INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: ASHBROOK P. BRYANT

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Judge Bryant's residence, Bethesda, Maryland

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let's start at the top then and let me ask you to explain how you became involved with the Senate Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee.

B: Well, that's quite a long story. I had been chief of the Washington Supervisory Investigative Department of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Through that I got into working directly on presidential directives during World War II. The main one of those was the Empire Ordnance investigation, which had a life of its own, a long story of its own, and we ultimately had to present that to the grand jury in New York. I was pulled back out of the army; I had gotten into the army by that time. We had submitted an enormous report, and it was a report that didn't have too much direct evidence in it but it had a lot of innuendo and that sort of thing, and it was presented at the White House. The President, I am told, said, "This has got to go to a grand jury. We can't have this thing kicking around," and he turned it over to the Attorney General, who was then [Francis] Biddle. The assistant attorney general in charge of the Criminal Division, or the Antitrust Division or whatever it was, was Tom Clark from Texas. They needed

somebody; they shipped it up to New York. It was under the--is this too much detail?

G: No, no. That's fine.

B: It was under the general supervision of Clark. Clark's man was Jim Kilday--who was the brother of Paul Kilday, who was quite a well known Texas congressman in those days, probably a bit before your time--and others, and they sent it up to New York to present it to the grand jury. The fellow in charge of it in grand jury was Boris Castelanos [?], who was a very well known assistant district attorney up there. But they also sent for me. I was by this time in the army--I was in the military police actually--getting ready to go to OCS [Office Candidate School]. They pulled me out of the army and brought me back to New York and there I was. We presented the whole thing to the grand jury, and I got to know Clark through that.

When I came back after the war I sort of stayed in touch with this kind of thing. I didn't know Lyndon from the side of a house. His man was Don Cook. Don Cook had been with him in the House, as I understand it. Then he had become alien property custodian, I suppose through Lyndon's efforts. I don't know that to be the case, but I would assume that to be the case. And then when Lyndon started out on this investigative work having to do with the armed forces, Cook did it for him. Cook decided he wanted to be chairman of the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission]. In the meantime I had again gotten involved in Texas, because I had investigated a couple of big matters down in Texas for the SEC and had gotten to know O. H. Allred, that's Oren Allred [?], who was a brother of Jimmie Allred who was at one time governor of Texas.

G: Excuse me, let me just ask you what the matters were that you were investigating.

B: Well, the matter that we're now talking about was the Globe Aircraft Company, that was one of them. The matter that I investigated under the presidential directive for Tom Clark was the Empire Ordnance investigation, which was very famous at the time, and oh, several others. I've kind of forgotten what they all were, but they all had this kind of thing, so that I was reasonably well known I guess as a successful investigator.

When Cook moved into the SEC, he continued for a while his dual job as being an SEC commissioner and also the chief counsel of the Preparedness Committee, which was Lyndon's committee. As you will notice, all of the first dozen or more, oh, twenty reports which that committee put out were put out under Cook. But then he decided he was going to be chairman of the commission, or some way it was decided, and they needed somebody to take his place.

As I say, I was chief of the investigative branch of the Corporation Finance Division in the SEC, and Cook called me in one day and asked me if I thought I would be interested in doing what I knew vaguely he had been doing. And I said yes, I thought I would. I'd just about had it as far as the SEC was concerned. So he said, "Well, I don't know just exactly how this is going to work out, but stand by," and I did. Then he called me and he took me up to meet Lyndon. Well, I had never known Lyndon; I was only vaguely aware of who he was. We had a pleasant interview. I'm not too clear on the dates, but this was probably the latter part of 1951.

Along in January, I suppose it was, of 1952, I filed a dossier more or less with all my history and so forth. I remember it was a typical Johnson operation, very precise. They wanted a picture of me and all this kind of stuff, which I provided. Then I went up

again and had another interview with him, and then he took me before the committee, at a regular committee meeting of the Preparedness Committee. They were all there. Surprisingly enough, the only one who stood up to greet me was Leverett Saltonstall, which I think was quite typical. But I was--oh, before that Lyndon had taken me to meet Styles, that is Styles Bridges, who is as you know the leading Republican on the committee and a senator from New Hampshire, a very able man. I later learned that when I first talked to Styles he wasn't particularly impressed, but then at this meeting of the committee, several of them pressured me rather closely as to who I was, what I did and so forth, my history, and Styles asked me, "Mr. Bryant, just why do you want this job?" I said, "Well, I might be able to do you fellows some good, and I might be able to do myself some good." He smiled broadly, as you can imagine, and Lyndon sort of nodded a bit. Apparently that impressed Bridges, he told me later. So I went to work there.

Several investigations were under way and I took over and we were quite successful. I have the reports here, if you're interested in them. I don't know whether you've got them or not. Those are some of them. I'm not sure they're all there, but if you want me to--

G: This is a report on the Munitions Board, an interim report on defense mobilization, adequacy of air power, a supplemental report on the tin, an interim report on the Moroccan air base construction.

B: That was a very interesting thing, the Moroccan [air base], but . . .

G: Aircraft procurement, Moroccan air base construction second report . . .

B: Well, the way we operated was this. We had an office, not in the Capitol building or in the Senate Office Building; we were down in the old SEC building. Lyndon would come down there sometimes and we would have staff meetings down there, at which I would report to him on where matters--first I would have the staff report to me with just the normal type of thing, and then I would report to him. They would occur only occasionally.

G: What would you say, once a month?

B: Oh, about that. But almost two or three times a week, at least once a week, I would go up at five o'clock, meet Lyndon in his office, and here's where I got the--when I first went up there, frankly, I went in and talked to Lyndon. He had the most fantastic oral memory of anybody I ever encountered. I would go in there and start telling him something, and you usually double back a bit in order to pick up where you were last week. He would stop me and say, "Don't do that, Ash," then he'd practically recite word for word what I'd said the week before, and then we'd go on from there. This amazed me because I knew he was doing a thousand other things at the same time.

Another thing that's interesting along these lines was that when we reported to him in writing he insisted that we get it all on one page. He would take those pages--oh, occasionally I suppose if it was a very important matter it would spill over--but he'd take those pages, and his secretary when I first went up there was a woman named Mary Rather. By the way, is Mary still alive? She is? She sort of ruled him in a way. He was always talking about people didn't appreciate him and this kind of stuff. I think it was kind of an act just to get people to do things, but Mary would come in. He'd say, "Where

is that thing?" so forth and so forth. Mary would come and she'd pick it up and put it down right in front of him.

Anyway, what was I saying?

G: You were talking about you would be up in his office at five o'clock.

B: Oh, yes. We would go over--and the first time I went in there, he would pick up the phone and he would--apparently, his mind was surprising, because it was elliptical. His mind would keep on going on what he was saying to me while he was talking on the telephone, and then when he put down the telephone he would go on without filling in. So the first time I went in there I came out and I said, "Walter"--Walter [Jenkins] sat outside. There were three offices: his office, Walter's office with two or three others, and then the outer office where Sam [Houston Johnson] sat, Sam, and the others. I said, "Walter, my God, I have no idea what that man said or what he told me to do." Walter laughed, he said, "Oh, you'll get used to it." And I did. I finally got so that I knew what he was talking about.

As you know, I was there something less than a year. We got out a number of excellent reports. I was with him every day more or less. I was either up in his office talking with Walter or I'd duck in or have something to ask him. Other than any impressions and three or four little things that I want to tell you about, this is about it. I mean . . .

G: I wanted to ask you first about Donald Cook. You knew him well.

B: Very well.

G: Was it difficult for him to maintain a position with the SEC at the same time he was

being--?

B: Well, difficult in what way? He was a very able man.

G: Well, either time-wise or in terms of--

B: Well, sure. I suppose the reason he left the job was that running the SEC is a big thing. He first came down there as just a commissioner, as I recall it, and then they created a position called vice chairman. During these two episodes he continued to work for the committee, and he directed the committee, and that's why the committee's offices were down in the SEC building. He used to do then just as I did later, he would go up every afternoon about five o'clock and go in and [talk about] whatever small business he had to do with Johnson and so forth.

G: Did he give you any advice in dealing with Lyndon Johnson when he approached you about the job?

B: I don't remember any specific advice. I used to advise with Cook fairly frequently. In what sense?

G: Oh, in terms of, say, what Johnson's expectations would be?

B: Oh, Johnson's expectations were always more than you could do. Johnson was a terrific worker himself and he expected everybody else to be. The guy that could really tell you about that would be Walter Jenkins. Walter was on telephone calls--Johnson used to call him at two or three o'clock in the morning.

Oh, I started to tell you about this Mary Rather thing. When we would get up these little one-page memos, which all must be around somewhere, he had a leather briefcase and Mary used to put them all in that and he would take them home. He always

insisted on going home, as I told you on the telephone, at six o'clock "to play with my children." No matter what else was going on, as important as it would be, he always insisted on that. He'd take this leather envelope and put it alongside of his bed, I'm told, of course I wasn't there, and then he would read these things. He would put "OK, LBJ," or "See me," or "Walter, look into this." In the morning they would be distributed. If something puzzled him and it was two o'clock in the morning, he'd pick up the telephone and call Walter and ask him, or he'd pick up the telephone and call somebody else.

When I first went there--I just remembered this--John Lyon [?], who was a very well known and very able professor at Columbia whom I had when I went to Columbia, John was a big, fussy sort of a guy. With his permission of course, when I went to work for Lyndon I gave John as one of the references. By God, he claimed--John was always exaggerating, it probably wasn't two o'clock in the morning--that he was in his apartment up on Riverside Drive and the phone rang, and here was Johnson cross-questioning him about me and so forth and so on. John wasn't the sort of a fellow that took that. I would have loved to have a transcript of that conversation, because Lyon was just about as eccentric in many ways as Lyndon was, that sort of thing.

G: Back to Cook. Were there any administrative problems or legal problems with having this kind of relationship with the SEC and the sub-committee?

B: Well, if there were I didn't know about it. I didn't ever get into that kind of thing. You mean whether or not there was a conflict of interest?

G: Well, not so much that, I mean, but providing office space and presumably some staff time, if at least the chairman or the--

B: Well, I just don't know. It was never raised with me. It may very well have been one of the reasons why Cook gave it up. I don't think so. I think Cook was just sick of it. I think it was a full-time job, and they were coming up to an election, as you remember. We were pushing to get these reports in, and I suppose they wanted somebody to ride herd on them, and I did it.

G: How much did the Preparedness Subcommittee's work depend on the Korean War, or how much was it tied to the Korean War?

B: Oh, quite a bit, quite a bit.

G: Do you think that--?

B: I think the idea was of course everybody was very interested in--well, now for instance, you take that ammunition thing, you've heard all about that, ten thousand miles or something or other. In order to get ammunition over to Korea somebody figured out--I don't think it was on our committee--that a memorandum had to go ten thousand miles before [it was approved]. Oh, we had all kinds of very interesting things. For instance, in the air force investigation I remember very well we were going to the 143 wing air force. The question was that they were overloading, why weren't they getting the planes, why were they behind schedule and all that kind of stuff. I remember, I think it was a fellow from Curtiss-Wright or one of the big airplane companies was testifying one day before the committee. They were talking about safety, and they had some enormous number of miles of wire that were in the airplane with all kinds of safety devices. This gentleman said, "Well, Senator, the perfect airplane would be so heavy with all of these safety devices that it wouldn't fly, and it would be perfectly safe." That was just one of

the little things. But we had all kinds of stuff.

G: Did the essential mission of the subcommittee change through time? For example, I read in one of the reports that its initial focus was on the problems of manpower and material.

B: Well, that's true. We went into all kinds of things. The main ones that I ran personally, and they were vast investigations and they were highly controversial, one was the Moroccan air force bases. That was where they built the air bases--see, what happened was the British turned over to us protecting the Mediterranean and so forth, and we had to build those air bases over there. That was one--I did a lot of that myself. I didn't go to Morocco, but I directed that and wrote the reports and so forth.

G: Did some of the investigators go to Morocco?

B: No, they didn't. The only one that I know that went over to Morocco and actually saw the thing firsthand from our committee was Wayne Morse. Wayne sent for me. He said he was going over there to take a look at it, and he got me to give him a whole series of suggestions as to what we were looking into and so forth, and he did a pretty good job. See, the problem there was--well, it was kind of too bad, because in a way it may be that the problems over there were somewhat insurmountable, but for instance they built air bases with runways. When the big planes came down in, they just kept going right into the ground. They were accused of spending most of the money building themselves luxurious quarters. Well, this is not unusual with the army. Actually, whatever his name was, the head of the engineers got fired over that thing.

G: Well, there was a situation I guess with a colonel's wife.

B: Yes, well, she came into my office; I felt very sorry for her because she told me--she

came over to see Lyndon and he of course schlepped her off on me, a very nice little person. They were an army couple. I don't know whether this is the same--you're talking about building a house or something for her?

G: Yes.

B: Well, what she was concerned with, and rightfully so, was that once an army officer gets entangled with a committee of Congress and in an unfavorable posture, he's finished. He just doesn't go up, at least so I was told. That was her mission coming to see me. Now whether she'd been to see others or whether this was the same woman that I saw reported in one of those earlier reports, I'm not certain.

G: What did she want you to do about it?

B: Well, she wanted me to intercede with the Chairman and have him give this colonel whatever-his-name-is a clean bill of health. Well, we had already criticized him in the report for being partly responsible for--oh, it was a mess over there. The big fellow who later was executive vice president of Westinghouse was then under secretary for air, I just can't think of his name; I'm getting old. He finally went over to Morocco. See, we had operated largely on reports that were coming in from the air force complaining about the construction being done by the Corps of Engineers who were in charge. What in the world was his name? Anyway, I knew him later in other contexts. But he went over there and determined that almost everything we'd said in our reports, they agreed with.

G: I'll check and see if I can find out.

B: I'll think of it.

G: Well, how did the Moroccan issue come to your attention to begin with?

B: Well, it was already going when I got there, but what had happened was that there were overruns, there were complaints that the Corps of Engineers, as I say, was feathering their own nests. There were problems with the French. As amazing as it seems, in order to land workers in Morocco we had to pay some kind of a tax to the French, which is just unbelievable. I forget who the general was in charge of that, but he told me--they were telling us that 1954 was going to be the crucial year and that we had to watch out for the Russians and so forth and we had to get these air bases built and so forth. The general, whatever his name was, he came in and testified. I was sitting there chatting with him before he went on the stand, and he said, "You know, Bryant, we're in there talking about how you can get this job done and how fast we can do it and so forth, and all the French are worrying about is how much they're going to get out of it." It was pretty discouraging for those guys. I felt sorry for those high-ranking [officers], some of them, not all of them. There were a lot of timeservers.

G: Was there a problem in keeping the committee's preliminary findings confidential? For example, weren't there some leaks on the Moroccan [investigation]?

B: Oh, I'm sure there were. We just couldn't do it. I mean, I forget who it was, a senator from Nevada, what was his name? He was thought to be, well, put it mildly, friendly with some of these contractors that we were going after. But there was never any real evidence of corruption or anything like that. At least we weren't going after that sort of thing; we ran into a lot of it up in the Claremont Terminal when we finally got--this is a different investigation having to do with shipping over the material both for the Moroccan air force bases and for the bases in, in those days they called them Thule but

actually they were later that big air base up in Greenland that we built. But that's all covered in those reports in some detail. For instance, what had happened--I'm just sort of rambling around here.

G: That's all right.

B: What had happened, the Claremont Terminal was a big materiel dump really on the meadows, on the Jersey Meadows, and they had miles of stuff out there that had come in from various suppliers and was being shipped a) to Morocco; b) to Greenland. They had an awful time with the labor there; the rackets got involved in it. They say that the rackets from New Jersey had it in the daytime and those from New York had it in the evening. Downey Rice and, who was the fellow worked with him, they were both on my staff [George Martin], went up there and investigated this in the beginning, and then Mike Devlin and Dan McGillicuddy--Dan may have told you some of this today.

G: Now this was a question of the rackets taking and selling some of the equipment or what were they--?

B: Well, that's covered in the reports. This was known as the shape-up, in other words theoretically--there wasn't any questions about it was happening. What they would do would [be] come in and shape-up and then just keep right on going. There were workers, of course, but theoretically the payrolls were all padded and this, that and the other thing. That came out, there was almost a tizzy over that.

G: How so?

B: Well, somebody accused Lyndon--well, actually, what happened was that Drew Pearson wrote an article saying that Lyndon had killed a report that exposed corruption in Frank

Hayd's [?] bailiwick up there in return for Frank delivering, or promising to deliver, the New Jersey representative delegates to Dick Russell at the Democratic National Convention. Well, as a matter of fact, Downey Rice and George whatever-his-name-is had gone up there and come back with a report which contained a lot of this stuff, a lot of these allegations, but with very little evidence, practically none, and I read it. Johnson didn't even know we were doing this; I mean, he knew vaguely that we were investigating the Moroccan air force bases and the materiel that was going over.

So meanwhile, Downey had gotten kicked out because he was [Estes] Kefauver's man--well, I don't know whether it was because he was, but he had gotten in a mess, had gone to Florida to some kind of a [function]. Kefauver was running against Russell and there was a big to-do about it and so forth. After Downey got canned, apparently what happened was that somebody gave one of these preliminary reports to Pearson, and he said Johnson killed it. Well, this was a damn lie. They called me up one night, I forget exactly when it was. I said simply that--I've forgotten the exact details--the report was still in process and it certainly was not true; Johnson didn't know anything about it. It was still on my desk. This must have been known to Pearson. Well, Pearson didn't like it a damn bit.

G: Was this similar to the Allison Division of General Motors, when they had that investigation?

B: Well, I wasn't there then. That all happened before I came. That was under Don Cook.

G: Do you think that Downey Rice tended to favor more of a rackets-type, cops-and-robbers [investigation]?

B: Oh, sure. Downey had been one of the top investigators for the Kefauver investigation. And he was very good at it. Unfortunately Downey didn't know evidence from rumor, and this is what the problem was. But I sent Dan McGillicuddy and Mike Devlin up there. Dan was a very competent--well, you've met him--FBI-trained investigator. He and Devlin went up and pretty well proved what Downey and his friend, whatever his name was, I've now forgotten, had picked up sort of in the rumor stage.

G: Did LBJ not want to have an emphasis--I mean, disregarding the question of rumors and evidence--did LBJ tend to steer away from the cops-and-robbers type of investigation?

B: Well, yes, I think he did. I think we stumbled into this Claremont Terminal thing. He was interested in two things, whether or not we were taking adequate steps to prepare the country to defend itself, and number two, he was always on the tack of getting a dollar's worth of defense for a dollar. And the rumor was all over the place--and still is by the way, Reagan and his crowd don't seem to know this, I talked to the fellows that I know--it was just a rule of thumb that we got a dollar's worth of defense for every two dollars we spent, and that's still the case. This used to drive Johnson crazy.

Johnson told me that Eisenhower told him that when he was chief of staff or whatever he was, trying to keep expenditures in line with what we got for them was the one thing that he'd never been able to really accomplish. And you know that finally, when he left, Eisenhower made that famous speech about the military-industrial complex, and this was apparently the same thing. But Johnson and Eisenhower were quite close, as you know.

G: Did Johnson lose interest in the subcommittee, the Preparedness Committee, while you

were there?

B: Well I think toward the end, after all, after the election we didn't go at it quite as hard as we had because we didn't know it was going to happen, and it happens. Let's see, who came in? Saltonstall. Saltonstall got to be chairman for two years, and then Dusty Rhodes took the job I had. His name is Fred Rhodes; he's still around I think.

By the way, you asked me about Dave Ginsburg, he died a couple of years ago. Cook is dead, too, I found that out. I was sorry, I didn't realize that. Is this being helpful?

G: Yes, it sure is.

Let me ask you, typically where did the initiatives for an investigation come from?

B: Almost anywhere. On the personnel thing I think it came from one of the columnists. Traditionally that's where that stuff comes from. I mean, the newspaper people dig it up or somebody would write in. Now for instance, we ran all kinds of little side investigations that didn't result in reports. I remember this kind of thing, that the mayor of Alamogordo, New Mexico, came into Washington when they were going to move the rockets from Alamogordo down to Florida. He came in almost in tears over what was happening to his town. He wanted an investigation to find out why, after they had built houses to house the personnel, this, that and the other thing, restaurants and one thing and another, and suddenly they lift the whole thing up and take it to Florida. He wanted us to go into that.

G: Did you do that?

B: No, no. Well, we probably would have in the long run except that the election came along and we knew--well, for heaven's sake, I don't know whether I should tell you this but the Kaisers had a big tank operation out in their plant, wherever it was. Dan would know about this. Styles Bridges had been criticizing them. Their costs were way, way over, and Styles had been going after them. The day of the election, just as soon as it was pretty clear as to who had won, Bridges called me from New Hampshire, where he was, and said, "Say, how is that investigation up at the Kaiser plant coming? Get on that, will you. I have a young man perhaps might be useful to you." And so naturally I went to Lyndon--that was Jimmy Anton. Have you talked to Jim Anton, by the way?

G: No. Hanson?

B: Anton, James Anton.

G: Oh, yes. I have his name.

B: He's still around. He was Styles Bridges' man from New Hampshire. But he and Mike Devlin conducted that investigation of the Kaiser plant. What the Kaisers had done, I think quite foolishly, is wired all of their automobile dealers in New Hampshire to work against Bridges. Had you heard about that? Well, Bridges naturally was not pleased.

What else?

G: Well--

B: Let me tell you a couple of things about Lyndon. You hear what a hard, tough guy he was, and he was in many ways. He was a consummate politician. Now, for instance, he had an administrative assistant, Walter's subordinate over there, Arthur Perry, who had originally been Senator [Tom] Connally's administrative assistant, and Arthur was a

delightful fellow. He had wanted to retire and Lyndon had talked him into coning in and working for him and so forth. I used to go up there--and this is after I had left--and talk to Arthur while I was waiting to see Walter. Arthur was always complaining that Lyndon wouldn't let him quit. I said, "Arthur, you can quit. Why don't you just do it?" He said, "Well, I just can't do it."

So I came up there one day and I go in to see Arthur and he's just about in tears. He hands me a copy of the *Congressional Record*, and one of his jobs was to read that *Record*. This was in the morning. And without telling Arthur anything about it, it was an anniversary I think of Arthur's having come to work in the Senate. And Lyndon, knowing of course that Arthur was going to read the *Record*, he had stopped the show on the Senate floor and made a long oration about Arthur Perry and this, that and the other thing. Old Arthur, Lyndon could have shot two or three people down right there but Arthur would have excused him. That was the kind of thing he did every now and then.

Now another thing. Just about the time, you remember Lyndon had a heart attack.

G: 1955, yes.

B: 1955. Well, this is after I had left, several years, but I was still in touch with him. My brother Albert, who had done a little work for the committee *gratis*, he had been with the air corps engineers and on this Morocco air force base thing--he had built air bases during the war and he knew all about it. I had sent him some of the papers, some of the reports, and he had analyzed them for me and so forth. But he had a massive heart attack just like Lyndon had, and he was up in the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, they have a famous heart clinic up there. I went up to see him, and you know, a heart person has a

deep depression after they have the attack. He was in a deep depression and very unhappy and so forth.

So I came back and I went over to Johnson's office and saw Walter, and I said, "Say, do you suppose that you could write up a little something and get the Senator to sign it and send it up to my brother Al?" Walter said, "I don't know, we're right in the middle of trying to get this civil rights thing through." "Well, see what you can do." So about a week or ten days later I went back to New York and went up to see my brother, and here he is sitting up in bed smiling as I came in. He reaches around; he brings out that letter that I've got over there. Lyndon had dictated the thing himself. That was the sort of thing that most people just don't know about him. You might take a look at that letter if you want to. It's in an envelope that's marked "my brother Albert's letter." That's it. You might just glance at it quickly.

G: Good letter.

Well, let's talk a little bit more about the mechanism of the subcommittee's operation. Would you very often get complaints from, say, people who were on hand observing waste or inefficiencies, people who were employees, or servicemen connected with something?

B: Yes. I don't remember any specifics but a good many instances of waste, that's the way they arise. A lot of that waste stuff comes--you know each of the three services has an audit division, and a lot of the stuff the audit division [does] is not always very popular with the procurement division. My investigator from a congressional committee who knows his business, he knows that they have probably turned up stuff like the oyster

spoons and things of that nature that you've come across. We didn't have too many of them, but there was a House committee that sort of dealt in that stuff. We had some, mostly before I came there. But, yes, the answer to your question is that I think generally speaking a lot of the waste type investigation originates from somebody on the inside. It would almost have to.

G: And then once a complaint was brought to your attention, how then did you decide whether or not to do an investigation?

B: Well, if we thought it was a matter of sufficient importance, we would suggest that we would go ahead and do it.

G: The committee staff would recommend it to the committee itself or how would that [work]?

B: Well, generally we would just send it up to Johnson on one of these memoranda and he would say look into it or don't or whatever. Usually if it looked like anything that was at all substantial, we'd at least start some sort of an inquiry.

G: Were there any types of investigations that he didn't want to pursue?

B: Well, he was always very diffident about getting involved in anything which might trench on either the State Department or the executive, President's office. He was very conscious of the separation of functions. For instance, when we were doing the Moroccan air force thing, he was always very careful not to get into or to be too critical of the arrangements that, say, the State Department was making. He considered his function of the subcommittee was to investigate the armed forces, that is basically the Pentagon and their suppliers and so forth.

G: Did the Republicans on the committee have different ideas about who and what ought to be investigated?

B: No, I don't think so.

G: Was there any--?

B: It was largely--as far as I was concerned, I wasn't aware--for instance, Saltonstall, we ran investigations for him in Massachusetts. I've sort of forgotten the details now, but the answer is I think no. For instance, I remember one time, this didn't get to be a formal investigation, but they were going to put a big jet bomber base in New Hampshire. Some of the chicken farmers up there were irate about this thing. They came down, and who was the old boy, the other senator, the one that was on the--oh, Lord. Well, the other senator up in New Hampshire [Charles Tobey?] sort of took out after Styles and our committee because we weren't doing anything about putting this air force base up there and interfering with the chickens. But that kind of thing, those fellows were both Republicans. As far as I was concerned, as far as I could observe it, Johnson and Bridges and Saltonstall all got along very well. I think probably the only flat wheel might have been Estes Kefauver. Of course, he was running for president while I was there.

G: What do you mean, flat wheel in terms of--?

B: Well, of not really pulling his oar in the committee and being a little critical of what was going on. I don't have specifics on that.

G: Was Johnson inclined to be sensitive if it had to do with a Texas project?

B: Yes, but I never knew him directly to kill one. The one we might have in mind was when it destroyed the bomber force down at Fort Worth. Do you know about that? The

tornado hit Carswell, is that the name of the air force base down there? And they had these great big bombers parked in a big line out on the air force base. I went down there to see them and, my God, they were piled in a great big pile. Who was the fellow who owned the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* at that tine?

G: Amon Carter.

B: Amon Carter. Well, Amon Carter never permitted anybody to use the word tornado; it had to be a freak storm. I think Johnson was a little scared of Amon, which a politician naturally might be. Or not scared of him, but I don't think he wanted to rile him too much. I went down there. Walter went with me, as a matter of fact. I went down to look into this thing, ask basically why were these planes parked out there in a vulnerable position? But this happened and we looked into it. I've forgotten just what [happened]. It was a rather serious thing, but there was no direct culpability as far as we could see. And number two, it happened on Labor Day in 1952 and was right there in the midst of the presidential campaign, and we never ran any [hearings]. I think Johnson handled that one himself or perhaps Gerry Siegel had something to do with it, because we never had hearings. We had all the weather people come in, and we had the air force people come in and we talked to all of them about it as to how this could happen and what kind of a storm. We went into it pretty thoroughly. But I don't think it would be fair to say that Johnson tried to prevent it from being looked into because we did look into it. We just didn't have public hearings.

G: Well, did he try to keep them low key or quiet, do you think, because of the election, or because it was Amon Carter or Fort Worth?

B: I wouldn't know really. I just was doing it. They sent me down there; I spent almost a week down there, came back with all the information as to what had happened, and what had happened is that nothing like this had ever happened before. The only thing that could have been criticized was that the air force had these planes, the only answer would have been if they were in the air.

G: Now, Richard Russell, a very powerful senator from Georgia, was on the Armed Services [Committee]. He succeeded [Millard] Tydings as chairman.

B: Yes. Yes.

G: Was there a tendency, do you think, to go light on Georgia because of Russell's position on the committee?

B: I know of no specific instance.

G: Did they ever investigate anything in Georgia?

B: I didn't.

G: Really? Okay.

B: I don't know that there was anything to investigate, as far as that goes, in Georgia.

G: Yes. I know they did investigate gambling near Keesler [Air Force Base]. Was it Keesler, near Biloxi, Mississippi?

B: Yes. Well, those investigations occurred before I got there. I didn't know anything about them. The big ones when I was there were the overall preparedness, the air force, the 143 wing air force, the Moroccan [air base], the Greenland [air base], Claremont Terminal, then a whole bunch of little things that we didn't write reports about but we just looked into, like this Alamogordo thing. Something came up every day.

G: Yes. LBJ seems to have been very interested in strategic metals, especially tin. Of course, there was a tin smelter in Texas City that he for years I guess kept open or worked to keep open.

B: Well, I had nothing to do with those. We put out one report which has my name on it about tin, but that investigation had been going on for a long time. All those metals--see, there was a problem of stockpiling metal. I suppose--what is that organization they set up to stockpile the stuff, and I think they did that as a result of some of the inquiries that Johnson's committee made, which was probably a good thing.

G: Good point.

B: But this had all happened before [I came]. As a matter of fact, a good friend of mine, Freeman Bishop [?], who was top man for the metals daily [?], he represented the metals. I remember at one time he had all those reports, well, there was a whole series of reports on various metals as I recall. But they were all done largely by a fellow named Larry Sherfy. Sherfy I guess has died, hasn't he?

G: So I hear.

B: So many of them are gone. Good gracious. Of course this is thirty years ago we're talking about. I'm rattling along here. I haven't thought of any of this stuff in years.

G: What role did publicity play in this whole thing?

H: Well, that's the life of politics, as you know, and this is politics. The way it worked was that George Reedy, who was highly skilled, a very able fellow, he handled the publicity. We'd write the reports in draft more or less and Lyndon always wanted George to write the introductory part. This is one of the things that George Reedy and Don Cook used to

get tangled about. Reedy always wanted to--Lyndon wanted him to, I'm sure--write at least the introductory paragraphs from a journalist's point of view. I didn't give a damn. I let him do it.

G: The introduction to the report or each part of the report?

B: To the report. And then he would write a press release based on the report. Those reports had an excellent reputation over there. We'd take then over to the press gallery. Of course, the press gallery gets all kinds of stuff thrown at them; every senator up there is trying to get his name in the paper all the time.

G: How did Johnson maximize the publicity of these things? Did he have favorite journalists that he'd give them to? Did he release them strategically at a particular time of the week?

B: I don't know; George handled all that. I didn't have anything to do with--on one or two occasions or occasionally I would bundle up the reports and the releases and take them over, just as a messenger, to the Senate gallery, and they were always glad to get them, because in those days there was usually something in them that the--for instance, the Moroccan air force bases, the Claremont Terminal, this was hot. And the Kaiser contract was way, way overrun. You know, overruns were a big thing in those days. Johnson was always talking about saving money, and waste in the Pentagon. I'm sure you know that ultimately, as a cumulative result of a lot of these reports and the waste that they had turned up, Anna Rosenberg was brought down from New York to act as a sort of a watchdog, a woman watchdog over in the Pentagon.

G: Was there a problem with some of your reports getting leaked before LBJ was ready to

have them made public?

B: No, not that I knew while I was there. As I told you, that one instance there when Drew Pearson came up with that preliminary draft of the Claremont Terminal report and wrote a column about it. It was ultimately published; I've got it somewhere. Whatever his name was, who's the editor of the [*Washington*] *Post*? [J. R. Wiggins?] They apparently had told Johnson that this was coming out, and they called me. I gave then what were the actual facts of the matter; he had nothing to do with it.

G: Okay. Now, did you sit in on the committee meetings themselves with the senators?

B: Sure, if there were any. There weren't very many.

G: How often did the committee meet, would you say, the full subcommittee?

B: Well, the committee would meet for hearings, and then they would get together and discuss so the two things would be sort of melded together. That is, we'd have a witness there, or witnesses, and either one or several members--usually several, because this committee was a fairly active committee. I would say offhand probably that Johnson and Bridges were in close liaison. Kefauver didn't take too much part in it. Saltonstall did, he was interested, and Lester Hunt. Now who else was on it?

G: Wayne Morse was on it.

B: Wayne Morse. Wayne Morse was interested.

G: [John] Stennis was the other one.

B: Stennis, yes. If they had committee meetings that I wasn't invited to, I don't know about them, and I probably wouldn't. But whenever I had any problem to be taken up by the committee, I just went and presented it. Usually Johnson would be there and three or

four others, or two or three others. But how often that occurred, I simply don't remember specifically, but I'm sure whenever it was necessary they did it.

G: How large was the staff of the subcommittee?

B: Well, let's see. When I first went there it was ten or twelve. Let's see, there was Sherfy, there was McGillicuddy, there was Downey Rice and George Martin, one or two others, and then three girls, my secretary and--let's see, how many did we have?--Mary whatever-her-name-was [Keadle or Miller?], a very competent girl as I remember; the big tall boy, Engle, he was from Texas. Ten or twelve.

G: Wallace Engle, is that right?

B: Wallace Engle, yes. He died I think, didn't he?

G: Did the staff grow smaller during your tenure there, did they reduce numbers?

B: Well, they fired Downey and George over that business with Russell. Then after the election I think only McGillicuddy and Devlin were left, and then one or two girls. But then it picked up again later, as you know. Oh, Engle was still there.

G: Well, I think this is a pretty good place to break.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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