

INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES K. BOATNER (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

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F: This is an interview with Mr. Charles K. Boatner, the Director of Press Information for the Department of Interior, in his office in Washington, December 17, 1968, and the interviewer is Joe B. Frantz

Mr. Boatner, first of all, tell us a little bit about your own background and how you came to this spot in your life.

B: My background is that of a newspaperman and my newspaper was the Fort Worth Star Telegram. I was on that paper for twenty-six years, fourteen of them as city editor, and one of the pleasures of being city editor was occasionally being able to assign myself to political races or campaigns that I thought would be interesting. It was doing that type of work--prior to becoming city editor--that I really first became acquainted with the foremost Texan, from a political standpoint, at any rate.

F: At what stage of his career was he in?

B: He was then making his second campaign for Senator from Texas. We were--there were three of us really working the campaign, and we would every week shift around to another candidate, so every third week I was with Mr. Johnson, until--I don't know what caused it--but I was called by the office one day and told that I wasn't to shift off of Mr. Johnson any more and I was to stay exclusively on his campaign.

F: You don't know why the change?

B: Later I found out that he felt my stories were more objective toward his endeavors than were those of Sam Kinch and Byron Utecht and he had so

communicated to my publisher, Amon Carter, who at that time was an inordinate backer of Mr. Johnson.

F: Did the Star Telegram take a stand in that campaign?

B: Yes, they took a stand in that campaign and they were for Mr. Johnson. That was the helicopter campaign, and it cost me a new Chevy.

F: How come?

B: Well, the helicopter was running about a 100 to 125 miles an hour and it was going across country. Texas roads weren't in those days what they are today and trying to make every stop necessitated breaking every speed law that the State of Texas had, and he had a very heavy schedule. So the result was that after two or three days of trying, you soon discovered you skip-stopped him. You and one other reporter would skip-stop and compare notes at the end of the day, and fill yourself in on the stops you didn't make.

F: You just burned the car up in effect?

B: The motor wasn't worth a damn!

F: How many of you covered him as a general rule?

B: You mean from all the papers?

F: Yes. Was there a fair press--

B: Yes. All the major papers of Texas were represented, both the Houston papers, both the Dallas papers, the Star-Telegram, UP, AP, and when you were in an area you'd have two or three of the local papers like, if you were in the Panhandle you'd pick up Lubbock and Amarillo. If you were around El Paso you'd pick up those papers.

F: Did Mr. Johnson pay any particular attention to the press, or were you just along on your own?

B: He at the end of the day did, and he made references to the press and to

the various reporters that he had along. If he was in an area where the paper had--say we were in East Texas--why Dawson Duncan of the Dallas News or Allen Duckworth or Dick Morehead were along, he would be sure that their presence was known to the audience. This helped him and helped the reporter too, and also made the town feel good, and when you're in a town of eight or nine hundred people why they like to know that a representative--or they like to see the base of the byline that they read.

F: Did you tend to travel separately or did you gang up?

B: Some of us traveled separately, some traveled together. Most of the time Acheson of the Times Herald rode with me, I can't recall his first name.

F: Was it Sam?

B: No, it wasn't Sam, it was Sam's brother [it comes to me now, Alex] who was on the Dallas Times Herald and he and I usually rode together. And in those days--Horace Busby rode with me quite a bit--he was working for the Vice President, the Senator then, but he would usually ride in the back seat. I had know Horace from the days in Fort Worth when he was there.

F: Were you consciously more objective than the other two reporters toward Congressman Johnson, or did it just seem that way to him?

B: No, I think he had a legitimate beef--Byron Utecht was given to writing a--he was, I've forgotten just exactly who he was for in that race--but--

F: It would have been Stevenson or [George] Peddy.

B: It was Coke [Stevenson]. He would write a paragraph of what Johnson would say and then write a paragraph refuting him, or taking Coke's position on it, and then he'd write another paragraph then he'd spend another paragraph refuting him, and if the copy desk wasn't alert at the paper you would end

up with an argument in the candidate's story. This was contrary to the policy of the paper which at that time to keep the news and the editorial comments separate--I hope it's still that way today.

F: That's almost old-fashioned now.

B: It is! And they would make the editorial comments on the editorial page, but Byron had been Austin correspondent for so long he couldn't resist this, and Sam still today--I don't know whatever brought it about--but he has an ingrained feeling about Lyndon Johnson which I wouldn't say was a feeling of wishing him success. And in fact when I remember when Jack Maguire was head of the Ex-Students [University of Texas at Austin] and made Mr. Johnson honorary Ex-Student of Texas, Sam's letter of protest was the first one in. So that showed--this was years later--this same feeling existed back then, I never was able to find out why, although later after Mr. Carter and Mr. Johnson had a little falling out about Adlai Stevenson, who should introduce him in Fort Worth, Johnson went ahead living up to his commitment to Speaker Rayburn that he would introduce Adlai through Texas. And Mr. Johnson had been told by Mr. Carter that if he, Johnson, introduced Stevenson in Fort Worth, that the Star-Telegram would never support him again. Mr. Johnson went ahead and introduced Stevenson and later after that campaign was over, Sam I were given the job of going back and--

F: You're talking about Sam Kinch.

B: Kinch. Sam and I were given the job of going back into the background of Lyndon Johnson and checking every political deal, every business deal, that we could check with all of the participants. This included the purchase of the radio station and land and anything else.

We spent six months--the house on Dillman Street, and everything else--

we spent six months working on that work project for Mr. Carter. We worked separately and independently, went where our leads carried us, all over the state, and we turned in separate reports and we didn't see each other's report until after Mr. Carter had seen them. And oddly enough we both came out with the same thing, that the many aspersions that had been cast against Mr. Johnson weren't quite as a lot of his opponents in Texas would have you believe. Mr. Carter after reading the reports said, "Hell, I can't see anything here I haven't done!" So that was the end of that project! But this in a way brought back my opinion of Sam. It was in his choice of adjectives or verbs and things of that sort that made Mr. Johnson feel that Sam wasn't being fair to him. In other words in place of saying he walked, he'd either have him scurrying or loping or use of adjectives in describing the way he'd throw his hat out of the helicopter, "traded a hat for a vote again in a cornfield or wheat field."

F: I wanted to ask you about that. I can give two or three instances where he lost his hat coming in over the local ball park or county fairgrounds where the group was to meet. Did you see enough of this to think this was accident or did you--was it sort of a gesture to appeal to the crowd that he'd thrown his hat in the ring?

B: It was a crowd appealing gesture and I would say that--I wouldn't say that 99 times out of a hundred because I don't know that I was it happen as many times--but the majority of the times I saw it done the hat was delivered to him back before his speech was half through. Somebody would recover it and give it back to him.

F: Did he pretty well stick to schedule?

B: Yes, he stayed on schedule and he was most accommodating to the reporters,

I think. I remember one day deep down--we were around Refugio--I don't know just exactly what town now--but we stopped at lunch and God, it was hot, so he was in the bathtub and he drew a tub of cold water and got in it during lunch and some of the reporters were wanting to see him, so he just opened the bathroom door and we had a press interview right there!

The girl from Hillsboro--

F: Mary Rather.

B: Mary Rather was sitting outside and behind the door in her chair and in between questions he was giving suggestions to her. But he made darned sure she was behind the door!

F: Do you think the use of the helicopter won him votes?

B: The use of the helicopter indirectly won him votes, yes, because it attracted a crowd, and then the crowd got to hear him and size him up. And he was straightforward with his answers. For instance, I remember at Houston Roy Hofheinz had made arrangements--Roy was then the County Judge--made arrangements for him to meet with some labor leaders down there, and so he cautioned Mr. Johnson about saying anything about the Taft-Hartley Act unless he was asked. But when Mr. Johnson went before them, he looked at them and opened it up with his comment on the Taft-Hartley Act, that he voted for it, he'd vote for it again; however, there were some things about it he thought could be amended since it had been in effect. But that seemingly pleased the labor leaders; they knew right then where he stood.

F: You know this was the campaign which to some people's consternation labor officially went for Stevenson who was ultraconservative.

B: That's right. I was with Coke the day he got word that labor had endorsed him and Coke--

F: Did that come by telegram or telephone?

B: Came by telephone and Coke and Bob Murphy and I were riding together. I was riding in the car with them; that was Coke's campaign and his campaign style.

F: That was Murphy from over at Nacogdoches?

B: Coke's nephew--One-Arm Bob Murphy. He's an officer at the House now, isn't he--isn't he a doorkeeper or something in the House?

F: Yes, he's something down there.

B: But Coke got word and we were preparing to leave town and we went out and sat down in the car, and he just seemingly for ten minutes didn't say a word and he said, "Well, I'm going to accept it; it will do me less harm to accept it than fight it." Then he turned to me and said, "Is that your opinion?" And I said, "I'm no politician, that's your problem!" But that was his reaction to it.

F: Veteran reporters are supposed to be quite seasoned and cynical. Did you feel--as you will recall, Johnson trailed rather far behind Stevenson in the primary, had to make up 70,000 votes in the runoff--did you feel an upsurge in the interest in Johnson?

B: No. I felt all the time that it was just very, very close. In fact when I was switching off on the candidates, my wife later commented that she couldn't tell who was winning the race because I would come back in and I would say, "I think Stevenson's ahead this week," and the next week I'd be out with Johnson and I'd come into the house to get a meal and a bath and a change of shirts, and I'd say, "I think Johnson's ahead this week," so that was the way it was going.

F: You believed in whomever you'd see last.

B: No, I wouldn't say that. The crowd reaction and the enthusiasm of the local supporters, and oddly enough--well, not oddly enough, it was just the way campaigns to--I might make the same territory or much of the same

territory with both men on succeeding weeks. And it was in San Antonio that I decided that something was a little bit odd. I was in there with Johnson first and around with some of the Johnson majordomos in San Antonio, and I spotted three easily recognizeable Mexicans there in the office, and the next week I doubled back and picked up Coke and we ended up in San Antonio--this is the first primary--and there were those three Mexicans again. And I was never able to prove it; in fact, I went back to the office and talked to them about it and I wanted to go back down and do some investigating about these three because they'd all been identified to me as local Mexican leaders, who could guarantee delivery of votes, and hearsay was that they had been paid off twice, first by Johnson people and then they got paid off by the local Stevenson people to a greater amount. However, I will say that neither candidate to my certain knowledge ever saw either one of those three.

F: When you said "paid off," what do you mean?

B: Well, I mean paid in cash for delivery of a certain number of votes.

F: Did you see a good bit of that in Texas in those days?

B: It occurred in Fort Worth. I have known actual instances of it there; in fact, I noticed Buster Little's death here in the paper--he was a sheriff, he was running an ice plant on the north side and between ice and groceries that they sold at the place and some cash, and the word I got from Joe Garcia, the Mexican food impresario there, was that--and the way the area voted for Buster--was the way Buster Little beat Carl Smith for sheriff. And in talking to people in Temple and San Antonio and Laredo, I think there was quite a few.

F: Down in George Parr's country?

B: Yes. The local--what would they call them--

F: Padrones.

B: Padrones--took care of them and they in turn when it came to voting time they took care of the padrones.

F: This to a certain extent is a kind of honest vote buying, isn't it?
That is, if you don't buy it the other fellow will sort of proposition?

B: Well, this goes back to the night of that Stevenson-Johnson race. Felix McKnight was covering for the Dallas News. This was when he was still on the News. And I was covering for the Star-Telegram. Harry Bench Crozier was there, Coke was doing the barbequing, we down on the river on this ranch--

F: This was Johnson?

B: No, I was with Stevenson the night of the count, the night of the return, and Stevenson was doing one of his river barbeques; he'd gone back to the ranch that afternoon and there was quite a bit of barbeque and quite a few beans and a lot more bourbon down there on the river, and every vote count that would come in, Stevenson was ahead, and he would caution--"Now wait a minute." The boys would pass around the drinks as the Texas Election Bureau results would come in, and Stevenson kept cautioning, "Don't get too enthusiastic. I'm worried about Archie Parr. We didn't build some roads that he wanted built down there." And he said, "He has been with me before but I'm worried about him this time." And finally when the vote came in from that area and Stevenson's lead just dissipated, there was dead silence, and a few more drinks gulped, and in the dead silence, Felix McKnight said to me across the campfire, "Charlie, is it true that John Connally and Lyndon Johnson were communicating through you--weren't speaking to each other and were communicating only through you the last week of the campaign?" Well, he was a little wrong on the length of the

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time, it lasted about three days, John and Mr. Johnson had had a blow-up between themselves and I was getting messages from Austin and suggesting to Mr. Johnson that he see so-and-so in such-and-such a town. But the net result of that was two or three of those friends of Coke's just picked me up and I found myself out in the middle of the river! I came in about twenty yards below the fire and had to come up there and borrow some whiskey and stand in front of the fire and dry off!

That night after they'd all left I drove back down the road from the ranch to the motel where we were staying and the next morning I got up pretty early and was putting my bag in my car when Coke came by just hell-bent for Austin. You could see the dust behind that car for five miles! I beat it on into Austin and he was in there already starting his legal campaign to see what he could do.

F: Before we get on to that, what did Connally and Johnson blow up about, do you know?

B: Well, it was just--

F: Campaign nerves?

B: I know, I think I know. John had had information that somebody had given Mr. Johnson some campaign money in one of the towns and, running always short at the headquarters, he had asked Mr. Johnson for it and Mr. Johnson said he had sent it to him. He'd already sent it to him. And John said, "Well, Goddammit," he hadn't gotten it, and both their tempers went up, and they didn't talk to each other for a couple of days. Then it all got ironed out.

F: Did you cover the legalities and the investigations and so forth that went on after the runoff?

B: No, I didn't. I had to go back to the city desk.

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F: So, you had no part in that?

B: I didn't have any part. I covered the convention in Fort Worth immediately following that race.

F: At which he was certified as a senatorial candidate?

B: Yes.

F: Do you have any clear memories of that?

B: No, except that it was a hell of a day, both factions were really vying for control but Mr. Johnson's forces stayed in control.

F: Do you think they had the numbers?

B: I wouldn't [know] now without going back and reading on them some place.

F: One way or another they maneuvered it.

B: Yes. The Stevenson people were just out-maneuvered.

F: Talking about this matter of payoff, in a sense Johnson could have paid off Parr without ever having contacted him simply because Stevenson failed to deliver on something that Parr thought was due him?

B: Yes. That has always been my feeling, from what Coke said that day, that Coke felt that he, while he'd always had Parr's support, that this time he had lost it through failure to grant Parr some road building or other things in that area that Parr felt he was justly entitled to as six-time backer of Coke.

F: What did you do then? How much longer did you stay on the Star-Telegram?

B: I stayed on the Star-Telegram until '61 and actually, though, at that time Mr. Johnson--well, that's another story.

In June of '61 I got a call from the Vice President's office and it was George Reedy and George said that the Vice President wanted to talk to me and he got on the phone and he said, "Are you going to be a man of your word?" And I said, "I don't know just what you mean, sir." And he said,

"Well, in '48 I asked you if there was any chance of your coming to Washington and working for me and you indicated then that you wanted your boys to go to school and finish up in Fort Worth." Then he said, "Your youngest son graduated from high school night before last, and I want to know whether you're going to be a man of your word." So I told him that I would--then he continued that he was going to be down at the Ranch on, I think it was the fifteenth of June, and would have the Premier of Pakistan down there and he wanted me to come down with my bag and be ready to go to Washington with him. Well, I talked this over with my wife and with the paper and the paper thought it would be good for me to get the experience in Washington, and my wife and I figured that all the boys would be in college and the household was breaking up anyway, and I was discontented at the paper. Mr. Carter had died--Jim North had died--and the management of it had fallen into the hands of the business office; while I respected Burt Honea as the general manager of the newspaper, I didn't particularly like the way the policies of the paper were running, so I took the offer. I didn't go then--I came up--I went down to the ranch to the barbeque and then came up here on August 1 of '61.

F: Doing what?

B: I didn't know until I got here, but I found out that I was a generalist and was sitting in for Walter Jenkins when he was out of the office, and I was sitting in for Cliff Carter when he was out of the office, I was sitting in for George Reedy when he was out of the office, doing a few other chores on my own.

F: Did you do some speech writing?

B: Some, I worked with Horace Busby some on speeches. My duties mainly consisted more of editing than writing because Mr. Johnson has this great

desire for conciseness in his speeches and brevity in his speeches, and I worked on those. Worked mainly with the Texas and Southwest press.

F: Had you kept up with him in those intervening years between '48 and '61?

B: Yes, whenever he'd come back to make a campaign in Texas, or a speech, if it was in the area if I could do it and the situation at the office was such, I'd assign myself to cover it. Then, too, along in that period I had met his younger sister when she'd moved to Fort Worth and I'd met his mother. And I'd become quite enamored with Mother Johnson, and whenever I would go to Austin on a story or some detail regarding the paper, why I always tried to--I was going to eat dinner in Austin I would call Mrs. Johnson and take her to the Driskill to dinner. Because I was--I had the feeling--I didn't know Mr. Johnson would ever become President but I thought he was going to continue to be a great man in the United States government and I wanted to learn as much as I could about him, and I thought she was the best source on him. And she was. She was such a gracious lady too that--well, you'd walk into the Driskill with her on your arm, and they had an old white-haired maitre d' in the dining room of the Driskill--

F: Youngblood?

B: I've forgotten what his name was. But I'm telling you, when he saw her coming, his head just swept the floor, that old white head went all the way to the floor, and selfishly, you always got a better meal when she was there. But Alice and I both just loved Mrs. Johnson.

F: Did she have an ordinary mother's pride or was she a little critical of him?

B: She was critical of him on occasions.

F: He had to measure up.

B: He had to measure up not only to her standards, but the standards she felt

Mr. Johnson, whom I never knew, would have set for him. When he did something she didn't feel was just exactly according to the standards she set for him, she said so. Then there was a certain amount of mother's pride in it too.

F: She didn't betray any of the sort of restlessness that characterizes him?

B: No, not at all. This younger sister, Lucia, is the female counterpart of Lyndon Johnson. She has got that same restlessness, and I notice the President likes to, and Lucia does too--pull strings and watch people react.

F: How long did you remain with the President?

B: Two years. I came on a two-year leave of absence and I found you spent a lot more time in his office than you ever did for a newspaper, even though I got frequent calls at home on the newspaper. I still didn't get calls at 2 o'clock in the morning when he couldn't sleep and he wanted to tell somebody about something, why sometimes you were the recipient of the call. And too, I'd get home late and Alice was new in Washington and hadn't met too many people, so she wanted either to go home or something--so in August of '63 I told him I was going to go back to the paper. She'd already expressed herself with Mr. Johnson.

F: Did he accept it with pretty good grace?

B: Yes, he said he'd like for me to stay in Washington, and if I had some other job in Washington, where I could be on call would I consider it? I told him I didn't know, it was according to what it would be, and shortly thereafter I got a call from down here wanting to know if I would consider coming down here to work.

F: Do you think he spoke to Mr. Udall?

B: I don't know that he spoke to him, or had someone, because Jim Faber who had this job before me and the Secretary didn't see eye-to-eye about

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what this job should be. So Stewart talked to me about coming into this job.

F: What should this job be?

B: Well, Jim had the idea of never counseling with the Secretary on things, actions that he was planning to take that he could readily see was going to cause trouble. That is, cause adverse criticism in the press, and then he'd kind of laugh about it. And say, "Well, you sure got your foot in your mouth yesterday," so the statue incident in Washington, incidentally, was one of them.

F: What was that incident?

B: Stewart said there were too damned many statues in Washington and he was going to get rid of them. Well, every backer of every statue in Washington descended on him. And then he had a habit carried over from his days as a Congressman, when he could comment outside of his field of endeavor, which would get him into other departments and created a little trouble with other departments, and Faber wasn't cautioning him about it or checking with him beforehand. This I'd learned to do with Mr. Johnson and George Reedy.

F: I was going to go back to that in a second. Did you take part in the 1960 boon for Mr. Johnson for President at all?

B: I covered for a group of Texas papers headed up by the Star-Telegram. A group of papers went together to pay my expenses and I filed with the Star-Telegram and they in turn would file copies of my stories with the other papers.

F: Did you go all the way out to Los Angeles?

B: Yes.

F: Can you describe the situation out there as you saw it from a newsman's

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stance? Was there any real belief that Mr. Johnson was likely to get the nomination?

B: For President?

F: For President, yes.

B: Yes. Of course the Texans were all hot and I'd say they were getting deep down in their belief that they could make it when the debate took place and they felt that the debate had boosted Mr. Johnson's chances considerably. However, checking around with the various Democratic sources that you had and with the people from the Texas delegation who were working other delegations trying to get them to be for Johnson rather than for Kennedy it was inescapable conclusion that Kennedy had the thing. And that night, I know Mr. Johnson stayed in his hotel room and had on his house slippers and a sports shirt, and they hadn't gotten very far down the list when he said he was going to bed. There were a few reporters in the room at that time and I was one of them, and then he went to bed. And the next morning, of course, the Texas delegation was released from its pledge. That night though, after he went to bed, I went on out to the convention and picked up from three different sources that he was going to be offered the Vice Presidency. One of them was Mr. Rayburn. Ed Jameson and I talked to Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Rayburn said that Lyndon was going to be offered it.

F: Where do you think Mr. Rayburn stood on this?

B: Well, since then, I was told by Mr. Johnson that Mr. Rayburn at first was against it and then the next morning was for it, after thinking it over, decided they couldn't win unless Johnson was on the ticket and so informed Mr. Johnson.

F: Do you think he in effect interceded for Mr. Johnson and with Mr. Kennedy?

B: No, I think he interceded for Mr. Kennedy with Mr. Johnson.

F: Then by the time it happened, you weren't surprised?

B: No. In fact I stuck pretty close. Sam Kinch and I were out there together and I couldn't convince Sam it wasn't time to go home. He went on out to the airport and got on an airplane about five o'clock and came back to Texas because he was on to the Republican convention. He did have that headache and there was only a couple of days intervening.

F: Did you personally witness any of the reactions of Mr. Johnson's nomination, say the Texas delegation or any of the Kennedy's?

B: Yes. Some of them were happy--the Texas delegation--and some of them were very bitter about it, as bitter as most of the Kennedy people were. In fact, I went to the Kennedy headquarters after that and the rank and file were bitter as hell. I didn't see Kenny O'Donnell or Ted Sorenson. Speaking of that, how times change, I watched Ted Sorenson sit for thirty minutes down here waiting to see Stewart Udall.

F: It does change. How come more animosity against the appointment of Mr. Johnson or the selection of Mr. Johnson didn't rub off on Kennedy himself? He seemed to escape it, just seemed to be a general frustration.

B: In the Texas delegation it was the resentment that of taking second place. In other words, they thought that he could come back and be Majority Leader. Well, talking to politicians out there, I was convinced that Mr. Kennedy could sway the picking of the Majority Leader on the Hill. He had enough support--Mr. Johnson might have been Majority Leader, I wouldn't say that he wouldn't be--but when the Senate caucused he'd have had a harder time getting it. And my personal reaction was that he wouldn't get it if Kennedy had been able to get the nomination away from him, he could probably try to get the Majority Leadership away from him.

F: Do you have any indication that this thought entered Mr. Johnson's mind?

B: I have no doubt that it did not. I've never talked to him about it, but I feel that as smart as I know him to be, and knowing how he always considered all angles of the things, that he thought of this.

F: Did you cover much of the '60 campaign?

B: I covered Johnson up to the time of the train trip, and then I had to go home and put out the first joint Star-Telegram and Times Herald edition. So I missed the train trip, then I picked up again in politics and went on through the nomination and we made the trip to Hyannis (I learned to pronounce that word up here) with Mr. Johnson and his crew of Texas writers when he made his first visit to Jack Kennedy after the team was picked. He had made his trip to Acapulco and back and Kennedy had gone on a short vacation, and then he went up to Hyannis to talk to Kennedy, but then covered the rest of the campaign.

F: Did you discern any indication that Mr. Johnson was more effective than Mr. Kennedy in holding the South in line?

B: I still think the Bruce Alger incident in Dallas and the fact that Senator Russell came down and joined Mr. Johnson the last two days of the campaign and the publicity that they received did more to bring the South--the ones that were still on the fence, how they were going to vote.

F: Did you see the Alger incident? Can you tell us about it?

B: I saw the crowd outside. The press bus pulled up and we got out, we'd stopped at Arlington [Texas] and Grand Prairie [Texas] coming over, then this crowd was out there and they were nasty when the press got out, and they just grew nastier as the--especially when Mr. and Mrs. Johnson started coming across from the Baker to the Adolphus and going through the lobby.

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F: Even though the press presumably doesn't care one way or another did they show some nastiness to the press?

B: They resented the hell out of the whole thing, and I think their stories--no matter how objective they were--reflected this. In fact that night I took a group, I felt guilty about it, I mean this was occurring in my state and in a town that I'd lived in as a kid and I felt ashamed. I took--Tony Lewis was covering for the New York Times and I've forgotten who else--but I took them to dinner that night at the Key Club at the Adolphus and, incidentally, I never did get that on my expense account either because they kept knocking it off, and I eventually had to pay for the whole damn dinner! But all of them there--I think I had about five or six eastern reporters, Frank Muto was the photographer for the Senate who was covering for Johnson, and that was all they could talk about, was the action of these people and what they had seen. And I know I'll never forget Mr. Marcus there in Dallas went on out from the Adolphus to the suburban shopping center rally and was on the platform with Mr. Johnson. In fact, Mr. Johnson asked him to go--I overheard this conversation and Mr. Marcus said, "Well, I'm just losing some more customers. Yes, I'll go along!" So that was the way that one went.

F: Did you see the Johnsons come through the crowd?

B: From the Baker to the Adolphus? Yes, I was sometimes two people away from them and sometimes ten, according to how they--the street was absolutely packed, it looked like Times Square on New Year's Eve.

F: They hadn't made any attempt to keep the street open?

B: If they had, it was a damned poor one. When we arrived there--I mean when the press bus first arrived, the people around--oh, another car's width from the--I mean two cars' width from the curb and there was just two lanes

of traffic, but by the time the Johnsons came from the Baker over to the Adolphus, it was nothing but people in the street. And all of them seemingly because of the gathering that they had there, all of them anti-Johnson people.

F: Were they muttering, shouting?

B: They were muttering, and audibly saying things, and it was one of the few times, and the only time publicly that I ever saw Mrs. Johnson lose her temper. She started to answer one woman and--one girl rather--most of them were young, Junior League types, and Mr. Johnson kind of put his hand over her mouth and stopped that and brought her right on along. Of course, he looked like I. B. Hale packing Davy O'Brien, he's so big. He was--he had her gathered that close. And the wire from Russell got there that evening, that provided more news copy, where he was going to join Johnson--

F: Do you know how that was initiated, whether it initiated with Russell--

B: I knew as a reporter that Senator Johnson had asked Senator Russell to join him and Russell had pleaded he couldn't and things rocked along--this was--he'd asked him to join him the last week or ten days of the campaign--and this had rocked along and been more or less forgotten. But when the story got out, immediately this wire came from Russell that he was going to join the last two days of the campaign and he was in Houston the next morning when we arrived in Houston.

F: That's pretty effective.

B: And it was my feeling at that time that the publicity that this whole incident got, got all the fence straddlers over on the Johnson side of the fence.

F: Were you with the election party--or I mean the nominee party on election

night that year?

B: Yes, at the Driskill.

F: What do you remember about that?

B: Well, there weren't any particularly vivid memories. Mr. Johnson and his immediate family gathered in one of the rooms up on the mezzanine to watch the TV, and of course, restless as he is, he was in and out of the room on a number of occasions, and much of the staff was down on the first floor where one of the dining rooms is now, and we were just trying to gather sidebar story, but there wasn't anything particularly significant in my sidebar story.

F: When you showed up that first time out at the ranch with Ayub Khan, was there any opportunity to talk to the President on that occasion or were you just one of a group of people--

B: Well, we were one of the visitors. Briefly, he reiterated his invitation to join his staff, and told me that I'd be working with George Reedy, if I did, and after the party out there George and I went back to his suite--the President's rooms there at the Driskill and discussed it at length and I got some of the salient facts like about what I would be making, and about what my duties would be as much as George could describe them. You know from your association with the President and your talks with staff members, if you happen to be the closest to him when he thinks of something, you're the man who's going to be doing it, so it's pretty hard to describe your duties. And then when I came up here--

F: One thing that anyone with a strict organizational mind is not going to get out of this except confusion is precisely who did what, because everybody has worked on everything.

B: Yes. You're a generalist and you're charged with certain specific things.

When I first came up here, I checked into the hotel and reported the next morning for work, and found out to my--I came up actually the last day of July, thinking Monday was the last day of July, and I thought, well, I'll get everything squared away and be ready to go to work on August 1. And I found out that July 31 doesn't exist on the Congress' calendar. You can't be sworn in, you're not paid for it or anything else. And 31st doesn't exist in a sense. So I just knocked around that day and acquainted myself with the Capitol and met a lot of people, and the next day I was sworn in and--

F: Where were you located physically?

B: Well, physically I was in the office in the New Senate Office Building for the first few weeks, and then some offices--Joe Duke was doing some changing of the office that George Reedy was in, which was in the Capitol under the terrace, the west side, and George had an office down there and I had the other adjoining office. It was a two-office deal with secretaries in between.

F: Where does the President tend to light?

B: He was mainly in the old Majority Leader's office, which was up on the next level above us on the other side of the building--well, two levels above us on the other side of the building. But as long as he had the telephone--

F: What were his relations, as far as you could tell, as a staff member, with Mr. Kennedy? Did they see much of each other or did they pretty much go their separate ways except when the necessity arose?

B: I think they saw each other several times a week. I wouldn't say it was every day but they saw each other several times a week. The Vice President would come by the White House before he would come to the Capitol, or after he opened the Senate he was to go back down for other things, and there

seemed to be a good relationship between the Vice President and President Kennedy.

F: Did the Vice President maintain any kind of office either at the White House or the EOB?

B: He had a suite in the Executive Office Building which is directly across from the west entrance to the White House. On the second floor, there are three or four offices there.

F: The same place that Vice President Humphrey is now.

B: I guess it's the same place--

F: But his principal place of doing business was back in the Capitol.

B: Yes, I would say that he was in his office--except for the Cuban crisis--he was in his office in the Capitol more than any other place, the old Majority Leader's office. And on occasion he would go to the New Senate Office Building; Walter was running that operation.

F: Did you get any evidence of the tension that might be building up between the Kennedy people and the Vice President?

B: The main source of any tension would have been with Bobby Kennedy; it was just "handle Bobby Kennedy with kid gloves" feeling that you got from Mr. Johnson. The relationship that I had--well, about the only people I had to deal with were [Malcolm] Kilduff or Andy Hatcher or Pierre Salinger and our relations were the best; however, George Reedy handled most of that.

F: There was no staff against staff.

B: No. Not in that respect. In fact, I know when I came over here Pierre called me, said "Great! I've been having trouble with Faber ever since he has been over there."

F: This was before the assassination?

B: Yes.

F: What have you done since November '63 in the way of helping the President?

B: Well, as you know, the President is very interested in conservation matters, and I've worked on some of the things I've suggested to the Secretary, and he has carried it out, or I mean he has either said "Yes" or "No" and anything else, but we work up the first draft of signing statements, suggestions for trips, and of course we never have really succeeded on a trip other than the one up to the Statue of Liberty, with the President. But with Mrs. Johnson, when I've had the same relationship with Liz [Carpenter], we've worked up all the trips, like down to the Big Bend and all the others, and there's always a park or two on her trips and I do the advance work on that portion of it, and on her statements and so forth.

F: On one of her trips, do you tend to lay out a suggested itinerary and then they improvise around it or do you work these things in collatoration--

B: Well, sometimes there are some commitments that Mrs. Johnson has that have to be worked into it. Sometimes we lay out an intinerary and then Simon and I or Marsha and I or Liz and I or somebody would go out and do the actual stops and figure out what things could go in and couldn't and what could be elaborated and what could be cut out. For instance the Big Bend trip--we did the advance on that. The advance on the trip to Sante Fe, Mrs. Johnson's trip up the Hudson recently on--and I just laid up in the hospital and cussed during this Redwood trip because I couldn't make it, couldn't participate in the advance on it. But I did work up the itinerary for it or part of the itinerary for it. She had this New Orleans commitments and we'd made suggestions. I'm sorry that her first stop wasn't--we wanted to stop down at the Carl Sandborg Farm first then go to the Everglades, then go to New Orleans, and we lost those first two stops.

F: Things just jammed up on you.

B: Because of time requirements and space requirements.

F: Now you have found her rather good at adhering to a schedule once it's agreed on.

B: Completely. Far better than the President.

F: Does she offer much in the way of suggestions herself as to where she might go?

B: Yes. She asked for--when you first submit your itinerary to her you want to provide plenty of backup material on each stop and why and what's to be seen there and what can be accomplished there and why we are stopping there. And with this in mind, she asks questions--like on the Big Bend trip, I took a bunch of slides from the Big Bend over and showed them on the wall in the Lincoln bedroom to her before--did the same thing before we went to Santa Fe--no, we used another bedroom that day.

F: Were you on the Snake River trip?

B: Yes.

F: Have you had any untoward incidents on any of these trips?

B: No, not with Mrs. Johnson. I never will forget once Mr. Johnson was touring the space installations on the West Coast as Vice President and I had a Time reporter with us who decided that he should have an exclusive interview with the Vice President, and I invited him down to the bar at the hotel we were staying at in Los Angeles to discuss it and in the meantime, knowing that the Vice President was planning to take all the staff to dinner at Chasen's and I was about--by the time I got the third or fourth double martini down this Time reporter and got him around to my way of thinking that it wasn't right for one reporter to have an exclusive interview when all these other reporters were along. I got up and I was

thirty or forty-five minutes late getting up there and Mr. Johnson looked at me and he said, "You know we were supposed to go to dinner at seven o'clock," and I said, "Yes, sir, but I've been about my Vice President's business," and he grinned and didn't say a word! So we went on out to dinner and oddly enough Nixon was in Chasen's! So he was just about getting ready to leave, so we circled the block--the Vice President's car circled the car--

F: How could you tell Mr. Nixon was there?

B: We had received information from the Secret Service man who had gone ahead.

F: Oh, I see.

B: But he told us what course he was on, so the staff went in, and Mr. Johnson tended to another little errand and by the time Nixon finished his dessert and had gone out, then Mr. Johnson came in. So we avoided a confrontation there between the two. The table oddly enough were in the distance from me to you.

F: About three feet.

B: Yes.

F: Did you play a role in the sloganeering in 1964?

B: In what?

F: In building the "LBJ and the USA" slogan in 1964?

B: Yes, I sent it over to Bill Moyers as "USA for LBJ." And it all started with word from Clif Carter that the President wanted an emblem with the White House as a background of the emblem. Well, I fiddled around with that for awhile and decided than an outline of the United States would be better, because frankly I couldn't make White House and LBJ rhyme!

But as it turned out it was finally decided on as "LBJ for the USA."

When I sent it over originally it was "USA for LBJ," which I still think was better. But any rate, in the wisdom of those at the White House who decide such things, it got turned around, but I did have the pleasure of seeing that outline map and also my suggestion of making one black and silver was carried out. A silly thought of mine that just black and white was good too in this particular time with his backing of civil rights legislation.

F: When the President has had some conservation bee in his bonnet, does he ever come straight to you or does he always work through Mr. Udall?

B: Well, he has come straight to me on a number of occasions, either himself or he'd have Jake or Larry Temple or Walter or Bill Moyers or Jack Valenti call. But whoever might be the man next to him right at the moment, or sometimes he has called himself, in fact, I've had calls--I know one startling call I got one night at home because he was having one of his first White House dinners and it was quite an affair, and we'd just been listening to the news report of it and getting ready for dinner ourselves at home when the phone rang and it was--this voice said, "Charlie," and I said, "Yes, sir," and he said, "This is Lyndon Johnson," and I said, "Yes, sir", and he said, "If I have a news conference tomorrow do you have anything worthwhile to report?" And I said, "Yes, sir," and told him what I had and what was over other, and he said, "Thank you" and I just always wondered whether he had his pants on or off, because I know he had to be changing clothes at that moment.

F: Do you know whether he used the material, did you check up?

B: He decided not to have the conference before he left to go to the ranch; he was leaving for the ranch the next day and the question was whether he should have a news conference here, but he did use the material down

at the ranch on Saturday or Sunday.

F: Did you play any role in the 1964 campaign?

B: Only in supplying information on what the department had done and you could always--I see something that could be capitalized on, why I'd send a memo to someone other there--right now it would be Larry Temple, for consideration if you think it worthwhile, pass it on to the President.

F: Do you think most of those get passed on?

B: I never know. Sometimes when I see some reference come out in a speech or something I figured either I might have thought of it or somebody over there might have thought of it or the President himself might have thought of it. Of course, his great interest in the LBJ Park and I think between his--whoever he has got working with him over there at the White House--mainly carried that out, that is on what Interior could do there at the park.

F: Have you run into any particular problems in trying to work with the Texas Parks and Wildlife people on this? Is there state and federal friction here?

B: Well, Will Odom I've known for a long time and he and I can talk to each other; we talk the same language. And if Will doesn't talk to me I get word from Larry or the President himself on something he's considering and could it be done or is it feasible and if it falls within the proper purview and disposition of the material.

F: Are there any other instances of the federal department of the Interior and the National Parks Service working with a strictly state park situation like this?

B: You mean some other state?

F: Yes. Or is this unique?

- B: Well, Arizona of course has got quite a few spokesmen in the Department and they sometimes check to see if something is feasible, like Camelback Mountain outside of Phoenix. I think it was Goldwater who first approached the Secretary on this, and I guess he'd still be called his A.A. [Administrative Assistant] was calling me on it and we were working back and forth on this Camelback Mountain thing. This is one that Mrs. Johnson dedicated on the trip out there. But it was Goldwater's--
- F: I've heard Secretary Udall say that the United States has two Secretaries of the Interior with Mrs. Johnson as First Lady, implying of course himself and Mrs. Johnson. Could this apply to the President, has he shown that much interest in Interior, or has he pretty well left that to Mrs. Johnson?
- B: Well, let me recite just what happened the other day which will show you the President's interest in it. We went over to the White House to brief the President on some possible new national monuments, which as you know are created by executive action. And Clark Clifford was in the room too, in the Cabinet Room, and after the briefing by the Secretary showing the areas in Alaska, Utah and Arizona that could be created as national monuments, why the President asked Clark Clifford for his feeling on it. In fact one of them was being proposed as a wildlife refuge and it is now being used as a gunnery range. And the President asked Clark about this and Clark used this as a launching pad--he expressed himself on that and then he also said that recently the Secretary of the Air Force had been seen about a proposal that had come to them from the White House on the making of Matagorda Island a possible national seashore, and he couldn't understand why Interior couldn't take things up with the Air Force, why they had to have the White House intercede for them. I'm boiling down Clark's very

erudite remarks. And so when he got all through, the President looked at him and said, "Clark, I think you'll find when you check back that it wasn't the Interior that instigated that inquiry with the Air Force, it was me." I've never seen Clark Clifford nonplussed before but he was!

F: Do you think the President has favored Texas in--well, I'm thinking of Big Bend, I'm thinking of Padre, and you've got the Big Thicket coming in, possibly you've got other lesser areas, or is this pretty much out of the President's hands?

B: No, not at all. I was in on Big Bend from the standpoint that my publisher Amon Carter was the instigator of that, and he had every member of the Texas delegation working on that damned thing! It was far away from then-Representative Johnson's district, and I don't think--I think he knew it was going on, but I don't think he was really active in it. Then Padre Island, yes, he was active in that, but Guadalupe, well, you've been in the area of the informed on that one and you know that he is interested in it but it had to be proven up as a possible park before the President would go with it. He has evidenced the same interest in parks in other areas but his particular interest has been and his inquiries have been aimed at trying to get the parks near the centers of population where people could go. And I know he has asked the Secretary repeatedly and was probably--I know the idea existed in Secretary Udall's mind--but it probably came to fruition more about building parks, smaller parks and promoting smaller parks, in the towns.

F: Between him and Kennedy, you've had a complete change in the philosophy that parks are primarily a western development.

B: Well, prior to President Kennedy all the parks had been made out of public lands, either transfer of public lands or forests or something of that

sort. The first time any money was appropriated by Congress for a park was when Cape Cod came into being and Padre Island; that's the first time the Congress had laid out a dollar for a park, and this was the push to the East Coast. Then we got Assatiague and Fire Island, Delaware Water Gap and these are, I think, the great things that have been done in conservation and actually the Congress has seen the wisdom of investing the money and getting this stuff going.

F: Has the President, as far as you know, shown any interest in possible reorganization of some of the functions of the Department? I know that Secretary Udall has some interest. Dropping some functions and picking up others.

B: Well, he was interested in and was--I don't know how active he was in it--but he didn't throw any road blocks as far as I know into the adding of the water pollution program, and transferred it to Interior from HEW, when the Secretary started talking about that. I remember the first time the first budget the President worked on, he had Udall and Freeman down at the ranch and the forest service portion of the budget all goes up to Congress with Interior so when the discussion turned to forest service and its monetary needs, Secretary Udall said the President looked over at Orville [Freeman] and said, "Oh, yes, that's that bureau over there that you've got that really belongs in Stewart's [Udall] Department." And he said Freeman was slightly taken back for a few minutes, but he recovered. But the President is very aware of what other Presidents have done in the field of conservation and what has been done and what still needs to be done and frequently comes up with information that you didn't know he had or wouldn't be aware of.

F: You don't think his failure to visit any natural areas has anything to do

with his lack of interest.

B: No. I think--in fact this is one of the things I expect to see him doing after he retires from the President, is visiting a lot of these areas. He expressed himself to that idea the other day when the Secretary was briefing him on these possible national monuments, which I hope will come about Thursday.

F: Has he ever talked to you about depletion allowance?

B: No.

F: Or import quotas?

B: Never once.

F: Can you think of anything else we should discuss?

B: No.

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By Charles Boatner

to the

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