INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 6, 1968

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE BROWN

INTERVIEWER: PAUL BOLTON

PLACE: Concan Ranch, Uvalde County, the ranch home of Mr. Brown

Tape 1 of 2

PB: First of all, Mr. Brown, we like to ask the person who is being interviewed to tell a few of the facts about himself.

GB: Well, I first came to be in the construction business in 1922 when I returned from Montana where I was working for Anaconda Copper, and went to work with my brother, Herman, and Dan Root.

PB: They comprised the firm of Brown and Root?

GB: That is correct.

PB: But before that, though--you are a native of Temple, I believe, Bell County?

GB: I'm a native son of Texas. My mother was born in Texas and my grandfather came here during 1836.

PB: And you were born in Bell County?

GB: And I was born in Bell County.

PB: You went to Rice Institute, did you not?

GB: Yes.

PB: And what was your degree down there?

GB: I didn't get a degree there. I took pre-med there and went into the Marine Corps in World War I, decided I did not want to be a doctor and came out and went to Colorado School of Mines to become a mining engineer.

PB: Oh, I see, and that's what got you up at Anaconda?

GB: That's right.

PB: And then from Anaconda you came back to Texas and joined the firm of Brown and Root?

GB: That's right.

PB: I've heard tell that the firm of Brown and Root started away back there with a team of mules and a road grader. Is that a good story or is that just a good story?

GB: No, Herman, when he got out of school at the University, went to work for a small teaming contractor who was not successful in his operation and became so involved with debts that he had to give Herman these mules and the scrapers to pay him for his wages. And he, being ambitious, went to Temple and bought some new mules, younger mules, and better equipment on credit from a friend of his named Thompson. Then he began to get into all sorts of, varieties of dirt work. Levees on rivers, railroad dumps, and in those days, very few highways.

PB: You joined the firm--first of all, the name of the firm Brown and Root was based upon Herman's partnership with . . . what was the gentleman's name?

GB: Dan E. Root.

PB: Dan E. Root. And they've kept the name. Why have you kept the name down through the years after Mr. Root died? Mr. Root died when?

GB: In 1928.

PB: Yes.

GB: They had good will in the name and we saw no reason to change it.

PB: Now, as you recall, when was the first contact with this young man in Austin who was destined to become President, Mr. Lyndon Johnson? When

was the first contact between any member of your firm and Mr. Johnson?

GB: Well, when he was placed in charge of the NYA for Texas, he came to Herman for help and advice on people he could get, business people and people in public life to help him arrange to locate these camps--NYA camps all over Texas.

PB: Yes.

GB: And that was the first contact.

PB: Herman had a wide acquaintance over Texas. Brown and Root was a very well established construction firm at that time.

GB: That is correct.

PB: Now, Mr. Johnson was first elected to public office in 1937. Do you recall, did you know Mr. Johnson yourself at that time?

GB: Only through Herman. I had not met him at that time.

PB: Did Herman support Mr. Johnson in that early race?

GB: As I recall he was for Avery.

PB: C. A. Avery, an Austin man. Now at that time Brown and Root was engaged in construction work in the Austin area, was it not?

GB: That's right.

PB: What were they doing?

GB: Well, the biggest project we had, we got in 1936. It was the Marshall Ford Dam. We had a joint venture. A. J. Mackenzie up in San Antonio had one-third and Brown and Root two-thirds.

PB: And that was a dam being constructed by the Lower Colorado River Authority.

GB: No, I think it was being constructed by the Department of Interior through the Reclamation Department.

PB: Yes. Had the LCRA been formed at that time, or do you know?

GB: Yes, I think so.

PB: And after Mr. Johnson was elected to Congress, I understand that there were some difficulties about the funds to complete this dam by the Reclamation Department, and that was your first contact with Mr. Johnson?

GB: Well, yes, I don't know whether I'd call it difficulty but it certainly was the concept of the Reclamation Department to own a dam in Texas, and we had bid and were low bidder on the first phase of this dam.

PB: Yes.

GB: And if the dam was going to be completed, it had to have another appropriation. And in 1938 I suppose it must have been, I went to Washington to talk to Mr. Johnson and see if I could be helpful in any way to get this appropriation booster, which I knew he, by the nature of being in his district, would be for.

But as I said before, Texas went into the Union with the United States not owning any land in Texas. So there was a hiatus in the concept of the Reclamation Department or Interior Department doing work in states where they had no public land. And that was the thing that Mr. Johnson had to face and get help with among his friends in Washington, Congress, and Mr. Ickes, who was secretary of the interior, to continue this dam.

PB: Mr. Alvin Wirtz, I think, had a great interest in this dam. Was he in the Department of Interior at that time?

GB: I can't recall, but I know that he was the father of the idea of having them build the first dam down where his home was in Seguin. He had built the first dam for a utility company. As you know, Insull had all the dams above there, the Buchanan Dam and the concept of

harnessing the Colorado River for power. And when he went into bankruptcy, or his firm did, in the early thirties, this all had to be then reconstructed and reformed into the Lower Colorado River Authority. And as I remember, Wirtz was the father of putting that together.

PB: How well did you know Mr. Wirtz?

GB: Well, I knew him very well.

PB: Tell us what kind of a man he was.

GB: Well, he was a man of great integrity; he was a man that was a practical politician; he had been state senator; and he had a host of friends because he made friends. The type of man that he was, anybody that knew Wirtz believed in him.

PB: He was a rather slow moving man. Do you recall anything about his personal characteristics?

GB: Oh, yes, just as you say. He was very deliberate in everything he did, even to walking or talking, but it gave people confidence in him because he was slow in reaching any decision. He didn't shoot from the hip, so to speak.

PB: How familiar are you or do you know about the early associations of Mr. Wirtz and Mr. Johnson?

GB: Well, I think Mr. Wirtz knew Mr. Johnson's father. And he knew Lyndon by knowing his father, and when Lyndon came into Texas in NYA, why, he went to him same as he did the other friends of his father's. And they became fast friends. And that was the beginning of it as I remember it.

PB: Well, Senator Wirtz was his adviser for a good many years, as we know.

GB: His whole life, as long as Wirtz lived; he was his advisor until he died.

PB: We were talking about your visit to Washington and Congressman Johnson's problems about getting sufficient appropriations to complete the Marshall Ford or the Mansfield Dam. I understand that Congressman Maury Maverick also was interested in that dam, and perhaps some other congressmen were, too. Do you know about their interest?

GB: Well, I only know that Maury was interested. I am sure others in Texas, all of them, were interested because it was something new for Texas and the biggest job that had ever been performed in Texas at that time. And it was. Very few dams that had gone before were as big as this dam was going to be. The Boulder Dam, of course, was the papa of all the dams and the first one that was built with that concept, of harnessing the rivers.

PB: By the way, was that the first dam that Brown and Root built?

GB: First large dam. Yes, it was quite a step out for us.

PB: The Tennessee Valley Authority had been established at that time.

GB: That's right.

PB: And it was built somewhat on the order of the Tennessee Valley.

GB: That's correct.

PB: In any event, you did get the appropriations from the Congress to complete the Mansfield Dam. When I say you, I mean the money was appropriated and through Mr. Johnson's help.

Now, Mr. Brown, what was your relation with Mr. Johnson? How did you become such close personal friends as you were over the years?

GB: In my time in Washington, a lot of visiting at his home and at his office, but mainly at his home where we became close due to our philosophy of life.

We naturally would talk about the questions of the day as you do, and it became very apparent to me that Lyndon Johnson had the makings of a real public servant and good government. But the friendship was really formed by the fact that I had a lot of young ideas, useful ideas, about the education and how we were going to make this country a great country, and the assets that we had and what we had to develop. Many of my ideas of education were very close to Lyndon's ideas and we became very compatible in our thinking. So from that we discussed other philosophies of government and the burning questions of free-enterprise and socialist form of government, autocratic form of government versus the democratic form of governments. We spent many hours discussing the pros and cons of each one of these questions. We had a complete meeting of the minds and became very close because of that, and my living in Houston made it a little bit different type of a friendship than what he would have with Herman who lives in Austin with his constituents.

PB: In other words, Herman was one of the voters in his District in Austin.

GB: Yes.

PB: And you are saying your friendship was more on a personal basis that on a voter?

GB: Almost entirely on a personal basis because, as I said, we saw eye to eye on almost all the philosophies of a democratic form of government and what it should be like and what it should do for the peoples--the masses as well as upgrading the people and at the same time keeping it a government on a basis that the best government was the least government.

Naturally, this thing in the last, oh, twenty or thirty years hasn't borne out some of the things that I thought would come to pass, but in general we had a meeting of the minds and became friends.

PB: Let me ask you a rather abrupt question: of course, the friendship with Mr. Johnson goes back to his early campaign days, and I assume that it is true that Brown and Root or the Brown Brothers, Herman and George, contributed to Johnson's campaign.

GB: Of course, we did.

PB: Did you consider that it was a profitable contribution? Did you profit from that support of Mr. Johnson materially? What I'm trying to say is what was the purpose behind all this?

GB: Well, I think that Herman and I both, and Margaret and Alice, had a philosophy that we felt was very important--to have good government to keep from having a socialist form of government, and if we didn't have good government, why, we would go into a socialist form of government. That was the real reason that we decided to support Lyndon Johnson in anything he did. As a matter of fact, in a material way there was no way for him to help us because we had to be low bidder on everything that we got from the government. So the only thing he could do at all would be to give us information that might become available to him as to what appropriations they were thinking about and what appropriation they might make. But, as far as him helping us in a material way, there was no way for him to help us.

In the Gulf of Mexico we build platforms in deep water and do other marine work that was kin to this, and we had engineers and personnel that probably knew as much as about the ocean at that time as any one firm.

PB: During the war, the Second World War, that is, your firm set up a new firm to build ships, did it not?

GB: That is correct.

PB: And what was the record of the firm?

GB: Well, the first contract we took was to build four pursuit crafts that another contractor in Houston had failed, after having the contract for a year, to perform any services. The Bureau of Ships, through the advice of Albert Thomas, asked me to come and talk to them, taking over this company.

We talked to them and although we had never built a ship, we did know how to organize people, and we did have some good electrical engineers, and electrical mechanics and craftsmen from the Marshall Ford [Dam] days, and we agreed to take them on it. We took this on a lump sum price which this other contractor had bidden and gotten. We had no idea whether that price was high enough to make a profit or not, but the best we could figure, we could at least break even. We took this contract from this contractor, and the Navy got him to sign it to us, and we went out and bought the land and built the ways and built the slips and were building the ships. This is in early '41. And when Pearl Harbor came in December 1941, the Bureau of Ships called back and wanted to know, back up there, if we could build destroyer escorts and larger ships than this small pursuit craft which I think was 162 feet. So we told them we could. We had the land and had the facilities. Then we got into a large program, probably ran into something in the neighborhood of a billion dollars. Before we were through we built 354 combat ships from that period until the war was over.

PB: And you were awarded the . . .

GB: Well, we were awarded the E for each year for 1943, 1944. There was one time we launched eight ships in one day and we had Speaker Rayburn and Secretary Knox and all the other people there to watch us perform this feat of launching eight in one day, in one afternoon.

PB: Now that E stands for what?

GB: Excellence!

PB: E for Excellence. Okay, now, we were talking earlier and you told me something of a very close relationship that sprang up in 1940 at a resort where you were recovering from ulcers. Tell us something about that episode.

GB: Well, I was up there. I'd had hemorrhages and was pretty weak and thought I ought to go somewhere and just get in the sun and walk and take it easy. Then I went to White Sulphur Springs which was close to Washington and close to Charlie Marsh who was a friend of mine and who lived in Virginia. And that was the time that--

PB: Well, just there, you referred to Mr. Charlie Marsh. Who was Charlie Marsh?

GB: Well, he was a publisher, had a chain of newspapers; he owned The Austin Statesman and numerous other papers in Texas and through the South; he was a genius in his way. He was a man of a lot of vision, a man of strong personal opinions, a man who was rather difficult to know because of his strong opinions. He was a well versed person and a philosopher and a close friend of our brother Herman who lived only a block from him.

PB: In Austin?

GB: In Austin.

PB: And while you were at White Sulphur Springs, he came down to visit you and brought Johnson with him?

GB: I don't know whether he brought him up or Johnson came.

PB: Yes.

GB: They both came to see me and to talk about my health and the things of the day. At that time, you know, it was the late forties and France had

fallen and the war was going against all the people that were fighting Hitler. And so there was a great discussion.

PB: Things were almost as troubled then as they are right now.

GB: Yes, yes. Not much difference. Only different contexts.

PB: Right there, let me ask you, Mr. Johnson was elected to Congress as a Roosevelt supporter back in 1937. Were you a Roosevelt man?

GB: Yes, I was.

PB: Always voted for him?

GB: That's right.

PB: Somewhat unusual. At least it is my recollection that the conservative business community was not a great supporter of the President.

GB: Well, I think that was true after his first election. I think everybody voted for him the first time. Some of the business segments got disenchanted because they thought he was going too far in social reforms, but my brother and I felt the social reforms were way behind what they ought to have been. And that's one of the things that kept us so close to Johnson--that we had the same idea about social reform.

PB: But in that period were there any disagreements between you and your brother and Johnson? You and your brother on one hand and Johnson on the other?

GB: Well, most of the time I was on Johnson's side. We had a lot of disagreements, but a lot of times I'd argue on his side. But, naturally, when you are going through a period that was as rough as that period of the thirties was, there are bound to be disagreements because the question was not what to do but how to do it.

PB: Yes.

GB: And the method, the mechanics of doing it. We had, of course, great

discussions along many of those things.

PB: Well, now, here at this meeting at White Sulphur Springs between you and Mr. Marsh and Mr. Johnson, you discussed among other things Johnson's future in politics. Can you tell us something about the directions that discussion took?

GB: Well, Charlie Marsh would needle Johnson about why he didn't do this and why he didn't do that and every time Johnson would say, well, he didn't have the money. "Well," he said, "I want to give you my half of the oil properties that I own with Sid Richardson and you will have the money and you won't be responsible to any special interest and you can do these things." And Johnson looked at him a long time and said, "I don't think that would work." And then he said, "Well, then resign and take the properties. They are great properties." He said, "Well, I want to stay in public life--don't want to resign."

As you know, the property developed to be worth over $200 million, and if Johnson had accepted Marsh's offer to give it to him, he'd be worth $100 million today.

PB: Out of that conversation, what do you think prompted Marsh in making that offer? It was a bona fide offer, was it not?

GB: Oh, absolutely. He was begging Johnson to go ahead and take it and for me to help him in any way I could to come for the business judgment he might need. Being a partner of Sid, Johnson knew Sid, and of course, was a friend of Sid Richardson's and so was Marsh. But Marsh had a great conflict of personality with Sid Richardson. Sid and Marsh were almost as much of a conflict as could be between an Ivy tower professor

and a ranchman. They didn't see eye to eye on a lot of things. Marsh had a lot of money and was making a lot of money in his newspapers, and he had done this for Sid, financed Sid when he needed it back in the early days of the Depression. He wasn't interested in oil, he was interested in newspapers. And he later sold his half interest back to Sid because he wasn't interested in oil, he was interested in newspapers.

Of course, he had a big heart, and he wanted to help Johnson become independent where he would not have to worry about somebody that he didn't want to be under obligation to or feel like he was under obligation to giving him some money. Marsh wanted to give him a hand because he had the same idea about Johnson that I had. He knew that he was a dynamo of industry, he loved to work and he did work long hours and hard, and he had a good mind and had everything it took to make a good public servant. And, as you know, there are not too many of them in public office today that have the same qualifications that Johnson had.

PB: Marsh's idea was that the good public servant ought to be free of financial worries.

GB: That's right.

PB: Subsequently, I understand that you had some part in helping Johnson achieve that status by the ownership of KTBC in Austin.

GB: Yes, I did. In the middle forties, I've forgotten, I think 1943, Johnson came to me and said, "Now, you know the West boys." I'd like to tell you who the West boys are. Jim West and Wesley West were sons of Jim West, Sr.

PB: Jim West, Sr. was an oil . . .

GB: He was originally a lumberman and he backed Roy Cullen in the oil business and got in the oil business indirectly and made a lot of money. He had a lot of money before he got in the oil business.

He had the idea that we were going to become a socialist form of government. So he went to Austin and established a newspaper to be in competition with Charlie Marsh who he thought was too far to the left. Later he became in control of this radio station. Then he died and when he did, well, the boys were losing money every month on this radio station, and they decided to close it up. They thought Johnson might be too far to the left and had horns on him. And he was afraid to talk to them, he was afraid they would brush him off. I said, "No, I don't think that's right. I think that I can get Jim and Wesley to let you buy this thing yourself and not me. In other words, I think it is a case of "speaking for yourself, John."

So I arranged the meeting. We had an apartment in 8-F in the Lamar Hotel and I got an apartment right across the hall and got the two West boys up there and was talking to them. I then got Johnson to come in from 8-F and meet them. I stayed a few minutes and left. By the time Johnson got out of that room which was some four hours later, he had convinced them of his assets and his philosophy of life and what he was trying to do, and they really became supporters in place of adversaries.

He bought the radio station for a nominal amount of money, I don't remember now, but it was something that he and Bird could get together and pay for it. And, as you know, the history of that, he put it to where, by living there and working at it, he made it make money where it probably wasn't making any. And when TV came in after

the war, well, he went into that. Naturally eventually most of these radio stations got TV and he got TV same as the rest of them, and it gave him the independent income where he could be independent and where he didn't have to depend on any special interest. It made him capable of being felt in Washington without having a fear of having to live on and get money from people that he didn't want to take it from.

PB: Mr. Brown, I know that your long friendship with Mr. Johnson has resulted in some influence upon his thinking, or perhaps you all thought alike. You told us earlier that you had been a supporter of Mr. Roosevelt during his regime which was somewhat unusual for a conservative business man. Give us some of your thoughts on the nation's social problems and how you thought they should be met.

GB: Well, that goes with your background or your childhood, I think. You grow up with these ideas or you don't grow up with them. I grew up with the idea that we must have better and more education in our country than we had when I was a boy. And I had this concept of endowing every child, black or white, with enough resources from either the state government or the federal government to enable him to take whatever education he was capable of taking. If he was not capable of going past the high school, well, that was his lot in life, but if he was capable of going past the high school into college, then he'd be financed in some way to enable him to do it. I think that that's the concept that we had, and I think that the reason we are leading the world today in every type of mechanical, electronic and other new age we've come into is because we did have a better educational system even if it wasn't up to what I thought it ought to be. We're so far ahead of all the rest of the world today

they'll never catch us no matter what they do. Russia or anybody else will never catch us because we're educating more masses of people today than any other nation, including the Russians. And if we just keep hammering on this one thing, I feel that we will keep ahead and will have the economy and the social benefits that will accrue to every man, woman and child.

PB: Speaking in specifics, we had, during the Roosevelt regime, such innovations as the National Youth Administration, and the Rural Electrification Administration, and Social Security, and, well, the regulations of the stock exchange, some of which were at the time radical ideas, so called radical ideas. You grew up while those issues were developing. Did you have an opinion on them at the time? I mean, you were maturing while those ideas were maturing. What was your idea about some of those social reforms that the President was making?

GB: Well, I felt very strongly that they had a lot of pluses and especially the N.Y.A. which pointed up the things even in 1930 that we've got today more intensified. Had we followed through with those up through the last thirty years, I think we would not be in the place we are today, having to have crises and having to have crash programs and all that to try to catch up with the segment of people who are in a position where they are completely frustrated in every way. I think the REA undoubtedly kept our farmers to where they could and did out-produce the world in agriculture. I think that the SEC, of course, was the forerunner of getting rid of the barons of the 1890s and 1910s who would run over anybody who got in their way if they had the money power. And it would bring on and did bring on a condition that had to be corrected, and I think the first to admit that today are the business people who

are in Wall Street or have the responsibility of making a living out of large corporations. We couldn't go on like we were going the last part of the nineteenth century.

PB: It seems to me that the criticism that I have heard most against the philosophy of what you may call the Roosevelt philosophy or whatever you call it has been that it concentrated too much power in Washington. As a businessman, did you subscribe to that idea of concentration of power?

GB: Well, naturally, I was afraid of it, I think everybody's been afraid of it, for fear it would get out of hand in a way that we couldn't have enough control at the grass roots to keep it in hand. That's one of the things we used to talk about with Johnson, and state's rights and how we're going to keep state's rights. A specific thing he wanted to do was to help the LCRA come into being, and, too, if we didn't do it, then it would be like Tennessee Valley: the federal government would come in and do it. He got it done by the local government and it is now controlled by the people of Texas and not by people in Washington. The leadership that we've had in different state governments has sometimes been good and sometimes not so good. The philosophy of central government and central control has almost been accepted, I think, by most of the people. I still think it has got a lot of hazards and a lot of pitfalls and things can happen. How we can control that, as you know, is one of the big questions of the day.

PB: How we can control central government?

GB: Central government.

PB: Yes. In the present situation, I may say a sociological situation, the big emphasis right now seems to be upon the problems of our cities.

Have you ever talked to Johnson about any of these problems?

GB: Yes, always. Through his efforts I think, I've been appointed on the Advisory Council to the Poverty Program, I've been on the Advisory Council to the Defense Department and the State Department, Business Advisory Councils, that is. I have been representing the business segment of each, in some cases twelve, fifteen, in some cases twenty-five committees of businessmen that he has appointed to be on the advisory councils of these agencies trying to get a balanced thinking on how we can have these programs and not become completely bureaucratic in the approach. The bureaucratic approach has always got its pitfalls because a bureaucrat is the same as a businessman. If he gets too much power he gets drunk. It's the same as a labor leader. If he gets too much power, he gets drunk with power, and that's the thing we've got to guard against and the thing that is hard to guard against. But I think we're making progress, and I think that a big thing that we've had the last few years is just that thing of trying to be sure that the bureaucrats didn't get so that they would pay no attention to the grass roots rights people--the people that paid the money and paid the taxes.

PB: How would you classify Johnson? From the standpoint of his political views or sometimes when he was a young man supporting Roosevelt, why, some people considered him too radical, some of the far left have condemned him as being too conservative, like the ADA, I think, has condemned him. How would you classify him?

GB: Well, I think his record shows better than I can classify him, I think his record proves. . .

PB: Can you cite some of the record, then?

GB: Well, he has the concept of free enterprise which I think is so essential

if we are to keep the democratic form of government and progress as we have for the past two hundred years. We have become such a great population that naturally your government has had to become more and more a partner of business, and the business people don't realize what a great partnership they are. But you know they take half the profits, and all your foreign commerce is dictated by the policy of our State Department, so it's a . . . Johnson has tried to keep it in that course and I think that his record proves that he tried to keep it in that course.

PB: You had a great influence in introducing Johnson, I think, to a number of businessmen in Texas particularly in the Houston area, is that right?

GB: Well, I think that's correct. I got to know him better than the average businessman and I had business friends who wanted to know what in the world I saw in a fellow like Johnson. I said, "Well, if I can just get you to meet him and talk to him a while I think you will see the same thing in him that I saw in him." And we arranged some kind of a place to either go shooting or to go on trips or to come to Houston just on a social night at my house or to get them acquainted with him and to get them to get the feel of him, of what made him tick. I think once you see what makes him tick and know him well enough to know what makes him tick, you couldn't help but be in favor of having him in public office as a public servant.

PB: We're going to miss him.

GB: I think that is correct.

PB: Mr. Brown, you have spoken about your ideas about education. Have you done anything to try to put those ideas into action?

GB: Yes, I have in my own way, the best way I knew how. Before Herman's death back in '62, we decided then that I surely didn't need a lot of money and it might do him more harm than good, and that we should put this into a foundation what we had made out of Brown and Root and Brown and Root itself which was our life work, into a foundation, which we did. And after he died, he left his part of the other estate that he had, other interests, to the Foundation, and that Foundation today is giving away between three and four million dollars a year of which practically all of it is going to some form of aid in education and excellence in education.

PB: That is the interest from the Foundation?

GB: Foundation.

PB: And the Foundation will continue, the capital will continue, from here on out, I assume.

GB: Well, that remains to be seen. As you know, there's a great philosophy going around now that every foundation ought to be done away with after twenty years of being a foundation. They ought to give away their total assets. That has some merit. My wife and I, being the only two living ones that made the contribution to this Foundation, have to cross that bridge. But at the time, we are giving away every dollar that we can make to education. We may give the whole capital away before we part from this world, but we feel very strongly that what material success Herman and I have had should be plowed back into building this country up. And to build the country up you've got to build education. You've got to educate them. That's the biggest asset we've got. And if we could do two things, both long range programs, both no short results, is

birth control where it needs to be controlled and where the people want to control it, and to educate those who are born with the potential to make a contribution to their fellow man and to their country.

PB: Mr. Brown, this may not be chronological, but I do know that you were among those present, or Mr. Johnson was your guest at the time he had his heart attack back in the middle fifties. Can you tell us something about that occurrence?

GB: Yes. I had invited some of my friends down for the weekend.

PB: Where was that now?

GB: Middleburg, Virginia. We had a farm there. Herman and I bought a farm there back in the fifties before we had jet airplanes. We'd get caught in New York or Washington on the weekend and have to be there on Monday, so we thought we ought to have someplace to go without having to fly all the way, ten hours back to Texas and ten hours back. We had a dairy farm there.

And on this particular weekend, I invited Clint Anderson and his wife, and--

PB: That's Senator Anderson?

GB: Senator Anderson of New Mexico, Frank Oltorf, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson--Mrs. Johnson couldn't come because of some conflict with the children and she had to do something with them--and another couple, I can't recall who it was. Finally I think it was about seven or eight people, and we were awaiting lunch. Mr. Johnson was supposed to be there at eleven-thirty or twelve. The rest of them had gotten there and were up playing cards or doing something. Johnson finally got in about twelve and he came down to the first floor. He came in and I said, "What in the world kept you so long?" Whatever bill it was,

a very controversial bill up at the moment, and he said, "I had to meet with reporters and I like to never got away." He said, "I've got indigestion." He said, "I wish you'd get me some indigestion medicine." So I got him some Amphojel that I had, and he said that didn't do any good, so he said, "Get me some soda," and I gave him some soda. And then he said, "Give me a drink. Maybe that will help." So I gave him a good strong drink and that did relieve it a little bit but the pain came right back. I said, "You lie down here on the sofa."

I called Clint Anderson down from upstairs--Clint had had a heart attack before--and he said, "I think he's got a heart attack." So I called the local doctor, and he came right over and he said it was a heart attack. They didn't have any ambulances in Middleburg. They did have a hearse and he said they'd get them to put him in that and take him to the hospital. So having all these guests, I asked Frank Oltorf if he would ride with the doctor.

PB: Who was Frank Oltorf?

GB: He was a man who was representing us in Washington at that time. He was a legislator right after he got out of school. He is now what you'd call a gentleman farmer, lives in Marlin, Texas.

PB: Yes.

GB: So, they took him to the hospital. I called Bird and told her to meet him over at the Navy Bethesda Hospital and, of course, she got there just in time. He hadn't been there long, within two hours he went into a state of shock, but he was there where they could have oxygen on him. Really, I think, it was a very close call. But with the strong physique that he had, he was able to really get probably a better

heart than he had before, from what the doctors say. And, of course, you know the history since then. He's shown no evidence of this heart attack. But it was a very close call.

PB: Did he actually pass out before he left your place?

GB: No, no, he was conscious all the time.

PB: I understand they had quite an exciting ride in that hearse.

GB: Yes, yes, they did, you'll have to get Frank Oltorf to tell you that story. He was there and he can tell it better than I can.

PB: Mr. Brown, before we conclude this talk, I need all the information you can give us concerning the man who had a great deal of influence on Mr. Johnson, who was almost a second father to him, and whom you knew so well, and that's Senator Wirtz. Is there anything else that you can recall about Senator Wirtz's relationship with Mr. Johnson? Perhaps your own relationship with Senator Wirtz.

GB: Well, A. J. Wirtz, I believe, as you say, had as much influence on Lyndon Johnson's concept of what he should do as a public servant and what his obligations were as any man he came in contact with in his early political life. Wirtz and Herman, when Wirtz was in the state senate, were friends, and I became friends, through Herman, of Alvin at that time. It grew and when Johnson came into the picture as a congressman, he took Johnson under his wing, and we spent many hours in different places where we went for recreation, the three of us, talking about the problems of the day and developing this idea. We had a very kindred feeling for one another and at that time Lyndon said,

"I want to make a pledge here with you and Alvin that the three of us won't let anybody come between us in any way, shape, or form, and that we will keep this friendship alive by respecting one another's opinions. I respect your opinion of what business judgment I should use in my career as a public servant, and Alvin, in turn, I respect your opinion on the legal part of it and the obligations that I have, and you in turn, both of you, respect my opinion as to what I do and why I do it. And that way we will not let any of our friends or enemies come between us as long as we are alive." And we kept that contract.

PB: Thank you, Mr. George Brown.

Tape 2 of 2

PB: Mr. Brown, I would like for you to expand, if you will, and give some more details about the relationship between Mr. Johnson and your brother, Herman.

GB: Herman considered Mr. Johnson like he would a younger brother. He felt like he was more or less one of the family, and he treated him very much like he did me, his younger brother. He naturally felt like he was older and had more knowledge of the facts of life and human nature than we did. We had a lot of fun and a lot of ribbing at times about how young and out-of-the blue ideas that both Lyndon and I had about different things that came up from time to time. He really loved Lyndon and Lyndon loved him. Herman was a person who had great affection for people. He always loved people that he was interested in and who he thought were helping themselves and he was a great person to try to help people who helped themselves.

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PB: Well, now, Mr. Brown, for instance, as an example, your company acquired the Big Inch and Little Inch Pipelines after the federal government declared them surplus. Did Congressman Johnson help you in that venture?

GB: No, there was no way he could help me. As a matter of fact, it wasn't our company, it was a group of people that asked us, Herman and I, to finance what we call front money to bid on a job as big as this project was. And with this group of people that we worked with, we did a lot of research on it and we had the background of the pipeline, gas pipeline, and the ambition to be in the gas business. So we put in a bid and we got it by a big majority. We were $13 million higher than the nearest one to us. We bid $143 million and I think it was about what it cost the government back during the war days. And this was surplus that they sold at no loss. We later made the Texas Eastern Transmission Company the owner of these two pipelines and converted them into gas. It had been oil and products. The Little Inch had been products and the Big Inch had been fuel oil of crude oil.

PB: How did the company feel about leaving $13 million on the table there?

GB: Well, naturally, we weren't too happy about it, but we made up our figures and figured we could make money and pay that much for it, so we bid that much for it.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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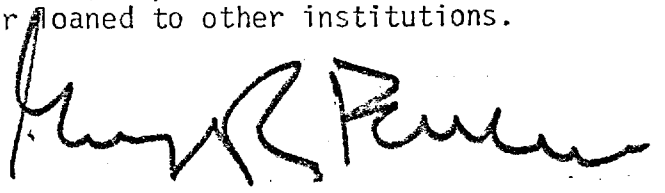

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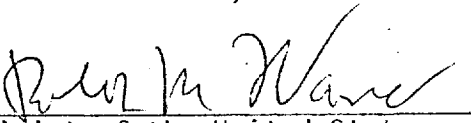

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