INTERVIEWEE: J. LINDSAY ALMOND, JR.

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

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B. This is the interview with J. Lindsay Almond, Jr. Sir, let me read an outline of your career subject to corrections and additions. You were born in 1898 in Charlottesville, served in World War II in the Army --

A: World War I.

B: Excuse me! World War I. Law degree from the University of Virginia in 1923; practiced law in Roanoke for awhile; and then were assistant prosecuting attorney in Roanoke. Then from the mid-30's to the mid-40's, you were a judge of the Hustings Court in Roanoke; '46 to '48 in the U. S. House of Representatives. Then, until '57 Attorney General of Virginia; governor from '58 to '62, and since in 1962 your position here is Associate Judge in the U. S. Court of Customs and Patent Appeals.

A: That's correct.

B: Now, sir, when did you first meet Mr. Johnson? When you and he were in Congress together?

A: Yes, as you have already observed, I came to the Congress representing the 6th Congressional District for Virginia, as a result of a special election to fill a vacancy in January 1946.

My first contact with President Johnson, then and for some time prior thereto a member of the House of Representatives, was in connection with the Case Labor Bill, which was under debate when I

entered the House. I came from a district with a lot of labor in it, and I was under very much pressure relative to that bill. Naturally I sought the advice of Speaker Rayburn, a man whom I held in high respect from the first day I knew him until he died. And I cherish his memory; always will. Then Congressman Lyndon Johnson came into the office, and the Speaker asked him to sit down and he joined in the conversation. It was my concern, being a new member just starting out, whether I should become embroiled in that or not. I sought the Speaker's advice and Mr. Johnson, Congressman Johnson, joined in that. That was my first contact with him.

B: Did Mr. Johnson give you direct advice on how a freshman Congressman behaves?

A: Well, yes, he did. And it was very helpful. He told me that every man had to conduct himself and his thinking, to a certain extent, relative to the views of the people whom he represented. After all, a representative in the Congress has certain political implications that one cannot ignore, and that I should approach the thing, do what I felt was right and at the same time take into consideration my own interest.

That conversation went on for some length. Mr. Speaker joined in and concurred with those views. From that I got to know -- I at that time called him Lyndon Johnson, I wouldn't dare do it after he became President because the Office of the President being so much to me -- but it helped me to get started and I envisioned him and sized him up

as a man practical in politics, yet one who had courage and who had a fine sense of dedication.

So I faced the issue and supported the Case Labor Bill, voted affirmatively for it even though I knew that it would cost me politically in my district. As a result of it I was assulted politically in the next ensuing primary but fortunately made it all right. I did what I thought was right and largely my fears were allayed as to my own political security as a result of my conversation with Lyndon Johnson and Speaker Sam Rayburn.

B: You were re-elected at the regular election?

A: Oh, yes. Re-elected with an increasing majority.

B: Did you have any further contacts with the then-Congressman Johnson in your continuing term?

A: I can't recall any specific contacts relating to legislation or legislative policy. We were both Democrats. I recall seeing him in the Democratic cloakroom, sitting beside him at times in the House while issues were under debate. Maybe in close contact with him when roll call votes would come up. I can recall several instances -- I can't name the specifics of them -- in which I asked him how he was voting on some issues and why. More not to question him but to inform myself as to what I should do because I did have respect for him.

B: Do you know if there were other Congressmen who sought out Mr. Johnson for the same kind of purpose and advice?

A: I do not recall how long he had been in the House prior to my entry, but I do know that he stood well, was well thought of and highly respected by his colleagues in the House. And that's not confined to the Texas delegation. During my time there I felt Texas had a very strong delegation. Some of them are there now -- and people you could lean on and you could rely on.

B: Did you see anything then or later of the relationship between Mr. Johnson and some of the Virginia leaders, like Howard Smith or Harry Byrd?

A: I never saw anything that I can recall relative to his relationship with Senator Byrd. I do know that he highly respected Congressman Smith. I'm sure he didn't always agree with him and neither did I. I think they had a very high regard for each other. Further than that I could not go into specifics.

B: You left the Congress, as we said, in '48 to become the Attorney General of Virginia. During those years, from '48 to '57, while you were Attorney General, did you have anyfurther contact with Mr. Johnson?

A: No, I did not.

B: I was wondering -- those must have been difficult years to be the Attorney General of Virginia; the Supreme Court's school decision in 1954 and its aftermath in the South generally. I was wondering if Mr. Johnson, by then a leader in the Senate, was in contact with the leaders in the Southern states about how to meet these problems and so on?

A: Well, if he was, his contacts would have been through his senatorial associates but I had no direct contact. Of course, I was in contact with members of Congress from Virginia, and the Senators from Virginia. But I had no contacts with him relative to that. I don't know if I even had an opportunity to be with him during that period.

B: When the 1957 Civil Rights Bill was being discussed in the Congress, did you have any direct or indirect relationship with that?

A: No, I had no direct relationship. I testified before Manny Celler's Judiciary Committee of the House, but I do not recall having any contact other than with the Virginia Representatives in Congress and in the Senate.

B: Sir, if you don't mind diverting slightly from Mr. Johnson, it would be a shame to pass up this opportunity. Those years when you were Attorney General and from '58 on as Governor, as I said, must have been very difficult years. Do you mind if I ask you about some purely Virginia matters?

A: No. I'll be glad to respond if I can.

B: Well, I was wondering, your activities in encouraging moderation, for want of a better word, in reaction to the Supreme Court's decision, was it difficult to follow the kind of moderate and realistic course that you adopted in Virginia?

A: It was not only difficult, but many of my close friends and political associates and advisers regarded it as impossible to do. Now, I had been Attorney General through those years, prior to becoming Governor, possibly I think about ten years.

I argued all those school cases in the lower courts and in the Supreme Court of the United States. I was convinced as a lawyer that the decision of the Supreme Court was wrong. I felt that the precedent laid down in Plessy against Ferguson, I believe in 1898, expounding the separate but equal doctrine was sound law. That precedent had been reaffirmed since then by the Supreme Court of the United States. I felt that the issue was one that should be left to the States.

I did not believe in racial discrimination. I didn't want to see it, but I did believe that it was impossible to bring about all accommodation whereby you could eliminate separation of the races in public education. I believe that the facilities for both should have been as near equal as possible. Therefore I fought, and I say this as background, I fought as hard as I could, as best I knew how -- and I trust fairly and honorably -- to preserve the right of the state to make that determination for itself. After the decision adverse to that point of view had been handed down by the Supreme Court in Brown against Board, which is the stock case referred to, came up to the Supreme Court through the lower federal courts from Prince Edward County, Virginia, I felt that I had to go as far as I could as Attorney General and subsequently as Governor to try to devise ways and means consistent with law, and in keeping with Virginia standards as I conceived them to be, to accommodate to the decision without any sudden disruption of the entire educational system of the state by the amalgamation of the races in the public schools. So I struggled, you might say, to the last ditch and even probably went too far.

Then as a lawyer, I knew from a legal standpoint in the arena of debate in these courts of the United States, that our cause was lost, that the Supreme Court of the United States had laid down the law and whether I liked it or not or anybody else liked it, it was the law of the land, and the judgments and decisions of that court or any other court of competent jurisdiction as long as they stood should be respected.

Then I gradually, through a process of contacts -- not through public statements but through a process of contacts with my associates in the General Assembly of Virginia and with members of Congress and with Senator Byrd -- tried to get them to see that we had to come up with a solution of our dilemma that would not dishonor Virginia nor put Virginia in a position of open defiance of the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States. And that's when my troubles began.

Then many thought, "Well, he's weakening." I wasn't weakening at all. In my own honest judgment I was trying to arrive at the conclusion that was honorable and at the same time, whether I liked it or not, comported with the law which had been established by final decisions from the Supreme Court of the United States.

To answer you specifically, the approach to it was through a very trying period, sometimes facing utter desperation. Sometimes the discussions would get very warm, and not too polite, and then ultimately after I became Governor calling the General Assembly into session and laying down a program that I thought was the proper accommodation and a proper measure of compliance with the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States.

B: Did you win over allies?

A: Yes.

B: Men, like for instance, Senator Byrd eventually come around?

A: No, no. Senator Byrd just from the beginning until the day he died was very adamant. Ne never came over, and as a result of it, to my regret, because I did admire and respect him, we had an open break -- a political break, philosophical break. I'm sure that from things he said and did, he had lost any admiration he ever held for me. I trust I can say -- I'm trying to be honest -- I'd always admired him and admire his memory and respect his memory to this day.

But, not only that, but in order to -- if I may use the expression -- to buck Senator Byrd in the legislature of Virginia, was a very serious proposition. It had never been in my time successfully done. I had to do it! There was no way out of it. There was no compromise. I had to face the issue and in a desperate legislative battle I got my program through the General Assembly of Virginia. Now I was not the only one. Without the help I received I couldn't have done it, and others, too, who were situated politically as I was, had to break with Senator Byrd. But I was the leader. I was the titular leader of the State by virtue of the fact that I was Governor of Virginia and of course I had to bear the brunt of the responsibility which I accepted. Not gladly, but willingly, because there was no other way out, and my conscience was clear then and it is now, and I've always regretted that I had to clash with Senator Byrd.

B: Did it come close to seeing all the schools close?

A: No. But we were rapidly doing down that road and that was the program, to close every single one of them in Virginia before, if you'll allow me to use the expression, there would be one ounce or one iota of integration. That's what Senator Byrd. wanted. Furthermore what he wanted was the invocation of the power of the State against the power of the federal government.

B: A nullification kind of thing?

A: A nullification process. They introduced in the General Assembly of Virginia a resolution of interposition which derived from some of President Madison's papers, I think, and possibly from something Jefferson had said, so as to interpose as legal concept the authority of the State between the exercise of federal authority on a State subject matter such as the public schools. And of course that was foolish -- that was legally foolish.

B: But as it ended up, only the Prince Edward County public schools were closed.

A: No, the Prince Edward County public schools were closed. When I became Governor there was a law on the statute books enacted under Senator Byrd's tutelage during the administration of my predecessor, which required that if any integration took place the schools would be closed. And while that law was on the books, I was telling them, even though I'd advised against its enactment when I was Attorney General -- I applied that law because I was supposed to fairly execute the laws of

Virginia, knowing that legally I couldn't maintain my position. So the schools in Norfolk were closed. I think the schools in Charlottesville were closed, but that didn't last long because the federal courts opened them up, as I think most any lawyer would have known that that would happen.

B: But it took longer, not until '64, I believe, in the Griffin case the Prince Edward schools were reopened.

A: That's right, that's right.

B: This is a question of pure speculation, but what would a man like yourself as Governor of Virginia have done about the race and school question had there not been the Supreme Court decision in '54?

A: Well, what I would have done and what I had advised Governor Tuck, who was Governor of Virginia when I became Attorney General -- made every reasonable endeavor to bring the system of education for the races, even though on a separate basis, to bring them to a parity in teacher qualification, for pupil instruction, for pupil expenditure, for bus transportation so that we could say that we had lived up to the rule pronounced in Plessy against Ferguson in 1896 or '98 -- and we hadn't lived up to it.

When we went into the Prince Edward case to defend it after it was brought, we were wholly outclassed, in fact, because the facilities were not equal. I was Attorney General, I went to the Governor and with the aid of the school authorities in Prince Edward County, persuaded him to make an appropriation available, so that I could say to the Supreme Court of the United States that when this suit started these facilities were not equal. We were not in compliance with Plessy against Ferguson but

now we are. And we were in a position to say that. But as you know, the decision said, "separate but equal," was inherently discriminatory.

B: The decision said the separateness was therefore discriminatory. Thank you, sir, for allowing that digression.

A: You can use that as you see fit.

B: To get back to Mr. Johnson and national politics, you played a part in the activities around the 1960 Decratic nomination and campaign. When did you first begin to see Mr. Johnson as a potential Presidential candidate?

A: Well, I think it was very apparent -- it certainly was to me -- that when Senator Kennedy was campaigning for the nomination in various primaries, that Senator Johnson had said enough, and his friends had indicated, that he certainly was going to be a candidate for the nomination. Well, as you remember, he did not go into a primary. While I had great respect for Senator Kennedy -- also served in the House with him -- I felt that Virginia's best interests would lie with the nomination of Senator Johnson for the Presidency.

So when the State convention came on prior to the Los Angeles convention, to nominate and instruct the delegates from the State to the national convention, Senator Byrd was rather insistent that the delegation be instructed for Johnson. Now, that wasn't necessary. I didn't oppose it. It was agreeable to me but it wasn't necessary to be done because the majority of the delegation was for him anyway. But I think he felt,

and from some things he said my thinking is more than just surmise, that unless the delegation was instructed, that since Governor Almond was chairman of the delegation to the Los Angeles convention by virtue of his office he might get out there and try to throw the Virginia vote to Senator Kennedy.

Of course, had they not been instructed, I would have gone by the majority of the delegates voting in caucus in the State delegation at Los Angeles. I had no desire to do it, because I stayed with Senator Johnson's forces until it was clear that he could not receive the nomination and cast the Virginia vote for him on the ballot when the balloting came up. I just believe there was one ballot. I'm not sure. I think there was one --

B: I presume Senator Byrd's attitude was an outgrowth of the difference between him and you, you've described?

A: With reference to instructing that delegation -- because it had not been done in my recollection before -- the Senator usually attended the national conventions and he instructed the delegation after he got out there. He didn't have to instruct them in the State convention. I think that was his purpose in tying the hands of that delegation so that I would have no position to maneuver after I got to Los Angeles, if I thought it desirable -- as a good many members of the delegation did think it was desirable.

But I told my forces at the State convention, I said, "He's got strength enough in this convention to instruct it; why go into a losing fight?" They wanted to keep it from being instructed, because Kennedy had considerable support in the Virginia delegation, and I said, 'I'm not

going to lead a fight against him because I know when I'm licked! He has got the vote set to do it." So I think he was a little surprised when I didn't put up a fight.

B: Had Mr. Kennedy or any of his aides been in touch with you prior to this state convention?

A: Bill Battle, who was very close to Senator Kennedy -- after was Ambassador to Australia under President Kennedy's appointment -- and Bob Kennedy on several occasions conferred with me. One one occasion I saw Senator Kennedy and discussed the situation.

B: Did you tell them then your inclinations were toward Mr. Johnson?

A: I told them my inclinations were toward Senator Johnson and that the majority of the Virginia delegation even before they had been selected from the sentiment in the state, and from various ones to whom I had talked (who) I knew would be delegates, that Senator Johnson had the majority vote, and that I didn't think it would be instructed -- and at that time I didn't -- and that when the time for maneuvering came along that he had a lot of friends in the Virginia delegation -- that I was one of them -- but that I felt that my first commitment was to Senator Johnson.

B: Why did you favor Senator Johnson for the Presidency at this time?

A: Well, I think both men were, in my judgment, preeminently qualified -- Senator Johnson and Senator Kennedy -- both to be President of the United States and to lead the party in that fight. I think each of them were.

He (Senator Johnson) was a Texan. I was very close to and very fond of Speaker Sam Rayburn. I had made friends in the Texas delegation

when I was in Congress, and I had held that delegation in very, very high respect. Somehow I felt closer to Senator Johnson than I did to Senator Kennedy though I did know and admire him very much.

B: Did you think that a Southerner could be elected President?

A: No. I didn't think a Southerner could be elected President at that time. I was afraid he couldn't be elected President heading the ticket. But I felt it my obligation and my sense of evaluation of friendships and contacts that I should be for him and I don't regret it.

B: After Mr. Kennedy received the nomination, that following morning didn't you meet with a group of other Southern leaders with the then-nominee Mr. Kennedy over the question of a Vice President?

A: Yes. Senator Kennedy, then the nominee, called me and asked me if I would sit with him and a group of his friends at a certain time. I think it was at the Biltmore Hotel. Of course I agreed to do it.

Between that phone call and the time that I met the Senator Kennedy, Mr. Sam Rayburn called me and asked me what I thought about the Lyndon Johnson situation for Vice President. I told him that I was heartily in favor of it, that we had to win, and that I thought without him that Kennedy couldn't win.

B: Had the offer already been made then when Mr. Rayburn --?

A: As far as I know it had not, but I couldn't answer that because that was between the time Senator Kennedy called me and the time I sat with him.

B: Was that early Thursday morning?

A: Early Thursday morning. I don't think I'd had breakfast. Mr. Sam called me at my room at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Los Angeles. I don't want to misquote him but he left me an impression, though he didn't say so, he left me the impression he didn't think much of it. I don't know whether you knew him or not but he had a way of grunting sometimes that you could tell. But he didn't say that. He just thanked me and said he'd be seeing me. Then I sat in on that conference.

B: Who was at that conference, sir? Do you recall some of the people there?

A: Yes. Ernie Vandiver, Governor of Georgia, was there. Luther Hodges was there. The Governor of South Carolina, Ernest Hollings, was there. I think Price Daniel, I'm not sure, but I think Price Daniel was there. Mennen Williams came in -- whether he was invited or not, but he came in. I recall seeing Orville Freeman there, and several gentlemen I didn't know. I know I've left out some of them.

B: Was Robert Kennedy there?

A: I don't think he was. I'm pretty sure he wasn't.

B: At that meeting did John Kennedy just open the floor for suggestions for the Vice Presidency, or did he ask you what you thought of Lyndon Johnson for the Vice President?

A: Well, of course, in his very magnanimous way he thanked us for coming and said, "As you know, we need all the help we can get and you, my friends, I can depend on you for that. I want some advice as to the best man

for this convention to nominate to the Vice Presidency of the United States." He opened it for discussion, and said, "I want you to be free; it's going to be off the record, anyway you want it."

He opened it wide for discussion, and I don't think he led. As I recall, he didn't try to influence that discussion this way or that. He gave the impression that his mind was open. That was the impression, and different names came up. I don't remember who suggested this that or the other, but different names came up. But principally the leading name was Senator Johnson. And I think, as I recall that conference, I kept my mouth shut. I was a little late getting in and he pulled up a chair and I sat right beside him, and he finally turned to me and he said, "Governor Almond, you haven't said anything. Would you express your opinion?"

I said, "Yes, I'll be glad to do it." I did, and what I told him was this, "In the first place I felt that Senator Johnson was not only qualified to be Vice President of the United States, but any man who was qualified to be Vice President of the United States should also be qualified to be President of the United States," and I thought he measured up to both of those qualifications -- prerequisites. The main object, with that part out of the way, was to win this election. And he couldn't win this election, in my humble judgment unless he carried Texas, unless he carried Virginia. And I said, "I can't speak for Virginia, nor can I speak for Texas, but I'm going to do everything I can to help you carry

Virginia. I think you can! I know you can if Senator Byrd will come out for you." And I heard somebody laugh, don't remember who it was -- "And together with our help you can carry Virginia. But you have got to carry Texas in my judgment and you will be enabled with Lyndon Johnson on that ticket to carry maybe one or more Southern states that you otherwise wouldn't have carried." Now I honestly felt that way. And there was right much agreement with that approach.

After he thanked us, and he didn't indicate, but he thanked us and said we'd been very helpful. We left, and they were serving coffee or something in the next room, a great big place there, somebody came to me and said, "Wish you'd go through that door there," and pointed to a door. And he said, "unobtrusively." I knew it was something, so I opened the door and there was Senator Kennedy alone in the room -- no one else there. He called me "Governor," said, "Governor, you were very frank awhile ago."

I said, "I hope I was not too frank." He said, "Oh, no, I appreciate it very much indeed. I wanted to tell you I did." And he said, "I want to talk to you about Virginia." So we talked about Virginia and didn't say any more about Texas.

B: Did that mean incidentally talking about Senator Byrd's possible position?

A: Well, yes, because he said, "From what you said you didn't feel that you were too certain that Senator Byrd's going to support me." I said, "Senator, I'm afraid he's not going to support you." I said, "You know how he did Harry Truman." I was Attorney General then and I campaigned in the State for Harry Truman and he called me on the mat and gave me the

devil about it. I told him I was a Democrat and above that I admired Harry Truman and I was going to support him. I didn't carry the state for Truman, but Truman carried it. I helped him all I could. I said, 'I'm going to help you all I can." But I don't know, because he was adamant about instructing that convention for Lyndon Johnson -- that Virginia delegation -- and it wasn't necessary to do it. But he did it, and I said, 'I don't know whether he is or not."

B: Did either one of you, either you or Mr. Kennedy, at this time mention the possibility that with Johnson on the ticket Senator Byrd might be more likely to support it?

A: Yes. Yes, you refreshed my mind, because he said, 'I don't see why you would doubt it, that he would support the ticket inasmuch as he supported me for the Vice Presidential nomination four years ago -- which he had -- and inasmuch, as you said, he was so adamant relative to get the Virginia delegation instructed for Johnson." He said, 'I don't quite follow your logic." He was very pointed in what he said. I said, "Well, that remains to be seen."

B: What I was getting at, it seems perhaps that in Mr. Kennedy's mind this might have been another reason for giving the choice to Mr. Johnson.

A: Could well have been, could well have been.

B: I don't want to be in a position of reading his mind, but --

A: No. It could well have been, because I think he realized he had to carry some of the Southern states to win. He was too smart not to realize it.

B: Did your conversation with Mr. Kennedy go on any beyond that?

A: No. Oh, we might have had some just personal reflections, but nothing relating to politics. I didn't get a chance to speak to him, though I saw him several times, until the night he addressed the assemblage after his nomination in the Los Angeles stadium. I went up to speak to his mother and when he came up he came over and kind of hit me on the back, shook hands with me -- nothing political.

B: During that day, after the offer of the Vice Presidential position was made to Mr. Johnson, did you see either Mr. Johnson or Mr. Rayburn?

A: Later that day?

B: I'm asking because it's pretty well known that Mr. Rayburn, well, as you've indicated, was at first reluctant to see Mr. Johnson take the Vice Presidential nomination. But somehow or another, Mr. Rayburn changed his mind.

A: I made no effort to see Senator Johnson after it became known that Senator Kennedy had selected him. On the convention floor the Virginia delegation was abutted right up against the Texas delegation, which suited me fine because I felt at home with those fellows. I could slip over and speak to Mr. Sam whenever I wanted to by just going a few feet, you know. I did see him. I did discuss it with him. I judged from something that was dropped by some member of the Texas delegation that he was not too well pleased. But he didn't say that to me. In that phone conversation he didn't say that, but he left me an impression. He kind of grunted and said, "umm," or something like that, and "Thank you, I'll be seeing you."

B: Was the Kennedy-Johnson ticket agreeable to your delegation there on the floor?

A: Not a hundred percent. Because there were several who had said that Virginia banner wouldn't go in the triumphant parade. You know how they do those things. I said, 'It's going in the parade, and I'm going to carry it, and I don't know of anybody here man enough to stop me." About that time a great bull-necked fellow -- a dear friend of mine, oh, he was a powerful man -- he stepped up and said, 'I'll carry it for you, I'll go with you." So four or five of them didn't get in the parade and didn't follow the banner but the banner went in the procession, you know, after he had made his speech.

B: What was their objection? Did they object to Mr. Kennedy's or Mr. Johnson's inclusion on the ticket?

A: They were not too warm for either one of them, because subsequently some of those same people didn't support Lyndon Johnson when they had a chance to do it when Goldwater ran against him. Because of their close contact with Byrd, I read that as a reflection of Senator Byrd's feelings even though Senator Byrd at that time was in Switzerland -- not even in the United States of America. I knew that from those people that took that attitude I felt Senator Byrd was not going to go along with that ticket, even though with Lyndon Johnson on it. And, as you know, he didn't.

B: Do you figure, incidentally, that made the difference in Virginia? As I recall, Nixon carried Virginia in the '60 election.

A: He did carry Virginia. And that made the difference. Had Byrd come out for the ticket, that ticket in my humble judgment would have carried Virginia by a substantial margin.

B: During the campaign, and after the convention, when the campaign had started, do you know if Senator Byrd and Mr. Johnson got together? If Mr. Johnson tried to win the Senator over?

A: Yes. Either both Senator Johnson or Senator Kennedy, but certainly Senator Kennedy, told me in this language. "You know, Lyndon and I went to his office and sat down and talked with him and explored this whole situation with him." I said, "How far did you get?" He kind of shook his head, and said, "I'm afraid we didn't get very far." I don't want to say that Senator Johnson discussed it with him. I just don't know.

B: What was Senator Byrd's objection? Why was he so adamant against Senator Kennedy?

A: Well, of course, Senator Kennedy had been in the Senate. Senator Kennedy had been in the House. He thought -- his thinking didn't comport with Byrd's concept of conservatism. He thought he was too liberal. I can't conceive of Byrd having anything personal against either man.

B: Did religion play a part in it?

A: No, no. I must say that, because in 1928 he was very active for Al Smith, and so was I. And if you will permit me to digress a moment, I was a young alwyer then and I campaigned all through Virginia for Al Smith. I thought the way they treated him on account of his religion

was a great tragedy and a travesty on my concept of fairness. I thought he was a great man and would have made a great president. Senator Byrd was very active for him. I spoke on the same platform with him. I was much younger then. That was in 1928. I spoke on the same platform with him and the same platform with Carter Glass, then Senator from Virginia. No, Senator Byrd was not a religious bigot by any means.

B: Incidentally, did you find in Virginia a difference in attitude toward Catholicism between 1928 and 1960?

A: Very perceptible difference. I debated several wild-eyed preachers in the 1928 campaign, and it wasn't very polite. I spoke for Senator Kennedy and Johnson at Atlanta, at a meeting at one of the hotels in Atlanta. Bob Kennedy was there in his room, several were around and this issue of Catholicism came up. Bob Kennedy -- somebody had told him that I had been in the Al Smith campaign as a campaigner, in a very humble capacity of course. He said, "I want your frank view about it." That was before this delegation of preachers had invited Senator Kennedy to Texas --

B: The Houston Ministerial Association.

A: The Houston Ministerial Association. I said, "I hope you tell the Senator for me, for Heaven sakes, face this issue head on. Accept the challenge. While I think it's dangerous, I think the temper of the people has changed and ameliorated to a great extent, but a lot of it is there yet." Then after the Houston invitation came up he accepted it, and I

think he allayed that issue right there in my judgment. But I remember discussing it with Bob. I said, "In some parts of the country and some parts of the South it's going to be touch and go."

Just for an example I was speaking in Southwest Virginia for the ticket. I was driving my car and I know we had the radio on and some preacher was exhorting the people that, "If you elect this man President, the Pope's going to move in and take your Bible," just screaming it! In some areas, some backwoods areas, there was a lot of that sentiment even then. But it had changed a lot, it had changed a lot from 1928, but it was still dangerous.

B: Did Mr. Johnson campaign in Virginia in the '60 campaign?

A: Yes, yes. I introduced him at Richmond. I introduced him at Petersburg. He spoke at Charlottesville. I couldn't be there because I had another speaking engagement in another part of the State. On the Southern Railway that went from Washington I think to New Orleans, I met that train at Culpeper, introduced him at Culpeper, Charlottesville, and Danville. Then I think Luther Hodges took over in Greensboro. I got off somewhere in the South and came back.

But I campaigned for the ticket as best I could and many said that it was well received. I think that's true. But I knew we had an uphill fight because lots and lots of people that I would talk to would say, "Well, what about Senator Byrd. He's not hollering. Why are you hollering your head off?" I could tell they were being influenced by his attitude.

B: Did you talk to Senator Byrd at any time during this campaign?

A: No, Senator Byrd didn't speak to me and was not on speaking terms with me during that time because of the school situation. In other words if I'd see him, if I'd get in his company, he'd turn his back on me and get away from me like I had some loathful disease.

B: I've heard it said that Mrs. Johnson is a pretty good stump speaker and a political campaigner. Did she campaign in Virginia on that train trip too?

A: I don't recall her making any speeches, but she was campaigning and I think one of the most effective I ever came in contact with. I hadn't heard her make a political talk and she handled herself beautifully. She's modest. She's sweet. She is outgoing. She engages the confidence of her listeners. Every movement, every action is attractive, and even in the rough and tumble of politics I think that Mrs. Johnson would be an outstanding campaigner. Some speeches she made -- some that I read, some that I heard -- I thought very good and very effective.

B: Did you see much of Mr. Johnson after he was Vice President?

A: Not much. Occasionally when I'd get to Washington, and had a chance to get over on the hill, if he was available, I'd drop in and just speak to him. Since coming on the Court, before he became President -- President Kennedy appointed me -- I was in his office several times, just a friendly visit.

B: Did you get the impression that he was unhappy or frustrated as Vice President?

A: No, I didn't. I didn't get that impression. And I never heard anyone else of my acquaintance who had been with him indicate anything of that sort.

B: He and John Kennedy seemed to get along very well together?

A: I so judged it. I was at the White House on at least two or three occasions when he was present, had lunch with the President, when the Vice President was present. I thought the rapport between them was all that could be desired, all that you would desire. I never heard either one say or indicate anything that would cause me to think otherwise.

I was there on a Governors' Committee -- Dave Lawrence, Governor of Pennsylvania, was chairman of it, about some Appalachian problems and he insisted we stay for lunch. The Vice President came in, I'm sure by invitation, and we had quite a frolicsome good time, all friends. All the Governors there, there were six Governors, all very friendly to both of them, and I never saw or heard anything that would indicate there was any abrasion between them at all.

B: In that November of 1963, just before President Kennedy went to Texas, there was a judicial reception in the White House. Did you attend that, sir?

A: To my dying regret, no. Mrs. Almond and I were invited and just that day the doctor had put her in the hospital to run some checks we thought were important. We had accepted, and I called Pierre Salinger and explained it to him. He said he would communicate with the President and

that I would hear from the President after he came back from Texas. We were talking about it the other night, to my everlasting regret we couldn't be there.

B: Did you see the then-President Johnson any time fairly soon after the assassination?

A: Oh, I say within -- well, in person, you mean?

B: Yes, sir.

A: Of course I saw him when he delivered his first message in the House and just had a chance to stick my hand out and speak to him. I would say within three months we were invited to the White House.

B: What sort of function would that be?

A: That was a judicial function. It was very shortly afterward. He always included us. He was always very sociable.

B: What did Mr. Johnson seem like on that occasion?

A: Well, he seemed to have adjusted. He seemed relaxed, good frame of mind. I had very little chance to talk with him. I remember saying this to him when I went down the receiving line. You know how he'd do, he'd kind of wink at you. I remember when I introduced him at Culpeper during that Presidential campaign when Kennedy was running. I had just a few words. The last words he said to the crowd there, he raised those arms up and he said, "What the hell did Nixon ever do for Culpeper?" As I went down the receiving line, I looked at him and he kind of winked at me, and I said, "Mr. President?" He said, "Yes?"

And I said, "What the hell did Nixon ever do for Culpeper?" Well, he got a big laugh out of it.

I saw him on subsequent occasions when I thought he was very, very tense -- very tense. Friendly, open, frank and all that, but I could kind of read a tension.

B: Did you infer that this tension came from the burdens of the Presidency generally, or from, say, the Viet Nam war specifically?

A: Well, of course, I think the war itself had the greatest impact, but I think generally it was the overwhelming pressure. I don't believe any man -- certainly in my reading of history, you know, in my time -- the Presidents that I can recall ever had the pressures or ever had the problems, the conglomeration of problems, intertwining problems. You would think you had one straightened up, you went into another one. I thought the war had a terrible impact on him. Naturally, he's human, and had a great heart in him. And he suffered when people suffered. While the war had the greatest impact. I think the burdens of his offices were just too much for any human being.

B: Do you think the office is getting to be that big and that complicated almost beyond one man's capability?

A: Well, it's really very distressing to me. I don't know what it ultimately will come to. I think it's getting so big that so much authority has got to be delegated. Whenever there's delegation of authority from an elected official who has gained the confidence of the people, there's always a chance of some aberration, some miscue, some misguided thought or act or deed. But I think there has got to be more and more

delegation of authority in the office of the President.

B: Some say that Mr. Johnson is just not the kind of man to easily delegate work.

A: I think that's true. I think he carried his problems to bed with him. I think he slept with them. He's not the type of man who could look at something and say, "This is for you," and "This is for this department, I want a report on it." I think he followed it. He'd turn it over to a subordinate, the head of another department, yet he still kept it with him. I don't think he's the type of man who can delegate things, I think Eisenhower was a great delegater. Of course, that was his military training. But Lyndon Johnson was a type of do it yourself! After all, I think he felt, "This is my responsibility; if it's not done, I'm responsibile for it."

B: Could you evaluate Mr. Johnson as a man and a President? His strengths and his weaknesses?

A: It's going to be hard to do except in the prespective of history. I think he's a man of very strong convictions. I do not know just how far he had been qualified when he ascended so tragically and so suddenly as a result of the tragedy to the Presidency. His whole training and experience had been legislative, not executive, at either national or state level. But I think he grew in the Presidency.

I think one of his greatest weaknesses was not being able to delegate authority to responsible subordinates, heads of departments, and holding

them specifically accountable. I don't think he had the knack -- I don't call it lack of capacity -- to divorce himself from minutiae, from detail, instead of adhering to the big concept, the big principle, the big things that had to be done and leave the details to others. I think that was his great weakness.

From the standpoint of dedication, devotion, loyalty to his country, courage, and innate character, decency, I place him second to none.

B: Have you found a difference in the Lyndon Johnson who comes through in personal relationships, and the Lyndon Johnson who appears on televison?

A: Yes, yes. In personal conversation and relationship, he hardly had a master. He didn't project himself on television, except in good old Texas or Southern free style, speaking like I used to like to try to do. He didn't project himself when he was making a speech. A formal speech was not his part at all in addressing a college convocation, United Nations, or whatnot. But as a political campaigner, he's hard to beat. I don't know that he had a peer. As I say, he was a hard-driving, free-swinging, fighting sort of a man. So, just to answer you directly, he did not project himself.

Now Kennedy did. Franklin Roosevelt could. Franklin Roosevelt would just exude. You would be mad at him -- even before the days of televison. If you'd see him, or hear him, you'd say, "Gosh, I'm sorry I said that about the President." Kennedy had that knack. President Johnson didn't have it. And that's no criticism, that's just my honest judgment.

B: Any other strengths and weaknesses that you see, sir?

A: Specifically, I --

B: Or generally.

A: No, no. I guess you'd call this a strength -- and I can't call names. But I said to a mutual friend of his and mine, "Why in the world did you give up a secure position to take another position?" At least three of them -- I cannot call names, I shouldn't, because what they said to me, I think, was in confidence. At separate occasions, each of these three men said, "Have you ever had the President of the United States twist your arm?" I said, No, never did." He said, "Well, I've answered your question."

B: You mean these are men who gave up positions to take other jobs President Johnson wanted them to?

A: Yes.

B: Did you ever get a hint that perhaps he pushed too hard in some of these things?

A: Yes. Yes, I got that impression at times.

B: Did these mutual friends give you the idea that maybe they had just been overwhelmed and on second thought were a little --

A: Well, they didn't discuss it any further. Maybe discretion was the better part of valor. But that was enough for me. "Did you ever have the President of the United States twist your arm?" The reply was almost identical, on separate occasions, separate people.

B: He's pretty famous as an arm-twister. Sir, is there anything else you would like to add to a record of this kind?

A: I think what I've said, I'm afraid, has been more of a hodgepodge or salamagundy. I can't think of anything right now, unless you have something else in mind. I do want to say I appreciate the opportunity. I hope that I made some feeble contribution to the purpose of your mission, and I certainly have enjoyed talking with you and seeing you and meeting you.

B: We appreciate your time, sir, and it's no hodgepodge. It's quite valuable and fascinating material.

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Gift of Personal Statement

By J. Lindsay Almond

to the

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In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, J. LINDSAY ALMOND, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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Signed J. Lindsay Almond

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