INTERVIEW VII

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INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT G. BAKER

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Baker's residence, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: Let's start with the discussion of this Upper Colorado River project and the Echo Park Dam.

B: It had been the policy of the Eisenhower Administration and their Interior Department to try to get the government out of the dam-building business. The Eisenhower Administration used all the political muscle they had to keep this Echo Park Dam from being authorized and then appropriated for. But my recollection is that because of Johnson's friendship with Senator [Richard L.] Neuberger from Oregon and Wayne Morse, while Neuberger and Morse disliked each other intensely, Johnson was friendly with both of them. And it was a project that meant a great deal to the western senators. So Johnson used a lot of muscle with some of his southern friends to vote for it, to pass it. My recollection is that we ultimately did some tradeoffs, but it wound up being constructed over the opposition of the Treasury Department and the Secretary of Interior and the President.

G: Was there a question of conservation as well? Did conservationists oppose the dam, do you recall?

B: I don't recall the conservationists specifically being opposed to it, but I think that there were some strenuous objections of people who were

part of the wilderness movement that by building the dam you are going to flood a lot of the natural wilderness area. So you get into one of those conflicts.

G: Okay, the highway bill was another big controversy that year. Do you remember that?

B: Yes, sir; yes, sir. I think that the administration under President Eisenhower had suggested the interstate highway program, but they really wanted a limited number of miles. Once the highway program started and the various governors and state highway departments and so forth felt that they were being neglected, it became a big political plus for the Democrats. So we had constant wars which we ultimately won by increasing the total number of miles in the interstate highway system. Eisenhower said we were budget busters and reckless and irresponsible. But because of the power of Senator [Robert S.] Kerr and Mike Kirwan, Speaker Rayburn and Senator Johnson, and the popularity of the highway program on both sides, I think we got some Republican votes like George Aiken and Leverett Saltonstall, people like that who voted contrary to the wishes of the administration.

G: At the time these votes were taken, was there any assurance where the highways would go?

B: No, since the Secretary of Commerce under his department had control of where the roads would be built, but you could rest assured that there was sort of a quid pro quo as to where the additional mileage would go. Because you had a Democratic Congress and a Republican President, so you had to get the money from the Congress. So it was an accommodation as

to where these additional funds would be spent. This happens constantly.

G: One of the big issues that was related to that seems to have been the control of advertising rights along these highways and whether the federal government could or should get involved with regulating bill boards and things like that.

B: It was a very emotional issue [for] the conservationists and the people who thought that we should not have all these outdoor advertising signs like we had on the other federal highways. So the end product was that the billboard lobby was very, very influential with the politicians, because all politicians had used their services, you know, when they were running for office. So there was a great conflict of interest between senators and congressmen and those people who were in the outdoor advertising business. A lot of people voted really contrary to what they really wanted. The end product was that they did vote for any additional mileage put in the system that you had to be about a half mile away from the highway to have an outdoor billboard.

I think Mrs. Johnson had a lot to do with converting Johnson. Originally I think he had made a commitment to the billboard people in Texas, who were very powerful. Harry McPherson's father had been in the billboard business. Harry McPherson was on the Democratic Policy staff, and his father had sent Harry to Harvard from money he made with outdoor signs, and I think he almost fell out with his son when he thought his son was on the side of the beauty people. But the end product was that they pretty well compelled the outdoor advertising people, if you're going to have a sign, you've got to be about a half a mile away.

G: Yes. Well, was Mrs. Johnson that enthusiastic about beautification or regulating the billboards at this point?

B: I am of the opinion that she had, I think, been inducted by some of the women who were lobbying against this; I think [by] Liz Carpenter, who was a newslady from Arkansas at that particular time, but a friend of the Johnsons. But I think the women were the ones that were for beautification, and I remember on several occasions hearing Johnson say that he was going to ban her from the house if she didn't quit lobbying him about the billboards. I think this was the first time that she showed a great interest in beautification. Then, as you know, once he got to be president she followed through.

G: What position did Senator Kerr and Walter George take in this?

B: My recollection is that Senator Kerr was for the people in the billboard business being able to continue as they had done in the past, but he was not full of hellfire and damnation against it, because I think [of] what Mrs. Johnson was doing and maybe Mrs. Kerr. But the beautification people were very, very alert. They got hold of the various senators' wives and so forth.

I don't have any recollection as to Senator George's position at the time. If he took a position, he would not have lobbied anybody, because at this particular time he was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and most of his time was spent on trying to keep Secretary John Foster Dulles from getting us in a war over Quemoy and Matsu off the China coast.

G: I just assumed with Coca-Cola being based there that that would--

B: I'm sure that Senator George would have voted for whatever Coca-Cola wanted, because he was known sometimes as the senator for Coca-Cola. (Laughter)

G: Okay. Now, Allan Shivers made a trip to Washington that spring, and LBJ seems to have been in a position of trying to promote harmony between Shivers and Paul Butler and bring Shivers back into camp. Do you recall Johnson's efforts here?

B: I recall that when Governor Shivers had come to Washington that there was one thing that Allan Shivers and Lyndon Johnson had in common, and it was their distrust and detestation of Paul Butler. Paul Butler was a wild Irishman who thought that he was *the* spokesman for the Democratic Party, and he had nothing but contempt for the congressional leadership. He had been a very strong advocate of Adlai Stevenson. So I think that the fact that Allan Shivers and Lyndon Johnson both disliked Paul Butler, it made it possible for them to meet socially and politically when Shivers was in town. And I think because of this that it in many ways kept Allan Shivers from being a candidate against Lyndon Johnson. A lot of Shivers' supporters, the real conservative right, wanted to get rid of Lyndon Johnson, and Allan Shivers was their great hope. But it shows you the genius of Johnson, and I don't know Shivers so I don't know his political genius, but the fact [was] that the newspapers constantly say [that] Shivers is going to run against Johnson. Shivers, as I recall, did not vote for Stevenson, because of Stevenson's position on tidelands in 1952. But any time Shivers would come to Washington and Johnson knew about it, he was very gracious, kind and hospitable. And I think by doing that he made it possible whereby he and Shivers would not

have a great confrontation. So it worked out certainly to Johnson's benefit. Had Eisenhower selected Shivers to be in his cabinet, like he did Mrs. [Oveta Culp] Hobby, I'm sure that Johnson would have been one of his strongest proponents. Politics makes strange bedfellows.

G: There was an article by Elizabeth Donahue in ***The New Republic*** entitled "The Prosecution Rests," and the thrust of it was that LBJ had restricted or limited some of the Senate investigations that year. The three that she mentions were: one, he maneuvered Estes Kefauver out of the chairmanship of the subcommittee scheduled to investigate the Dixon-Yates contract. Do you recall anything about that?

B: I recall that Kefauver was running for the presidency and he was always seeking to chair an investigative committee. He was on the Senate Judiciary Committee, and they thought they had given him an innocuous subcommittee, the Subcommittee [to Investigate] Juvenile Delinquency. But Estes had more staff members than the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and he sort of abused his subcommittee chairmanship. And because of that, the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee was opposed to giving Estes another subcommittee. And I think the powers that controlled the Senate thought that because of his known political ambitions that he would abuse that and that he would just have a field day. So there's no doubt that Johnson and the hierarchy, the conservatives that were running the Senate, were very happy to keep Kefauver from having that subcommittee.

G: The second charge is that he softened an investigation into the administration's security firings, and this was a committee that Olin Johnston had proposed. Do you remember that?

B: There was a big issue about a fellow named Otto Otepka in the State Department. He later was hired by Senator [James] Eastland to work as a consultant for the Senate Subcommittee on--it was called the Internal Security [Sub]committee. Here was a committee that [J. Edgar] Hoover used; when he couldn't get somebody investigated on his own, he would use that committee to investigate people. Olin Johnston was a member of that committee, Senator [Patrick A.] McCarran was chairman. So you had McCarran and Eastland and Olin Johnston on the Democratic side, and I think Senator [Everett] Dirksen was on the Republican side. It was sort of a one-man show. But in the State Department there had been some allegation that Otepka had leaked some security files about people who were soft on communism to this committee and so forth. The Secretary of State and the President were very strong in that they did not want an investigation because they thought that it would do irreparable harm to their own security program. So I think it was because of Johnson's influence and the relationship that he had with Senator McCarran that the end product was that they worked it out that this guy Otepka got a job working for the Senate. That way he sort of softened having an investigation of the State Department.

G: I see. The third one was an investigation of the radio-television industry that Senator [Warren] Magnuson was pushing. Here I guess the investigation was simply running out of money. They weren't getting enough funds to conduct their investigation.

B: I really don't recall what that particular issue might have been. It must not have been too significant, because, you know, Magnuson and Johnson were good friends, served on the same committee together. Now

Magnuson may have been taking a position publicly and another privately. And that's probably what happened in that particular case.

Talking about that, I saw on last evening's CBS television show that Dr. Frank Stanton, who was a dear friend of Senator Johnson's, and Mr. Bill Paley had been awarded a scroll at the University of Arizona from the Walter Cronkite School of Radio and TV Journalism. So they were the first recipients. I guess somebody gave a lot of money to the University of Arizona, so they named their radio and television school the Walter Cronkite School. So Dr. Stanton--it brought back [memories]. I used to see him frequently when he was here, and he was Johnson's friend and Mr. Paley was his friend.

G: Was he?

B: Oh, yes. Sure, he was. He was a frequent contributor to Senator Johnson's campaigns and to those senators that Senator Johnson wanted to elect. Paley was a very, very wealthy man and astute politician.

G: And of course KLBJ was affiliated with--

B: CBS.

G: --CBS, yes.

B: So they had mutual interests. But Dr. Stanton was, I think, one of the people that President Johnson wanted to name to the cabinet, and I think he had to give up something like a two-million-dollar pension that he had coming from CBS, and as a consequence he had to turn the President down.

G: Okay. Another legislative issue had to do with public housing and the defeat of the Capehart Amendment. Remember Homer Capehart brought up an amendment to limit the--

B: To limit the number of public housing units that were to be constructed for the poor. Capehart was a Throttlebottom, but he was a real decent fellow. The worst spanking I ever saw a senator take on the Senate floor was when he was trying to defend General [Douglas] MacArthur [after] being fired by President Truman, and Senator Kerr literally tongue-lashed him. I've never seen a man beaten more decisively in debate in my life. But Capehart was much more liberal when it came to housing, and his record showed. He was chairman of the Senate Banking and Currency Committee, and my original boss, Senator [Burnet] Maybank from South Carolina, served with Capehart. He was a businessman; you could negotiate with him. The administration really wanted to totally gut the public housing program, so Capehart offered the Eisenhower Administration's public housing bill. There were enough Democrats and Republicans and not too much flak from Capehart, but he became the administration's spokesman because he was chairman of the Senate Banking and Currency Committee. So that's the reason, you know, if you had to have an opponent, he was a good one to have, because he wasn't mean and you could negotiate with him. They did not get all that they wanted, but they got a pretty liberal public housing bill, notwithstanding Eisenhower's objections.

G: The suggestion has been made that Johnson put together a majority by convincing the southern Democrats to vote for it, because any public housing was the same as a lot of public housing, that it was just like being a little bit pregnant.

B: It was no doubt about it, yes. Plus the truth of it is the South needed public housing worse than any part of the country, especially where

you'd had military bases built and with World War II coming to an end, you had communities that really didn't have any housing. So while the real estate people were adamant in their opposition to it, they didn't have the clout to totally defeat it. They curtailed it, but not too much.

G: This was the vote, I believe, that Senator Humphrey's plane was allowed to land or something like that in spite of the bad weather or landed ahead of some of the other flights.

B: Yes. It was a very close vote, and this is one of the issues that meant a great deal to Senator Humphrey and to Senator Johnson, because it was a good-guys-versus-bad-guys vote. So I called the controller office at the airport, even though they basically work for the administration. But I got the chief controller and we had a--it was sort of a wintry day and the planes were stacked up for many, many miles around. When I said that "The Senate Leader, Lyndon Johnson, is not going to have the vote until you land that plane, and it's absolutely an emergency," once I made the phone call, they gave priority to the plane. Then later when the administration found out what I had done, they were very upset with the controller and they advised him that he would be fired if he ever did that again.

G: Oh, really?

B: Yes, sure did. Sure happened.

But I had the same thing happen another time. Senator [J. W.] Fulbright had gone to Baltimore to make a speech, and the Mayor, Tom D'Alesandro, was our friend. So I was holding up a vote. Baltimore is about forty miles away. So I had instructed the Mayor to have the

police car come a hundred miles an hour. Senator Fulbright grabbed me and he wanted to choke me. He said, "You almost got me killed." (Laughter)

But those are a few of the perks of being with Johnson and things that we did to try to get them there for a vote.

G: How did you know Humphrey's situation to begin with?

B: Because we knew when Humphrey left Minneapolis. We knew what time the plane was to land. So when we called the control tower to find out why the plane hadn't landed, we were advised that there were, I think, about forty planes being held in the pattern. When I reported back to Johnson, he said, "Go get hold of the chief controller and tell him that it's an emergency, that Humphrey's plane's got to land, and that we're not going to vote until he gets here." So then we sent a Capitol Police car out there to pick up Humphrey, didn't even pick up his luggage, we just brought him in.

G: Is that right?

B: Just rushed him right in.

G: I suppose that the vote was held up through some device.

B: What we would do, we would ask for a quorum call and then we'd ask our people not to show up so we would just instead of taking fifteen minutes for a quorum call, sometimes we could drag it out an hour. So that's precisely what we would do. We would just have our senators go to the restaurant or go to the Secretary of the Senate's office or stay in the Cloakrooms. So it was a dilatory tactic. Both sides have been known to use it.

G: Yes. Was there anyone else that you had to either fly in or go to some extraordinary length to get there on this occasion or any other occasion?

B: Well, not on this particular occasion. One time on the Bricker Amendment, we had Harley Kilgore in the Naval Hospital, so we brought him from the Naval Hospital in an ambulance and brought him in on this ambulance cot to cast the vote. I think Senator Kilgore had pneumonia, and the doctors at the Naval Hospital were absolutely horribly upset that we would countermand them and bring him in. But we needed that vote and we were successful.

G: There's a story that's been told that [John] Sparkman was brought back from Alabama or someplace in a state police [car], or taken to the airport, when he was needed for a vote. Do you remember that?

B: I don't remember it, but I'm sure that is correct. We had such a narrow margin that every vote counted.

G: Now, on the other hand, was there a way of keeping someone away that you didn't want to [vote]?

B: Yes, sure. If we knew that we were going to have a vote on an issue and that there was no way to change a senator from our side on this issue-- (Interruption)

So, we were talking about--

G: Keeping a senator away.

B: Senator Johnson, being the majority leader, controlled trips overseas. You would hear a senator say that his wife wanted to go to Paris or he never had been to Tokyo. So when we would have delegations going for a NATO conference, I would try--

(Interruption)

G: Okay, you were saying if you knew a NATO trip was coming up.

B: Yes, right, a NATO trip or a--we were able to send a lot of senators to the association of parliamentarians [Interparliamentary Union]. It was sort of where senators and congressmen got together with their colleagues in England and France and Germany and Japan, and the wives liked these trips. So when a man--take Senator Eugene McCarthy, while he was opposed to oil depletion in the natural gas bill--I use this as an illustration, I don't think it ever happened, but for historical purposes this is the way it would work.

(Interruption)

I was talking about using Senator Eugene McCarthy as an illustration of when we had a senator, either a liberal or a conservative, who would be opposed to a particular bill that we had coming up that the Majority Leader, who was Lyndon Johnson, was trying to get passed or trying to kill. So if we had two or three people who we knew were going to be against us, we had a little lollypop; we'd come over and say, "We've got this trip. It's a two-week trip during the Thanksgiving holidays and you won't miss a lot of your constituents and so forth, because people are away on vacations. How would you like to take a NATO trip? You'll go to Paris and to Brussels and to Bonn and to Athens and Rome in a two-week period." I would say nine times out of ten they would be delighted, especially when they would tell their wives about it, because most wives felt like that they were abused and neglected, so they got to be somebody on these trips. It was a very key weapon that we had to protect our flank.

G: Was there anything other than trips?

B: Well, we could arrange speeches out of town, like, you know, most of our people, the Democratic senators--use a fellow like Frank Church. Frank Church had no personal wealth. So there would be people who, like the homebuilders were holding a convention, and you could get a fellow like Frank Church a five-thousand-dollar honorarium to talk to their national convention. John Sparkman, being chairman of the Housing Subcommittee, was sought after constantly. But those are a few little tricks that we had.

G: The administration must have controlled a lot of travel, just State Department and other sorts of things.

B: But they never knew how to use it.

G: Really?

B: Because for some inexplicable reason, there was never the closeness between the executive department and the legislative body. I don't know whether the liaison office from the White House was unaware. You know, you're bringing in somebody--like when Eisenhower was president he had General Jerry Persons as his liaison with the Hill. So you take a general and put him in that job, he doesn't know the sticks and the carrots of his office, where Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn had been on the Hill for twenty or more years each. They knew what they could and could not do, so they had a big advantage on the administration, plus they controlled when you would vote, which the executive wing didn't know. They were sort of at our disposal.

G: Okay. The day after the Capehart Amendment vote there was a vote on the minimum wage that would raise it to a dollar an hour.

B: Yes, from seventy-five cents to a dollar, right.

G: Evidently Eisenhower had asked Congress to raise it only to ninety cents.

B: That is correct.

G: Do you recall how that vote [went]? That was also a very tightly fought issue, I understand.

B: It was a very tight issue. The administration was absolutely adamant in their position that you could not afford to raise the minimum wage more than ninety cents. So they really threw every roadblock in the way that they could to keep the Democratic proposal of a dollar an hour [from passing]. It was a big, big issue with the AFL-CIO and, as you know, Johnson wasn't too popular with the AFL-CIO. And I'm sure the agricultural interests in Texas sure [as] hell did not want to go from seventy-five cents to a dollar. But Johnson voted for it and was able to barely get enough votes. He lost some conservatives on our side; if I recall correctly I think Price Daniel voted against it, and I know Jim Eastland and people like that voted against it. But we were able to get enough Republicans to just barely win.

G: Spessard Holland, I gather, was leading the opposition.

B: That's right. Senator Holland was a very powerful conservative senator and, as you know, Florida with its citrus industry and a big agricultural state, it would have a tremendous economic impact. He was a tough cookie.

G: Was he?

B: A tough cookie.

G: There's a story that LBJ brought this up to a vote when Holland was in the Senate dining room and just rushed it through with a voice vote while Holland was gone. Do you recall that?

B: No, I think we had a roll call vote on that. He may have asked that the Senate consider it, because my judgment is that had Senator Holland been on the floor, he probably would have started a personal filibuster on the motion to consider it. So it may be that you have some historical notes there saying that Senator Holland felt that the Majority Leader had taken advantage of him. My judgment is Senator Holland had stated that he was vigorously opposed to the bill. To my recollection, he never told me that he wanted to be on the floor when it was taken up. But he sure could have caused us a great amount of difficulty had the vote been on the motion to take it up rather than once it's before the Senate. Because a lot of people could protect their flank by voting against the consideration of the bill, but once you've got it out there in front of the Senate and they had to vote either for seventy-five, ninety or a dollar--

G: Well, I think this was for actual passage, though, I really do. Here's the--look at that.

(Interruption)

B: The Senate Labor Committee was packed with liberals on our side, because it's one way that Johnson placated the labor movement, by putting anybody they wanted on the Labor Committee. That was the one committee that was totally stacked in labor's favor. So evidently the Labor Committee had reported out the dollar-an-hour minimum wage. Eisenhower had agreed to go to ninety. The stacked committee of Democratic

liberals had voted for the dollar. Therefore it was on the calendar. So evidently when Senator Holland was eating or something, Johnson took it up, passed it, and then under the rules of the Senate he could move that the voice vote be reconsidered. Then a motion was made to lay that motion on the table, which precluded anybody from ever taking it up again. So Doris Fleeson, who was a very liberal columnist here, she stated in her column that a lot of liberals would like to have been on record with a vote, with a yea and nay vote, showing what they had done. But Johnson was the pragmatist; he saw this as a way to get that through without going on record. So he was not only taking care of labor, but he was also taking care of his Texas flank.

G: Another very close vote, in fact it passed by one vote, was a-- (Interruption)

There was a defense appropriation bill, and the Democrats raised the Marine Corps strength to, I think, 22,000 over the projected 1956 level. And this was something that [Stuart] Symington had sponsored that would, say, increase the Marine Corps budget by $46 million. Do you recall this, and it passed by one vote?

B: Yes. What happened was the administration, in their desire to sort of consolidate the armed forces, had reached the conclusion that we really didn't need the Marine Corps anymore. So they had really in their proposed budget for that particular year cut them down to where within a few more years they would be totally out of the picture as far as being a separate service. I think President Eisenhower's position was that we had the Eighty-second Airborne Division and units like that, and the day of the need of the Marine Corps had passed, that if we ever had another

conventional war that we would not be invading islands like we did Iwo Jima, et cetera, where the marines had fought so wonderfully. So anybody who had been in the Marine Corps had bombarded their senators and congressmen that this was disgraceful, that Eisenhower was an old army man and the army was always trying to do away with the Marine Corps and that, by God, if you didn't vote to keep the Marine Corps that they were going to vote against you. It became a very emotional issue. The end product was that Symington, who had been secretary of the air force and I believe he was a candidate for re-election and also had good friends in the Marine Corps, proposed it. We had quite a few members in the Senate--Smathers had been in the Marine Corps, Paul Douglas. So it was an easy emotional issue. My recollection is it carried by what, one vote?

G: One vote, yes. Any recollections on getting that one vote?

B: No, I do not.

G: There was some suggestion here that on this vote they used a device, or you all used a device of parlaying one vote into three or so, if one senator said, "Well, I'll vote for you if somebody else will."

B: For the life of me, that does not ring--

G: Was this a device that you would use though in general, "Will you vote with us if we can get, say, your colleague?"

B: If you have a treaty, you have to carry a treaty by two-thirds of the Senate, so I could take one nay vote and two yea votes, see. You could offset on a treaty, you know, you could take one vote to offset two. But on just an up-and-down proposition, I don't know of any way. You just had one-on-one.

G: But would you use that leverage with a senator? Would you say, "If we can get Senator X to vote with us, will you vote with us?"

B: Yes. Let's use this: if we had a Republican senator from Maryland, say, Glenn Beall, and we had a Democratic senator from Maryland named Herbert O'Conor, which I think we had, I could go to Senator O'Conor on my side and say, "Senator, if the Leader is able to get Senator Beall to vote, say, for the Marine Corps money, will you vote with him?" So he'd say, "If my colleague votes that way, then I'll go with you." Because in a state like Maryland they would try to vote together. So that would be an illustration of where you could do that.

G: How about if you could convince them that their vote would allow the bill to pass? Would they be more inclined to vote for it if they thought that their vote was the vote that could get the bill passed?

B: The clearest illustration of that point was when Senator Earle Clements, who was the Democratic whip, had made a commitment to the lobby for the doctors in Kentucky that he would not vote to liberalize social security payments. So we knew that we had a tie vote. And Senator Clements had made a commitment to Senator Johnson that [although] it would destroy him politically, which it did, if he broke his word, which he did, that he would vote with us. Of all the votes that I've ever seen that was mean and cruel and defeated a man, it was that vote by Senator Clements to liberalize social security, contrary to his commitment to the doctor lobby in Kentucky. So that was what caused Thruston Morton to be elected as Senator Clements' replacement. But it was because of Clements' loyalty; it was really his loyalty to Johnson.

Johnson tried many, many ways to make up for Clements' defeat. After Senator Clements' defeat, he made him the chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee; he had Mrs. Johnson hire Senator Clements' daughter, Bess Abell, who worked for them when they were in the White House. But I think Johnson felt bad about that one vote the rest of his life, because he destroyed a man's political career.

G: Did Johnson put a lot of pressure on Clements to vote with him in that?

B: Yes.

G: Did he?

B: Yes. And he destroyed him.

G: Any specifics on what he [did]? Did he insist that Clements do it?

B: He--I mean, I had my vote tally which was Johnson's vote tally, and Clements was seated right next to Johnson, and sweat was coming off of his head. He was down there, just hoping and praying that our vote tally was wrong. But it was a tie vote. And so we won by Clements' vote.

G: You tried to get Senator [J. Allen] Frear, I understand.

B: Yes, we did. We tried to get Frear, but he had made a commitment to the doctors and he kept it. We were doing anything to keep from Clements having to cast that one vote, but Frear wouldn't agree to it.

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G: He [Joseph McCarthy] introduced a Geneva resolution, and evidently [William] Knowland wanted to have this resolution buried quietly in committee, but LBJ wanted a display of how the Republicans opposed Eisenhower. So he forced it out into the open, and it was defeated by seventy-seven

to four. But it was an embarrassment to the Republicans, evidently. Do you recall that?

B: No, I don't. There was such a schism between Knowland and McCarthy and their position that Eisenhower and the State Department were too liberal. There was what they called a congressional foreign policy, which was Knowland and China and so forth and [Styles] Bridges and McCarthy. But I'm sure when you mention that vote that evidently the Republicans wisened up to what Johnson was trying to do to embarrass them, so they just voted for the thing. Because I bet when you look, McCarthy and Bridges and Knowland and [William] Jenner probably would be the four votes, you know, to show their opposition to the administration. Sort of the China bloc, we called them.

G: Okay, let's see what we've got here.

Heart attack. Did you have any indication beforehand that LBJ might be having heart trouble or that he was under a lot--?

B: I had absolutely no inkling that he might be subject to a heart attack. My recollection is that this happened on a Fourth of July weekend. I had gone with my family to Ocean City for the weekend, had not left word with anyone where I had gone. Did not know he had had a heart attack until I bought the Sunday paper, and it was the headline. Then I immediately came back to Washington. You know, as you get older and wiser and you look at a man who is overworked, overweight, smoked too much, drank too much, I mean he was a prime candidate, because I guess when he had the heart attack he certainly was twenty pounds overweight. He worked twenty hours a day. Probably consumed at least a fifth of Cutty Sark every day.

G: Oh, do you really think he drank a fifth of Scotch--?

B: There's no doubt in the world about it.

G: Really?

B: Hey, I was with him. I mean, you know, he would drink about--oh, if you put more than an ounce in his drink, he would get angry, but he would be there talking over a--I'm not talking about just sitting down drinking a fifth, but he would average easily a fifth a day because he'd start, say, at lunchtime you'd have two, probably in the run of the afternoon, after five o'clock in the afternoon, he'd be negotiating with various senators so he'd have a drink with this one and so forth. Time he got home, he'd have some more, so I would bet my life that up until his heart attack, he consumed at least a fifth of Cutty Sark every day of his life. Because he was so pent-up, so tense, and screaming. I mean, he had the typical talent for a heart attack, because he had--and I think that maybe the Scotch calmed him down.

G: How much did he smoke?

B: A minimum of two packs a day, maybe three. Always had one in his mouth. I think that was the worse thing he ever had to give up, because evidently he'd been smoking that way for many, many years.

G: Was he impaired by his drinking?

B: No. He could handle his whiskey probably as well as any man I've ever known. And I think the key to it was that he wanted a tall glass full of soda, and I'm telling you he would chew your ass out if you put--he always said a half a jigger, but we had to pretty well, whoever worked for him, [put in] one jigger which was no more than an ounce, and always put the soda water on the top. But he was flushing his kidneys. He had

a medical history of having kidney stones; doctors always told him "drink a lot of fluids, flush your kidneys out." I've never known a man that could consistently drink a fifth a day and handle his whiskey as well as he could. He always had control of his mental facilities. But he drank it over a ten-hour period. Most people who drink to get tight will sit there and drink too quickly, and it impairs their effectiveness. So out of all the senators that I knew and knowing their drinking habits--you know, Alben Barkley, he'd go take about three jiggers of bourbon for lunch and he was half tight. He and Senator George would go out every day and he'd have to go take a nap; he couldn't hold whiskey. But whether it was the fact that Johnson was putting all that soda water and drinking over, say, a ten-hour period. He'd turn over in his grave if he knew I told you he drank a fifth a day, but he did.

G: Well, you learned of the heart attack and you went back.

B: I came back to Washington, reported in to--called Walter Jenkins at his home. At this particular time, I think it was Sunday evening, he told me that the doctors at that particular time did not think that he would pull through. They thought historically when a man has had a heart attack as massive as he had that pretty generally you will have a second one that will prove fatal. Fortunately, that did not happen. I think Mrs. Johnson called or Walter called me and asked that I go to the hospital. So I spent a great amount of time [there] during the four to six weeks he spent at the hospital.

G: What was the first thing he asked you to do, or someone asked you to do for him, do you recall?

B: I don't have the foggiest idea in the world.

G: I'm told that you were one of the people he wanted to see right away.

B: One, he wanted to get the tailor, told Mrs. Johnson to get the tailor; he'd ordered two or three suits, and he said, "Whatever happens, I need the blue one." He wanted Earle Clements, and he wanted Walter and Felton Johnston, secretary of the Senate.

G: What did he want Johnston for, do you know?

B: Well, you know, Senator Johnson was very fond of Skeeter Johnston. Skeeter Johnston was the secretary of the Senate. So he knew that the senators were having lunch in his office, and so he was trying to have both Secretary of the Senate Johnston and myself let everybody know that he was getting better and so forth.

But for three weeks everybody was sort of the opinion that he would not make it through. And then the question people wanted to know, "Who do you think's going to be leader?" and so forth, because that was running through their minds.

G: Did he make any effort to either retain his post or to move somebody in as a potential successor?

B: He immediately had Earle Clements assume full responsibility as the leader, I thought on the assumption that he would not be back. So since Senator Clements had been elected as second in command, it was easy to do. Now, had he tried to put someone else, he would have had trouble. But Senator Clements was respected and he was a loyal lieu tenant. So that made it very easy, having somebody that he trusted. Now, it would have been a hell of a mess, you know, like John Connally didn't like the Lieutenant Governor of Texas. God only knows what would have happened had the second in command been a person other than a Johnson loyalist.

G: What was his mood during the weeks right after the heart attack?

B: He was very upbeat, optimistic. You know, he was a very sympathetic--he was a loving man. He was telling me, just thanking God for all of the blessings that he had, like Lady Bird and his children and his mother and Walter and, you know, the people that he--I think he was thinking how lucky he was, but he would certainly never indicate to anybody around him that this was it, he's through. He had such a fierce determination and will power to overcome this, and he was desperately hungry to find out from the best doctors in the world how do you get over it, what happens to you after one month, two months, three months. He was a good patient; he followed their instructions pretty well. With the President coming to see him, the navy, they're all shaking because he was the biggest celebrity they'd had out there. But I think the fact that he had Dr. [J. Willis] Hurst there, who the Mayo people liked. He was a very good patient, took off the weight, quit the cigarettes, so he followed their instructions.

G: Did he feel that the heart attack would limit him politically, say, in terms of running for president or anything else?

B: At the time he had the heart attack, there really, other than in the Texas papers, had never been any talk of his being a presidential candidate. It just was never thought of. I don't think any of the people associated with him talked about him being president. Even in 1956 at the convention, he knew that he was too sick to be a candidate for the presidency. I don't think it entered his mind whatsoever. He wanted to be a power.

We were really talking about before the convention in Chicago in 1956, during the convention and so forth. I was the executive director of the Democratic Platform Committee in Chicago when John McCormack was the chairman of the committee. At this time, the party, sort of the old pros including Truman, knew that Stevenson could not beat Eisenhower. Now, Truman, without consulting anybody--I guess talked to his labor friends--endorsed Averell Harriman, who was the governor of New York. So Senator Johnson and some of them had, I believe, been supporting Senator Russell. Senator Kerr was a candidate. Everybody knew nothing was going to happen, but the end product was that Governor Stevenson made a deal with Walter Reuther, who was the president of United Automobile Workers, who had about three hundred delegates to the convention from all the big industrial states, including Texas, California, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, and New York.

So when Stevenson got the nomination, then Senator Gore wanted to be vice president, Senator Kefauver wanted to be vice president, Senator Kennedy wanted it. So Johnson threw his support to Kennedy over Mr. Rayburn's--Mr. Rayburn didn't like John Kennedy, because he had been a very poor member of the House and had a poor attendance record and so forth, and he didn't think that he had the character to be president. But I guess Senator Johnson was the big factor in the Texas delegation, and my recollection is most of them did support John Kennedy for the vice presidency. So Johnson still, in the eyes of all the political columnists and the politicians, was just out of the question as being the presidential candidate, either then or in the future, because of how massive his heart attack had been.

But after that convention and seeing what was taking place, he had the glint in his eye. As close as I was to him, we never had a discussion about his being the candidate for the presidency in 1960. Now I'm talking about 1956-57-58. I mean, he--while a lot of people would come to Washington and say that Senator Johnson was the ablest man in the Democratic Party and he was the only man that they felt could carry their states. I specifically remember Governor [Buford] Ellington from Tennessee who said, "Bobby, the Democratic Party is not a labor party. We've been overwhelmingly defeated with Governor Stevenson twice, Truman just barely got elected in 1948. We've got to have a man that can carry Florida and Texas and Tennessee if we're going to win. Under the rules of the Democratic Party of Tennessee, I pick every delegate; I am the chairman of the delegation. Whether Lyndon Johnson is the candidate or not, I am going to cast my vote for a winner, because he is a man that can carry my state. I am tired of losing my state, and I'd like to see him president."

Now, Johnson acted like "oh, I'm not a candidate," but he was flattered. And there were a lot of other people all over the country. He was getting letters from Jim Farley. Jim Farley respected him and had a lot of friends in the business community. I think Jim Farley had made a lot of money representing Coca-Cola for many, many years. So he was getting encouragement in newspaper editorials, [from] columnists and so forth to be a candidate.

The worst tongue-lashing I ever had from Lyndon Johnson in my life was one day we had had a very boisterous, mean session in the Senate. Let's say this is in 1959. I had been leaking stories, notwithstanding

his own feeling about the presidency, that there were so many people around the country who thought that he could win and they wanted to support him. So he motioned me to sit down with him. I think Rowland Evans had a story about what a ground swell there was all over the country for Johnson to be the Democratic nominee. So Johnson said, "I know goddamn well that you gave that story because Rowland Evans is your friend. I don't have the respect for him that you do, but," he says, "you're going to destroy me. Let me tell you. Last night I had to take three nitro pills. You never had a heart attack. Anybody that's had a heart attack is a damn fool to want to be president. If you want to kill your best friend, you just keep giving stories like you did to Rowland Evans." He really made me feel bad. But he was tired, and he knew how to get sympathy. Then the next day he never mentioned it again.

G: What did you say in response to it?

B: I just said, you know, "I can't lie about the truth. The truth is there's a tremendous amount of people in this country that think you are the only Democrat that can get elected. It's true, I did tell Rowland Evans that there were quite a few people coming here pledging their support. I know you don't like it, but it's a fact." But he really chewed me out.

G: Many of the senators stood up and gave tributes to LBJ after the heart attack. Do you remember that?

B: Yes.

G: Even Herbert Lehman.

B: Yes.

G: What was the effect of this on Johnson?

B: Well, as you know, after all you've been through, I've never known a man that had a bigger ego, that liked love and affection and nice things said about him. This had more to do with his amazing recovery than anything. The fact that his colleagues, the President, the Vice President, everybody in this country who was anybody was genuinely interested in him, because he had really been a true statesman when the country was divided, when Eisenhower was elected. He made the system work. So this was a way, whatever their political persuasion, liberal, conservative, Republican, Democrat, there was a genuine outpouring of affection, of respect. You know, a lot of people didn't agree with his moderate position, like you've mentioned Senator Lehman. But Senator Lehman was a decent human being, and he knew that Lyndon Johnson was a pro and he had done more than anybody to keep the Democratic Party sort of bound together as close as it could be.

G: Did Mrs. Johnson assume a more active role in LBJ's--during this period of recovery?

B: Yes, yes.

G: I understand she stayed at the hospital for--

B: If there was ever a love affair between a man and a woman in the history of the country, it was her love for him and his love for her. She knew how to inspire him; she knew how to keep from getting him upset; if he was upset she knew how to placate him. I mean, she was a miracle woman. That old real true love that she had when he was so sick worked. I mean, if he'd had someone who was bitchy or saying "You've got to resign," and I'm sure that entered her mind, you know, "Why do you want

to just willfully kill yourself?" And I think if she had her own wishes, she would have liked for him to have resigned from the Senate and gone back and lived the rest of his life there in Texas. I've never talked to her about it, but that would be my judgment, because she knew that that job as majority leader was a killer. But she also knew that job got his adrenalin going better than anything he had ever done. As the Senate majority leader--forget about the presidency, because I have no competency to talk about that--but of all the jobs that he ever had I think he did the best job there; he was the happiest that he was ever in his life.

G: His mother flew up to be with him while he recovered. Did that give you an opportunity to get to know her, and do you have any insights on their relationship?

B: I did not. I knew that he had a very, very unusual closeness to his mother, and being at the Ranch at Christmas time when his mother would come there, I always noticed that Mrs. Johnson was very deferential to her. He overly pampered his mother, and I think his mother overly pampered him. It's a sensitive situation where, like Mrs. Johnson is his wife, but his mother was a good tonic for him.

G: Were stories planted that would bolster his morale during the recovery period?

B: I am sure that's true, but it's pretty hard in today's world to plant a column. There's a few people that you could use. I would think that Drew Pearson would have been a person that you could plant a column with, somebody.

G: Anything on any of the visitors that he had? You remember--

B: Oh, I think the one that thrilled him the most--outside of the family and the working family--was President Eisenhower coming to see him. I mean, that the head of the opposite party would take his time to come see him, I think that was the biggest lift that he had.

G: I guess he stayed in the hospital what, three or four weeks, and then went--

B: At least four weeks.

G: --to his home.

B: Then he went back to the Ranch.

G: But he stayed at his home on 30th Place for a while.

B: Yes, because the doctors wanted him to be close by in case he got unlucky and had a second attack.

G: Yes.

B: But when they permitted him to go back, he went back to the Ranch. For some reason, the Ranch just changed his--he got well in a hurry once he got back to the Ranch. Having to lose the weight and he had no color, he looked sick when he was here. But when he got back to that Ranch and got out in that mild air and so forth, it was like a drug. My God, it really took its effect on him. He had tremendous recovery from the minute he was at the Ranch.

G: Did you go down there and spend any time?

B: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. I went to the Ranch and spent--and we would take various senators down to the Ranch to visit with him. I specifically remember Senator John Pastore went down. But I would think a majority of the Democrats in the Senate made it their business to go by to see him. Senator Kerr went down. I remember he was telling me, Senator

Johnson asked Senator Kerr, "How is your wife, Grace?" and Senator Kerr said, "She's fine. You know, she can spend it faster than I make it." But the Kerr visit did him a lot of good. Kerr was one of the best friends he ever had.

G: Did he attempt to stay up with what was going on in the Senate while he was recovering? Did he do that through you, if he did?

B: Well, I would send a synopsis of everything that was taking place. We worked at trying to have the Congress adjourn to get the hell out of there, where we didn't take up anything that would ruffle his feathers. So I think that from the time he had his heart attack, we got out of session, so whereby, say, from about Labor Day until the following January the Congress was out of session, which made it easier for him and easier for us. But while he was in the hospital, especially after he left the hospital, we'd have a rundown of every bill and what was happening and so forth. But we did the bare minimum that we could.

G: You say a synopsis. Was this a written synopsis?

B: Oh, yes.

G: Was it? Okay.

B: Send him a written synopsis on each bill, what the vote was in the committee, what its status was, what we planned to do with it. And sometimes he would have--I'm sure he talked to Walter Jenkins more than anybody. So Walter would call me and say, "Mr. Johnson would like for you to do this and so." He was very good about not really interfering in the day-to-day operations. But we worked it, keeping it that way where there was nothing controversial that would bother him.

G: What sort of job did Clements do in filling this--?

B: Clements did a brilliant job.

G: Did he?

B: He sure did. He was loyal, he was dependable. Everything he did was to make Johnson look good and get the hell out of there. So I don't know of any assistant leader in the history of the Senate that was pushed into that spot that could have done a better job than Earle Clements.

G: Some of the other visitors to the Ranch that fall: Stevenson and Rayburn came in, I guess it was September. Stevenson was going to make a speech at the University of Texas. Were you there then?

B: No, I was not. Mr. Rayburn genuinely liked Adlai Stevenson. He thought Adlai Stevenson was basically a populist. I don't think Johnson had the feeling toward Stevenson that Mr. Rayburn did, but I do know that Governor Stevenson liked Mr. Rayburn. It was in the papers that Mr. Rayburn and Governor Stevenson had made a courtesy call.

G: How about Humphrey's visit? Hubert Humphrey came out. Do you remember that, anything?

B: I remember Humphrey coming, and I don't remember whether I was there or not. But Hubert Humphrey was such a pleasure to have around, because he and Johnson could laugh and joke and kibitz, so he was a good tonic for him. Johnson really liked Muriel Humphrey; Muriel is so much like Lady Bird. I mean, she's a great lady. So these two guys really adored each other. They could laugh and make jokes at each other's expense, but there was a true affection; there was a wonderful rapport with Johnson and Humphrey. Now, Johnson took advantage of Humphrey in many ways. He made Humphrey the brunt of his jokes and so forth. And I think he

abused him when he was president. But, you know, he had a long history of doing that. He never wanted to admit that Humphrey was a grown man.

G: How did the heart attack change Johnson?

B: Well, it frightened him. He knew that if he ever had another one, that the odds were, say, ninety-eight to two that he would die. So he started mapping out his life a lot differently. One day he was talking to me about the lack of liquidity that Mrs. Johnson would have had had he died. And he told me, "We normally buy our insurance from Huff Baines, who's my cousin. There's not an insurance company in Texas that will insure me because of my heart attack." I told him that I was secretary-treasurer of a partnership here with a guy named Don Reynolds. I said, "Reynolds told me that he represents a company that started a new program called Manhattan Life--I think they're out of Canada--and they're going to try to take people like you. And it costs you for it." The end product was that Johnson bought about $200,000 worth of term insurance. It was very costly. He never thought about--he evidently did not have a lot of insurance when he had his heart attack. But he began thinking, though, that "the odds are that I'm going to die before Lady Bird does." Texas is a community property state. She probably would have had to [have] sold the farm and quite a few things had he died when he had his first heart attack.

G: Yes.

B: But the longer he lived, the wiser he became, and I think that he probably--I don't know the details of it--had a brilliant estate planning when he swapped his TV properties for the California company

properties. He always had the best brains in the country advising him what to do.

G: Was the insurance deal tied in with advertising on his station?

B: No. The insurance deal was a simple deal, and it's never been explained, and it's a good time to talk about it. I was a partner with Don Reynolds in this company. I was buying my insurance on my Carousel Hotel, you know, without paying the commission. Generally, when an insurance agent writes you a policy, most of the profit goes to the agent the first year. And when I talked to Reynolds about the insurance policy on Senator Johnson, I said, "Don, it's a damn shame. Here's a man that's had an amazing recuperation from a heart attack, but nobody will insure him." So he talked to the Manhattan people and they said, "[We will] if he passes our medical exam." And I went with him, I went in the taxi with him up on 16th Street to the Dorchester House. Manhattan Life's own doctor took his tests, the cardiogram, and every test that the insurance company wanted, he went there. And he passed that test. Now Reynolds said to me, "If Senator Johnson buys the insurance policy, when we get the commission back from the insurance company after we pay the taxes, I'll give you the cash and you give it to your boss. We don't want to make a profit out of your boss. He's been good to you, and it's a prestige account for us." So that was a deal, very simple deal.

Well, when it came time for Reynolds, at tax time, to give the money that he had promised my boss, Senator Johnson, [Reynolds] made me look like--he said, "I can't do it. It's a kickback." I said, "What the hell you talking about, it's a kickback? It's my man that I brought

to you and sold--what I do with my money is my business. You're not kicking back. I'm a registered member as a partner with you, and you made the commitment, and I told Senator Johnson that he was going to get the money." And he said, "Well, I have checked with the insurance commissioner, and if I do that, I'll lose my license." He was lying; he never checked with anybody.

So in the meantime he said, "Why don't you find out what the Johnsons want for Christmas? I'll try to work it out with the money that I owe as gifts." So he bought a stereo set that he had delivered to the Johnsons. This is where he got a little credibility, because he told Senator Williams that Johnson made him do that. Then he had a friend out here in Silver Spring, Maryland that was selling pots and pans, using television and radio and so forth, and so he, Reynolds, had arranged with his pots and pans man to go to Texas to take some advertising time. And he did that through Walter, because I was trying to get back the money. Reynolds got the pots and pans, and I don't know whether they ever paid their advertising time.

But Johnson mishandled the thing, because when the Baker investigation started he stated that--I think he had Abe Fortas issue a statement that the Bakers and the Johnsons exchanged Christmas presents and that Baker gave him the stereo. It would have been a one-day story had he just said Reynolds has lied or had he talked to me and let me handle it. But it was mishandled from the very beginning and he got a lot of bad publicity, should have never had any. Walter Jenkins went through hell on the thing.

To end the story, what really happened was that Reynolds was a crook. When the International Carpenters Union moved their headquarters from Indianapolis to Washington, he made the representation-because he had the insurance with Lyndon Johnson--that he was a very influential man, he could help them. So they paid him about $400,000 for an insurance policy, which he never paid taxes on, he put in his pocket, and he went up--when the Baker investigation started, he knew that because I had been a partner in the insurance company that the insurance company would be investigated and he would be exposed. So he had made an allegation with the Internal Revenue, when I was in prison, that he had bought eighty thousand dollars worth of real estate and stock. So I petitioned the tax court and after spending hundreds of thousands of dollars and ready to go to trial, Reynolds fled the country. So there is a tax court judgment [that] shows conclusively that Reynolds was a liar and that he didn't pay taxes. But Senator John Williams, the Republican from Delaware, got a lot of publicity, did a lot of damage to Johnson and myself, because he was in bed with a liar and a crook.

G: What was Williams' relationship with Reynolds?

B: Reynolds, being a fellow South Carolinian, had known a fellow who had a company called Capitol Vending. And when the vending man lost his contract at Melpar, he filed a lawsuit against me, telling his stockholders that he had a three-year contract when he only had a thirty-day written contract. He'd had eighteen months. But Reynolds and this fellow Ralph Hill were friends, so Ralph Hill had gone to Senator Williams telling him that Baker was a crook. When Reynolds found out that Hill was going to Senator Williams, Hill introduced Reynolds to

Senator Williams. So Don Reynolds had credibility because he had an invoice where he had bought the stereo and it had been delivered to the Johnsons. So he had a little credibility.

But the truth of it was that Don Reynolds did not keep his--he's the one that offered to give the money and he never did it. And everybody in the country tries to buy a used car for the best price they can, you try to buy your insurance for the best price. And nobody in this world would have criticized Lyndon Johnson, who no insurance company in the country and Texas would insure, if a fellow who worked for him told him that "this is going to be the fee, this is how much you're going to get back." He was entitled to about eight thousand dollars. So Reynolds cheated him out of it. He would have never bought a nickel's worth of insurance from Reynolds had it not been for the representation that after the taxes were paid--it was about a twelve-thousand-[dollar] commission, so taxes four thousand--it was about eight thousand dollars he was due.

So it's a good illustration for politicians in the future. The truth is the best defense against libel. Hit it quick. If I've got any advice to anybody in the future, it's a one-day story. You see what happened to Vice President [George] Bush right now on his income taxes. When they found out he had paid the $198,000 under protest, he would have been a lot better off to have had a press conference and said, "I don't agree with the Internal Revenue. I think they're mistaken, and I'm going to sue them," instead of waiting till the campaign is going, till September of 1984. He may have ruined himself for the presidency on one stupid thing. And this damn Reynolds thing could have very

easily cost Johnson the presidency in 1964. Because if you hit something with the truth right on ahead quickly, the people will believe you, because the truth is the answer.

G: What was Johnson's attitude toward the stereo? Did he want Reynolds to buy him the stereo, or did he want you to--?

B: Well, he felt that he had been lied to, which he had. Johnson kept kidding me, he said, "What kind of guy are you partners with? My God, I can't believe a man makes a deal, then he breaks it." You know, Johnson was always talking about what a good horse trader his father was. Johnson thought, "My God, here I made a better deal than I normally can make with my own cousin." And Huff Baines just said, "I can't get you insured." So when Reynolds said he could get him insured and "In addition to what you've paid, you're going to get an eight-thousand-dollar refund," Johnson felt good and I did. I thought, "I'm helping my boss." Then Reynolds turned out to be a scoundrel. But Johnson mishandled that as bad as anything in the world. He acted like he didn't even know me.

G: Yes.

B: He acted like, "Bobby who?" you know.

In my next book I'm going to go into great detail about where politicians make a mistake trying to do anything other than telling the truth.

G: Johnson seems to have been more concerned about business after the heart attack. He did buy some more radio stations, bought the one in Waco and another one in Weslaco, I guess. Let me ask you about those. Do you recall any aspects of those purchases?

B: I remember his talking about he was overpaying. And then I think he really felt that he made a--the Weslaco station, I think he thought he really got that at a bargain. But he knew that he had such a winner in his station in Austin, I mean it was a real moneymaker. Therefore he could afford to overpay for these other stations, because really he was using tax dollars.

G: Yes.

B: And he built up a tremendous estate. But Lyndon Johnson was one of the best business people I have ever known, because--and the reason he was such a good one was he went to the brightest people in the business to find out the pitfalls and so forth.

G: Some people say that the credit is really not his, that it is Mrs. Johnson's, that he didn't assume that active a role in making the decisions for the station. Did he? How active was he in--?

B: There's only one person that really knows the answer to that and that's Walter Jenkins. My vote is that it was a combination of Mrs. Johnson's good manners and his business acumen that made them the success. I don't know of anybody that dislikes Mrs. Johnson; there's a lot of people that disliked him. But he was the one--I mean, she's a very conservative lady and I doubt very much that she would have bought all these other properties if she had the final say-so, because I don't think that she had the desire.

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B: [He had the] business acumen. I've been with him in New York. I got him to make a speech for bonds for Israel. We stayed at the Roosevelt Hotel, Mrs. Johnson, Senator Johnson and myself. And he had all of the

big shots from NBC, CBS and ABC over to visit with him while he was in New York. And he was always moaning that they were not buying enough time on Mrs. Johnson's radio and TV station down there, and their answer was that Austin at that time was about seventy-five as far as the markets in America were concerned. But they got reports, daily reports, how much business they were doing. He had a photographic mind; he knew every number, every dime they spent, who got what pay and so forth, and he ran a tight ship. It was a two-person team, but he was the genius back of their success, in my opinion, for what it's worth.

G: Did people, do you think, buy advertising simply because of his position as majority leader and their desire to get influence with him on other matters?

B: I am sure that happened, but you would never be able to pinpoint that. But also they had a virtual monopoly because of the FCC regulations about a V station, which was, you know, VHF was the best that you could have. He really had a pick of CBS, NBC and ABC, so he had the best programs possible. So he's in a market--Austin was growing, growing, growing and getting bigger, and I would think Austin now is one of the better markets in this country because of its growth. There's no doubt that there were some smart people [who'd] say, "You know, we've got so many millions of dollars to advertise and it will be smart to take out a little bit more at KTBC than we normally would do, because of his position." They would never tell him that, but he read the numbers.

G: But did he ever, or have anybody who worked for him, go to someone who was interested in, say, a piece of legislation and say, "I'll help you with this if you'll buy some time on my station"?

B: No, no, he was too smart for that.

G: Is that right?

B: Yes. I don't know of any person that's been around him that has ever made that statement. I just don't think--he was just too smart. That would be crude and absolutely defeat any purpose that he had.

G: How else did the heart attack change him?

B: Well, it made him more mellow. He knew his limitations. He would take a nap, which he would never do [before]. When he would run out of steam, he had a little secret office down near Capitol Page School on the west side of the Capitol. Very few people knew he had that, but sometime when he would really get worn out or if he had trouble sleeping sometime at night, he would slip off down there and take a couple-hour nap and come back and be totally rejuvenated.

G: What did they call the office? Did they just call it his secret office or--?

B: That's what I always called it, the secret office down there, because he didn't want anybody to know. I don't even know whether Walter Jenkins knew he had that.

G: Is that right?

B: Yes. Senator Johnson was very close to the Sergeant at Arms, Joseph Duke, and Joseph Duke was in charge of the rooms. So he had a few rooms that he could hide out. He spent a fortune fixing it up down there, because it was hard to get the heating and air conditioning, because it was sort of what I call the bowels of the Capitol down there. It was on the inside, sort of facing the architect's office, and it was hell to

get the heating and air conditioning in there, because he always wanted too much air conditioning. But he liked that place.

G: How did you find out about it?

B: Because he knew I was the one man that had to find him if I had a crisis. So I was one of the few people that had that number; I never told anybody about it.

G: It had a phone, though?

B: Oh, it had a phone, yes. But one time he wouldn't answer the phone and I knew he was there, and I went down and banged on the door and he finally came to the door. Because I was about ready to have a revolution on the floor, I had to have him.

G: Is that right? Do you remember the issue?

B: Wayne Morse was fighting over home rule for the District of Columbia and he was trying to take it up by unanimous consent, and we had commitments to other people that we would have a full hearing and report it out of the Policy Committee and so forth. But Wayne was like a bull in a china closet, and he was demanding that if Johnson doesn't show up in five minutes that he's going to ask unanimous consent to take it up, and I had to get Johnson.

G: Let me ask you to describe that office and just tell me--

B: It was about like a big motel room. It had two windows and I would say it probably was about 20 by 30 feet, so 600 square feet, had a bathroom in it. I think he made them put a shower in there for him; he always wanted a shower every place he went, because he perspired a great deal.

G: Did it have a kitchen?

B: No, did not, it did not have a kitchen, but I think Joe Duke put a shower, and it had a big long sofa in there that he could stretch out on. So that was his hideaway of hideaways.

G: That was on the basement level or the ground level or what level?

B: It was on the ground level on the west side of the Capitol. If you'll go look at the west side of the Capitol, there must be a hundred steps to get from the ground up to, say, the first floor of the Capitol. So as you are coming down each level, they would have a little--like the architects of the Capitol had so many square feet. The Capitol Police used to have a little office in there. Then on the other side, the better view, was where the Capitol Page School was when I went to school there.

G: Okay, good.

B: But most of these rooms had been just storage rooms for electrical equipment and things like that, so [it was] not until Johnson and Joe Duke got together that they started fixing those places up. Then as other senators found out about it, they would try to get a little hideaway.

G: I assume, then, that eventually senators got them, what, on the basis of seniority or influence or--?

B: Yes, seniority. Sometimes, you know, you could give one to a guy that didn't have the seniority if nobody knew about it.

(Laughter)

Oh, my God, you could make a lot of friends with those little private offices, you know, because they could get away from their staff. If

they met a pretty constituent, they could take them there. If those rooms could talk, it would make a good gossip book.

(Laughter)

Including Johnson.

G: After the heart attack, did he start associating with younger people? Was this--?

B: It'd been my experience that he always was stimulated by younger people. Let's take Bill Moyers; he was fascinated with Bill Moyers. Bill Moyers, I guess when he came to work for him, was a divinity student, but he was bright and alert. Those were the kind of people that Johnson liked. And these student interns, he liked them. Like Harry McPherson, right out of college, he liked to hear the input they had. I think he was beginning for the first time to appreciate the youth of his two daughters, because they'd come from being children into young ladies and their life had more appeal to him. Because up until then Mrs. Johnson had been mother and father. I think both of them, they really didn't know their father, because he was gone all the time. But he was interested in who they were dating, where they were going, what they wore. But the young people on his staff, he liked to have them around.

G: I gather he was more concerned about exercise, too, after the heart attack. He started these walks to Cousin Oriole's at the Ranch and put in the swimming pool.

B: He loved that swimming pool; [it] was his pride and joy. He got more pleasure out of that than anything. And late in the evening he would--the doctors told him that walking was the best thing he could do, so he'd take Mrs. Johnson and all the guests that he's got with him and

make them walk down to the cemetery and Cousin Oriole's place and so forth. But the pool was the best relaxation. I've been there when the damn water was cold, but it never bothered him.

G: Really?

B: Yes. He wanted to go in that pool every day.

G: Were you down there when he had it put in? I understand that he supervised a lot of the--

B: Yes, I was there partially. You know, oh, yes, he--

G: Tell me about it.

B: He was always trying to get a dollar's value for a dollar spent, so he would get a local cement man and he would haggle with him over how much per square foot. And that little old guest house they built out there, I mean, my God, he was--I think he told me he wound up spending eight dollars a foot on that place. And he bragged to every guest he had about what a good businessman he was and how prudent he was.

G: Did it change his attitude toward politics at all? Did it change any of his beliefs or perspectives on--?

B: I am not competent to answer that. I don't know.

G: Did it slow him down significantly--

B: No.

G: --or make him more cautious about either his temper or exerting him self?

B: Well, it sure calmed him down as far as his temper.

G: Did it?

B: Yes. Before the heart attack he could really explode. That was his nature. He had a big bark and no bite, but, you know, screaming at

Mildred [Stegall] or Mary Rather or Dorothy [Nichols], the people that worked for him, if they misspelled a word or something, he could get upset before the heart attack. But he had learned to live with himself. It was very seldom that I saw him get real angry after the heart attack, and I think it was self-discipline. He needed it.

G: Okay. Anything that you recall of that fall after the heart attack? His Whitney speech, that speech that he made up in Whitney, Texas, near Hillsboro? His trip to Los Angeles? He went out to Los Angeles and took the kids to Disneyland, and I think he met with Noah Dietrich out there. Do you remember that?

B: I remember him telling me about it and how much he--he was telling me how much he and the children enjoyed the trip to Disneyland and all of the things they had [done]. Any time that he saw something that he liked, it becomes a must for his friends to go see. He just said, "You've got to take your children and go out there. It's one of the wonders of the world." You know, he was very effusive about it. But I think the children enjoyed that trip with him out there. I don't remember his Whitney speech.

But say come November, he was beginning to think about what was going to happen in January. If my memory serves me correctly, I spent Christmas with him and we went over the whole agenda for the beginning of the new session of Congress and so forth.

G: Of course, the natural gas bill was a big issue.

B: Yes.

G: Why would he meet with Noah Dietrich?

B: Well, Noah Dietrich had been Howard Hughes' right arm. Howard Hughes was originally a Texan. I don't have any recollection of Johnson specifically saying anything about Howard Hughes, but Noah Dietrich was a great storyteller, and I guess at this particular time he was the one man in the Hughes organization [that] could say yes or no. I'm sure if we knew what Noah Dietrich did, he probably spread a lot of Hughes' money for political contributions. Hughes on his own had been very active with Donald Nixon and Bebe Rebozo and so forth. But Hughes was too big and too influential not to have had somebody like Noah Dietrich to cover his flank on the Democratic side. Based on my friends out there, Noah Dietrich was a pretty sophisticated fellow. And when he gave a commitment, it was kept.

G: Bill White and Gerald Griffin came down to the Ranch and came back with stories that LBJ was putting together some sort of conservative coalition, and these articles really irritated Johnson, who denied them.

B: Well, I'm sure that's true. Bill White from the ***New York Times***, who was a Texan and Johnson's personal friend, and Gerald Griffin, who was a political correspondent for the ***Baltimore Sun***, both of them were sort of Eisenhower Democrats, conservative. And I think that they probably generated their own stories, because I'm sure that they would have leading questions about this moderate or this conservative and so forth. So they formed their own illusion. While Johnson had a lot of conservative business ties, what I'd call moderate business ties, he had to protect his flank with the liberal establishment, and so those stories, especially in the ***New York Times*** and the ***Baltimore Sun***, [irritated him] because everybody knew that Bill White was his mouthpiece. So I could

see how sensitive he would be on anything that Bill White wrote, and I'm sure Bill wrote what he thought he was thinking, which is very difficult to do.

G: Yes. Anything else on that last part of 1955?

B: Just the only thing was he realized before Thanksgiving in November for the first time that he was having an amazing recovery and that he was out of the woods. Because he was in constant contact--I think at this particular time he began to talk to Dr. [Michael] DeBakey in Houston and so forth and other people. It was amazing how many of his friends had had heart attacks and had recovered. Evidently after about four months you begin to feel normal. But I noticed around Thanksgiving when he really looked and acted like his old self. At Christmas time, hell, you couldn't hold him down.

G: Eisenhower had a heart attack, a serious one, that fall, in September. Do you remember his reaction to that, or--?

B: Yes, when we first learned that the President had had a heart attack, everybody thought he was going to die, because they were very secretive about it. Had Eisenhower died and Nixon become president, it [would have] changed the ball game a great deal. But evidently Eisenhower's heart attack was not as severe as Johnson's was. He, if I recall correctly, had something like angina, sort of between a heart attack and a stroke. But Johnson had a massive heart attack; he had as bad a one as a human being can have and live. So Johnson felt better when his doctors talked to Eisenhower's doctors and found out that it was mild.

G: Well, I think we've covered everything in--

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview VII

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