INTERVIEW III

DATE: October 29, 1974

INTERVIEWEE: MARIE FEHMER CHIARODO

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Ms. Chiarodo's home, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: I think when you left off, you had finished the first day of the presidency. You had not moved into the White House as yet, I understand.

C: That's right. There were several days.

G: Do you remember what followed, the other events in the aftermath of the assassination that were important to you?

C: I don't remember anything specific, I really don't. I remember, let me say, much chaos, and a lot of people running helter-skelter. Many staff people were going in different directions. The President was calm and almost a different person. It was as if he had changed; there was no more of that hurrying. . . .

(Pause in recording)

G: A little bit more specifically, you perhaps remember that he called in a lot of key people.

C: Oh, I do.

G: Former President Eisenhower was one. Can you remember the people that were called in? You perhaps [called] some of them yourself.

C: Most importantly I remember former President Eisenhower, who came in, and he was asked the same question that everybody then was asked, "What do I do? What would you do if you were the president? And where do we go for now?" And I remember President Eisenhower said that he had some thoughts, and President Johnson said, "Well, you can dictate them to Marie here," or to some girl; I don't know that he pointed to me. But President Eisenhower said no, what he would like to do is take a yellow pad and go sit somewhere where it was quiet. My memory is that he did that and that there is a hand-written draft somewhere of what President Eisenhower suggested to him. I know that President Eisenhower took a yellow pad. I don't know whether or not he then dictated it to the person who was then McGeorge Bundy's secretary, a lady named Alice Boyce. He may have done that, because he knew Alice from the time that he was in the White House; she had worked for Ann Whitman. I remember his being there**C**I'm trying to think of all the other people and I can't give you any names.

G: What about former President Truman? Did he come to the White House; was he called?

C: I think there was a telephone call, but I don't think he came to the White House. I'm sure there was a telephone call.

G: What about Richard Russell?

C: Oh my goodness, yes.

G: Do you remember his role in this?

C: He was one of the wisest men. I can only think of the many discussions on most everything. I can remember some times when Lyndon Johnson would call Richard Russell and talk for forty-five minutes, and Richard Russell would say nothing other

than, "Yes, sir." "I understand, sir." "But have we considered this, sir?" He did nothing but prompt and direct thinking. He knew how to handle Lyndon Johnson. And he was marvelous, and I say this because there were times when I may have been in the room and the speaker phone could have been on, or I may have been listening in on the phone. Oh, yes, Richard Russell was a great figure.

G: Immediately after the assassination, the first days of the Johnson presidency, do you recall Richard Russell either being at the White House or having been there?

C: I'm sure he was there; it's just that I can't remember. That's how many years now?

G: Any other senators that might ring a bell? I know that's a long time ago.

C: Yes, but I should know. But I can't; no, I can't give you any names.

G: I suppose at this point, the country was preoccupied with the funeral and the state ceremony here. It brought a lot of foreign dignitaries. It was something that occupied the President's mind, I'm sure. What do you remember about his activity then at the time of the funeral?

C: I can't give you any specifics. I'm about to say let's start over on the tape, because I don't think I've started out well. I can only remember that he was constantly moving, constantly concerned about several leaders. I remember his concern about [President Charles] de Gaulle. I remember discussions and very lengthy briefings on de Gaulle and how to approach him, and I remember his feeling hurt at de Gaulle's misunderstanding of Lyndon Johnson as a person, especially, he felt, at this particular time. But my memory was that even at the reception that was held afterward for the foreign dignitaries, de

Gaulle made only perfunctory acknowledgments toward Lyndon Johnson as the president, which he was then.

G: He was quite stiff.

C: Yes. Yes. I can't remember the words that were used, obviously, but I remember the two of them there. I don't think they saw each other again until Adenauer's funeral, and they were both at that. That was in 1967, April of 1967, so there was not any contact all that time.

G: Any other aspects of the funeral?

C: I remember large discussions and long discussions about whether or not be was going to walk, and he was determined that he would walk. Mrs. Johnson, I don't think, wanted him to, but he was determined; he refused to drive to the funeral in what he called, "a big black Cadillac."

G: Is that right?

C: Yes. He would not do that.

G: Did they try to persuade him?

C: Oh, yes! Well, remember what happened to the Secret Service. They never lost a president before, and they were really shaken. And Rufus Youngblood was then a great hero. A young man that President Johnson later came to understand but was frightened of in the beginning, Clint Hill, was then second or third, maybe fourth, fifth in command, and he, having been through that thing in Dallas, didn't want to take a chance on another President, either. You know, he's the fellow who climbed on the back of President

Kennedy's limousine to rescue Mrs. Kennedy. So there was very strong persuasion, but he said, "I'm going to walk!"

The law says they can do anything, but, while this is not popular to say about presidents today, Lyndon Johnson felt he was the president, and they all worked for him. Some of the things I've seen recently in the press about his Secret Service**C**one thing in particular: I read an article about bathroom habits and the Secret Service. I can't testify to his bathroom habits, but I know that he at first resented the Secret Service greatly. Well, I guess everyone has told you he was a very complex man, but at one time he could be very complicated, and he could also be very simple. And at times he could be very friendly and open, or he could be very private. He thought that the Secret Service were people that he was not able to know, hence he could not trust them. He could know me, so he felt he could trust me. But here were all these strangers who were observing what he was doing, and how could he trust them? And in a way he was right, because one of those strangers told this terrible story the other day about the bathroom thing; I saw it in some article.

G: Generally, did he go along with their proposals for security?

C: He did at the very beginning; let's say that day in Dallas, he did everything they said. He did not after three or four days.

G: Did he have favorites that he would deal with? I know in later years, Mike Howard was. . . .

C: Oh, yes. Yes. He had favorites, and they were determined only by personal chemistry, personal magnetism, people that he felt he could relate to. Well, I think I can begin by

saying that on the vice-presidential detail, he had Rufus Youngblood and Jerry Kivett. Before that, there was Stu Knight; Stu is now director of the Secret Service. Stu left the vice-presidential detail and went to the Secret Service office somewhere in California, I think San Francisco, maybe Los Angeles. So we had two, and I know these two very well, because the four of us were a traveling road show in the vice-presidential days, where I was secretary, nurse, baggage packer when Paul Glynn wasn't around, typist, recorder**C** I was the White House communications agency with my little machine, which never worked because I was always right in the center and there were two PA systems. So I doubt that I ever got anything of his speeches. So those were the two that he started out with.

I think he then became very fond of Clarence Knetsch. He became very fond of Clint Hill, who he was very afraid of. He became very fond of . . . I think Bob Taylor; Bob took some whacks from him, but I think he cared for Bob Taylor. And if there are any others, I have just forgotten names. I'm sure there were a couple of others, but those were the ones, I think, that he recognized by name. Mike [Howard] he got to know through Lynda, because Mike was on Lynda's detail. He met Mike through Lynda, and then Mike**C** I think, I don't know how this worked up, but Mike went back to Texas with him, or stayed in Texas, or something like that. He just felt they were people that he didn't know, and hence, he couldn't trust them, and that any time that he felt that he wanted to preserve his privacy, he didn't care for them.

G: One of the things that you pointed to in your earlier interviews that I think, as long as we're on the subject of trust, we might talk about: how did Lyndon Johnson decide that he was going to trust you? What formula did he use?

C: Lord have mercy, I don't know. I never knew, for the first two years of my employment, whether or not I'd have a job the next day. I really had no feeling of what was going to happen. If I'm repeating anything that I've said before, just stop me. I remember the first two or three months when I was here, I really didn't know what I was going to do, and I held that graduate assistance that I had at the University of Oklahoma up until late August, because I wasn't sure, having been hired early in June, that I was still going to be here. That was when I felt that he was still, what I can later say, giving me the fruit basket turnover type treatment. In other words, "Can you take it?" Everybody had to prove that they could take it in their own way. Could you take not knowing what was to happen to you the next day? Could you take awful assignments without complaining? Golly, when I think about him now, I wonder how in the world, with today's frame of reference for young people going to work, anybody would have worked for him? Because he was tough, but by George, he made a good person out of you**C** if you lasted.

Now back to your question about trust: I guess it was two years into the White House before I knew. And then there was not any little piece of paper that said, "Here, I trust you." It was just that he stopped telling me not to do certain things. There were times when he felt it was necessary that he tell me not to say something, and then he stopped telling me not to say something. I remember a dinner party at The Elms way back in the vice-presidential days, when there were about twenty people at the table, and

in telling some of his stories he was doing this wonderful thing about**C**that other people at the table knew very well that he knew who he was talking about. But he was saying that he couldn't remember the name. "Oh, if I can just pull that name out." And I, like an eager beaver, wide-eyed thing, threw the name out. And that, of course, was the greenest thing to do; that was not at all what he wanted to do or wanted me to do. Oh, did I get a dressing down for that, because I was not perceptive. He said, "This is [inaudible] I've said before." When I said, "But I thought . . . ," he said, "I don't pay you to think!" Today's young people. . . . Even I today am not so sure that I'd want to work for that sort of thing. But I would.

G: What were the things he expected in order to trust someone? What were the things that you think he looked for in an employee?

C: Ability, discretion, and complete loyalty. That's a hard thing to talk about now, because some people can say that maybe [H. R.] Haldeman and [John] Ehrlichman were loyal, and maybe they were; I have no information on that. But I define Lyndon Johnson's kind of prerequisite for complete loyalty as a feeling from him that if you disagreed with him, you told him, not someone else. And you did not disagree with him without telling him first. Some of those wonderful things I learned about campaigns**C**I remember the 1964 campaign, when he'd call Goldwater and he'd say, "Listen, I'm going to get you for so-and-so, so-and-so, so-and-so." And Goldwater would say, "Well now, Mr. President, you know I'll have to come back with so-and-so, because my party won't let me take that lying down." And he'd say, "Yes, I know that, but we're good friends, and I just want you

to know that I'm going to get you for so-and so, so-and-so, so-and-so." That's sort of one of those open rules, I guess.

G: Can you remember the specific instance?

C: No, I can't, and I wish I could. Maybe I forgot it because there were a lot of things that I probably . . . deliberately forgot.

G: We're still in 1963, in late November. You have a picture, I think, of the staff before you moved into the White House; no, that's after you moved into the White House, isn't it?

C: Oh no, before we moved into the White House; this is before, the one I'm looking at, and we have no way of describing this for the tape. But this is the National Aeronautics and Space Council, of which he was chairman. This will mean nothing to the tape, except this was his office in the Executive Office Building, which he rarely used except for these meetings, and then for the meetings during the Cuban missile crisis. President Kennedy, I think, suggested that he be closer**C**I'm not sure that came from the White House**C**but he moved his office from the Senate to the Executive Office Building during the Cuban missile crisis, and I went down there with it. So that's when this particular picture was taken. I'm jumping around on you, Mike.

G: Did you talk about that in your last interview?

C: I don't know.

G: One of the last things of his vice presidency and the first things of the presidency was the problem of Bobby Baker and the problem that this created in the media. Lyndon Johnson was no longer vice president; he was suddenly president. I'm just wondering, was he

considerably bothered by this loss of a former aide? I know that he wasn't as close as he had been.

C: I'm going to tell you, Mike that I can't answer that well. I remember my contacts with Bobby Baker were limited; remember, I was brand new. I was still in what I call that two-year trust period. And I remember a couple of dinners at The Elms during the vice presidency where Bobby and Dottie were present. I cannot remember any conversations. And I remember a long drive to the opening of the Carousel Motel, that famous thing. I think it was a Sunday afternoon, and Vice President and Mrs. Johnson, I, maybe Cliff Carter, I'm not sure, got into Norman's car, and I sat for three hours on that dreadful jumpseat, and we drove to the opening of the motel. I can't tell you any substance; that was discussed, I know, in great detail with Walter Jenkins, and I just have to say I don't remember, or maybe I choose not to remember. But I really don't remember.

G: There's no reason to go into that, in that case. The effort at establishing a continuity with the Kennedy Administration, I think, was one of the first orders of business, and consulting aides, and . . . . Do you remember any matters of grave concern here, say in the foreign policy area, that took up a great deal of President Johnson's time right away?

C: The first thing that I can remember in the foreign policy area is that he felt that he very much wanted McGeorge Bundy to stay on, once he was convinced that McGeorge Bundy could be loyal. He took over a staff of people who were intensely devoted to a president**C**not to the presidency, but to a president. And this was a martyred president.

When you think of 1963, I think, the first sort of trauma that happened to us other than a world war began with that decade, 1963 to 1973. Think of all the assassinations

and the things that we now expect are almost commonplace. We don't really think about assassinations any more. No one really worries. The country was in a deep state of shock, and I remember his distrust of McGeorge Bundy, but yet his feeling that he had to have him. And I remember his absolute faith in Dean Rusk early in the game.

G: Did this stem from his association with Secretary Rusk as vice president?

C: If it did, it was a very limited association, because I don't remember very many vice-presidential contacts with the Secretary of State. I remember very few White House contacts with the Vice President.

G: Why did he distrust McGeorge Bundy?

C: Because he was a Harvard scholar, the Eastern Establishment.

G: Did he feel that he would give him bad information or that he would be working for a Kennedy, let's say?

C: Yes, I think so. I think so, and it wasn't until he realized, of course, that he had to keep McGeorge Bundy, because he had to keep everybody. He didn't have a staff; he had no time to build a staff. He had poor, broken-down George Reedy and Marie and Juanita and Cliff Carter and Willie Day, Glynn and Mildred Stegall, and Walter Jenkins. And he didn't think much of Marie and George Reedy, because I think a year before the assassination—I think it was the summer before, summer, maybe of 1962, late summer—he went to New York City to address the President's Council on Physical Fitness. Have I told this story?

G: Yes, and it's a good one,

C: But he didn't think much of those two members of his staff.

G: Yes. I thought that was terrific. Well now, let's talk about Reedy in these days. He had been one of Johnson's intellectuals, I guess. He contributed a number of memoranda all through the Senate years and presumably during the vice presidency. What happened to Reedy after the presidency [began]?

C: Well, right after, I think, was a difficult time for George, because there was Pierre [Salinger], and Pierre was settled and in place. I think George had an office in the Executive Office Building. I don't think he worked in the White House press office; I can't remember. Is that right?

G: I think so, yes.

C: And for a while, you know, we were a little sad, because it was as if he'd been banished. All of a sudden, this sort of thing had catapulted Lyndon Johnson, but because of Pierre's being there and Lyndon Johnson's not knowing exactly what he was going to do with the press, George was sort of waiting. But George was very patient, and my memory is that Juanita was very kind to him, in that Juanita, being older and a good friend of George, realized what he was going through, and she kept him informed and she talked to him and held his hand, as we would say, at times when he would be blue and thinking, "What's happening to me?" It paid off, because Lyndon Johnson turned to him later and made him his press secretary.

G: Did he serve the same role during the presidency as he had served before, though? I mean, was he more than a press secretary? He had been sort of a memo-writing. . . .

C: That's right, and a speechwriting . . . and he wrote beautifully, and, let's say, issue selecting and preparing papers on issues, position papers.

G: Why wasn't he used for this sort of thing in the White House?

C: I'm not sure except that possibly there were so many other people around who were so much louder and who made their positions known. George was quieter and more retiring. He might not appreciate my saying that, but I think he was and I don't think he pushed himself.

G: You don't think he was aggressive enough?

C: No. No.

G: That's an interesting approach to things. Well now, what about Walter Jenkins who, I suppose, was his right arm?

C: He was. Walter did everything, from repairing the first car that I had wrecked up here**C**I got my driver's license here in Washington. I didn't drive in Texas. And the Vice President lent me Mary Margaret's car, since Mary Margaret had gotten married. There was a car that Mary Margaret Wiley Valenti drove, and it was listed and owned by the LBJ Company, or KTBC, so it belonged to them. I had my very first wreck in it, so who did I call? Walter Jenkins. I haven't had a wreck since. But Walter did all that sort of thing. I know of all of his troubles, but I think we helped bring them on. I think of all the things we turned to him for.

G: What was he like? Was he sort of a staff director?

C: Oh, yes! He was an assistant vice president. Anything he said would be fine, because you knew that he knew Lyndon Johnson well enough to know what he would say. And he took everything; he took a lot of guff. Any troubles that he had, we contributed to.

G: He would, in other words, take heat and cover his subordinates, I take it.

C: Yes, as much as he could, because that was one of the rules: you never tattled. You didn't lie, but you didn't tattle. You took the blame if need be, but you didn't tattle.

G: How far did his responsibilities extend? I've often heard that he was responsible for Johnson's private and personal financial interests in Texas, that he was a man that Johnson could count on for his private business, that Walter Jenkins would keep up this end of Lyndon Johnson. That Walter Jenkins was a political advisor, particularly with regard to matters involving Texas politics. That Walter Jenkins advised him on policy decision and legislative strategies. How much of this was in his area of expertise?

C: I think all of those things were in his area of expertise, in addition to which he also could be counted upon to speak for the Vice President. I will really say that he could have been an assistant vice president. Any time that we were traveling, if the White House wanted to get a message, it came through, usually, Ralph Dungan to Walter Jenkins to Lyndon Johnson. Walter had complete responsibility. I don't know if anyone else feels that he didn't, but I know that he had complete responsibility for all of it. That's pretty much for one man, and he worked from six in the morning till midnight. It's unbelievable to think what those people did, and you don't think people would do that now. There was great devotion; no one would complain. Some of us complained during the White House because we'd gotten a taste of cushy living, but you never complained.

G: I think we've probably gone halfway.

C: And I haven't said anything, Mike.

G: Yes, you have. I think that you've said quite a bit, but let's go ahead now and address yourself to Doris Kearns and the LBJ that she describes, and then we'll hit some of the high points in the remaining thirty minutes.

C: All right now, let's see. My frame of reference**C** well, there are two things: first of all, the Haynes Johnson book on ***Lyndon***, and then the recent article in ***Time*** magazine classifying Doris Kearns as a psychohistorian, whatever that is. In the Haynes Johnson book, I was offended by personal references which I know Doris spoke to the two authors about, and my interpretation of that was that she was trying to make a name for herself and get herself a bit more well known. But more importantly, I'd like to talk about this thing in ***Time*** about her saying that she had asked to psychoanalyze [him] for history, and I don't think that he would want anybody to psychoanalyze him. It wasn't even popular to pretend that you could understand him or predict what he would do. That was one of his private sides, in that he liked to feel that he and only he was in charge.

I would also like to contradict that thing about the depression, almost inferring some sort of mental illness, in that I was able to talk to him every other week by telephone at the same time and in the same manner that I talked to my parents and to my husband's mother. So I would talk to him at times when he may have felt low and tired and lonely. He always had his family around, and the only way that he ever alluded to the fact that he was lonely is that only two people remembered him. And I sort of took this as Lyndon-Johnson kind of flattery, because he said one person was Marie and the other person was Marvin Watson, and that was that these were the only two people who called him all the time. Now if he said this to someone who took it out of context, they

might read something into that, in that, "Nobody remembers me; I'm all alone." It was not said that way.

G: Give us a history of Doris Kearns' relationship with Lyndon Johnson.

C: Well I remember, I think it was, 1967 when she was selected to be a White House Fellow, and she was, I think, the only female. There may have been one other in that particular class of White House Fellows. And this in itself was an oddity in 1967, in addition to which she had published this famous article asking for his resignation and criticizing his policies. Lyndon Johnson was a great persuader, and the first thing he saw there was a challenge. Not only was it an Eastern Establishment nonbeliever, but it was a *female* Eastern Establishment nonbeliever, and that was before females were supposed to be very smart. So this in a way was another challenge to him, and he set about to persuade her and to understand her and what made her think this way.

G: I was just wondering, did you witness his early reaction to either the article . . . .

C: Yes!

G: What was it?

C: Well, he thought that we had us some very dumb selectors on the White House. . . . He had some very graphic language.

G: What did he say?

C: Well, I'm not going to repeat what he said, but he used all of the four-letter words that he knew and some of the several-syllable phrases that he used, and said that they were White House Fellows, and certainly he ought to have something to say about why they were selected. And didn't they know before this woman was selected that she had this article

coming out. He was quite unhappy. He said, after all this was his White House, and here someone had been selected**C**that really made him feel like an idiot.

G: Did he attempt to have her relegated to a lesser post than the White House?

C: I don't think so. You see, they weren't all designated to come to work in the White House; they could be assigned throughout government. And I don't remember that kind of intent; I just remember sort of a red-faced feeling, as if we didn't do our homework, which is always very bad.

G: When do you sense that he took up the challenge, that he decided that he was going to win this one over?

C: Oh, I think very soon, I think when he first met her and she turned out to be a very feisty young woman and someone who was willing to listen to him and whose mind was not closed. She's a very brilliant person, and she was willing to listen. But I have to say that during the White House years, I don't think that she was around him more than a dozen times. And I can't speak for after. I never saw her at the Ranch, but after all, I was only there two or three times a year and in Acapulco, I think, to work on the book a couple of times. So I really can't speak for that, but I don't like to see her setting herself up as an expert on those White House years when I know she was not.

G: Perhaps it might be good here for you to discuss LBJ's attitude toward women and how he dealt with women as a rule.

C: Well, he did believe that women were the stronger of the two sexes. I think I've said this before in discussing his wife and maybe his mother, in that I remember his saying that a woman is like a reed, in that in a storm, she will bend, but a man in a storm will break.

Hence the woman is the stronger, because she will bend and come back. It's so hard to discuss him in terms of today's look at EEO, although he's the granddaddy of it all. I know that he felt that women had a lot to contribute. I know that he also found ladies very attractive. What man doesn't, and what woman doesn't find men attractive?

G: Didn't he like for women to be at their best in terms of attractiveness?

C: Oh, always. No question about it. I think the thing that I heard him say most to his girls was, "Put on some lipstick, Lynda and Luci." Yes. Always.

G: Was he quite courtly to women. . . .

C: Oh, yes. Old southern gentleman; charmed them all the time.

G: How would you relate this to Doris Kearns for the sake of. . . .

C: I don't know, because she was not the kind of southern female like Mrs. Johnson or like his daughters. And I don't want to imply any kind of personal relationship. There was none of that at all that I can speak of. I just think that he enjoyed talking to her and enjoyed the persuasion process, but I do not think that he felt that she had more wisdom than Dean Rusk and McGeorge Bundy put together. I also know that Lyndon Johnson did not want his people to be book writers, and he made that very clear to us without our signing any kind of statement.

G: What did he say, do you remember?

C: Yes. He said that we were not in the White House to write books. We were in the White House because we had a job to do. This is paraphrasing now: writing books was a little bit cheap. That's the memory I have. And there were one or two people that I remember his saying that he thought should write a book, and one of those was Dean Rusk.

G: Is that right?

C: Yes, and I just don't put anyone else in his category. But I just can't imagine his being depressed and on any kind of fringe—all of us get depressed, but any type of fringe mental pattern, when he just lived each day to its fullest. Although he, after April 1972, did put his affairs in order, and I remember he knew after that Charlottesville attack that he was going to die, because he told me about it.

G: How did he put it, do you remember?

C: Yes. He told me over the phone in one of those phone conversations. He just said, "Well you know, I won't be here much longer." It was said in a very light manner, and that, "If you have any loans you want to make or anything you want to hit me up for, you'd better do it now. Or if that husband of yours isn't going to take care of you and you need some help from me, let me know," that sort of thing. And he always teased Mrs. Johnson that last year. He said she was going to marry an Italian count after he was gone. Has anybody told you that?

G: No.

C: Oh, yes! Well, he said the Italians always took his best women. Jack Valenti took Mary Margaret, and my husband, who is of Italian ancestry—I think that's very flattering. And he said, "Bird, you're just going to go off and marry some Italian count. You'll forget about me after a year or so." He said, "Mary Lasker will introduce you to some Italian count over in Italy." I just love that. Yes, he said that many times. I'm rambling!

G: Well, that's fine. I'm glad that we did get to that, because that is important.

Let's talk about the 1964 campaign, and look back into the chronology of 1964. Now, there's a lot that went on, and you were certainly**C**

C: Right in the middle.

G: All right, well, what comes first?

C: God, the awful campaign trips. I can't believe it.

G: What about the selection of the vice-presidential candidate**C**

C: Oh, my gosh!

G: **C**and ruling out of Robert Kennedy? Robert Kennedy, for some unknown reason, wanted to be vice president.

C: I don't think that Lyndon Johnson had any intention ever if having Robert Kennedy as his vice president, but he felt that, for one reason or another, he had to go through the motions. And whether or not this was to have had him do his homework or to let other people realize that he was being fair, I don't know. But he did talk to people about it.

G: Who did he talk to, do you know?

C: I can't remember specifics, but I'm sure that he talked to Dick Russell about it, and I'm sure he talked to Abe Fortas about it, and I bet he talked to John Connally about it. John Connally served a very interesting role in that campaign, in that he traveled around the country, and he used a pseudo [pseudonym], and he'd call in with a pseudo. He'd never use his own name; his pseudo was Juan Conelli, which was Connally. If you hear any recordings of telephone conversations, if there are any available, and there's a Juan Conelli, that's who it is, it's John Connally. Speaking of that, we must go back to the Dominican Republic crisis in 1963, because that just triggered**C**

G: Nineteen sixty-five, I think.

C: Nineteen sixty-five.

G: Okay, but let's go to it anyway. Please.

C: Well, I don't think anybody knows that Abe Fortas went to the Dominican Republic during that crisis.

G: No.

C: This is one of those things. Yes. I think our ambassador was Tapley Bennett, wasn't it, and he was someone that Lyndon Johnson knew but didn't know well. And this was one of our first tests. Lyndon Johnson always felt better having someone he knew and trusted**C**again that trust**C**on the scene. And Abe Fortas went down there incognito, and if someone doesn't get him to tell that story, then you've lost something. The conversations came in both through cable and telephone from Tapley Bennett, and Abe Fortas under another name. I can't remember the name; it was the "Juan Conelli" that brought that to memory. But Abe Fortas has got to tell you about that.

G: First of all, I suppose the problem with Tapley Bennett was the feeling in the White House was that he was a little bit too panic-stricken, or least he was prone to jump to conclusions.

C: Wasn't seasoned.

G: Is that right? Well, why Abe Fortas, do you know?

C: Yes, Abe Fortas was a trusted advisor.

G: Can you recall the circumstances of Fortas' being asked to go down there?

C: No, because I was not present. Lyndon Johnson decided himself; he didn't ask anybody. He just asked him to go. I don't know that anybody knows that. I'm sure Juanita knows it. But somebody should ask him about that if he hasn't talked about that.

G: Do you remember the impact of his report on our policies, or anything of this nature? He would report by phone and by cable?

C: Yes, yes. They are specifics, and all I could give you now would be an impression, having read**C**and hindsight, and I can't remember any specifics. That's unfortunate that this hasn't been done sooner.

G: If they are written communications, we'll have them in the Library.

Back to 1964 and "Juan Conelli." Do you recall anything specifically with regard to Robert Kennedy and more or less breaking the news to him that he would not be considered?

C: That was done in the Cabinet Room. It was done, I think, in a two-part session. There was first a meeting in the Oval Office between the two men, I think. And then, I think, there was a meeting in the Cabinet Room.

(Pause in recording)

G: This is something that you were very close to. What about Senator Humphrey? When do you think he decided that Senator Humphrey was going to . . . ?

C: I think on the plane going to Atlantic City.

G: Do you? Do you remember anything specifically there?

C: Oh, I remember that well-known dodge with the poor Senator, who didn't know what was happening. And all of the flurry. And I remember the very personal discussions about Humphrey's strengths and weaknesses, and that was gone over very carefully.

G: What were considerations here?

C: I remember his strengths were, I think, his Senate experience and the balance that he would give. His weaknesses in Lyndon Johnson's estimation, I think, were his wanting to be Mr. Nice Guy and his mouth, in that he talked too much. It was put much more graphically; it would be much better to hear it in his words. But he felt he was the best choice.

G: You don't think he was considered too liberal?

C: Oh, yes. Well, there was all that ADA-type smear stuff on him. Sure. He got a good treatment on that from Lyndon Johnson. It was beautiful.

G: What are your memories of the campaign? Did you travel with them?

C: We traveled constantly, yes. There was one day that we hit five states, and we were all just sort of shaking like this, you know, with our heads just going blippy. Lyndon Johnson loved it; he was exuberant. The people loved him. I keep remembering the enthusiasm now, the genuine enthusiasm that wasn't tromped up by advance men. I remember some hecklers**C**every campaign has that**C**and I remember a few antiwar type things, and I remember our way of dealing with them, which was not nearly as vicious as turned out to be later in the years. We just put itching powder down their backs, and that made them very uncomfortable so they then left the demonstration.

G: Literally?

C: Yes! Yes! Our people just went in and put itching powder down their backs, and they became uncomfortable and left. (Laughter) Kind of harmless, isn't it?

G: Yes, better than kidnapping.

C: Yes. But the campaign was carefully laid out by a master politician. He participated in that campaign completely; he lived it.

G: Where did you go with him?

C: Everywhere. I can't even remember. Wherever we went. I think we hit everywhere except the southern states. I think that the only southern states I didn't get into were maybe Georgia and Alabama; I don't think we ever got there, for obvious reasons.

G: Did you go to California with him?

C: Yes.

G: San Bernardino, where he had . . . .

C: Yes.

G: Did he ever tell you the stories of his youth there when he had gone to California and worked as . . . .

C: With the pork and beans?

G: Well, he had worked as an elevator operator, I think, in San Bernardino.

C: Yes. He told stories then. See, my problem, Mike, is that all those places sort of fade together. If you've seen one airport, you've seen them all. I'm sure people have told you the pork and beans story**C**well then, I may have told it before. But that was one of his first trips away from home; he went to California to make his fortune with some other boys. They had an old Model T or Model A, whatever it was.

G: Model T.

C: And they were driving to California, and they had a case of pork and beans. And that was their food, and that's how they got there. They had no money, just pork and beans and the car. Now how they bought gas or anything, I don't know. I don't remember any elevator operator stories. I remember all the stories of his being in California later and meeting Nancy Hayes, the movie star, and also his story about John Connally and the silk robe.

G: I've never heard that one.

C: You've never heard that story? He and John Connally were naval officers together. They, I think, went into a little Chinese tailor shop and had themselves silk robes made. This was very special, very high living. Several years later when John Connally was here in Washington as secretary of the treasury, John Connally went back. Either that, or he was governor of Texas, I have to admit I don't know which. And the little Chinese tailor was still there. And the tailor said, "Isn't it wonderful that this congressman has become President? Is this something?" (It must have been when he was governor of Texas.) And at that point, the little man had a silk robe and sent it to the White House for then-President Johnson, so it was when John Connally was governor.

But then the little Chinese tailor looked at John Connally and said, "And what happened to you all these years?" He was governor of Texas, but that really didn't make any difference, because he had been overshadowed by this big, tall man. So that's his California stories.

There's another story that J. C. Kellam should tell you about the naming of his baby girl. It's another California story. I can't tell it because I just can't remember the details; it's so complicated.

G: Okay. On that campaign, do you remember the speech in New Orleans?

C: Meeting the Lady Bird Special?

G: Yes. He spoke at the Jung Hotel, I think, in New Orleans at the end of that . . . .

C: I was there, because I remember calling some friends of mine who were there and just talking on the phone to them. I don't remember the speech.

G: Any other meetings or campaign speeches that were memorable here?

C: I'm going to have to do some homework, Mike, for the next time. Just if I go back and read the speeches, I might remember some discussions as far as strategy and to why certain thing were made, but I can't right off. But I can do some homework for next time.

G: Anything else about the campaign that you felt that you had a definite input in, that you contributed? Can you recall occasions when you came to his aid doing something important or witnessing something important?

C: No more than just being there every day, Mike. I really don't think so. A presidential campaign is really quite different from anything that I've ever seen before. It means three or four airplanes and maybe two or three hundred people, and it means sort of doing the same thing at each stop. Staff members have to know exactly what they are doing and where they are going; you don't wait for anybody. I remember the drill is: you find out where your car is or your bus is and you go there and you be sure that you get in before

he does, and out before the candidate is out. Everybody has funny campaign stories, but I don't think they are really relevant.

G: Have you got one?

C: (Laughing) No.

G: I really received an impression from some people that during the early campaigns, say the 1960 campaign, he was not a "happy warrior." He was not really that enthusiastic once behind the scenes. How was he during that 1964 campaign?

C: Oh, he was great! He was exhausted. He had terrible problems with his throat. I was not around in the 1960 campaign, so I can't compare. But he loved it; he needed contact with people, and you don't get that in the White House. This rejuvenated him, and it was kind of like recharging batteries. The "pressing of the flesh" was really good for him. He would come in from a stop drenched with perspiration, and he would immediately have to go change clothes and then have his hands taken care of. I'm sure that people have told you about how sore his hands got from the campaign. Oh yes, it was almost like adrenaline; it was like a B-12 shot.

G: Where were you the night of the election? Were you in Austin?

C: We were at the Ranch, and then we went to Austin, I think.

G: He spoke in Austin.

C: Yes, I think we were at the Ranch, and then we went into Austin.

G: I think he spoke at the Capitol.

C: Yes. I remember we were there the whole evening.

G: I think it was Eric Goldman who said that Lyndon Johnson was conscious of FDR's big majority in 1936, comparing his to FDR's, and trying to see how the returns as they came in compared. Do you remember this aspect of it at all?

C: I remember that he had phone calls from people all over the country, not private citizens, but people who were watching the elections and who were in charge of different areas.

G: What was his attitude that night?

C: Quiet. Quiet. He was being the statesman, not the politician.

G: Even among you people?

G: Well, there were a lot of people coming in and out, if I remember correctly. I'm trying to figure out where we were. Maybe we were in downtown Austin. I remember a sort of stage-like thing. Did he make an appearance on a stage that night, do you know?

G: I don't know, but a little personal history: I was at the State Capitol, and he spoke there that night.

C: But where did he speak after the election, I mean when the returns were in, do you remember?

G: Oh, I don't know.

C: The reason I remember that is that I was terribly embarrassed because he was so careful in thanking everybody who had helped him that he brought everybody out on the stage, wherever we were. It was very embarrassing to us who just sort of wanted to sit back and not be seen. I'm just going to have to do some homework and maybe jog my memory on those two things, because I'm not good.

G: This is a problem. It has been so long ago. . . .

C: You know what's happened too, Mike, since the last time I talked is that I haven't been able to talk to him. Remember in the times before that I did these tapings, I was also talking to him every two weeks, and there was a constant thing. Now, of course, I haven't talked to him since his death, obviously. I just find I'm forgetting so much.

G: Is there anything else that comes to mind, after looking through the pictures, one thing or another that you want to go ahead and include now while we've got the recorder going?

C: I don't think so, Mike.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III

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ACCESSION NUMBER 99-32