INTERVIEW III

DATE: July 11, 1977

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INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mr. Brown's office, Houston, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Do you feel that Jesse Jones was more conservative than Lyndon Johnson during this period?

B: The word "conservative" hardly fits the description of either Mr. Jones or President Johnson. I think he considered himself more practical in his approach to economics as well as social problems, as Mr. Roosevelt was. Mr. Jones very strongly believed in not giving things away and having people work for them. I think that was the main difference between Mr. Jones and Lyndon Johnson.

Jones was a businessman who had come up from the bottom and made everything he had for himself, and so he felt that everybody ought to do that and not just be given things out of the clear without working for them. He felt that Johnson didn't feel that way. Johnson was just as pragmatic as Jones was, in my opinion, but he didn't give that impression because he was supporting Roosevelt.

G: I wonder if Lyndon Johnson ever tried to get the [Houston] Chronicle to support him in some of the campaigns--the Senate races, for instance.

B: Well, I'm sure he did.

G: Did he ever talk to you about that?

B: Yes. I don't remember the details.

G: Did you ever talk to Mr. Jones about it?

B: No, I never did.

G: I guess it wasn't successful.

B: Mr. Jones was in Washington at the time and he theoretically had nothing to do with the editorial policy. The people that ran the paper at that time were not pro-Johnson. I had a friend who was editor, but he died and a new regime came in over there in 1939 or 1940 and they didn't like Johnson's politics very much.

G: On the other hand, I guess Mr. [Charles] Marsh was more in line with Lyndon Johnson's politics.

B: Yes, very much so.

G: What sort of a role did he play in Johnson's career?

B: Marsh? Well, he was kind of a godfather to Johnson. He played a very important role.

G: Did he?

B: Yes. In getting him elected, I mean, and in getting the people at that paper to support him, and giving him the politics that he thought he had to have and the platform he had to have in order to get the votes. Marsh did a lot of work for him on all his newspapers.

G: Do you feel that in these early years Mr. Marsh was more important than Senator [Alvin] Wirtz?

B: There's no way to compare the two of them.

G: How was their sponsorship of him different? Did one man, say, contribute strategy and the other one political philosophy?

B: It was entirely different, because Marsh was an intellectual person. He was sometimes a genius, sometimes an insane man in his approaches to any question that he believed in. He liked Johnson very much, did a lot of things for him, but he wasn't as close to Johnson as Wirtz was because Wirtz was a practical politician and one that Johnson felt he could trust. He would rely on his judgment more than he would on Marsh, because Marsh was a newspaperman. He'd take his judgment on a lot of things, but when it would come right down to a really tough decision he would go to Wirtz and confer with him on his judgment.

G: Marsh must have been a man of strong opinions.

B: Yes, he was.

G: I get the feeling that he held those opinions very strongly and if someone disagreed, he'd argue with them.

B: Yes.

G: I was going to ask you some more about those conversations that you and President Johnson and Senator Wirtz used to have when Lyndon Johnson was a young congressman.

B: When he was a young congressman, we'd meet in either his home or my home or Wirtz' home and talk about the topic of that particular day or week. Johnson would always say, "We've got a joint venture here that we don't ever want to be broken, because Wirtz is going to take care of the legal part, and I'm going to take care of the politics,

and you're going to take care of the business end of it. It is the three of them put together that makes government function, and if the three of us work together with our minds and our ideas, we all three will be successful, because I will make a contribution and you will make a contribution"--talking to Wirtz and then talking to me--"and you'll make your contribution. The three of us together will come up with a solution that will improve the status of all three of us." He firmly believed in that, and every time he had any tough decisions to make, we'd get together and argue the thing out from either what he wanted to do, or what Wirtz thought he ought to do, or what I thought he ought to do from a business viewpoint, from the reaction of economics.

G: Can you recall any particular things that you talked about? You mentioned education earlier.

B: Well, practically everything he voted on at the time we talked about, I mean all the hard decisions. When we go back that many years, it's hard to get the details.

G: This was when he was still a congressman though?

B: Yes, back in 1937, 1938, 1939.

G: Did he ever talk about President Roosevelt and his feelings for him or his association with him?

B: He didn't talk about him; we all knew what his feelings were. We knew how Roosevelt put his arms around him down here when he was running for Congress. Roosevelt was in Texas at the time on a fishing trip. He did a lot to help him win that winner-take-all

election. You know, the election was called; it wasn't a regular election. There were five or six people in the race, as I remember. Johnson was high man.

G: I'd had the impression that your brother supported [C. N.] Avery in that race.

B: That's right.

G: But I suppose after Lyndon Johnson was elected they became friends.

B: That's right.

G: There was a note, I think, in his files that indicated that in May, 1939 you were in Washington with him and walking to the Capitol. He evidently had a dizzy spell or got sick. Do you remember that?

B: I don't recall it now.

G: He had several bouts with pneumonia I guess back then.

B: Well, he was very emotional, of course, and would get excited, anything could happen to him. He would get the stomach-ache or break out on his hands or his shins. He had itching problems and all kinds of problems.

G: Do you think he overworked himself perhaps?

B: Yes, he did.

G: Before we turned on the tape, we were talking about A. J. Mackenzie, and you were saying that he was a strong-willed Scotchman and that perhaps the two of them had a personality conflict.

B: They didn't get along very well because Mackenzie, as I say, just his personality conflicted with Johnson's. He didn't have any dislike for Mackenzie, I don't think. He just always said his rathers, and

he'd rather deal with me, because he felt like I was nearer his age. Mackenzie and Herman were both fifteen years older than he and I was only ten years older, so I was a little nearer his age.

G: We were talking also about the Marshall-Ford Dam and the problem that they had getting the additional appropriation to build the high dam. I know this is a long time ago, but who do you think was ultimately responsible for helping secure that appropriation?

B: I think Johnson did it almost by himself.

G: Did he really? Did he talk to Secretary Ickes about it?

B: Oh, yes, he had Ickes' ear.

G: There was a fellow named John Page, I guess, with the Reclamation Department.

B: Yes, but the fellow he relied on most of all and became friends with was the fellow he later appointed to the Supreme Court, Abe Fortas. He was a brilliant young lawyer then in the Interior Department. He wasn't close to Ickes, but he had Ickes' ear. He'd go to Abe and have him over to his house, or we'd go over to Abe's house and talk to him about the problem we had getting this thing or that thing worked out so he could get this appropriation. Then, you see, Wirtz came up there about that time in the Interior Department. He had to work through the legal part of it, that's where Wirtz came in. The dam shouldn't have been in the Reclamation Department; it should have been under the Corps of Engineers by past rules. Reclamation only built dams in states where the government owned land, and they owned no land in Texas. Texas had been independent and had kept all their

lands in the state of Texas' name, so it was really a misfit. All that had to be straightened out not only politically but legally. That's where he needed Wirtz' opinion very much.

G: I see. And he had, I guess, drafted the legislation creating the Authority down here.

B: Yes, that was earlier, on the LCRA. I'm talking about the appropriations for the Marshall-Ford Dam. The first part of the appropriation was just gotten in order to throw a bone to him. Then the second part was the big money where he had to go back and rework all the laws so that Reclamation could continue to supervise it, and it would come under the Interior Department as all the other dams in the western part of the United States had at that time.

G: I gather one of the major issues here was an issue of public power, too.

B: Oh, yes. But they didn't have power in this appropriation at that time. They later put the power into it. They didn't get into that part of the argument until later. They got the thing off center, as I remember, before they got into the power aspect of it.

G: But wasn't it assumed that if they built a high dam that it would be a hydroelectric power dam?

B: Yes, but they didn't say so in the bill.

G: Oh, I see.

B: As I remember it, it was Wirtz' firm hand that kept them from getting into a hot argument over power, the way he drew the appropriation. Later, I think in the third year, they had to put in the power part

of it. Of course, the power people fought it, but it was too far along then for them to hurt it.

G: Could you sense that Lyndon Johnson was a strong public power advocate then, and do you remember conversations with him along these lines?

B: I don't think he was ever a strong advocate of public power. I think what he wanted to do was improve the district that he represented, and the only way he could do it was to have something like the TVA had. He wasn't trying to revolutionize public power all over the United States; he never had that idea in his mind. At least, I never got that impression.

G: I guess the private power people thought so back at the time, didn't they?

B: They might have thought so. I don't know. I don't remember now.

G: But he didn't seem like he was really in the vanguard of these public power advocates back then?

B: No, I don't think so. He had to get their support, of course, in order to get the appropriations for what he was doing and get the LCRA for it. That's another place where Wirtz came in to help him. He had to get the state legislature to pass a law permitting the Lower Colorado River Authority authority on all the rivers. That was done by Wirtz and me. He lived in Seguin and I was working in Wharton in Colorado County. We got the support of the local government and the state government to pass a bill creating the Lower Colorado River Authority.

G: That authority was created before he was elected to Congress. I believe that was something that was created in the early thirties.

B: I think he was in Congress, I'm not sure. You have the record; I don't know. But I remember I worked on it, and I remember working entirely for him to get the dam built where it could function. That was after he was congressman.

G: Did Maury Maverick help get the appropriation on that Marshall-Ford?

B: I'm sure he did.

G: You don't recall, though, any particular role that he played?

B: Well, I think he was friendly to Ickes, and I think he helped Johnson get better acquainted with Ickes.

G: I see. Ickes seems to have really admired Maverick because Maverick seems like such a progressive type, the sort of man that Ickes would, I guess, feel kindred with. How would you contrast Maury Maverick and Lyndon Johnson during this time when they were both young congressmen? Of course Maury was older.

B: Maury was older. I don't know how to describe him. It was probably that you either liked him or you didn't like him. He was more positive on virtually everything. I think he was more of a showman than Johnson was. He wrote all the things that were unpopular to write at that time. He came out with a book showing that the people who had fought in the Civil War were people who had nothing to gain and had been pushed into it by the slave owners. He was very much against slave owners. He was anti-slavery, of course, and anti-people that had fought in the Civil War against the United States

government. That made him pretty unpopular with a lot of people. I know it hadn't made him a lot of friends with people in the Congress. So he had a lot of crosscurrents, but if you knew Maury you couldn't help but like him. He was genuine in what he thought. He wasn't hypocritical in his policies at all. Whatever he believed in, he believed in.

G: I was wondering if he also might have had a role in helping Senator Wirtz get that under secretary of the interior position.

B: I don't remember. I doubt it. I don't remember the detail on that.

G: Do you remember that corrupt practices indictment in San Antonio when Senator Wirtz came down and defended Maverick?

B: No, I don't remember that.

G: In March, 1940 evidently Lyndon Johnson talked with you about the possibility of his running for the Senate when one of the older members--presumably that would be Morris Sheppard or Tom Connally--passed away. This was a year before it did happen and he ended up running. Can you recall that conversation you had with him?

B: No, I don't recall the details of it, but I'm sure we talked about it at length.

G: Was he anxious to run, do you think?

B: Of course he was.

G: What would he say? Did he see his own future in terms of the Senate?

B: No, it was just a promotion. He thought he could go farther up the political ladder if he became senator. He would have more influence

on policies affecting the United States as a senator than he would as a congressman.

G: Well, did you think he could win?

B: Well, I thought he could win and he did win. I think he was counted out of it in 1941.

G: In 1941 he could run and lose and still retain his House seat. In 1948 he was gambling everything.

B: That's right.

G: Did you initially advise him that perhaps it would be wiser to stay in the House where he had a sure thing than to run against a popular governor?

B: No. Well, I don't remember the details of it. I imagine that he didn't pay much attention to my thinking on that subject. As I remember it, he looked to Wirtz for advice, to other people, Wirtz and Marsh and people like that, rather than to me on whether or not he ought to do it.

G: Does that seem to have been your opinion at the time, though, that he shouldn't make the race, that he ought to stay where he was?

B: No, I don't think I had that opinion. I wasn't as sure that he could be elected as he was. I was worried about it in 1941, and I told him that it was going to be difficult. Of course in 1948 he felt that he had been counted out in 1941 and he could win, and I felt he could win, too.

G: He seems to have had an ability even then to influence people a

great deal when he was campaigning or meeting them on a one-to-one basis. What was he like as a campaigner back then?

B: He was very personable, very personable. He had a wonderful memory, and he could remember details about people. He could remember their names and remember their relations, where they came from and where they were raised. He just remembered details. He could make you think when he met you that he was genuinely interested in your background, who you were, what you were doing, and if he could help you in any way.

G: Do you think he liked campaigning, traveling around the state making speeches?

B: I don't think anybody likes it, because it is really hard work. But as well as he could do it and feel that he was getting somewhere doing it, he did. It was very hard work, as you know.

G: Did he change much in terms of his style in later years?

B: Well, he became more polished than he had been in his earlier years because he had learned more. He learned some of the things not to do and, as I say, a lot of the rough edges were smoothed off.

G: Did he seek much advice from you on either issues or campaign strategy?

B: I can't remember the details of it; I just remember we used to talk together a lot. I don't remember the details because I was not really interested in whether he sought my advice.

G: Let me ask you a couple of questions about Lyndon Johnson during World War II. I know that you visited with him before he went to

Australia in 1942. Do you have any recollections of him during this period and what he was thinking about, what he wanted to do?

B: No, I think he wanted to serve his country in the best way he could. That was in the back of his mind more than anything else. Some of his friends in Washington thought it was foolish to volunteer for the service when he should stay in Congress. He could do more good for his country there. But I think he felt that was not the case, and he should go to the service; he should get in the Navy.

G: Did he talk to you after he came back from overseas?

B: Yes.

G: What did he say about his experience over there?

B: He was very excited about it, very excited, full of a lot of conversation of what was going on. Of course, in the early part of the war, it was very questionable whether we were getting the better of the Japanese or not. But it wasn't too long until people who came back from the Pacific were convinced that we would overpower them.

G: I get the impression that he was very worried about our fortunes over there at the time he was there, very alarmed.

B: At the time he was there it was pretty questionable. There was no one in the Navy who could tell that much about it. He wasn't far enough up to get a picture of it. But an admiral, for instance, who I talked to just a few months after Johnson came back had a better overall view, and he gave me a different idea. He said there wasn't any doubt that we were going to prevail.

G: Can you recall any more particulars of Congressman Johnson's alarm, or what he talked to you about here with regard to the war? Did he ever talk to you about having a meeting with General MacArthur over there?

B: I don't recall much about the conversation. As I say, that was a long time ago.

G: I know in 1943 he introduced a work-or-fight measure that was designed to get people who were hurting the defense effort because of absenteeism to--

B: In war jobs?

G: Yes. Did he ever consult with you on that or get your advice on this sort of thing.

B: I don't recall.

G: I know that his subcommittee did do an investigation of your ship-building company and discovered that absenteeism was hurting your efforts there. I was just wondering if this was something that came out of that investigation?

B: No, I don't recall that it did. It might have, but I don't remember.

G: Do you think that after the war, after President Roosevelt's death, Lyndon Johnson became more conservative politically?

B: No, I don't think so. I think Johnson was always more conservative than people thought he was.

G: How so?

B: Because he was raised that way, I think, and his mother taught him

that. I think he was much more of a believer in private enterprise, business for business, than he was given credit for.

G: During the long course of your friendship, you never sensed changes one way or the other?

B: I never did. No, I think he stayed the same way.

G: How would you describe him as a friend? What was he like when you would get together with him?

B: He was like any close friend. You could lay anything you had on your mind before him, ask his opinion of it, and he would tell you what he thought about it if he had an opinion. If he didn't he would say, "Let me think about it. Let me talk to somebody. Let me get some more facts." His favorite motto was, "Your judgment is as good as the facts you have that you make your judgment on." That was his long suit. He was always quoting that. If you asked his opinion and he didn't have enough facts, he couldn't make a very good judgment. That is the way he ran his life. He tried to get enough facts before he made his judgment, whether it was for business or politically or legally or what have you.

G: When he was around you, would he talk about the political events in Washington, for example his legislative work, or would he completely divorce himself from this and just talk about other matters?

B: Well, he would talk about obvious things that were on his mind. They mostly had to do with his district because that was his main job, to do as much as he could for the people he represented. That is the thing he talked about. Anything in Washington that had anything to

do with that, he'd have a lot of conversations about it. Quite often we wouldn't agree on his approaches to those problems, but he always felt he was approaching it the only way he could approach it. He didn't think I had enough facts to have any judgment. I didn't deserve any judgment. We'd have a lot of arguments over that.

G: He wasn't an easy man to argue with I suppose.

B: Oh, I got a lot of fun out of arguing with him.

G: Could you hold your own with him?

B: Yes, I thought I did.

G: He must have had a remarkable sense of humor, too.

B: He did.

G: Did he have a favorite story that he used to tell?

B: Well, he told so many. They were all good. Most of them have been repeated time and again.

G: Some people have indicated the feeling that if Lyndon Johnson had gone into business instead of politics that he would have been very, very successful in that endeavor. How do you feel about that?

B: I think he would have been successful in anything he went into.

G: Is that right?

B: Yes. Because he loved to work, and he had a good mind. He had a dynamo running all the time inside of him that made him motivated to work. If you work in any business, why, you make a success out of it with ordinary brains, and he had better than ordinary brains.

G: Why do you think he was so restless in this? He almost seems like a driven man, someone who was just compulsive.

B: He was made up that way. That was his personality. As I say, he had a dynamo that was running all the time to give him energy.

G: Did he ever talk to you about, say, a desire to go into business or to have gone into business?

B: Oh, yes. Every time people would criticize him or he would get bad editorials on what he was doing, he'd say, "Hell, I want to throw it and go into business." He'd talk about me getting him something he could do, get him a job here, get him a job there. But it was just conversation. I never took him seriously because I knew he loved politics.

G: I get the feeling, though, that he really envied businessmen. Do you think that is the case?

B: Well, I don't know. When he got in business, in the radio and TV business, he did very well at it because he knew what not to do there and he was successful financially.

G: I guess I'm thinking of more large-scale business or industry.

After he became president, I think you spent some time with him at the Ranch that Christmas or right after Christmas. Do you recall your stay there? Were you talking with him about what he should do in the White House?

B: I was, yes. He was very [inaudible]. He'd reached the pinnacle of what he wanted to do when he became president. He wanted to relax and enjoy the fact that he was the president.

G: Do you think he enjoyed being president more than he had being vice president?

B: He did then, yes.

G: Do you think he was restless as vice president, or unhappy in the job?

B: Well, I think he was restless because he didn't feel that he was at his potential. He never felt that he had reached his potential. That's the reason he would have succeeded in any business that he had gone into, because he had that feeling that he could do better if he worked a little harder, a little longer.

G: Why do you think he took the vice presidential nomination? Did he ever talk to you about it?

B: Yes. He and my brother and I had different opinions. My brother was very dead set against him taking it. I more or less felt it was of one and half a dozen of another whether he took it or whether he didn't take it. I didn't think it would amount to anything. He thought it would be more power because it would be better than being a senator, and I think he took it purely and simply for that reason.

G: He felt that he could make it into a powerful position?

B: Well, he just felt that being vice president was a higher honor and he could do more than he could as one senator. His whole ambition always was to get on the next ladder up. He was climbing a ladder all the time; he always wanted to get on a new plateau. So he became vice president because it was a higher plateau than being a senator or majority leader.

I think one of the things he felt very strongly about was that he didn't think he could continue to be majority leader and be as

successful. He had been very successful, as you know, before he was nominated as vice president. He had been able to run the Senate as it had never been run before, to get things done that he and President Eisenhower wanted done. He'd get it done, get a bill passed, and he felt that was going to come to an end. I remember he talked about it. One reason he wanted to be the vice president was he felt he had reached the top in input in the Senate, and that he'd be on the way down as far as getting things done was concerned. It was very evident that he couldn't do any better because he passed practically every bill he really got behind and wanted to pass.

G: Do you think he ever considered in this decision whether or not he could help the ticket get elected, the fact that if he were not on the ticket that the Democrats would lose?

B: That's just subconscious. He didn't talk about it, but subconsciously he was bound to have thought it. I imagine Kennedy told him that he could.

G: Do you think that he felt that his heart was a factor, and maybe that if he continued as majority leader he might have health problems?

B: He didn't talk about it.

G: Back to the presidency now. You were out there with him, and I guess he was talking about some of the programs that he initiated.

B: I disagreed with him very much on what to do about Vietnam. He had five or six friends there and all of them told him he ought to honor the commitment and give them troops, and I told him he ought to get out. He couldn't help people that couldn't help themselves. I

advised him to get out of there any way he could. Then he got very upset with me and got up from the table and walked around and put his finger in my face and wanted to know what I meant when I said he couldn't help people who couldn't help themselves. He said, "You mean you wouldn't help Sam Houston and he is an alcoholic." I said, "That doesn't have anything to do with this. I said you can help him, but you won't do him any good." And he got very upset over it. But I kept repeating that's what he ought to do, he ought to get out. We finally decided we'd best get off on some other subject and so we did. This was after dinner, sitting there at the table, about six men as I remember. The women were all somewhere else and we were in there alone.

G: Did anyone else take your position?

B: No.

G: It was one against six? This was in that first Christmas?

B: Yes. He had only been in office about a month. He saw it coming, and he was going to have to make up his mind because he had read all the commitments and knew all the commitments. He felt like he was committed to it.

G: Do you think that he ever felt in later years that he had taken the wrong course there, or did he ever say he'd been wrong?

B: He would never admit it if he did.

G: Did he ever talk to you about the poverty program and his policies here with Great Society programs?

B: Do you mean after 1964 when he was elected?

G: Right.

B: Yes. He talked about it, and I told him I thought he was running too fast, doing too much.

G: A lot of these programs of the Great Society, like the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Job Corps, seem to have been patterned after some of the programs of the New Deal.

B: I imagine they were.

G: Do you think that he drew some of the ideas here from his New Deal experience?

B: I'm sure he did. He drew them from somewhere and I imagine that's where they came from.

G: You don't recall him ever expressing this notion?

B: No.

G: I know he was a lot busier when he was president and had a lot of advisers, but I am just wondering if there is one thing that you feel you really had some input with him on while he was president, either a policy or a program that you advised him on and he took your advice.

B: No, I don't feel that I had nearly as much input when he was president as I did when he was a senator.

G: I see. Is there anything during the Senate years that you want to talk about in terms of legislation or influencing him?

B: Well, education was my hobby and his hobby, too, when we first became friends back when he was a congressman. I was mainly interested in educating people as far as they were able to go in education, as far

as they were capable of handling, and he was, too. That's why we first became friends. And all through the years, as far as the social things that we had in common, one was education.

G: As a teacher, I guess he was a firm believer in education?

B: That's right. But the main thing that we had to do was figure out a way to educate all economic groups, have them go as far as they were capable of going. When the war was over we could see plainer and plainer that Europe was bankrupt because of their educational system, and our educational system had made it possible for us to do the things we did in the war. The war creates new ideas, of course, and new ideas are put into laboratories and made effective by the fact that you've got a war and you spend the money to do it. When the war was over it was pretty much a proven fact that our educational system could be improved and we were still way ahead of Europe, because Europe wasn't educating anywhere near the percentage of their inhabitants that we were. That was really the reason we were so far advanced. Even at that, both he and I felt that we could improve it.

G: There wasn't much, though, in the form of legislation helping education during his Senate years, I guess the school construction bills and the national defense education bill.

B: Oh, I think there is quite a bit that went on. If you go back through all the bills that he had you'll find education in all of them.

G: Before he became president, you mean?

B: Yes. After he became president, as I said, my input wasn't nearly as much. I didn't see him very much. After that Christmas, he had no reason to see me.

G: Do you think that that caused a strain in your relations?

B: Oh, no, I don't mean that. I mean he just was busy.

G: Did you get the feeling that he wasn't going to seek re-election in 1968?

B: Yes. He told me that but I didn't believe him. He told me that in 1966 and 1967. In 1967 we went swimming, just the two of us, in the pool in the White House and he told me, "You don't believe me, but I am not going to run." I said, "I don't believe you. It's in your bones and in your mind. You couldn't quit if you wanted to." He said, "I'm going to." This was eight months before he announced it. He told me he was going to.

I didn't realize that he had as much fear about his health as he had. Because I'd heard him complain so much all the years I knew him I just didn't take it seriously.

G: But that was one of the reasons he gave at that time?

B: Yes. That was one of the prevalent reasons, in my opinion. Everybody said he quit because he thought he was going to be defeated. I don't think that's the reason he quit at all. A lot of the opposition said that.

G: Did you encourage him one way or the other here when you were swimming together, whether or not to go ahead and run again or not to run again?

B: No, I didn't encourage him. I just told him I didn't believe him, that I thought he was going to run again. I told him I thought it would be the thing for him to do to run again.

G: I guess you two also spent some time together in retirement.

B: Oh, a lot more, yes.

G: How did the presidency leave him? What kind of a man was he after the White House?

B: It didn't take him long to get back down to the same basis he was before he became president. In four or five months, he was just as normal as he was before he became president.

G: He seemed to have had an interest in working with young people, and students in particular, during retirement. He even talked about teaching at Rice, I think, didn't he?

B: Yes. He talked about it, but he wasn't serious.

G: He wasn't, really?

B: It developed to me that he wasn't serious, because I was trying to make it possible for him to do so. I was at Rice at the time and chairman of the board.

G: Did he talk to you about it initially?

B: Yes. I talked to the powers out there and got it set up for him, and he just kept creating all these damned demonstrations, and he didn't want to create that. He finally came to Rice, and when he did he got a great reception. Students, all of them, just flocked around him and showed that they really admired him. By that time he had given up on teaching.

G: Did he ever talk to you about his other aspirations for retirement after he left the presidency? Did he plan to travel or did he want to devote time to his ranch or do some more writing? What else did he have in mind?

B: Just about what he did; that's what he had in mind. He didn't talk about it, but he just went ahead and did it.

G: During all of the years that you knew him, and particularly as he was looking back on his career in retirement, what do you think he was proudest of in terms of his years in public life?

B: I don't know what he was proudest of. I'd have to give a lot of thought to that one, it would be hard to say. I doubt if he knew exactly what he was proudest of.

G: Do you think he had any regrets, anything that he felt he had made a mistake on or hadn't emphasized enough?

B: He's bound to have had some, yes. It would be human for him to have regrets.

G: But do you recall anything that he expressed as things that he would do differently?

B: No. I don't recall the details. It would be too difficult to put into words just what he felt like.

G: I get the impression that quite often his best adviser was Mrs. Johnson.

B: Yes, I think that's right.

G: That she would not only give him good judgment, but if he ruffled

some feathers she would smooth them over. What can you tell me about her in this connection?

B: I think it's pretty well known about her and her relations with him, the influence she had and what a great partner she was, a partnership that any successful man has got to have. If he doesn't have a good partnership with his wife, he's got two strikes on him all the time. I think Johnson had that and used it, or he wouldn't have gotten where he did. She was a real helpmate, carried her part of the load more so all the time.

G: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

B: No, I can't think of anything.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III]

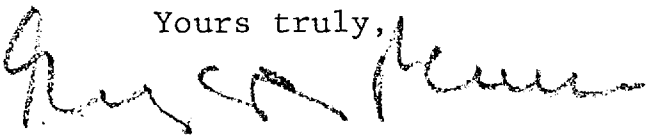
GEORGE R. BROWN
SUITE 2910, 2 HOUSTON CENTER
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77010

December 7, 1981

Dear Mike:

With reference to your letter of December 4th, questioning Caro's account of the Greenbrier visit in 1940, Johnson did not take offense to Marsh's offer and did not leave in anger. On the other hand, Caro added a lot of pure "baloney" to his account of what took place at Greenbrier.

Yours truly,



George R. Brown

GRB/ddj

Mr. Michael L. Gillette
Chief of Acquisitions and
Oral History Programs
The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library
Austin, Texas 78705

Dear Mr. Brown:

Having received news of your recent illness, I hope that receipt of this letter finds you in improved health.

I would like to ask you about an event discussed in Robert Caro's article, "The Years of Lyndon Johnson," a copy of which is enclosed herewith. As you perhaps know, Caro leans very heavily on you in describing the Greenbrier visit in 1960. His narrative goes beyond a discussion of the Richardson partnership offer made by Charles Marsh to recount your thoughts on LBJ's motivations for refusal. Since you did not elaborate on this aspect of the episode in the interviews that you recorded for the Library, I and other historians shall wonder for many, many years whether Caro's account is accurate. On this subject there is no better source in the world than you.

Please be assured that my request comes solely from intellectual curiosity and a desire to insure that your views of your unique relationship with President Johnson are not distorted. I am seeking neither a rebuttal nor a revision of your recollections, but am merely wondering if your impressions are accurately recorded in the Caro piece.

While I cannot recall the source, I did receive an impression that LBJ took instant offense at the Marsh offer and immediately left the Greenbrier in anger. Does this ring a bell?

Many thanks for considering this request, and I shall deeply appreciate any thoughts you have on the matter.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Gillette
Chief of Acquisitions and
Oral History Programs

Mr. George Brown
Suite 2910
2 Houston Center
Houston, Texas 77002

December 3, 1981

MLG:jk

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of George R. Brown

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, George R. Brown of Houston, Texas do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on April 6, 1968 in Uvalde County, Texas and on July 11, 1977 in Houston, Texas and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

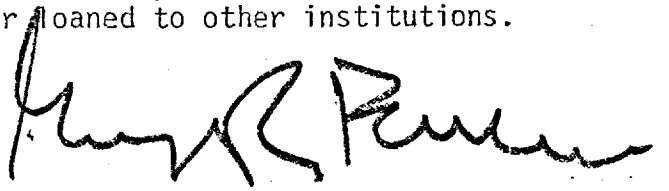
(1) During my lifetime the transcripts shall not be available to researchers. Thereafter, the transcripts shall be available to all researchers.

(2) During my lifetime the tape recordings shall not be available to researchers. Thereafter, the tape recordings shall be available to all researchers.

(3) During my lifetime I retain all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter, the copyright in both the transcripts and tape recordings shall pass to the United States Government.

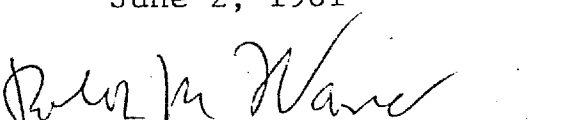
(4) During my lifetime copies of the interview transcripts or tape recordings may not be provided to researchers. Thereafter, copies of the transcripts and the tape recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) During my lifetime copies of the interview transcripts or tape recordings may not be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. Thereafter, copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.



Donor George R. Brown

Date June 2, 1981



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June 18, 1981

Date