INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: JAMES BLUNDELL

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: The National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

G: Let's start with your background, leading to how you got to know Lyndon Johnson.

B: I was raised in South Texas, moved to Waco in 1921, and went through school there. In 1936, I became interested in politics primarily for Governor James V. Allred, and I worked for him in Central Texas. In 1938, while I was in Baylor, some of the people that had met in the Allred campaign asked me to come to Austin and work for then Colonel Ernest Thompson, in his race against W. Lee O'Daniel for governor, which I did. John Connally was president of the Student Body at the University of Texas at that time, and he came down to get into the campaign and get his feet wet in politics, that's where I first met John. We went through that campaign together, and as I told you a while ago, after the campaign, John and I were playing golf one day and I asked him what he was going to do. He said, "Well, I've got two offers: one to go into the Attorney General's office under the new Attorney General, Gerald Mann, and the other to go to work for the congressman from the Austin district, Lyndon Johnson." I gave him my usual good advice and told him he should go in the Attorney General's department, which I thought was the best way to go because

of his interest in getting into Texas politics. He told me at that time, he said, "I've visited with the Congressman once, and he's a very persuasive man, and I'm supposed to see him again next week." Well, the next time I saw John, he said he was going to Washington with Lyndon Johnson.

Well, in [1941], Senator Morris Sheppard died, and there was a special election for the Senate to fill that spot. There were about twelve or fifteen candidates, including Martin Dies, Gerry Mann, then-Governor O'Daniel, and this young congressman, Lyndon Johnson, in a special election--winner take-all. So John called me one day and asked me if I would come down and help in the campaign. I had a lot of statewide contacts, young fellows--we worked together in Young Democrats and Demolays, and law students from Baylor. So I did. I went down and spent a couple of months in the Stephen F. Austin Hotel with John. You might be interested to know that there were a few young fellows that came into that campaign, one with the name of Jake Pickle, another one was Joe Kilgore, who now, I believe, is on the Board of Regents of the University of Texas. Realizing that Congressman Johnson was not known very widely outside of the Tenth Congressional District, we made a pretty good campaign. In fact, on the morning after the election, the Dallas Morning News had a headline, "Congressman Johnson Elected to the Senate." By the end

of the week and the complete count of the votes, Governor O'Daniel was ahead by 1100 votes out of about a milllion votes.

That was my first experience with them-Congressman Johnson. He asked me to come to Washington with him after the campaign. I had to turn it down because of my parents, who were elderly, and I had a new baby, and it just didn't make sense for me to leave. But he did get me a job in the Office of Government Reports, which was a part of the Executive Office of the President and later became the Office of War Information.

The day after Pearl Harbor, I called John Connally in the Congressman's office and told him I wanted him to help me get in the Army. About that time I heard the other phone lifted, and it was the Congressman, and he said, "Jimmy, why do you want to get in the Army just to push a pencil or drive a truck?", and I said, "Well, I think they need people like that." He said, "Well, if you want to do something for your country, come up here and run my office so I can go in the Navy," which of course I did. And from there--at that time, the OPA was getting pretty dangerous, politically, making everybody mad, and they were taking it out on their congressmen. I met the OPA people up here working through the Congressman's office, and they asked me if I would go back to Texas and set up the Information and Public Relations program for the OPA. Well, I mentioned it to the Congressman when he got back from a trip out to the Pacific.

I think he thought at first that I was trying to find some way to get away from him, and he didn't like that much. But then he realized that I might be able to help him more straightening the OPA out, public relations-wise, than I would be able to working in his office. So he agreed that I should take that job, which was a district job in San Antonio. I was there several months, and then they brought me to Washington for several months, and I went back to Dallas as the Southwest Regional Information Director. From there at the end of the war, I opened my own public relations office in Dallas; I was there until 1960, when I came to Washington to help him campaign.

During that period, there were many occasions that I had to work for or with the Congressman. But in 1960, the early part of the year, he called me one day in Dallas and said he was going to land at Love Field and would like me to drive him to town (I believe it was to Neiman-Marcus?). Of course, I told him I would be happy to, and I met him at the plane. On the way to town, he said that Mr. Rayburn and a lot of his very strong friends were really pushing him to get into the presidential primary campaign. I'll always remember this remark, to show you how astute he was, he said, "I don't want to do it, because I've got to run the Senate, but," he said, "they're putting so much heat on me that I've got to do something, and I'd like for you to go over to Fort Worth and get with John. Y'all

talk about coming to Washington and setting up some kind of organization and operation." He didn't say so, but I knew what he meant: to take the heat off him and satisfy the people that wanted him to run for President. And then he made this statement: he said, "If Jack, " meaning John Kennedy, "wins West Virginia, the show's over anyway; then it's not going to make any difference. If he wins West Virginia, he'll take the convention and the nomination." I'll always remember that, because he did take West Virginia, and he did take the convention, although we made the strongest showing of any Southern candidate since 'way before the Civil War. We got a little over 400 convention votes on the first ballot, but there wasn't enough split; Kennedy got all the rest of them. I probably wasn't as realistic as Senator Johnson, because I got imbued in the campaign, and we really talked ourselves into thinking we had a chance. But we were up against some real pros in a well-organized, well-financed, well-publicized operation. I later learned after getting acquainted with the Kennedy people that they were just looking at our hole cards all the time.

G: Can you give me an example of this?

B: I remember we really thought we were going to get nearly all of the delegates in North Carolina. Senator Johnson--I say Senator because he was Senator then--relied almost entirely on his friends in the Senate to deliver the delegations from their states, but it just

didn't work that way. The senators are up here; they don't participate in day-to-day politics in their states. The governors do that. While Senator Johnson was working with his colleagues, who I'm sure in good faith told him that they were going to deliver their delegates for him, the Kennedy people were working through the governors' offices and with the governors' organizations and the state chairmen, and that's where the real control was. Well, we found that out later and spent a lot of time rehashing the campaign with the Kennedy people.

After the nomination in Los Angeles, I decided to go back to Dallas to pick up my business again and just assumed that Senator Johnson, being the vice-presidential candidate, wouldn't need me, that the Kennedy people would run the campaign anyway. Well, I was home about two weeks, and he had Walter Jenkins call me one day and say, "The Senator wants you to come up and handle his campaign over in the National Committee." I said, "Well, of course, I'll be glad to do anything I can; I always have, but I really don't think he needs any campaign organization in the National Committee." Walter said, "You just don't know what you're talking about, because we're up here and we know." I said, "All right. If he wants me, I'll be there." So I came up. I didn't get to talk with Senator Johnson very much because he was out traveling and awfully busy, but I got as much briefing as I could from Walter Jenkins

and other people on the Senator's staff. I went on down to the National Committee, and the atmosphere was very cold. It took me several days to find out what the problem was, that the people that had been in there, prior to the time that I went in there, working for Senator Johnson were formerly Hubert Humphrey people who had worked for Humphrey in the bloody campaigns in West Virginia and over the country, and the Kennedy people didn't want anything to do with any of the Hubert Humphrey people. They just assumed that I was another Humphrey supporter, that Johnson had taken over the Humphrey organization, which wasn't true. So I did what I could to cultivate people like Ken O'Donnell, although he was traveling all the time with Kennedy, Steve Smith and Dick McGuire--quite a few others, all of them intensely Irish, intensely political, and intensely loyal to Jack Kennedy.

Well I'd been there about a week, and Senator Johnson called and said he would be in town that weekend, I believe, for Senator Tom Henning's funeral, and he said he wanted me to go to the funeral with him. I thought that was kind of peculiar that he would want me to go to the funeral, but I found out that that was all the time that he would have for us to get together. So I did go to the funeral with him, and on the way back, he said, "How are you getting along with the Kennedy people?" Well, I told him the situation, and he said, "Well, we've got to do something about that;

what do you want me to do?" One thing about Senator Johnson--President Johnson--if you had a problem, you just laid it out to him. You didn't try to hide it. If you wanted something done, he'd get it done. He would always make it possible for you to do everything that you were capable of doing, I mean, give you whatever you needed to--and that's what he meant by saying, "What can I do?" I said, "Well, Senator, I think it would help if they knew I was your man." He said, "I'll take care of that right away." So we got back to the Majority Leader's office; he said, "Who do you want me to call down there?" I said, "Well, there are two fellows I've gotten to know. I don't think we're friends yet, but I think either one of them would help; one is Dick McGuire and the other one is Steve Smith." He said, "Which one would be better?" I said, "Well, Steve Smith is a little closer to the throne, and I think it might be more helpful to talk to him." So he turned to Mary Margaret and said, "Get Steve Smith." So Steve came on the phone and the Senator had a few opening remarks, and then he said, "How's my man Blundell getting along?" Well, I'm not sure that Steve Smith even knew who he was talking about unless he just happened to recall my being in his office a few times. And by the way, we were in an office of four people; I had a staff of three other people. We were in an office about twelve by twelve [feet], with three telephones, and that was another one of the problems.

Senator Johnson asked Steve Smith how his man Blundell was getting along, and then he gave me a very high buildup, telling Steve Smith that, "Blundell is my man. He's been doing things for me for twenty years," and so forth. Johnson was very good at buildups. So after he got through, he said, "Anything else you want me to do?" I said, "No, sir."

So we went over scheduling and advance work, primarily scheduling. He said, "There are three places that I will not go, so don't even schedule me." I said, "What's that?" He said, "New York, Chicago, and California." I said, "Well, you just mentioned the three largest states." He said, "Yes, but I'm not going in there and have those liberals beat my brains out and embarrass Kennedy and embarrass me." I said, "All right. We'll work it out; you're the boss." Well, of course, we did go into New York, and he got a hell of a reception. He went into Chicago at the invitation of Mayor Daley, and he went to California. But he had something in his mind that he thought the Eastern liberals would really cut him up.

To follow up that meeting, I went back to the Committee headquarters, which was 1001 Connecticut, and I hadn't been back in my little cubbyhole but about fifteen minutes when Steve Smith came in. He very solicitously said, "Jim, how are you getting along?" I said, "Fine." He said, "You're a little crowded here, aren't you?"

I said, "Well, we're managing." He said, "Well, you've got to have more space." In a little while, Dick McGuire came in. "How are you?" From then on, we worked pretty well together.

It was customary to have one office handle the scheduling of the candidate and another operation handle the advance. Well, we didn't have that big a campaign, and I thought I could do a better job if I did both. So at a meeting in Walter's office a few days later, we were talking about the problems and what we needed. I think Walter said, "Now who do you want to handle the scheduling?" I said, "I want to handle it." Well, he thought I was taking on too much, but we did combine both operations so that nearly all the campaign was handled right out of one office. And it works better that way, because if you make the schedule, you certainly know more about it than anybody else, and you're able to advance it better than anybody else. I wasn't just trying to take on the whole operation, but it made more sense to me, and it worked out that way.

G: Can you give us an example of how you would schedule--?

B: The most important thing was to coordinate the two candidates, and just as a rule of thumb, we agreed--I was working right next door to the Kennedy people who were making Kennedy's schedule, so after this rapport was established by Senator Johnson for me, we worked on a very close basis. We would discuss each other's

schedule. They might have an invitation someplace that was very important that Kennedy was already committed and couldn't make, and they would want Johnson to make it. So it worked that way. But we had one pretty firm rule, that we wouldn't have both the candidates in the same part of the country at the same time. We tried to have Johnson on the East Coast when Kennedy was on the West Coast, have one in the South--of course, the South was a special situation. We just coordinated both campaigns.

G: Was the scheduling primarily responding to individual invitations or was it, say, setting up a whole lot of speaking engagements along a certain route?

B: It was both. You certainly wanted to take advantage of invitations, particularly to large groups such as the VFW-American Legion convention, American Medical Association convention, the large groups that would give the candidates great exposure. Yet at the same time, there were political reasons for you to go into certain places. If our polls showed that the Nixon-Lodge ticket was strong in a certain area, we needed help there, we'd either get one of the candidates in there or get a senator or somebody who was working for us in the campaign to go into that area. The shortness of the campaign necessitated a very carefully arranged schedule to be sure that you'd covered all the areas of the country, particularly the twelve or fifteen largest states, where sixty percent of the vote is.

You just had to sit down and figure out and you had to anticipate. Now we had one crisis soon after I got there. Senator Johnson was already scheduled and had already accepted quite a few appearances before I came into the picture. Some of them didn't make sense, some were very important. So he was actually under way in his campaign when I got there. Well, it made it a little more difficult, because I had to live with the commitments already made while I was planning for additional appearances in the future.

The Senator called one night, and he was using a Convair, a twin-engine Convair. He called one night and said, "I just talked to C. R. Smith, and he wants me to change planes and get a bigger plane and a faster plane, so he's going to fix up an Electra for me." Well, at that time, the Electra was the hottest commercial plane, not the biggest, but one of the fastest. But it created some problems. There were only about--well, I just have to pick a number--25 airports in the United States that could handle an Electra, because after the starters were charged, the plane had to fly two and a half hours or had to land at an airport where they had chargers to recharge the starters, to start them. The speed of that airplane was so great that in two and a half hours, you could fly almost across half of the United States. Not only that, but you needed longer runways. We were putting this little Convair into very small communities; but that wouldn't work with the Electra. Well, we spent all night one night

getting information from the CAB, the FAA, the Air Force, everybody that had anything to do with airplanes and landing and flying in the United States. It was my unhappy duty to tell the Senator the next day how many places we had to cancel because you couldn't get an Electra in there.

G: How did he react?

B: Well, you just don't tell Senator Johnson that you can't do something. You just don't do it, unless you have got all the facts, and I had all the facts, I think, I explained to him how fast they fly, how much runway you need. I think his answer was, "Well, just work it out the best you can." But it did necessitate canceling an awful lot of commitments that had already been made and revamping our whole philosophy of scheduling because of the faster airplane and having to land on longer runways. That was just one of the crises.

One of the most interesting things we did was the whistle-stop train from Washington to New Orleans. You can imagine how many advance men you need if you're going to stop at every station between here and New Orleans and have a crowd set up, a band ready, local dignitaries, and so forth. Well, we recruited nearly everybody in Texas for that job. It worked out very well. I think even the Kennedy people were convinced.

G: Was this the time you went to Culpeper [Virginia]?

B: Yes.

G: Can you remember that episode?

B: Well I don't know of any particular episode. I didn't go to Culpeper.

G: Oh, I see. I thought you were on the--

B: No.

G: You were ahead of the train, I guess.

B: No, no. I was in Washington--

G: Scheduling from Washington?

B: Yes. This was a communications center, and it was my policy to talk to every man we had on the road at least once every day.

G: Did you have many crises in that trip?

B: Well, just every day. You don't have a campaign with a Lyndon Johnson without having crises.

G: What were some of them?

B: Well, the biggest problem was that the advance men would get into a town and let the local people make the schedule and set up the events rather than him telling them what to do and doing it himself. Senator Johnson had two very basic philosophies: one was that he didn't want any local press conferences, and the other was that he didn't want to make over three speeches a day. To tell a politician that he can only make three speeches, even if he says he only wants to make three, is really dreaming, because any time you've got six people together, that man is going to make a speech. That was my biggest problem, was the advance men not being able to turn down

a local invitation. If the Kiwanis Club's meeting that day, well the local people are going to insist that Senator Johnson appear at the luncheon club. Maybe there are two or three meetings; they want him at all of them. I'm not sure that he objected to that as much as he impressed me with it, because he was always saying that we overworked him. I think it was a defense mechanism or something. But he always did it, and he always did more than we asked him to do. He always did more than anybody else would do, such as seventeen speeches in one day--which he blamed me for having to make. I think that the whistle-stop campaign train from Washington to New Orleans was probably one of the greatest political events in our history of any party. Of course, you won't remember, but this wasn't an original idea. We remembered how successful Harry Truman was, and we needed to do something dramatic in the South, because the South was not for Kennedy. The Catholic issue was very strong, the Yankee from Boston just didn't go very quickly with the people in the South; they had to be sold. That was the primary thing that Lyndon Johnson did, not selling himself but selling Jack Kennedy. His entire theme all through the South was that you don't make an issue of a man's religion. And he would always tell the story of Jack Kennedy's brother, Joe Junior, going down in that airplane with a copilot from New Braunfels, Texas, and he said, "I'm sure that they didn't ask each other what church they went to. They both died for their country." He's made a lot of points with that story.

G: Whose idea was the whistle-stop campaign, do you know? Do you remember when it first originated?

B: I'm not sure. It could have been Bobby Baker's idea; it could have been Jim Rowe's. I don't know; it was something that just grew.

G: I think it was during this 1960 campaign that Jim Rowe had a difference of opinion with the Kennedy people, didn't he, how they were running it?

B: Well, he had a difference of opinion with Lyndon Johnson.

G: Oh, did he? What--?

B: Well, as you know, Jim Rowe is a real great liberal in the traditional sense of the word, and he didn't think that Senator Johnson was really carrying the fight as the liberal that he knew Johnson was. Jim Rowe was one of the people in the National Committee before I went over there. He had worked for Hubert Humphrey, because he got tired of waiting for Johnson to get in the race. He was so imbued with the idea of, I guess, being against the Kennedys--I don't know; or he was strong for Humphrey, of course, and for Johnson. So he didn't want to wait any longer, and he just jumped in there with Hubert. But he didn't agree with a lot of the campaign and a lot of the philosophy that Senator Johnson was using, and I think it was because he didn't think that the Senator was making the liberal fight. He wanted him to go to the garment district in New York and places like that that he thought that Johnson did have an appeal, but Johnson just wasn't about to go up there.

The whistle-stop was a great success. We were fortunate in having all of the local leaders in nearly every stop we made. Many of them would drive back and get on the train the day before they reached their town. The result was that we had people on and off that train, and they would get to ride with the candidate and others. There were United States senators, governors, which made it very impressive when you arrive in their town and they get off the train with senators. That was very successful.

G: Did you have any scheduling problems, other than the one you described, with the train?

B: Well, you don't always have the most ideal schedule when you're operating a train and you're tied to that train. I remember that some of the senators or friends of Senator Johnson would talk him into making side trips from the train, maybe fifty or sixty miles by car, which was good except that it wore him out and the train had to wait for him to get back. So the schedule was constantly being revised. It was a very successful thing, and I don't know if there'll ever be another one because of our improved communications of television. But there's nothing like that personal approach and people being able to see the man in person, touch him, shake his hand, hear him talk. I'm sure there have been a lot greater orators and speakers in the Democratic Party and in the Republican Party, but I don't think anybody could ever sell as well as or better than Lyndon Johnson.

G: Is there anything else during that campaign that you feel is important, any other crises or problems?

B: Oh, there were a lot of them, sure. I don't know that they are all of interest. I think our New York meeting, which we called the Summit Meeting because it was the first time that Johnson and Kennedy appeared together during the campaign. There is an interesting story to that. I mean, it was interesting to me; I don't know whether it would be interesting to anybody else or not.

Senator Johnson had a feeling, whether or not it was justified, I don't know; but he had a feeling that either Jack Kennedy or the Kennedy people didn't want him campaigning with them. Every day or so if I would say, "That was a great speech you made last night," he would say, "Well who else thinks so?" And I would say, "Well, everybody I've talked to." He'd say, "What did the Kennedy people think?" He was always interested in what they thought. Then he got onto the idea, he said, "Why don't they ever ask me to appear with Jack?" I said, "Well it just hasn't occurred to anybody." Actually they hadn't. He said, "Nixon has Lodge with him quite often, but the Democratic candidates haven't appeared together." I said, "I'm sure there is plenty of time; we'll probably work something out along that line." So I got to talking with O'Donnell and McGuire. I didn't feel that there was any hostility. There might have been some feeling that, "We've got to give all our time, all of our efforts, and

all of our facilities to Jack, because he's the presidential candidate." They were satisfied for Johnson to work the South, but every time he made an appearance some place outside the South, he was very warmly received with large crowds. In fact, he went to Boston right after the convention, and it was a very successful trip.

Well, to get back to the Summit Meeting: we finally agreed that the candidates would appear together and the most desirable place would be the big rally in New York on Thursday night before the election on the following Tuesday. So we set it up very carefully, and it was the first time that the entire Johnson organization or staff and the entire Kennedy staff had to work together. We'd been working on schedule and advance, but here we had the television appearance involved. We had the personal appearance at an outdoor rally. There was to be a torchlight parade. Just the logistics of appearing in New York City at night with the traffic problems, and unfortunately it rained the whole time, and that made it worse, made this the biggest problem logistically that we had during the whole campaign, outside of that airplane.

G: Was much of this handled out of your office?

B: Yes. It was handled working with the Kennedy people, but as far as Johnson was concerned, we handled the whole thing. He was in Texas, as you may recall the famous incident at the Baker Hotel when they shoved and pushed and really got a little out of hand.

G: Did he ever talk to you about that?

B: Well, there wasn't much to talk about. He talked about it publicly, and his indignation over it, I think, made a lot of difference in the election in Texas. Texans just don't like to see any lady insulted or shoved; they resented it, and it got them fired up, and I think that's actually what made the difference in the vote in Texas. But that was the day before Johnson was to fly to New York for this meeting there.

Well, I took three of my advance men and my secretary and Leonard Marks, who was Mrs. Johnson's attorney for the television station. I asked him to go up to sit in on the conferences on the television, the telecast. We went up a day ahead of time, and we had an operations center at the Biltmore Hotel. The next morning I met with the Secret Service and New York Police, and we went over the plans of the route of the parade. It was supposed to be a torchlight parade, but of course that was rained out. Senator Johnson and his party left Texas that morning, which put them into New York about the middle of the afternoon, I think. I had two of my men meet the plane at La Guardia, and Senator Johnson got off the plane and said, "What the hell are you all doing here? Why has Blundell got his people here; this is Kennedy's operation." Well, that's a little interesting sidelight, because Kennedy's operation broke down. They lost him on Manhattan Island in the rain, and he had the police chief and the commissioner of police traveling with him. It was

one of the worst fiascos that you could imagine. They'd been making a lot of stops out on Long Island and Manhattan Island prior to the big meeting that night. Because of the rain--that's the only reason I can account for it--the Kennedy caravan got lost. They were supposed to come to the Kennedy suite at their hotel, where he was going to change clothes and have a bowl of chowder, so we had Senator Johnson and his party there. His party amounted to about forty people, Texas press and friends that he brought up. Understand, it's still raining. Well, we had a chartered bus to pick them up at the airport, to bring them to the hotel, and to take them to the Armory that night--the Johnson party. The time began passing, and I got a call from one of my boys saying that, "The Kennedy caravan is lost." This is about six o'clock; we're supposed to be at the Armory, I think, about seven, seven thirty. As it turned out, instead of Kennedy coming to their hotel, the Kennedy suite, we went over to I think the Biltmore, and as we got there--of course, this is not the kind of operation that Lyndon Johnson would have had. I mean, it would have been clicking like this. I don't think Kennedy or his people were to blame; the local people were, I think, more to blame. Anyway, we got over to the Biltmore just after Kennedy had gotten there, and we all went into the sitting room, and he was in the bedroom dressing. About that time he stuck his head out the door

and said, "Lyndon! Come in here." So Senator Johnson went in, and it was about ten minutes, and he came out and he said, "Oh! That's the maddest man I've ever seen in my life." He said, "They actually lost him on Long Island." And he stopped the caravan at a filling station and said, "I'll find out where we are if you'll just stop this damn car!" He went into the filling station! And of course Johnson got a kick out of that.

Well, we went on to the Armory, had the telecast, and there were 25,000 people waiting outside for the candidates to appear for a rally, and it was still raining. So I went on out to see if things were set up, and here is this platform, nobody on it, I think about three chairs, and I knew that they were supposed to be coming out soon. But Jack Kennedy had gone into the studio there to tape some commercials so I realized that Johnson was going to have to go on and make his appearance, but there was nobody to introduce him. So I saw Bill Moyers standing over there; I called Bill over, and I said, "Bill, get up there and introduce the vice-presidential candidate." Well he just walked up there just like this and started talking, and it was beautiful. It was as good an introduction as I ever heard. So he introduced Senator Johnson and Lady Bird and the daughters, and Johnson started his speech before Kennedy ever came out of the studio. He was still talking, and I noticed Senator Kennedy come out, and he was standing in the doorway there

waiting for Johnson to conclude. Johnson was talking about Joe Kennedy, Jr., about his being killed and using that story as I told you before. I looked over, and Jack Kennedy had his head bowed, and it was a very touching thing. So then he introduced Kennedy, and he made his speech. Kennedy had several stops later that night in Connecticut and two or three other places, but he drove Senator Johnson and Mrs. Johnson and the girls to the airport. I got this report later from Marvin Watson or Bill Moyers, who were on the plane, and Johnson was feeling pretty good and he was walking up and down the plane telling the press, he said, "Well, Kennedy's operation broke down, and my boys saved the day." Whereas that morning he was saying, "What the hell are you doing here?" So that made us feel pretty good.

We had another little crisis that morning. Leonard Marks called me. I was working with the Secret Service and I think the police, and Leonard Marks called me and said, "Jim, you had better get on down here." I said, "What's the matter? You handle the television." He said, "No, we've got a problem." I said, "All right, I'll be down." So I went down and there were about four Kennedy people there that handle his television, and Leonard. I walked in and nobody said anything, and Leonard finally said, "Jim, they want to give Senator Johnson five minutes." I said, Well, we're not going to do that." And then they started explaining,

said, "Jack has gotten so much applause lately that he doesn't have time to finish his speech." I said, "Well maybe you had better cut some of his speech out then, but Senator Johnson is not flying all the way from Texas up here to appear for five minutes on national television. If his plane hasn't left, I'll call him and tell him not to come." Well, the outcome of it was that we finally got ten minutes, but I would never have looked Lyndon Johnson in the eye if he flew all the way from Texas up there for this big summit meeting, first meeting with the candidate, and then I had to tell him that he had five minutes of the television show. But it worked out all right. There were a lot of incidents and a lot of things that go to make up a campaign, every campaign I guess, but there have never been any campaigns like Johnson campaigns.

G: I hear that he was conscious of the slightest detail. One example: a fellow told me that he could tell that the people from the Post Office were not in the audience, because they weren't wearing their uniforms there. He asked, "Where were they?"

B: Of course he did.

G: Do you recall any examples of this?

B: Oh, there were many, but I'd have to think a little while; I didn't anticipate your question. But yes, you're right. He paid attention to every detail, and when you didn't, he'd say, "Jimmy, you've got your brain locked up.", or, "You didn't do your homework." A lot

of times, he wouldn't say anything about these things until a week later, and then just to let you know that he still remembered it. But he was a hard taskmaster, but a very sensitive, tender man, which people who didn't know him well just wouldn't believe.

I caught the brunt of, I guess, everything more than anybody else because I was there at the headquarters, the center of communications, and I'm sure I talked to him three or four times a day. He would call from the West Coast at two o'clock their time, which was four, five, six o'clock our time. Oh! And we were working about eighteen hours a day. He'd give you hell, and you'd really hate his guts for a little while, and then he'd do something, you'd just melt. I got a telegram the night of the election, or the morning after it was determined that we'd won the election, and that telegram meant more to me than anything that he could have done or anybody else could have done. I just remember a few words in it. He said, "Your patience," which was a key word, and a lot of other things he mentioned. I accused Bill Moyers of dictating the telegram, but he said no, he heard Johnson dictating it to Mary Margaret. It's just things like that, then you realize that the man was so great and so intensely wrapped up in whatever he did that he didn't have time for trivialities or small talk or side issues. He concentrated on the goal that he had, and nothing else mattered. So if little things got in the way, he was very--I won't say inconsiderate--just nonconsiderate!

G: His campaign temperament has often been depicted as being, well, rather complaining often and, you know, until he got into public, being cross, not what you would call a "happy warrior." Is this the case? What was his mood?

B: That is the case, yes. I don't agree with a lot of people with their reasoning for it, but I think it goes back to what I just said: he was so intense, so dedicated, and so determined that he just had no regard for anything else. People thought that he had no regard for their feelings. Well, it wasn't that he had no regard for their feelings; he had no regard for anything else except accomplishing what we set out to do. I think the hardest thing he ever had to do was to accept the vice-presidency, and that was quite an experience in Los Angeles when he did because John Connally was opposed to his doing it; Sam Rayburn didn't want him to do it. But I think he felt, and I certainly felt, that you can't turn down your party. If he had turned it down and Jack Kennedy had been defeated, they would have blamed Lyndon Johnson; if he had turned it down and Jack Kennedy had been elected, they would have said, well we didn't need him. He couldn't win.

G: Were you privy to the politics of the convention?

B: Oh, I was privy. I didn't participate in all of it. It was above and beyond me, much of it was, but my job at the convention was coordinating all the activities that are entailed in getting delegates' votes.

We had people working every state, we had a floor operation which was second best.

G: You mentioned the case of North Carolina.

B: I just happened to think of that one in particular; New Mexico was another one. Senator Johnson felt, and we all felt, that Senator Anderson could deliver the whole delegation from New Mexico. Well as it turned out, he delivered about half of it, and that was true in nearly all these states where we really thought, or Johnson thought, that we'd get the whole delegation because the senator from that state was so strong for him. As I told you, the game wasn't played that way and the Kennedy people knew it.

G: Why didn't Johnson enter the primaries? Why didn't he enter West Virginia? He knew how critical this one was.

B: I doubt if I can answer that; I can only give you my opinion, going back to what he told me to begin with, "If Jack wins West Virginia, he's got the convention sewed up. I've got to run the Senate; I can't get out here and become a full-time candidate." I think he thought more of his job in the Senate and what it meant to the country than he did winning the nomination.

Tape 2 of 2

G: All right. We were talking about West Virginia.

B: Only in reference to what he said.

G: Policy. Well, how about a strategy of blocking Kennedy in West Virginia by promoting Senator Humphrey? Was this pretty much a strategy?

B: I don't think so. In the first place, Johnson was too realistic a politician to think that Humphrey could win. I don't mean this in any critical sense, but Senator Johnson did not believe in lost causes. By that I mean if he thought there was a chance in the world, he would go in and give it all he had. Now there might have been friends of Senator Johnson who sent money into West Virginia for Humphrey. I'm sure there were a lot of Johnson people who were supporting Humphrey, but that doesn't mean that Lyndon Johnson ever did anything to try to stop Jack Kennedy or try to help Humphrey. Of course he was a lot closer to Humphrey than he was with Kennedy. But nevertheless, I don't think after what he told me in Dallas that he would have committed any money or effort to helping Hubert Humphrey in West Virginia.

G: Getting back to the politics of the convention, there was a bitter fight between the Johnson people and the Kennedy people, I've understood. It's been rehashed a number of times. I'm just wondering if you have anything with regard to either the offer of the vice-presidency and whether or not they really wanted him to accept.

B: Well, that's been written about by people who were a lot closer to him than I am. I doubt if I could say anything that I haven't read that somebody else has written that influenced my thinking or my information. I always felt he had to accept it. But you were right. The campaign got pretty bitter, but I want to say this. Never at any time did Lyndon Johnson and Jack Kennedy have any differences of opinion. They might have differed over issues in the presidential primaries, but not in the campaign. A lot of the Kennedy people didn't like Johnson, and they may have tried to influence the campaign in some way, but Jack Kennedy admired and respected Lyndon Johnson's ability. He had worked with him in the Senate. They respected each other. They were professional politicians. It was the other people who got into the campaign who tried to create differences or cause trouble.

G: Is there anything about this that you want to talk about?

B: One funny thing happened. After I saw him in Dallas, and I went over to Fort Worth and John and I came up here, I came to stay full time

and John was back and forth. Mr. Cafritz gave us some space in the Ambassador Hotel on the mezzanine floor. They gave us the whole floor for the headquarters. Well, we were down inspecting and we were talking to the telephone company about how many phones we needed and all of that . . . yet Senator Johnson had never said that he was a candidate. He was willing for us to go ahead and do these preliminary things, but he kept hedging and hadn't made any announcement. Well, I got a sign painter to paint a sign to go on the outside of the building . . .I told him just to hold it until I gave him the word to put it up. Well, one weekend I went back to Dallas for the high school graduation of one of my daughters and while I was gone, this damn sign painter starts to put the sign up on the outside of the Ambassador Hotel. "Johnson for President." Well, of course it created a lot of interest. One of the newspapers got a picture of the sign going up and as soon as somebody saw it and called Johnson, he raised hell and said, "Get that damn sign down," and "Where is Blundell!" Of course, I was on my way back. I got back to all this. The papers got a picture of the sign going up, and they got a picture of it coming down. We got a lot of flak about that.

G: Why didn't he want it up?

B: I think he was holding off as long as he could not to get 100 percent committed. I don't know any other reason because we were ready

to go and we had assembled a pretty good staff, most of them from his staff or friends from Texas. I think that the sign went up about a week later.

G: I think that Mary Rather said that she worked on that staff.

B: Oh, she did.

G: Who else was with you on that?

B: Marvin Watson. Marvin was full time, I think. Bill Moyers was back and forth. He was in the Majority Leader's office.

G: Did Earle Clements work on that at all?

B: Earle Clements was very active for Senator Johnson. There were a lot of people in and out. As far as a full-time staff was concerned, we had George Bevel from Fort Worth, an advertising man to handle the press; John Connally brought him up. Marvin Watson, Warren Woodward--I can't remember anybody else with a major role in the headquarters. They were primarily the staff.

G: What about that trip to Houston with the Houston Ministerial Alliance?

B: Well, I could be mistaken about some of the things I might say, but as I recall, most of the Kennedy people were against him doing that. I think that Senator Johnson was the deciding factor in getting him to do it unless he wanted to all the time. Senator Johnson felt that you couldn't skirt the Catholic issue. You had to meet it head on and this was one way to do it. The other way was Johnson's own campaigning and his speeches, but this was a turning point. I think

it was Senator Johnson's idea that he do it, and I think he influenced him to do it. He had enough confidence in Jack Kennedy's ability to stand up there before this group and do a creditable job. And he also, I think, felt that they were a group of reasonable people, reasonably reasonable, and he probably had done some homework. He probably had talked to some of those ministers. I don't think he would have just wanted to throw Jack into the lion den there if he wasn't pretty sure that he was going to do the job.

G: In advancing a Johnson speech, what were the prerequisites? You had to have the podium a certain height, didn't you, or the microphone . . .

B: Oh, yes.

G: Can you recall some of the specifications that would cause complaints if you didn't get them right?

B: Well, I think he changed the height of the podium every time he made a speech, and we finally had one specially made and carried it on the plane. It was made according to his specifications. But I don't think he realized that the surroundings, the height of the platform, the depth of the stage, the size of the room, all made a difference in the height of the podium. You couldn't say it had to be 18 inches high or 26 inches high in Madison Square Garden, and also in some small town theater. I remember in some little town in Missouri, I say little town--it wasn't too small, they had the

speech in a theater and there was something wrong with the podium. It bugged him and he just went through his speech as fast as he could, just to get it over with and to get out. As soon as he finished his speech, before leaving the podium, or doing anything else, or saying anything else, he started calling Marvin Watson. "Marvin." He wanted, I guess, to get on Marvin about the podium. But you ask me about the prerequisites; of course, to him that was important--to anybody else it wouldn't have made a difference. It was just one of those things that was just part of his perfectionism. He wanted to be a certain height above that podium, he wanted the people in the first row of the audience to see him, and that's why I say that every podium is different. I think the one we finally got was adjustable where he could raise it and lower it. And, of course, he liked gadgets anyway, and I imagined he liked that one because he could play with it. But you asked about the prerequisites for advancing. Of course, the main thing, the most important thing, is to get wide local support for any rally or any meeting that you have. As I said in the beginning, most of the scheduling, a lot of the scheduling, was to built-in audiences at convention or national plowing contest or something like that, and then you would build around that. But stops like the whistle stop where you had nothing there except local people and a lot of times it was hard to get the local Democratic chairman to come out. Even though he thought

a lot of Johnson, he didn't think Johnson should be running with Kennedy or some reasons, and the advance man would have problems locally. I remember particularly Culp Krueger, state senator from Texas. He, of course, was a great politician. He spent about a week in one of those places and found out that the local county chairman didn't want to appear, or he had to build around him, and he spent about a week working with the other groups and set up his own committee. Most of it is improvising, and it depends on the ingenuity and the ability of the advance man to get the job done. He has to get placards printed or painted. A band is always number one requisite, usually the high school band. You would have to contribute to the band fund or something like that.

G: Did he have money with him to pay for this?

B: No. No, he never handled any money. Candidates don't do that.

G: No, I meant the advance man.

B: Oh, yes. They would have small amounts, mostly just their expenses, but they try to get everything paid for locally.

G: I see. The local people . . . I see.

B: Yes. Such as newspaper ads and if you get a strong supporter, a local chairman of your campaign committee, there is no problem. They do it. The best ones would welcome the advance man in, say, "Well, all right now, what do you want us to do?" We would brief the advance men before they go out. They would have, well, you

might call it a handbook, it wasn't that extensive. You've heard a lot about Larry O'Brien's Campaign Bible or textbook; well, it's nothing more than what everybody uses. He just put it together a little more extensively and a little more attractively. There was nothing unique or new about it, you just sit down with them and have a conference before they leave to go out on the road. We would talk about the things, and we would have a check list of things that had to be done, and then things that were desirable, and then he was on his own. A lot of times they would need additional material or something from my office, and I would be talking to them every day to find out how they were doing and if they needed anything, and we would try to supply it if they couldn't do it locally. I know many times some of the best advance men we had were top flight newspapermen. Bill Lloyd was one, I remember; he is over at NASA now. Bill was a Texas newspaperman, and he came up here to work with Johnson. I remember Bill, and he had somebody else with him, but they painted signs all night one night.

G: Is that right?

B: Yes. They got down there and they couldn't find a sign painter, so they bought the placards and paintbrushes and they spent the whole night painting placards and signs for the Senator's arrival.

G: How about Chuck Lipsen?

B: Lipsen?

G: Yes.

B: That name is not familiar.

G: I think Marty Underwood was . . .

B: Well, now, you see, I'm talking about the '60 campaign.

G: These came later?

B: You're talking about '64.

G: I didn't know that they were in '64.

B: Marty Underwood was one of our advance men in '60, and a very good one.

G: Well, are there any more specifics such as, well we were talking about the podium, and I was just wondering, were there difficulties getting it on the plane? I think it was very heavy, wasn't it?

B: Yes. Well, I didn't have anything to do with getting it on the plane so I wouldn't know, but I'm sure there [were] difficulties.

G: What about sound systems? Was this a problem?

B: I don't think so. We usually--the advance man usually got the local people or the local sound company to furnish it, and they tested it, and it would have to be working by the time they needed it. In some places, they used sound trucks to hustle up the crowd. The difference in advance men, the best advance men were those [who] worked on behalf of the candidate; there were others who worked on their own behalf. Some would go in and immediately call a news conference, and we would get papers the next day where so and so,

advance man for vice-presidential candidate Lyndon Johnson, held a press conference today and said, quote . . . that was a violation of our strictest rule, but, nevertheless, some of them just couldn't avoid the publicity.

G: Were there any other rules that you can think of here?

B: Well, we had quite a few rules. Some of them weren't written. They weren't supposed to imbibe too much in the alcoholic beverages; some could and some couldn't, depending on the individual. Mostly you had to--if you selected the man, you had no problems because you know what you want, and you know what his abilities are. But, we had so many volunteers that you couldn't turn them down. We couldn't say no that we don't want you to work for us. So you would have to use them where they could hurt you the least. I had problems with several of them who wanted to say where they were going to advance the candidate. One of them insisted that he was going to go to New York, and another one insisted that he was going to California. They just wanted a trip, and it didn't work out that way. Had they been capable and top-flight advance men, there wouldn't have been any question about it, but I knew that they just couldn't handle the big pressure operation like New York or California.

G: What was the attitude of Senator Johnson and his staff toward the Nixon campaign in this election? Did he think of Nixon as an old enemy?

B: No, he didn't have time for that kind of thing. He was too busy campaigning himself. Of course, he attacked the Republicans in his speeches, but I don't think there was ever any indication of personal animosity or a personal feeling toward Nixon. Now there was by Jack Kennedy; I don't think he showed it publicly.

I remember one time during the campaign, and this is second-hand hearsay but told me by one of the people who was present, somebody asked Kennedy one day why in the world he would want to go through all this to be President of the United States. And his reply was: "To see that Dick Nixon is not." Now whether or not that was his primary impetus, I don't know, but he did have a feeling. I'm sure Johnson probably did, too. But Johnson was never a . . . he didn't have time to criticize people too much. He was always too busy doing constructive things or trying to get people to do constructive things. Although he would give me hell all the time, he never really . . . and I don't remember him criticizing people except his own people and that to their face.

G: His criticism always had a very useful purpose.

B: There is one thing in the light of current history and campaigns and campaign finances. I think there is a side of Johnson that people don't know. They think of him being a big wheeler-dealer and a big politician, and he certainly was. But I have worked for six Texas governors and three United States senators, and I have never known

any politician or candidate to be as careful about observing the campaign laws as Johnson was. I know he had two lawyers in Austin checking the reporting laws and requirements, the contributions, and so forth. Everett Hutchinson was one of them. But I like to tell this story not to embarrass anybody, and in fact, I'm not going to mention anybody's name. The night before [the] whistle-stop train left Washington, I got a call advising me that there was a certain person on that train who was expecting to ride that train all the way to New Orleans. Of course everybody wanted to ride the train. They wanted to be seen when it stopped every place, and that was a problem. The policy was that the local, I say the local senator, the senator from that state would ride the train through that state. But this man wanted to ride the train all the way. He wasn't a good man; he was a wealthy man. I won't even say where he was from. I don't want to identify him in any way or identify the person who was involved with him. But I got this call and I said, "Well, that man can't stay on the train. It will be a great embarrassment to Senator Johnson." Well, apparently there wasn't anybody who could tell him to get off, and I said to the person that called me, "Well, get him off." He said, "Well, so and so has gotten him on there, and he has made a big contribution." So, I called the Senator and I said, "Senator, you've got a lot of people on your train. I think most of them are all right, but there is one man that shouldn't

be on there," and I mentioned his name and he said, "Hell no, get him off." I said, "Well, I've tried to, but I can't." He said, "Why can't you?" I said "Well, the man who put him on said he has given you fifty thousand dollars in cash for your campaign." He said, "Well, give it back to him and tell him to get the hell off the train." So I told the man who had taken the contribution what Senator Johnson said. In fact, Johnson said , "If he is on there when I get on there in the morning, I'll put him off. But give him his money back." Now that is, I think, quite a contrast to the looseness with which we handle campaign money today. I think that is really the big thing that was wrong with the whole Watergate thing was the money. Senator Johnson was very careful.

Another thing in regard to money: he insisted that his contributions . . . money that came into his campaign would be sent to the committee to offset all expenditures that we were responsible for out of the committee. He didn't want Jack Kennedy or anybody to think that they were supporting his campaign. So all the expense money came out of the treasury, but we would notify Walter Jenkins every week that this is how much they spent on his campaign this week, and Walter would get that amount and bring it down to Steve Smith.

G: Where were you during the election?

B: In the Mayflower Hotel. I had a suite in the hotel right across the

hall from Dick McGuire's suite. That was the Kennedy suite, and mine was the Johnson suite. Both doors were kept open, and we visited back and forth. We would cook dinner up there, cook supper whenever we got off.

G: Was there a consensus among you there that you were going to win?

B: Well, of course you always think you are going to win, but we knew it was going to be close. We knew that the debates had helped Jack Kennedy. We knew that Johnson's trip through the South was successful. We didn't know how successful; we couldn't until the election. But we did know that we were making a good campaign.

G: Is there anything else about that '60 campaign that you think . . .

B: I'm sure there is a lot, but I've just recalled what to me were the most interesting.

G: Those are awfully good. I share your judgment on it. Is there anything on the Johnson for President movement before he announced that we didn't cover? Who were you taking orders from? Walter Jenkins or . . .

B: No. In fact, we didn't have any orders. As I told you, Senator Johnson said, "Go over and get with John Connally, and you all go up to Washington and put together some kind of organization."

G: What did you do? What did your work involve other than having the painter paint a sign . . .

B: It involved getting people in every state in the country to contact their

delegates and try to sell them on supporting Lyndon Johnson. In a lot of states, the situation was already developed. I mean there were people who were for Johnson even though he hadn't announced, the people who wanted him to announce. A lot of it was a result of his contacts in Congress, in the Senate. They all knew firsthand what a great President he would make. Jack Kennedy was an unknown quantity as far as his ability was concerned. He had been in the Senate.

G: Did you raise money here for him as well?

B: I didn't, no. I think John Connally handled that primarily, and I'm sure that Senator put up some of his own money to start with. I don't know. We didn't spend a lot of money. We didn't have a big campaign. We had a small staff. We had only one newspaperman, and in a presidential campaign like that you would have a news department of ten or fifteen or twenty people.

G: Let's go back and pick up some of the early stuff that we talked about very briefly. The '41 campaign, do you remember much about that? Did you work primarily out of Austin?

B: Yes.

G: I guess that's where his state headquarters were, weren't they? What did you do in this campaign? What was your role?

B: I guess you would call it organization. Getting people in every county to support Johnson and primarily contacting people that I knew either from Baylor or from Young Democrats or Demolay

organizations, because as I say, he wasn't known very well outside of the Tenth District, except for his NYA work. He was state director of the NYA. He had a pretty good organization there. But I was on the phone all the time. That was my primary function.

G: Was his campaign style different in this campaign than it was later? What was he like as a young man campaigning?

B: Well, of course he wasn't as sophisticated politically. He worked like hell. He would out-work anybody. I don't think he had developed the real effective speaking style. He did develop it quickly. I don't know that . . . I can't tell you very much different. There is nothing new in campaigns. The techniques are the same.

G: In this election in '41, he was closely identified with the theme "Roosevelt and Unity," I think.

B: Well in the special election of Congress he was, in '37.

G: Well, I think in '41, too . . .

B: Oh yes, sure.

G: . . . promoting Roosevelt's foreign policy, he got quite a bit of support from the White House I think at the time. There again, Jim Rowe was . . . did you have any contact with the White House end?

B: No.

G: Do you recall the instance where this was just one episode where W. Lee O'Daniel had exaggerated the import of a telegram which he had wired FDR to the effect that Texas should set up its own army

and navy?

B: That's the first I've heard of that, but it doesn't surprise me.

G: Was Johnson counted out in that election?

B: Yes.

G: Was he? Where do you think you made your mistakes--by you I mean the campaign as a whole.

B: Well, if you take a first-term congressman and run him in a statewide special election against twelve or fourteen individuals, and he leads the ticket for five days after the election, you didn't make many mistakes.

G: I've heard it said that flushing out the votes and getting his strongholds to report as early as possible lended itself to being counted out later. How do you feel about this?

B: Well, I recall that early Sunday morning, after the polls had closed Saturday night, Senator Alvin Wirtz, who was our legal advisor and perhaps Congressman Johnson's closest advisor, wanted to be sure that we observed all of the reporting laws and that we didn't do something or fail to do something that would make it possible for somebody to contest the election. It looked like we had won it, and he wanted to be sure that we didn't do anything to let it get away. One statute or one provision in the election code as I recall, this has been a long time ago, required that the county chairman report the vote I think to the Secretary of State within a certain time, or

the precinct chairman had to report to the county chairman, I just don't recall exactly. But anyway, Senator Wirtz called John and me down to his suite--we were all in the same hotel--and he had the statute book there, and he read us this statute. I had never heard of anybody doing that before in any campaign that I had been in, but I didn't question because it was right there in the book. So he told us to get out a telegram to every one of our county chairmen, all the county Johnson chairmen, for them to see that our vote was reported within such and such a time either to the county chairman or the county chairman reported it to the state, I don't know. Anyway, that was done. Well, that meant . . . that was our vote; that was it. O'Daniel would have never been elected to senator if it hadn't of been for the people who wanted Coke Stevenson to be governor. Actually, it was a Stevenson campaign for governor that beat us, that beat Johnson. There were so many people that wanted to get rid of O'Daniel in the first place. In the second place, there were so many Coke Stevenson people that wanted him to be governor that that combination was just hard to beat. As I say, we were, I don't know, something like ten or twelve thousand votes ahead on Saturday night. The Dallas Morning News had a banner headline, "Lyndon Johnson Elected to Senate." Well, by Monday, our lead had decreased to about six thousand , by Tuesday it was five thousand. I'm just using round numbers. And by the end of the

week, we were behind. So you ask me if we were counted out, I don't know if they were withholding their votes and waiting to see.

G: Well, I think I've heard other people talk about, I think one case was Longview . . . I don't know if you . . .

B: Well, most of it came from East Texas; that was a strong Stevenson country. I can't point a finger at anybody.

G: Can you remember specific counties in which you had . . .

B: No. I do know that on Sunday night, there was a meeting at the Driskill Hotel, which is across the street from where we were, of Stevenson people. At the conclusion of that meeting, they left and they just scattered all over the state, mostly to East Texas.

G: Is that right? Who were they, do you know? I mean, is there anybody we could talk to to get . . .

B: No.

G: Well, that's a very interesting thing, because we have talked to a lot of people about '41, and we've never been able to nail anything down other than just speculation.

B: Apropos Senator Wirtz' telegram, when we saw what was happening we naturally started calling our people around the state to urge them to watch the thing and be sure that there wasn't any hanky-panky going on. They had already certified our vote. There wasn't anything we could do about it. Whether we could have or not, I don't know. We did try to make certain that we didn't lose any of the votes that we had on the recounts or that there were not

additional votes put in for O'Daniel. Well, apparently there were. Now, as I say, I don't have any hard information. I know at the . . . when the Secretary of State certified the vote, eleven hundred and some odd for O'Daniel, most of Johnson s friends wanted him to contest it and ask for a recount, but I think that was one of the smartest things he ever did. He said no, that he wasn't going to do that, that he wouldn't be a poor loser, and he gained a lot of respect for that. I think it increased his stature throughout the state.

G: This was really his only defeat as far as an election was concerned, I suppose. What did it do to him?

B: He was just very philosophical about it and he just came back to Washington to do his job as congressman. That's the only electoral campaign he ever lost. He was in a lot of convention fights, and I think he won every one of those. I remember, I don't recall exactly the year, but the only time that he and Allan Shivers had a confrontation, fortunately I was working for Price Daniel then, and Price urged me to stay out of that fight. And fortunately I did, but everybody was curious because here are the two most powerful politicians in the state and a lot of people thought that Johnson was making a mistake in challenging Shivers's leadership in the convention. They thought that Shivers would win it, but Johnson won it. That was, I think, perhaps his greatest victory in Texas

politics, because here was an incumbent governor who had control of all the party machinery and Johnson took him on, and he defeated him.

G: I've heard that Sam Rayburn actually talked him into doing that.

B: He may have.

G: Rayburn was so outraged with Shivers.

B: He may have. Shivers made some unfortunate statements about Mr. Rayburn. It was all political; I don't think he had any personal feeling toward him. Texas politics gets a little rough.

G: I've heard that Allan Shivers was the only man that Lyndon Johnson feared politically, that Shivers was so powerful at this time and that people advised him against challenging him.

B: I don't know. I can't imagine him fearing him. I do think that he may have respected his strength and his political ability.

G: We were talking about the '41 . . .

B: Well, let me say this. They respected each other very strongly. I know that. I think perhaps that they admired each other as politicians.

G: And possibly each reluctant to take on the other.

B: I'll tell you a little incident. I don't want to get too personal, but I think this little story gives you an idea of Johnson's political philosophy. Senator Bill Blakely was my boss at the time that Shivers appointed him to the Senate, an interim appointment, after

Johnson became Vice President. I came up here with Senator Blakely and at the end of that sixty days, Senator and Mrs. Blakely gave a party for the Texas delegation at the Shoreham Hotel. A lot of people were trying to get Blakely to run in the special election, which he didn't do. He would have been elected if he had run at that time--he didn't want to. I think he wanted to, but Mrs. Blakely probably talked him out of it. But at that party we had for the Texas delegation, Senator Johnson came in--no, he was Vice President then, and he got Senator Blakely and me over into a corner and he said, "Now, when you get back to Texas, you've got to start working on getting everybody together." He said, "We are just tearing up the whole state party. Johnson man, Shivers man, Daniel man, Yarborough man, everybody's their own man, and we've got to get the party together." He said, "Now Shivers and I understand each other." He said, "We use the same knife to cut each other's guts out." He said, "Price Daniel wouldn't understand that." So they knew how to operate.

G: That's fascinating.

B: That's not critical of Price, because Price is my ideal--Price Daniel--as a public servant, public official. I worked for him in every campaign he had except the last one when he and John ran against each other. I told them both I couldn't touch that one.

But Price was [a] very strong friend of Johnson's.

G: What about Alvin Wirtz? I've often heard that Senator Wirtz was Lyndon Johnson's real mentor.

B: Well I think he was to start with.

G: What was he like?

B: Well, he was a very astute politician and one of the most successful lawyers in Texas. His law firm, I guess, was the most successful firm in Austin, which means that it was one of the best in the state. I can't tell you what he was like because I wasn't that close to him, but I knew him. I think he liked me, and I respected him. I wasn't sure his political thinking was always correct, but you are right; he probably did more for the young Lyndon Johnson than anybody else.

G: Can you recall, other than, say, sending out the wires to your people on getting the returns in, can you recall any other occasion where Wirtz influenced Johnson that you witnessed, or influenced his thinking?

B: No, I wasn't present when they were having their discussions. Sometimes we would have a full-scale staff meeting which consisted of about six people. Wirtz wasn't the only one that advised Congressman Johnson . . . Ed Clark, Everett Looney, quite a few. Of course as time went along, he had more. As he grew, so did his advisors.

G: I was going to ask a follow-up on Wirtz. Did he treat Wirtz with considerable deference?

B: Oh, yes.

G: Wirtz was very definitely the senior partner of the relationship.

B: There may have been a time when John and I took one side of a question and Wirtz took the other. And I think Mr. Johnson always took Wirtz' advice. I don't mean that there was any big difference of opinion, but politically he was pretty conservative. I'm not talking about his political philosophies, I mean as far as campaign technique was concerned, he was pretty conservative. But he certainly was a valued advisor for the young Lyndon Johnson.

G: Did you work in the '48 campaign as well?

B: No, I did not.

G: Any campaigns in the meantime? Now, you said you headed the Senate or worked in the Senate or the House office, I guess that would have been, when he went into the Navy.

B: When he went into the Navy, yes.

G: Mrs. Johnson was there, I understand, working some there . . .

B: Yes.

G: . . . and Nellie Connally, I think, was there, and he was going to Australia, I believe. What did you do in this capacity?

B: I was in charge of the office. I dictated the mail; I made calls to the departments.

G: Did things slow down pretty much when he was gone?

B: I don't really recall. Of course, the war had just started, and nothing was slowed down, everything was probably at a peak.

It was just an ordinary routine. I remember the first thing he told me was that if I wanted to know how to run a congressman's office just to go over to Wright Patman's office and talk to Mrs. Spain, who was Mr. Patman's secretary, which I did, of course. I remember Mrs. Spain quite well and of course got to be very close to Mr. Patman.

G: Do you recall learning any of the specifics of his trip to Australia and meeting with Douglas MacArthur, subsequently the report to FDR when he got back?

B: Well, I know all of that; I don't know of anything that . . .

G: Did you sense at this time a sort of competition between President Roosevelt and Douglas MacArthur?

B: No. No, I wasn't aware of it if there was any. In fact, my impression now was that we knew that he was going on a trip for the President; we didn't know what the purpose of the trip was.

G: I had heard that one of the things that FDR had asked him to do was to feel out the political ambitions of MacArthur.

B: He may have, but I don't know that.

G: Okay. Then after he came back from Australia, did you continue to run the office? I know Roosevelt recalled a lot of the congressmen.

B: No. By that time I had already gone with OPA. I think I had . . . well, I was in San Antonio, I think I had moved to Dallas by then.

G: Well, did you work with him much when he was Vice President?

B: No, I wouldn't . . . I was in pretty close touch with Walter, and Bill Moyers and the people in his office. I went into the Post Office Department as deputy Assistant Postmaster General. I was there about six months. I did a few things that might have been helpful to him. Then after I had been there about six months, I opened my public relations office in Washington and was retained by Douglas Aircraft. I think the Senator was always a little skittish about the military complex. He never criticized me at all for going with Douglas, but in fact I did get him to go out and dedicate their space plant, space facility three weeks before he became President. But he didn't ever want to be too closely identified with the military contractors, and I understood that.

G: Did you see him as President?

B: No, I didn't.

G: Did you work in the '64 campaign?

B: Yes.

G: What did you do then?

B: I was working with Dick McGuire and the National Committee primarily, when Johnson became President. We had already started working on the convention program. Dick McGuire asked me to research all the programs in the past, how they were handled. I got as much information as far back as I could, and it developed that the printing was always contracted out and about two-thirds went to either the ad agency or

the entrepreneurs or only about one third to the committee, both, I think, Republican and Democrat. So, I suggested that with all the talent we have, why not produce the book ourselves. Well, they thought that was a good idea and they said go to it. So, I worked with Bill Moyers and Walter, and I got George Bevel to come down from New York and handle the actual production. The result was that it was the most successful convention book we ever had. The committee got all the money, about two million dollars, although I wasn't out in front on the thing. As I have already mentioned, being identified with Douglas and the defense contractors, I didn't want to do anything that would embarrass the President. After we got the thing set up and going, George Bevel handled most of it.

G: As far as the campaign itself, did you have any tasks that he had assigned you?

B: Not officially, no. Not in'64.

G: Is there any episode during his presidency in which you were in contact with him that you think we ought to record here?

B: No, I don't think so.

G: Do you remember the last time you saw him or talked to him?

B: Well, I was at a luncheon at the White House. I'm not sure whether it was before or after he made his announcement that he would not run again. And I have had correspondence with him since then, since he left the White House, but no, I think that was probably the last

time I saw him.

G: How was he then? Was he glad to see you?

B: Oh, of course.

G: Did you talk about old times?

B: Well, he was busy. No, we didn't have that much time. I remember the week that he became President after the assassination, Joe Kilgore called me and said that he would like for me to come up and be his guest at the Texas delegation luncheon, which is a nice event every week. I used to make them quite often. Well, driving up to the Capitol it occurred to me that "President Johnson is going to be there. This is the first delegation luncheon, Texas delegation, since he has become President." I met Joe and we went on in the Rayburn Room, having lunch, and Joe was chairman of the delegation at that time. We were about halfway through lunch and a Secret Service man came in the door and came up and whispered something to Joe and went on out. In a little while, Joe got up and announced that President Johnson would like to join his old colleagues for lunch. He was in the Capitol visiting Senator Dirksen. He came in and of course everybody was real proud and greeted him very warmly. We visited a few minutes after the luncheon at that time.

G: Is there anything else you would like to add? We have covered a lot of ground.

B: Well, there are a lot of things that I would probably enjoy recounting, but I don't think they're of any particular interest.

(Interruption)

G: Everything you have mentioned so far has really been excellent, and I think that with your batting average you couldn't get very far astray.

B: Well, I think of a lot of anecdotes . . . some are favorable, some of them are crude. I remember one time, a friend of mine in Dallas was a Texas staff photographer with Time magazine, Time and Life, I assume. He called me one day and he said that he had an assignment from Time/Life to do some pictures of Johnson at the ranch. He said, "I can't even get through to his press secretary." I said, "What do they tell you?" He said, "Well, they just don't return my call." I said, "Well, I'll be glad to do what I can." I didn't particularly want to do this fellow a favor, it didn't mean that much to me, but I thought maybe it would be something that would help Senator Johnson. This was still when he was Majority Leader. So, I called him and I told him the situation and he says, "Well, they've got ten thousand pictures of me, and the only ones they ever use are when I'm picking my nose or scratching my ass." He said, "I don't know why they want any more pictures, but if he is your friend and it means anything to you, tell him to get his bathing trunks and be at Love Field at four o'clock this afternoon and we can fly to the ranch." Well, this boy called me on Monday after he got back, and he was thrilled to death. He said it was the greatest

weekend he had ever had in his life. He said that they couldn't have been nicer; he said he didn't know whether they would use any of the pictures or not, but he said he had a great time.

G: Well, I hope he took some good ones.

Side 2 of Tape 2 of 2

G: I've heard that LBJ was a great raconteur.

B: He could always recall a story for illustration or to help him sell his point. He was a great storyteller, but never in the crude sense or just for entertainment. His stories were usually parables, and you could learn a lot from them.

G: I hear that he was a great mimic, too, that he could imitate people.

B: Oh, yes. Yes.

G: I think we have a speech in which he did a magnificent imitation of John Connally.

B: Is that right? I would like to hear that.

G: But the Hill Country German accent, I think he could imitate that. Do you recall any of these stories?

B: Not specifically. I don't recall any right off hand, but I've heard a lot of them.

G: Any other episodes that, while not entirely significant, reflect the man's personality and humor?

B: This is probably not a specific answer to your question, but I just recalled you were talking about a humorous incident. I think one of

the funniest things that I have ever seen or had any part in was in Johnson's office right after I came up here. Jake Pickle and [John] Dub Singleton were working in the office. They'd work in the office at night and either run an elevator or be a policeman in the daytime. This may have happened just before I got up there. The first thing a new man in the office would be directed to do was to revise the filing system. For some reason, maybe that was part of his apprenticeship. Johnson told either Jake or Dub to set up a new filing system. I'm not sure which one was the culprit, either Dub Singleton, who is now a U.S. Federal judge, or Jake Pickle, who is a member of Congress. But they got off duty and [he] came into the office and had all the files spread around on the floor for room. Well, it got so late that he decided he would go get some sleep and come back early in the morning and finish the files. Well, you know what happened: he got back the next morning and they were all gone. The cleaning woman had taken them all. Well, he went down to the incinerator and retrieved nearly all the files. That was one of the funniest things that ever happened.

G: That's terrific. Do you remember LBJ's reaction to that, or was he gone at the time?

B: I wouldn't have to remember it. I would almost know what his reaction would be, but fortunately, he was out of town at that time.

G: Do you recall any more episodes of when he was out campaigning?

B: Well, I'm just trying to trace the campaign from the start to see if there were any. Well, there were many, but some of them not worth repeating, others I can't recall just off hand.

Getting back to his first directive, that he would not appear in New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, or Southern California, we had a request, I don't know whether it was directly from the mayor's office or not, but a request for him to appear in Chicago. I told him when we talked that night, I said, "I remember what you said about not going to Chicago, but you've got an invitation to go." He said, "Who extended the invitation?" I said, "Well, I'm sure that it has the mayor's approval or it wouldn't have been extended." He said, "If you'll get me a personal invitation from Mayor Daley, I'll go to Chicago." Of course, that wasn't difficult to do because the mayor wanted him out there. But he was adamant that it had to be via his personal invitation.

Well, I told you about going to New York. Now, I don't recall the circumstances of why he broke his rule in going to California, but nevertheless, he did and it was very successful, but not as successful as Chicago. Mayor Daley turned them out for him.

G: Really?

B: Oh, one of the biggest crowds that anybody ever had.

Mrs. Johnson was very influential in all of his campaigns. We were talking about Alvin Wirtz' influence. I don't know how influential

she was back that early--I'm talking about in campaign strategy--in philosophy, in techniques, and all of that. She began growing very much as an advisor and she was, I don't mean to put it in the past tense, but that was in the past tense where I was involved. That's the reason I say she was, but I'm sure she still is. She had a very fine sense of timing and political techniques. Particularly, she had a great ability in determining if something was right or wrong--a feeling for it. The Senator didn't always take her advice, but I think it turned out that she was always right. She just had a native ability to feel something, whether it was right or wrong. I think her development as a great First Lady has proved that.

G: Well, how was she in the office? Did she do quite a bit of work in that congressional office?

B: Oh yes, sure she did. She answered mail and did a lot of phone calls. I don't think we were there together very much. She was back and forth to Texas, and it's been so long ago, I don't recall a lot of it, but I do recall, it was quite an experience.

G: Well, Mr. Blundell, is there anything else that you can think of while . . .

B: No, I'll say that I'm very flattered that you or the Library or whoever it is wants anything from me. I've never felt the importance of it.

G: You've certainly proved, I think, a valuable source, and I think historians when they consult your transcript will agree with me that you have contributed a good deal of information.

B: Well, I think that it was a great privilege and experience for me to be, I say, close. I'm not saying that I was intimate, but I was subject to the Johnson influence. We didn't always agree, and there were times when we disagreed. I never did get real upset when he would chew me out, because I felt that that was his privilege and that was the way he operated. But I might have shown a little indifference to him which he probably didn't appreciate, but I'm not the type that can just throw that stuff off. If I take it seriously, it affects me and although I did take to heart everything he said, I didn't let it upset me like a lot of other people did. He had a favorite expression which is good for anybody and that is, "Your judgment is only as good as your information." I used it on him once or twice when we would have a few words of differences, when I knew I was right. But I didn't argue with him much. John did. John would argue with him, and they would have some pretty hot words but I just felt that if he wanted it done that way, I would do it that way.

G: I think one of the debates concerned, I believe it was, Johnson's appendectomy or some medical treatment that he had to have. He, LBJ, wanted to do it without publicity and just more or less quietly, and I think John Connally's position was that they do it with the press coverage. Do you remember this?

B: Well, I remember the occasion; I don't recall the details of the controversy. But they were both very strong-minded and strong-willed

individuals and John's association with President Johnson that long I think accounts for a lot of John's attributes and a lot of his style which has been very successful. I'm a great admirer of John's.

G: I knew that later on Governor Connally developed a strong will of his own, but I didn't realize that he was that much of a challenge to LBJ as far as differences of opinion back then.

B: Well, as far as I know, in my association with President Johnson, the only two people that I know of that would tell him he was wrong were Lady Bird and John.

G: Really?

B: Yes. And I don't mean that he always accepted it, but I know both of them were not hesitant to tell him when they thought he was wrong. I would tell him that I thought he was wrong and then that would be the end of it. I wouldn't argue about it, but John would. John would go to the mat with him.

G: Can you recall any specific occasions?

B: No. No, I don't recall anything that was serious or critical, but just differences of opinions. John and I had a few differences of opinions, but it was over method, not ideology or anything that was real serious. I could probably think of a lot of things, but I don't know that they are that important.

G: Well, if you have anything else, we've got plenty of time. If you would like to wait, you can add it later to the transcript if you decide to.

B: All right. I think you've got enough.

G: Great. Thank you.

[End of Side 2 of Tape 2 and Interview I]

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By JAMES BLUNDELL

to the

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