INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 1, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: FRANK CHURCH

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Senator Church's office, OSOB 405, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

M: Let's begin simply by identifying you, sir. You're Frank Church, senator, Democratic senator from Idaho. You came to the Senate in 1957, served since that time consecutively, and were re-elected to your current term just this last fall, 1968. That's correct.

C: That's correct.

M: Your first acquaintance with Mr. Johnson, as I suppose, came while he was still in the Senate. Do you recall under what circumstances that happened?

C: The first time I heard Lyndon Johnson's voice was on the telephone following my election to the Senate in 1956. I was having breakfast in my home, the old family residence in Boise, when the telephone rang and the voice on the other end of the phone identified himself as Lyndon Johnson, the majority leader. He explained that he had called to congratulate me on my election, and then went on to say that he felt that election of young men of my kind represented the future hope of the party, and that in the Senate an alliance between the West and the South had proved to be a necessary combination, political combination for the party; that in many ways

southerners and westerners saw things alike, and he felt that the small state was essential to the Senate if it was to play the role that the Constitution intended for it. He wanted to welcome me to the Senate, and to this fraternity, and wanted me to rely upon his office--extended the courtesies and hospitality of his office--in any way that would assist me in relocating in Washington.

M: He hadn't contacted you during the campaign for any purposes at all?

C: No, no, he had not. And I think that, in a way, my election in 1956 was not expected, and I had a feeling that he was kind of recovering for lost time, though I certainly did not hold that against him. He had many other things on his mind besides my election. However, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, which at that time was under the chairmanship of Senator Smathers in Florida, had taken an interest in my campaign, and Smathers himself had decided, despite the general forecast of the pundits in Washington that I would not be elected owing to the split in the Democratic ticket that occurred when former Senator Glen Taylor ran as a write-in, that nonetheless, I did have an excellent chance of winning. And Senator Smathers, through the Senatorial Campaign Committee, had given me help.

M: Wasn't your campaign involved to a considerable extent with the public power issue in the Hells Canyon episode?

C: Yes.

M: That was the first campaign?

C: Yes, yes,that was very much an issue at the time and for two years afterwards. But in a way, the fact that Taylor chose to run as a

write-in candidate charging me with being mortgaged to the corrupt corporate politicians, combined with Herman Welker who was the Republican incumbent charging me with being a puppet of the punks and the pinks, this put me in the middle, you see, which is the ideal place to be in American politics these days and enabled me to come right between the two, the people reasoning that whereas a man could be one or the other, he could hardly be both.

M: I found to my surprise, last spring I guess, that Glen Taylor is still living in California somewhere.

C: Yes, yes, and doing well. As a matter of fact, the circle came complete in this last election campaign when I was up for my third term. Glen Taylor, who had been my most passionate political enemy in the earlier years, granted an interview in which he said that he was generally satisfied with the kind of senator that I had been, and he gave me his endorsement and his blessing.

M: Who got in the middle, him or you? (Laughter) Did you get out of it or did he get into it?

C: That, incidentally, was not much of a political asset in my campaign, but nonetheless it is interesting to see how these things tend to come full circle.

M: Mr. Johnson also started out his career involved in a power issue on the Colorado River. Did he ever show much interest in the Hells

Canyon issue when you were first a member of the Senate, in helping you seek passage? It did pass the Senate, didn't it, in 1957?

C: Yes, it did, and with the help of Johnson. At that time he had the problem of civil rights legislation weighing heavily upon him. He had to rely upon his close working relationship with both southerners and westerners if he was to find the formula which would enable the Senate to avoid a filibuster and pass a civil rights bill. He knew the western interest in Hells Canyon, and it was through his intervention with key southern senators, I'm sure, that enabled us to pass the bill.

M: The Hells Canyon bill?

C: The Hells Canyon bill in the Senate. I remember, at the time, I had waited for six months following my election to the Senate before making my maiden speech--which was the custom at that time, though less so now--and I had chosen Hells Canyon as the issue on which to make that speech--again in accordance with the custom which called for a freshman speaking on a matter that was close to his own home state [and] on which he could be presumed to know something. And so this fell into that pattern, and I spoke on the Hells Canyon issue in my maiden speech. I worked a long time on the speech, and it was a very major effort. Those who had been associated with the Hells Canyon fight, both pro and con, were there on the floor when the speech was given. Many, including Wayne Morse of Oregon who had been a chief sponsor of the bill, were very flattering in their remarks concerning this speech. Even many opponents--I remember

Barry Goldwater [as] one of them--said very gratifying things, very complimentary things about this speech even though they disagreed with the position I had taken. I left the floor thinking that I had made a very major contribution to the winning of this battle.

I was on my way back to my office when Clinton Anderson, who was then the ranking member of the Interior Committee, as I recall, and a very prestigious senator, caught me by the arm and said, "That was a fine talk you gave. Have you consulted with Lyndon Johnson on this matter?" And I said, "No, I haven't." And he said, "Do you know the role that Lyndon Johnson has played in this? If this bill gets passed, it will be his doing, not yours." He said, "I think you'd better have a talk with Lyndon Johnson and give him the credit that he's entitled to for the interest that he's taken in the subject." And, of course, once he'd said it, I understood that that was true. But until he said it to me, it hadn't gelled.

I did have such a talk with Lyndon Johnson, and he did play the crucial role in enabling us to pass the bill in the Senate. It went on to die in the House. We never did build the dam that should have been built in the Hells Canyon, but he did his part, and it was one of those masterful jobs for which he became famous as majority leader.

M: One of the popular accounts of his majority leadership technique, that Rowland Evans/Novak thing, used you as an example of the way he worked in this matter of you agreeing to jointly support the Jury Trial Amendment to the Civil Rights Act in return for this

help. Is that the way it worked?

C: No, that wasn't the way it happened. There was never any quid pro quo at all. And that really wasn't the way that Lyndon Johnson worked, at least as far as my experience goes. He may have with other senators. He never did that with me. I think his method, at least as I saw it, was a very different one.

And to put that particular story straight: When I first came to the Senate in 1957, I was the youngest member. I had no sooner taken the oath admininistered by Nixon, who was then vice president and who ironically is now the president, I had no sooner taken the oath and stepped down and started to walk up the central aisle to my seat in the very rear of the chamber than I encountered this long arm of Lyndon Johnson reaching out and grabbing me as I passed and pulling me in to his desk there, front and center, and saying to me: "Now, Frank, you are the youngest member of this Senate, and you have a great future. There's lots going for you. But the first thing you ought to learn is that you get along in the Congress by going along."

M: The old Rayburn axiom.

C: The Rayburn axiom. He said, "Now, we've got a motion here that Clinton Anderson has offered, and it relates to a matter that is not important to your state. People of your state don't care how you vote on this, one way or the other, but the leadership cares. It means a lot to us. It means a lot to me. So I just point this up to you. Your first vote is coming up, and I hope you'll keep it in

mind, because I like you, and I see big things in your future, and I want to see you get off on the right foot in the Senate."

M: So his relationship with you was a kind of a personal . . . ?

C: That was the way he approached it. And perhaps, if I had known then as much as I know now about the Senate and its workings, I would have taken that advice more to heart. But at the time, I had not had a chance to study the Anderson motion. I told him that I had made no decision on it, that I certainly would look at it and I would keep what he had said to me in mind. That was as much as I said to him. In the days that followed, I did have a chance to study the motion, and I did have a chance to talk to its sponsors. I don't mean to Clinton Anderson, but to Senator Douglas, Paul Douglas of Illinois, and others who strongly supported this motion; the purpose of which, of course, was to establish the right of the Senate at the commencement of a new session of Congress to proceed with the consideration of new rules and not to be bound by the rules that had been adopted by the previous Senates in the past. This was an effort, of course, to modify Rule 22, the filibuster rule, by enabling a majority to decide what that rule should be. I felt that this was consistent with Democratic principles; that the majority at the commencement of a new session should have the right to make that decision, and so when the time came for a vote on the motion, I voted for it. Before that, I recall that Senator Smathers, Senator Long of Louisiana, and some other southern senators had visited with me and had urged me strongly to vote against it. I gave no commitment to anyone. I simply said

I would study it further and try to make up my own mind.

But apparently I had left Senator Johnson with the impression that I was leaning toward him or I would certainly vote with him, and he never came back to me a second time and never checked with me before the vote. When I voted for the motion, I remember he was taking down the vote on a little pad. When he got to my name and I voted for it, he picked up his pen and threw it down on his desk. And I didn't see him pick it up again. I knew then that I was in deep trouble with the Majority Leader.

For the next six months he never spoke to me, which was a part of his famous treatment. He said nothing to me that was insulting; he just simply ignored me. When I was present with other senators, he talked to other senators. It was clear to me, and made perfectly clear, that I was a persona non grata with Lyndon Johnson.

Then came the Civil Rights Act of 1957, and the key to the passage of that act was the Jury Trial Amendment which was proposed by Senator [Joseph C.] O'Mahoney. He proposed it in several forms prior to settling upon the final form for the amendment. When he settled upon the final form it was one that I could support. I called him and told him that I agreed with that amendment in its final form, and I co-sponsored it along with Senator [Estes] Kefauver of Tennessee.

It was a very close question in the Senate. The ardent civil rights spokesmen were contemptuous of the amendment, contending that it would gut the bill; that the practice of seating all-white juries

would mean that in any effort to enforce the bill through criminal proceedings and to punish those who violated the provisions of the act, their acquittal was assured by all-white, non-sympathetic juries. On the other hand, the argument for the amendment was equally strong, since this was not a matter of civil action where an injunction could require compliance with the law and where a willingness to comply would result in automatic release from any penalty that the court had to impose, but rather a criminal action that had to do with punishment of a past act which could not be undone. And here the tradition of allowing men so accused to be judged by their peers was a very strong one and deeply imbedded in the traditions of the West. I believe in it. Furthermore, I think that the position has since been vindicated. Juries have upheld the law and convictions have been secured.

But the matter turned on two or three votes, one of them, interestingly enough, being John Kennedy's. And as I studied it, it occurred to me that perhaps the addendum that was needed to the amendment was one that would put an end to the practice of all-white [inaudible] juries which had developed in the federal procedure. So I suggested that the federal code be amended in such a way to guarantee that in the selection of a jury, it would not be possible to secure an all-white jury; that there would be no racial discrimination involved, and this addendum became the key to the passage of the Civil Rights Amendment.

M: By soliciting these three or four . . . ?

C: Yes, it was one over these three or four additional votes, including Kennedy's, and it made it possible for us to pass the amendment, and the passage of the amendment in turn made it possible for us to secure the first Civil Rights Bill in eighty years--the first step toward civil rights legislation that has since been enacted.

M: But Johnson was not involved closely with that amendment?

C: Well, he was involved in this way: he had his staff people working with Joe O'Mahoney and others, Senator Kefauver and me, as sponsors of the Jury Trial Amendment. I remember, in those days, that he would sit at his desk in the Senate and plot ways and means to attract the necessary votes to cut this Gordian knot. And I must say that in those days, he received practically no recognition for his effort. The pro-civil rights press in the large northern and eastern cities viewed Lyndon Johnson as a sentinel of the status quo for the old South, as a kind of Machiavellian leader in the Senate who was doing his utmost to dilute and weaken meaningful civil rights legislation. It was a great injustice to him. The kind of injustice that can only be done by those who take a self-righteous view of such issues.

M: There was a lot of the national leadership that--

C: There were always plenty of that stripe, both north and south of the Mason-Dixon line. (Laughter). But in any case, Lyndon Johnson was determined to find a way to enact a voting rights bill; and when he saw the chance to get the Jury Trial Amendment approved, he recognized immediately that this was the key to the passage of the bill

itself, and he recognized that my addendum to that amendment was what everyone had been looking for to attract the two or three additional votes. And at once he took charge; it was at this point that he took charge. There was never any understanding between Lyndon Johnson and me that I would take a role in the Civil Rights Bill or I would join in the sponsorship of the Jury Trial Amendment in exchange for his help on Hells Canyon. That's pure fiction utterly without any basis in fact.

M: As a matter of fact, the freeze as you describe it had been going on during that time that you--

C: Oh yes, oh yes. I was absolutely an outcast, a political outcast as far as Lyndon Johnson was concerned. But when I made this proposal, he saw this as the key to success in his effort to pass the Civil Rights Bill, and he immediately latched onto it, and then he took charge of the tactics for getting it through.

When the time came for the final vote on the Jury Trial Amendment, he called me over that evening and suggested to me when I should offer the addendum; and he staged and timed that drama at the end of the long debate on the Jury Trial Amendment in such a way as to attract maximum attention to this modification of the amendment, in the hopes that it would pull over these three or four undecided votes. And it did. We passed the amendment, and we passed the bill. Lyndon Johnson is the one who should get principal credit for that achievement, and particularly so when you consider that as Senator from Texas he voted for the bill, which took a lot more political

courage than it took for those who were the sponsors of civil rights legislation from the large eastern states who were simply expressing the sentiment of their own constituency. Lyndon Johnson took a large political gamble in supporting that legislation, given the general viewpoint of the people he represented in the state of Texas, and I think that that was an act of courage. I think that it demonstrates that Johnson was a very great senator. I want to say that because I did admire the man personally in many ways, though I think that his presidency was a tragedy.

M: You're on record eloquently a number of times, and I want to talk about that subject, too. Was the freeze over when . . . ?

C: Oh, yes. (Laughter). Let's go back to that. That's interesting as a study of this fascinating personality which is Lyndon Johnson.

After I had played a role in the passage of this legislation, Lyndon Johnson was warmly and massively grateful, so much so that I was almost stifled in his embrace. That was the way it was with Lyndon Johnson.

M: I've heard it said that it was as smothering to be in his favor as it was to be an adversary.

C: Oh, yes. Yes, it was. He would pick you up and wrap his arms around you and just squeeze all the air out.

M: (Laughter).

C: And that's what he did following this role that I had played in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957. All at once, I was in the Garden of Eden, and Lyndon Johnson could not be lavish enough

in his praise of me. He spoke to newspapermen, people who were doing special magazine articles, talked about the great future of this young Senator from Idaho. He dispatched me as a Senate observer on a trip to the Argentine as a kind of indication of his new friendship and embrace. He intervened in my behalf to obtain for me a seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, when I was only completing my second year in the Senate.

M: Very unusual, yes.

C: And through his intervention, he placed me on that committee. I wish that it had been possible, later, for me to support his policy in Southeast Asia, because I did owe my seat on that committee to Lyndon Johnson.

M: What about the 1960 speech that gave you such great national exposure? Did he play any role in that at all, in placing you in that position as keynoter?

C: No. In 1960 I fell out of favor again.

M: (Laughter) Oh. Another cycle?

C: Yes. This was another cycle in my own relationship with Johnson. And I can see why, from his standpoint, he acted and felt as he did. He had every reason to believe that he had launched me on my way in the Senate. He had placed me on the Foreign Relations Committee, and he had been my benefactor. In fact, even once in his enthusiasm, in those euphoric days that followed the passage of the Civil Rights Act [he] handed me a written message across the table of the Foreign Relations Committee in which he said that I was one of a kind that

was heading for great things and he expected one day that I would be resident of the United States. And he couldn't have been more magnanimous in his praising me.

So, when he, himself, aspired to the presidency and undertook to seek the nomination in Los Angeles, he had every reason, I suppose, to expect me to support him. Certainly, John Kennedy had done me no comparable favors, even though I recognized he was not in a position to give them. But I felt that it was very important in 1960 to elect a Democratic president. I was deeply opposed to Nixon and to what had seemed at that time to me to be a do-nothing Eisenhower Administration. I wanted to do anything and everything possible to bring the Democrats back to power, and I did not believe that Lyndon Johnson could be elected president of the United States. The time was not yet ripe for that to happen, and the suspicion of the South, the deep feeling about civil rights, the schism within the party dividing the liberals in the North and theWest from the conservatives of the South, could not be bridged, even by the adept management of Lyndon Johnson. And I did not believe then, and I do not believe now, that had Johnson won the nomination, he could ever have been elected. The result being that Nixon would then have been elected, which was the result that I wanted desperately to avoid. Again, it is ironic to think that Johnson's own presidency has delivered the White House into the hands of Richard Nixon.

But for that reason, I concluded that the only man who had a

chance to win the presidency for the Democrats was Kennedy. Everything else was running for the Republicans: Eisenhower was placing his hands on Nixon's shoulders and anointing him as his successor; general prosperity; condition of peace in the world; basic considerations that normally operate in favor of the incumbent party. And it was not realistic to think that Lyndon Johnson, a outherner, under such conditions, could win the residency. Kennedy, on the other hand, had very special appeal. He was a very young man, a young man of action, attractive, articulate. He was something new and daring in politics. He challenged the people to overcome their religious bias and to give a Catholic a chance to be resident. He had a certain aristocratic appeal that excited the people and gave him a chance, despite the odds, to win against a very pedestrian Nixon. And that was the only chance I saw. And really, it was the only chance that existed.

M: But this didn't sit well with Johnson.

C: No. It did not. And when I was asked to make the Keynote Address at the Democratic convention, Johnson at once concluded that I had thrown in with Kennedy. This was not so. I had not made a pledge to Kennedy, nor to Paul Butler, who was then the Democratic National Chairman; but I had told Butler that if chosen as Keynote Speaker, I would refrain from siding with one camp or another until I had delivered my Keynote speech; then I would make up my own mind and cast my own vote as a delegate and explain my position to my own delegation. On that basis, Butler

was satisfied and endorsed my selection as Keynote Speaker. Kennedy, himself, wanted it, because I think he wanted to emphasize youth in the convention, and I happened then to be the youngest senator. He, himself, was a very young man to be aspiring to the presidency. And so he favored it.

However, from the beginning, Johnson believed that I had defected.

M: Certainly a high point of the convention, I have to admit. I remember that better than the other things that happened there. I think a great many people do, as well. What about after Mr. Johnson became vice president? Did you see much of him?

C: Well, curiously enough, as soon as he became vice president, or even before that, as soon as he became a candidate for the vice presidency on the Kennedy ticket, he included me back . . .

M: (Laughter) Another cycle.

C: . . . I think with the feeling that I had a rapport with Kennedy and that he was now a part of the Kennedy team. He looked at it a little differently than he had before, and he gave me two or three opportunities to re-cement our friendship.

I must say, in this connection, that he was much more generous to me than I was to him. As my disagreement with him grew more and more basic, I found it hard to be as generous toward him as I should have been. Of course, he had the ascendant office. It's easier from that position to be generous. Nevertheless, I think that he showed a largeness of spirit toward me and others

who disagreed with him for which he is to be commended.

During that period, when he was vice president, when we had no problems between us, we came back to cordial terms again. I remember that I went out with him to Senator [Richard L.] Neuberger's funeral--no, that, I think, was earlier. I think he was still majority leader then. It was later. I went out with him to the Northwest to a ceremony dedicating a dam, the John Day Dam on the Columbia River. He was then ice resident. And I asked him on that trip why he had decided to run for the ice residency. He was suffering from laryngitis--wanted to protect his throat for the speeches that were to come--but he wrote his answers to me on a little pad of paper. When I asked him that question, he wrote back to me that he had run because Sam Rayburn had said that if he didn't run, Dick Nixon would become president of the United States, and Dick Nixon was the man who had called Harry Truman a traitor and the Democratic party the party of treason. And I suspect that was as straight an answer as anybody ever got to such a question.

He then went on to say that he found the position hard, but that he was trying to be a good soldier; that the President was a man of justice; that he was not a man of warmth--he was a New Englander--he was sometimes cold in his personal relationships, but he was a man of justice; and that for such a man he could act as the good soldier.

M: That sounds about as straight a story about the vice presidency as

I've heard, too. I think he was being pretty straight with you.

C: Yes.

M: You were speaking out publicly against the involvement in Vietnam by early 1965. Was there some event or some administrative action specifically that made you determined to take that stand?

C: Well, there were two things that happened. Actually, I'd viewed our involvement in Vietnam with deepening misgivings during the Kennedy years. I supported the policy, but with growing skepticism. Up until that time, we had confined our assistance in South Vietnam to advisors, even though Kennedy had increased the number of these advisors from the few hundred to some twenty thousand by the time of his assassination. But the role was that of aiding, instructing, equipping the South Vietnamese armies to fight. I wonder how gullible we Americans can become, when these many years later, we're still being told that we must equip and train these South Vietnamese to fight, that that is now the new mission.

M: (Laughter)

C: I wonder how long it must take. I suppose we'll had to send them all to West Point.

M: You need another speech, "How Long?" . . . (Laughter).

C: Yes . . . "How Long? How Long?"

In any case, before Kennedy's assassination, he was on a television program. He was asked about this deepening involvement of ours in Vietnam, where it would lead. And he said, "We must remember that this is their country, not ours. It is their war, not

ours. And there really is no way that we can win their war for them. They must either win it or lose it themselves." And I thought that he was trying then to draw the line of rationality on what seemed to me to be self-evident. I would like to think that he would have held that line, but no one knows. In any case, he was assassinated, and Lyndon Johnson became president.

And there followed the campaign for re-election to the presidency in 1964. I supported Lyndon Johnson with enthusiasm in that campaign. He said to the people of the country, in words that everyone could understand, that American boys should not be sent out to do the fighting that Asian boys should do themselves.

M: Sort of a southwestern paraphrase of what Kennedy had said a year earlier.

C: Yes. And he indicated, in his campaign against Mr. Goldwater, that Goldwater was a trigger-happy candidate who would likely carry us into a major war, while he was a man of the strength and responsibility who understood the futility of that kind of war, that he could be entrusted with the power, and that Mr. Goldwater could not.

No sooner had he become president, on such an assurance of the American people by a landslide vote, than he proceeded to convert the war in Vietnam into an American war. And that was a betrayal.

M: Why do you think he did that? Did he take bad advice, or had he always believed that was the . . . ?

C: I don't know. In any case, whether he meant what he said when

he said it, or whether he decided later to enlarge the war, doesn't really matter. It doesn't seem to me to be so important. Once a man represents himself to the American people in a residential contest as standing for one thing, and then after the vote does another, he should be the last to wonder, along with his supporters, why so vast and deep a credibility gap develops and why people by-and-large begin to lose confidence and faith in the presidency. This was part of the Johnson tragedy. It has done the most grievous damage to our national institutions, to the general faith that the people have in the government. I trace it back to those beginnings. From then on, he seemed to do one thing and say another. He took the military advice. He came to regard Vietnam as a kind of Asian Alamo. He came to look upon those who disagreed with him as a part of a sinister conspiracy--talked sometimes wildly about communist influence.

M: I was wondering about that. Did you lose accessibility after you became a critic?

C: Well, finally I did. There was a time when Lyndon Johnson thought that he might win back some of the dissidents by giving them the famous Johnson treatment, and he attempted that. When he finally decided that he couldn't win us back, he turned us off. This took quite a little while. To keep the Congress placated, he held a series of elaborate orientations at the White House. And following my speech in February of 1965--when George McGovern and I, by pure coincidence, chose the same day to speak out against the war policy--

the President evidentally decided to put a damper on congressional resistance and spreading congressional dissent, first, by sending Everett Dirksen onto the floor the following day to reply on behalf of the ,dministration. I think that it is fair to say that Everett Dirksen was his principal lieutenant in support of the war in the Senate.

M: And he was on the leadership as well.

C: Yes. And Dirksen said he thought he'd never see the day that the white flag would be raised in the Senate and proceeded to give a very excoriating and ridiculous address. This was the first rebuttal. And then a few days later, I was one of those called to the White House for one of these lecture courses on war. And the President commenced the lecture, in the company of Mr. Rusk and Mr. McNamara, by saying: "There was once a senator who thought he knew more about war and peace than the president. And he predicted, a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War, that there would be no war in Europe." Well, he said this looking straight at me. And his reference, of course, was to another Idaho senator, William E. Borah.

Then he proceeded to answer questions, sometimes allowing Mr. Rusk a few minutes, sometimes, Mr. McNamara, but usually jumping up and sitting them down and answering the questions himself. He was very excited that evening and really acted almost like a carnival barker, using all of his persuasive powers which were always impressive and calling upon many a folksy tale to fortify his

argument. I didn't think that I could demand equal time in the White House, and I said nothing. I listened.

Afterwards, [Senator] Mike Mansfield said to me, "Frank, I was expecting you to speak up." And I said, "Well, the President is so excited. He looks to me like a lightbulb about ready to go out. I didn't want to aggravate him any further. I thought it best just to remain silent."

And about at this point, he--the President--came through the crowd in the State Dining Room, and put me over into one corner, and then proceeded to talk to me for the next thirty minutes about the war. And again, he was very cordial, but very determined to show me my error. And he tried for thirty minutes to do this. I listened, for the most part, but at times I interjected my own point. And at one point I said, "On that, Mr. President, I agree with Walter Lippmann." Whereupon he said, "Walter has been very good on this," and then went on with his argument.

Well, everybody stood first on one foot, and then on the other, waiting for this discussion to end so that everybody could go home.

M: Right. They couldn't leave.

C: And [Senator] Gene McCarthy said afterwards, in one of his famous quips, that, "If Frank Church had just surrendered, we all could have gone home thirty minutes ago." (Laughter)

But, anyway, the next day, the President evidently called someone from the press in, and in reviewing this conversation

said to them, "Church said to me, 'I agree with Walter Lippmann.' So I said to him, 'The next time you want a dam in Idaho, Frank, go to Walter for it.'" This got out and was widely circulated and widely believed. I never blamed the President for circulating this story. I see the president as a man with many balls that he's got to balance and many pressures upon him. He felt the story would be helpful in dampening congressional dissent, as, indeed, it may have been.

About a month or two later, when he gave the Johns Hopkins speech, he called me and Senator McGovern and Senator [Gale] McGee--a curious trio . . .

M: I was going to say, that's not exactly three of a kind.

C: . . . down to his office in the White House. And McGeorge Bundy gave us a copy of the speech to read beforehand. Of course, we were pleased, because the tone of the speech was the first break, first indication, of a presidential willingness to negotiate a settlement. We were very pleased.

Then we went upstairs to see the President. As we walked into this little room next to the Oval Office, he looked up at me with a kind of glint in his eye, and he said, "Frank, how's the dam building business going on in Idaho?" And I said, "Well, Mr. President, it's just going fine. As a matter of fact, the next dam we build, we're going to call the Walter Lippmann dam." Jack Valenti and McGeorge Bundy were in the room, and their faces froze. And the President froze for a minute, and then he

threw his head back and laughed, and then they laughed, and everybody laughed. With that kind of gesture, he disposed of the incident.

M: Did you ever feel like you were getting your logic through, the logic of your cause for negotiations, for example? You say he called you down. Did he indicate that you had had any part in--?

C: No, no. His purpose, I think, that day, was to demonstrate that he was trying to do what we wanted him to do. He found himself in that position: on the one hand, saying to those who opposed the widening war that he was doing the best he could to stop it, that it took two to negotiate, and that he stood willing to walk that extra mile for peace, while he was saying to the "hawks," whose pressure he felt very strongly, that he was sending larger numbers of troops of Vietnam,that he was upping the military effort there, broadening the scope of the war, and that he had, of course, to contend with the "doves" and others who opposed this effort, and they would have to understand that he had them to consider in the balance. And so he played a role between the doves and the hawks, and he did it much the way he used to conduct his majority leadership. He did it on the notion that there was some middle ground, always, on which the majority of the votes could be secured. That was true in the Senate where you have to find that consensus in order to enact legislation. But I think the role of the president is different from that of a senator and that this was a matter of policy that could not be cut down the middle. And his constant attempt to

do it led him always to temper the military on the one hand and yet to generally move in the direction of larger warfare, reluctantly reaching out left and right in the hope that maybe something would give, some kind of peace would become possible, but, nevertheless, moving with the mainstream, and, on that, trying to base a consensus.

It didn't come with the war. It couldn't come. The question was whether the policy itself was correct or wrong. And if it was wrong, it had to be changed. He was never willing to change it. In the end, of course, he finally must have recognized that the accelerating war was leading us only deeper and deeper into Asia. We were no closer to peace. The cost was out of all proportion to the national interest, but many assurances he had received from his generals had again and again failed to prove that. And so, he changed the course, called off the bombing, reversed the policy, and abdicated the presidency. And now we're left to pick up the pieces.

M: Did his antipathy toward you . . . Are we running out of time here?

C: I'm afraid I've got some other people that I've . . .

M: Okay. Really and truly, there are a number of points about the activity of the committee--the '66 hearings, your drafting letters of '67, and the effectiveness of Fulbright, and so on--Fulbright is my senator, and I admire him very greatly I have to admit--that I would like to go into. Would it be possible sometime to schedule another, maybe, thirty or forty-five minute session--not necessarily right away?

C: I think maybe if you would wait I could see Ray Anderson here, then we could come back to it and get it done.

M: Oh, all right.

(Interruption)

M: Particularly involving the Foreign Relations Committee, did the enmity between Senator Fulbright and President Johnson play a major part in keeping the Senate from playing the role in moderating the war that it might have otherwise played, in your opinion?

C: No, I don't think so. In fact, I think that such a role as the Senate did come to play was due to the decision that Senator Fulbright took: to conduct open hearings on the war and to bring the committee to the fore in considering the policy questions that related to the war. As long as the committee conducted executive sessions behind closed doors, it was really the captive of the President and the State Department. This, of course, was the device that had been used to reduce the committee over the years to comparative unimportance in the foreign policy of the United States.

M: Senator McGee talked about the difference in senators' viewpoints behind closed doors as compared to before the TV cameras? Was there much of that?

C: I think that that is very greatly overdrawn. Senator McGee, of course, speaks as one who adhered to the President's policy and strongly favored the State Department's position. I think he naturally opposed the committee's decision to hold open hearings and to openly question the war policy, because, he, himself, favored

it. I'm sure the State Department took a similar position and the President, himself.

But, I remember the immediate reaction at the White House when Senator Fulbright commenced the public hearings. It was only at that point that the President really began to take the committee seriously. That, if anything else, was evident to all or should have been evident to all, because his first reaction to the hearings was to attract back the attention of the public press to himself. He immediately held a major strategy meeting in Hawaii and announced that he and the press would fly to Hawaii to attend it.

Senator McGee may feel that senators like the klieg lights but certainly Johnson had no particular aversion to them. He planned his own strategy in such a way as to attract them back to him. It was the klieg lights that the President feared, not my misgivings concerning the policy expressed behind closed doors to the secretaries who were uninterested, in my opinion, anyway, or to a president who was uninterested.

M: But it was effective once it became known?

C: But once the opinion was presented in public to a large American audience, once it became apparent to the American people that there were members of this committee, who obviously were good, loyal Americans, knowledgeable in public affairs and informed on foreign policy, who disagreed with the war, the necessity for the war, and who strongly opposed the widening of the war, then the general resistance to the war and the debate itself over the war began to

spread in the country. But if we had not gone out from behind closed doors, this never would have happened.

M: That's probably true.

C: Which I think is the thing that really concerns Senator McGee and the State Department and, indeed, President Johnson.

In any case, he went to Hawaii, and he held the spotlight out there for a few days, but he couldn't conduct the presidency from Honolulu indefinitely. So he had to come back again to Washington. Once that conference was over, we simply laid on some further public hearings,and it was possible for us, the committee, to get an audience. We brought the best experts we could before the ommittee--those that upheld the policy and those that disagreed with it. And we aired it.

M: Was there an effort made by the administration to keep the "doves," particularly, from getting adequate information?

C: Well, we never know what information we get from the Executive [branch], because we get what they want to give us. And it's almost impossible to know what they're withholding if we don't know what to ask for. In the case of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, we thought that we were given all of the information, but we later found out that we were not. Had we known at the time what we came to know later, I'm sure that the vote would have been very different on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. And the resolution, itself, would have been drafted very differently.

The fact was that we were not fully informed. We voted on the

resolution in the context of a situation that had brought on an attack on an American destroyer in the high seas and a retaliation against the torpedo boats that had conducted that attack. We thought we were authorizing that kind of military action. Afterwards, because the resolution was very broadly drafted, it was used by the President innumerable times to justify the very large war into which he took us and as proof that that policy had the sanction of Congress. Often, he challenged us afterwards to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution--that he was merely an agent of Congress carrying out the will of Congress.

M: While ago, you said something about, more or less kidding, the Walter Lippmann dam stories. But were there retaliations--recriminations--taken against the "doves" that were fairly serious politically, and attempts to make them, perhaps, come around?

C: Well, I can't say that President Johnson ever attempted directly to punish me politically for what I had done. We certainly came to a parting of the ways. Even so, he responded to my need at a much later date, when my position against the war was fixed, when he had no reason to do me any personal political favors.

There was a large forest fire in Idaho, and we needed federal assistance to help us pay for the firefighting, much of it being on state land, some of it on private, as well as national forest land; and there was an emergency fund for national disasters--a limited fund--which for six years had not been used for firefighting purposes, but only for disasters that involved the large loss of

human life or threatened human life.

I went to the President personally, told him about the extent of the damage, [and] asked him to authorize a special help from this fund. He told me that the policy had been established six years before against using money for this kind of disaster. He showed me a list of states that within that six year period had asked for money from this fund that had been refused for fire damage. He pointed out to me that Idaho had failed to pay the federal government on past bills due the federal government for firefighting in previous fires.

I acknowledged that we had a weak case, but that the disaster had been very large. And I hoped that he would, nevertheless, set aside the established policy and grant us that help, even though we had failed to pay previous bills that were still due and all. And he did.

M: Then the subject of Vietnam wasn't mentioned?

C: Vietnam was never mentioned. He authorized $250,000, which was more than had ever been spent for any fire on previous occasions. For this he got slapped in the face by the Governor of Idaho, who said the amount was an insult. I was very much embarrassed about that, but the Governor is a Republican and a man of little comprehension concerning matters of this kind. He simply used the occasion to win political favor at home by slapping the federal government, which is an old, usually successful, political trick.

M: In Arkansas, as well as in Idaho, I might mention.

C: But, nevertheless, that was the way the President treated me. Later,

I remember an occasion in the White House when he invited some of us down to an upstairs dinner of Democratic senators who were coming up for re-election. He, himself, had not yet disclosed, perhaps had not even reached, his decision not to run. We all assumed he would be a candidate again. The purpose of this dinner was simply to discuss common political problems. And he spoke that night to us, after the dinner in the upstairs dining room, of his desire to help us with our problems in our own states any way he could. And he mentioned at the end of his discourse that I had come to him a week or two before and that he had tried to help me with my problem, which, indeed, he had. And he invited other senators to do likewise. There were other "doves" there. After the dinner, we went out onto the upstairs balcony for coffee, cigars, and brandy, and a number of those senators who strongly supported his war policy gathered around him. He spoke to them in rather "hawkish" terms about the war and what he intended to do, and they encouraged him with their murmurs of agreement and so on.

I happened to be sitting just outside that circle; I didn't want to speak out because I would obviously have been in discord, and there was no reason for me to behave badly as a guest in the President's house. So I simply sat silently, waiting for the subject to turn to something other than the war, and he looked up and saw me sitting there saying nothing. So he stopped the conversation on the war and got up out of his seat, came over to where I was sitting, invited me to come over to the railing with him, and

we stood there at the railing, and he pointed out the planning that Thomas Jefferson had done on the back garden of the White House--changed the subject entirely.

It showed, I thought, much more sensitivity than he is normally credited for. He understood that I was discomforted by the conversation, and as a host, he undertook to bring me back again into the party and put an end to the conversation that had, in effect, ostracized me from the group.

So, again, I say the man had a capacity for generosity in his dealings with people. It was very large. He was a big man in many ways and probably far more complicated as a personality than any man who's sat in the White House for a long, long time.

M: That's what we're trying to unravel by the project you are helping us with, and you've been a great help. I don't want to cut off. Are there other areas where you had close contact with the President, which we haven't mentioned, which you feel are worth recording before we call it a day here?

C: Well, there are, of course, many occasions when we were together, though I saw him less frequently in the later days of his presidency. I suppose that we could talk about Lyndon Johnson for the rest of the day and all through the evening. But I've covered some of the highlights, and I think that, for the purposes of this interview, what I've said should suffice. At least, I hope it will suffice.

M: Thank you for your patience.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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