INTERVIEW IV

DATE: February 29, 1984

INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT G. BAKER

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Baker's office, Olney, Maryland

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let's start with 1952. We talked a little bit about it last time, but did not cover a lot of the areas. Let's begin with Adlai Stevenson and LBJ's attitude toward him.

B: Adlai Stevenson in 1952, if my memory serves me correctly, was the governor of Illinois. Evidently Stevenson had been elected in 1948 when Truman had won, so he probably was serving out the last of his term in 1952. Now, Stevenson really had never been mentioned prominently, so I'm just thinking about, say, February, March, April of 1952 right now as to what was going on. In going through your notes here and looking about how Estes Kefauver, who was a senator from Tennessee, had entered into the New Hampshire primary and had defeated Truman, who was then the sitting president, most people--I'm talking about most politicians--were of the opinion that Truman liked being president and that he would be a candidate for re-election. But after he had lost in New Hampshire and I guess a write-in vote in Minnesota and then the Nebraska and maybe Wisconsin primaries, a little later at a Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner here in Washington--[I remember] because I was there--Truman made at the end of his speech the announcement that he would not be a candidate for the presidency in 1952.

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Now, I believe that Governor Stevenson was there, but at this particular time he did not have a significant national following because the media then were talking about Kefauver. Kefauver was the new darling of the media, because here was the crimebuster, the maverick senator from Tennessee, the southerner who had the courage to introduce a bill for then they called it a Fair Employment Practices Commission. And the southerners hated Estes Kefauver with a passion, which as we go down later and we get into the 1956 convention, this will come in. (Interruption)

So Kefauver was detested [by the southerners]. He was not a detestable person, he was a likeable fellow. He had a whiskey problem, by the way, a severe whiskey problem, and a woman problem. But the media latched on to Kefauver because he would leak stories to them. Estes Kefauver and Johnson personally liked each other. There was never the bitter feeling between them, because Johnson realized that Estes was right, especially about the racial situation. There's no doubt in my mind that they had more in common than most of the what I call southern bigots, whatnot. But politically it certainly would have been a terrible mistake of judgment for Johnson to be identified as supporting Estes like for the presidency and so forth.

So now Truman has made his startling announcement at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner at the D.C. Armory that he will not be a candidate for re-election. So everybody is seeking his attention as to who he will support. Senator [Richard] Russell wanted to be president very badly, but he also was one of the most astute historians in the history of the Senate and he was smart enough to know that whoever Truman liked

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would probably be the nominee. You've got to remember that in that period--I'm talking about in 1952--between labor, the party bosses and the elected politicians, they would control the majority of the delegates at a national convention.

So a lot of people [wanted to nominate Eisenhower]. Olin Johnston from my state of South Carolina flew over to talk to Eisenhower about Eisenhower being the Democratic nominee. And there were a lot of stories in the paper that Ike didn't know what he really was, was he a Democrat or was he a Republican, because he had been taken out of the ranks of the army military as an obscure colonel and made into the most popular military leader of World War II by his mentor George Marshall, who was picked by Franklin Roosevelt. So a lot of political commentators thought that Ike was a good guy and was more liberal than [Robert] Taft and the Republican Party, and that he would make a great Democratic nominee. I am of the opinion that Truman would have been delighted to have supported Eisenhower for the presidency, because I think he personally liked Eisenhower. But I also think that he was such a proud man that once Eisenhower permitted [Henry] Cabot Lodge to run in the New Hampshire primary and then announce that he would be a candidate for the Republican nomination, that Truman felt that he had betrayed the President and the country by announcing that he was going to be a candidate for the presidency while he was--I believe Eisenhower was still in the military when Cabot [ran]. He had announced that he was going to retire, I believe.

G: I thought he was president of Columbia [University] at this point. Is this not--?

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B: We'll have to refresh our memory, but for some reason, when Cabot Lodge made the announcement that he was entering Ike's name in the New Hampshire primary, it was maybe a week later where Eisenhower, in Paris--see, Eisenhower may have gone to Columbia and then been selected to head NATO. At the end of World War II he had retired from the military [and] he did go to Columbia. Now, whether Truman took him from Columbia to be the first chief of NATO [I don't recall]. Because it was during Truman's administration that we passed NATO, so it's very easily that Eisenhower could have gone from Columbia to NATO as its first chief.

G: What was LBJ's reaction to these developments?

B: Well, Mr. Rayburn was probably one of Truman's closest advisers. And I am sure, if my memory serves correctly, Johnson played poker with Truman, when Truman was in town, about once a week. They'd go down on the President's boat, go down the Potomac, and Fred Vinson and Speaker Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson and maybe Stuart Symington, people like that, would go down either to the White House or down the river. It was probably that group of sort of political executives that were talking with Truman and looking over those candidates that were being mentioned.

I do not know what single person claims credit for talking Truman into supporting Stevenson. Stevenson did not like Truman. Stevenson tried to disassociate himself from Truman, and that haunted Stevenson all of his political career. Because true, Truman was politically unpopular, but he was the most influential man in the Democratic Party and he's sort of hand-delivering the nomination to Stevenson. So Stevenson never got over that hurt, and once we get to 1956, you'll see where Truman refused to support Stevenson and endorsed Averell Harriman.

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But Stevenson did have a big following. Walter Reuther was the most influential man in the labor movement because of his money, so he controlled more delegates to the 1956 convention than Truman did. You know, Truman in 1956 was an ex-president and he had not been rehabilitated; he still was about as unpopular as Jimmy Carter is now. It's a close analogy.

But [in 1952], notwithstanding that Stevenson was really anti-tidelands, anti-Texas, Mr. Rayburn and Johnson endorsed him and they supported him, although I would say not very enthusiastically. I have seen Adlai Stevenson and Lyndon Johnson together, not on a lot of occasions, but I remember--

(Interruption)

G: You were talking about Johnson and Stevenson at dinner parties.

B: The best illustration of the way that they sort of--you know, Johnson was always looking you over and he was trying to see which way you parted your hair--well, Stevenson didn't have a lot of hair to part--and looking at your eyes and the way you shake hands. Johnson was always in awe of what he called the Eastern Establishment intellectuals, the Harvard and the Yalies, people like that. He thought that Stevenson was a part of that group. In any meeting I saw them at, they acted like two boxers in the preliminary rounds of a boxing contest, you know, sort of probing each other, trying to see the strengths and the weaknesses of each other. As they grew older, I think both of them had a basic respect for each other. I doubt that they would ever really be quoted publicly, but just--I recall some of the conversations on the telephone. You know, I'd be in the room when Johnson was trying to defeat John

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Kennedy for the presidency in 1960 and overhearing some of the conversations with Governor Stevenson. Johnson's reaction, to me, I think Johnson felt had Stevenson endorsed him that he very definitely could have been the nominee instead of Kennedy. And there's no doubt in my mind had Stevenson done that, he would have been the first secretary of state--

(Interruption)

G: --when he was talking to Stevenson on the phone, was he trying to persuade Stevenson to take one position or another?

B: Well, it was a shadow-boxing conversation. They were talking about the fact that no Catholic had ever been elected and Kennedy's weaknesses. Neither one of them, you know, would just come right out and say, "Why don't you support me?" Now, Stevenson thought that he, for the first time, could win in 1960, because he thought he had a sufficient following and that Nixon would be by far much weaker than Eisenhower, who had clobbered him in 1952 and 1956. Evidently once you have been the nominee, you never get it out of your system. I think George McGovern's a good illustration of what we're talking about.

But Stevenson, he liked Gene McCarthy. Gene McCarthy liked Lyndon Johnson. And Gene McCarthy had been talking strenuously to Stevenson to support Johnson, because Gene was realistic [enough] to know that Stevenson could not get the nomination. Gene had sort of an intellectual jealousy of John Kennedy. He just thought intellectually he was smarter than Kennedy. If there was going to be a Catholic to be the nominee, McCarthy would rather be the nominee than Kennedy. I think all those little jealousies enter into the picture.

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McCarthy was pledged to me to vote for Lyndon Johnson for the presidency, and he was staying with the Minnesota delegation at the Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles. I had gone there to interview several members of the Iowa delegation, and Gene was at the top of the escalator. And he said to me, "Bobby, I am committed to Lyndon Johnson via you and I will stand by my commitment. But Mrs. Roosevelt desperately wants to stop John Kennedy and she has called me pleading, coercing, begging me to nominate Adlai. I am not a traitor and I keep my commitments. Unless you advise me to make the speech, I will just, when they call the roll, vote for Lyndon Johnson, which I told you I would do."

At this time I had learned that there was no hope with Governor Lawrence and the Pennsylvania delegation that they would support Johnson, because we had to have a breakthrough with a Catholic in one of the big industrial states, and Dave Lawrence was a great friend of Mr. Rayburn's, he liked Johnson. We had Bill Green's pledge, who controlled probably as many delegates as anybody in the Pennsylvania delegation, that if Kennedy didn't get the nomination on the first ballot that he would support Johnson on the second ballot. So, knowing that Johnson had no chance to break into the big industrial states on the East Coast, and knowing that we had really split up the California delegation [by] taking it away from Governor [Pat] Brown, and [knowing that] at this particular time we had a lot of Johnson delegates voting for Stevenson to sort of protect their flank, I made an instant decision at the top of the steps. I said, "Senator, unless we can get a sizable number of votes for Stevenson, say two or three hundred delegates, Kennedy's going to be nominated on the first ballot. So I will take the responsibility

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to release you as a Johnson delegate so you can vote for Stevenson. And two, you can make the nominating speech."

And he did it. The most exciting speech at that convention was Gene McCarthy's. Gene is not an orator, but his adrenalin was running and it was the most eloquent speech of that convention. Because, you know, the drama of being committed, being released, desperately--I mean, I guess the feeling that if anybody could stop Kennedy, he was the only man that had that [chance]. So all those things pumping into his mind, he turned on and he was exciting. The Stevenson people--well, there were a lot of really excited Stevenson followers; he attracted an excitement that few politicians do, I mean the intellectuals and people like that. Some of the people, they were ready to take over that convention hall.

But Kennedy was smart. How they bribed Paul Butler I have never known. But Paul Butler was the chairman of the Democratic Party and he hated Johnson and Mr. Rayburn because they had been fighting [him]. Paul Butler was a feisty Irish attorney; I believe he was from South Bend, Indiana. He spent his whole life--like a lot of Irish people, they like to fight. Compromise was not a part of Paul Butler's forte in life. So the Kennedys, old man Joe Kennedy hired Paul Butler's law firm, whatnot, which old man Joe Kennedy would do. A lot of people don't know it, but Whizzer [Byron R.] White had been a great all-American football player, he was sort of a folk hero out west. So old man Joe Kennedy, he made it his business, with his tremendous wealth, to hire lawyers in prestigious firms who normally would vote Republican, to support his son. I'll give you another illustration, in Virginia, the

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Battle family. Who was named ambassador to Australia? Governor [John S.] Battle's son [William Battle]. But all of this, had John Kennedy's father not had that money and the capacity to attract the most prestigious law firms in states like Virginia and Colorado and so forth--I mean, it shows you how money works. Whizzer White became the deputy attorney general when Bobby [Kennedy] came to town, and the first vacancy on the Supreme Court, Whizzer White was named [to fill it]. So they fulfilled their commitment.

G: Did Johnson respect Stevenson's political intelligence, his political judgment?

B: No. That's a harsh, blunt answer to your question, but that's a truthful answer. I think Johnson, at this particular time, was very, very pro-military, very hawkish, very distrustful of the United Nations and the Russians and the Cold War and the Chinese. Plus if you were going to survive in Texas politically, you had to be pro-defense. That's the reason that I wonder if Johnson and Stevenson were alive today, if you sort of wedded Johnson's knowledge and Stevenson's knowledge and you sort of bred them together, if maybe those two great minds might get us out of this abyss that we're in now. Because I recently read in the ***Wall Street Journal*** where that if you continue to spend--I'm talking about the Russians and the Americans--the same amount of money that you're doing in both countries the next fifty years, the only winners are going to be the Germans and the Japanese. And I think Stevenson and Johnson both were alert and smart enough and wise enough. Sometimes I am totally convinced you'll have a mandatory seventy [year] retirement [age], which would preclude Ronald Reagan from being the candidate. But

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you do learn from people like Johnson and Stevenson who have been exposed to the world and to the political pressures and so forth. I think that it is a tragedy that they didn't really form a coalition, if I really look at the Democratic Party and how it sort of disintegrated. Because Johnson and Stevenson were good for the country, had a lot more positive assets than negatives and, yes, they could have helped sort of meld your population through all these problems that we've had.

G: Did Johnson feel that Stevenson was wishy-washy, that he was not decisive enough?

B: Precisely. He thought that he was like an old widow woman. Her husband [had] died, he'd made all the decisions, and now she is left with an estate and she's got a lawyer pulling over here and a doctor over here and her family pulling the other direction. This I believe was a lack of information on Johnson's part. I think if we knew the other side of Stevenson, had we had the association and so forth to sit down and talk like you and I are, for weeks at a time, to know their families and the way things are going, which they didn't do, [it would have been different]. So I think that that is a tragedy for both the Johnson and Stevensonians.

G: Did Johnson have a better understanding, a better relationship, with John Sparkman?

B: Yes. You know, John Sparkman was I believe a Phi Beta Kappa when he went to school, but he hid his intellectual ability very well. But John Sparkman was one of the ablest, most competent, least jealous [senators], and a man that had the capacity to choose able staff people. I thought, as far as my knowledge about senators as executives and picking

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competent people, that John Sparkman and Lyndon Johnson were far and above the rest of their colleagues in the Senate in the people they surrounded them[selves] with. John Sparkman, to prove my point, the people that he hired always, after they got out of politics, went on to be better. John Horne, if I recall when he first came there, was his administrative assistant. He became chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board--

(Interruption)

John Sparkman and Lyndon Johnson always surrounded them[selves] with superior staff people. The key to both men's success as politicians has to be attributed, one, to their capacity as executives; and two, their staffs. John Horne was John Sparkman's administrative assistant. John Horne became chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board when John Kennedy was president. Edd Hyde became a vice president of Reynolds Aluminum Company after he left the Senate. John Sparkman had a nephew named Bryce Curry [?] [who] became governor of the Federal Reserve Board in New York. But he just had bright people. But of all the United States senators that I have known, I thought John Sparkman had less ego than most senators. His selection by Adlai Stevenson to be his running mate in 1952 did not help the ticket. Nobody could have helped Stevenson. Eisenhower was what the American people wanted. He was a folk hero, a military hero. The American people were tired of Truman and the Democratic Party. This was the precise prescription that our country wanted and maybe it was what they needed. They needed to sort of digest all of the New Deal-Fair Deal programs that they had. But John Sparkman was not an intimate personal friend of Lyndon Johnson. But you know,

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it's funny about politicians and sex drive. I don't know, you look at Franklin Roosevelt, they talk about here's a man with polio who was having an affair with Lucy Winchester [Lucy Mercer Rutherfurd]. John Sparkman was a ladies' man. I don't know whether you know that or not. Oh, yes. He was a very, very--sort of, you know, had a lust I mean, and he used that. It's a part of a politician's drive.

Now, we started talking about Stevenson. There were all kind of rumors that Mrs. Stevenson left Stevenson because he was a sissy, that he really wasn't interested in sex. That's ***National Enquirer*** junk. Nobody really knew. He had a son that went on to be a United States senator [Adlai Stevenson III]. But evidently his son had a lot of his father's mannerisms. I believe his son was an unsuccessful candidate to be governor of Illinois. Adlai Stevenson had a problem of making those practical political deals that a political leader must make. Ronald Reagan makes deals with sort of the right-wing nuts. He has to. I mean, he would not have been the Republican nominee had he not had that sort of fervent group of ideologues, you know, people that think that he's Mr. Conservative. I think if we knew him we'd find out that he was a rather moderate fellow, and I think that about Adlai Stevenson. I think they got him pushed way out as being soft on communism, a pro-Russia internationalist. When you really got to know the guy I bet that you could find out that he could be tough as nails. But that was a weakness on our part; I think that we had very poor intelligence.

G: Were efforts made during the 1952 campaign to get LBJ to be more active in it?

B: Yes.

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G: Can you recall?

B: They were constantly calling him on the phone, writing, putting pressure on him from people who--you know, Jim Rowe was working for Stevenson. He had been Johnson's friend ever since Roosevelt. I believe Jim Rowe had been administrative assistant to Franklin Roosevelt. He had a lot to do with Johnson's close relationship with President Roosevelt. So he [Johnson] was getting tremendous heat, notwithstanding the unpopularity of Stevenson in his [state]. I believe the Democratic platform had a plank that they were opposed to tidelands, and two, for repeal of the depletion allowance or at least curtailing it some, which is like a red flag in front of a bull as far as Texas was concerned. So I want to tell you, as well as I knew Johnson, I was surprised that he did as much as he did for Stevenson. But it's sort of indicative to me that even then that he secretly wanted to be the Democratic presidential nominee.

(Interruption)

I was rambling about Stevenson.

G: And that Johnson's support of Stevenson is indicative that he himself--

B: Well, the fact that Johnson would sort of defy [his constituency], knowing the polls in Texas showing that Eisenhower was going to just beat hell out of Stevenson, and the fact that he would get out and campaign where the traditional Democratic vote was; Johnson knew every county in Texas. The only hope that Stevenson had of winning, he had to carry Texas. So with all of the heat of the Jim Rowes and the people that Johnson was friendly with that were supporting Stevenson--I believe Mrs. Roosevelt called him three or four times and demanded that he go to more places. But Johnson knew that if Stevenson couldn't carry Texas,

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he sure as hell couldn't be elected, which turned out to be true, because Texas is sort of the bellwether state. I don't know how far you go back to see--I guess you go all the way back to, what, Woodrow Wilson's presidency? If a Democrat doesn't carry Texas, you don't get elected. It's sure applicable to Roosevelt and to Truman. Did Truman carry Texas in 1948?

G: I assume that he did.

(Interruption)

Did LBJ complain about the rough sledding, campaigning for Stevenson in Texas?

B: Yes. Well, he knew that it was a hopeless cause, plus it was harmful to him politically to be asking his people to support a man they didn't believe in.

G: Didn't Amon Carter break with Johnson over that?

B: Yes, I think this is precisely what happened. Amon Carter, who was the publisher of the ***Fort Worth Star-Telegram***--was that the name of the paper?

G: Yes.

B: --was a very conservative man but had stuck his neck out consistently to be a Lyndon Johnson supporter and had written great editorials about what a great United States senator Lyndon Johnson was. But Amon Carter had made a commitment I believe to deliver Lyndon Johnson for Eisenhower, which he was unable to do. So as is historically true of powerful, rich people who are unable to keep their commitments, then they will turn on you. That lasted for a period of time. I don't know whether it was ever healed.

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But Johnson, as I told you before we started taping, Johnson did have a great capacity to get back with people that had been his enemies, and Amon Carter is a good illustration of what I'm talking about. Because one time he asked me to bring something to John Pastore from Rhode Island, who was sort of a powerful leader of the New England delegation. He was a senator's senator, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, worked at doing his job. He was the first Italo-American ever elected to the Senate. He liked Lyndon Johnson. He told me many, many times that Lyndon Johnson was the ablest man he'd ever known in his life and he wanted him to be president. "But," he said, "I have the practical side that John Kennedy is a folk hero, and I don't have any choice. I have to support him for the presidency. But if I were free, I would be for Lyndon Johnson."

So Johnson had me arrange to bring Senator John Pastore to Texas. Back then we flew on a DC-7 from Washington to Dallas. It was around Christmas time; Johnson and John Pastore and I were on the plane. So C. R. Smith was from either Fort Worth or Dallas; he was the president and founder of American Airlines, but he was a great Johnson friend. So Johnson got an impulse before we got to Fort Worth that he wanted to introduce John Pastore [to Amon Carter]. I guess John Pastore was telling Johnson what a great man he was, and Johnson really was believing all this stuff. So he went up to see the pilot to ask the pilot to get C. R. Smith on the phone. Now that is not easy when you're flying over these cities, especially at the state of communication at that particular time. But somehow, someway, contact was made with C. R. Smith, and Johnson said, "C. R., I have got to go see Amon Carter

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because I want him to meet John Pastore, who is a senator from Rhode Island, and he's on the Commerce Committee, and he controls what's going to happen to your airline. Now you got to help me." So C. R. said, "Put the captain on," and he told the captain to make an emergency landing in Fort Worth.

Now you can imagine the consternation of those people on that plane at Christmas time, with all their Christmas gifts, with planes to make connections from Dallas. Had they ever known that Johnson had done this, they would have killed him. And had the press ever found out what he did--I mean, as I've told you on several occasions, Lyndon Johnson was a genius. He was a genius that he had friends like this, but he was an idiot to do this. Because a little petty thing like that, if the public ever knew that you kept somebody who was going home for Christmas to see their grandkids or their kids, and they missed the damn plane because you used your power, it would kill you. He never thought of it. He just had that instant impulse that he wanted to go see this guy Amon Carter, who had been his supporter and now was his enemy, and he thought he could make some peace with him. I believe Amon Carter was in the radio and television business possibly, too. So John Pastore, being chairman of the Senate Commerce subcommittee that had jurisdiction over radio and TV stations, I mean that Machiavellian mind was working all the time, you know.

G: Were you there? Did he actually get in to see Amon Carter?

B: Sure. Oh, yes. Sure. Amon sent his car out to pick us up, and we went down to the newspaper and we had a meeting and then went back. But

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Pastore, he kept telling me, "You know, there's only one man in the world would do what he does."

G: Was Amon Carter cordial?

B: Very, very impressed. John Pastore impressed him. He knew all of Lyndon Johnson and his tricks, but John Pastore with his power, first Italo-American [senator]--a little small [man], I don't believe John Pastore was over five foot three or four, but he had a keen mind, a very, very fascinating talker. And John Pastore had him in the palm of his hand, and I think this did more to help Lyndon Johnson with Amon Carter than anything he'd done in a long, long time.

G: Amazing.

Now, LBJ apparently talked to Richard Russell and discussed getting Russell to support the Democratic ticket that fall just before the election. Do you remember that?

B: Yes, I do, because he called me to see if I thought there was any way that Senator Russell would publicly endorse the ticket. I said, "[You're] the only man in the country that could get him to do it. Senator Russell is going to vote the ticket; he has never done anything but vote the straight Democratic ticket in his life. But he feels that the Democratic Party has abandoned its basic roots, that it's too liberal, labor controls the nominating processes, and that we are headed for hell in a hurry. But he has enough basic belief in you and the party that if you call him, he'll hold his nose and put a blindfold over his eyes and come out for the ticket." He gave a very tepid endorsement. It did not [help Stevenson], other than helping in Georgia. I believe Georgia was one of the few states that Stevenson carried.

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G: Well now, my notes indicate that there was a considerable time lag between the time that Russell made that endorsement and the time the press published it. It looks like a deliberate attempt by at least the Texas press to keep it out of print for a while. Was that in fact what happened?

B: I think it's a combination of the conservative Texas newspaper owners' knowing of the tremendous impact of Senator Russell's endorsement because of his respect in the South and with moderates all over the country, plus Senator Russell had probably the weakest staff, and I attribute that to *his* weakness. Here was a man that had a lot of pluses; he was really presidential material, must have had a lot of the qualities of Robert E. Lee. Robert E. Lee should never have been the leader of the southern forces in the Confederacy. I mean, when you look at Dick Russell, had Dick Russell said, "The Supreme Court's ruling is the law of the land. I am an attorney. I am a politician. I have sworn to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the land. This is contrary to our traditions; you've got to give us a little time. I suggest that we start in the kindergarten and the first grade because you can't teach an old dog new tricks," he would have been probably the first man in the history of the country to carry all fifty states had he done that. But Richard Russell surrounded himself with very, very weak staff, and I think that he had a very poor press officer. Because there was really, at this particular time only one significant paper in Georgia, and that was the ***Atlanta Constitution***. So whoever was assigned to Washington and so forth would write Russell's stories.

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To be an influence nationally, you have got to play the media. You've got to know what their problems are, their schedules. The best media user when we're talking about senators was Harry Flood Byrd from Virginia. Now here was a man that really intellectually was not very bright, but he was a genius in using the media. Every Sunday he would have a news release he would give out on Friday for publication on Sunday. Senator Byrd was always talking about a balanced budget and reckless spending by the bureaucrats. So I would say he got more press coverage than any senator. He was a genius at using the media, because somebody who worked for him knew how to get your name in the paper. These old conservative newspaper owners, they were anti-Washington, anti-establishment, anti-government spending, so Harry Byrd was their hero. He got more rewards for being the most conservative man, the leader of the world, and when it really got down to the world we were living in, he was lost.

You know, like when we came along with the interstate highway system. It was just beyond his power of recognition as to why it was in the national interest to have a federal highway program. It was the only way you could really bring all of the fifty states together, and how you do it is with the taxation power, because he had always historically been a states' rights advocate. If you go out here to Virginia, the roads are still terrible because they didn't build roads where they needed it. They'd always build a road for a farmer, because that was his [Byrd's] political base. He was smart enough to know to take care of the politicians.

G: Well, now, of course, Eisenhower swept the--

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B: Swept the country. But Eisenhower liked Lyndon Johnson, and Lyndon Johnson was probably the best thing that ever happened to Eisenhower. Because either Eisenhower was born in Texas or he'd lived in Texas, but he liked Texans. I think Sid Richardson, some of those wealthy Texans bought cattle for him, bought tractors for him. Drew Pearson was always writing stories about the guy from Cities Service. I don't know whether he was a Texan or not, but they were always giving him something. Eisenhower had never had any money; he'd been a military man. I guess the first time he ever saw any big money was when he wrote his book [***Crusade in Europe***].

G: There were a number of Texans in the administration, Oveta Culp Hobby and--

B: Bob Anderson.

G: --Bob Anderson.

B: Bob Anderson I always thought was one of the most competent people that Eisenhower had around. He was level-headed, shrewd, and he had the respect of Mr. Rayburn and Johnson. I went to the Kentucky Derby in Bob Anderson's plane, I believe. Since he was secretary of the treasury he had charge of the Coast Guard, so he flew Lyndon Johnson and myself to the Kentucky Derby about the first year Eisenhower was president. And we got caught in a DC-3 in a thunderstorm. We dropped five thousand feet. As much as Johnson had flown, he thought this was the end. He could overreact sometimes.

(Interruption)

G: You were talking about this plane ride.

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B: So we had been invited by Secretary Anderson to ride on his plane, which was assigned to the Coast Guard but they used [it] for the secretary of the treasury. So Sid Richardson, I believe Perry Bass, I think Elkins, Elkins, what was [his name]?

G: Of Vinson, Elkins, Judge [James A.] Elkins.

B: Judge Elkins. Judge Elkins was there, Clint Murchison, Sr. And everybody in the Texas group at the Derby, there was a bunch of rich oil men, bankers, lawyers, who had been coming there for years--

(Interruption)

--at this particular time I was about twenty-two, twenty-three years old. So when we arrived at the airport they had a limousine to meet Johnson and all these people. We had a box right on the finish line for the Derby, but we didn't have a reservation for lunch. So I was sort of a go-getter. I knew that the Stevens brothers were the caterers for most of the racetracks in America, so I went in to the main dining room and went through about three maitre d's, and I said, "I must see Mr. Stevens." They said, "Well, this is Derby Day, there's no way you can see him." I said, "This is absolutely a must. I've got the Secretary of the Treasury with me and Senator Johnson from Texas, and I've got to see him."

So finally I got to his secretary. When I told her what my problem was, she got Mr. Stevens. I said, "Mr. Stevens, I'm embarrassed. I've got sixteen people, including the Secretary of the Treasury and all these rich Texans, and they don't have a reservation and they want to have lunch." He said, "Son, you've come to the right man. That's what I'm here for, is to take care of crises. Give me ten minutes and I'll

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have a table." All he did was, he just took an aisle away and made a table.

Well, they thought I was a boy genius when I came up with a table for sixteen.

And then I got lucky. I ran into a little old Missourian named Scott Wilson. There was a senator from Missouri named Thomas Hennings, and he and Johnson had served in the House of Representatives together, and he liked Johnson. He was sort of a patrician fellow, very handsome, but he was a drunk. He had been a great athlete when he was a youngster. But that fellowship that they developed in the House of Representatives spilled over when he came to the Senate. But [Hennings was] horribly jealous of Stuart Symington, hated, loathed Stuart Symington, but he liked Johnson. But he hired this little old Missourian, who was sort of like a country greeter. So if you were from Missouri and you came to see Senator Hennings, this little fellow would take you on a tour of the Capitol. So he was one of those staff members I got to know. It was a smart deal to have a fellow like that.

So Scott said, "Bobby! What are you doing here?" I said, "You can't believe what I'm doing here. These old rich people are running me to death. The poorest son of the bitch in the crowd was Lyndon Johnson. You know, I am certain without him telling me that he's worth at least ten million dollars if he's worth a nickel, and I don't know what Secretary Anderson is worth, but I think he's a wealthy man. But these other people are worth anywhere from fifty million to five hundred million. I mean, that is their reputation in the financial community. They have no idea about these horses. They're betting every horse.

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I've been around horses a little bit and know who the better jockeys and trainers [are] and so forth. But they want to have a Derby winner." He said, "Well, Bobby, let me tell you. When I was a young boy your age, I was a roommate with Ben Jones [?], who was the trainer for Calumet Farms." They had a horse that had not done well, had been a little sickly, but Ben had told him the night before the Kentucky Derby that in his opinion his horse was going to win, and win easily.

I went back and told Johnson about the conversation I'd had with Scott Wilson, because he knew Scott. So he repeated my conversation to all these fellows, and they all bet on the horse that Calumet had running, and I am sure that they made at least a hundred thousand dollars. I mean, I never had so damn much money, because I was in the hundred dollar window. The guy said, "Aren't you ever going to quit?" God only knows how much [inaudible]. But not only did I win for them, I won for myself. I think I won two thousand dollars that day.

G: Let me ask you to describe that plane ride, though. What happened?

B: Well, [it was] a DC-3, which had been the major mode of transportation of World War II, up until the DC-6 and DC-7 and Lockheed came out with a four-engine plane. In fact, Eisenhower's presidential plane was one of those Lockheed funny wing, you know, [it] had a funny tail. I forget the name of it, it's been so long. But when the plane dropped five thousand feet, Johnson turned white and he thought that we were all going to be killed. He could get excited.

G: What did he say?

B: He said, "Goddamn, this is it!" He just thought we were gone. Sweat was coming off his head. He really thought that this was the end. As

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much as he had ridden from Texas, hearing those storms and so forth. Plus he didn't have a lot of confidence in military pilots. He thought they were young boys. He had great confidence in Wesley West's pilots. I remember Wesley had some guys that had about forty years' experience, two older guys, and Johnson was always telling me, "Now those are the only two sons of bitches who know how to fly a plane."

G: Big Deal is one of them.

B: Big Deal, was that who it was? Nice fellows. I don't know whether they're still alive or not. But they liked old Johnson. They were such masters, like when they would land the plane you never knew that you hit the runway. But these young boys, they'd bounce around. They were just young military pilots. They don't keep them a long time, they didn't have that experience.

G: Were the other passengers worried as well? Were you?

B: Well, sure. You know, any time you drop five thousand feet and you're out there in a horrible storm [you're worried]. I doubt if you had radar then. So sure, you wonder if this is the end. He sure thought it was the end. He thought we were gone. Bob Anderson was unflappable; it didn't bother him.

G: Is that right?

B: Yes. Yes. He just said, "Just a little thunderstorm. You'll survive."

G: Well now, did Johnson use Anderson for entree to the White House, or did he go through these avenues of Anderson and Oveta Hobby to get things out of the Republican administration?

B: I think that Johnson was very kind, deferential, supportive of Mrs. Hobby, because of who she [was], the paper that her family had, she had.

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He respected her. I think she was a very bright lady, and she respected him. But I think when it came to really powerful influence and helping Johnson that Bob Anderson, the Secretary of the Treasury, had more to do with making Johnson influential with the White House group. Because Bob Anderson had the President's total support. The President had been embarrassed with [George] Humphrey, because Humphrey thought he was smarter than Eisenhower and he was domineering. The staff didn't like Humphrey, because he was arrogant with his wealth and he was always a self-dealer. Anderson did not have those characteristics and was probably the most influential secretary of the treasury in my lifetime. I'm not competent to evaluate [Henry] Morgenthau during Roosevelt's administration because I was too young. But from those that I [know of], reading history and so forth, I don't see people giving the credit to Anderson that I think he deserved.

This was a very difficult era in our country, to have a Republican President, a Democratic Congress--

(Interruption)

We were talking about the Johnson-Eisenhower relationship, the influence of Bob Anderson and Oveta Culp Hobby.

Eisenhower liked old man Rayburn, but Johnson was the smarter of the two and he was the most powerful of the two. He was the opinion maker. Because with four hundred and thirty-five House members, it's awfully hard to deal in foreign policy and things like that. They traditionally had been the body for appropriations and taxation; historically they don't confirm ambassadors and cabinet members and so forth. So Johnson, because of being the senator and the minority and

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majority leader, was in a position--he was at the right place at the right time. And Wall Street liked the relationship between Johnson and Eisenhower. You see the aberrations in the stock market right now. Wall Street is uncertain as to what the Congress and the White House is going to do. What you see today is an illustration of statesmanship, because Johnson was able to work--

(Interruption)

We really have a serious economic crisis because of the debt and the recession that has been incurred in the first three years of the Reagan Administration. Now the Democrats control the House and there will be a coalition--

(Interruption)

The Dow Jones went down almost twenty-three points yesterday, and the reason is Wall Street cannot operate in a government of uncertainty. Everybody that knows anything about economics knows that you cannot function with a two hundred billion-dollar annual federal deficit. So the President has been advised by his supply-siders, including his Secretary of the Treasury, that it will be political suicide to be for a tax increase in view of the fact that he ran on a ticket of being for tax reduction. And he was able to get through the Congress the rather substantial tax cuts, but when you look at how much money they're raising with social security, it's sort of a wash. Many people don't know that, but that's basically what has happened, especially for the average taxpayer. Now the rich people are better off, much better off.

So here you've got divided government. When Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn controlled the Democratic House and Senate, and Eisenhower

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was president, you didn't have that uncertainty. Wall Street and the world knew that we had a continuity. We had statesmanship, we had credibility, believability. You don't have that now and you are going to have a lot of crisis in government. You're going to have a lot of crisis in Wall Street until Wall Street knows that there's going to be budget cuts and a [deficit] reduction. It's easy for politicians to vote for government programs and tax reduction; it's very difficult to get elected and vote for tax increases. So that's part of our problem right now. But we are going to have a very difficult time the next twenty-four months, because we don't have the statesmanship that we had back then, and we are attracting mediocre people to Washington, in the Senate, in the House and in the cabinet positions. You don't have a Bob Anderson as secretary of the treasury that has the influence to say, "Hey, Mr. President, we have got to do something because the markets are falling." Secretary [Donald] Regan is rich. He brags that he's worth twenty million dollars, but times have changed since he was a president of Merrill Lynch. A third-grader knows that you can't use borrowed money all the time. We have got to do something about this.

G: Some of the Eisenhower legislative liaison people, the White House people who were working the Hill for the White House, seemed to complain that LBJ was doing an end run around them, that he was going through Bob Anderson and exerting influence to get what he wanted at the White House, and outsmarting them in that sense.

B: Well, Johnson was smarter than they were. Eisenhower had two people on his staff that liked Johnson. One was General Jerry [Wilton] Persons. I think Eisenhower really--

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G: Slick Persons.

B: Yes, Slick Persons, that was his nickname. He had known Johnson from the [House] Naval Affairs Committee, Armed Services Committee. They personally liked each other. He didn't have those little petty jealousies. I don't know whether he's deceased or not.

G: I think he is.

B: Okay.

The other fellow was Bryce Harlow. Bryce Harlow was a very competent, able lobbyist for the White House, but he also knew about Washington and what to do. I'm not privy to your interviews with people like Bryce Harlow and whether he has that view, but you also have got to understand that Texans have a great affinity for each other. Anybody from Texas, they do a little bit more [for them]. So there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that Lyndon Johnson and Bob Anderson would do more for each other than they'd do for a non-Texan. I think you have to bear that in mind.

G: Can you recall any particular examples where Johnson, if he met resistance at the White House, would go to Bob Anderson and get something accomplished that he wanted?

B: I believe that General Dynamics had a big military facility in Fort Worth.

G: That's right.

B: There were some budgetary cuts in the process, and Fort Worth was going to lose something like three thousand jobs. I think some of the people on the staff around Eisenhower wanted to transfer those jobs from Texas to California to sort of get a little jab in at Johnson. And I think to

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Johnson's credit that he went to Anderson and said, "Damn you, I've been carrying your water pail up here and I need some help." I think that is a specific illustration of where Johnson used Anderson to go to Eisenhower to keep the jobs in Fort Worth. I mean, I don't think there's any senator in the history of Texas that did more for his constituency when it came to keeping jobs and [getting] a bigger percentile of especially the military expenditures for his home state than Johnson did for Texas.

But he paid attention to the detail and taking care of projects for senators and congressmen and the secretary of defense--you know, when they had projects, he knew the machinations of the Congress. Because the President can start a thermonuclear war, but he can't appropriate the money. But Johnson knew how to go from the subcommittee in the House to the full committee to the subcommittee in the Senate to the full committee to the conference committee, and to survive the conference committee and not get a presidential veto. That was his genius. He was a legislative genius. Because most people, they introduce a bill, and they get it passed in one house and they lose it in the other. They lament that they did all this work and nothing happened. But Johnson was able [to do it], because of his talent--and very few politicians have it--to follow through. He did. He had a staff that followed through.

But he made those deals with the people in the House--having served in the House helped tremendously for his being in the Senate. Plus the campaign contributions. When he was in the House he worked on that House campaign committee giving out money to people. They become respectful, not obligated, but respectful. The same thing in the

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Senate. It creates a lot of problems for you, because everybody feels they don't get what they're entitled to. The Democrats never had enough money, but all politicians complain about that.

G: Well, perhaps this is a good [place to stop].

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview IV

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