

INTERVIEW I

DATE: November 26, 1968

INTERVIEWEE: CECIL E. BURNEY

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. McCOMB

PLACE: Mr. Burney's office in the Petroleum Tower Building in
Corpus Christi, Texas

Tape 1 of 2

M: Mr. Burney, first of all, I'd like to know something about you. Where were you born and when?

B: I was born in Reisel, Texas, October 6, 1914.

M: Where were you educated?

B: We moved to South Texas in 1920 and I went to high school in Bishop, Texas. I graduated there in 1931 in the depth of the Depression, and I succeeded in getting a scholarship to A&I for two years--Texas A&I University in Kingsville. I could live at home in Bishop and commute back and forth for the six miles there, and I did; I hitchhiked back and forth every day. Then in 1933 I left Bishop and went to the University of Texas and graduated there with a B.A. and an LL.B.

M: What was the B.A. degree in? What was your major?

B: Economics.

M: Then you got your law degree?

B: Yes.

M: And you took your bar exam?

B: I didn't have to take the bar in those days, thank goodness. I was one of

those strange individuals that they passed the law while I was in school that said hereafter that everybody that doesn't graduate by a certain time must take the bar exam. I was working and a number of the other students were working, so one of the students got a law passed that said those people who had started early enough and who were working for a living, as long as they continued to go to school when they got out, they could get admitted to the bar without taking the exam. So I didn't have to take the exam.

M: You went immediately to work as a lawyer then?

B: Yes, I came to Corpus Christi--graduated in February '38, and I came on to Corpus Christi then and set up my office here.

M: Off and on you've been a lawyer here ever since, or constantly, or what?

B: Ever since except for the brief interval in the service.

M: When did you first run into Lyndon Johnson?

B: My first knowledge of the man, I guess, was back in 1933. As I indicated to you, I was one of those people that suffered from poverty in those days; my father died when I was nine years old, I'd always wanted to go to law school and I had no way to go; I could go to A&I for practically nothing, but I couldn't go to the University. I was delivering newspapers in Bishop and I read in the Houston Chronicle that the NYA had been set up, and that he was going to be the administrator of it; that you could get \$15.50 a month and go to the University by working two hours a day or some such thing. So I went off to the University and got one of those jobs and went to school, so that my first contact with him was through the NYA, although I didn't know him individually at that time.

M: He was the director at that time. Then when was your next connection with him?

- B: Well, I guess about 1937 he ran for Congress; and being an economics major on the hill, I was well acquainted with Dr. R.H. Montgomery. Dr. Montgomery was a great fan of Lyndon B. Johnson. So all of the Montgomery school was boosting for Lyndon Johnson, so I did a little work while I was a student there in his first race while in Austin. But I really didn't ever know him at that stage.
- M: What kind of work did you do in that campaign?
- B: I think we had what was then called the Young Democrats at the University, and we were all active in that as well as we could in doing whatever we could around town.
- M: You'd be handing out leaflets and--
- B: Anything we could do, yes.
- M: And talking to people and so forth. Well, he was successful then?
- B: Yes.
- M: Went off to Congress. Did you have any connection with him immediately thereafter?
- B: No. The next connection I had with him I guess was in 1938. After he got to Congress he got the grant for the first public housing slum clearance project in Texas for Austin, and that was in the fall of '37 I guess. And this interested me and I read about it and heard about it, so after I came to Corpus Christi in February of '38 I began to talk around and say, "Well, we ought to do that too." So I wrote to the then-Congressman Johnson and asked for some information on slum clearance and some background on it and got that from him.
- So by April of '38 I had started the first Housing Authority here in Corpus Christi. Whenever possible I would call upon him for information.

We had a Congressman named Dick Kleberg who was less than enthusiastic about all these social programs that we then were engaged in, and so I used the good offices of Congressman Johnson for help on that as much as I needed.

M: Johnson worked for Kleberg for awhile, did he not?

B: Yes, this was earlier before he became NYA administrator. As a matter of fact he lived here in Corpus for awhile, he and Bird both after he married. But this was before my time with him because I was in the University at that time.

M: Do you have any early impressions of Johnson at the time that you recall?

B: Oh, he had a reputation in those days to get things done and getting them done in a hurry; this getting a letter back the next day on every inquiry you'd sent him, this sort of thing. So he had early built up this reputation of being a go-getter.

M: Then what was your next connection with him?

B: During the next couple of years, I guess, I was in and out of Washington getting more money and tying up the details of the housing program here; and from time to time I guess I would at least get the services of his staff there. I don't recall any specific instance where he helped me.

M: But he didn't mind helping somebody from out of his district?

B: I had sort of a connection there by having been in Austin in '37 when he got elected. Just was one of his NYA boys, I guess.

M: Did you have anything to do with his Senate race in 1941?

B: Yes. In 1941 I was--Was it '41 or '40? Anyway, whenever it was, I was in partnership with John Lyle; he later became the Congressman from this district, defeated Kleberg during the war. And John was in the legislature

then and through the legislature had gotten pretty well acquainted with Johnson and with John Connally. So when '41 came along, John and I discussed it and we enlisted in his cause for several reasons. We were not too enthusiastic about O'Daniel, and we were enthusiastic about Johnson, so we joined in the campaign in '41 for Senate and did what we could in South Texas.

M: Were you sort of a director of political campaign in this area or what?

B: No, I was just a member of the committee or something I guess--I don't remember, just to be honest about it. I guess John Lyle was sort of the director, but I don't know that; I can't remember. But I remember being active in it and being around. We used to have political rallies in Artesian Park, and he'd come down here and speak in Artesian Park. I remember being at rallies down there with him and doing various chores for the campaign.

M: Do you remember any of the issues of that campaign?

B: It was a campaign against W. Lee O'Daniel, and of course W. Lee O'Daniel was not the greatest scholar or the greatest public servant; he was a great public relations man, but he wasn't much of a public service man. He got very little accomplished, but he was a distinguished Governor because he could control the will of the people so well; but he couldn't control the legislature, so he didn't do too well as Governor. I assume that primarily it was one of ability to do things in Congress as opposed to being a Governor that hadn't done too much.

Incidentally there's one other connection with Johnson. Before that, I think in 1939, he was down here as a member of an Armed Forces Committee that was investigating the location of the Naval Air station here.

M: This was when it was first to be founded?

B: When the investigation committee was determining it, and Lyndon Johnson was the principal movement in getting the location down here; I guess it was then the Naval Affairs Committee. He was chairman of the subcommittee or on the subcommittee that chose this site, and so I had some connection with him in those days. I have no recollection of what it was, but I do remember the event.

M: That Naval Air Station was a great boon to Corpus, was it not?

B: Yes indeed. Then he was here again, I guess it was the first day of April, 1940, when the Naval Air Station was formally commissioned. Secretary Knox, Mr. Speaker Rayburn, and Congressman Johnson and others were present for the commissioning of this station as I recall. And that was April 1, 1940 as I recall.

M: Do you remember anything about the defeat in 1941? Do you remember anything about his reaction to that?

B: I had the best reaction anybody ever had, and I threw it away. This is one of the great tragedies of my life. We moved here to this building five or six years ago, I guess it's a little longer than that now, but it was prior to the time that he became President and I believe at that time before he became Vice President--that would have been more than eight years, wouldn't it?

M: Yes.

B: But when we moved I of course had to get rid of a lot of stuff, and I went through all the files and threw everything away. I now remember throwing away voluminous correspondence from the man, but one letter of which stuck in my mind. It was a letter to John Lyle and to me in which

he said--apparently we had written him and said, "Look, we ought to contest that evil result over there in East Texas." You remember Coke Stevenson was trying to get to be governor by shoving O'Daniel upstairs to the Senate. And so all of the East Texas maneuvering in those days--the evil areas of Texas in those days were in East Texas, not South Texas, the change has come about. But anyway, there was obviously some late returns and some unusual circumstances about some of the returns from the East Texas counties where Coke Stevenson and Jim Ferguson influence resulted in some late returns, some changes, and one thing or another. So we were justly indignant about it, as were many people who had been for the Congressman. So we apparently had written to him or called him or something, and we got this letter--and as I say, I threw it away, it was the most priceless letter that you could have; but the effect of it was, he said, "that while the margin of victory is very close with only nine hundred and seventy one votes," or some such figure, "I've decided that we'll live to stand another day and it wouldn't be right to contest it in that things will come out better in the end if I abide by the results rather than contest it. We'll live to fight another day," and some such thing. It was a beautiful letter. As I say, I sure wish I had it now that he's the President of the United States, but I threw it away. But this was his reaction of course, and he did not contest it; he was urged to do so on many fronts, but he didn't.

M: Then the war started and you went in the Navy?

B: Then the war started and I went into the Navy. Just before I went Jimmie Allred ran for Senator as I recall--Judge Allred, and Congressman Johnson was supporting him for the Senate at that time. Then he too went to war

right soon thereafter, so I didn't hear or see any more of him until after the war I guess.

M: You were in the Navy from 1942 to '45, is that correct?

B: Something like that.

M: And Johnson himself was in the Navy for awhile and then returned to Congress. Then after the war, what connection did you have? You returned to Corpus, I assume.

B: Just before the war was over, as I mentioned, in 1944 John Lyle was elected to Congress. And by this time I was back in Miami, Florida in the Navy. And when he was sworn into the Congress on the third or fourth of January I went to Washington to see him sworn in. Of course I saw Congressman Johnson at that occasion. I have no recollection of anything specific happening, but I was there during that occasion. Then I got out of the service, I guess later that year and with Johnny Lyle in the Congress I was there a good bit to visit with him and back and forth.

M: Then did you next have a connection with Lyndon Johnson in 1948, or was there anything between then?

B: Yes. I guess it was about '48 that I became active in his Senate campaign again. I have a feeling that Fenner Roth was the campaign manager in this district. He was an old [friend], one of those multitudinous roommates. I think he was the campaign manager, but I was on the campaign committee and active in some respects in the 1948 campaign. I remember very little about it other than the helicopter in the campaign. That seems to be the only thing I remember at the moment: him coming in and the great blitz that he put on from his first primary to the second one when he started out forty thousand votes behind and ended up eighty-seven votes ahead in

the second go-around.

M: Did he fly his helicopter into Corpus?

B: Yes. I remember one occasion when he landed down on the shoreline and all of us were down there to greet him. But that's about all I remember about the '48 campaign other than the tense rivalry that went on with Coke Stevenson and the photo finish at the end that we had.

M: When it was realized that that vote was going to be very close, apparently the Johnson headquarters sent out calls to the various districts to check the tallies and the votes. Did you receive one of those calls?

B: I talked back and forth to John Connally I guess during most of it. I do not recall at the moment ever physically going anywhere to check anything though. You see, this was Johnson country and having been here as a Congressman's secretary and having been on the committee that got us this Naval Air Station, having been highly regarded through the '39 campaign here, '40 campaign, whenever it was, this was his country and Corpus Christi in particular. There was no problem. For example the big Latin vote that we have, they were all for Johnson; Johnson had buried a soldier over here at Three Rivers in the national cemetery one year, and this created a great and good image for the gentleman.

M: This was a boy that came back from what--Korea?

B: No, I think it was World War II.

M: A Latin boy that had--

B: Yes, a Latin boy that couldn't be buried from the funeral home in Three Rivers, Texas; they refused to let him be buried in the cemetery or from the funeral home, and so Johnson then arranged for him to be buried in Washington. He had a lot of occasions to endear himself to the Latin

American vote in South Texas, and they rewarded him handsomely by always voting for him and voting strongly for him.

M: Is the Latin vote the key vote in this area for him?

B: It is the key vote for anybody nowadays. At the present time, well, for example when he ran for President in 1964, we got about twenty-six thousand more votes in this Congressional district than was needed to carry the district. And the margin in the state was something like forty-six thousand, so we produced about half of it here and about half of the margin in the Rio Grande Valley, another predominately Latin district. The Latin voter, while many say he is not as intelligent as he should be, acted pretty intelligent. He knows which side his bread's buttered on and who his friends are. And he recognizes that he gets what he is entitled to from the Democratic party. So when it gets time to have an election, those of us who work in elections work real hard in about forty-five precincts where they're predominately Latin, because we know that for every person we produce at the polls we're going to get nine or ten, almost ten out of ten. You don't have to try to explain to them how they should vote, you just get them to vote and they automatically vote Democratic because they're great Democrats.

So to get back to your question, here in this country there was no great problem with checking returns or checking ballots or anything, because this was a county that was favorable to Lyndon Johnson in the 1948 election.

M: Is there any other reason why the Latins are so strong for Lyndon Johnson?

B: Oh, there are many. He has done many things for them. He was the first fellow that really ever recognized them and gave them any recognition at all. You see, in my lifetime in South Texas a Mexican-American was a

"hand" when I grew up; he couldn't go to the same schools that I went to. As late as 1938 when I built those housing projects here, the United States government approved grants for three projects; one was for what they called "white;" one they called "Mexican," and one they called "Negro." And this is not too long ago--thirty years ago. Even the United States government was approving such designations as white, Negro, and Mexican. So we've segregated and done an awful bad job by the Latin Americans in South Texas for these long years, and they needed a champion. Here was one that understood them, having been in Cotulla and knowing the Mexicans and understanding their background; here was a fellow that was a real champion for them. When he spoke for them, he spoke with dignity for them so that it gave them some feeling of importance. There ain't no way you can take the Latin in South Texas away from Lyndon Johnson; they love him!

M: It wasn't just a vote for a Democrat then, it was an actual vote for Lyndon Johnson.

B: No, it was Johnson. Well, in the '48 election, you see, it was a vote for Coke Stevenson or Lyndon Johnson; it wasn't a party line then. It was "which Democrat shall we chose?". And they chose strongly Johnson.

M: Was this the key then to Johnson's consistent victories in this area?

B: I think that's correct. Now, he has had majorities all along in all sections of the city here in Corpus Christi. But when you talk about great majorities, the great majorities are in those western precincts where they vote strongly and vote united. Now I live out in the south part of town and I know in 1968 for example that if I worked as hard as I could work in my precinct, that the best I could hope to do would be to break even. So if I've got only so much time to work and so many workers, then I'm

ignorant if I were to go and spend the time in the southern sections of the town, so-called silk stocking sections, when the only thing I could hope to be would be to break even or slightly better if I was real lucky.

Why shouldn't I go work where they really count, where I can get almost a unanimous vote? So that's what I've always done.

M: How do you go about appealing to the Mexican section? What do you do, what are the mechanics of this?

B: You don't really have any great problems of getting the Latin vote. The Latin vote, as I say--they're not nearly as ignorant as people give them credit for. They understand who their friends are. In recent years of course the politics of South Texas have been Lyndon Johnson. Since 1956, both in '48 and in the Senate election in 1956 when we took over the Democratic party machinery in Texas for Johnson--ever since then it has been a question of who's for Johnson or who's against Johnson. We had that real bitter battle with Allan Shivers in 1956 when he took over the machinery, but from then on it has always been who's for Johnson. So in '60 we were voting for Johnson. Now Kennedy had a great deal of appeal to the Latins; he was Catholic and they're Catholic. And of course the Kennedys have developed a great rapport with the Latin Americans. But they like Lyndon Johnson better. So you just have to pass the word that you're about to vote for your friend Lyndon Johnson, and you get the votes. Senator Johnson wants it done and that's the way it's done. It's almost true still today. When you're talking about this election, you pass the word that President Johnson is for Hubert Humphrey, and this is who we're for this time. We vote for our friends. It's about that simple.

M: Can you tell me something about this fight in 1956, the takeover of the

machinery?

B: Yes.

M: You were in on this?

B: Yes. Let's go back a little before that though before we get on to that. We carried the '48 election and then shortly after the '48 election, I became the then-Senator's representative or district chairman or whatever it is--I don't know what we called it--district man for the 14th Congressional District. I guess it was 1949. So from that point forward until today, I guess, I've been the spokesman for Lyndon Johnson in the 14th Congressional District. I've handled all the campaigns; I have been his representative in this area, got everything he needed done, and that sort of thing. And it was an important post to him because he relied a lot on people.

M: The organization of the state was along congressional lines.

B: Correct.

M: And you were assigned here.

B: He had one man assigned to each congressional district, and then in turn that man got a representative in each county to be his county man. So if the Senator had an appointment--if Mike Wilson was a candidate from Goliad, Texas or Cuero, Texas, they sent it to the district, and they called the district man and said, "Check this one out and see what you can find out about this fellow. Is he the kind of fellow that ought to go to Annapolis?" Or what have you. We'd check him out and if he was a decent sort of a guy and there was no reason why he shouldn't go, we'd report it back, or vice versa we'd report back what we found about him. This kind of gave the Senator eyes and ears when he was in the Senate that no one had really had before to the extent that he ran it.

M: Then your duties as the political leader of this district extended all through the year? It wasn't just in campaign periods?

B: No, you were his man forever once you got tied up with him.

M: And if he was coming down to this area to give a speech--

B: He would call you and say, "I've been invited to come to Corpus Christi and speak to the Junior Chamber of Commerce. What do you think about it? What do you think we ought to do? Should we have any meetings? What should we do while we're there?" Then you'd get busy and get on the phone and call all the county people, and you'd get in a group of people to meet with him beforehand or afterwards, or whatever it was that you needed to do at that stage. And of course you handled all the detail arrangements of his visit, saw that everything was arranged.

M: Would he consult you about appointments?

B: Correct.

M: And if there was a man coming out of this district, he would call and ask you about this?

B: Yes.

M: Well, then, what happened to 1956?

B: Can I go back still [further]? I hate to bother you.

M: No, that's what you ought to do.

B: You ought to know about my participation in the 1948 contest. In 1948 there was a litigation filed in the federal court in Fort Worth styled "Stevenson versus Johnson." And Vann M. Kennedy was the executive secretary of the Democratic party in Texas at that time. And he of course was a major figure in all of this prospect going on there of approving the candidates--the Democratic party had to approve the candidates--and getting

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the proper totals and adding them up and bringing them out. So Vann was an important figure in that big controversy. He was a party defendant in this lawsuit. I was employed to represent Vann Kennedy in the litigation in Fort Worth. We were a sort of a stakeholder by the time the litigation had come; what Mr. Kennedy had done had been done pretty well, and he had certified certain results. So we were party's defendant, but we were not antagonistic to either side at this stage. We were sort of in the pleasant position of having a front seat at the fight and being able to watch and participate in a moment of history without having to suffer the consequences too greatly.

So when I went to Fort Worth I had a great time visiting with the various lawyers involved on both sides. Not being on either side officially, well I was obviously on Johnson's side actually, but professionally being there as a representative in a stakeholder position, I would go back and forth from Johnson's lawyers' suites to the suite of the other side and visit all my lawyer friends and listen to them argue and talk; and was careful of course not to carry any tales back and forth. But the Johnson forces had accumulated all the finest lawyers they could find, that they could get hold of--just a great stable of them. And of course the Stevenson folks had done the same thing and had gotten all the best lawyers they could find. So each of them had a hotel room with twenty-thirty lawyers I guess of the highest names in Texas.

You're not interested in what went on in the Stevenson rooms, of course, although there was a little byplay there. One of my old college friends, one of my closest college friends, was a fellow named T. Kellis Dibrell; and T. Kellis and Jim Gardner his partner were old friends of Stevenson's. Dibrell had gotten a job through Stevenson so he could go to

law school. He was devoted to Stevenson and indebted to him, so during the campaign he was strong for Stevenson. And of course I was strong for Johnson. Dibrell and Gardner had been with the FBI and they were the ones that Stevenson had called to go to Duval County and Jim Wells County to try to produce the evidence that was needed for this thing. So here I would see my old friend Dibrell. He was working in and out of there with all this great evidence that he had and the witnesses and so forth. I had a pretty good insight on what was going on on their side. At the same time having access to the Johnson suite, I had access to that. So I knew what was going on on both sides and enjoyed it greatly, I might add.

But anyway, the story I want to tell was the story of what went on in the Johnson suite the afternoon before the trial. These great lawyers-- I remember John H. Crooker, Sr., Dudley Tarlton of Corpus Christi who is dead now, Everett Looney of Austin. No other names come to me at the moment, but there were fifteen or twenty of them anyway in the room. This was the afternoon before the trial was to open, and they had not, of course, had time to write their pleadings. The question they were discussing was what they were going to plead and how they were going to carry this case on. So they spent the whole afternoon making jury speeches to each other. And it was a tremendous experience to hear these great lawyers, the finest lawyers in the state, making jury speeches to each other. But none of them knew how to sit down and write the pleadings and work out the details. They were all great advocates but when it got down to the hard work of preparing and filing an answer, no one seemed to get down to the details of it. They were too busy making speeches to each other. Finally about dark, a little small gentleman whom I did not know then who had been

sitting there listening and hadn't been talking stood up and said, "Well, if you gentlemen don't mind, I'm going to get a secretary and I'm going to try to make a draft and let you see a draft of what I think should be filed. And then we'll take your comments from there." And the little fellow was Abe Fortas who got to be quite a fellow in his day. But Abe Fortas wrote the pleadings, and of course they were accepted and filed, while all of those great lawyers, they were all helpful and their names meant a lot, but as I've done in recent years, they'd kind of gotten away from the nitty-gritty of writing answers and preparing petitions and this sort of thing. Some associate did that sort of thing for them, and they were having a hard time getting down to it. But here was this great brain of Abe Fortas who did the writing of the pleadings. Obviously that and then his later stay that he obtained with Mr. Justice Black endeared him very greatly to the President of the United States when he got to be President.

M: This must have been impressive then to watch Fortas do this?

B: Yes. The next day the case was held, and it was a great pleasure. I really enjoyed that one. It was one of those strange things that Mr. Justice Davidson who was the District Judge that they tried it before made a great pronouncement I never will forget. He said, "Under the ancient Virginia and statutes of antiquity," he said something quoted in Latin which means, "that for every wrong there must be a right. In this case there doesn't seem to be any--there seems to be a wrong, but no right, and I am therefore going to declare that this court has jurisdiction to do in this and issue these orders."

As a lawyer, it was repulsive to me to hear a judge saying, "Just

because something's wrong, I'm going to try to remedy it even though I have no jurisdiction to do so." But the final result of course was great.

Getting back to the interim, from time to time--

M: Let me ask you one thing about that. Since you saw both sides of this case, is it a clear-cut case?

B: No, I do not think so on either side.

M: That old business about coming to court with clean hands--did either side have clean hands?

B: I think that could be a good speculation--that both sides were as guilty as the other. I know from my representation of Kennedy that there was great pressure put on these county chairmen by Stevenson's people in the counties in which he had things, and there was great tension, of course; and those that were weak could have fallen into the trap that they were called upon to do. And the same thing on the Johnson side. Obviously we needed every vote we could get. I assume that there were people who were willing to swear and did swear of course that they did not vote, and they were shown as voting in Jim Wells County in Box 13. But again, there were a lot of problems on both sides.

M: Could it have ever been straightened out?

B: No. I don't think it was one that you could ever run down every lead and get every detail. But the problem with these things is that by the time you do these things, they become moot. And of course the final result in the court was correct. Once the Democratic party through its processes had certified that there was an eighty-seven vote majority for Johnson, the case became moot because there was no way in the world to establish within the time allowed for filing in the November ballot that

you could do this. Of course, the final result was proper, but it got to be a rather tedious thing. And it was so vindictive that people on both sides were overzealous to bring about their results. So to say that you could have done anything differently, I don't think you could have.

M: Did you celebrate when the decision came out for Lyndon Johnson?

B: Yes, some. I don't really recall any specifics. But anyway after that, that was '48, wasn't it? And anyway I became his district man and so I became pretty close to him.

M: Why were you selected as the district man?

B: I guess because I could do what he wanted done.

M: You'd worked before and he knew you?

B: Yes, he knew me; and he knew I'd do what he wanted done. He exacted a high degree of competence, and I hope to say that I had the competence that he was seeking.

M: You were obviously a competent person.

B: Going along during that time, I remember he never did campaign during the times when it was election year. He'd always campaign the year before. So when he came up for re-election in '54, in '52 and '53, we campaigned pretty hard. I remember him coming down through here and he would--Well, I remember going up to Gonzales some place up in there, and picking him up one morning early in my car; we worked our way south to Corpus Christi by night; started at an eight o'clock breakfast in Gonzales, I guess it was, that morning. We talked to every school and rotary club from there south. We'd drive along the road, and there'd be a little country store along the roadside; and he'd say, "Stop, Cecil; Stop, Cecil! I've got to go in here." So he'd just jump out on the run almost and run in there and shake hands with everybody in the store, and then run and jump back in the car and away we'd be gone. He was the greatest campaigner that ever was, of course. And the little country

crossroads store would tell everybody that ever came in that store that Senator Johnson had been there the day before. It was the greatest advertising you could ever get, the kind of advertising--the blitzing that he would do. And he would blitz into a place and out; he was a great blitzer.

As I say, we worked all day and we got down to Beeville. We were coming to Taft for a night and dinner, and he said, "Cecil, before we go to Taft I've just got to have a bath. Is there any hotel in Sinton where we can take a bath?" And I said, "No, Senator, I don't think there's a place in Sinton I could recommend you take a bath--in a hotel." He said, "Well, I've just got to change my shirt and take a bath." And we'd been hot and sweaty all day, we were just really tired and sweaty; so I said, "Well, I'll tell you, we've got an old friend down there that's county chairman for us and has been county chairman. Maybe we can go to his house." He said, "All right."

So I called up on the telephone Judge John Miller. And Judge John Miller, the District Judge over there, had been our county chairman for some time past. So I called John and I said, "John, we've just got to come to your house and take a bath, that's all there is to it." He said, "All right, come on." So we went to John's house and took a bath, in a terrible hurry to get done of course. John always laughed about it later, after the events of Dallas, that he wanted to put a brass plaque above that bathtub, saying, "The President bathed here!"

But we went on and had a great campaign. I remember another campaigning trip that we made through Robstown. We got out just driving down the street, and somebody had let the school children out standing

on the street coming to see the Senator pass by. He ain't never going to pass by any group, and so he'd stop; he'd crawl on the top of my car and speak on the top of my car so the kids could see him good, and beat the heck out of my car crawling up on top of it. But he'd always crawl upon the hood or the rooftop of my car. He was a great campaign man.

M: Was he a good speaker?

B: Oh, he was a pretty good stump speaker, but he read a speech very poorly in those days. Whenever he did it himself, whenever it was Johnson talking, it was good; but whenever it was somebody else talking, it wasn't too good, to be honest about it.

I remember another occasion out at Del Mar College. This was later, I guess. Because he must have already had a heart attack by then because Bird was greatly worried about his health. That's another thing I remember that I should have kept. We were sitting there on the stage at the Del Mar College, and he'd talk to these kids--college students, and he talked about ten minutes; well, Bird started handing him notes. I was sitting next to the podium, and she was sitting next to me. She'd pass them across to me and I'd hand them up to him; she'd say, "You've already talked fifteen minutes, that's enough," or "Better quit now!" I'll bet she must have sent him ten different notes, and he didn't pay any more attention to it than the man in the moon. To heck with it, he'd just keep talking, you know. But I picked up all those notes and put them in my pocket, and threw them away later. I should have kept those, too. I'll bet you there were ten or twelve times, but he kept talking; he was enjoying himself. When he got going and enjoying himself, he just kept talking. He was a great campaigner.

M: He did this campaigning in 1953 in preparation for the 1954 [re-election]?

B: 1952 and '53, late 1952. He'd always campaign when he wasn't running.

M: This was when you were driving him around in Gonzales and--?

B: Yes. During election year, we didn't campaign very much. We'd do some. We didn't have to, actually, in 1954, because Dudley Dougherty of Beeville was running against him.

M: This was his only opponent?

B: Yes. Incidentally, I made another trip after that--and I can't remember when it was now--going north with him. I remember going north with him to Beeville. And we stopped at every courthouse and city hall from here to there and made several speeches. He got between Skidmore and Beeville and in Sinton, he had been handed a note or someone had handed me a note that Dudley had called at the courthouse and wanted to invite him to come out to see him when he got to Beeville. And all the way up there he and Bird and I talked back and forth about what he ought to do about it.

M: This was after Dougherty had announced against him?

B: No, this was after the campaign was over with.. The next year or the following year. We kicked it around and obviously as is necessary for him to do, he reserved to himself the final decision. Although he kept asking Bird and me what to do about it, we knew he was going to make the decision in the final result. He did by the time we got to Beeville and the meeting was over in Beeville. He motioned to me to come up to the front and he reached down and while he was shaking hands said, "Go call Dudley and tell him we'll come by a minute."

So Mrs. Johnson and the Senator and I went out there. He lived on a ranch a little north of Beeville, and he was a gracious host. He had

a beautiful place out there. Of course, he was a wealthy oil heir. And it was another one of those strained tense moments that I had been with him over the years. You could just cut it with a knife, the air was so tense when we came in, but Johnson took charge. One of Dudley's daughters was there, a little girl. She was sitting on Johnson's lap, and he was giving her pencils and inviting her to come to the ranch. And the first thing you know, Johnson had it well in hand again, and the tension was all gone. He was running the show again. As a matter of fact, he invited Dudley to come see him, and Dudley did later go by the ranch to see him. I guess this must have been either the following year or two years later. Had a real tense situation there.

M: Why would Dougherty want to see him?

B: Oh, I have no feel for it. He didn't ask for anything. It was just a gesture on his part as a gesture to the winner. As I say, you could just see the wheels working in Johnson's head when he was going along trying to figure out what he wanted to do, whether to go or not. Of course he had a speaking engagement in Austin that night; the plane was waiting for him there at the Beeville airport. He kept everybody in Austin waiting, I guess, while we visited with Dudley. But it was really a tense moment and I could feel it real good.

M: Then when you left everything was calm.

B: Very pleasant. Johnson took charge, and when he took charge, you know he can be the most charming man in the world when he wants to. There isn't anybody in the world that can be more charming than Johnson when he's trying hard. He has got a great philosophy of winning over all of his enemies. He doesn't want anybody to be mad at him. Some of his friends

say the best way to get something out of Johnson is to be his enemy and he'll try to win you over, but I don't think that's quite true. Anyway, since he had the opportunity, he wasn't going to let the day go by without getting Dudley back in the fold, and he got him back in the fold. That's the story of campaigning.

Now before we get to '56 let me give you another little pleasantry. In '51 and '52 I was president of the State Bar of Texas. Johnny Lyle was still in Congress. And Roy Baker Sherwin, a Texas lawyer working in Washington called me and said, "Cecil, you never do have anything for the Texas lawyers up here, and there are lots of them. I want to put together a reception, and I want you to be the honored guest so we'll have an occasion to get all the Texas lawyers in Washington together and meet the president of their State Bar, and let you make a little speech to them." And I said, "All right, I'll come." And so we worked out a date, and Roy sent out an invitation to all the Representatives and the Senators and everybody, so Senator Johnson knew I was coming. Knowing my habits, he knew well enough where I would go when I got to town.

So I was over at John Lyle's office that morning, the day that I was supposed to be at the reception that night, the phone rang, and it was the Senator. He said, "John, is Cecil there?" "Yes." Well, he says, "Let me speak to him." He said, "Cecil, can you come over here a minute I said, "Sure can." "Well, now, don't wait, come on now. I want you right now. I've got a fellow here I want to impress for you. Take a cab, don't walk, take cab, come on quick!"

So I did. I didn't know what in the heck he wanted, so I rushed off to the other side of the Capitol and went up to his office, they escorted

me right in, and said, "Sit down over here, Cecil. I've got a fellow here I want to impress a little." And so he rang for them to bring in the man outside. And he introduced me to him, and said, "Mr. So-and-so is general counsel for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation," and he just introduced me as Cecil Burney--didn't give me any background or anything.

After a pleasantry or two, he turned to this fellow and he said, "Now, tell me again where was it that you needed--I understand you've got a matter that needs to be handled in Texas by a Texas lawyer. It's a matter of importance to your agency, and you need a competent man with some experience and standing in the profession." "Yes, sir." "And it should be someone in the Corpus Christi area--in the South Texas area--because it involves a matter before the courts down there." "Yes, sir." "Well," he said, "This is Cecil Burney. He's the president of the State Bar of Texas, and he lives in Corpus Christi, and he'd be glad to handle your matter. Would that be all right with you?" And of course this fellow just dropped on his face--he couldn't imagine that within five minutes after he was there to make this request to one of the secretaries to get a name to whom they could write, the Senator produces in the flesh a lawyer from Corpus Christi who was not only a lawyer, but who was president of the State Bar of Texas. And he just dropped, he just really took--So the Senator just brusquely told him, "Well, now any time there's anything else you want me to do, let me know whatever I can do for you." He just left the impression with the fellow, "I just do this all the time--anything else you need, let me know, I'll take care of it."

Of course this was part of the Johnson treatment, and I went outside

with the fellow and arranged to go see him. When I went over there that afternoon, it was obvious the story had gone through the halls because everywhere this fellow would take me, "Yes, you're Mr. Burney, yes indeed!"

M: Who was this man?

B: I don't remember, but he was general counsel for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. I did handle his lawsuit; it wasn't very important, I might add. But what had happened, I later found out, he had stopped and asked Mary Rather for the name of somebody in Texas that he could write and send the matter to, and she went in to ask the Senator about it. That's when he called me. You know, "Just wait a minute." Obviously he didn't intend, number one, to see the Senator, or to get one in person. But this is part of the kind of buildup that Johnson did all the time as a Senator, and he got his reputation for being able to get the job done. Part of any such reputation, of course, is myth and a good performance, good public relations myth also.

M: He apparently enjoyed doing things like that.

B: Right. He greatly enjoyed this one. Then later in the day he came over to the reception and was having a good time and laughing about it with me, about how we took care of that fellow real well. But his whole attitude was, "This is simple; I do this all the time. Just let me know what else you want. If you need anything else, you be sure and call me." Of course this builds up greatly to his reputation.

Now if you want to go to 1956. In '56 we had a meeting up at the Senator's LBJ Ranch of all the district people. And the question was, "Shall we take on Allan Shivers for the leadership of the Democratic party. We sat around the swimming pool and discussed it all

afternoon. Obviously the Senator had to be the standard bearer. We had to have something to rally our forces behind. You can't beat Allan Shiver with nothing.

M: He was pretty strong.

B: And you had to have something to beat him with. So the question, of course, was whether the Senator should be the favorite son for the Presidency and candidate for chairman of the delegation. After listening to everybody and talking to Bird, he decided we ought to do it. And so we undertook this assignment and for the next six weeks, I guess, we were pretty busy on it.

M: Was there any compelling reason why he should take over the leadership?

B: Well, we thought so. It goes back to his philosophy and my philosophy. My philosophy is that the two-party system of government is the stability of our form of government. The responsibility of Everett Dirksen for the Republicans and the responsibility of Senate Majority Leader Johnson during the Eisenhower Administration creates a stable government unlike that now in Rome and unlike that in Paris in previous years. And this is to him, and certainly to me, a major thing. A two-party system with responsible leadership is the basis of what we have in this country.

So the leadership of the Democratic party in Texas in 1952 became the leadership of the Eisenhower campaign; everyone that was supporting the Democratic nominee that were members the Democratic executive committee resigned from the Democratic executive committee because the great bulk of them had through Shivers' leadership endorsed Eisenhower. And to a student of government who understands this two-party system, this is tragedy. So during the 1952 campaign I remember we had to conduct the

campaign for Stevenson under something called the Democratic Advisory Council or some such thing; Byron Skelton I remember was active in it, Mr. Speaker Rayburn. But we had no state organization to help put it on because Shivers had turned it over, and they became "Shivercrats" instead of Democrats. So this for the Majority Leader and a man of leadership in the party, he and Mr. Sam had worried about it a lot, as all of us had, and he felt that since he was the highest elected official of the Democratic party that was loyal to the cause that it was his responsibility to do something about it. And we agreed that it was, so we undertook it.

This was the reason for it.

M: And you faced the same thing in '56?

B: This was '56, and we did it.

M: I mean, you're facing the same situation all over again.

B: Right.

M: And so you would take on this task of seizing control of the party for the sake of the party?

B: That's correct. The party was dead for all practical purposes in Texas. There was no Democratic party. We had the Democratic Advisory Council, but as I say this was a rump sort of a thing, just some of us who refused to kowtow to the Shivercrats decided we had to have some kind of an organization. So that's what we got. We had to rescue the Democratic party. That's what it boiled down to.

But we set up an organization before the day was over, and opened headquarters in Austin. I remember going to Fort Worth and making a speech over WBAP, I don't know whether it was network or--I don't guess it was network in those days. But anyway I remember going to Fort Worth and

making a TV speech, the first television speech I ever made, and that was in 1956. We worked real hard on it in this district here.

M: What did you call your organization?

B: Oh, this was just a Johnson effort, Lyndon Johnson favorite son. It was Lyndon B. Johnson for favorite son. And we organized, and we organized well. And Shivers organized, and he organized well. You see, these were precinct fights. And when the precinct meeting was to be held in my precinct, I was the precinct chairman in the precinct in which I lived, so I called the meeting trying to get away from a little of the bitterness that had been engendered. I called the meeting from my house. (Interruption) So in 1956 we had the meeting out at my house in my precinct, for example. The most we had ever had out to a precinct meeting of that group before had been seven or eight, and this time we had, I think, about twenty on our side and about fifteen on their side. Thirty-five showed up for the precinct meeting so that evidences the interest that was in it.

We had the meeting, as I say, at my house. Then when it was over with, we served refreshments and insisted that everybody stay and visit awhile to try to get rid of some of the hard feelings we had because we knew we would be working on it again. Anyway, we carried all the precincts.

M: Now, this precinct fight went on all over the state.

B: Every precinct in the state, correct.

M: So it was really a fight at the grassroots level.

B: At the grassroots level, and it's in each locality. In this county, for example, there are one hundred and two precincts. That means every identifiable area had a meeting. In this county, we swept the county pretty well for Johnson. The 14th District carried for Johnson highly,

and of course we carried the whole state, but we were losing some.

M: Did you have responsibility for the whole district?

B: Correct, right. The 14th Congressional District.

M: So you had to watch every precinct, really?

B: Yes. We had precincts and then we had county meetings in each county.

The precinct meetings elected delegates to the county convention. At the county convention we selected delegates to go to the state convention.

We in this county received the help and assistance from organized labor who have always been Democratic, of course. They did not like what Shivers had done to them in regard to the Democratic party, and so they helped us. And they were some help. So we sent a delegation to Dallas, the state convention, composed of all factors of party except the ultraconservative Shivers group.

M: What about the so-called liberals? Did they help you?

B: Yes, indeed, they were for us.

M: So you had the liberals and labor and the Johnson people.

B: And the middle-of-the-road people. The only people we didn't have were the ultraconservative element that Shivers had influenced.

M: Did you have any kind of meetings with the labor people and the liberals to organize together?

B: Yes, many. This was the way we set it up. We would get everybody that we could that we thought would be influential to try to set up who will take care of which precinct. You see, it's a physical job of calling everybody you know, going by and seeing them and being sure they come, because they have to be present to vote.

M: Was there any kind of swapping or making arrangements for programs, or

what you would do, or was this just a united effort to get rid of Shivers?

B: It was a united effort to get rid of Shivers. Now we of course agreed with labor groups and liberal groups that they would be represented in those delegations at the state convention; and we carried out that promise by jointly agreeing upon the delegation. Since labor and the liberal group were in the minority, I recall they got about forty percent of the county delegation, and the Johnson middle-of-the-road group got about sixty percent.

When we got to Dallas to the state convention, I was one of the Johnson floor leaders. Some people can't stand victory, you know. and the night before we began to have troubles. We had a lady from San Antonio named Kathleen Voight, I think it was, and she was a character out of this world. She wanted to be the Democratic national committeewoman, and she would cry and swear and do about everything. But finally about two o'clock in the morning, we finally just said, "We'll drop you. We're just not going to put up with it any longer. You're not going to be the Democratic national committeewoman, we're just not going to take you." Also during the night some of the labor boys got out of line, and they wanted to select Mrs. Frankie Randolph from Houston as the Democratic national committeewoman, and this was not in accord with our wishes.

M: Had you made any prior agreement about that?

B: At Dallas we decided we were going to go with B.A. Bentsen. Mrs. Lloyd Bentsen, Jr., but we had no prior agreement about it. The night before when labor began to kick over and we met with them several times, it became obvious that they were not going to live with us with our control. We

proceeded to scratch their names off all the committees, all the delegations to Chicago and this sort of thing, because if they weren't going to work with us there wasn't any reason for us to continue this coalition any further. For example I had worked out an arrangement whereby a fellow named Henry Weir from Corpus Christi who was an Oil Workers International man--I had arranged for him to be a delegate to Chicago. They deserved it I thought, as long as they were working with us. When it developed that they kicked over the traces, we decided we'd find somebody else to be a delegate and we did, in this district.

But after a long and arduous night of negotiating back and forth, we just pitched the battle and, of course, organized the convention ourselves. Our old friend Senator Yarborough was on the outskirts again. During the day his cohorts were stamping their feet and saying, "We want Yarborough! We want Yarborough!" disrupting the convention. And finally they called him up and let him make a speech.

We were not as well organized. As the day wore on, we made a mistake. Raymond Buck of Fort Worth was chairman of the convention, and Ray, a great fellow and a brilliant guy, didn't have the iron hand. He was too decent a guy to be chairman of an unruly convention, and so the thing rocked on and lasted too long. Conventions to be controlled shouldn't last too long. By late afternoon some of our people had left; everybody had gotten tired. So Frankie Randolph became the Democratic national committeewoman, beat us on the voting; so we lost that much of it. We elected Byron Skelton as our Democratic national committeeman, but we lost on the committeewoman.

M: Did the liberals support you with Skelton?

B: Correct. We didn't have any trouble about Skelton; we didn't have any contest over that. We had a contest over Mrs. Bentsen.

M: There is some story that the Johnson people had made a bargain with the liberals whereby you would get Skelton and they would get Mrs. Randolph. Is that correct at all?

B: No, I don't have any recollection of any such agreement. As a matter of fact they wanted Skelton, but we got it all involved in this Kathleen Voight thing. This was one of the troubles we had with women. You sometimes have problems with women who are active in Democratic politics. There's lots of pride and self-denial among them. And so between the problems we had with Frankie Randolph, and with Kathleen Voight, and Frankie Randolph being on the other horizon, we just weren't organized enough to take care of it.

M: So you got one man you wanted, and you broke the power of Shivers.

B: We broke the power of Shivers; we selected the delegation to Chicago. And we have controlled the Democratic party in Texas ever since.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson take any steps to smooth over relationships with Shivers then?

B: No, I don't recall any. Later he did, but it was much later. This was '56, and I think it was close to '60 before he did.

M: Did Mrs. Randolph continue to give you trouble?

B: Well, Mrs. Randolph is a strange character; she's very rich, but she doesn't look like the kind of a person that would be a leader. But the people that were behind her gave us trouble from time to time from '56 to '68. She was quite a factor there for a long time, I guess through Price Daniel's day. We had difficulties with her in San Antonio, I remember

one year. But she went to Chicago as a member of the delegation I remember, but she just wasn't on the Johnson team ever. She was a Yarboroughite,

You see, this is also a thing. Until '64 when the President said, "I want Ralph Yarborough reelected," this was the first nice thing he had ever said about Ralph Yarborough publicly, I guess. They had never been together in all of these conventions over the years. I was the beneficiary of his knife on two occasions because of the fact that I was a leader of Johnson forces every time and was active in the management of the conventions. I got credit for more than I deserved from him, and I became sort of a symbol to Ralph. I was bad because I was too close to Johnson. But until '64 we never--we kicked Ralph everywhere we could; we didn't let him go to Los Angeles in '60. He had eight long years there he didn't have any say about anything, and this rankled him of course, but perhaps rightly so. A United States Senator should perhaps have a little more recognition than he got; we didn't give him much because he wouldn't work with us. Politics is sort of a game of rule or ruin, you know, so we ruled him. If he wouldn't run with us, we couldn't let him run and that's about what happened to him. In '60 he wouldn't come out for Johnson for President, so we wouldn't take him to California with us; he wasn't on the delegation.

M: Is this difference between Yarborough and Johnson one of political ideology, or personalities, or what?

B: Personalities primarily. Johnson and Yarborough are not too far apart on their political philosophy. The President has told me himself one time, "The fellow always votes right; I need him. When it comes to voting in the Senate, I need him. As president, I need him to back me up. I know he'll

support me on my programs, but he's just hard to live with."

Anyway that was the '56 convention. We were firmly in control of the party. In '56 we went to Chicago, and that party of John Connally, Dolph Briscoe, John Lyle, Raymond Buck, Woody Woodward, and I went up and set up a headquarters--opened a headquarters; put a sign out front: "Johnson for President"; got some materials printed and some signs made and hired a band and whatever you do to have a demonstration; put on a campaign for Johnson. John Connally nominated him to the convention, and it was obviously a favorite son proposition. But as we went along, we saw glimmers of hope that might make it more than that, but we were more optimistic than we were wise.

M: You mean you kind of sold yourself on the idea?

B: Yes. You see we were there, it must have been about ten days before the convention started, maneuvering and visiting and what have you; and we oversold ourselves. But anyway when Mr. Stevenson, who was saying he didn't want the nomination, turned out he did want it, there wasn't much left to be done but to let him have it, and he got it, of course.

Then we got into this question of the Vice Presidency, and our leadership--Mr. Sam and Senator Johnson--led us to vote for Senator Gore. And in the maneuver we voted for Senator Gore instead of for Senator Kefauver whom our leadership didn't want; and then eventually ended up with Kefauver. This was Kennedy's defeat. I remember the Kennedys sitting in the stand, the first time I ever became acquainted with the Kennedy family was in '56; they were there, good at strength in the stands. That was the first national convention I ever attended; I've been to every one since.

M: Is this the beginning of Johnson's serious thoughts about attaining the Presidency?

B: Oh, I don't know. He, of course, wouldn't have acknowledged it if he had been. But came the next few years, he was a strong Majority Leader, and attained great fame as that. In '60 we decided to make a serious campaign for it, and a group of us gathered in Washington and organized the headquarters, and fanned out across the country seeking delegates. Our problem then was we had a reluctant candidate there for awhile.

M: Did you start this on your own without his support?

B: Well, that's a good question. Obviously John Connally and Cecil Burney and Woody Woodward and John Singleton and people of that stripe don't start anything on their own--maybe they start it on their own, but obviously the group was too close to the Senator for it to be a pure grassroots movement obviously.

But anyway we did start it, and we did open the headquarters, and we did have meetings in Washington. I first met Mr. Bobby Baker there that day, I might add. He was at one of the meetings we had. Culp Krueger of El Campo labeled him the first day. He said, "That's the biggest phony I ever saw." I never will forget that because I always remember how smart Krueger was about that Bobby Baker. He was sitting next to me when Bobby began to tell us what we had to do and how the cow ate the cabbage, Brother Krueger leaned over to me and he said, "That guy's a phony, Cecil, he's not anything. He don't know what he's talking about."

Anyway, we did organize and we did fan out across the country. Then our reluctant candidate finally became a candidate the week before--. We made one very major mistake that year. The Senator had been in the Senate

so long, he knew exactly what Senators could do and how important they were in the Senate and what their responsibilities were; and he knew that he controlled the Democratic party in his state, so he assumed that the Senators of the United States could control the Democratic party back in their states. And he made a bad mistake in making that judgment. We found from experience that, number one, there are not very many Senators that control the Democratic party organization in their states; they certainly did not control it to the extent that they could transfer this support to any one individual. And secondly, we found that the Senators are big--A high and mighty Senator from Washington just can't afford to get out and work like he has got to work to win an election. And so the promises made on Capitol Hill were not executed in the vineyards.

M: Is this the reason he didn't campaign much personally?

B: Well, his decision not to campaign was that somebody needed to tend the store. And he was obviously the most powerful individual in government at the moment; Mr. Eisenhower was President, but Mr. Eisenhower was not exerting any influence or wielding any power as such. So--this is '60, Mr. Eisenhower was enjoying life playing golf, and he never was the type of whipcracker of course that Johnson was. So Johnson stepped into that void and cracked that whip and kept that show going. So he felt sincerely that it would be wrong for him to leave to campaign as long as he was Majority Leader of the Senate and running the store. And so he waited until the Congress adjourned to announce that he would run. That was a week before the convention, which was way too late.

M: Of course Kennedy had been out campaigning hard.

B: Correct. For years. And secondly, as I say, we relied upon people that

you could not rely upon to be honest about it. And in all due respect for these Senators, they're fine people and I know many of them and love many of them, you don't get out and tear your shirt to help somebody else when the result may be that you lose your own standing. The most important thing to the Senator from Utah or Washington or what have you is that he get reelected. And so in the Congress Lyndon Johnson was his friend and leader, but back home Jack Kennedy was the darling of his Democratic friends. Senators are not stupid, they find out how the wind is blowing back home so they gave great jury speeches to Johnson on Capitol Hill, but when they don't execute them back home, Johnson doesn't get the nomination. Of course the Kennedys understood organization and had good organization; they had people that had been at it for years and the result was that you couldn't get a quick grassroots organization and nominate Johnson.

Now we had assumed all along that if we could get enough votes to hold the nomination over to the second or third ballot, we could then pick up some votes like Indiana, which would be released after the first ballot, and New Jersey, and perhaps we'd get some of Pennsylvania through Congressman Green and Governor Lawrence, but those things didn't happen. And when the world fell down and it became close on the first ballot so that people gave in and we didn't win.

M: Did it surprise you that Johnson took the Vice Presidential position?

B: Very much so. We had gone to Los Angeles I guess two or three weeks ahead of time to get started and set up and what have you. I was in charge of a region. We had six regions in the country. I had the region that included Colorado and some states through this area. I remember that Byron

White, Mr. Justice White, was my Kennedy counterpart. He kicked the socks off of me in all of those areas in which we met head-on. I was relying on Senator McFarland and ex-Senator Johnson in Colorado and these sort of people. Byron White was relying on some people down at the grassroots who worked. So he really cleaned up on me.

But anyway after the nomination had been assured for Kennedy, the rest of us relaxed and decided to recover. The next morning Senator and Mrs. Johnson came into the public room of the Johnson forces and made this little speech. There were tears in a lot of eyes, and it was really a tremendous moment in which he indicated that it was time for us to go back to work and "thank you very much" sort of a speech. And all of us left with the idea that the thing was over.

As a matter of fact, John Ben Shepperd and Blake Gillen and I left just immediately thereafter. And we went over to town, went down to the Farmers Market and had dinner. We were through as far as we were concerned. We didn't keep in touch, we didn't do anything. So we were gone three or four hours, I guess.

When we were on our way back for the next session, there was a newsboy on the street somewhere down by the Farmers Market selling newspapers that had headlines: "Johnson Will Be Nominee for Vice President." And ole Shepperd said, "Stop the car. I want to buy a newspaper." So we stopped. With his hand on the newspaper, he said, "Keep these. These will be a real souvenir. The idea of Lyndon Johnson being the nominee for Vice President is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of.

So we went back to the hall and everybody was looking for us. We went into the little gashouse that we used as a command post behind the

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colosseum there and started to go in. They said, "Sorry, you can't go in. You've got to have a check." It was a Secret Service man there on the gate. So we had to be approved by somebody on the inside to get back in before we could go back to work. We learned what the deal was, that it was true. So we went back to work and went back to the convention.

M: The Secret Service man was symbolic of Johnson's choice?

B: Yes. Once it was announced, there was a guard placed on the door of his headquarters. In other words, we knew when we couldn't get in that this was the confirmation. Before we ever got inside to talk to anybody that would know what had happened, [we knew] that it was true, the he had been selected.

Then that afternoon they had the session. And the thing I remember most about the session was a fellow named Soapy Williams of Michigan. He stood up in his chair and booed when they called for the vote on Johnson being the Vice President. I always wanted Brother Johnson to be vindictive about it when he got to be President and fire him as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, but he never works that way. He was always nice.

Well, this was 1960. Then we had a terrible campaign, of course.

Tape 2 of 2

B: So 1960 was the year of the Kennedy-Johnson campaign.

M: Did you accept this without any misgivings once he had made the decision?

B: Surely. The campaign was a rugged one that year, of course, because there was a lot of antagonism in Texas toward the Kennedy philosophy

type thing, and there was the other problem of the Catholic religion that entered into it. So we had many problems. There were a lot of people in Texas who were unhappy because Johnson had taken the Vice Presidency on the Kennedy ticket.

So we had a meeting up at the ranch.

M: Were you again the leader in this district?

B: Yes. And we had a meeting up at the ranch very soon after and discussed this matter of him taking the Vice Presidency. Mr. Speaker was there and explained what the situation was, what the problems were, why it had to be. Mr. Truman was there, of all people, that day and spoke with us. I do not think the Senator was there; Mrs. Johnson was there, but I don't believe the Senator was there. But we had this meeting. And we wanted to make some plans and talk about it.

Then we had this terrible campaign. And three major things happened that affected the campaign favorably in Texas. First of all, there was this televised appearance that Senator Kennedy made before the ministers' association, Baptist Ministers' Alliance or something, over in Houston. his openhanded answers and his demeanor under great pressure did a great deal to eradicate this Catholic problem. Then of course there were the great debates that greatly affected the election in Texas.

M: Now, in your district the fact that Kennedy was a Catholic would help you with the Latin vote, would it not?

B: Correct.

M: And then the Houston speech would help you with the rest of it, is that true?

B: The fact that Kennedy was Catholic in our district would be in most areas of our district helpful. In the rest of the state, East Texas and that area, we badly needed something--I'm talking about statewide--to counteract this Catholic thing.

And, of course, the national debates helped greatly.

But the final thing that really cinched it for us was a fellow named Alger that was a representative from Dallas to the Congress. He and some of his perhaps well-meaning but misguided silk stocking friends from Dallas organized picket lines in front of the Adolphus Hotel and marched up and down with signs. Complained against the Vice President as a candidate and said a lot of mean things. And on Friday before the election on Tuesday, Senator and Mrs. Johnson tried to go in to a luncheon at the hotel. These people were in the lobby and they pawed at them, and they spit at them, and they used abusive language and would hardly let them go through the lobby to go to their meeting.

M: Were you there, incidentally?

B: No. I was down at the district here. But this was the greatest political error that anybody ever made, because the campaign was real close. But from then on Senator Johnson could do no wrong because most Texans appreciate fair play, and this wasn't fair and this wasn't honest and this wasn't decent.

I know we had scheduled a meeting out at the municipal airport here several days before. He was coming in here Sunday night--a terrible time to come in. But we borrowed the airport building and took all the chairs out and set up a rostrum. Originally we had expected a reasonable

crowd of three to five thousand people to come out to hear Senator Johnson that Sunday night. Then two days before very special help was given us from Dallas, and we had the greatest political crowd to ever gather in Corpus Christi. There were cars backed up double-breasted for several miles trying to get into the airport by the time he left, and just literally thousands that couldn't get into the airport building.

S: So there was immediate reaction.

B: A grand reaction. And there many of them--I was walking along with him as he came in, and people would reach over and touch him to let him know that "we don't go for this down in Corpus Christi." People that wouldn't normally come to the rally came to say to the Senator from Texas, "This kind of foolishness doesn't go. We don't like this foolishness." So there was just a great outpouring of humanity that just wanted to say to him personally, "Look, we don't believe in this kind of thing. Mrs. Johnson, this is not right, for anybody to treat a lady that way, and you're a lady."

So this greatly affected the election. And of course, it gave us all a shot in the arm, we workers all had a shot in the arm. So we had a great election and won handily. This was 1960.

M: Did you have any connection with him when he was Vice President?

B: Well, we all went to the Inauguration. And from time to time, I would go see him when I was in Washington. Early in the Kennedy Administration, one of his aides called me one day and said, "The Vice President wants you to come up here tomorrow. He wants to talk to you." So I said, "All right," and I went. He got me a room at the Washington Hotel--I

remember that for some reason--and I checked in there Sunday night. Monday morning the phone rang, and it was Bird. She said, "Cecil, the Vice President wants to talk to you a minute." He said, "Are you dressed?" And I said, "Well, no, but I'm about ready." "Well," he said, "I'm just about ready to leave home, and I want to come by there and pick you up. You be down on the front sidewalk." I said, "All right." And he said, "You be down on the sidewalk in front of the hotel and I'll pick you up in a few minutes." So I rushed and got ready to go downstairs. He drove up in his Vice Presidential limousine and picked me up. He was going to the White House for breakfast.

So on the way over there, he told me what he wanted. He said that he had been talking to the President and Attorney General about selecting a successor for Judge Allred down here, and he wanted me to be the judge. He wanted to know whether I was interested in it or not. And I said, "Well, obviously, I think I would be." I hadn't asked for it. I didn't want to ask for it. I wasn't going to ask him for anything. Then he said, "I want you to have it, and I'll tell you what I want you to do." So he told me to go see Ramsey Clark, and that Ramsey would take me up to see the Attorney General.

And I went up to see the Attorney General, and he told me that the Vice President had said some nice things about me, and that the only problem he had was one request for the Latin Americans in this area for a judgeship. He had to consider that, but it was odd that he--nice enough to say that I had good qualifications. He said that he'd talk about it some more.

So I went back and reported that to the Vice President. No, he had told me then when I got through there to get my Congressman and go see Mr. Speaker. So I went to see Mr. Speaker, and we told him what the Vice President had told me to tell him: that mainly he wanted to recommend me for a judgeship and hoped that the Speaker would be for me. And of course I assumed he had already arranged whatever arrangements were necessary with the Speaker. But anyway the Speaker was very kind and said, sure he'd be for Cecil Burney.

So I then went back to report to the Vice President, and he said, "Now, you've got to go see Ralph Yarborough." So I went to see Ralph Yarborough. I had a very terrible time ever getting in to see him, and finally stood outside in the hall of the Senate waiting room and sent in word that I needed to see him. He came out and talked to me a minute out in the lobby, and I told him the Attorney General had sent for me to come talk to him about this thing, and that I wanted to talk to him about it and I wanted to get his thoughts on it. "Well," he said, "Cecil, with your reputation, I couldn't stand in your way. Obviously, you and I haven't been close, and you wouldn't be the one I would nominate if I were going to do it, but with your reputation and activities in the Bar, I couldn't stand in your way. I couldn't blackball you. But, as I say, I wouldn't have made the nomination if I were making the nomination. I have other friends that would be closer to me, but I wouldn't stand in your way and I wouldn't blackball you." I said, "Well, Senator, I appreciate that. That's fine, and that's all I could ask."

I left and went back and reported to the Vice President. He said, "Well, go on home." The next day the FBI was around asking questions about me. About a week later they had a meeting with the Attorney General and the Vice President and the Senator. This was when this great war was going on about patronage between them. So they'd arranged this meeting in the hope of getting some agreement on some of these appointments so they could get them moving.

The Attorney General, I'm told, started off the meeting by saying that he understood that they had both agreed that I should be appointed as the judge, and he guessed they could go from there to get some of the other ones out of the way. The Senator spoke up and said, "Just a minute now. I haven't agreed to any such thing." So the Vice President became annoyed, I am told, and he said, "Wait a minute, Ralph, now didn't you see Cecil Burney when he was up here the other day?" He said, "Yes, sir, I did." "Didn't you tell him that you wouldn't stand in his way or you wouldn't blackball him?" He said, "Yes, I did. But I didn't tell him I'd confirm him." I'm told the Vice President of the United States exploded and in rather strong language wanted to know what the difference might be, and the Senator said, well, he saw a difference. Neither the Attorney General nor the Vice President could see any difference, and the meeting broke up without discussing any other candidates for any other jobs. So I ceased to be a federal judge pretty fast.

Then of course the Vice President--the then-President--was kind enough on two other occasions to suggest that I ought to be a judge. Both times I was turned down flatly by the Senator. So I never have been able to gain his graces for some reason. Anyway, we're talking about the Vice

President. But that was a rather great experience I had with him.

I was there many times, some times with constituents from the 14th district who had problems. I was still the district manager, so to speak, looking after the district.

M: Incidentally, just for the record, does a district manager like that get any compensation other than the prestige or what pleasure you get out of it?

B: Prestige. It costs you plenty of money, but it does have some prestige. Now, for example a man raising broom corn at Beeville had some problems about exports, and we went to see the Vice President. It's amazing, always amazing to see how he'd work. Well, "You first go see so-and-so, and then you see so-and-so. That's the way you do it. Then report back to me." And it was amazing how he worked things out. He had what we laughingly call the greatest spy system in the government. He knew what was going on in every department and he knew who to talk to. He had friends in every department practically over the years that he could send you to see if something needed to be done that was reasonable. But he had the most remarkable ability to make government work than anybody I ever saw. So I had numerous contacts with him when he was Vice President over the years.

M: Did you help Connally in his governor's race?

B: Yes. In '61 I had some reprints made of a favorable article about his service as Secretary of the Navy and distributed them to a list that one of his secretaries gave me of some of his old friends, and suggested that we might want Connally to go further as--come back to Texas for political office. Then in October I hosted a meeting up at a ranch up in Karnes

City at which about twenty-five of his old faithful friends got together to see whether they thought they could elect him governor. So I was quite active in that deal.

M: Was this done with Johnson's support?

B: I don't know. Certainly he didn't disapprove it. I never went to him and asked him if it was all right to run John for the governor, but I always assumed that John was keeping him fully advised of what we were doing.

M: Did you have anything to do with Kennedy's tour on this date in 1963 on which he was killed?

B: He was not coming to Corpus Christi, but he was coming to Austin for a statewide dinner, and each of the district men had an assignment of tickets and arrangements and so forth. I was in Austin for the dinner that night and was having lunch when I heard that he had been shot.

M: Do you know the reason why Kennedy came to Texas?

B: No. I read all the articles and so forth. Just based on my personal experience, I think it was more an effort to bolster his own forces than it was to try to patch up the feud that existed. You know, human beings are funny. We get the idea pretty quick that a martyred President or a martyred Senator was a great man and had no detractors. But I remember that of course I was getting a lot of trouble from Kennedy detractors that were saying that he was a sorry President, and giving us trouble about it. And of course I would naturally be the one that would receive these things, having been the campaign manager of the district. But we had sizeable blocks of the business community at least that were adverse to Kennedy, and so it was not a bad idea to bring him in '63 to Texas

which had contributed twenty-five electoral votes and much money to his '60 campaign back to Texas in '63 to get ready for '64. And he did have some getting ready to do, it was obvious. Certainly the feud between Ralph and the Vice President and Connally was there, but any patching of feud that was needed was between Ralph and the Vice President, not so much Connally and the Senator.

M: Of course that had been a long-lived feud too, hadn't it?

B: This had been very bitter over the patronage and all this sort of thing. Well, the little story I told you about myself evidences the bitter feeling that the Vice President must have had after this happened toward the man that he had to work with; and the compromises that they made are evident--that they had to compromise because we have in the Southern District of Texas Judge Seals who had been Frankie Randolph's lieutenant and who had opposed the President in his various efforts to control the Democratic party in Texas over the years and yet he became the District Judge. So he would not have become the District Judge under ordinary circumstances if it hadn't been compromised, because he was a highly inflammatory name to many of those who had fought the battles on the other side; so it had to be compromised to get to that point.

M: Then Lyndon Johnson had to take over the Presidency, became President, flew back to Washington. Did you have any contact with him at that point?

B: No, I did not. I do not recall any occasion soon thereafter that I talked to him directly, but I talked to Walter Jenkins many times.

M: This would be on appointments and--

B: Well, primarily things when people in our district needed something. And then of course Walter was a close friend of mine, and I would go to

the White House to see Walter occasionally. And I never imposed upon myself to go to see the President. I'm an old hand at this game, and I understand that he hasn't got time to talk to every one of the two hundred million citizens he has got, and I'm one of those citizens, and if I need something done I could always talk to Marvin [Watson]; or if I wanted the President to know something, I could always tell Juanita [Roberts], and I'd know that he'd hear about it. There was no question about it in my mind. I knew the channels that were open, and I had open channels and had had for years. When he was Vice President I was up there almost a year working on a contract, and I would visit with Walter from time to time. I knew enough about that office to know that you don't have to tell the President of the United States anything; if you want him to know it, you tell Walter or you tell Marvin or Juanita; these people understand how to get these things done, so I never did bother him, to tell you the truth. I never made it a point of trying to do something. And when the President wanted to talk to me, he could call me or send for me, and I'd come. But I never voluntarily went around, saying, "Look, I'm in town, and I want to see you." When I was in town while he was Vice President, many times Bird would call me and ask me to come out to dinner or some sort of little function they were having, and I was out to his house many times there. But when he became President, I assumed it was not my responsibility to run the country, so I left him alone.

We have been many times to the White House. We were active in the 1964 campaign. And my wife went up and spent four or five days at the White House helping Bird on that Lady Bird Special through the South. Spent some time over in Charleston, South Carolina, coordinating for that. I

was running the 14th district again on behalf of his election here, and I might add, looking after Ralph Yarborough's 14th district election because when the President said, "I want him re-elected." I helped re-elect him.

M: Did you have any trouble in '64 here?

B: None for Johnson. We had some Yarborough troubles, but with the great landslide we had for Johnson, he was easily re-elected.

M: Did you do any special tasks for the President in the time of his Presidency?

B: Only one major thing. In February, 1968 I was in Chicago to a Board of Governors' meeting of the American Bar Association, and I received a call from Marvin Watson saying that the President wanted to see me and he wanted me to run his campaign for re-election. I said, "Well, now. Marvin, I'm in Chicago at this meeting, I'm not at home, and I've got lots of problems. I'm going to go home in a day or two, and I'll call you from home when I get home." He said, "Hurry up, the President wants to know whether you'll come up here or not." Well, I had lots of problems, I was busy; I've got lots of interest and lots of activities, and I hadn't time to take off six months and go run his campaign for re-election. But you don't say no to the President of the United States very easily, and so I tried every way in the world to figure out what the answer to it was. And finally I decided that I had to go.

A few days later the President--a week later I guess after he called me, the President was at the ranch; and they had a dinner that night in Austin for John Connally I remember. And because of this foul-up on this thing, I couldn't go to the dinner. But they called that day about four

o'clock and said that, "The President is going to leave at nine o'clock from Bergstrom Air Field going back to Washington and wants you and Kara to come fly up there with him and talk to him on the way back.

M: This is your wife?

B: Yes. So we scurried around here getting ready and trying to get a plane to carry us to Austin and be there in time. So we got there and rode up on Air Force One and talked to him on the way up. And I have to admit that the President of the United States told me--the first thing he told me was that he had not made up his mind what he was going to do, whether he was going to run for re-election, but that he wanted to keep his options open. And they were having this campaign in New Hampshire at the moment, and he wanted somebody that he understood and trusted and whose judgment he could rely on to look after his interests so he could keep his options open as long as he wanted to. And he wanted me to do this. He said that they had set up this organization called "Citizens for Johnson-Humphrey" and that he wanted me to go over there and run it.

And having said that he then for the next hour talked about specific things I ought to do and who I ought to see and what I ought to do. I have to admit that I paid no attention to the gentleman's denial of making up his mind, in not deciding whether he was going to run for office, because in one breath he gave me that story and in the next breath he told me a thousand specific things to do which indicated he was running like mad.

M: It's typical of a politician to say they're not running.

B: Typical. So I paid no attention to it. I really didn't think anything of it. It just went off my back like water off a duck, I didn't

think anything about it because it never occurred to me he wouldn't run for re-election.

Then events of the following weeks evidenced that even greater. Every time I'd see him, "Cecil, you've got to keep me fully advised about this. I want to know what's going on everywhere." And Marvin once in awhile would call me and say, "You've got to get the night reading in. He has got to have this on the night reading tonight." The report about what was going on.

Of course in this formative stage of trying to get an organization together, we didn't have enough people, didn't have enough anything to get organized. Amazingly enough, the Sunday that he retired from politics was the first time we ever had complete reports on all fifty states in one day. We finally got organized.

But every morning I would get a great pile of stuff from the White House, some of which obviously had notations on it in his own handwriting, things that I ought to do. And Marvin Watson was calling me and telling me what to do, who to call, and so-and-so's message he had gotten, and this and that and the other. So it was pretty obvious that we were running a pretty heavy campaign. Marvin moved out of his appointment secretary's office down the hall to devote more time to assisting on the campaign, handling campaign details. For the last month we set up a daily meeting at 8:15 every morning in Marvin's office, and we had Bill Connell of the Vice President's staff, and John Criswell, the treasurer of the Democratic party. Marvin and I met daily, and each day we'd get a long list of new things; obviously Marvin didn't think these things up, things that needed to be done or ought to be done, that he thought of that we could do.

M: Well, you were well on your way to a national organization.

B: Correct. We had already been through New Hampshire, and we had Kennedy in. The Tuesday after he retired on Sunday was Wisconsin's campaign, so we had a major effort going in Wisconsin. We started with two and ended up that we had about sixty-some people in Wisconsin from out of the state that were there working on the campaign. And by Sunday night when he quit, we sent in about forty that day. As a matter of fact, a whole plane load of Young Democrats just arrived that night, and they listened to the speech at the airport in Wisconsin after they got there.

But the great issues we had were two in number--the war, everybody said, "We're for the President; we're going to do something; we're going--our delegation will go for him, but he sure has got to do something about this Viet Nam thing." The other issue we'd always hear about was this law and order thing, so to speak--riots and burning and looting was a very live issue of the people. And of course I communicated all these problems to the President, as well as the good reports. I do not consider it to be the duty of a good campaign director to tell the candidate only those things which he wants to hear; you've got to tell him what the bad ones are with the good ones. Anyway we were getting pretty well underway when that speech was made.

M: Let me ask you this at this point before you get into that. Could you have overcome his lagging popularity, do you think?

B: There's no question about the nomination.

M: You could get the nomination.

B: You see, in my existence I divided the problem into two sectors; the first problem is "Can I beat Gene McCarthy and Bob Kennedy for the

nomination?" Now this goes through August. And my assignment stopped August 8. Now I never did really think I was going to go home on August 8 until the last delegate was chosen. But in my organizational plans I made it clear that all I was interested in was getting the delegates. Now, in broader policy phases of it, I took note of every detail that might affect the campaign in November. But basically my job was to get him renominated, and I so considered myself as the co-chairman of the Citizens for Humphrey-Johnson--my duty was to get him renominated. And that then the Democratic National Committee or somebody else--I had a feeling I'd still be around, but in some other capacity, to say the least. So all I was interested in was in getting him renominated.

M: But you had not doubts that you could do this?

B: No question about it. You see, there are two different problems. People who select nominees are people like Cecil Burney who work in the vineyards and who go to conventions and who are more or less professional politicians in the sense of the word, if you want to call it that. But I've been to 1956, 1960, 1964, 1968 national conventions, and these are more or less the same types that do this, no matter what state it's in. Now, these types--what influences these people does not always influence the voters, and maybe they're two different things sometimes. I would like to hope that the selection of a Democratic nominee is done in light with what's best for the country, but it's not necessarily so, it doesn't always follow. Decisions about who the nominee shall be are made by Billy Green in Philadelphia and Mayor Tate, Mayor Daley, and people of this nature, as well as people like Cecil Burney. Okay. The nominees to Democratic conventions are not going

to kick the President of the United States in the teeth, number one.

And secondly, they understood that this was a miracle man, everybody that you talked to understood "this fellow is a miracle man, and don't worry about it--this is what the problems are, but surely the man will come up with the answer before November gets here."

M: You mean, they had faith that he could get the popular vote?

B: That he could solve his problems and overcome them and have a solution to the riots and have a solution to the war in Viet Nam by the time November rolled around.

Secondly, Gene McCarthy and Bob Kennedy were not professionals. They were attempting to come from the outside and take away from the Billy Greens and the Tates and the Daleys and the Burneys the prerogatives they'd had for many years. In New York for example Kennedy kicked out the old organization and started a new organization in the Democratic party. Everybody knew that that was his philosophy. So the Burneys and the Tates and the Daleys across the country, they don't want to be kicked out; they're with the establishment. And whomever the establishment decides upon, they're for them. So the establishment was not going to take Robert Kennedy, and the establishment was not going to take Gene McCarthy; they were going to take Lyndon Baines Johnson for renomination.

On Friday before his withdrawal on Sunday, I sent over a chart showing that he would get as of that time, I felt confident, about seventeen hundred of the twenty-six hundred delegate votes that were needed to nominate him. So he knew that the best information I had was that he could be renominated without a question; there was never any doubt in anybody's mind but what he could be renominated. So the decision

he made was not one of deciding, "I should not run because Bob Kennedy might beat me, or Gene McCarthy might beat me." The decision was based as he says on problems in the world. So he knew he could be renominated.

M: You were completely surprised by this?

B: Oh certainly. As a matter of fact, I have a boy who was at that time a senior at the Hill School up in Pennsylvania; and he had his spring vacation. And his mother had been up there with me a few days. So he left Hill to come to Washington at the beginning of his spring vacation. And the next day the President was going to Texas. So I told Marvin that Kara and "the judge" and I would like to ride back home with the President. If he was going the next morning and the rumors were out that he was going, and if he had room, we'd like to ride back with him; that "the judge" had just started his vacation. So that night about eleven o'clock he called me back and he said, "The President said that he would be delighted to take Kara anywhere any time; and secondly, he'd be delighted to get better acquainted with your boy." But he said, "You're not going anywhere; you've got a job here, and you can't go home." So the net result of it was that I stayed and they went home.

M: What is your boy's name?

B: Well, he's Cecil Jr., but we call him "Judge."

So when they left I suggest to him that he come back two or three days before he had to go back to school, so I could at least visit with him a few days because I couldn't spend his vacation with him. So he came back up about Saturday before this Sunday. This job--we lived in the hotel, we ate in the hotel, we worked in the hotel--one of those eighteen-hour-a-day deals. So on Sunday afternoon, this was during cherry season,

John Ben Shepperd and I said, "Well, let's just take off an hour and go look at those cherry trees." We'd never seen them, been here many times, had never seen the cherry trees; and this boy here needed to see the cherry trees. So we took Judge and went to see the cherry trees. And we hadn't had lunch, it was about four o'clock. So we just left on Sunday afternoon to go see the cherry trees; we got a cab, went over there; and on the way back, we stopped and had dinner--had lunch--about five o'clock downtown.

So when we got back, Marvin had been calling. Said he had had a man over there that he wanted me to see; said he was going to help us in the campaign and wanted to talk to me; and wanted to send him over to see me. Said he had him there at the White House, but since he couldn't find me, he had let it go, but he'd try to find him and call us back. This was then about six o'clock, six-thirty. So he said, "I'll see if I can find him." So he called me back about seven o'clock, six forty-five, seven o'clock, and said, "I can't find him, but I've left word for him. Be here in the morning for our eight-fifteen meeting. You can visit with him then and take him back with you and talk to him some more over there in the morning. It's Terry Sanford, who was governor of North Carolina at one time. He wants to help you, and I want to get you with him." This was seven o'clock and we were talking about the meeting the next morning for the election.

I had always had troubles in Wisconsin. And they were saying, "Please have the President say something about the war. Please have the President do something about the war." And so the day before I was telling Marvin about this request, and he said, "Well, he's going to

make a speech tomorrow night, and he's going to say something about the war. Tell them just don't worry about it. He'll talk about the war." So everybody was real happy. The President was going to be on the TV and solve our problems about getting votes in Wisconsin and elsewhere about the war by making some statement about it.

So we were looking forward to the nine o'clock speech, and we sat down to listen to it. And about ten minutes after nine, the phone rang and it was Marvin. He said, "Cecil, the President has got about four more pages on the teleprompter, and then he's going to read a special statement in which he's going to say that he's not going to run for re-election. And he wanted me to call you and tell you before you heard it on TV, because he didn't want you to hear it on TV." And this was maybe ten minutes after he had started his speech.

I was of course stunned by the whole idea. I announced it to those others that were sitting there, and nobody could believe it. But we listened to this speech, and we had been enjoying the speech so much because it was a great speech, just saying what we wanted him to say about the war and so forth. That was the greatest speech we ever heard for a politician. We needed it bad. This was what we wanted to hear. Then we get this message that he is going to say that he's not going to run for re-election, and this whole organization sitting around there had been put together for that purpose. Of course, we didn't believe it and we were stunned by it, to say the least.

But then to look at the other side of the story, the next morning we still had the meeting. At this time we began to talk about what the. . . . And Marvin told me at the time that about eight o'clock that night the

President had called him, and he said, "Marvin, unless I change my mind between now and ten minutes until nine, this is the statement I'm going to make on TV." And he handed him this sheet and said, "Now, if you don't hear from me again before ten minutes to nine, you get Larry and Barefoot in and make some calls to the people that you know about that have got to hear about this thing. But don't do it until after I've gotten into the speech because if I'm not going to do it, I'll call you back at ten minutes until nine. But if I am going to go ahead, you won't hear from me."

So Marvin said he got Larry and Barefoot out, didn't tell them why, said to come on down, he needed them. They thought there was going to be some kind of meeting or something. And they were waiting around outside his office there. Then after ten minutes to nine had passed and he had gotten no word from the President, they came on in to his office and he shut the door and told them what the situation was. He wouldn't let them leave until after the President got started giving his speech and then said, "Okay, now, go start making your calls." So then they came out and started making the calls. They called me; they called Mayor Daley; they called Bob Burkhart, Governor Hughes, and people of that nature around the country; John Connally.

M: What made him decide to do this? Was there ever an explanation of that?

B: Well, two days later I asked and received permission to bring over all of my staff that was working there, to see the President. We went into the Cabinet Room, and he sat down there in his chair and in an off-the-cuff sort of way to the people that had been working on this thing so hard, he told them, "You know this situation we're getting into in the country where we're divided and in trouble. The Negroes are mad at the Mexicans, and the Mexicans are mad at somebody else. It's all terrible. I've got

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two sons-in-law that are involved in this war; they've got to raise their families in this country, and we just can't do what we've got to do in this country with the situation like it is. I just thought that it was up to me to do something unusual or different to bring about a result that would try to put this country back together." He wasn't bitter about it, but he was hurt somewhat that the country was in this bad a shape. He wanted very badly to get people to talking to each other again, using his famous expression about, "let us reason together." And he talked to this group, I guess ten or fifteen minutes just off-the-cuff like that. Everybody had tears in their eyes; it was a real unusual meeting. As he left he came over to shake hands with me, and he said, "Say, Cecil, I sure did mess up your life, didn't I?" And I said, "Mr. President, it's not unusual; go ahead."

M: Do you interpret that decision not to run to be an act of political courage on his part?

B: I surely do. In other words knowing that there was no doubt that he could be renominated; and having no doubt in my own mind that he could have been re-elected, it was a great act of courage and statesmanship on his part. He dearly wants this peace thing to come about.

M: To carry this a little bit further--and then after that I want to ask you some general questions about Lyndon Johnson and his character--you were a delegate to the 1968 convention, were you not?

B: Yes.

M: According to some of the stories, Lyndon Johnson tried to control that convention from the White House. Is there any truth in this?

B: This is the silliest thing I ever heard. I've been trying to think of

that fellow's name, that CBS reporter that was there at the convention.

I can't remember.

M: Could it be Cronkite?

B: No, another one that was on the floor. But I was there on the convention--I was on the platform committee. And of course the platform committee was the crux of the thing when it was obvious that Humphrey was going to be nominated, and the only fight was over basically what the platform would be and this Viet Nam thing.

During the course of the convention one day while it was getting underway, before it got underway, I went outside. And it was after the platform had been written. As a matter of fact when I got back in, Hale Boggs was up there delivering it, making speeches about it. This fellow was on the TV on CBS, saying that Mr. Humphrey sent over a draft of this Viet Nam resolution to the committee, and that the President didn't like that draft and so therefore the President said he wouldn't take that one, and he sent one over himself; that the committee then took the President's draft and turned down Humphrey's draft; that it was obvious that the President was cracking the whip on the platform committee and so forth. So I listened to this back in the lounge in the back end of the hall. I came back on the floor and as I did, I ran into this fellow on the floor who had just been on TV. And I said, "Say, you got a minute? I want to talk to you." And he said, "All right." And I said, "I've been on this platform committee, and I just by chance happened to hear your broadcast. I want to tell you, you've sure got that wrong, and I want to tell you something about it. I've been a friend of the President of the United States for over twenty-five years, and I've been on the

platform committee; I'm the representative on the platform committee from Texas; and I want you to know everything you just said was wrong. The President of the United States, if he was going to call somebody to ask them to please get this changed or send a draft over to somebody, I think I'd be a pretty logical person that he'd call. If he wanted me to try to get something adopted or wanted to send a draft to somebody, I think he might have sent it to me. At least, I would have been one of those who had heard about it, because he would have known that he could depend on me as being a faithful friend. And you know, the fellow never called me at all, and I haven't seen him or heard from him. I was in Washington three days, and he didn't call me; I didn't go to the White House. We met in Washington for three days, and I didn't get any word from him about this. This is the silliest thing I ever heard, and you ought to correct that erroneous report you just put out.

"Well," he said, "if Mr. Boggs wants to come down here, I'll put him on the air and let him correct it." And I said, "Well, you know that's silly. Mr. Boggs is up on the podium delivering the platform, and he can't quit delivering the platform and come down here and correct this error you just made." "Well," he said, "I believe that what I said is correct," and walked off. But it's just obviously such a terrible fallacy. Now, obviously John Criswell was the executive director of this convention; John Criswell is a part of the establishment, no question about that. But Criswell wasn't pro-Johnson and anti-Humphrey because all the people that were for Johnson were also for Humphrey; we wanted Humphrey to get this nomination. John Criswell wanted Humphrey to get this nomination. So he wasn't directing the convention for Johnson and against Humphrey as

some of these silly things came out.

M: Do you think that the violence in Chicago has been overplayed?

B: No. I think it was there. You've got to remember, though, that there were two groups of people. And if some people confuse them, there was a couple of thousand "clean for Gene" kids there in the hotel. But these that caused the difficulties across the street were a different bunch of people; and these were not "clean for Gene" kids; they were people with beards and older people, mostly a much older group than "clean for Gene" kids. I've been around a lot of places; I was in the Navy; I've been around the world; and I never heard in public the kind of language that was used and the abusive epithets that were thrown. The fact that there were threats and violence and the other things that came out over that microphone across there that night, the couple of days I watched them and so on; these intimidations of the police and calling them pigs and that sort of thing. Sure they overreacted, I'm confident of that in some cases, but I would have overreacted too I'm afraid. The Kerner report, which is the best document we have on the subject, said the way to handle riots is with manpower and not with firepower; so they had the manpower. And they followed this idea; Governor Kerner was the Governor when they started putting this thing together.

Well, as it turned out it reacted pretty badly against us; and the networks played it up pretty badly, but it was a bad situation. And I can't complain too bitterly against the networks for playing it up, because it was there and it was an ugly sore. It was the first time I've ever been that close to a thing of this sort.

M: Did you consider the debate on the platform thorough enough?

B: Oh, it was great; it was a good debate. It was well done both in the committee and on the floor.

M: Now to say a few things in general about Lyndon Johnson as a politician and as a man. Do you have any thoughts about the items in his character that make him a successful politician? Why is he a success?

B: One, he's a thoroughly competent individual. He's as competent a man as I've ever known; he gets all the facts; he organizes them well; he surrounds himself with a good staff to execute them; and he is generally a competent leader. Secondly, he understands the system. I'm one who thinks the country's better off to have a Nixon or a Johnson as President than to have an Eisenhower. I love General Eisenhower for what he has done and for what he is, but this is sort of like sending a housewife to be president of General Motors as far as I'm concerned.

M: You prefer a professional politician?

B: I prefer somebody who understands how the machine works. And this is the most genuinely knowledgeable individual about how the machine works of anybody in the country. So when you take competence and knowledge and hard work and put the three of them together, you've got a successful combination. He's the hardest working man I ever knew.

M: He has a reputation for having a hot temper. Is that true?

B: Well, there's no question about that. I've seen it, I've never experienced it fortunately, but I've seen it. He does have, but he's fussing and complaining one minute, and then he's doing something nice for you the next breath--the same fellow that he has just eaten out--I've seen him fuss at Cliff Carter and the next day go buy him a new car or something. This is the kind of guy he is.

M: Is his reputation for crudity in language well founded?

B: I do not think so.

M: Those who hate him play this up is the reason I ask about it.

B: Of course, I'm not the most cultured guy in the world myself, maybe.

But this is a decent sort of a guy. He's not a Harvard graduate. He's not a professor-type. He's not Kennedy in his great polish. This is a man of the soil that came out of the hills and got to be President, so he doesn't have quite the polish that the Harvards and the Oxfords do, maybe. But he a great something that some of them don't have; that is, he has a great heart and he loves people. So maybe 'he's not as polished as they are, but I've never heard him be crude or use uncouth language. On the contrary, I've sat at his table both in the White House and at the ranch where just Bird and he and my wife and I were there, and he'd offer the blessing and it would be more than a perfunctory prayer. This was a genuinely honorable guy that believes in God and country and motherhood, so to speak.

M: It has been said that Lady Bird has served as sort of a counterbalance to Lyndon Johnson. You mentioned when he was speaking too much she would pass him notes. Is this true?

B: Well, I don't think he ever did anything of consequence that he didn't confer with her.

M: That pretty well brings me to the end of the questions. Do you have any comments you wish to make. Anything you wish to add to this interview?

B: I remember a little story he told me one night at the White House when I was there. This was back a year or so before I went up there to be his campaign manager. Looking ahead to this thing, he said, "I guess the best

thing that could happen to me would be that I could quit and go home and enjoy life the rest of my life and live a long life, but everybody would fuss because I quit. Then the next best thing that could happen to me I guess would be to run again and get defeated, then I could go home and live longer and still live out my life and enjoy it. The third thing would be to run and get re-elected, but I never would make it through another four years of this. It's a real hard decision to try to think of what you ought to do." He was just lying there on the bed sort of talking and philosophizing. He's a genuinely good guy; there's nothing wrong with this fellow at all. He's so much like the great mass of people of the United States that when they write the books, I think that they'll say that he did what was right at the proper time.

I think Humphrey has got more social conscience about the problems of the poor in the world maybe; got more background as a reformer as other people are. But when the books are written, it's Johnson that has sort of got the laws passed that made these reforms that brought about the Civil Rights Act. He's the most completely dedicated man to the job I ever saw.

On night we were at the ranch and got to talking about the picture shows. And Bird said, "You know, the other night the girls were going to be on a newsreel," that's back when he was Senator; and said, "The Senator hadn't been to a movie in four or five years, and I took him over to see this newsreel that they were going to have and our kids were going to be on the newsreel; he stayed for the newsreel and wouldn't even stay for the movie, he came on home." You'd drive around with him on the ranch and he interrupts himself to say, "Look at that cow there, what she's

doing," and so forth. Tell you about showing his ranch, but he's always talking about his job, being Senator and what needs to be done with the country, and that sort of thing. He has got a single-track mind. There hasn't ever been anybody that's that devoted to the job, I don't guess.

Well, I don't want to bore you with this thing. I just enjoyed talking about it.

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

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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