

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE CHRISTIAN (Tape #4)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

June 30, 1970

F: This is interview No. 4 with George Christian in his Austin office.
The date is June 30, 1970; the interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

George, let's talk first of all about your experiences with the foreign travel of the President and just what this involved in the way of getting ready; in the way of arranging facilities overseas; and anything that you may have run into along the way that wasn't in the script, which I imagine happened every few minutes.

C: Most of my duties pertained to getting the press ready for overseas trips. On most of our trips, particularly those involving international conferences like the Manila Conference in 1966; and the Punta del Este Conference in '67; and the conference in El Salvador, the Central American Presidents and President Johnson in '67, was it?

F: '68, the summer of '68.

C: All of those meetings were, of course, planned well in advance, and we had ample time to send advance teams to the place of the conference. I always had both a press advance man and a transportation advance man on those trips. Any overseas trip by the President is relatively easy if everything is planned down to the minute ahead of time.

F: Who makes out the timetable? Is it a combination job? I'm sure, of course, the President puts the final authority on it, but somebody has got to figure out how he can get where, when.

C: A committee of White House--sometimes Pentagon, sometimes State Department--people plan these trips. Generally the military people at the White House, the President's pilot--that most of the time.

of course Colonel Jim Cross--he is very prominent in the advance planning. Frequently as a matter of fact, they would send a Presidential plane out ahead of time to land on the airfields that might be visited just to make sure that there weren't any problems there. The Army Signal Corps was of course deeply involved at that time in the planning to make sure communications could be set up--

F: In doing your advancing, did you send along equipment, or did you try to gather local equipment?

G: We took everything that we thought we needed. Usually the advance team went out two or three weeks, or more, ahead of the President, taking everything they could possibly have use for, including a helicopter. If there was time, the stuff was actually in some places sent in by ship, as well as plane, although most of the equipment was flown in. We took our own communications equipment--telephones, radio equipment, press filing facilities, Telex machines, press telephones. A lot of that was taken care of by the Signal Corps in foreign countries to help us and the telephone company and the television networks get set up so that the press would have communications as well as the President.

In some places the communications were so primitive that practically a whole new layer of communications had to be put in over the local service in order to take care of the needs of the White House and the President, and then the needs of the press on top of that. This was usually accomplished with the help of our telephone company. Sometimes someone from ITT went with our advance people to South America, say Punta del Este. The television-radio networks usually sent some people out ahead of time to establish communications to make sure

that--

F: Do the networks and the wire services and so forth pay a certain amount of the extra costs?

C: They pay for everything they use.

F: This does not come out of the President's contingency fund or something like that?

C: No. None of the press facilities are paid for by the President, or by the White House or the government. Occasionally probably some facilities used by the press might be something the Signal Corps had a hand in setting up, but generally it's all privately done with the help of the Signal Corps.

F: But you keep kind of a hand in just to see that it is going to be all right?

C: Yes. And in the case of the writing-press communications, we establish them ourselves. The press has no way of establishing its own communications on an overseas trip like that. When you're taking forty reporters with you, it has been by custom the White House has seen to it that those people have communications filing facilities available where the President goes. They pay for it, but we have to oversee it because it's part and parcel of our total communications situation.

We worked with Western Union and with the telephone company to make sure they had everything they needed. We'd estimate what they would need based on the number of people that were going with us. Then our press advance man's primary duty--he was usually an assistant from the White House press office--his primary duty would be to see that: One, the press had a place to stay and a reasonably decent

place; that they had a press room.

F: The individual newspapers or whatever did not make their own reservations then? You pretty well took care of that and assigned?

C: We located the best available places. We set up the press rooms. We set up their communications and chartered their plane for them.

F: Could any accredited correspondent go whose newspaper was willing to pay the freight, or did you limit it?

C: Sometimes of course we were limited by the number of seats on a plane. In one or two cases, we sent two airplanes. We had an overflow of a plane, but no, we didn't restrict it. The cost itself is restrictive because we'd put everything virgually in the plane fare, and it's pretty steep to send a man to cover the President somewhere. They'd pay a premium to do it because it is extremely costly with communications and everything.

F: You kind of ran a general accounting office on that, too, and then billed them?

C: The White House transportation office prorated the costs of all of this and just billed the news agency or the newspaper or the network.

F: Did everybody always pay?

C: Yes. I think the whole time I was there, I think one person maybe went on a trip and we had difficulty collecting from him. Generally there were no problems there.

The press advance man had to know his business though. He had to know where he needed to build a television platform, for example, for cameras. He had to see that it was built. Sometimes this was tough in going into a foreign country and just really literally taking over.

In some of the countries President Johnson visited the people were

not really aware of the type of press that we have and the demands of the American press on meetings of this kind. Sometimes it can sort of overwhelm them. Their concept of press may be different from ours. It just startled a lot of them that there were so many American press covering these events, following the President.

I know on our first trip to Asia in 1966 we ran the risk of some hard feelings and some real misunderstandings on just the demands that we were forced to make in order to take care of the press. When we went to Wellington, New Zealand, they didn't even have a hotel in Wellington that could handle them--the number of the press that were coming with the President. We sent two full plane loads on a TWA jet and a Pan-Am jet of press with the President on that seventeen-day trip to Asia.

F: What did you do with them?

C: In Wellington, New Zealand, Tom Johnson, who helped advance the trip, had the New Zealand government recondition an old ferry boat which had sleeping quarters. They took it out of mothballs and put it on the dock--next to a dock. We set up the press facilities in one of the buildings at the port there with the boat alongside. The press stayed on the boat instead of in a hotel.

F: It worked reasonably well?

C: It worked reasonably well. It was costly, but under the circumstances was the best we could do. So you had to have a little ingenuity, too. I mean this was a problem that if we had not had the trip well advanced and advanced far in advance, we could have had some real problems. Of course, you run into places where literally the facilities are just not adequate for someone to suddenly drop in on

you with a couple of hundred people. We usually flew with not just the White House Air Force One and one press plane. We might have five airplanes. We might have Air Force One and a backup plane might come ahead of time or a little after with automobiles and Lord knows what all in them, and maybe two press planes. It's just like flying an armada into some places. On the Asia trip, it really was sort of a unique experience for a lot of countries we visited to be confronted with that sort of thing.

A lot of places don't understand our security problems. New Zealand, again, was an example of that. A New Zealand Prime Minister --he may have one security man, but he pretty well moves around the way he wants to. In Australia, pretty much the same thing. They've got no great security problem with their public officials, so they don't understand the sudden influx if fifty or sixty Secret Service agents and all the military people that the President brings with him. I've wished that we could avoid this in some way, but I don't know how to do it.

They told us, "My word, the Queen can go through the streets of Wellington with a couple of bobbies or something, you know. Why do we have to have all of this? Nobody is going to do anything."

Well, we have a little bit different situation, and they have to adapt to it when an American President goes somewhere. In some places it's no particular problem because in countries like Korea and Thailand they are extremely security conscious, whereas a country like Australia or New Zealand would not be.

F: I can give you some anecdotes of their casualness. I served with them on a British ships in the Second World War, and some of their feelings

about security just kind of made my hair stand on end.

C: They have a different concept altogether. It's just too bad we can't have the same concept.

F: It would make a more relaxed operation.

C: Yes, because the President literally takes an army of people with him wherever he goes--any President does. In some ways it's resented in a lot of places. I think it was resented in South and Central America. The "Colossus of the North" type-thing, you know, "Here he comes".

F: Just kind of overwhelmed.

C: Yes. "Here comes the army from the North." That's about what it looked like.

F: A little invasion.

C: And literally at Punta del Este, we did have to put U.S. Army troops in there to help. They were very carefully disguised so that it wouldn't appear that they were Army people, but that's what they were. We had to have additional security people there. We had real potential problems in Punta del Este. Consequently our people--Secret Service people--had to beef up their normal security.

F: Did you dress them in civilian clothes?

C: Soldiers in civilian clothes, especially trained for this type of thing.

F: No rifles--just pistols?

C: I never saw rifles around, but I saw a lot of folks and I would assume they were armed in some way. Of course, it becomes less offensive to the country you're visiting if you try to keep as low a profile as you can on this sort of thing. But when the President moves around

in crowds and getting a lot of publicity and everything, his security is quite apparent. The newspapers in other countries make great to-do about the President's security.

I've got a picture taken in Australia printed in a newspaper there. I had a radio in my hand, and I bent over to tell the President something when he was getting in his car. The caption on the picture says, "Presidential Bodyguard Warns President of--" something or other. But they just assume that anybody around the President, particularly if he has got a radio in his hand, is bound to be a bodyguard or Secret Service or something. They're fascinated by Secret Service. I used to kid Rufus Youngblood about--I used to call him "folk hero" because in Australia, he is sort of a folk hero, being in the Secret Service.

But the press part of it adds to the difficulties of Presidential travel. It just multiplies everything by two or three, your needs and everything else. In the old days of course very few press went with a traveling President. President Eisenhower, I think, was the first one that really had a large contingent of press traveling with him when air travel really became easier and that sort of thing. President Roosevelt, I think, used to just take a couple of wire reporters, and that was about it. But with the television networks there, they might send a crew of ten people--each network and wire service--

F: What about the foreign press who are represented in Washington? Do they get in on that pool of people who go?

C: Yes, they do.

F: Again, if they can pay the freight?

C: Yes. We must always have Reuters with us, and Agence France Presse traveled with us a good bit. Occasionally the Melbourne newspaper, the Sydney paper, or the London Times had someone with us.

F: It sort of depended on where you were going?

C: Yes.

F: Did you locally--that is, when you got into a country, did you try to throw any kind of a press party or do anything like that especially, or would that have been considered patronizing?

C: I didn't usually try to do that. We tried to fix the press accommodations as comfortably as we could. We tried to provide eating facilities, bar, and so forth.

F: Kept a kind of buffet where people could nibble while they worked?

C: Yes, as comfortable as you could. The foreign press, we treated them the same way. They were welcome to join in with whatever we were doing. Usually one of the airlines--Pan-Am--might have a courtesy party or something for them when they got there--you know, a courtesy bar, could get three drinks or something of that nature. There was rarely any planned entertainment except the regular entertainment planned for the President.

On our Asia trip we always tried to slot several reporters into each event that the President was going to. He had a State dinner in Bangkok at the Palace. We tried to take as many reporters as we could.

F: More-or-less on a round-robin basis?

C: More-or-less. This might be a black tie event. I remember taking to the dinner I cited in Bangkok; I believe I took three television networks, two wire services, and four or five other reporters to this

formal dinner. Then somewhere else down the road, we'd pick up somebody else.

F: Did they come prepared, or did they rent?

C: We usually planned it far enough in advance where, if we were going to set a special pool for an event like this, we told the guy before we left Washington to take his black tie because he was going to be the pool reporter on such-and-such an event and it was a black tie function. Most of this was planned well enough in advance so that we could pick our pools and everything everywhere we were going.

We frequently printed up what we called a "Bible" for the trip, which Bob Fleming, the Deputy Press Secretary under both Bill Moyers and me, learned from Jim Hagerty. The first trip the President took of any length was President was the trip to Asia in 1966. Bill Moyers invited Hagerty down to give all of us a briefing on President Eisenhower's travels and his preparations for that. Then he invited Pierre Salinger down to brief us on the Kennedy trips during his Presidency. These were very helpful, especially the Hagerty experiences because President Eisenhower traveled a great deal when he was President. Hagerty had it down pretty much to a "T" as to how to handle the press.

F: He had formularized it.

C: Yes. After one or two trips it had come down to a formula that worked, and Hagerty was a very methodical man anyway. He had on his staff at the time I think one or two people who the White House press still say were probably the top advance people anywhere. They just knew how to do it.

F: Incidentally, from what you know of Hagerty, I've had him on my

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tentative list. Do you think he's anybody worth my seeing? Do you think he had enough relations with Johnson in those Eisenhower years?

C: I think he probably did. Not a great deal of direct relationship, but I believe he could give you some insight on the Eisenhower relationships and so forth. I think he would be the best of the living people from the Eisenhower Administration. Sherman Adams --did Sherman Adams die?

F: Not that I know of.

C: I think he's still alive.

F: I've seen Milton Eisenhower, but of course he's not right there on the spot.

C: He wasn't actually working with the President directly. I'd say Hagerty or Sherman Adams would be. Bryce Harlow was there at the time. He's now with Nixon.

But anyway Hagerty had this actually developed into what he called his "Bible" for a trip. Before President Eisenhower ever left Washington, the press was given this Bible. It was just a blow-by-blow account of everything that was going to happen, had the press pools already picked--individuals who would be covering a certain event to report to the others when it was over when you couldn't take all the press somewhere. They had press departure times; had their arrival times; had hotels, and whether you would pick up your key or whether the key would be in your door, just everything; where the President was going, and whether this was coverable by television cameras, still cameras, both, or whether it was open to press coverage only with no availability of cameras. All of this was just down according to

the best way it could be.

Of course, this was refined even more by our people, because things had changed since Eisenhower was there. The demands were greater. The television was considerably more widespread and so forth. But we took the kernel of Hagerty's work and used it pretty much as our own guideline.

F: Did the presence of satellite communication give you any particular problems?

C: Yes, a time or two we had real crises on either trying to get network film to a location where it could be put on satellite, or trying to hasten the development--

F: You were pretty limited on where you--

C: Yes. Or trying to hasten the development of satellite potential in some place where they might have been working on it and weren't quite ready at the time we were going to go in. I think in the case of the Asia trip, I believe the film of the Manila Conference, for example, had to be flown to Tokyo for satellite transmission. The second time we went, I think we had ample satellite transmission out of Australia and out of Germany when the President--

F: Did communications facilities ever determine where you would go, or was it usually strictly diplomatic, military and so on?

C: Well, communications was extremely important on a lot of these things. You'll remember a big debate--this was not Presidential travel, but it's the same type of thing--a big debate after the North Vietnamese agreed to come to the conference table in the spring '68. The controversy arose over where they were going to meet. We had recommended two or three places, and the Communists wanted two or three places. They wanted to go to Phnom Penh, which is in Cambodia, for example.

We were holding out for other spots.

F: Warsaw got in there, I remember.

C: Warsaw got mixed in with it. Communications was extremely important to us on where that conference was held. If it were held in rather a primitive area, we thought we would have a problem. In Phnom Penh, particularly--we didn't have an embassy there. If it were held in a Communist country, we were really concerned about the communications problem as to whether you could establish the type of clean communications that you needed with your negotiators. Frequently on Presidential trips, we were fairly restricted as to where we would go by, first, the airfield, as to whether his jet could land in a certain place. This was particularly a problem on this Central American trip where, in one instance, we couldn't land at the capital of the country. I'm not sure whether it was Nicaragua--one of them.

F: What did you do?

C: Landed in another city. But the landing field was important. It was an important consideration. The availability of communications was important. You can't put the President of the United States where he can't communicate. A time or two we actually had the potential for a problem on that. In El Salvador the main telephone communication with the United States was knocked out while we were there by roadwork up in Mexico or somewhere, and we had to use radio communication.

F: Did you ever have hams standing by?

C: No.

F: You never really got down to that.

C: Usually they had Navy communication ships standing by and so forth. In this case I think we went by radio from--kind of a roundabout way. We went to--

F: Probably went up the West Coast, didn't you?

C: No, we didn't. For some reason we went through Camp David to get to the White House. We had some intermediate point before we got to Camp David. It worked out all right. We had plenty of backup systems. I don't ever recall an instance where the President was totally out of touch. I believe it was at Punta del Este where we had to put a communications ship offshore to help us there, and in several other places we had to use ships.

F: Now, the President is notorious for last minute changes in schedule, many of them not even planned by him, I gather. If the crowd is going good and he likes it, he stays on too long, or decides he wants to go by somewhere else on the way. Did you advance all possibilities, or were you sometimes caught outside the ballpark?

C: Well, on domestic trips we had problems in a lot of places. One international trip to Canada, to Montreal--

F: We've gone over that to some extent.

C: To Expo was, of course, a nightmare. Generally on overseas trips, especially conferences, we had no problems because we pretty well stayed with what he was going to do. In Central America we did decide when we left El Salvador that he would visit each capital.

F: That had not been decided when you left?

C: As I recall it, that had not even been considered.

F: That wasn't your recommendation?

C: No. I don't recall my opinion was ever particularly asked on that.

I think I probably hollered a little bit about it when I heard about it.

F: How did you handle that? What you've got there, you've got your countries so close together that you can't gain any flight time on them.

C: We landed, I think, just a few minutes ahead of the President in each instance. We may have put a pool on his plane, I don't recall all the details. But I know that he was quite concerned--and a bit miffed--that the press situation would have some bearing on what he wanted to do about landing at these various capitals. As far as he was concerned, the press could just go on back to the United States and let us go about our business, but of course you can't do that.

F: Was there much to do at those landings except to report that the crowd cheered?

C: There really wasn't much to do. Fortunately, they were all short stops. We got them his speeches ahead of time pretty much. Their filing was adequate. They didn't have any great problems, and we did manage to advance it a few hours before they went.

F: In general, how soon before the President makes his speech does he have to have it finally set? Or can you tinker with it right up to the minute he starts talking?

C: Oh, we used to tinker with his speeches while the plane was pulling up--

F: He doesn't want a half-hour leeway to--

C: He's one fellow who never had to read over a speech too much before he gave it. He would still be fiddling with a speech literally when we were landing. It wasn't because he hadn't seen it before or

anything else, he just wasn't satisfied with it and maybe something had changed--conditions had changed. I don't recall very many speeches of his of any significance that were set in concrete a long time ahead of time he delivered them. He did a whole lot of personal work on his stuff anyway. He like to write in on the cards things he wanted to say, and only he could read his handwriting in some instances.

F: That trip that he went down to Harold Holt's funeral and then just kept on going. Was that as unplanned as it seemed--as spontaneous?

C: Yes.

F: This must have given you some real fits.

C: Monumental headaches. Everybody knew when we left Washington that he wasn't just going to Australia and coming back. That just wouldn't have been in character. But I told the press before we left that I would have no announcements of any other travel prior to the time we actually went there we were going--that if the President went anywhere else, I wasn't going to be able to say anything about it.

F: They just ought to go prepared for any contingency then.

C: Just go prepared for anything.

F: One question while it's on my mind. Except for that Canadian trip, were you able to give most of the press a fairly good notice of when you were going to leave so they didn't have that problem of not knowing whether to stay home for breakfast?

C: They knew a whole lot more than they ever liked to admit. They did not like the President's travel habits. They complained about them constantly. I had considerable sympathy for some of their complaints.

F: It's probably press club folklore, though, by now, and they're a little wistful about it.

C: Oh, yes, that's right. It's more folklore than anything. Lord, I've heard so much folklore though about Eisenhower and Kennedy that we just have added to the folklore about sudden changes in plans, and decisions to land an airplane where you're not supposed to land it, and stuff like that. So I guess President Johnson probably magnified it by the fact that he appeared to be making rather mercurial decisions on travel sometimes, and sometimes they were rather sudden.

F: Did he ever change them in the air?

C: Yes. He would change his mind about something; he'd just say, "Well, we're not going to Texas Friday; just can't go; got too much to do." And Friday afternoon when he was getting ready to take his nap and he realized he was about caught up on everything he was doing, he'd say, "Well, I think I'll go to Texas tonight." But that's his prerogative. All you can do is just scramble and do the best you can. But that happened very rarely, because he generally knew pretty much what weekend he was going to go home.

Occasionally we would have trips that would jump up rather suddenly, trips to military bases for some reason or another, things like that. Sometimes he never went places that he gave serious thought to going to. He might have given consideration for two weeks to going to Detroit to make a speech somewhere, and then decided that he didn't want to go for some reason--the situation wasn't right for him to appear before that group and say what he had intended to say; it was not a right forum for him--something of that nature. He'd just decide not to go. Well, sometimes rumors got out ahead of time that the President was going to be there. This just kept the press in constant turmoil. They just asked me every day, you know, "Somebody

says in Detroit that he's coming over there on such-and-such a day." I'd say, "I just haven't heard anything about it. I'll let you know if we have any travel." And then nothing would ever happen. The date would pass; he wouldn't go; and they didn't know who to believe. They didn't know what the score was.

But on that big trip around the world, of course, all of that was compounded by the need for security and by some rather clumsy handling on our part.

F: I presume you had advanced it as a contingency.

C: No. When we left Australia, we were very fortunate that we were able to get an advance team out just hours ahead of him, just to make darned sure that we could land where we were going.

F: Sweep off the runway and that was about it.

C: Yes. And that he had a telephone that he could call the White House with. The Signal Corps, in particular, just performed miracles on these things. Of course, in a lot of places the Signal Corps has gone in well ahead of time just on the outside chance that the President might be going somewhere. For example, in most of the major capitals in Europe they are equipped to go in on a moment's notice and set up communications for the President because they've already done their advance work. They've done this in India. Of course, you go to a military base in Thailand or Cam Ranh Bay in Viet Nam or something, you've got no problems. They're equipped to take the President or anybody else whenever he comes, but not so in some places.

In that particular trip we tipped the press that he was obviously going into the war zone--not from anything we told them because we

never told them a thing, except for the fact that we had to have certain shots--inoculations--for safety's sake before we could go into Thailand or Viet Nam or somewhere. So these guys were wise enough to know that when you say, "You've got to get your plague shot." they know you don't need a plague shot for Australia.

F: You did that before you left home?

C: Yes, we had to. You just can't take a guy into a place and expose him to some horrendous disease that he's not inoculated against. But they were very good about protecting that. They accepted it just as a real contingency plan. I told them frankly I didn't know where we were going. I wanted to be inoculated for whatever we were. We might crash in New Guinea or something and might need that plague shot.

But after we left Melbourne, or Canberra, or wherever we took off from to head out around the world, it was just one problem after another everywhere we landed. I was under ironclad instructions not to let the press file any stories out of Darwin, Australia, where we refueled--that if stories were filed out of Darwin, it was an obvious tipoff that we were headed North to Viet Nam or Thailand.

F: Did you let them off the plane?

C: Yes. When we got there, we discovered the first people who came out to the airplane were Australian newspaper people. They already knew about it. This is one of those things you get into. Our own traveling press had been barred from whispering the word. But there we were in Darwin, Australia, and here the Australian press knew all about it. They're not dummies. They knew the President was coming into Darwin from just the preparations being made. And the Australians,

their attitude toward security is not as severe as ours. They didn't pay much attention to it. So naturally our press, very justifiably, flipped over the fact that we had told them they couldn't file.

Well, as it turned out, we had filing facilities in Darwin because the advance team had put some up not knowing what the plans were. We finally just allowed our press to go ahead and file anyway. What else could we do! It created a real doubt in their minds that we knew what the hell we were doing, and I had some doubts myself on that trip.

The same thing happened to us in Thailand. We were in Korat Air Force Base in Thailand under strict secrecy orders. The press couldn't file stories. They could write their stories and they would be filed several hours after we left Korat the next day. When we got there they accepted this without too much complaint. We dragged in there late at night and were going to have a few hours sleep and start the next morning at four o'clock. I had no sooner got them to bed than one of them came in and said he just heard on Armed Forces Radio that we were in Korat, Thailand. They were just madder than hornets. Because you just can't keep the President's travels that secret and the wire services in Bangkok had discovered through various means that the President was in Korat. I heard that the way they did it was they knew he was coming somewhere to Thailand. There are only two or three bases there that he could come to. They kept calling the bases and saying, "Has the President arrived yet?" Finally some operator somewhere said, "No, not yet."

Well, that's all they needed. They knew where he was coming. They had ways of getting information from military people as to where

he was and what he was doing. So they had the story, and here our traveling White House press got scooped on their own story. Here they're traveling with him and can't file a peep out of anything. You can understand their rancor at this sort of thing. But we survived the trip. I sometimes wonder how.

F: Did going on into the Vatican give you any particular troubles, because the Vatican has that certainly an overtone of a religious state as well as--?

C: No, we didn't have any problems from that standpoint. We had problems taking care of the press in Rome. That's one place we really had to trick the Communists or face the possibility of just a violent riot in Rome. The President and Marvin Watson and others just finessed the Reds something terrible there. They brought him in secretly.

F: How did they do that?

C: We were supposed to fly to Madrid to spend the night, and the rumors were we were going to double back to Rome and see the Pope on Christmas Eve. We cabled the Embassy in Rome to reserve the rooms at the hotel there for the night of the 23rd. Of course, when that happened the word got out rather quickly that the President was going to spend the night in Madrid, which he never had any intention of doing. So the Communists in Italy relaxed, thinking we were coming in the next day. They were laying all their preparations for a big demonstration on Christmas Eve. The President flew into Rome on the night of the 23rd, instead of the 24th, which caught them completely off guard. They didn't have time to stir their troops up or bring them wine or something. So he was there, and went to see the Italian leaders, then over to the Vatican, and out of Rome before anybody

really knew what was happening. It turned out to be a very important trip to see the Pope without stirring up a big worldwide demonstration.

F: Did you get a feeling that he was well received on these trips, or did you get a chance to get any feeling at all? Were you too much restrained in your own movements?

C: I was generally with him when he was talking with the leaders. I think he was well received virtually everywhere.

F: Did he seem to get on with most or all of them?

C: I never saw any real problems with his personal relations with them.

F: Nobody that he kind of developed an instant antipathy toward, or vice versa?

C: Oh, he and Prime Minister Pearson of Canada really didn't get along too well. I think there was some resentment--well, I know there was, they told me--on the part of some of the Canadian officials on that trip he took to Expo. I think they were a little bit distressed that we hadn't gone through the usual amenities, and so forth, on a trip to another country.

F: Particularly to come up to the capital.

C: Yes. Well, we went to see Pearson in his retreat somewhere near Ottawa after we had been to Expo. But I think that left a little bad taste in their mouth. Other than that, I don't think there was an instance I can think of that he didn't have good reception, and that he didn't seem to--

F: How in your view did he get along with Ky and Thieu--who must be a pair of "Gold Dust Twins" in a way?

C: He got along okay with them. Toward the end of his Administration, I think they pulled some shenanigans he didn't like. He did his best

He did his best to keep them working together, which was difficult because--

F: Well, you had that problem just about the time of the election in '68, you know, when they were recalcitrant about Paris and getting underway, after you had seemingly had hammered out the problems with North Viet Nam.

C: They left some antagonisms, but I think the President understood some of their feelings.

F: Did he always hold himself in and keep up that kind of a deliberate understanding, or did he ever call them what he might have called you and me in the same circumstances?

C: No, he never called them anything directly. He did give the word to them at one point in '68 that, in effect, he was beginning to lose patience during some of the peace talk controversies. But by and large he had a pretty good relationship with them.

I think that Thieu trusted him. I think Ky must have at least understood the President's situation because he cooperated surprisingly well, considering the fact that he had been kicked down to second man in this thing. But I always thought there was--remember Naguib and Nasser in Egypt where Naguib was the President and Nasser was the second man, and nobody has ever heard of Naguib since then. I always thought the potential was there for Ky to try to pull the same thing in time. We certainly always had the impression that the situation existed for rivalry and even, possibly, a coup or something of that nature after the Thieu government was elected. But it never happened during our Administration, and I think it has probably faded considerably since then.

F: To come back to your travel, when you went to Punta del Este this was a little different proposition, since you're going down and sit a spell rather than bounce all over the place. I presume this in a sense was just like moving the White House to Uruguay.

C: Yes. We rented a beautiful suburban estate for the President which had guest houses and this sort of thing which enabled us to keep his personal staff the same place he was and provided security, and so forth. We just literally set up shop at this house that we had borrowed from a newspaper publisher. A lot of--

F: Did you take your own serving personnel, or did you use local?

C: Everywhere the President went, he took Filipino and Guamanian mess personnel from the White House--brought his own food. They prepared it for him there--took all his own water and everything; dishes; just the full household; took his own bed.

F: What do you do at more or less public dinners at affairs like that? What's to keep him or the President of Peru or anywhere else from the cook sticking something in it, or the waiter?

C: Well, I assume they just watched it carefully because he went to a lot of functions like that. We didn't worry much about it; I think a lot of the food preparation for him in his own habitat was as much for his convenience and peace of mind as it was for anything else. There wasn't anything to prevent you from--

F: What was your routine down there? I presume you did establish a kind of routine.

C: At Punta del Este I set up in the press room in the press offices in the hotel where the press stayed and spent most of my time taking press people back and forth out to his villa for his meetings and

pictures and so forth with the dignitaries--visiting Presidents.

F: What did you do, try to take a national from a particular country out at the same time that that particular person's leader is going to--?

C: Yes, sometimes we just took them all, just took everybody out there, and let them get the flavor of what they were doing; then take them on back to the hotel. A lot of the Punta del Este Conference was taken up by conference in conference hall, you know, with everybody making speeches and going to sleep. It just couldn't have been duller.

F: In your own relationships with the press down there, did you have your own interpreter? Did the State Department provide him?

C: The interpreter for the Spanish-speaking press, you mean?

F: Yes, and I guess Portuguese too.

C: The State Department handled that. We briefed for the American press. Actually my briefings were oriented only toward the American press. We didn't brief the others.

F: The foreign press could come in if they wished?

C: Yes, if they wanted to. They were interested in the total conference. Our press people, of course, were more interested in the President's activities. At that particular conference I tried to set up at least two briefings a day and utilized the officials as much as I could. Secretary Rusk came down at my request and had a news conference one night--a full report on everything that was going on. The Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, I'd have him there explaining the economics of what they were talking about. We generally kept them abreast of everything by special briefings.

F: Was there anybody in the official family that you had to avoid because

they didn't handle themselves well in press meetings?

C: Well, you had good ones and bad ones. Some of the White House staff did not like to participate in press briefings. The press did not really care--not personally--but I mean the press did not really look forward to briefings by certain individuals. They made it quite plain they didn't.

I'll recite the names. I guess it was common knowledge in the press. They just really tried to avoid briefings by our science adviser Dr. Hornig. They didn't understand what he was saying. They couldn't write stories out of it, you know. They were just unhappy generally all the way around. They didn't really like to be briefed by Jim Webb, the head of NASA, one of the smartest guys alive, but he overwhelmed them. Anything connected with NASA, just by the nature of NASA had a real hard public relations pitch to it all the time. I mean, NASA officials were just generally selling, selling, selling all the time. The press really didn't particularly care for this. On, there were two or three others they didn't really like for me to produce for them. It used to be sort of a standing joke, when I really want to tick them off, I'd tell them. "Well, at 4 o'clock we'll have a special briefing with so-and-so here." And oh, they'd scream! I'd just be kidding them myself.

Most of the White House staff that had any contact with the press did a good job of briefing. Joe Califano and his people were especially good at explaining domestic programs and Presidential messages--this sort of thing. Douglass Cater was pretty good, although the press liked to bait him a lot.

F: I can see that.

C: Some of the White House staff that weren't in the program areas never did brief the press, never had anything to do with the press. I used to bring Barefoot Sanders in on occasion to give them a legislative report. He always did a first-class job, just laying it out the way it was without any folderaol. Yet some of the assistants wouldn't have been caught ever briefing the press. I couldn't have roped Marvin Watson to come in and brief the press on anything. He didn't want anything to do with it. Other White House assistants actually enjoyed it and wanted to do it whenever they could. I utilized other people for special briefings a great deal. I liked to bring up the National Security Council staff people and let them deal with the press--

F: Did you have very much of a free hand on deciding whom you wanted, or was there somebody who was verboten to the President and he said, "Don't let that so-and-so talk to the press."?

C: I had a 75-percent free hand. If we were going to have a foreign visitor come in, usually the day or a couple of days before he arrived I would have the expert from the National Security Council staff come up with my afternoon briefing, say, and give the press a full rundown on what to expect; who the guy was; what the problems were they were going to be discussing--this sort of thing. It was helpful to the press, and it gave the staffer a little exposure and made it appear to be more of a team operation instead of just some all-seeing White House, you know, knowing everything that's going on. But I guess there were some people the President did not like to get shoved out in front too much with the press. It went in cycles. Sometimes a fellow who had done a lot of briefing would get cut off sometimes

if the President thought he was getting too much.

F: He was getting noticeable.

C: Yes, a little too noticeable. But by-and-large I had a fairly free hand in getting anybody I wanted to on rather low-key stuff. But if it was something of monumental importance of course it was the President's decision on what to do in terms of who spoke and who was the spokesman on it and that sort of thing. But on minor stuff he didn't care what I--

F: Were there any cases in which you're dealing with some kind of a White House--at least the White House is the eventual seat of action for it--that the President thought it would be better to let the local Senator or Congressman make the announcement, or would call him over to the White House to let him make it from there in one of your briefings, or something of that order?

C: Oh, frequently if the President saw someone on his appointment calendar who he thought had a fairly good story to tell to the press, he would send the fellow out to me or call me in and let me talk to the fellow and take him out to the press; let him report to the press what they talked about.

F: These are the on-the-record appointments?

C: Yes. Occasionally, we'd have an off-the-record appointment that turned out to be pretty good from a news standpoint. We'd pop them out as kind of a surprise.

F: Your bonus for today?

C: Your bonus for today is to get to talk to Cyrus Vance, or something. But it might be a Senator; I remember one time he brought me in there and I took--He and Wayne Morse used to have a lot of problems from

time to time. I brought Wayne Morse out to talk about Alliance for Progress. Of course, I used to take Senator Mansfield and Speaker McCormack--the leadership--out sometimes after the leadership breakfast and leadership meetings, and let the press ask them questions.

F: Back to Punta del Este, the President saw the leaders of the various Latin American countries individually and seems to have gotten on rather well with most of them--maybe a little less well with President Belaunde-Terry of Peru, and then there's that almost confrontation by the President of Ecuador Arosemena. Were you present at those?

C: Yes, I was there when he talked to Belaunde. He got along well enough with Belaunde. I think he was a little distressed at Belaunde for being kind of an architect in government as well as an architect in fact. He was a whole lot more interested in roads. He had a fascination apparently for some capital things that the President really wasn't too much interested in hearing about. I don't recall any particular conflict between the two. Their relationship was not as good, say, as the relationship between the President and [Gustavo] Diaz-Ordaz of Mexico.

I think the most cautious of the Presidents we saw down there was probably [Dr. Joaquin] Balaguer, of the Dominican Republic, who did not want to appear to be a puppet of Lyndon Johnson's, you know, with all the conflict they'd had in the Dominican Republic, and probably held back with any compliments any praise, anything else as much as he could just to keep from being stamped as Uncle Sam's tool.

The President of Ecuador was kind of a problem. He just chose

the occasion to want to be "big man" and slam the colossus around, you know. I think it annoyed all of us, but the President endured it as one of the problems.

F: He didn't visibly color.

C: I don't remember him coloring.

F: Every dog has his day, huh.

C: He gave the fellow his own private classification. The President can be nice to the point of almost iciness sometimes. If he thinks he has been done wrong, he'll smile while he breaks a couple of your ribs. I don't even remember all of the episodes. I just remember flap.

And we had a minor flap with the Central American Presidents that he had out to dinner at his residence one night. He saw all of them together, which was probably a mistake.

F: He stayed out there at the Ambassador's house, didn't he?

C: No. It was somebody's private home at Punta del Este.

F: Oh, this was still at Punta del Este. I see.

C: The Central American Presidents were there, too. I think the biggest problem there was that he wasn't in the mood to talk business that night. I think they all showed up wanting to talk business, and he wanted--

F: This was going to be one of his sociable evenings.

C: Yes. He wanted to be social and wanted to have fun. He was tired. He'd been seeing one guy after another all day long, and they came in there loaded for bear, you know, wanting to talk about monumental issues--monumental to them. But I think he was a little weary of hearing some of this stuff, and he wanted to be sociable and just have

a relaxed time. So darned little business was transacted, and I think they left thinking they'd gotten short shrift on it. But it wasn't anything serious because later he went to Central America and certainly gave enough attention.

But he had good meetings and good relationships and got good personal impressions of a good many of the Latin American leaders at that meeting, and formed some friendships, I think, that were probably beneficial.

F: Did he make any particular effort to get heads of states to visit the United States, or did he and protocol and the State Department and so forth work out those who petitioned to come?

C: They usually sent word some way or another that they look--

F: That they would welcome a visit--

C: That they would welcome a visit to this country. We didn't have any dearth of visitors.

F: I know that.

C: We had two or three every month. He was usually glad for any of them to come.

F: To come back home, did the Fortas flap give you any particular problems? Was this just another problem that you handled in routine fashion?

C: Oh, it was a problem, but Lord, Joe, there were so darned many problems. You know, every day was some new crisis. Fortas was one in the sense that we were on the defensive the whole time. But my main role was to continue to express optimism and to do the best I could to defend him. Others on the White House staff had the primary role of trying to get him confirmed. So for me it was a matter of sitting in the councils and trying to be there when the President

was talking with Senator Dirksen and others about getting him confirmed.

F: Did you have the feeling at the beginning that the President thought there'd be no great problem?

C: I think he thought there'd be a little bit of a problem, but I don't think he anticipated the extent of the difficulty. One thing, Senator Dirksen had no problems at all with it at first. He wound up voting against him. I can remember sitting in the Cabinet Room with the President and Senator Dirksen and Senator Mansfield planning how to get him confirmed. Dirksen was just part of the team. Later on Dirksen changed his mind. He went with Griffin against confirmation. So the President was little misled by circumstances probably.

F: The revelations on Fortas were a revelation to him I gather.

C: Oh, yes, he had no idea that--. If he did, he never told me. I think that virtually everything that they were dredging up and trying to indict Judge Fortas was--. Well, really there wasn't much. It was that American University thing and, oh, I've forgotten what the other was.

F: The fact he used to come over to the White House to help advise the President.

C: Yes but that was minor.

F: But there's plenty to start the precedent.

C: Yes. That was a rather minor issue after they got on to the fact that he had taken money from American University to teach a course or something. That's about all they came up with. It was only later, you know, after we left office before all the Wolfson stuff and all of that was started going around. But Fortas' "so-called" sins at the time of his confirmation for Chief Justice were really rather

minor in our mind.

F: Only a partisan could make anything of it.

C: It was an extremely partisan fight. This was annoying I think mostly because the President realized that he didn't really have the clout to do much about it.

F: I was going to ask--did you ever get the feeling that he felt that if he weren't such a flat non-candidate that he could have pushed it through?

C: Oh, yes. I don't think Judge Fortas would have ever been withdrawn if the President had not been a lame-duck President. I don't think the fight would have ever arisen to the ferocity that it did, because it was a Republican-Democratic fight. President Nixon thought he was going to be President, and he wanted that appointment. It's a darned near as simple as that. Most of the Republican leadership went with their candidate to try to keep it from happening.

F: And after you began to see that you were being beaten over the head with Fortas, then [Homer] Thornberry seemed like a lost cause, too?

C: Well, yes. If Fortas didn't vacate his Associate Justice seat to take the Chief Justice, there wasn't a place to put Thornberry. He could have appointed Thornberry Chief Justice--

F: That would have brought the house down.

C: Well, it would have. In view of all the circumstances surrounding it, it would have been an injustice to Thornberry to do that to him right on the heels of this other thing. I think the same fight would have erupted, and the same consequence, so the President--.

It really was a question of whether the President had the right

to appoint the Chief Justice or not. That's what really was at the core of the thing. Warren resigned in such a way that Johnson could appoint his successor. By elevating Fortas it really gave the President two appointments to the Supreme Court--Fortas as Chief, and Thornberry as Associate.

Politically it was contrary to what the Republicans wanted. They were mad at Warren for resigning in such a way that Johnson could make the appointment. They thought they were going to win the election. They didn't think their man ought to be saddled with Johnson's Chief Justice. And that was pure and simple all it was. Everything that happened after that was a result of that. So the same thing would have happened to Thornberry, or anybody else. It was a question of whether or not the President could appoint anybody, and the Republicans didn't want him to appoint anybody. They wanted to hold it over.

F: Did he get the feeling before the Democratic National Convention met that the President probably would attend it some time?

C: Yes, I did, really, although he told me that he had no intention of going and was not going to go to the convention. I said, "Well, I'm just going to operate on that basis with the press."

F: You came on down to the ranch then with him?

C: Yes. But I mean this was two or three weeks before the convention ever started. I said, "When they ask me about it, I'm just going to tell them that you told me that you have no intention of going."

He said, "Well, that's a fact. I just don't think I ought to go to that darned thing I'd just be the focal point of something," or, "I'm not the candidate. I don't know who the candidate's going

to be, and I don't want to get in the middle of that. I'd rather just be somewhere else. If I go on this date, they'll accuse me of trying to upstage the nominee. If I go on that day, I'll get right in the middle of the fight." His just general attitude was "I don't want to go."

Well, I took him at his word and told all the press. They didn't believe me. You know, they just said, "Well, old Christian is just lying to us. The President's going to that convention."

I said, "Well, I'm not saying that he won't change his mind and go, but I'm telling you right now that he doesn't have any intention of going."

Well, as it turned out there was considerable pressure on the President to go, and the pressure was from his own friends. Probably his own desire at one time during the convention was to, if things worked out, maybe he ought to go. He hated not to go if it looked like something that he could really score some points with, but I think it became rather obvious to him after he looked at it objectively again that his first impression was the right one and that he ought not go. So nothing happened; he didn't go. He never made any inference that he was going.

F: The rumor never died right down to the last day.

C: No, the rumor never died. But nobody in the White House or him ever intimated in the least way that he was going to the convention. Well, when he didn't go, here again the press really--even though we had told them all along he wasn't going to go--they still were highly suspicious that the President had intended all along to pop up there at some big surprise event.

F: You would deny the charge that he manipulated the convention from Johnson City?

C: He didn't manipulate the convention. He probably had a larger role in the convention than he especially wanted known, but he had a much smaller role than was painted for him. He wasn't oblivious to the fact the convention was going on, particularly when it was considering things very dear to his heart like the Viet Nam resolution that just could have been right in his teeth.

F: He did use the telephone on occasion?

C: I don't think he did. Now, his views were made known through other people. But I don't think he ever just picked up the phone and called Hale Boggs or anybody else and said, "I want it done this way." He didn't have to do that. In the first place he had people up there in Chicago--Marvin Watson and others--who knew just exactly--

F: Jack Valenti was there.

C: They knew exactly what he wanted and what he didn't want. They had a little sense. They knew he didn't want a Viet Nam resolution that kicked him right in the teeth. He didn't need to be pulling wires and calling signals every minute. The thing that he was involved in to the extent that he was talking back and forth. He wasn't, I don't think he ever really did talk to Marvin about this. But whether or not he should go to the convention himself, I think became a point of considerable contact back and forth.

But as far as manipulating and pulling wires and stuff like that. I was here. I wasn't at the ranch. I was in San Antonio or Austin, wherever we were staying at the time, but I know what he was doing a good bit of the time that it was going on. He was out in that car

driving around the ranch. He wasn't hanging over the telephone or over the television set waiting breathlessly for something to happen so he could pull a wire. His presence was in that convention. There's no question about that; his presence was there. But the mental picture of him just sitting there trying to manipulate this convention and casting himself in the best favorable light is rather --It didn't fit what I know about it. Maybe he was; maybe he was secretly calling up there every night and saying, "Marvin, do this, and Marvin, do that," but if he was, I didn't know anything about it. The press thought he was doing it; and word got out in Chicago, "The President thinks this. The President thinks that." "That's right; that's what the President thinks." But so what? What did they expect him to do!

The fact was that he did not in my judgment manipulate that Democratic convention and nominate Humphrey. The Democratic convention was set to nominate Humphrey if things fell in shape and fell in place right. If the Southern delegations went with Humphrey, he had no particular problems.

F: Only a revolutionary stampede could have turned it around.

C: Who in the heck else would they have gone for? I just knew Humphrey had the nomination when the convention started, and so did everybody else. There was darned little doubt that he was going to get the nomination unless the thing just blew up.

F: You know he stayed out of the campaign pretty largely until he made that Houston appearance right at the end in the Astrodome. Did he stage-manage that to some extent, or was that Roy Hofheinz?

C: What--the Houston Astrodome?

F: Yes.

C: It was advanced by Humphrey's campaign people. Humphrey himself asked the President to go to the Astrodome. It would probably have been strange if he hadn't gone.

F: Humphrey at no time, as far as you know, ever asked the President to lay off the campaign?

C: No, I don't think so. Actually, of course, the Astrodome was not the first appearance that the President made during the campaign. It was the only one he made with Humphrey. But he made a campaign trip through West Virginia and Kentucky for Humphrey, and was on television and radio nationwide.

In all instances, it was at the request of the Humphrey people that he did these things. He made a special broadcast for the Garment Workers at their request. But I don't think they asked him to lay off at all. In the first place, he told them many, many weeks before that he wasn't going to get directly involved except in spot situations; that he didn't want to be out campaigning all the time. He didn't want to be making everything he did partisan during the fall. They accepted that. At an early point in the campaign, I think the Humphrey people frankly didn't want him--were glad that he wasn't too deeply involved. I think later in the campaign they got concerned that he wasn't deeply involved.

F: You know the rumor went around that secretly he hoped Nixon would make it just to teach the party a lesson. You never saw any evidence of that?

C: Oh, heck!

F: He's more of a Democrat than that.

C: The President is a human being. He gets his feelings hurt, I think.

just like everybody else. But he's not a little Joe in the first grade when it comes to politics. I can't imagine him being for any Republican getting elected President. There are more important things to him than whether or not he gets the short end of the stick in the Democratic party. He can be pretty partisan in his own right. After all, a Democratic victory by Humphrey would in many ways have been a vindication of Johnson's policies.

The worst thing that could have happened to Johnson from the standpoint of history would have been a Nixon landslide. That would be like Eisenhower going in and wiping out poor Mr. Truman's record by stomping Stevenson the way he did. The President certainly didn't want that.

I mean, to have your Vice President elected to succeed you is the best of all worlds if you're not running for yourself. No matter what your Vice President stands for, he's your man. You know that your delegates at the convention nominated him. You know that your friends within the Democratic party financed him. You know that your friends in the Democratic party put him over the top. Now, that's a whole lot more vindication than going around secretly wishing that Nixon, of all people, would swat the Democratic party just out of some kind of spite--that the Democratic party wasn't in favor with the President.

I don't say that as a human being he wasn't upset or concerned sometimes by the way he was treated by his party that he'd been the leader of, or by certain individuals in his party, and the way he was treated on occasion during the campaign. I think some of the Humphrey-Muskie campaign people went out of their way to--

F: They weren't running against Nixon sometimes; they were running against Johnson.

C: I think that's probably true. I think a time or two they were guilty of gross insult to Johnson. I remember one TV film they used which I mention in my great book that's coming out here this summer. Hell, they dredged up every Democrat from Woodrow Wilson to Teddy Kennedy to show in this film without one mention or one picture of Lyndon Johnson. You'd have thought that the Johnson Administration just never existed, and here it was a Democratic campaign film. It had all three Kennedys in it; Adlai Stevenson; Truman; the whole works, you know, and no mention--no nothing--of Johnson. It was a Muskie film. It was to promote Muskie by showing him with these different individuals, but I think they could have found a picture of Muskie and Johnson somewhere back in the dark recesses of the Democratic files--that they could have mentioned the fact that Johnson passed every old Democratic program he could find that had been laying around for numerous years. But they didn't do that.

I mean, that kind of stuff gets you a little bit irritated. It doesn't make sense. It's a coloration of history; it's closing your eyes to the fact that you wouldn't be where you were if it weren't for him. Hell, the Democratic party would have been in shambles if it hadn't been for him! But anyway, that kind of thing happened during the campaign, but there never was a rupture. There never was an out-and-out total disagreement in the Humphrey campaign. We were all for Humphrey. The President's people were all for Humphrey. His Cabinet campaigned for Humphrey. His White House staff helped him every way they could.

F: I remember they brought Muriel here.

C: You just look what the President did to encourage the Texas people to get together to try to deliver this State for Humphrey. It took a lot of pride-swallowing from both Connally and Yarborough to get on the same platform with each other. You'd never have caught them there if Lyndon Johnson hadn't been President, I'll tell you!

F: Did the President ever comment to you on that Connally-Yarborough love affair?

C: No, except he was glad they did it. It was an unusual show of unity. I think it had pretty good effect down here.

But sure, all the rumors about Johnson--that Johnson didn't want Humphrey elected and all of that because of Viet Nam or something else--. Some of the Humphrey people believed that. I guess they wanted to believe it. I guess they wanted to read things into episodes of one kind or another.

But there was a lot more in Johnson's guts than Viet Nam. That was a factor--a big one--but there were lots of other things he was a heap more interested in than he was Viet Nam. And that's programs and things that were dear to his heart. I mean, when you push a country as hard as he pushed it for five years to do things, and to think that he would settle back and say, "Okay, you Republicans take it for eight years and wreck everything I tried to start." Well, that doesn't make sense. I just never saw that. He got sore sometimes. He got upset sometimes. He got out of sorts with the Democratic campaign, but never to the point of helping or even pointing toward any help from the other side. He just never did it! He did everything

he could to get Humphrey elected within the limits he'd set on himself.

F: You'd worked for John Connally, of course, before you joined him. Now Connally is somewhat more conservative, and, of course, the different vantage point in that he is serving Texas specifically as Governor. Therefore he's not always enthusiastic about certain Johnson programs. Did the President ever comment to you about that? Did it ever seem to cause any great difficulties in the relations of the two men, or did they just understand the political necessities?

C: They got upset with each other from time to time. I, of course, got a chance to see it from both ends. It was a typical relationship of two men who were very close to each other, and who have different responsibilities, and consequently different reactions to things. There was considerable understanding between the two of them all the time, but there was also a degree of friction and hurt from time to time on certain things.

F: A little irritation, if nothing else.

C: Yes. Connally wanted to be independent. He didn't want to be identified as just "Lyndon's boy John" type of thing. He had his own views on things. He was quite upset at some of the things that the federal government was doing in Texas, and he sounded off. If he didn't like it, he'd call Marvin Watson or Willard Wirtz or whoever he could get to--. And Sargent Shriver, he just let him have it with both barrels at a Washington meeting. This is what he thought he should do.

And President Johnson--there were times after I went to Washington that he was more-or-less dismayed at something that was happening in Texas, but by then there weren't any major disputes. There

wasn't any dispute over the Poverty Program. That had pretty well been resolved. The President made reference from time to time that John was more conservative than he was, "John doesn't feel the same as I do on that," or something to that effect. But he knew it. He might think in his own mind, "Old John's wrong on that." But I never heard him say anything mean or anything of that nature about John Connally.

Now I heard him say some things about lots of people, but I don't recall him ever, ever referring to John Connally in any demeaning fashion. In the first place he had very great respect for him. And one of the few people I think that the President just really has up on a pedestal.

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By George Christian

to the

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March 13, 1975

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