INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 8, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT B. ANDERSON

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Mr. Anderson's office, One Rockefeller Plaza, New York City

Tape 1 of 1

M: You don't have any connection with Arkansas?

A: No. I had connections only with the University of Texas, both as a teacher and as a student.

M: Yes, I'm well aware of that.

Just for the purpose of the tape identification here, you are Robert B. Anderson, and the interview is being conducted in your New York offices on July 8, 1969.

During the time Mr. Johnson was president, you were frequently described in the news media as a longtime Texas associate. I wonder if you could perhaps begin by just describing how that early acquaintanceship came about and just how close was it in, say, the thirties in Texas.

A: In the early thirties, I was the state tax commissioner of Texas and was appointed the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Texas Youth Administration. One day a gentleman appeared in my office and introduced himself as Lyndon B. Johnson and told me that he had been appointed as the executive director of the National Youth Administration in Texas. We then discussed the plans and

programs of the Youth Administration. Mr. Johnson did serve as the administrator of this agency with his usual vigor and competence and skill, and made a very worthwhile project out of the agency. During these years we became very close friends, very close associates; I became a great admirer of his ability and his skill and his friendship. This I think was the beginning of our real close association.

M: Was your association mostly official, or was it social?

A: Well, it was both. The early thirties were depression years, and people tended to socialize more in depression years than they did in later years. There was more time for it. Life was more leisurely because business was not as active. But it was both a social and an official association.

M: Did many of his close associations that began in those years linger on through his presidency?

A: Yes, a great many of them. I would find it difficult to recall all of the names, but a great many of the people with whom he was associated in those days are still intimate, close friends of President Johnson.

M: Do you know under what circumstances he was appointed to that NYA position?

A: He was appointed by President Roosevelt.

M: Did he know someone who intervened for him?

A: I don't know, but I think President Roosevelt and the White House staff came to admire him while he was secretary for Congressman

Kleberg. But in any event he was appointed by the President to accept this responsibility and did so.

M: Was he fairly close to President Roosevelt, so far as you knew, during those days?

A: Oh, I think as a young man he was as close to him as one in that station of life could be to a president, but obviously, in that point of his life, was no presidential intimate.

M: No, he was a little bit young and not in a position of much power yet. What happened to your relationship when Mr. Johnson went to Congress?

A: When Mr. Buchanan died there was a vacancy in the Congress from that district. I talked with Mr. Johnson, counselled with him about whether or not he should run and advised him to do it; worked for him in his campaign. This was the beginning of a very long political association with Mr. Johnson. He had a great many opponents, as everyone did in the Depression, but he was successful over them. He went to Congress and began his career.

M: What kind of campaign did he run that first try for the Congress? What issues did he think were important?

A: I don't recall the issues. I remember only the water control aspects of the Colorado River, the advocacy of rural electrification. But President Johnson wouldn't know how to run a campaign except in the most vigorous manner possible.

M: And he never forgot that.

A: That's right.

M: When he went on to Washington then, you remained in Texas for some time. Did you stay in close association during those years?

A: Yes, we were in reasonably close association. When I would go to Washington, I would see him as a congressman. When he ran for the Senate against W. Lee O'Daniel and was defeated, I supported him, worked for him in his campaign.

M: What kind of work did you do in the campaign, sir?

A: I wrote speeches for various people. I counselled with him on platform issues, I wrote letters to friends; I helped in the financial organization of his campaign, and did all the sorts of things that people do when they're trying to secure the election of one who they think is qualified for office.

M: And that was an unsuccessful attempt then.

A: Yes, it was unsuccessful.

M: Did you then repeat that performance in his successful bid six years later?

A: Yes.

M: The same type of help?

A: Yes.

M: That was the famous eighty-seven vote victory. Do you have any particular insights into that campaign? It was a rather difficult one.

A: Well, it was a hard-fought campaign. It was a campaign in which Mr. Johnson was regarded as being more liberal than Coke Stevenson. Texas at that time was particularly a conservative state. The margin of votes is well-known. I did not have anything particularly to do

with the aftermath of the election, as to the determination of the final victor. But it was a campaign waged very vigorously by both sides, and the outcome is well-known historically.

M: You say he was known as the more liberal of the two candidates. The labor unions, however, I believe supported Mr. Stevenson that year, didn't they?

A: I don't recall.

M: By the early 1950s Mr. Johnson was attaining some prominence in the Senate and was minority leader by early 1953. You were occupying various successive high positions in the Defense Department, as secretary of the Navy and then deputy secretary of Defense after that. Was your contact officially close during that time?

A: Yes, both because we were friends and because Mr. Johnson was on the Senate Armed Services Committee and was chairman of the Senate Preparedness Committee. As both secretary of the Navy and as deputy secretary of Defense, I dealt with the full committee at all times and with Senator Johnson's subcommittee continuously. So I would say that we had a close, intimate, friendly relationship as well as a political one.

M: He was conducting some rather famous hearings with his Preparedness Subcommittee. Were you directly involved in those hearings? Did that come just before you were secretary of the Navy or while you were secretary of the Navy?

A: There were constant hearings before all kinds of committees in Senator Johnson's committee, as well as others. I don't recall any

specific situation involving the Senate subcommittee, except perhaps one, and that was a situation in which the subcommittee decided while I was deputy secretary of Defense that the strategic plans of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be examined by the subcommittee. This we were not prepared to allow the subcommittee to do because we felt that this properly belonged in the field of the executive office, in the Office of the President, and not in the Office of Congress. As a result, while we were not trying to withhold information from the committee, we nevertheless felt that these were plans which were constantly in a state of change as the world circumstances changed and that therefore they should not be a part of a committee hearing. This was resolved between me and Senator Johnson by our agreeing to allow the former secretary of Defense under the Truman Administration, who had been privy to all of the strategic plans of the Joint Chiefs up until the end of the Truman Administration, to come in and review the current plans of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under the Eisenhower Administration and then make his own verbal report on these strategic plans to Senator Johnson's subcommittee.

M: And Mr. Johnson was willing to work with the executive [office] in that way, to avoid--?

A: Yes. This was the way in which we did do it.

M: Some of Mr. Johnson's critics have always claimed that he was a captive of the military, and some of his friends have always claimed that he was always suspicious of the military. Do you have any

strong impressions as to what opinions he had of the uniformed services during those years?

A: No, but I would certainly say that he was not the captive of any group. I think it typically uncharacteristic of Senator Johnson to say or to believe that he would be the captive of any group. I am sure that there were members of the Armed Forces in whom he had great confidence, perhaps more in some individuals than others. This is a part of human nature. But I think the Senator always realized that he, like all the rest of us, was concerned about the military as a corporate institution or as a governmental institution being in the hands of and under the direction of civilians. I do not think that he would be characterized as other than subscribing to this constitutional principle.

M: Among your activities during the period, particularly when you were deputy secretary of defense, was an important international conference at Geneva on disarmament in 1955 that resulted in the very well-known Eisenhower Open Skies Proposal. Did Mr. Johnson ever show any interest in things of this nature that were in the foreign policy sphere?

A: Oh, yes. He showed a great deal of interest. I was at the meeting in Geneva with President Eisenhower as the military adviser to the delegation. I worked very closely with President Eisenhower and Mr. Dulles and the others who were there, spent a great deal of time privately with Russian delegations, their leaders. I worked actively on the Open Sky policy, was there when it was announced. When I

returned, with the President's permission, I had a great many conversations with Senator Johnson and with the Armed Services Committee on the happenings of this conference in Geneva.

M: These were official conversations or social, private [ones]?

A: They were private conversations largely, but official in that I was speaking for the President and the delegation and speaking officially to the senators, not in an open and formal hearing but normally in their offices.

M: So those conversations haven't been published.

A: No.

M: Mr. Johnson then, you would say, did have some interest in foreign policy prior to the time he became the national officer, unlike what some of his critics would have you believe?

A: One cannot serve on the Senate Armed Services Committee and not be concerned with international problems. This is a prerequisite, I would think, to any kind of competent service on the committee.

M: This is just a little bit irrelevant to Mr. Johnson directly, but it does come in his times and you're a very important witness on the matter. Some of the academic types currently are taking a line of revisionist history of the last twenty years which makes the United States the culprit particularly in disarmament matters, [saying that] the Soviet Union offered more. The 1955 conference is one of the areas where they say the Soviet Union made great concessions and great offers and we weren't prepared to go that far. Do you think there's any validity in this historical point of view at all?

A: None whatsoever. When the Soviets came to the meeting in Geneva, they were really operating on a committee formula. The power was divided between Khrushchev and Bulganin. It was quite apparent to those of us present that the dominant figure was Khrushchev, but from a titular standpoint Bulganin and Khrushchev operated as a team. When you'd come to very, very important issues, proposals would be made by the United States or by the others--I would suppose mostly by the United States--and they always reached the point in which the Russians would say that they would have to return to Moscow and discuss it with their other members of the Communist hierarchy and would so advise us. The result was that we really didn't get any reaction from them other than a willingness to take our proposals and consider them. As far as my recollection goes, I don't recall any positive proposals on their part. They were simply wrestling with the rest of us on our proposals and not putting forward any on their own.

M: I'm glad to get that comment, even though it's a little bit maybe out of line of what we're doing here, but if that's going to be the historical viewpoint, the witness of people like yourself will be most important.

A: I think that all of us came away with the feeling that there was a considerable amount of uncertainty among the delegates from Russia, that no one felt he was powerful enough to speak for them. And at this time there was a great many of the old guard, Gromyko, Mikoyan, Bulganin, Zhukov--

M: Still around in power.

A: In power and at the conference table. And the man who did the most talking at any one time would be Malenkov. But certainly if one has any impression of this meeting, it was a reluctance on the part of the Russians either to put forward anything or to answer specifics, even on the Open Skies policy. They made no comments of significance other than that they were prepared to study the proposal.

M: Later on when you became secretary of the Treasury, you served on the National Security Council and were intimately involved with foreign affairs during the period Mr. Johnson was most prominent in the Senate. Was he in on the decision-making process in foreign policy matters during that period? Was he consulted regularly and fully?

A: Well, I would like to divide my answer there into several parts. In the first place, even when I was secretary of the Navy, although I was not a member of the National Security Council, I was normally invited by the President to attend. And when I was deputy secretary, I was always invited by the President to attend, although the official member was Mr. Wilson. All during this period not only Senator Johnson, but the other members of the Senate and House Armed Services [Committee], particularly the chairman and the ranking minority member, were kept as fully informed, I would say, as one reasonably can be under these circumstances. And on a good many instances, the leadership of the committees and the ranking minority member were called in by those of us in the Pentagon at the

President's instruction and briefed on various specific topics. They in turn would inform their colleagues. There was a deliberate effort made to be sure that anything which affected the national security was shared as widely as it could be shared among those who had a need to know. It did not extend beyond the need to know to other people because this, of course, was within itself an added security risk.

M: Was Mr. Johnson considered by the administration a fairly safe supporter of its foreign policies?

A: Mr. Johnson was considered always as a man who put his country above any kind of political considerations in matters of national security. On the other hand, it was fully recognized that Mr. Johnson was a leader of the opposition. As a leader of the opposition, he had to articulate the policies of the Democratic Party as contrasted to the policies of the Republican Party, and he did this and did it well and did it effectively. In a system like ours, this is to be expected of anyone who occupies that sort of a position.

M: Did you have any opportunity to observe the kind of relations, if any, that he had with Secretary Dulles? Was he close to Secretary Dulles at all?

A: I don't really know how close he was to Secretary Dulles. I would say that I did not know of any breaches between them, and so far as my knowledge is concerned it [their relationship] was always a cooperative one. But whether it was more than just the normal

formal conduct of affairs between a secretary and a leader of Congress, I don't know.

M: What about your operations as secretary of the Treasury? Did they involve contact with Mr. Johnson considerably?

A: This is probably one of the most interesting aspects of my career, and I suppose President Johnson's career and President Eisenhower's career. When I became secretary of the Treasury, the leadership of the Senate was under President Johnson as the majority leader. It was a Democratically controlled Congress, both Senate and House. The leadership of the House was under Mr. Rayburn. I had known both Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson from the early thirties. While we had had different political allegiances in some respects and I was serving as a Republican under a Republican president, there was an absolute confidence and trust between all of us. So I was asked by President Eisenhower if I would not assume unofficially the responsibility of remaining a liaison between him personally and between Senator Johnson and Mr. Rayburn, not just for the matters which affected the Treasury but for any matter which President Eisenhower felt that he would like to have informal soundings from the political leadership of the House and Senate--the Democratic side. During all of those four years, I saw the Senator and Mr. Rayburn, always alone or the three of us, innumerable times, sometimes on a daily basis for weeks on end in their offices or my offices or in their homes or my home, at what time we discussed the various matters which President Eisenhower had asked me to discuss with them or which they

in turn wanted to submit to the President. We had very few ground rules. One was that we all maintained an absolute confidence. As far as I know, this confidence was never breached. The second was that I specify to Mr. Johnson and to Mr. Rayburn that I would willingly keep secrets from anybody in my own administration whom they asked me to keep matters from except the President, but that I never wanted to be told anything under any circumstances that I could not fully repeat to President Eisenhower; that this was one secret that I would not keep under any circumstances. This was accepted by all of us. We operated on this basis, and I think it contributed very substantially to the harmonious relationship between the executive offices of President Eisenhower and the majority leadership of the House and the Senate.

M: That's a story that I'd never heard. That's the kind of thing that we really are trying to do in this project, too.

A: Well, you've never heard it for a very good reason. I've never told it before.

M: I was going to say, we've dealt with Johnson so closely the last year that there doesn't seem to be that many stories [left], but that one's very well kept, as I've never run in to it any other place.

What kinds of things? Was it legislative matters generally that Mr. Eisenhower asked you to conduct liaison with Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson, was it executive activities, or the whole [picture]?

A: I would say that, basically, it was matters in which there was a joint concern of the executive and the Congress, which of course would mean legislative matters. On the other hand, there were a great many other matters; matters in the fields of economic and foreign policy, domestic policies in which the President would want his point of view gotten over to the Democratic leadership. You understand that there was no effort made to curb the criticisms that might be made either by Mr. Johnson or Mr. Rayburn or by other members of the opposition. It was quite clearly understood that we fully accepted, respected and appreciated the point of view that they were the leaders of the opposition, that they were going to articulate differences. But in this relationship, at least the thinking and the background and the reasons for what might have been adopted as an administration policy were known by Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson.

M: Prevents misunderstandings.

A: This would prevent a misunderstanding. It would allow adverse or opposed points of view to be put forward without involving personalities, thinking that something was being done for a political reason when this might be very far removed from the minds of either the proponents or the dissenters of a policy.

I can remember on one occasion when we thought it was required that we extend the debt limit. Congress was about to adjourn and go home. If we ran beyond the debt limit, it would mean a special session of Congress. It would seriously impair the confidence in

our economic political system. So I went to the Speaker and asked him if a measure increasing the debt limit at that time could be put through the House. He thought it could. I went to Senator Johnson and Senator Johnson, after some deliberation, advised me that he thought it was highly questionable as to whether or not it would pass in the Senate. In a few days Mr. Rayburn revised his own judgement and said he was doubtful that a bill to increase the debt limit would be passed by the House. So I went to the President and said, "Now, we're in part of a dilemma. If we allow the Congress to go home and if we in the administration have not proposed a debt limit and if, in fact, the expenditures run so high that it appears that the debt limit is going to be exceeded, then our choices are to exceed the debt limit, which is a violation of law, or to reconvene the Congress. Undoubtedly the people in the world will say 'Why didn't you do this during the regular session and why didn't you foresee these matters because you're dealing only in a matter of three or four or five months.' On the other hand, if we submit the legislation, even if we have the cooperation of the leadership of Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson and the Republican leadership, if we're unsuccessful because the mood of the Congress is against raising the debt limit at this time, then we have probably a more difficult situation because we'll be asking the Congress under those circumstances to come back and reverse a decision which has already been taken."

So, with this knowledge on everyone's part, I went to the principal spending agencies, the Pentagon, the Department of Agriculture, all of the agencies where money is spent, Health, Education and Welfare, and we made as close an estimate as we possibly could on how we could avoid raising the debt limit until Congress returned. Finally decided that this was the preferable course.

I then said to the Democratic leadership, Senator Johnson and Mr. Rayburn, "I'm going to write you a letter as secretary of the Treasury. I'm going to tell you in this letter how difficult the problem is and that we might have to exceed the debt limit, in which event we'd have no choice other than to bring the Congress back. This is not intended to be a private letter; it's intended to be a letter thatyou can show to all your colleagues, to any of your colleagues, to handle in any manner in which you see fit. But as the responsible fiscal officer of the nation, I don't want you or the country to feel that this has been something that we were not fully aware of and totally appreciated."

I did send the letter. Then entered a very curious sort of thing because I would get calls from all over the country saying, "Why is this program cut back?" and, "Why has something else been cut back?". I discovered that what was really happening was that where agencies, and particularly the Pentagon agencies, had a program that they were not happy with, that they were not satisfied with, that they would like to cancel, that they'd had no reason in the past to cancel, were then saying to their contractors and to

others, "We have been required to cut back this program because if we do not cut it back, we might exceed the debt limit, and therefore we have no choice other than to reduce it." Of course, this was never done. Nobody was asked to cut back anything. They were simply asked to give us the best estimate they could of what they were going to spend. We were not trying to make judgments.

But I remember that I was severely criticized by a great many people and by states and by communities for having cut back programs under the guise of not wanting to exceed the debt limit, money not being available. But this is one of the burdens one learns to share. There is no way in which you can get up and start arguing with all of your colleagues and others. If you do you simply worsen the situation because it's not really understood. The fact that it was understood with the leadership on both sides, the fact that we all realized that Congress might have to be called and that we were operating without any confidences being withheld--

M: And that they had confidence in you personally, too, which I'm sure helped quite a lot.

A: I'm sure that this was a fact. But it made it possible for us to go through and not raise the debt limit until Congress returned and avoid what would otherwise have been a political issue which was politics, I think one would have to guess at because it's never popular to raise the debt limit by anybody. But it was a practical way of meeting a very difficult problem by the kind of relationship which I've described to you.

M: When Mr. Johnson became president, he always evidenced an extreme admiration for Mr. Eisenhower. Were they very personally close?

A: Yes, I think so. I saw President Eisenhower with great regularity; I suppose during the years after his presidency I talked to him at least once a week by telephone. I saw a great deal of President Johnson. I know that President Johnson once said to me that, in all of his presidency, no one man had been of greater assistance to him than President Eisenhower. President Eisenhower always felt that he wanted to be helpful, but he wanted the initiative to be taken by President Johnson because, as a former president, he did not feel that he wanted to be in the position or should be in the position of saying to the then-President, even though he were a Republican or a Democrat, that "This is the way I handled it," or, "This is what I would have done." It was Mr. Johnson's presidency. It ought to be his. This was the way our country was run. If President Eisenhower's thoughts were sought after, he would give them, but he would not push them forward on his own initiative.

M: But the admiration and the consultation was genuine. It wasn't a political facade that Mr. Johnson was using.

A: It was a genuine, honest consultive arrangement. When two men who have held this office talk, it can only be that. It's no time for either frivolity or for politics; it's national welfare.

M: Right. During this time you said you talked to Mr. Johnson quite a lot, does that include the vice presidential period, from 1961 through 1963?

A: Yes. I talked to him when he was vice president, I suppose more after he became president. In fact all of my life, since the early meeting in the thirties I've been in close relationship with President Johnson. I think he has felt that he was free to call and ask my advice, and I felt that I was always free to call and discuss matters with him.

You know, when you're talking to a president, I, for one, have a very strong feeling that one has to be terribly careful of what you say, terribly thoughtful about the kind of counsel or advice you would give, because it just might be that he'd take your advice. This is the sort of thing that makes it both a great burden as well as a great privilege to be close to a president.

M: You knew him very well for so long. How unhappy was he as vice president?

A: Oh, I don't know as I would be able to say how unhappy. I don't think I've known many happy vice presidents, that is, I don't mean personal happiness, but happy in the sense that they are so close to the president and yet constitutionally so far removed from its own operation. It's really a matter of how close does a president want his vice president to be. And a president, even though he may admire his vice president very greatly, gets so caught up in the extreme pressures of time and the sense of emergency and the sense of happenings domestically and abroad that he just doesn't have the time.

M: Did Mr. Johnson feel like he was being excluded? In his conversations with you, did he indicate that?

A: I don't think perhaps excluded, but just not included as much as he might like to have been.

M: There's a difference there that's fairly obvious if it's happening to you, I'm sure.

A: Yes.

M: You're among those that he called the first hours apparently after the assassination of President Kennedy, and then you held long talks with him in the immediately following few days. What subjects seemed to interest him most or worried him the most during those early talks with you?

A: Of course, one of the problems, and one that I dealt with a great deal, was the making of the budget.

M: That's his first budget at the end of the year.

A: The assassination happened in November. The budget has to go to the printer in December. It's required by law that it be given to the Congress in the early days of congressional session. And just physically the budget is so big and so complicated and so detailed that the work has to be finished in December in order for it to be printed and in the hands of the Congress at the time that the president makes his report on the budget. So here was a man who had not really been an intimate part of the budget-making process suddenly confronted with the responsibility of a budget in which he had less than forty-five days to review, to prepare for, to have printed. It was going to be his budget for the fiscal year beginning the following June, so you were really talking about eighteen months away.

So President Johnson asked me if I would be of assistance to him and help him on this budget not because of a lack of confidence in any of the other people officially engaged in the budget-making, but, I assume, because he thought that he could talk to me on a more intimate basis about some of the problems inherent in budget-making. And I did work with him, and I worked with the agencies very closely. While we talked a lot of a great many other things, such as the total responsibility of the presidency, the way in which his presidency would begin, the kinds of people who were around him and whom he thought he might like to have around him--

M: That's an interesting point. Was he worried about the loyalty or the helpfulness of the Kennedy people that he was beginning with?

A: I don't think that he was worried about their loyalty. I think that his great concern was the continuity of a government and a feeling either here or abroad on the part of the people that the government had not been erupted; and therefore the absolute necessity for his doing the difficult task of bringing his own personality and his own responsibility and his own thinking to a government that had been oriented essentially to dealing with a different human being, a different man. Obviously, he realized that some people were in the government because of the personal relations which they had had with President Kennedy. But his sense was not a worry about whether individuals were going to be disloyal to him as Mr. Johnson as much as how you kept the continuity; and if there were those which he felt he wanted to replace or those who on their own initiative wanted to

be replaced, how you did it and how you selected the other people and how you had this sense of continuity.

M: Did he talk to you about coming back into the government during those first days?

A: Yes, he did. And I said to President Johnson that I had served seven of the eight Eisenhower years, I didn't feel that I should or wanted to come back as a permanent officer, and that if, therefore, he would not extend me any invitations I would always be in the position of saying that the matter had never been raised and he would be in that position. This is precisely what we did. I made it clear to him that I didn't want to come back. He accepted it.

M: He didn't give you the famous "treatment"? He knew you too well.

A: No. Yet I made quite clear to him, and I continued in this role, that if there was any time that he felt that I could make a contribution to the national welfare during his presidency, that I was just as close as the phone and everything else would stop. And I would do this for any president.

M: Was the decision that that first budget had to be cut down considerably below what some people expected it to be made very early in those first few days?

A: It had to be.

M: There just weren't that many days, were there?

A: There just weren't that many days. He had to decide about where the budget should be from an economic point of view, and he didn't just

consult with me, he consulted with a lot of others. I know I've read that the budget was cut essentially because I told him to cut it.

M: That was what I was leading to.

A: This is only very partially true. I did give him counsel as to how high I thought the public was willing to accept a budget under these circumstances without complaining or with a minimum amount of complaining, and how high I felt the budget could be from the standpoint of security of the American dollar, which had to be secure, but that he had to accept the responsibility for weighing all of the programs, which no one else can do; and that therefore he needed somebody else's advice other than mine. And he took other people's advice and made his own calculations, his own decisions, and this went into the budget.

M: Did Mr. Johnson really understand fiscal details, or did he have to pretty well rely on the advice of experts such as yourself who had been involved in it most of your life in one way or another?

A: Quite obviously, the more budgets you make, the more intimate you get into all the details, the better technician you become: There is no doubt but what he was not as good a technician and did not understand as much of the intimate details of the budget-making and the budget process in the first budget as he did all the subsequent budgets. It would be contrary to all human nature if he did.

On the other hand, remember that you're not dealing with a novice in this field, because as a senator he had had to be consulted,

he had had to be concerned with the budget as it applied to the military sector in the Senate Armed Services Committee. As the leader, he had to be concerned with the total budget. So he was not a stranger to it at all.

M: Throughout the balance of his presidency, did he consult you primarily on economic things, leaving aside your several foreign missions for now?

A: Oh, I would guess that they were more economic than anything else, but it was quite a range of subjects.

M: And he did talk to a lot of people outside of government other than yourself?

A: I'm sure he did, although I don't know. I have always felt that every conversation I had with the President was privileged, so I was very careful. I tried very hard never to say to anybody that I've talked to the president. You know, a lot of people in this world [do say so]. And one of the burdens of the president's is if he talks to anybody, the news is spread as fast by that individual as he can, even if he doesn't say the subject: "I talked to the President." And from my own associations with every president I've known well, he's a human being and he needs somebody to talk to. He needs somebody to share his troubles with, his difficulties and his problems. He needs somebody who won't talk about them even to the point of saying, "I talked to the President."

In my days with President Eisenhower, I doubt that very many of my own staff ever knew the times that I talked to the President.

This is not something they needed to know. Now if it had to deal with a tax matter, I might very well discuss it.

M: If it was their business, you talked to them.

A: Yes. But if it had to deal with something else, this was purely a matter between me and the President. And when I left office, I remember President Eisenhower asked me if I'd had any offers to write books and I said, "Yes, a great many. But don't worry about it. I'm not going to do it. Because if I wrote about everything that I could tell in the intimate manner in which I have worked with you or with others, I'd be betraying a great many confidences. If I just wrote the platitudinous things that were rewrites of what everybody knew, it would be almost committing the fraud of monotony on people. So," I said, "Mr. President, I will leave the writing of your administration to you and I'll help you. I won't write the books." I turned down a good many lucrative offers. I still do.

M: I'm sure you do.

Did Mr. Johnson usually telephone? Is that the method that he contacted you?

A: He would telephone, he would ask me to come down. If he'd come to New York, I'd meet him in the hotel, any way, whatever suited him, because he was the president.

M: Right, just personal contact.

You undertook several important foreign missions for him. The first one, I guess, was to see General de Gaulle in the fall of 1964.

Did Mr. Johnson give you some specific instructions in regard to that visit as to what he wanted to accomplish?

A: We were discussing specific matters, but even for conversations of this sort I think these remain the personal privilege of President Johnson.

M: The press comment at the time was that there were considerable bad feelings between Mr. de Gaulle and Mr. Johnson that kind of dated from the Kennedy funeral. Do you think this is accurate, that they didn't get along personally?

A: Well, it was not evident in my talk with President de Gaulle.

M: Mr. Johnson, of course, was always the one in the executive branch who wanted to be the most proper and correct toward General de Gaulle, as I understand it.

A: President de Gaulle never indicated any hostility toward President Johnson, as far as I was concerned.

M: How about the Panama mission? When did you get involved in that difficulty?

A: I was away from my office in some other city, I've forgotten where. President Johnson called me and told me that he'd been making efforts to restore diplomatic relations between our two countries; that he had sought the willingness of the Panamanians to negotiate with two or three people out of the State Department and the professional diplomatic corps that might enter into treaty revision discussions with the Panamanians. These individuals had been rejected by the Panamanians for one reason or the other. [And the President said]

that my name had, for some reason, been put forward, that it had been accepted by the Panamanians, and that he felt it was terribly important in our national interests if we would resume our diplomatic relations and enter into some treaty negotiations or discussions with the Panamanians. [He said] that he felt that he had to make some announcement that afternoon; that he was therefore calling to see if he couldn't make the announcement and at the same time announce that I had been appointed with the diplomatic rank of ambassador to initiate or to participate in these negotiations as his personal representative.

I called and talked to my family, sat down alone with myself for an hour or so. I called him and told him that I would undertake it, with the understanding that I had my responsibility directly to him; that I was not trying to avoid the State Department, that I wanted their help and their counsel; I certainly wanted the help and counsel of everybody who had an interest--certainly the military did have--but that I did not want to have to be in the position of having ideas and positions and that sort of thing formulated by these departments and passed on to me. That if I negotiated, I wanted to negotiate freely and independently, seeking the advice of the departments when I wanted it, their not trying to give me counsel and advice when I didn't want it, and that my responsibility would be to the President and to the President alone. That if he would accept those conditions, I would accept the responsibility. He said, "That's fine." He accepted it and he announced it that afternoon.

I went to see him on the following day and he said to me: "I just have two suggestions to make to you."

(Interruption)

He said, "The first one is, let's make a fair treaty with the Panamanians. Let's be very sure that it is fair to them and fair to us. And the second thing is, let's try to make a treaty that can be used as a model of how a big country like ours ought to enter into treaty relationships with smaller countries and countries less secure than ours." That's the only instruction that I ever had from him.

M: You really had almost full authority, then, to conduct your negotiations. How closely did he get involved in the actual course of talks after they began?

A: Only when I would go to him with various proposals. For example, I went up and went from door to door in the Senate and called on practically every senator and explained to him the limits within which I was conducting the negotiations. I had said to the Panamanians, "I regard only two things as being absolutely non-negotiable. One is that we in the United States must control the Canal, and if we share control with you through any other kind of an organization other than that which currently exists in which we act as if we're the sovereignty, the final deciding vote must be in the United States. The second point I regard as non-negotiable is that we must have an absolute right to defend the Canal, and this must be a right to defend it from internal as well as external sources.

Under no circumstances can our right to defend be abridged. We will cooperate, we will share defense with you, we will do whatever is practicable under the circumstances, but in the final analysis we must have the absolute right of control and the absolute right to defend. Everything else is negotiable."

M: That would include the sovereignty of the Canal Zone then?

A: Yes. Now I kept the President fully informed, usually directly but sometimes through Mr. Rostow, as to the progress we were making in the negotiations.

In June of 1967 in this office, we initialed a proposed treaty between the United States and Panama. The treaty was really in three parts, all of which were submitted as a package: one having to do with the Canal Zone as such presently exists; one having to do with a possible future sea level canal; and one dealing with military rights in the Canal area in Panama.

We were asked by the Panamanians, first, not to make the drafts of the treaty public and, second, not to submit it to our Congress for ratification until after they had submitted it to their Congress for ratification. I knew this was going to be embarrassing. I told the President it would be embarrassing because the very minute that one becomes aware that treaties have been negotiated or initialed, both the press and the Congress, and everybody else, wants to know what's in them. But if we had acceded to the demands of the public and the press and said, "Here they are," we would have had the immediate and lasting hostility of the Panamanian government and

the Panamanian negotiators who had asked us not to do so. Of course, it was only a matter of a few days until the Panamanians had released it. It appeared in several American papers. I was both criticized and questioned by members of Congress as to why we were simpleminded enough to believe that we could keep it quiet. Again, I simply said that we did it because we were asked to. I was never under any illusion, nor was the President, that you'd keep it secret. But, nevertheless, when a foreign government asked you to do it, and this is almost a condition of their entering into the relationship, then we agreed to comply.

I directly, and I suppose President Johnson indirectly, have been accused by a great many people in the country as willing to give away large American rights in Panama. And undoubtedly, without question, we are giving up some of the status which we've occupied under the treaty of 1903, in which we could act as if we're the sovereignty. I still think this is what we ought to do. I think the time is past when any country, big or small, can maintain an absolute sovereign conclave in another man's country, whether you're big or little. Now if we're prepared to enforce our will by the treaty of 1903 in military terms, we can do it. We have a large Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and they have a very small national guard.

(Interruption)

M: Was there a great deal of division in the United States government that required Mr. Johnson's aid in the negotiations with the

Panamanians, his aid in backing your position against other parts of our government?

A: No. As a matter of fact, I don't think I ever went to him in a single instance.

M: That wasn't necessary?

A: There were divisions in the government, but I was always able to resolve them myself, and to the extent that you can resolve a problem, you don't need to put it on the president's desk.

M: That's right. He's got plenty. What about your mission in 1967? Would Mr. Johnson initiate your visit to Mr. Nasser in the Middle East?

A: I've been visiting with leaders in the Middle East since 1955. I went out there a great many times under the auspices of President Eisenhower, mostly without any public knowledge or attention. I continuously maintained these contacts, both with the Arab leaders and with the Israeli leaders, over now more than twelve years. So I would advise the President each time I was going, and each time I returned. In those matters in which a particular interest was evidenced, I would have discussions. Sometimes the discussions were held with members of the State Department and not with the President directly, sometimes with Mr. Rostow, sometimes with the President. But in each instance, I would try to keep the President as fully informed as I could on conversations both before I went and after I returned.

M: On several well-known occasions, Mr. Johnson called in outside people with great experience in foreign affairs to deal with particular crises in Vietnam. Did you ever participate in those sessions?

A: Not in Vietnam, no.

M: You were spared that part.

A: That's right. I've had lots of general discussions with him and shared his own feelings and thoughts about specific problems in Vietnam, but I was never just called in to a special consultive role in Vietnam.

M: You've been quite patient here. Are there any topics that we haven't touched upon that you think might be important to add to this record? I don't want to limit you in any way by my inability to ask the right question.

A: No. I think I might only comment on one subject. One thing which appears to one in my position is the difference, the human differences, in the way in which presidencies are operated. President Eisenhower's background in history was a military one. He came up through all of his life in the atmosphere of having staffs, delegating large amounts of responsibility, assuming large responsibility delegated to him, but having a very tight staff operation. For example, when I was in the Treasury I have no recollection of the President ever calling me to suggest a policy or anything of the sort. It was always the other way around. I would go to him and say, "This is a matter of sufficient importance that I think we ought to talk about it." I would say to President Eisenhower, "I never want to

have a meeting with you to discuss an economic matter in which you don't have an hour, because the matters are so complex and so difficult that in less than an hour I can't give you a fair appraisal nor answer your questions intelligently. So I'd rather wait until you have an hour." And there was a very vast delegation of responsibility by President Eisenhower.

I think, on the other hand, in President Johnson's situation, he grew up as a congressman. He grew up as a leader of the Senate. He grew up in a consultative atmosphere. He grew up in an atmosphere in which he was not surrounded by either large staffs or where he could say, "I'm going to delegate these responsibilities," because he was the congressman, he was the senator, he was the majority leader, and this became a personalized responsibility. So I think in President Johnson's administration there was much more of a personalized presidency, a president who by his very nature became more personally involved in more details, in more operations, and in more procedural matters, than in the days of President Eisenhower.

No one knows which is right or wrong. Regardless of who is president, the president has to operate according to his own concepts, his own way of doing business. But I think that Mr. Johnson's concept was one which worked him physically more than any other president I've known, because he did elect to assume this highly personalized responsibility.

M: But he still gave full authority to such as yourself, as in the negotiations?

A: He did in this instance. But I think it was because he felt that if there were either political or substantive questions that merited his attention, that I would bring them to him, that I wouldn't try to make these decisions all by myself and leave him suddenly exposed to a point of view of which he was completely unaware. I don't know how many others he dealt with on this basis. But I do think that, as between the two presidents that I knew best, that the Eisenhower years were much more staff years and delegated responsibility in which you were absolutely held responsible, as compared to a more highly personalized government of the President [Johnson] in which he felt that he personally both had and wanted to assume a personal responsibility for.

M: That's an interesting insight.

Have you decided upon a disposition of your papers?

A: I'm sending most of them to President Eisenhower's Library. I think I had quite a different concept from most. I know when I left the Pentagon, after being there several years, and after I left the Treasury, after being there several years, I carried away all of my personal papers in the back seat of my car. I didn't, as most of my predecessors had done, load up file cases and put them in warehouses and this sort of thing, because I had the feeling they belonged to the government. I had the feeling that my successors were entitled to look and see what I had done.

M: So your personal papers are not as extensive as they might be otherwise?

A: No. I remember when I left the Pentagon, they asked me how many trucks I would need to haul my personal papers away and I said I wouldn't need any. They said, "Everybody who has ever had this office has taken their papers away in trucks." I said, "My feeling is that they belong to the government."

M: As long as they're preserved, as far as historians are concerned, we don't care where they're preserved, just as long as they are kept.

A: I assume they are preserved because I left them there.

M: Thank you very much. You've been quite patient, and we greatly appreciate this.

A: It has been a privilege.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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