INTERVIEW I

DATE: June 8, 1970

INTERVIEWEE: H. S. (HANK) BROWN

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Brown's office in the AFL-CIO Building in Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

F: Mr. Brown, let's go back and get you placed. How did you get to Austin in the first place?

B: I first came up here during the period of 1945-47 during the legislature when at that time there was a wave of anti-labor laws being introduced all in the good name of the so-called right-to-work. There was a series of about fifty different restrictive bills.

F: Did you get in on that famous Dallas meeting on the right-to-work during the war in which it was part of Americanism?

B: No, I wasn't in on that end of it. That was the fat cats and the business community and the haters who were off on this kick. I was naturally on the other side. But I got involved in the legislature in the 1945 session. I had just got back home and I was involved in the local union and was a delegate to the AF of L council and was first named to the legislative committee. That's what brought me to Austin where I got interested in legislation and politics and have been here ever since--well, in one way or another.

F: Yes. This has been base ever since.

Where did you first come in contact with Congressman Johnson?

B: I had met him earlier. He once spoke back when he was part of the FDR team in the late thirties, as I recall. He and I kid about it sometimes. It seems like he came down and spoke to us at a September, I thought it was a Labor Day [meeting].

F: Now down is where?

B: San Antonio.

F: Right.

B: That's my home. It seemed like he spoke to a meeting we had in 1939, September. I recall we were not pleased with our congressman of that hour at all, and the committee thought, "Well, let's call this fellow up here from Johnson City. He seems to be a guy that relates more to labor." He was part of then the Franklin Roosevelt young congressmen.

F: That was after Maury Maverick had been defeated.

B: Right. Maury had been defeated and this new man [Paul] Kilday certainly did not meet with our feeling even though I found out later that the then-president of the AF of L had supported and wrote every union member a letter asking for Maury Maverick's defeat because he had attended one of the early meetings of the CIO back in the terrible fight between the AF of L and the CIO.

But I met Johnson at that function and it seemed like it was at San Pedro Park which labor used to use. Sounded like a knowledgeable guy, young fellow, very strong for Roosevelt, and talked about a lot of the things that I thought were important at that time. That was my first acquaintance with him. I'm sure he wouldn't remember it,

but I remember it because it was the occasion of my first personal contact with him.

F: Did you see anything of him between then and the time you came to Austin?

B: Not much. Up until the war interfered. He was gone and I was gone and I had hardly any contacts, written or [otherwise] until I became active in 1945 and 1946 and 1947 in those legislative [matters]. And I got involved in the Homer Rainey campaign. That was really my first wetting where I worked officially for a candidate besides being for Mr. Roosevelt.

F: Yes. Now Johnson was a congressman from this district so when you started hanging around here you inherited him in effect.

B: Well, even then, I kept my home in San Antonio until 1953, in fact still maintain my home there in Sunshine Drive which was then out in the country. Of course, now it's part of the city, but I used to kill deer out there in my back yard when I first moved out there.

F: The only thing you could kill now is pedestrians.

B: But I didn't really get a working relationship, you might say, with Lyndon Johnson. We had a big fight at the AF of L convention after he had supported the Taft-Hartley law and had actually supported the overriding of President Truman's veto. We were all just madder than hell at him. So the AF of L refused to endorse him, but some of us felt like that Stevenson was no better and therefore--

F: The only advantage Stevenson had was that he just hadn't had to declare himself.

B: I think that's right, but at the hour--this was of course right afterwards and the people were angry and they were mad and the national leadership was referring to it as the slave-labor act and so forth.

F: Did you talk with Congressman Johnson before he voted on this?

B: No, I didn't have that relationship with him. I talked to my congressman, but I did not have any contact with him because I was from another district and I didn't know him that well.

F: So then he came home and ran in 1948. Were you active at all in that or did you pretty well sit it out?

B: Yes, I took the position there that I thought Johnson was at the time the lesser of two evils, that Coke Stevenson had certainly not done a damn thing for the working people, that Johnson had done many things in the past, had championed minimum wage and other legislation that I thought was helpful. Back in a bitter fight in 1944 when they were trying to pass a national legislative act that was I thought very detrimental, he was on the side with Mr. Roosevelt against that. I spoke for Mr. Johnson, but nonetheless the leadership took a no-endorsement position and that's what the AF of L did. Now the CIO, as I recall, actually condemned him. We didn't condemn him; we just didn't take a position for him.

F: Do you think that this vote against the administration's position on Taft-Hartley did hurt him badly with labor, or do you think labor paid much attention to it?

B: I think it hurt him all through his lifetime. Ever since then, whenever

people were evaluating him, I think it hurt him with labor, for example, as late as 1960 when he was vying for the presidency. The one thing that people would always use against him when they lacked anything else was that he was one of those that gutted us in 1947.

F: Always an element of suspicion there.

B: I don't think that he ever regained the total trust of labor leaders all the way back to that time. I think it's lived with him all of his life.

F: Did he ever talk to you about his vote?

B: Never has and I never asked him.

F: No, of course it was a dead issue by the time you came out, that is, dead in the sense that it couldn't be retracted.

B: Right. I didn't officially come on the scene as a state officer [until] I joined the AF of L staff in 1953 and by that time it made no difference. You know what I mean. It was there and we had to live with it and while I had my own feelings about it and I certainly didn't appreciate his vote on it or the work he did, I thought that he had done other things that were offsetting.

F: When you came on up here then as the educational director for this state AFL-CIO, Johnson's a senator and is getting to be something of a power in the Senate. He's first minority leader and then majority leader, and all through the fifties they were always talking about modifying the Taft-Hartley Act, or talking about not modifying it, but it remained one of the continuing issues. Did you ever have any occasion during the latter stage to talk to him about what ought to be done?

B: Yes, we talked about it. I got to know him a little better in the 1952 campaign when I was active for Adlai Stevenson. I was then president of what is the Texas Pipe Trades--that's the association of all the plumbers and pipe fitters which is my union. We talked about different aspects of making it possible for there to be a union shop in Texas as well as all the other so-called states. But the national AF of L-CIO wasn't pursuing it as hard as I thought they should, their argument being the pendulum had swung with Eisenhower's election, as they say, politically to the right and it was not timely. By that, I assume they meant they did not have the votes . But we did discuss it a number of times and I think Johnson the longer he stayed seemed to be more in accord with the AF of L-CIO's position that the right-to-work was a bad scheme that really pit labor against management and management against labor and was not inducive to good labor management relations. But then we never knew that until later when he was president because the thing never came to a vote until the middle sixties.

F: Did you get the feeling while he was majority leader that he might be dragging his feet a little bit in getting that up out of committee and onto the floor, or that he'd done just about all he could?

B: I don't know that personally. This is what was said in Washington by labor leaders: that Johnson was dragging his feet, that he really didn't want the thing; that while he said the right thing, he didn't do the right thing. Now, whether that's true or not, I

don't have any evidence to support it or not support it, although I tend to believe it's true.

F: That he gave lip service.

B: To that part of the labor's program. I think that was the feeling and that's what I believed.

F: In 1952, Johnson and Rayburn both supported Adlai Stevenson, and of course [Allan] Shivers and Price Daniel went for Eisenhower as did the state. Did you get to observe Senator Johnson's activities at all in this campaign?

B: Well, Johnson, I felt like, was part of the national Democratic administration as the portance of his position, and I felt like the whole Democratic Party drug their feet. I thought what he and Mr. Sam and the national Party did in Texas was too little and too late. I got the feeling that they didn't want to take on the very then-powerful Allan Shivers who was then the power of Texas, and I thought we could have won Texas--that was merely my opinion--but we didn't do much. The literature always came late and the campaign was always late and we had very little to do it with. I worked almost full time in San Antonio for Adlai Stevenson for sixty days, and we'd order literature and it was [there] two weeks after we needed it and this sort of thing. The whole campaign was too little and too late.

F: Never really got up off their haunches.

B: Johnson took a beating, among many of us, in our opinion, for his role in the campaign. Now whether or not he deserved it--many times it doesn't matter whether you're guilty or not, if people think you are,

then you are, at least in their minds.

F: How do you explain the fact that just four years later he and Mr. Sam take on Shivers and with your help and some other help do a first-class job of defeating him?

B: Well, I think Johnson was always a very pragmatic politician. I think he felt, like many of us, that Shivers' day was ebbing, that his power was diminishing and waning, and that there was a new power coming in Texas. And by that time the coalition and the DOT was a growing factor--the first real coalition of Negroes and Mexican Americans and labor--plus he was moving nationally and was becoming more nationally oriented. I think that first of all he felt like that as a national Democrat oriented person and Shivers was moving further to the right all the time, that he had to take him on and help break Shivers' power in order to maintain credentials with labor and the Mexican American and Negro, plus to continue to reassert himself as a national Democratic figure.

F: Did you see evidence during that period between 1952 and 1956 of the Johnson-Rayburn team working Texas to try to establish a real power base here against Shivers?

B: Yes. I think in the era of 1945 to 1956, Johnson tended to have on what I considered his conservative suit. He worked very closely with what was the very conservative leadership in the state government, the attorney general, the lieutenant governor, et cetera, all of them very conservative. Then somewhere in that period between 1952 to 1956, he and Mr. Sam began to assert themselves more and more

in an effort to break this power hold that Allan Shivers et al had. And by 1956 I think that's when he broke out of what I thought was his conservative era.

F: How did they accomplish this: just good precinct work or working with the leaders of what, up to this time, had been the kind of disinherited or what?

B: Well, of course, the Mexican Americans of that hour and the Negroes of that hour and the labor movement were growing in political awareness and astuteness of actually learning, because as late as 1950 labor had very little political savvy and know-how. Oh, they'd make endorsements and send letters out. But as far as training people, I think the educational program of the AF of L which [Jerry] Holleman had undertook [was most effective]. I was its ramrod of that facet of every week conducting workshops and clinics from Amarillo to Beaumont and Texarkana to El Paso. We'd hold forty workshops actually showing people and showing films and running records and teaching them political involvement. Then, with the new kind of a surge of the Negro and the Mexican American into the politics to a greater degree and more registrations of poll taxes then, Johnson saw this new power because he was always one to recognize power and he felt the need to relate to it plus he could see that Shivers' hour was diminishing.

F: Did you get involved at all in that Shivers-Port Arthur [story]?

B: Oh, yes. I was on the staff here working for Senator Yarborough. It was one of the dirtiest, nastiest campaigns in my twenty-five

years in public life.

F: Did Johnson show his hand at all in that or did he stay out of it?

B: I thought he stayed out of it, but charges have been made that because of his comradeship with Allan Shivers that he had his hand in it. But if he did, I didn't see it.

F: Of course, we could make a whole tape out of Port Arthur, but I don't suppose it's part of the story here.

B: Yes, we could.

F: Were you involved at all in his movement toward a civil rights act in the latter 1950s? You know, this was the first one that--

B: Just indirectly, as part of the AF of L-CIO. We've always supported the national legislation that deals with giving the minorities a greater voice, a greater job opportunity, a greater education. We did contact our congressmen and worked with Lyndon Johnson and by that time of course he was a real power in the Senate. It appeared to me then that he was moving more and more in our direction, that from the time he became the majority leader, he was working with labor much more than he had, say, the ten years from 1946 to 1956. It seemed like, with the coalition of the DOT leaders and Frankie Randolph and all of the DOT folks, as well as labor, Mexican American and Negro and the Yarborough people, that from that time on, from that convention where that coalition of effort beat the Shivers organization at the Democratic convention, that more and more he began to work more closely and relate, whereas for the ten years from that time, from 1946 on, frankly our relationship was not very good.

F: In 1956, then, you put the Shivers forces to rout at the state Democratic convention and carried it for the national ticket. The honeymoon didn't last long.

B: Not too long, no.

F: Did you have a feeling that it was going to be sort of a short marriage?

B: No, I really didn't. I felt like that it would be lasting, and yet when 1959 came, national leadership felt, and the state leadership feels today, that he did considerable foot dragging as far as labor was concerned--he and Mr. Rayburn both on the Landrum-Griffin laws--that they felt like that they were saying the right things, but they just weren't pressing, and that had they pressed, the Landrum-Griffin law would have not been nearly as harsh and severe as it is. All of us who are what we consider legitimate career people of the labor movement did not object to all facets of the Landrum-Griffin law, but certainly we felt like that they had gone too far in writing restrictions that took away many of the labor workingman's rights and the rights to organize instead of merely correcting those things they wanted to correct with regard to honest elections and with regard to elimination of racketeers in the labor movement. All of us who are career people shared that view, but [not] the other restrictions they slipped into the total package. And again, Johnson and Rayburn both took a beating from labor leaders. This showed up, in my opinion, in 1960 as to why he got very little help out of labor in his bid for the presidency.

F: Is it necessary for your national committeewoman and your national committeeman to work in harmony or to work with your senators in Washington? I'm thinking of Byron Skelton, Frankie Randolph, and Lyndon Johnson, who are not exactly a chummy trio.

B: No, I don't think they have to be in harmony because actually it's an altogether different world. You see, your senators relate direct to legislation, the right of review of the presidential appointments, whereas the Democratic Party, being the kind of party it's always been, encompassing so many different kinds of folks from way conservative to way out liberal, farmers and workers and Negroes and small business and big business and conservatives and liberals and moderates can be absolutely poles apart and still work within the framework of the Democratic Party because they have different responsibilities, in my judgment. Now I think it helps, naturally, for Democrats in any position of responsibility to tend to work together, but that does not necessarily mean they have to come from the same political side of the street.

F: My next question is obvious, and that, were Frankie Randolph and Lyndon Johnson able to work together?

B: Publicly yes, privately no. I think they frankly despised one another, not perhaps personally, I don't know about their personal lives, but I do know that they were of two different political kind of pussy cats. Frankie Randolph had very little to say good for Lyndon Johnson at any time, and I would assume that the same was true of Lyndon Johnson. I don't believe they shared much except that it took a combination of what

muscle she had in the DOT and what muscle he had as a leading United States senator of Texas to beat the Allan Shivers machine. It was just a marriage of convenience of that effort. That's my opinion about that.

F: When you come on down toward 1960, you've got at least the rumors that Johnson is going to go for the presidency, although he's slow getting anything off the ground. Was there any contact between Johnson and Texas labor in looking forward to the Los Angeles convention and what might happen?

B: Well, you understand I was a staff person, so as such [I did not have contact]. The president and secretary of treasury did have many contacts with Lyndon Johnson, I am told. In fact, in the famous convention we had in 1959 this was a major matter of bone of contention and, while it's not on the record, many of the quiet caucuses and meetings was the internal fight where Holleman appeared to be strong for Lyndon Johnson while many of us were not. Very frankly, while I said, "If Johnson gets the nomination, I'll be for him," I was not going to help him get the nomination because I was still mad as a wet hen about Landrum-Griffin. It seems like the two times in his life that he really came to bat, he had offended labor just before [or] kind of during the period of engagement before the marriage. In 1948 he had offended us very deeply with his overriding the presidential veto on Taft-Hartley. Then in 1959 most of us believed that he had been foot dragging on the Landrum-Griffin matter or that we could have substituted it for a bill that would have been

better for the working people and for the labor unions of this country.

F: On this meeting, whom should I see? Jerry Holleman?

B: I would guess Jerry Holleman as president was naturally the chief contact, but we've always operated with two executive officers who work very closely together. Even though they may be different guys of different worlds, they have a constitutional duty here. Our secretary of treasury under our constitution has always been a fairly strong person and so we really have two strong officers under our structure, more so than one. And many of us felt that as a result of Holleman's support of Johnson that that in turn lent considerably to Johnson's support for him for the secretary of laborship. But in this case Goldberg got that and Jerry wound up being an assistant secretary. But I think most all of us are of the opinion today that Holleman was named as assistant secretary of labor primarily because of Lyndon Johnson.

F: That's something I wanted to ask you. Whether in effect this was President Kennedy trying to make good to the Texas liberal wing or whether Johnson did push Holleman for the job?

B: No, because the Texas liberal wing was pretty put out with Jerry Holleman as a result of his efforts for Johnson in 1960. In fact, the DOT almost totally dismantled itself because Holleman had called a meeting, a breakfast, that morning in an effort to get labor to actually endorse Johnson for president despite the fact that Meany had put out a letter to the states federation saying that this was

not their responsibility under the national Constitution, that there was Symington running and Kennedy was running and several other dark horses.

F: Stevenson was even an outside possibility.

B: Stevenson was given an outside. Meany's letter was to the effect that no federation has the constitutional authority, that this was a matter by constitution of the national executive board and national convention, and that national labor would no nothing until after the Los Angeles convention. Therefore no states were to make any public moves. So while they didn't do it publicly, the morning of the DOT convention where Frankie and her troops were going to gall Johnson with public proclamation just tearing him up, Holleman had his famous breakfast at the Stephen F. Austin where he attempted to get labor to endorse Lyndon Johnson for president. But the leadership throughout the area councils refused to concur with Holleman's recommendation and left it on a basis of no position. We went to Los Angeles with no official position for or against Lyndon Johnson.

F: Which, in a sense, was a vote of no confidence.

B: That's right. And many of us felt like that Holleman did this believing that Johnson was the better man although many people believe he did it because he felt like it was a route for him to travel to get to be the secretary of labor.

F: In one sense, I know you can't know what's in the other man's mind altogether, but was Jerry Holleman kicked upstairs as assistant secretary of labor?

B: Well, he was not kicked upstairs by virtue of labor.

F: I mean, was it a kind of face-saving [thing]? Feeling wasn't that strong against him?

B: Nobody here in labor was really for Johnson. I mean at that time Holleman's influence was waning.

F: Yes.

B: And part of that was due to his closeness with Lyndon Johnson. And in 1959 where he attempted to raise the per capita tax, which in this constitution takes two-thirds, he got beat pretty badly. In fact, he didn't even get a majority. It was the first time in history that a president went to a convention with a recommendation and didn't even get a majority. So that even then he had suggested to me that he might be moving along. And national labor did not recommend him for the assistant secretary of labor position, and Senator Yarborough had not recommended him. So most of us were of the opinion that it was his relationship with Lyndon Johnson that had got him the job.

F: Senator Yarborough and Jerry Holleman, though, were on pretty good terms?

B: Not at that time, no. One time they fell out and never did recover when [Texas] Commissioner [of Agriculture, John] White ran one time against Senator Yarborough and got a handful of votes, got seventeen thousand I think statewide. Jerry was very close to White and had felt like, "Well, we've been with Yarborough 1952, 1954, et cetera. He's a loser and we're going to find us a new man." But when he got to the convention, the convention was very strong for Senator

Yarborough again, and while they healed up that difference, they never were very close after that.

F: The old cordiality disappeared except on the surface.

F: You were close to Senator Yarborough through the years, both winning and losing. Were you able to form any firsthand estimate of the senior senator's treatment of his junior senator during the Johnson-Yarborough life together in the Senate?

B: I always felt there was not very much personal rapport there. They seemed to work fairly well together, although they voted quite differently on numerous occasions, but there just wasn't what I would call a warm, personal relationship at all.

F: Did you get the feeling that perhaps the Majority Leader in a way subordinated Senator Yarborough at times.

B: I don't think there was any question about it--that during all of Johnson's tenure that he kind of put Ralph down--as the majority leader, as the vice president and as the president. I think their relationship improved after Ralph was the senior senator and Johnson was the president, by virtue of the fact that we then had Ralph as the Democratic senator and they were compelled to work together, plus the fact that I think the President himself said that the strongest supporter of his programs in the whole United States Senate was Ralph Yarborough. We've published numbers of times the fact that Ralph was, with his role on the labor committee, labor and public welfare, probably more responsible for helping the president, and I think Johnson issued this statement which we re-published that Yarborough had done more to help enact

the Johnson program. But there was always a great strain in the relationship between them. They fussed and fought a great deal over appointments, Johnson believing that as a Texan--

F: Johnson pulled his weight on that, I presume.

B: He throwed his weight considerably on it and Yarborough resented it because he felt like he was the senior senator of Texas and the only Democrat and he ought to have the right to take the lead which is the custom in other spots.

F: Did they ever make a kind of a formal truce, a handshake on this situation, or did they just continue to play it by ear?

B: Now that I don't know. I do know that appointments would lag in Texas for six months or a year or more. Then all of a sudden you'd see a wave of appointments. If you were a political observer, you'd see that Ralph had got about half of the guys that he wanted appointed and Lyndon had got the other half. It seemed like this would build up again and there'd be numbers of appointments. Then they'd come to some kind of a showdown and understanding, and some of the judges would be those that you obviously believed Johnson wanted. While none of this was ever publicly said, I think that's the way it worked out.

F: You could pretty well identify who belonged to whom.

B: They'd come to a showdown, kind of like a strike situation. They'd come to the eleventh hour, but neither one of them would strike; they'd make a settlement, a compromise.

F: When you got out to Los Angeles, did you have any idea at all that

Johnson could get the nomination?

B: I never did believe he could be nominated, no, never did believe it.

F: Had the labor group at Los Angeles, that is, the Texas part of it, come to any decision at that point, or were they still playing it by ear?

B: The Texas folks, of course, I don't believe there were many labor people on the delegation. I was not on the delegation. I went strictly as a visitor. Frankly, I was for John F. Kennedy for many of the reasons I've already said: I never had quite forgiven Lyndon for 1947 or 1959, and never had that close a rapport with him, although I always supported him in every election that he ever ran, but I've always done it reluctantly at some time.

F: But sometimes it was because of the alternatives.

B: But I was a John F. Kennedy person. Frankly, my first love was Hubert Humphrey. I've been a Hubert Humphrey person ever since I knew Hubert Humphrey. But it was obvious that Humphrey wasn't even in the game out there, so I did what I could influencing labor delegates from other states to be for Kennedy.

F: Did you see Johnson at all before the nomination for president began?

B: I did not speak to him at Los Angeles. He was busy negotiating high level and I wasn't in that high a level and I never did see him at Los Angeles.

F: When did you first get word that Kennedy was going to name him as his vice presidential running mate?

B: After Kennedy had the nomination, somewhere, well, it was early the

next morning, after it was a commonly known fact.

F: Did it come down as a rumor or as a pretty stated fact?

B: No, it came as a pretty stated fact that during the course of the night whatever had transpired had occurred. I remember a fellow now dead who was head of National COPE, Jim McDevitt, who was the old labor leader out of the AF of L; he was the leader, the Al Barkan of his day. He was the man ahead of Al Barkan as head of COPE under the merged organization. I thought he was going to have a heart attack, because he was a very strong anti-Johnson person. We had to put him to bed. He was in a state of shock about it. It just struck him as being unbelievable.

F: Did you have the feeling that a successful revolt could be pulled off?

B: No, I did not.

F: These were just people expressing themselves.

B: They were just expressing themselves because by the time it became an official fact, most labor leaders that I talked to weren't happy about it but they felt like Mr. Kennedy knew best and probably felt like he needed Johnson to win, and yes, Johnson had great legislative ability. As vice president, he'd be in the Senate where his ability to get legislation enacted [would be valuable]. This has always been Lyndon's long suit, somehow to get those of the far left and the far right to get together on a bill and get it passed into law. Maybe not all you wanted, but certainly better than not having a bill at all. If Johnson has a long suit, and he has many, and then he has many shortcomings, but his ability to get legislation passed, I think is the great

contribution that he made.

F: Did you more or less agree with the national labor sentiment that Kennedy knew what he was doing and that the thing to do was go along with it and work the ticket?

B: After I got over the shock of it, because I was never that strong anti-Johnson. I just didn't think he was as good a man as Kennedy for the country at that hour. I'd had a personal relationship with him that had been pretty fair; he'd always treated me with respect and as a gentleman and I'd always treated him the same. All the legislative workshops which I used to conduct as educational director, he would always come to and he would always seem to be for many of the legislative ambitions of the labor movement. So my feeling towards him was not as hostile as many others, but there were a lot of hostile labor leaders at that convention who frankly were just damn unhappy about that. Yet they seemed to take the position that Mr. Meany took--that Mr. Kennedy knows best, it's his prerogative, it's his right, and we support it.

F: And, of course, if you do veto him on his first act as your nominee, then you throw the whole campaign into a--

B: Well, that's right. If labor had caused a revolt, it was obvious later when the election was so close that here, even in Texas, we won by, what, forty-one thousand, even with Lyndon Johnson on the ticket. Had labor revolted against that first appointment, it was obvious that we would have given the election to Mr. Nixon. I think Mr. Meany showed his wisdom there and even Mr. Reuther took the position that

this is Mr. Kennedy's decision and, while we may be displeased, we support it. And that kind of quelled the rebellion.

F: Going back to these labor workshops you had for a moment, when Johnson used to come down to those, did he give just a frankly political speech? What did he do there?

B: Oh, he, frankly, never talked politics to us much. We'd be in Washington, you see, and I'd take a hundred and fifty leaders, two different people from every congressional district, and we'd spend a week in Washington lobbying. And we would hold what we called a Washington legislative workshop. Many times the prize of having done things all year was this free trip to Washington. He and Sam [Rayburn] would both come and they would talk about legislation. Of course, they'd get in their own political licks, but they'd do it indirectly.

F: They'd explain more or less the status of bills and the possibility.

B: Lyndon would bring Lady Bird with him most of the time, and this would be when we clang it up with a banquet. The way we'd conduct them, there were no speeches; you merely introduced all your congressman guests, your Department of Labor guests, your international union guests. We'd have about two hundred. Lyndon and Sam would come, and Sam would speak for the House and Lyndon would speak for the Senate. Then even later when he was vice president, he would come, but he seldom made a political speech at these functions. We were there for legislative purposes and he would generally talk about legislation or he would talk about the Democratic Party. But he seldom talked politics about his own election efforts.

F: Did he seem to have a pretty good grasp on what the party's needs were?

B: Oh, he always had a grasp. He always knew what the party's program was and what it ought to be doing. And after he became vice president, I thought he was a good vice president in that he was a good advocate of the President's program.

F: What did you do during the campaign of 1960?

B: I worked like hell. I just worked day and night.

F: (Laughter) It took it, too, didn't it?

B: I worked day and night. I traveled this state more miles. I guess I traveled twenty-thousand miles in three months, every union meeting that I could get into. I just worked because I disliked Richard Nixon and I still do, if anything more so. He's only proven what I knew all the time about that fellow. I think he is a terrible president. He is dividing this country and it is in worse shape today than it ever has been. I don't blame him for it, but when you take the job of being coach, you ought to do a better job than he's doing.

F: So you're not sure he's coaching sometimes.

B: I don't believe he is. But Lyndon Johnson, I think, make a great contribution in the 1960 campaign. In my opinion, Mr. Kennedy was right, he needed him to win. I think the election results proved that he made the right decision.

F: Do you think those southern states that went for Kennedy, Johnson pretty well brought in?

B: I think that, as well as Texas. I think without Lyndon Johnson on the

ticket we would have lost Texas and many of the other southern states.

F: (Laughter) Couldn't afford to lose any.

B: That's right.

F: Did this matter of Kennedy's Catholic religion give you much problem or was that pretty well tossed aside?

B: Well, I am a Catholic, and it was a problem, but I think the meeting in Houston did a great deal in the way Mr. Kennedy conducted himself and the statements he made there, I think he put a lot of that to bed, but certainly not all of it.

F: That was an inspiration, really. Did you have any role in getting it set up?

B: No, I really didn't. I didn't have anything to do with setting that meeting up. I don't even recall who did, but it was a good thing.

F: You don't know whether Johnson did either?

B: I'm not sure. He may have and I just don't know about it.

F: Did your paths cross Johnson in this summer and early fall of 1960?

B: Yes, we had met on numbers of occasions. He was campaigning and I recall one big shindig we had up at the Ranch at that time. Then we had met again up at Fredericksburg and we met all over this state. I guess we met a half a dozen times. And each time of course, as the President would come down, we would travel with him wherever he went. Mr. Kennedy was always very certain that wherever he went he had a pretty good entourage of labor leaders. He would contact them immediately about any of his travel plans.

F: As far as you can tell, did Johnson and Kennedy campaign together well?

B: I thought they did. Now if they had their differences, I never saw them. It seemed to me from the time they shook hands in Los Angeles that they were a pretty good team. Even though they were two different kinds of politicians and two different kinds of men with two different kinds of philosophies, they seemed to be compatible.

F: Once Johnson is vice president, does the fact that he's from Texas give Texas labor any particular advantage in getting to whatever people it needs to?

B: Not especially, because you see you have to understand--I'm sure it did, but you have to understand that on matters that are pertaining to the nation, we work strictly through the offices of the AF of L-CIO. Seldom if ever do we go to Washington pursuing a legislative matter or appointments, for that fact, unless we work through out organization. We learned a long time ago that on national matters, we do better with the power of the fifty states collectively than each of us will do individually working on a state-to-state basis. So even when we were interested in appointments, we would go through the legislative department, or the COPE department, or the research department, and in setting up our appointments with the President, we would always relate through the buildings [?], so that even when I wanted to see the Vice President, even though he was from Texas, I just kind of followed the organization protocol. I would tell Al Barkan in COPE, "Well, I'll be up there next week and I'd like to meet with him. I'll have a delegation of some twenty-seven or twenty-eight labor leaders and if your office would be kind enough--." Plus it saves us

money. So Al's organization, through the AF of L-CIO, would arrange it. Johnson would tell him what time and we were either going to have a coffee or we were going to have a lunch and we were always treated with respect and courtesy. Very seldom can I say that the President, Lyndon Johnson, or the Vice President, or the Majority Leader, or even the Senator Johnson did not treat us with respect, although we had many differences with him, especially the ten hard years between 1946 and 1956.

F: Right. But you never did lose contact with him in a sense.

B: No. But, you see, again, until 1961, I was not the president and much of his high level dealings were with the then-president--

F: Well, I wasn't thinking of you specifically, I was thinking about the Texas labor movement, even in those years of bad relations, they continued to get good--

B: I think the communication was not very good in the years of 1946 to 1956. In fact, I would say the relationship between labor and Lyndon Johnson in those ten years was pretty cool, outside of those many personal friends he had. But as far as the official heads of the AF of L and CIO, I would assume that what I observed was that there was a very cool relationship in the years of 1946 to 1956.

F: Does Johnson stay abreast of things that are happening back home? I'm thinking particularly of your being elevated to, well, I'll make it one of the two headships of the state AFL-CIO. You've changed status about the same time he changes status. Now, does he seek you out on this?

B: Oh, yes, he stays on top of these things very well. He's aware of what's going on.

F: He knows that Hank Brown is no longer the same Hank Brown he was a month ago.

B: Yes, he's always aware of these changes, whether it's the Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association, or Labor, his organization seemed to stay in touch with that because there's always Johnson the politician. And Johnson the politician knows to keep up with what's going on back here in Texas.

F: And how the power may change as time goes on..

In this matter of appointments within the state, of course, Kennedy now is making the appointments, but you do have this Texan as vice president. Did that help you at all to get to President Kennedy for the appointments you wanted, or did you need Johnson?

B: Well, in my personal instance in 1961 when I became president, because I had been such a loud and strong advocate for Kennedy, I had a very good relationship and could go direct to the President through the many people I knew in his organization, so that in this instance, with regard to me, I didn't necessarily go through the Vice President's office. When I wanted to deal with the Vice President or needed to, I would, and I never went to Washington that I didn't always go by to see the Vice President. It was a matter of courtesy, it was a matter of respect for the office he held.

F: You always kept him informed of what you were there about?

B: I'd always visit with him and every time we had a function he was

always invited and certainly we always treated him with respect, even though we were disagreeing with him sometimes about what he was doing.

F: Did you get involved at all in the Kennedy visit there in November 1963 that resulted in his assassination?

B: Yes, see, I flew on the plane with him to the Albert Thomas [Dinner]. You see, here's that picture right here when we got off of Air Force One. Here's Lyndon Johnson. On that occasion I was on Air Force One. Here's Jackie and here's the President and here's President Johnson and Lady Bird. You can't see it, but [William W.] Kilgarlin, the then-Democratic chairman's wife is standing behind. This picture appeared in the Houston Post and I sent off.

We all went to the Thomas dinner together. We had a very large delegation of labor, I guess a thousand or more people to greet them. I had been up there; the day before I had testified for the Medicare bill before the Ways and Means Committee of the House, and had run into President Kennedy's brother-in-law and he first suggested it.

F: Is this [Sargent] Shriver or [Stephen] Smith?

B: Smith. He said "Why don't you just fly down with us?" I was going to fly commercial and meet them. So, said, "Well, let's call Vice President Johnson." So we did and Smith talked to him and I talked to him and he arranged to get me on the airplane. So I came down on the entourage and then I left them because we were getting all our executive board and COPE in here to go to that big hundred dollar dinner here.

F: You didn't make the tour the next day?

B: We flew to San Antonio first, Kelly Field, and then we flew over to Houston. Then I gave my seat up to our COPE director, and he took my place on the plane to Fort Worth and then to the Dallas thing. And I was driving with our woman director and the educational director of the United Steelworkers, Mr. Eddy Ball, and we were in Bastrop about to stop for a sandwich to come up here, because we had worked it out with President Kennedy that we would have a board meeting just before the reception for the big dinner that next day. He was going to pay the executive board of the AF of L-CIO a personal visit. That had never been done in our history, and we thought it would have been [great]. Of course, unfortunately, it never occurred and the terrible tragedy came and I thought we'd lost our--

F: Did you hear it on your car radio?

B: I heard it on the car radio in Bastrop. I was driving and it just shook me up so bad, I drove off the damn side of the road into a ditch; just really struck me emotionally, and it just tore me up.

F: You must have have had a real problem getting on into Austin.

B: Well, no, Mr. Ball drove us in.

F: I mean, for anyone to have to concentrate on the road at that time--

B: I had just had a great love and a great respect and a great admiration for Mr. Kennedy and it just really tore me up.

F: Did you get the feeling that, in great part, the trip was made to heal the Connally-Yarborough split or that this was just time to come see about a state--

B: I don't know. I think in part that may be so--there's been so much

written about that--but I got the feeling that it was just kind of timely for the President to be coming.

By that time he had appointed me to a couple of presidential commissions which later Mr. Johnson also did on the National Labor Management Panel and also I was on one of the national civil rights advisory councils that Mr. Kennedy had set up. Therefore I got to see and talk to the President about every sixty days as a result of going to Washington on the panels. And my love and admiration for him had grown where I guess I had a more personal feeling for Mr. Kennedy than I've had for any man that I've ever known politically, just a great love. So it really upset me. I guess for three months after that terrible tragedy, I was worthless to myself and to this organization.

F: John Connally opposed of course minimum wage law and in other ways got at cross purposes with Texas labor. Did the fact that he was close to Johnson influence your feeling toward Johnson at all, or could you categorize?

B: Well, I resented the fact that I thought the President could have done more with John Connally than he did. He seemed to be able to in an effective manner persuade Connally on many things that the President was concerned about, but it did not appear to me that he changed Mr. Connally's attitude. During Mr. Connally's years we passed very little meaningful legislation, whereas under Mr. [Preston] Smith who is likewise a conservative, we've had the best legislative year in our history, the workman's compensation reform, the minimum wage, the new vocational

education act. And we've had more people appointed to boards and commissions under Governor Smith.

F: Getting smarter on industrial accidents--

B: The industrial accident thing, while Mr. Connally went along with it, he certainly didn't help it much. While Mr. [Ben] Barnes and Mr. Smith seemed to be moving to the middle as moderates, it appeared to us that Connally got elected as a moderate but tended to become more conservative with each passing month and had a very poor rapport. One thing you may say for Smith is you can see him just every day of the week and he'll talk to you and he'll agree with you sometimes and he'll disagree. Frankly, that's about all we want from a governor. He has certainly taken our recommendations of appointments. Frankly, I think that's helped him. With the tough election he's got coming up this November, I think this is going to have proven to have been a wise decision. But our relationship with Mr. Connally was very bad and we blamed Lyndon Johnson for this in that he did little to help us. Now, on the other hand, some of us felt like, well, he's got so many other pressing matters nationally. But we never did feel like we got much help from Lyndon Johnson, and frankly there was always the resentment that we felt like that he was for John Connally when we were for Don Yarborough.

F: Okay, we've got a new president and it's Lyndon Johnson. When did you first have any contact with him?

B: Well, we of course did the thing of saying it's under circumstances that none of us wanted, you and we didn't want . . .

F: Public statements.

B: . . . but you're the president and we pledge to you our support. That was immediately after the tragedy. From that time on we had, I thought, a good personal relationship and I thought he had a great legislative program. I think that history will record that Lyndon Johnson's ability is what I've said before, the ability to pass legislation. He picked up what was the Kennedy program, modified it some, but in the most part worked with a fervor, I thought, to ensure the enactment of all the dreams that Mr. Kennedy had on civil rights, on housing, on education, and on medical research, on Medicare--especially in the field of civil rights, because many of us had felt like that he had been a foot dragger on the subject. But, if that was so, then he either changed his attitude or else we were mistaken about him because he certainly fought. The AF of L-CIO worked very closely with him because in the matter of civil rights, I don't think there's been a greater force in America than the AF of L-CIO for civil rights, although we have great difficulty educating and relating this all the way back to our union members. Even as today, we have many rednecks in our organization.

F: That's part of the democracy, I guess.

B: Yes, it is.

F: (Laughter) But sometimes it's divisive.

B: The leadership is great, but getting all the way down to that membership is difficult.

F: Did having a president from Texas help the Texas labor picture any?

Could you use a little more clout with your membership?

B: I think it helped a great deal. It helped this way: certainly Texas fared well as far as appropriations and the bringing of many governmental programs to Texas. It certainly helped our influence in the AF of L-CIO, for example, to have a president from Texas. On many occasions I was invited to come to Washington and meet with our national leadership and then go over to meet with Johnson, that it was traditional that you would deal with the home state of the President. I don't think the AFL-CIO was any different, in that when Mr. Kennedy was there they could call in Massachusetts, and when Mr. Truman was president. Of course, he's gone, but we didn't have a very close rapport with Eisenhower whatsoever, kind of a stiff business. But that was a very warm relationship between the AF of L-CIO in the Kennedy years and in the Johnson years. Mr. Meany and Mr. Johnson became very close personal friends.

F: You yourself found that you could get through to Mr. Johnson if you needed to.

B: If I needed to. In fact of the matter, I can't ever recall calling the White House and not getting through to him either with a message--and his staff was always courteous, they were always on top, and if I said, "Oh, I need to talk to the President," they would arrange it through Mr. --oh, the man from East Texas.

F: Marvin Watson.

B: Marvin Watson. I always had a good relationship with Marvin Watson, even though I do not share his political philosophy whatsoever.

F: I was going to ask about that. Marvin is quite conservative.

B: But I think during his time at the White House, he tried to think like the President thought and he didn't try to think like Marvin thought. The young man that was I thought so bright, Moyers, wasn't it?

F: Yes, Bill Moyers.

B: I had a fine relationship [with him]. And then there was another young man named Jones--

F: James Jones.

B: --that was just a brilliant young fellow who was always just very helpful to me. Then of course our old friend from Smithville over here that was with the President and later went into the public relations business.

F: Cliff Carter.

B: Cliff Carter. And then also our friend [Jake] Jacobsen was always of great help. In fact, I can honestly say that from the time the President became the president, that there was hardly a time that I needed to talk to him or see him that they would not arrange it. And certainly he was kind to me; he named me to a number of national committees, the one of which I was always most grateful for was the education I got as a member of the National Vocational Education Advisory Council. That was probably the most meaningful governmental appointment I ever had because I got a great liberal education about the--

F: How big a council is that?

B: Twenty-one members nationally.

F: How often did you meet?

B: Met every month in one of the hardest working committees under the hardest working guys I ever met in my life.

F: This wasn't any paper committee. You were there to get something done.

B: No, that was a workhouse committee. They met every month and they would meet from seven in the morning till nine, ten at night, two and three days.

F: What did you do?

B: It was really a tiger. Trying to write reports to the President and to the Congress and trying to beef up one of the real problems in why we're spending billions of dollars today on crash programs of manpower and training is we have turned out of school too many people college-oriented and not enough people oriented to the world of work. Only thirty per cent of the youth ever go to a school of higher education and seventy per cent are going to work, and we are spending most of our money on the higher education instead of relating people to the world of work. So really got involved because my whole life has been in the field of being a plumber and an apprentice and a learner in the trade union movement and the greatest failure I think this country has outside of how to end this damn war in Asia is our inability to train and teach young people about the world of work and to make work something that's respected instead of just a necessary evil.

F: We're hurting on it too, now.

B: The whole educational system seems to be designed to send everybody off to become a great executive when what we need are technicians and workers, with a feeling of great pride. You know, I used to take my children around on Sundays when I was a plumber and they got tired of it, but I never did. I'd drive them by and I'd say, you see that apartment house, well, your old Dad just got through putting in all that plumbing, and there was a great pride in me. I think we've lost a great deal of this. Most of the student counselors are figuring out how to get them to the University of Texas or Harvard or Yale or somewhere when [what] we ought to be doing is teaching those about the world of work and make work something that a man looks on with great pride.

F: Do you think President Johnson saw this?

B: I think he saw it, but I don't think he's done as much as he could have in arm-twisting the budget. You know, all the great programs in the world don't mean anything if you don't provide the money. This is what's wrong with Nixon. He does a lot of mouthing but he doesn't produce anything. I see Dr. DeBakey just scalded him this morning that he had done less about heart research than any president we've had in modern history. I think all the programs are suffering under the present administration. And I think Johnson knew this but he just didn't go to bat for it, although we did pass during his tenure the new vocational educational bill.

F: This was a direct outgrowth of what you'd been doing?

B: Well, I got appointed on the committee after having worked on the

national AFL-CIO advisory education to do the very thing that's now begun. I think one of the credits to Lyndon Johnson is this new vocational education, given five years if the Nixon Administration don't kill it with lack of funds, I think by 1975 we may have a decent vocational education system all over this country. But they've cut practically all the money out. Johnson had put a lot of money in the bill, but of course the Congress had not appropriated it. And now what they've done is just cut it and cut it and cut it to where it's just a paper tiger. Now Preston Smith is also a very strong man on this vocational education and it has helped him a great deal with working people.

F: Did you get the feeling that Johnson was sincerely committed to these various programs in education, Medicare, old age assistance?

B: I think Johnson's greatest real contribution was in his sincerity about education, the overhaul of it all, the updating of it, as well as in the field of medical research and medicine and Medicare. I think he was really sincere about that, that he wasn't just giving it lip service.

F: He believed it was possible to solve these problems.

D: The fact that Ralph Yarborough enacted more educational bills during the Johnson years than all the way back to George Washington lends impetus, truth to what I'm saying--that Johnson had his weight behind this legislation. On the other hand, his weakness was Johnson never wanted to really build organizations much, whether they were the Chamber of Commerce or the Manufacturers Association or AF of L-CIO.

F: Or the local precinct.

B: He never wanted to help build organizations much. It was kind of like he had a fear of organizations, although he never said that, I got the feeling that he would never lend much besides lip service to the enactment of laws that would really help union organization. Now for workers, yes, but not for union organization. And for this reason his reputation among labor union leaders suffered even as president.

F: Did he ever talk with you about his stand on open housing?

B: I don't believe we ever discussed that.

F: Or wage-hours?

B: Wages and hours, yes.

F: Of course, he had a fairly consistent record there.

B: Yes, he was for that.

F: From the time he was a young congressman.

B: He used to say to me, "You know, Hank, the plumber and the electrician and the highly skilled worker--he don't need much help from the president. Where we've got to use the power of the government is for the low paid worker that doesn't have a union, that doesn't have collective bargaining, that doesn't have a representative." So it always appeared to me that he was strong for strong minimum wage laws and strong administration of those laws. On the other hand, I never felt like he was really strong for repeal of 14-B. I think he did the lip service on it. I think he did what the President with a Democratic Party pledge was supposed to do, but

I don't think he turned the screws down on the bill, although I wrote him that and said so in a blistering letter, that I thought he waltzed. He used to carry that letter around and every time [he saw] a friend from Texas, he'd pull that letter out and show it to him. "Here I've been a friend of this guy for thirty years, and he is cutting me up to pieces with this kind of stuff." But I thought it was true and I always was pretty honest in my dealings with Johnson and I think for the most part he was honest with me as an individual. But I don't think he did all he could have about the repeal of 14-B.

F: There was never any question that labor would support him in Texas in 1964.

B: Never any question, no. No, even though many of us were not totally happy with him.

F: (Laughter) Even before you knew it was going to be Goldwater?

B: I don't think it would have mattered who the man was because of the Republicans. If you know what kind of delegate body goes, there's a lot of decent Republicans, but very few decent Republican delegates, in my opinion; they tend to be in the hands of the right wing of this country. That's not to say that they are not good Republicans because some of them are personal friends of mine, but they certainly are not concerned about workers. The delegates to a national convention are likely to be the fat cats of most communities, and as a result, a guy like Lindsay going to the national convention is wasting his time and just seeking publicity. You know, here was Rockefeller--he had as much chance of getting the nomination at that

convention as I did.

F: Right. Did you get any particular insights into whether Johnson played a role in 1964 in keeping Joe Kilgore out of the senatorial race. He would have given Yarborough trouble and there was a strong feeling for him.

B: I thought he did. Now I wasn't in on those telephone conversations that have been written about. But I got the most definite impression that as president, the President wanted Ralph Yarborough re-elected, that Ralph by then had grown in stature, where on the labor committee he was a power, and that he was very strongly supporting to the President's legislative program and that he was necessary to the President's legislative program, which I thought was a good program. Therefore, I saw nothing except evidence that he attempted to keep anyone that might identify with him: Connally, Kilgore, and others out of that race. Kilgore of course had had a personal rapport and had Kilgore run, the nation would have believed that it was with Johnson's help even if Johnson had not done a thing. And I think [it was] for those reasons, but I don't think it was because of any great personal affection for Yarborough because I think history will reveal that they did not have a very good personal relationship, to say the least.

F: Right. Just good practical politics.

Did you in your position see much of Secretary [Willard] Wirtz?

B: Saw him a great deal. I was a member of the National Labor Management Panel. I was a member of his advisory council. And I had a

lot of respect for Bill Wirtz. I thought he made a good secretary of labor although many national labor leaders didn't like him.

F: Did you get the feeling that he worked fairly well with Johnson?

B: I thought he worked very well and I thought he was very loyal to the President, very loyal, and I thought Bill Wirtz was a darn good man. Now he had appointed some people in some departments that were not good administrators and they got him trouble with some of the labor unions in a national level. But Bill Wirtz I thought was sincere, dedicated, and was very loyal to President Johnson. I had a very close personal rapport with Bill. We would have lunch and we would visit and we'd have a toddy for our body, so to speak, after some of those long sessions. And the other man I got to know very closely was the man appointed as head of the Federal Mediation, now gone off, [William] Simkin, one of the most dedicated men I ever met in my life.

F: I haven't seen Simkin. Is he worth my time?

B: He's doing something at Harvard and at Columbia and mediating.

F: I wondered if he had enough contact with the Johnson Administration per se.

B: I'm sure he did because he served all his time under Mr. Johnson, you see, and had a very close rapport with him.

F: I've got him on my list.

B: Yes. Probably the most dedicated, hardest working public servant I ever met in my life. Even though he was a Kennedy appointment, he had a great personal loyalty to President Johnson.

F: From your vantage point, you never could see any difference between the people that Johnson inherited and the people that he himself named, could you, as far as loyalty to Johnson was concerned?

B: I couldn't see it, but you could feel it in Washington. Of course, I think they beat this thing to death in the public press, but there's a funny thing about most public servants I've met, especially on the high level that I was fortunate because of being on these commissions to get to meet, I think that no matter who the president would be, that they have a feeling of professionalism that, "So long as I accept this responsibility, I shall be loyal to the President." And they feel it very strongly. Now as to all of this other, as to the Kennedy folks having done this and that if they did that as reported in the press, I didn't see it, I didn't see it.

F: Right. You've at least been able to observe presidents at various levels, and known some of them, from Roosevelt down to Nixon. How do they tend to compare with each other in your view insofar as the needs and wishes of organized labor?

B: Well, it's very hard to make a comparison because they are such different men. Starting with President Johnson, his great long suit I think was his ability to enact legislation that was long overdue and meaningful. His short suit seemed to have been that he just never did understand well international relations, and having been the president at a time when we stepped up our involvement in the Vietnam and now the whole Southeast Asia war, I think history will speak ill of him on that involvement and well of him

on his legislative accomplishments on the domestic front. I always had a good relationship with him and yet it was not a closeness, it was kind of a business sort of a relationship. With Mr. Kennedy, he didn't live long enough to show what he could do for the country, but he kind of put a new hope in the hearts of men and women everywhere. I had a great love for him, but I don't know, I think history will record that he had a great effect on the country as a whole and the world, but his legislative accomplishments--of couse, he didn't live long enough to see whether he could produce. I always thought Mr. Eisenhower--and I began to go to Washington during those years--was kind of a nice guy who didn't pay too much attention to what was going on. He'd kind of drop by the office and sign the papers and made the proclamations and let the team run the Office of the Presidency. He did the TV bit, the radio bit, he made appointments as recommended by staff. He just kind of followed his cabinet, and he had some strong cabinet officers that really had more to say than he did. I thought he had a very poor relationship between him and his vice president as compared with, I thought, a good relationship between Kennedy and Johnson.

F: And Johnson and Humphrey?

B: Johnson and Humphrey had, I thought, a good relationship. I thought Humphrey was a very tremendous vice president in that he was on the President's team all the time, working, always working. I thought he made a great contribution, whereas I don't think Nixon made any contribution to the well-being of this country at all and didn't

even help the president much. You recall even Eisenhower's statement that if he had a week he'd think of something that Nixon had done that had helped. You recall that.

F: Yes.

B: I didn't know Mr. Truman well, and I was just a cub leader, but I guess I respect and admire him more than all the presidents I ever knew, mostly because he just told it like it is. He came closest to being a labor leader kind of a guy. "If you like it, all right, if you don't like it, sorry about that, I have made the decision and that's it." Another thing I liked about Mr. Truman is he never left a friend. It mattered not whether the whole world was against you, if Mr. Truman was for him, he was for him, and the world knew it. I guess in my lifetime--of course my hero that I grew up with was Roosevelt and he is today. I came through the Depression, I entered the world of work, I like to have starved to death, I traveled this country looking for work.

F: We can remember twenty cents an hour work, if you could get it.

B: My first job was for ten cents an hour and ten hours a day.

I thought that all of the reform legislation which was overdue--and I see so many people, 25 million of them receiving social security, now added Medicare, I see unemployment compensation in hard times, I see the security of loans, I see how much better off the farmers are in this country, the beginning of freedom for the Negroes and the minorities--all of which I think stem all the way back to the thirties reform legislation of the New Deal. Many of

the Republicans to this day have got rich because of the acts of Mr. Roosevelt. To me, he was just the greatest. I guess I'll die believing that there'll never be another man like Franklin Roosevelt. That's not to say that I don't think Mr. Truman was a great man.

F: But each built on the other.

B: But I don't think you can compare because they came at different times, they met different challenges, they had to make hard decisions. Of course, the presidency is a place where hard decisions are made.

F: Did you see any evidence in this campaign of 1968 that Mr. Johnson, as some people charge, really preferred Nixon over Humphrey?

B: No, I think that Mr. Johnson could have done more, but then again I don't know whether Humphrey asked him to do more. You see, if you're the candidate, such as is in labor politics, if I'm running for reelection and I don't call on you to do much, then you're reluctant to do much because you think that perhaps I don't want you or else you may hurt me and you don't want to hurt me. And every man who leaves as Mr. Johnson [did] certainly made his enemies. So I can't honestly say. However, I do know that Mr. Johnson made a great contribution in carrying this state for Hubert Humphrey. I think that what really got us over the hump where it was just nip and tuck, forty-three thousand votes. And I was really involved in that one because I was for Hubert Humphrey. I sent him a personal check when he was fighting Kennedy in West Virginia which I think was when Kennedy really put him to bed, so there were very few people

in Texas for Hubert Humphrey that far back. But, in any event, I think the Astrodome, when Mr. Johnson came and Frank Sinatra and Nancy and her troupe and we swelled that dome plumb to the ceiling and Mr. Johnson walked in with that tremendous ovation. I've never heard an ovation like that in my life.

F: Seemed to pick up Democrats all over the country.

B: And I think it just swept through the country, and it swept through this state. I think the Astrodome occasion and Mr. Johnson's personal appearance there and the magnetism that he has really made the difference. And that's not to say that Senator Yarborough was not a great champion because he headed up that citizens thing in Texas and with almost no money. I think the total amount of money that committee collected was something like seventy-five thousand dollars. So I think that if you could credit anybody with carrying Texas, it would be Ralph Yarborough and Lyndon Johnson. Now across the nation, I think Johnson could have done more, but then I don't know whether he was asked to do more. If he was asked to do more and didn't, then certainly I think that's a black mark on him. On the other hand, if he wasn't asked, then I think that was a stupidity of Hubert Humphrey's.

F: Haven't seen Mr. Humphrey yet. He's agreed, but after November elections we're to get together.

B: Yes. Well, he's a great American and a great man.

F: I agree on that. Have you seen Mr. Johnson since he came home?

B: Saw him a couple of times, mostly by chance. Called him after he got

home, you know, just, "Welcome home, Mr. President." It was funny. He was having a new phone system put in and it wasn't working that well that day, and Gerald Brown who's an old personal friend of his, no kin to me but a good labor leader and he's the head of all the building trade unions, a job I used to have before I became the president. We called him here and he had to call us back two or three times because the thing would keep getting disconnected. Then I ran into him perchance over here one day at the Federal Building and we had a cup of coffee and just chitchatted, nothing politic, just visiting.

F: He seemed in good spirits?

B: Then I sent him a telegram wishing him well the night the convention passed a resolution and we wired it to him out at Fort Sam. The next day I was in Laredo and he called me and said, "Just wanted to thank you," and all this stuff, and we had a ten minute visitation. So I talked to him I would guess three or four times on the phone and I've only had that one personal visitation, although we keep talking about driving up to the Ranch and just sitting around and chewing the fat. We just have been so involved [with] the legislature, the special session, and then we've had this real rough election year where we did well in the Texas Senate but we lost a really great friend of ours, Senator Yarborough. And shouldn't have, just shouldn't have.

F: Did you get the feeling that Mr. Johnson stayed out of this senatorial race?

B : I told our committee when we met to kind of analyze it that there had been some people talking because of Mr. Connally's involvement that Lyndon Johnson really had contributed to Ralph's demise. I didn't see his footsteps and I do not believe that he was involved. Not that he wouldn't be involved if he decided--I just don't think that he got involved because it would seem like I would have seen it if he was involved. Now certainly there's no question that many friends of Lyndon Johnson, vis a vis John Connally and others, no question about them being involved, and I would say ninety per cent of Johnson's business associates were certainly for Lloyd Bentsen.

F: Were you invited to any social affairs at the White House?

B: Yes, I've had dinner there several times, took my daughter which was one of the great thrills of her life.

F: What age girl is she?

B: She's now married. At that time, this was right after the President became president, I think it was in 1964, so she would have then been about--well, she's twenty--fourteen or fifteen. And his nephew was visiting him. So he just turned her over to this young nephew which was a young man about sixteen and they made a day out of it; they went all over Washington.

F: Must have been a dream day for a young girl.

B: She's got all kind of autographed pictures of the President, including the one of him in his cowboy regalia that he autographed for her. He's quite a hero of hers, mostly I think because she stays involved on legislation and she's quite a liberal-thinking girl, now married to

a young man serving in that damn war over there. We just pray that he gets home alive. Of course, I've had one son over there also, and I have a very nasty opinion about that war. I think it's a lousy, stinking war and I don't think we ought to be there, but then that's neither here nor there. I don't think we're going about that thing at all in the right manner, just destroying the fabric of this country, 35 billion dollars a year and more killing and more deaths. And we don't seem to be solving anything, we just seem to get in deeper and deeper. And after what, nine, ten years? I think Mr. Eisenhower first sent over the first technicians. For a country that seems to be able to solve all the problems of the world, we have done a pretty lousy job for a generation over there.

F: Well, thank you, Mr. Brown.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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