

INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 27, 1969
INTERVIEWEE: RAYMOND E. BUCK
INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB
PLACE: His office, 6421 Camp Bowie Boulevard, Fort Worth, Texas

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M: First of all, I think I ought to find out when you first met Lyndon Johnson and under what circumstances.

B: It was my privilege to first know Lyndon Johnson about 1933 when he was secretary to Congressman Dick Kleberg. I met him in connection with committee hearings over which Congressman Kleberg was chairman. Later, when he was acting as Texas state administrator for the National Youth Administration by appointment of President Franklin Roosevelt, I became aware of his outstanding achievements which became a challenge to the nation in youth administration, notwithstanding he was the youngest administrator in America. I also met him many times through our mutual friend Sam Rayburn who had served in the Texas Legislature with his father [Sam Ealy Johnson].

The roadside parks and the other improvements that we see today gracing our highways are a monument to his [Lyndon Johnson's] vision and that of his lovely wife, Lady Bird.

M: Excuse me a moment, do you recall having any impressions about young Mr. Johnson at that time?

B: Yes, I thought that he was one of the most knowledgeable, personable, and

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attractive young men that I had ever come in contact with in politics, or for that matter in any other activity.

M: He was a good administrative assistant then to Mr. Kleberg?

B: Yes, he was. He was so regarded, and my personal observation was to that effect.

M: On what occasion did you have to meet him in regard to his work with Congressman Kleberg?

B: I don't recall just what the committee was that Congressman Kleberg was chairman of, but it had something to do with air transportation. Because at that time, and for that matter, I'm still representing some of the major interests in air transportation, mainly American Airlines.

M: Yes, and you were working with air transportation in the early 1930's?

B: Yes. In fact, I began working with aviation and air transportation in the late twenties, helped to organize and did the legal work for the corporation of Southern Air Transport, which was the first scheduled airline in Texas.

M: You were their general counsel?

B: Yes sir, and it became a link in the chain which was later to be American Airlines, formerly named American Airways.

M: And you've been associated then with American Airlines?

B: I've been associate general counsel to American Airways and American Airlines ever since they were formed.

M: I see. That's from 1929 to the present.

B: Yes, sir. I got on the first month's payroll, and they have never been able to get rid of me.

M: (Laughter) It is in that connection that you ran into Lyndon Johnson working for Dick Kleberg.

B: That's right.

M: That must have been in Washington, too.

B: It was.

M: Then you also had some connection with him perhaps when Lyndon Johnson was the NYA director for Texas.

B: Yes, I was one of the organizers and chairman of the state executive committee of the Young Democrats of Texas which were organized early in the Roosevelt Administration. As such my interest was connected with the younger generation of men, and particularly Democrats, in Texas, and his work as youth administrator was likewise directed in that way.

M: Johnson was also a friend of Sam Rayburn then, was he not?

B: Sam Rayburn looked on him almost as a son, and Sam Rayburn was a very close friend of mine. I always called on him for help and he always gave it, not only in the way of advice, counsel, but for helping to get things done that were for the good of the state and community.

M: Well, you might go on with your narrative then.

B: Lyndon was elected to Congress on April 10, 1937, through the elimination of ten opponents. His campaign was based on strong support for President Roosevelt's New Deal program.

M: Did you work in that campaign?

B: Yes, sir, in a general way. Of course he was running for the Congress from the Tenth District, which is Austin, and that was not my district. But I was naturally interested in the congressmen of Texas no matter what part of the state they were elected from, because after all they represent the state. So I rendered some general assistance through friends that I had in his district.

M: Was it important that he was supporting FDR?

B: Apparently so. He was elected over several opponents who were not supporting

him, and President Roosevelt was a very popular president, at least at that time, and for that matter during his entire administration.

M: Did you have any connection with him after he was elected?

B: To Congress?

M: Yes.

B: Yes, in a general way. When I would be wanting to get things done and accomplished I would talk to the congressmen that I knew and had had contacts with, and he was one of them. So I had occasion to discuss many things of importance, at least I thought of importance, to Texas with Congressman Johnson as well as with my own congressman and many other state congressmen.

M: Did some of this have to do with airlines work and that sort of thing?

B: Considerable of it did have to do with the development of the air transportation system of the United States, because in those days it was more or less in its formative stage. There were federal laws that were enacted and then in force involving the operation of airlines. In fact the U.S. government had regulatory agencies, as you know, to regulate the airlines, certificate them in interstate commerce and such.

M: Maybe we should return to your narrative there and pick up the thread of the story.

B: He was re-elected to Congress in November of 1938 and in 1940 without opposition, having achieved outstanding results for the Tenth Congressional District and for the state of Texas at large.

During this period, he declined an appointment proffered by President Roosevelt to be national administrator for the Rural Electrification Administration. His abstinence from the appointment was based on the fact, as he expressed it, that he had a contract with the people of Texas to

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serve them in Congress. As you will recall, Lyndon had a great deal to do with the rural electrification development, and prior to his tenure in Congress people in the rural districts of Texas had practically no electricity except that that they generated themselves because the major electric companies were primarily involved with the urban areas.

In the spring of 1941 Lyndon announced for the U.S. Senate to succeed the great Senator Morris Sheppard who had died in office. I believe he made his announcement from the steps of the White House and received the endorsement of President Roosevelt. Shortly after his announcement the beloved Sid Richardson, who was a close mutual friend to Lyndon and to me, asked if I would serve as Lyndon's campaign manager for the northern district of Texas. I believe that there were four of us who served as campaign managers in that campaign.

M: What all was included in the northern district?

B: Primarily from Tarrant County west nearly to El Paso and north up to about Childress, and I think it was generally described as being the territory north of the Texas and Pacific Railroad which goes across Texas east and west.

M: That's a lot of territory.

B: Yes, it was a lot of territory.

Being aware of the capabilities and the achievements of this remarkable young man, I readily agreed to serve. Lyndon called me from Austin and made an appointment for the following day. When he came to my office we spent most of the day going over tentative campaign plans and programs, during which he said that one of his vital objectives was to gain the friendship and support of the late and beloved Amon G. Carter, Sr., president and owner of the Fort Worth Star Telegram. Being very intimate with

Mr. Carter, I knew of his reservations about being involved in political contests, either personally or through his newspapers. But Mr. Carter and I and a mutual friend met nearly every afternoon in his apartment at the Fort Worth Club about five o'clock for a game or two of dominoes and possibly some other activities that are appropriate for that time of day. I suggested that we go to the apartment of the mutual friend, Dr. Hodges McKnight, which adjoined that of Mr. Carter shortly before five p.m., and I was sure Mr. Carter would appear. About five o'clock we heard him come down the hall, and sure enough he opened the door to Dr. McKnight's apartment and came in, whereupon we all arose and I introduced Lyndon to Mr. Carter.

Lyndon immediately engaged him in the intense conversation of which he is most capable and proficient. After standing and talking for about thirty minutes before letting Mr. Carter sit down, Lyndon had made a friend and a supporter of him. Mr. Carter personally supported him in his campaign for the Senate, and his newspapers gave their support.

M: Do you happen to remember what they talked about?

B: I don't remember just exactly what they talked about, generally about the state of the nation, the Roosevelt Administration, Lyndon's plans for the Senate, about local affairs of interest to Mr. Carter. I do distinctly remember that Lyndon had his face within about twelve inches of Mr. Carter's face all that time, and that's the customary posture for him to take when he's doing the selling job. And he did a very good selling job there. Thereafter we played our game of dominoes, and by design or accident Mr. Carter came out the victor. I won't say that anybody threw off to him, because he was a very good domino player.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson play dominoes with you?

B: Yes. In fact, he spent a couple of hours there. We had an intensive campaign with several opponents, notably the late governor and senator,

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W. Lee O'Daniel. After about four or five months of hard work we came to election day, at which time most of the polls indicated that Lyndon was the likely winner. The Belden poll for one, I remember, did indicate that Lyndon would get the most votes. The election was on Saturday, and as of midnight Lyndon was about twenty thousand votes in the lead and his election seemed imminent.

On Sunday morning, when Lyndon and Sid and I were breakfasting in Sid's apartment, Lyndon said to me, "Raymond, you have spent many months of your time and money in helping me to be elected to the Senate, which now appears most likely, and I would like to know what appointment you would like to have in recognition of your services." I told him that I was happy in the practice of law and in my residence in Fort Worth and that I didn't care for any appointment, but I might later, as I got some older, like to be on the federal bench. In the late returns Sunday Lyndon was counted out of the election by less than twelve hundred votes, although he remained as congressman for the Tenth District for several years thereafter.

M: Did he ever express disappointment to you?

B: Yes, he did express disappointment to me, and one of the disappointments was that the late vote which gave O'Daniel the plurality or lead came from a section of the state down near the Mexican border where some years later Lyndon's opponents claimed that the voting was not appropriately supervised or reported. Coke Stevenson, who was then lieutenant governor and would become governor if O'Daniel was elected because he [O'Daniel] was at that time the governor of Texas, was a strong supporter of O'Daniel, and the strength that he was able to deliver to O'Daniel undoubtedly elected him.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson try to get the support of Coke Stevenson at that time?

B: I'm sure that he did in whatever way he thought was appropriate, but it

wasn't very likely that the Lieutenant Governor who would be promoted to governor by the election of Johnson's opponent would support Johnson. Because I believe that most lieutenant governors want to be governor.

There was nothing else said about an appointment for me after I had expressed my lack of interest in one except to the extent that later I might like an appointment as federal judge. But two years or more later I went to Palm Beach, Florida, to see my son take off for overseas duty in World War II. He was a lieutenant in the Air Transport Command. For our own protection I asked that my office not tell anyone where I had gone, because there were some rules about secrecy for overseas shipments. I checked in at the hotel about midnight and found a call awaiting me from Fort Worth. Answering the call, I heard the voice of Sid Richardson who said, "Well, you so-and-so, you won't ever let anybody know where you are. But I heard you say to Lyndon Johnson on Sunday morning in my apartment when we thought he was elected to the Senate that some time you wanted to be a federal judge. Did you say that?" I answered that I did, and Sid said, "Well, you are a federal judge." And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Judge Jim Wilson has written a letter to the Justice Department indicating that he intends to resign forthwith for health reasons, and Congressman Lyndon Johnson and Senator Tom Connally went to President Roosevelt yesterday and got his agreement to appoint you. He has appointed you as federal district judge for the northern district of Texas to succeed Judge Wilson.

I was, of course, pleased and honored and appreciative of the fact that Lyndon had remembered so long what I had said. But I had borrowed a great deal of money from a Fort Worth bank in the interim to acquire a controlling interest in an insurance company, it's name being the Commercial Standard Insurance Company, and I could not pay

the money back on a federal judge's salary even though it was a life-time job. Moreover, I felt that I could not retain the controlling interest in an insurance company which would likely have litigation in this court. But I told Sid that I would call Lyndon the first thing in the morning and discuss the matter with him. If this wasn't being taped I'd tell you what Richardson said.

H: Well, I'd like to hear what he said. You know, you can restrict this tape.

B: Sid said, "I don't give a damn whether you take the job or not, but you call Lyndon and tell him whether you're going to take it or not, because it's going to be announced." Sid was a great joker, and we had lots of fun together. I called Congressman Johnson early the next morning and repeated what I had told Sid. Lyndon said, "Well, we've got it definitely lined up, but you think about it for twenty-four hours and then call me again." I did think about it, and my decision that I should not accept the appointment was confirmed in my own judgment. But I did greatly appreciate Lyndon's initiative loyalty and thanks for what I had done in his behalf. This is a natural trait of character for him and has been during his whole life a hallmark in his career.

In 1948 I again served as one of his managers for his campaign for the Senate, and this time he was elected and served distinctively for about twelve years until he became vice president in 1960. His opponent in that campaign was the former governor, Coke Stevenson, whose supporters got a temporary restraining order from Judge Whitfield Davidson at Marshall restraining the Democratic executive committee from certifying Lyndon's name as the Democratic nominee to the Senate because of the closeness of the vote, there having been only a majority of eighty-seven votes. It was alleged, but certainly not proven, that irregularities in an extreme

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south Texas area near the Mexican border had contributed to the vote. Lyndon had legal aid from a prominent lawyer from West Texas, a prominent lawyer from South Texas and myself to handle the action in the federal court at Fort Worth to vacate the restraining order and authorize his certification as the Democratic nominee. We had an extended hearing in the federal court in Fort Worth, from which the results were not entirely satisfactory. Therefore we went to the U.S. Supreme Court through Justice [Hugo] Black, who issued an order vacating the restraining order that Judge Davidson had issued and directing the State Democratic Executive Committee to certify Lyndon Johnson as the Democratic nominee.

M: Through those hearings there was never proven any irregularity, was there?

B: None whatever. There were some rumors, and that's all they were, hearsay evidence that there were irregularities in reporting the votes, but there was no substantial evidence of any kind to support them. In any election contest they raise those kind of issues, but the mere closeness of the vote was an added incentive here to his opponents.

M: During the campaign did you run the campaign headquarters in Austin, or what did you do?

B: In the 1948 campaign? I didn't run it, but I was one of four or five campaign managers who met there regularly and deliberated.

M: Did they again divide Texas up into districts and that sort of thing?

B: Yes.

M: Were you again in charge of the northern district?

B: Yes.

M: That was the campaign where he used the helicopter.

B: That is right. It was the first time a helicopter had been used in campaigning, and the vote here in Fort Worth is to a substantial extent that

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of the employees of General Dynamics that was then Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation. They had about thirty thousand employees out there, and I flew with him out there in the helicopter, having made the arrangements for him to make a speech to them out there at the hall. We landed there and he made a speech, a copy of which I have here. One other thing that we did, we got up some circulars or posters and dropped them from airplanes over the city after advertising that we were going to do it, that this was not a bombing expedition but that there would be some startling thing in the circulars if they would read them. Of course, they got a great deal of attention from that.

M: So the helicopter was an effective means of getting attention?

B: Very, very effective--it was spectacular. He made stops all over; I guess he made four or five stops in Fort Worth at different central locations and made a talk.

M: Did he work in that campaign?

B: He works hard and has worked hard at everything he's ever done. He worked awfully hard, day and night.

M: He, I think, had some kidney stone trouble during that campaign. Do you recall that? Did that bother him any?

B: Yes, I recall. That bothered him, didn't stop him.

M: Didn't stop him? Was he happy with his victory, then, when he finally got certified?

B: He was tremendously happy. It wasn't too long before Christmas. He gave each one of us three lawyers that represented him in the litigation over the restraining order a wrist watch, which I still have. That was my fee.

M: Was there an inscription on it?

B: Initials. LBJ to REB.

- M: Did you get to see him inaugurated or anything of that nature?
- B: Yes, I went up there. They swore him in as of January, 1949.
- M: Did you have much contact with the new Senator Johnson after that?
- B: Yes, I did. I had considerable contact with him. I went to see him quite often, helped to raise money and pay off campaign debts. I asked him some favors.
- M: Did he respond?
- B: He always responded. For example, in 1953 I was president of the First Officers' Training Camp Association, which was the first training camp that was established for World War I. It was at Leon Springs, right out of San Antonio, Texas, and each year since World War I we've had what we call a roll call, rotating between the cities of Fort Worth, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. You notice I said Fort Worth first. I asked him to come down here and make a speech to us, which he did. He was about the most prominent speaker we'd had up to that time. They all appreciated it very much.

In 1949--or 1948--they passed a bill authorizing and appropriating funds for the construction of military housing at various military bases. One of the places was Carswell Air Force Base here at Fort Worth, and I was a contestant for the contract to build those houses. The government would guarantee the loan covering 90 per cent of the cost. In other words, you go to the insurance company or mortgage company and borrow 90 per cent of the cost. I went to Washington and sought the assistance of Senator Johnson. It was on a competitive bidding basis, but the decision to be made was that of the Secretary for Air. I had gotten the approval over the other contestants from the base command here at Carswell Air Base, and I went to Washington with that to see Senator Johnson.

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I never will forget what Lyndon said--John Connally was his principal aide then--Lyndon said, "John, you take Raymond over to see Secretary Symington." Stuart Symington was the secretary of Air, and Senator Johnson had been a very strong supporter of the Air Force. "You make this a first order of business." Because I had to get the Secretary's approval of the base commander's decision, which John did, and Secretary Symington awarded me [the contract]. I had as a then-silent partner but later an announced partner Amon Carter, Jr.--not Sr., but Jr.

M: Right.

B: So we got the contract and we built the houses, six hundred units. We rented them to the Air Force at rates that were fixed by the base, operated that project from about 1950 when we finished it till 1960, at which time the Air Force decided they wanted to own it themselves and they bought it back from us. That was in 1950.

In 1956 I'd built this building here and wanted to have a formal dedication of it, the insurance company, and I had called Senator Johnson and asked him if he would come here and dedicate it. He said he would. I was going to send a plane down to Fredericksburg to pick him up and take him back. When I woke up that morning it was zero-zero; you couldn't see twenty feet here in Fort Worth. I checked with the air services and found out that it was the same thing down at Fredericksburg. We couldn't land down there. So I called Lyndon and told him what the situation was that we couldn't get off the ground here or get in down there. It was on December 6; it was cold, too. I said, "You just stay there by your fireplace. I'll appreciate it just as much." He said, "I told you I'd come, and I want to come." And I said, "Well, there ain't no way for you to get here." (Laughter)

About thirty minutes later I got a call from Lady Bird, and she said, "Lyndon found out that there's a Braniff plane leaving Austin at eleven o'clock, and he just left here with his coattails flying." [He was] in his car driving to Austin from their ranch to try to catch that plane, and "if you don't hear from him, why, he'll be on it. If he can't get there or the plane doesn't fly, he'll call you." He didn't call me and by the time that I knew--by eleven o'clock. So I happened to know that the pilot who piloted him around in this helicopter when he was making his campaign in 1948 was the chief test pilot out at Bell Helicopter. So I called out at Bell Helicopter and got the manager out there and told him I wanted this guy to fly over in a helicopter, meet that Braniff plane and bring Senator Johnson over here. Which he did. Landed right out there, and he dedicated the building. I've got pictures of it.

M: Was he surprised to see the helicopter waiting?

B: Very much. Very pleased. They were all ready to meet him when he got off there. There I am. (Interruption --- shows pictures)

M: The picture indicates it was raining; he had an umbrella.

B: Yes. This was at the luncheon.

M: Yes.

B: Here he is. That's my daughter and that was General Ramey; who was the fellow that gave me the approval to build that housing over here, the Carswell Air Base commander.

M: I see. He was here at the dedication also?

B: Yes. There he [Johnson] is sitting down in the lobby of the building down here. They had a talk there.

M: Now that's not too long after that heart attack he had, is it?

B: No.

M: He seems to have lost some weight there in those pictures.

B: There's a lion and a lamb here. I was trying to find that picture. There's my son that I lost, my daughter. There he [Johnson] is making a talk down there. He described me as a can-do man. Here's the lion and the lamb--he was the lion, and I was the lamb. A whole book of those pictures.

M: The year 1956 was also that year that there was the statewide fight for control of Texas with Shivers, wasn't it?

B: Yes, that is true; it was between Shivers and Johnson.

M: With Sam Rayburn on the side.

B: Sam Rayburn was with Johnson.

M: Did you get involved in that?

B: Yes, I was very much involved in it. So much so that, largely through my efforts on behalf of Lyndon for him to be in control and to be the chairman of the delegation from Texas to the convention in Chicago, I was named as chairman of the state Democratic convention at Dallas, where I was in the position to appoint the committees and render some assistance to the Johnson faction.

M: Was the beginning of that scrap between Johnson and Shivers over Shivers' threat to support Eisenhower again?

B: It had something to do with it.

M: I know there were two conventions apparently that year, one in the spring and one in the fall. In the spring convention, the Governors' convention in May, as I recall, apparently Johnson and Rayburn united with Frankie Randolph in the liberal faction to control. Now is that correct?

B: Yes.

M: This must have made the Allan Shivers group pretty mad.

B: It did.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson do anything then to reconcile Shivers' group?

B: Oh yes, I'm sure he did. I don't remember just exactly what he did, but naturally he'd want to try to cure the rupture as much as possible. But we went to Chicago, and the Johnson-Rayburn group were in substantial majority. We had no trouble in Chicago.

M: Did you have any trouble over the appointment of Mrs. Randolph as national committeewoman?

B: Yes.

M: What happened there?

B: My mind's not very clear on that. There was quite a fight on that over in the Dallas convention, quite an objection to it. I just don't remember the details of it.

M: Do you remember that convention that came in the fall, and Mrs. Randolph was not allowed to seat her delegation from Harris County?

B: Yes.

M: Was there some fight over that, too?

B: Yes.

M: Do you remember what the reason was that the delegation was not seated?

B: I don't know what the stated reason was. The majority just didn't want to seat it. It was the same split there between the two factions.

M: But Johnson and Rayburn still controlled that, didn't they?

B: Yes.

M: Well, did you have anything to do with Johnson's campaign to run for the presidency in 1960? This may be in your narrative, I don't know.

B: Yes, it's in there. Yes, I was very active in his campaign. I went to the

convention out at Los Angeles and made several appearances before some of the important committees and some of the delegations from other states.

M: Were you surprised when he took the vice presidential position?

B: No, I wasn't.

M: You thought he might do that?

B: Yes, I thought he might do it. I didn't think that Kennedy would offer it to him, but I thought he might take it if it was offered.

M: Why do you think he would take it?

B: Because it was a stepping stone to the presidency, and it was a higher office than that of the Senate. He felt like he could serve the nation better in that office than he could as a senator.

M: I see.

B: I happened to be in the room when he and Sam Rayburn were discussing it.

M: Heavens, what did they say?

B: Well, finally agreed to accept it.

M: They must have had some heated conversation over that.

B: Well, it wasn't heated, but

M: Did Rayburn want him to take it?

B: Not at first, but later he came around to it.

M: Did Johnson want to take it at that point?

B: I think he did. He was walking a tightwire.

M: Did they have any contact with Bobby Kennedy at that time?

B: I only know that by hearsay.

M: Can you tell me why Lyndon J hnson then decided to take it?

B: I think he thought it was a challenge and that it was a step in advance and progress.

M: Did you have any contact with him during the campaign of 1960?

B: Yes.

- M: What did you do, give speeches and things like that?
- B: Yes, I was the state chairman for the professional and businessmen committee. I made some speeches.
- M: I may be getting ahead of your narrative here. Do you want to continue reading that, and maybe we'll pick this up?
- B: I think, and have said in many public speeches, that Lyndon has done more favors as a congressman and a senator and run more errands and accomplished more for the state of Texas than any other politician of our time. To name only a few: he was influential in keeping the government from closing down the Consolidated Vultee Plant in Fort Worth after World War II and from cancelling the contract for the B-36, which would have put twenty thousand people out of work in this community. He called me from Washington and said that Secretary for Air Stuart Symington would land at Carswell Air Force Base the following morning at eleven o'clock to inspect the plant in connection with the proposed cancellation and closing. I contacted Mr. Amon G. Carter, Sr. We met Stuart Symington's plane and spent the day with the officials of the plant escorting the Secretary through it and explaining its operations. At the end of the day, the Air Secretary typed a two hundred word telegram to the Department of Defense recommending that there be no cancellation or closing and that the B-36 contract be continued. In 1953, as I've said Lyndon came here and made an address to the First Officer's Training Camp.

In 1962, while I was president of the Chamber of Commerce, he came to Fort Worth and made the principal address to the annual meeting of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. He was primarily instrumental in obtaining rural electrification for the state of Texas and the nation. He was instrumental in flood control and highway construction all over this state and

many other states of the nation. He was helpful in getting government aircraft contracts for the Texas aircraft industry. I don't want to get into the controversial part of that, but I'd say that he was instrumental in getting lots of contracts for Bell Helicopter, for General Dynamics. He was instrumental in getting the Corpus Christi naval base and many other aircraft developments. As vice president and as president he gave all the other states in the nation the same consideration and concern that he has given to his native state of Texas. He is a truly great American and a true and loyal friend.

M: Did he say anything to you or write to you after he became president following the assassination of John Kennedy? Did you have any contact with him?

B: Oh, yes, lots of it.

M: Was this social or what?

B: As a matter of fact, I was chairman of the so-called breakfast which we had at eleven o'clock here for President Kennedy, and I was with them there at that breakfast. The pictures are over there. In fact, that picture there sitting on that desk of me and President Kennedy was taken just about an hour before he was assassinated. He was just leaving the breakfast as we were to go out to the Carswell Air Base to go to Dallas, and by the time I got back downtown to the Fort Worth Club the headwaiter told me he just heard on the radio that President Kennedy had been assassinated, been shot.

Of course I had some talks on the telephone and correspondence with President Johnson after that, I went to the White House many times.

M: Went to dinners and things of that nature?

B: Yes.

M: Did you get involved in the 1964 campaign?

B: Yes, to a lesser extent than I had been before. I was one of the campaign managers for the Democratic Party. There's a picture of the Vice President when he was down here.

M: This is?

B: 1968.

M: This is a picture of Hubert Humphrey and Mr. Buck.

B: Yes, I was involved in the 1964 campaign.

M: What did you do?

B: Same thing.

M: Talked to businessmen, helped raise his funds, write letters, things of that nature? Were you surprised last year when Lyndon Johnson announced that he would not run again? That was in March of 1968.

B: No.

M: Why not?

B: I thought, first of all, that he'd reached the conclusion that he undoubtedly did reach, and that is that he'd had enough. There never was a president since Lincoln, if ever, who had as many problems confronting him as Johnson had--domestic and the war in Vietnam, etc.--and I think that, first of all, he figured that he had made his contribution and that maybe it would be better for the Democratic Party to nominate somebody else.

M: For a man who had dedicated his life to politics, it must have been a strain to announce that he would not run again.

B: On the other hand, he had reached the pinnacle. Where else was there to go? He had rendered all the services to be expected of any man, and all he could do would just be more of the same.

M: I see.

B: So from his own standpoint of personal health and well-being, I think he made a wise decision.

M: I might ask you a few general questions, just about the personality of Lyndon Johnson a little bit to conclude with. You've mentioned, or given some hint that he was a man of great energy. Is that right? Hard working?

B: Very great. Not only he is himself, but he expects everybody else around him to be the same.

M: You mean, if you're going to work for Lyndon Johnson you've got to hold the same hours?

B: For illustration: at the convention we had here, the Tarrant County convention--I believe it was in 1956--they asked me to serve on the credentials committee as vice-chairman. They had named a Baylor University professor as chairman, but they told me that he wasn't very well versed in politics and they elected me to sit at the table with him as vice-chairman and try to keep the ship steered in the right channels. We got along pretty well, except there was a big dispute about whether we'd seat the delegation from El Paso and two other counties, I think. There was a pro-Johnson and an anti-Johnson delegation in all three counties, and we just couldn't get anywhere. We had I think seven or eight men on the committee, nine maybe, so the chairman didn't know what to do. We couldn't get an agreement. Some were abstaining from voting, and some were voting one way and some another. So I suggested to the chairman that we recess the meeting for thirty minutes. We recessed it, and I went upstairs. We were meeting down in the basement of the auditorium over there at Will Rogers.

The first fellow I ran into was Lyndon Johnson, and he

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said, "What did you do about those delegations?" I said, "Well, we couldn't get any decision on it. If we'd taken a vote, I'm afraid we would have lost it." He said, "Who's on that committee? I gave him the names, and we'll say there were seven of them that were opposed to Johnson. He said, "Well, my God, you get back down there and get to working on those guys. You persuade two of them and I'll get the other five." Sure enough he did, and we seated the pro-Johnson delegation. He just called them, got hold of them one by one, called them out and talked to them.

M: How come he was so persuasive when he would talk to people like that?

B: Well, he's very intense and sincere. He's positive, and he's a good judge of human nature--he's a good salesman.

M: Does he have a good memory?

B: Excellent.

M: Remembers names and faces and things that happened?

B: Yes. For instance, he remembered two years later the chance remark I made about maybe sometime wanting to be a federal judge. That's the only time it was ever mentioned, and it was just in passing.

M: Was he an impatient man?

B: Yes.

M: He liked to get things done in a hurry?

B: Yes.

M: What would he do when he was frustrated when something didn't happen the way he wanted it to?

B: Drive.

M: He'd just work that much harder?

B: Yes.

M: Did he ever get mad, lose his temper?

B: Sometimes. I never saw him get violent, but he'd get mad.

M: But he would get impatient?

B: Yes.

M: Did Mrs. Johnson help him a great deal throughout his political career?

B: She's been a tremendous help to him.

M: In what ways would she help him?

(Interruption)

B: She's very logical, very persuasive, very reasonable, very fair, and has a sense of understanding. I think she's been one of the greatest influences, the greatest influence in his life. She came here once or twice and made speeches when he couldn't come.

M: Oh, she did?

B: There's one, last time. (Shows Picture) Here she's just gotten off the plane and I met her out there. I look like Dirksen there with all that [hair]. I needed a haircut.

M: You're getting ready to kiss her on the cheek there.

B: I think she's one of the finest ladies, or people, that I ever knew.

M: You think she played the role of first lady as it should be?

B: Exactly. I think she was very popular and very highly respected as first lady, and very effective.

M: Now I'll ask you an open-ended question to be sure we covered everything we should: Is there anything that you'd like to talk about in this interview that we have not covered or any statement you wish to make about Lyndon Johnson or Mrs. Johnson.

B: No, I think we just about covered it. I think he will go down in history as one of the greatest presidents of all time and one of the greatest

chief executives of the world.

M: All right. Well, I thank you very much for the interview.

B: Thank you.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview 1]

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