed none of the bitterness which Manchester described.

Tape Number 4:

If it existed, it was unbelievable hypocrisy they practiced.

Manchester's book was Bobby's announcement for the Presidency. It was part of a calculated effort to destroy me.

I saw Mrs. Kennedy many times. She asked me to change Cape Canaveral to Cape Kennedy. She said, "You've just got to get Cape Kennedy."

Just as I heard about Walter Jenkins during the 1964 campaign, Bobby said I had to go see Mrs. Kennedy. I was with her one and a half hours. It was making the president see the queen. And all this time I had this Walter Jenkins news inside me. I couldn't be more shocked if you called me right now and said Lady Bird killed the Pope. But I had to keep all this while I talked to Mrs. Kennedy.

Then I had to talk at the Cardinal Spellman dinner.

Republicans just knew that this was the election.

Everyone who got in the way wound up corpses.

I couldn't go to the ***Newsweek*** party. Phil Graham was a good friend of mine. He brought $35,000 to me in the campaign against Kennedy for president. He told Kennedy to make me vice president. He insisted that we come to the ***Newsweek*** party. I couldn't go so Walter went in my place.

The waiters they had there were waiters from the Republican National Committee.

Walter Jenkins had one drink and started on the second and doesn't remember anything after that. He told me that.

I rode in the car with Mrs. Kennedy to the capital. I had to go out to her house to see her several times.

If she had the feelings that Manchester described, she wouldn't be standing in that picture.

I wrote her at the time of the Manchester book.

I always thought God Almighty took care of these things for me. So many things—so unfair—so unjust. He comes along and corrects them in good time.

After my announcement March 31, one of the first persons to call me was Bobby Kennedy. He came in and said what a great man I was.

He thought of me as a man who had to cling on to all his power. He couldn't conceive of it until after it happened.

If you announce you're not going to be a candidate for president, you might as well resign. I did better than most. If I had announced in January—and I almost did. Here I just thought, here I am asking for a whole cupboardful of stuff, and they will say.... But March is the deadline. No one [else] can be nominated and elected if he [the president] doesn't do it by March.

That was the last thing that entered Bobby's mind. But I wasn't new to public power. I had it for 38 years.

All of this was obvious to me from the moment we really came in contact—Bobby and I—in Los Angeles. Bobby elbowed me out. Maybe he thought the President would discuss

things with me, and many times he did. Many times he talked to me about the most intimate things one man can discuss with another. He asked me to do things. I'm sure Bobby didn't approve.

At the time of the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy called and asked me to come there. I was with him until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning.

Bobby's story on the missile crisis was another Manchester deal. He said, "Also on occasion Johnson came in." They had 37 meetings and I was at 36 of them. I missed one. I was in Honolulu at Kennedy's request. When he was out in Chicago and got that cold, we both agreed we had to show folks things were not so tense.

He called me back. I went swimming with him. He had Mac [McGeorge] Bundy brief me.

On civil rights, I recommended to the President that no savings and loan association or no FDC bank could continue if they did not make loans for open housing. Bobby called and said, "What are you trying to do, defeat the President?"

We didn't get it in any executive order from Kennedy. But we got it in a bill later. As president, I told civil rights leaders I wouldn't go for an executive order. I would try to get Congress to pass it in a bill. And we passed that bill before the year was out.

But the media was so charmed. It was like a rattlesnake charming a rabbit. But I believe men will look back on this era. Fifteen years or so from now, they will look back and say, "Okay, how did we do it?"

Martin Luther King was a tragedy. The President was most adversely affected.

I had no question about the Warren Report. I am no student of it. All I know is this:

I was no intimate of Justice Warren. I didn't spend ten minutes with him in my life. But I concluded that this was something that [J. Edgard] Hoover and the Massachusetts courts and the Texas courts could not handle. It was so much deeper in [the] affairs of men for the next several centuries. We had to seek the ultimate to do the possible. And who is the ultimate in this country from the standpoint of judiciousness and fairness and the personification of justice? I thought it had to be Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the United States.

I knew it was bad for the Court to get involved. And Warren knew it best of all and he was vigorously opposed to it.

I called him in.

Before he came I was told that Warren had said he wouldn't do it. He was constitutionally opposed. If asked he would say no. He thought the President should be informed of that.

Early in my life I was told it was doing the impossible that makes you different. I was convinced this had to be done. I had to bring the nation through this thing.

When Warren came in and sat down, I said, I know what you're going to tell me, but there is one thing no one else has said to you. In World War I when your country was threatened—not as much as now—you put that rifle butt on your shoulder. I don't care who sends me a message. When this country is threatened with division and the President of the United States says you are the only man who can save it, you won't say no, will you?

He said "No, Sir."

I had great respect for Warren. And from that moment on I was a partisan of his.

I called every man on that commission. Senator Russell said, "You mean I have to serve on that commission with Warren?"

I said, "Yes, and don't tell me you're less patriotic than Earl Warren because I don't believe that—and he feels more strongly about this than you do."

Everybody Bobby wanted to have me appoint, I appointed to that commission.

Halleck said Ford wouldn't be his choice.

Tape Number 5

One time I was standing with Mr. Rayburn and he said, "Poor fellow." And I said, "What do you mean?" and he said, "His guts are all over that floor and he doesn't know it."

I shudder to think what churches I would have burned and what little babies I would have eaten if I hadn't appointed the Warren Commission.

I've only been in Dallas once since that assassination—to an REA meeting.

Can you imagine what would have happened if we had no inquest on Kennedy?

If there was no Warren Commission, we would have been as dead as slavery.

With Joe Kennedy and Rose, and Jackie and Ethel—and except for one incident with Teddy—our relations were always warm and friendly—non-political—they were all helpful to me.

I have the feeling that Joe Kennedy felt his boy had no chance to be president except for what I did as majority leader.

I did try to bring about better understanding between east and west. November, December, and January I was writing Khrushchev saying "We will cut down on our atomic

reactors, we will cut down on our defense budget, and I hope you will cut down on yours. I am going through with some of these reductions and I hope you will do the same." He never responded. I was going to speak on arms reduction. I told him I had consulted with every senator [double voices here].

I had just started my speech when they handed me a note which said that Khrushchev had agreed to a simultaneous announcement of reduction.

Back to Dallas. We started the day after we got back to Washington after Dallas to try to bring peace in Vietnam. We avoided the course this thing took and continued to avoid it until July 1965.

At Tonkin Gulf we got authority from the Congress—anything we think necessary.

We took that approval from one August to the next August—one year—trying to avoid using it.

If Ho Chi Minh ever made one overture to avoid conflict, I never knew it.

We had several bombing pauses. We indicated several things to the enemy, through India and other countries. If Ho Chi Minh ever said anything but let them eat cake, I am unaware of it.

Our hope and prayer constantly was that maybe he'll do something, but there was never any question of it.

My guess is—who will bring the men home. The enemy is already in Laos, etc. Indonesia might stand but I doubt it. Ten years from now we'll be back in the Philippines.

And we'll wonder then—didn't we learn anything?

People say there's nothing worse than Vietnam. Well, I think there are lots of things worse than Vietnam. World War III would be much worse.

The good Lord got me through it without destroying any Russian ships, or Chinese. If I had hit Chinese ships—

I constantly walked on eggs, one foot in China's basket, one foot in Russia's basket.

China and Russia are like two brothers-in-law who don't like each other.

One misstep could have kicked off World War III.

"So help me God," were the happiest words I heard. When Nixon took the oath, I was no longer responsible for Vietnam or the Middle East.

One thing about the job of president—it's a wonderful job—the American people are good—the people of the United States were better to me than the press would ever have you believe. They were understanding and tolerant.

It's never a question of doing what's right. It's a question of knowing what's right.

Those first few days Vietnam was on top of the agenda, before the visiting heads of state got home from the funeral.

In the outer office of the EOB I saw Eisenhower sitting there with Marie Fehmer. He had a yellow tablet and was writing in longhand what he would do if he were in my place. The first thing he told me to do was try to reassure the country. Let them know that a man was in charge—that we were one nation—one for all and all for one. We had suffered a great tragedy but we had to go on. We should forget politics and our differences.

He advised me on fiscal policy—on Vietnam, on the Middle East as he saw it.

I got the impression that columnists thought Ike was not exciting and didn't know what was going on. I never saw this. I found his knowledge of men and events complete.

I disagreed with his evaluation of conditions often. He was too conservative for me, too admiring of some situations and rather prejudiced towards others. But he was filled with patriotism. He was a great help to me, and he was a balance to me often.

I remember once Ike said to me: "I want you to know I'm a mean Republican."

I said: "You're not mean at all."

He said: "I am on domestic matters."

I said: "You mean you're against the Great Society."

He said: "Exactly. Particularly I'm against your poverty program."

I see the papers say recently ten million American have been taken off poverty. This just shows you can get rid of it if you've got the guts, the will.

The first two men who came to see me were Fulbright and Harriman. They gave pledges of undying cooperation. I think both wanted to do everything they could to make the nation strong.

I'm not bitter against anything. I don't hate anybody.

I remember Mr. Rayburn said about Fulbright when someone asked him what is your judgment of Senator Fulbright. Mr. Rayburn said: "Well, I'll tell you. My evaluation of Fulbright is, he's just about as big as Arkansas."

Fulbright voted against the twenty-five cent minimum wage—and he voted against the $1.60 minimum wage in my administration. He voted against REA. He voted against civil rights. He never cast one vote for a human being in his life.

I honestly think that he honestly believes that he is the only man qualified to be secretary of state.

Tape Number 6

When I was a boy we used to sit around the fireplace. Everyone in town used to come and ask my father what to do. One time there was a tough race for sheriff, and the sheriff was *the* man of the town in our time.

Old man Dan Crider was a runner for my father. He used to scoop up all the gossip and come running in and give it. I can see my father now, sitting back in his rocking chair laughing.

One time Old Man Crider came running in and said, "Mr. Johnson, you've just got to help Ben Jack Stubbs who's in trouble." Ben Jack was the sheriff. Mr. Crider said that people were saying he was living with another woman. "Orrie [Oran] Strigler says that he's the last man he'd vote for." Orrie controlled the German bloc.

My father asked, "How does Ben Jack feel about all this?"

Mr. Crider said, "Ben Jack said he'll shoot anyone that he hears say that." He was mad because people said he had this mistress.

My father said, "Well, just tell him not to worry. The good people won't believe it and those who do wouldn't vote for him anyway." He said, "He shouldn't get on the firing line if he doesn't want to get shot at."

I used to reflect on that advice a lot, and I thought about it in 1968 when I was making my final decision not to run.

Anyway, my father said, "I regret to hear that Strigler's not going to support us. I was in the Court House yesterday and I saw old man Martini. He's the county judge, 84 years old, and I wondered who we could get to replace him. And I thought of old man Strigler. I just hate to hear that he's flown the coop."

And Mr. Crider, I can remember him now, winked at my father and said, "I get you." Next day he came back. He came in the house and said, "Mr. Sam, after I left you I thought I'd better see Strigler, and I went over there. He was sittin' there milkin', and his wife was in the loft, throwin' down bales of hay to the cow, and he just kept on milkin'. I said, "I want to talk to you." But he just kept right on and wouldn't look at me. So I told him what you said about how you thought he'd make a good county judge. After I did that, he just dropped both tits at the same time and called out, "Mama, come here and hear what Mr. Johnson's got to say."

Well, that made Strigler part of the establishment. Martini lived six or eight years and Strigler never did make county judge.

But before he died, my father made his son the county judge.

The first thing Fulbright did was to undermine Dean Rusk. Only Bobby tried harder to get him out of there. When they told me Kennedy was going to remove him, I didn't believe it.

But anyway, that was the first thing I had to face up to.

I had no particular friendship with Rusk. I knew him as Kennedy's secretary of state. I knew he was a gentleman and a man of conviction.

That's how I came into the transition period.

Rusk agreed that we ought to try to put a new face on things and make a new effort to see if the communists were amenable to overtures for peace. I sent Lodge back to do everything he could.

They had just—with our encouragement—assassinated Diem before I went into office.

Rusk was out of town and McNamara was out of town. Kennedy was at Hyannisport in a sailboat.

They sent a cable to Kennedy who approved it.

We found it difficult to put Humpty Dumpty together again. With all Diem's weaknesses, it was not easy to tear that government apart, and put it together again—any more than the Dominican Republic.

I don't believe assassination is ever justified any more than it was in the Dominican Republic.

They were ruthless people. Sure, Ho Chi Minh was. But I mean it was ruthless of the United States Government, with our boasted list of freedoms, to condone assassination because you don't approve of a political philosophy. I don't believe that Martin Luther King or Stokely Carmichael should ever be assassinated because somebody disagrees with them.

I don't believe that Hoffa should have his character assassinated because he's a thug. I don't believe the end justifies the means.

The Dominican Republic is better governed. But I don't think a proud nation ought to furnish the guns to knock off anybody.

That's what our government was party to.

The Khanh regime came. Then Ky. Ky gave stability. He had courage.

We don't underwrite all the practices of any country.

Thieu and Ky emerged as leaders. We brought them about as fast as we dared.

I'm afraid we've overstepped the Constitution—speeding it the way we did. But I have no reluctance about those two men.

When Madame Chennault told them would get a better deal out of Nixon, they broke faith with me and held back the peace a little while, I think. But I can understand why they did it. They thought that this is what they would have to live with.

Nobody paid any attention when I didn't go into Massachusetts—the primary there. I wouldn't go in.

No one picked up any indication because of the house [House of Representatives?].

The best way I know to put it is this: my best judgment told me in 1964 in the spring—May or June—that if the good Lord was willing and the creeks didn't rise, if we had the best of everything, I could get the job done. I could get my ideals and wishes and dreams realized to the extent I would ever get them realized, by March of 1968. The odds were that I could survive that physically—but there was no assurance, and there were grave doubts.

No one can ever understand who was not then in the valley of death how you were always conscious of that. I would see Wilson's picture and I would think of him stretched out upstairs at the White House and I would think, what if I had a stroke like my Grandma did, and she couldn't even move her hands. I would walk out in the Rose Garden and I would think about it, that was constant, with me all the time.

When that phone rings in the White House, it's always bad news. They don't let the good news get through to you. So I talked with three or four people that I knew best—Abe

Fortas, and Senator Russell, and John Connally, and A. W. Moursund, and of course Lady Bird—all mean one or the other thing to me.

Abe Fortas is a good, fine patriotic and courageous a human as I have ever known. He's been victimized in a terrible way. We're cruel people. I made him take the Justiceship. In that way I ruined his life. I knew he was liberal and stable and courageous and would do what's good for the people.

Tape Number 7

Senator Russell had the best qualifications for the Senate of any man I knew. Except for his record and standing on civil rights, he would have made a good president.

In 1960, Mr. Rayburn called me a candidate for president and opened an office. I closed that office. There were several reasons. One, I've never known a man who I thought was completely qualified to be president. Two, I've never known a president who was paid more than he received. Three, my physical condition—I just couldn't be sure of it. I've never been afraid to die. But I always had horrible memories of my grandmother in a wheelchair all my childhood.

Every time I addressed the Chair in 1959 and 1960, I wondered if this would be the time when I'd fall over. I just never could be sure when I would be going out.

The greatest bigots in the world are the Democrats on the East Side of New York. Eastland is charitable compared to an eastern bigot. Anyone south of the Mason Dixon Line has two strikes against him as far as the eastern liberals are concerned. The best man I know in New York can't help but feel that way.

I told Scotty Reston I'd have to do it all in six to eight months. The eastern media will have the wells so poisoned by that time that that's all the time I have. They'll have us peeing on the fire. I said I don't think any man from Johnson City, Texas can survive very long.

Walter Lippmann read my Baltimore speech—the one I made to [sic] Johns Hopkins. He said "It's a wonderful speech, but you didn't say anything about pulling out."

I said, "Walter, what you're asking me to do is surrender."

He walked out. And the next day. . . .

I came into my office by assassination—knowing that I was living under that burden.

Nixon is trying to move the country westward a little bit.

NBC and CBS news departments make no pretense of objectivity.

Ike's personality was such that he survived better than most.

Well, that was in my mind.

If I had a son, I'd [not?] want my son to be born on the eastern seaboard. They have no experience with the open prairies.

I was with President Roosevelt the day he fired Joe Kennedy. He picked up the phone and said, "Hello, Joe, are you in New York? Why don't you come down and have a little family dinner with us tonight?" Then he hung up and said, "That son-of-a-bitch is a traitor. He wants to sell us out."

Well, Kennedy did say Hitler was right.

Anyway, Roosevelt didn't have any southern molasses compassion. He didn't get wrapped up in going to anyone's funeral. Roosevelt never submitted one civil rights bill in

twelve years. He sent Mrs. Roosevelt to their meetings in their parks and she'd do it up good. But President Roosevelt never faced up to the problem.

I always thought of Senator [Eugene] McCarthy as the type of fellow who did damn little harm and damn little good. I never saw anything constructive come out of him. He was always more interested in producing a laugh than a law in the Senate.

I liked him. I thought he was an amusing fellow, very able and very good. His wife took Russian and Spanish classes with my wife.

McCarthy took money all the time in the Senate and I didn't respect him for that. He voted with the oil people because they paid him—along with [Vance] Hartke.

In the beginning of the year 1968, I thought Kennedy wanted to put McCarthy in New Hampshire to hold the line for him. And then Kennedy would come in. I thought Kennedy wanted to push out Humphrey.

Later I concluded that Kennedy seriously thought I was going to run. And McCarthy jumped the gun.

Times were right for agitation.

A great part of our student population became professional students—they dodged the draft for four or five years.

I had to make a basic decision on the draft. I had two fellows argue the merits of both sides. Larry Levinson argued that students should be further deferred. DeVier Pierson argued the other way. And I made up my mind.

It's hard for me to reconcile a man who had been McCarthy's counsel and McClellan's counsel when he investigated the labor situation—there's bound to be a little ambition there somewhere.

Martin Luther King's activity was financed by Kennedy. He tapped the phone with his right hand and gave him one hundred dollar bills with the left.

Conditions were ripe for violence. It was going on in Paris and in Rome. In the United States the denial of justice for Negroes for a hundred years was part of it.

When I was in the Senate we had two cars we would bring back to Texas. One car my wife and girls got in and the other car the Negro cook and her husband would drive. One time I asked them to bring my beagle dog. And I came in and they said, "Senator, does we have to take Beagle?" And I said "Why hell, yes, you have to take Beagle. Why don't you want to take him?" And they hung their heads and one of them said, "A nigger has enough trouble getting to Texas without a dog."

I watched this violence grow and I tried to cool it.

After Selma, I waited ten days and then I stuck it up to them. And I looked them right in the eye and I said I used to teach in Mexico and I saw the disappointment in the eyes of the students there, and I said now I am the president and I mean to do something about it.

So, some of it was based on a love of freedom, but it was financed and encouraged and directed by others for political purposes.

I never allowed my name to go on the ticket in New Hampshire. If I had, I have no doubt that I would have won New Hampshire two to one. The group pledged to LBJ won the election by a bigger vote than Nixon won this election.

I was surprised by McCarthy's vote in New Hampshire. I was surprised that folks all over the country were taken. I was surprised that a man with as little principle as McCarthy could take these people from the ivy colleges and make them think they were doing some good.

I don't remember much about Wisconsin at all.

About Massachusetts, I remember Larry O'Brien came to me and said this is what ought to be done. I said, "We're not going to touch Massachusetts." I did not feel I could disclose to him that I was not going to be a candidate. I never disclose too much to people who need to appear smart.

Tape Number 8

The fellow who does the least to satisfy his own ego is the one who doesn't have to tell it.

Whenever I used to read Drew Pearson, I would look and see where the "able" appeared. Somewhere in the last paragraph—the able Senator Such and such—and then you always knew where Drew got his story.

In 1968 I thought whoever I was for, for the nomination, would get it. I have not the slightest doubt that if I'd wanted to, I could have been re-elected. I believe I would have been nominated by that convention and that I would have won over Nixon by a substantial margin.

Humphrey started out as the leader of the Green Bay Packers and then he turned around and went in the opposite direction. To win elections, you've got to be for something and you've got to stand up for it.

Chicago hurt. Of course, it did.

Humphrey believed in everything I believed, until I announced I wouldn't run. You can't be all over the court. He's a wonderful human being. But you can't be all things to all people.

Humphrey doesn't like to face cold decisions. Well, neither do I. Neither does anyone. From November 23 [1963] until July 1965 I tried to keep from going into Vietnam.

Nearly 85 per cent of the people in the Congress said "We're not for your poverty program but we're sure behind you on Vietnam."

If I'm the only man left in this country to say aggression must not succeed anywhere in the world, I'll say it.

I believe Dulles was right on SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization].

When any outlaw breaks the law, the police ought to come in.

Kennedy and Harriman were playing a soft policy in Laos in 1961. The enemy said oh, oh. Diem stood up to them and they killed him.

Nixon is buying time.

If we get out, it's going to be tragic for this country.

They want what we've got and they're going to try to get it. If we let them take Asia, they're going to try to take us. I think aggression must be deterred. That's just sound policy.

I believe the big nations have to help the little nations.

I think we ought to have stopped Castro in Cuba. Ike sat on his fanny and let them take it by force.

But Cuba was not a success, because their efforts to take over Panama and Brazil and Chile didn't work.

We're going through a period of isolationism. After every period of great excitement and great challenge, that's what happens.

I believe you've got to keep your guard up and your hand out. I want to be friendly with the Soviets and with the Chinese. But if you let a bully come in and chase you out of your front yard, tomorrow he'll be on your porch, and the next day he'll rape your wife in your own bed.

I'm glad we had Ike and Patton fighting for us in World War II. I'm a free man because of it. I'd hate to have had to rely on [Henrik] Shipstead and [Robert] La Follette.

This is how stupid I was. I went to Congress and I signed the petition to require a referendum in the United States before we could go to war. I didn't trust the Congress, only the people.

So after Pearl Harbor we would have had an election for six months to determine whether the people wanted to respond or not.

Senator [Alvin] Wirtz [?] said to me one day: "You damn fool." He illustrated all the things that could happen. I talked to him all through one evening, and I finally came to the conclusion I ought to have had my head examined. I tried to take my name off that petition but it was too late. Right after that I did have the sense to vote to fortify Guam.

If I had run, we would have had some of the same problems Humphrey had. Most of it now is handled in broadcasts and media. Public appearances don't mean much.

I made many appearances, not at army camps.

Most of the picketing was organized. Those who picket that way don't believe in free speech. And I think those who foster and encourage it do our system a great disservice.

The morning of March 31, Lady Bird came in and woke me up at 5:30. She said, "Lynda is going through a trying period. She just told her husband goodbye and she's an expectant mother. He's going over there by your orders. He doesn't even know what you're going to say or do." She said we ought to meet her at the gate.

Lynda was coming on the Red Eye Special. We met her. We went upstairs and had a cup of coffee. She told us everything he had said, every little movement, where she kissed him. She looked at me and she had tears in her eyes and her voice. She said, "Daddy, why does Chuck have to go and fight and die to protect people who don't want to be protected?" It was hard for her to understand.

That night I looked over at Pat who had his orders for Korea.

The only doubt I ever had about the Marsh 31 decision—the only thing that could have made me reverse it—was those two boys, or 200,000 more, saying I was a yellow bellied SOB.

I asked Westmoreland about this in some detail—what they would think—

I salved my conscience.

I became convinced that my son-in-law and the public didn't feel that way. In my own heart, the way I really felt was that I was putting my whole stack in to get them out of there.

If I had put that in where no one would question the sincerity of it.

A nation cannot long endure when a public facility is used for private venom.

I'm concerned about the 1972 campaign. If the demonstrators will do all that to a fellow who passed the education and poverty bills, imagine what they'll do to a George Wallace or a Nixon if he turns into the old—

I could hardly improve on what Nixon's done to cool things since he's been in office.

The young people I've dealt with are the finest I've known in any generation. I've never come into contact with a cleaner or finer bunch than those I see.

Conditions of injustice of present policies and slowness to act were part of the conditions that caused all of this.

After every war there is desire to return to normalcy.

There was frustration in this country because in the 1950s we didn't face up to the problems that had built through the 1940s.

Now they want to do something about population control and poverty. Sometimes they do some rash things.

The protest we had in Los Angeles during the Glassboro weekend was played up more than the protest that Nixon got in Paris.

I don't think the country is going to hell. But you can't do everything in the name of freedom and still preserve freedom.

I don't think the McCarthys will preserve it any more than the Wallaces would.

Tape Number 9

I don't find a lot of fault with Nixon. We ought to help him, I think, more than we hurt him. And we ought to try to make his load easier.

If we can avoid serious economic problems, I believe we can find our way out of this Vietnam thing. I'd hate to think that we could not avoid all-out war.

I hate to think that I couldn't find a way out of the Middle East mess. The Israelis are too rambunctious. The Arabs are too inconsiderate and mean.

I didn't get all out of March 31 that I wanted to, but if I had it to do over again, I'd put my whole stack in again.

I could have either announced a bombing pause or that I wasn't going to run. But I thought it would have more impact if I announced them both together. And I think it did. I think it was the thing to do.

Time may show that it was a mistake, but the factors that I had to go by at the time indicated that it might just work. They put in their stack and lost, and I thought now they should be amenable.

We tried consistently, in my judgment, from November 23, 1963 to January 20, 1969 to be reasonable, to go the last mile in an attempt to have a fair and equitable resolution of the affair, without murder. We made overtures.

If the enemy made any, I am unaware of it.

Where do we go from here?

We have to go with our hand out and our guard up. We have to be patient and if we are patient I believe we can see it through.

Nothing could have changed my decision unless I became convinced that it was dishonorable or cowardly.

But I became convinced that it was the best thing I could do for those men. I had two right in the line out of my own family.

Now they're back and they're happy.

There's nothing I can do for this country that I am not ready to do.

I talk to members of Congress all the time. I talked to the Under Secretary of the Treasury all the time when the tax bill was under consideration. I talk to Nixon frequently.

I don't know of any way that I could improve on what he's doing.

The military situation on March 31 was this: I felt that we could stop the bombing without running a military danger. It was the right season of the year. Tet had failed.

I had determined that if they tried another offensive and failed, they would be ready to talk. I believe that was right, I believe the way we did it made our peace proposal believable to them. Proof of it is in Fulbright who said it was no good, it was a fraud. But Ho Chi Minh accepted it the same day.

It got us to the peace table.

When I got to where I could—in October—stop the bombing without endangering my men—I went that last mile.

If all we were to do was to get out, it might assuage things temporarily. But not in the long run.

I do think the country has problems. There is some danger to our safety and our future. But there's nothing we can't handle. We are more capable than any generation before us.

My father was outgoing and compassionate and trusting. He never met a stranger. He ran for office six times and was always elected. Mama made him quit. He'd stay out two or three years and then the people would make him go back. He was in the cattle business and cotton. Then the San Francisco earthquake came along and money went high. He went broke. He made a little fortune, two or three hundred thousand dollars, and then went broke again after World War I. And cotton went from 44 cents down to six cents. But he never belly-ached. He

never griped. I remember him all through the thirties, through the depression, as a rugged and able man.

My mother came from a long line of educators. She came out into the hills unprepared for the rough life there.

I was three months old when I was named. My mother and father couldn't agree on a name. The people my father liked were heavy drinkers—pretty rough for a city girl. She didn't want me named after any of them.

Finally, there was a criminal lawyer—a county lawyer—named W. C. Linden. He would go on a drunk for a week after every case. My father liked him and he wanted to name me after him. My mother didn't care for the idea but she said finally that it was alright, she would go along with it if she could spell the name the way she wanted to. So that was what happened.

I was campaigning for Congress in [inaudible]. An old man with a white carnation in his lapel came up and said, "That was a very good speech, I want to vote for you like I always have. The only thing I don't like about you is the way you spell your name." He then identified himself as W. C. Linden.

My mother used to make me memorize my geometry problems. She talked me into going to college. I was twenty-three years old then and I paid $23 a month for two meals and one room. In order to get in, I had to be able to pass the entrance examination in geometry. Mother came down and stayed with me three days, coaching me. And I finally made seventy-two in plane geometry on that examination.

I was the only one who made the debate team as a freshman. But old Dean Might [?] gave me a "D" in argumentation. A "D" on your transcript was just like having it say two years in Leavenworth.

I was nineteen when I was teaching at Cotulla. Bailey Radcliffe was the coach. He and I were smoking on the school grounds one day and the kids were watching us. The superintendent asked us not to smoke. But the next day Bailey lit up again and the superintendent came up and said, "I guess you feel as if you ought to do this smoking?" Bailey said, "Mr. Superintendent, I do feel strongly about it. When I work as hard as I do until noon and then just have an hour for lunch, I want to relax, and I really feel as if I ought to be able to smoke when I want to. Out here or anywhere else."

The old man looked at him, "Well, I think you're right. You sure do have a right to do whatever you want to. Now, I've got a right also. I've got a right to select who I want to be the coach of this team. And I'm exercising that right right now. You're fired, as of now. And there's no repeal [sic] from that decision."

I've always thought about that a great deal. Men do have rights, but other men have them also.

Bailey borrowed thirty dollars from me, the only money I ever remember a man not paying back.

If you really trust people, there are few who don't reciprocate. Nearly every person in the world is good. Those who are not were messed up by someone.

Mrs. Kennedy once told me that she wanted her children to grow up with animals. She felt they would understand people more if they did. If you scratch the head of a bull, he'll cut out his meanness.

I watch the people going into my birthplace, out by my Ranch. Everyone who goes in there is grateful. The women all want their sons to grow up to be presidents. If they knew a little bit more about the job, I'm not sure they'd feel that way. But they do and they're grateful to get a chance to look at where a president was born. They think some of that will rub off on them.

Tape Number 10

One of the women who works there told me that the other day a lady and her little boy were in and they were listening to Bird's voice on a record tell about the place. And the little boy started talking and his mama shushed him and said, "I want to hear what she's saying. This is where the President was born." He was quiet for a while and pretty soon he started talking again and she said, "I told you to be quiet. I want to hear...don't you know that this is where the President was born?" And the little boy said, "Yes, I know this is where he was born, but is this where he died?"

In Johnson City the old men sit out in front on the sidewalk and play dominoes all day long. And one of them, after I became President, said, "Old Lyndon sure has moved up in the world, hasn't he?" And the other one said, "Yea, up the road about a half a mile."

End of tape 10 of 10

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