INTERVIEWEE: CLARK CLIFFORD (Tape 1)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

March 17, 1969

F: This is an interview with Mr. Clark Clifford in his office in Washington, D.C., March 17, 1969; and the interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Mr. Secretary, tell us briefly how you came to get into government service, and how you have arrived at the point you are as of this St. Patrick's Day.

C: The story would go back briefly to the second World War. I was a young lawyer practicing in St. Louis, which has always been my home, and in 1943 I volunteered for the Navy, was accepted and in early 1944 I joined the service as a Naval Reserve officer. I came to Washington for a brief time and transferred out to the West Coast and from there worked in the major effort of preparing the offensive that was to take place in the Pacific against the Japanese.

In the spring of 1945 shortly after Vice President Truman became President, I was summoned to Washington by then President Truman's Naval Aide to assist in his office. He had been a former client of mine in St. Louis; his name was Commander James K. Vardaman. I then came to the White House and for awhile served in the Naval Aide's Office there in the spring of '45. By the time the war was over and we'd gotten into 1946 I continued to serve at the White House; the fact is, I became Naval Aide, I suppose, in early 1946 when Commander [James] Vardaman was appointed to the Federal Reserve Board.

F: Did it perturb the regular Navy that a reserve was the present Naval Aide?

C: Yes, not only that, but one other facet of the development concerned them deeply. When I came to Washington I had the rank of Lieutenant in the Navy and between the spring of '45 and I think January of '46 I went from Lieutenant to Captain.

F: Yes, the Navy doesn't go that fast.

C: I used to tell the story that my success in the Navy corresponded to a certain extent to a young man who was head of a very large company. Somebody said, "How could you have been so successful in such a short period of time," and he said, "First, I'm very intelligent; second, I'm exceedingly industrious; and third, I married the owner's daughter!" And that's about the shape that I was in.

But I served then as Naval Aide I think from maybe January of '46 until June of '46, but really I was doubling as speech writer and serving to a certain extent as informal

counsel to President Truman for that first six months in 1946. He formalized our relationship on June 1, 1946, by appointing me Special Counsel to the President. That is a position that Judge [Sam] Rosenman had held during a number of years during the Franklin Roosevelt Administration, and also Judge Rosenman had held that position for a number of months in the Truman Administration as a carry-over from the FDR Administration. So that I then resigned from the Navy June 1, 1946, and took over the task as Counsel at the White House and served in that capacity for some four years. That very briefly is how, through a set of circumstances, I happened to end up in the White House, and why it also gave me the opportunity while even still in the Navy at the White House, to meet then Congressman Lyndon Johnson of Texas.

F: It also gave you a vantage point in seeing the formation of the Department of Defense. You didn't know you were preparing for it.

C: No, I did not, but that was one of the most important early assignments that I had been given. Even while continuing to serve as Naval Aide at the White House, the President--that is, President Truman--and I discussed a concept which he had of ultimately unifying the military services. I recall clearly when the war was over, which was August of 1945, he said we had won the war, but we had won it despite the organization that we had. And he said, "We must never fight another war with the loosely organized and coordinated War Department and Navy Department." It had been a matter of deep concern to him that we had not marshaled our forces better and synchronized and coordinated them so that we would get the most benefit out of the effort that we were making. And I started a study at his direction in early '46 with reference to finding a better means of organizing our Armed Forces.

That study and a number of subsequent meetings ultimately led to the Unification Act of 1947, which created a separate Air Force and a separate Department of the Army. It maintained the Department of the Navy. It also, that early Act, created the National Security Council. Interestingly enough, it also created the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which had not existed before, and also, and this is not remembered, created the CIA as our major governmental intelligence organization. Before I leave that subject, I might say the Act of 1947 was a failure. It did not give the Secretary of Defense sufficient strength to run the Services. It merely gave him a coordinating function.

President Truman, I think with rather rare perspicacity, appointed James Forrestal as the first Secretary of Defense. He had been Secretary of the Navy during the events leading up to the '47 Act and had bitterly and strenuously opposed any such legislation, feeling that it would affect adversely the prerogatives of the Navy. After opposing it during this period, President Truman reached out and made him the first Secretary of Defense and said, "All right, now, let's see you take this job on and make it go." Within six months, Mr. Forrestal was back at the White House saying that he did not have sufficient authority and power to make it go. He was very helpful then as we worked on

toward a revision of the '47 Act. That was finally accomplished in '49 and we had the amended legislation which created a very strong Secretary of Defense, gave him the power and authority to run the entire Defense Department. Greatly diminished the power of the individual service secretaries and the area within which they had the decision-making authority.

Since 1949 the Department of Defense has gradually worked toward the goal which Mr. Truman had in mind way back in 1945 and 1946. It has taken a long time. I give some emphasis to it because of course President Johnson also served in the Armed Forces in the Second World War and from time to time as this process of evolution took place we would discuss it and then, of course, in his capacity as President since 1963 he has had the closest kind of relationship with the Department of Defense.

F: I want to come back to this in probably a later interview and also talk about what has happened to the National Security Council in the interim and the situation you inherited when you became Secretary of Defense. But we'll save that for the time being. Right now, I'd like to find out when Congressman Johnson first sort of seeped into your consciousness and how your own personal relationship developed.

C: It was a slowly developing relationship. I had not known him before. I came to Washington in the spring of '45 and as far as I can remember I believe I didn't know anyone in Washington. I came in as a young Naval officer, went into the Naval Aide's office in the White House--

F: No idea you'd be here a quarter of a century later.

C: None whatsoever. I was merely serving there because I had been directed to come in and go into the Naval Aide's Office. My plan was to continue my Naval service until the war was over, at which time I was then looking forward to getting back to my law practice in St. Louis, because I had a wife and three children, whom I had sent back to live with her people in Boston during the time I was in the service. I was hoping that we could get our family together again and I could begin to meet the economic difficulties that we had encountered by reason of my going into the service and so forth.

I would estimate I probably met Congressman Johnson some time during the latter half of the year 1945; it would have been only a casual meeting of some kind, very likely at a White House reception, something of that sort. However, by the time 1946 came and I was occupying a position of greater importance in the White House, I would be likely to see him more in the year '46; again it was a casual and only occasional relationship. By that time I had met Mrs. Johnson, and I would assume by that time also that I'd met either one or both of the daughters. Then I do know that by the time 1947 came on that we had started the beginning of a closer friendship.

I've looked briefly at my correspondence file. I find that by 1947 instead of his being "Mr. Congressman" he had become "Lyndon" at that stage. I might say that "Lyndon" is a word that I have not used since he became President, because I follow with meticulous care the use of the proper term when a man becomes President of the United States. So when I use his first name, I'm referring back to the period when he was a Congressman and a Senator. Also, I can recall in that period of '47 and then on into early '48 of occasionally seeing him, of a relationship gradually developing merely because he was becoming an important member of the Legislative Branch and I was serving on the staff of the President in the Executive Branch. Nothing more than that I would say developed until--I have one very clear recollection, but that came along in 1948.

F: Now, you were a member of a labor advisory group that the President set up in '46, and these were the days of Taft-Hartley Act and opposition and Mr. Truman's veto and so forth. Mr. Johnson was dropped, you may recall, in 1948 by labor who supported a quite conservative candidate just because of his attitude toward Taft-Hartley. Do you have any relationship at all in representing the White House as against the opposition Mr. Johnson--

C: I have no recollection of contact with Congressman Lyndon Johnson on that particular subject. I remember the Taft-Hartley incident well; I remember the debate that took place in the White House at the time. I remember that President Truman opposed the legislation, and I remember that I also supported his position. I thought the legislation was inimical to the best interests of labor and to the best interests of the country. I have a very clear recollection of the amount of work that I put in personally on the veto message that President Truman ultimately delivered. It was obviously his message which he sent up to the Congress, but I remember the manner in which that was prepared, the meetings that led up to it and a good many of those details that contributed to the writing of the veto message on Taft-Hartley. I do not recall at that time coming into contact with Congressman Johnson.

F: Of course he was then one of 435 congressmen.

C: Yes, but at the same time by '47 a relationship had been established because I see in my file letters going back and forth between him and me on personal matters. I might congratulate him on something that took place, he might in turn have something to say about some effort that had been made in the White House. So by '47 we had established the beginning of a friendly relationship.

F: You said a moment ago that you had one clear-cut memory in '48.

C: Yes. The memory I had in '48 was being on the train with President Truman in the '48 campaign. We made most of that campaign by train. I remember one stretch, for instance, where I figured that out of fifty days I think I spent forty-two nights on the train.

F: Incidentally, I heard on the radio in the taxi coming over that they're putting up that campaign train--campaign car, Mr. Truman's private car--for auction this week.

B: Oh is that right? I assure you I am not interested in making a bid for it. Oh, it was the most difficult, tiring, exhausting campaign--it was really murder. I have a vivid recollection when the train reached Texas, and this would be, I suppose, in the summer of 1948, of candidate Lyndon B. Johnson getting on the train. He was then a candidate for United States senator, and he rode with us for quite a while on the train. It would stop at small places and he and the President would get out on the back platform and greet the crowds that would gather at the station and it seems to me that he may have been present at an important stop or two at Texas when the President would have had an important speech to make. And I have some recollection that maybe there might have been some exchange of correspondence from back in that early time.

Yes, I note in looking at the correspondence file October 15, 1948, a letter written in Austin, Texas, by then Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson in which he says, sent to me at the White House:

> "Dear Clark:
>
> I thoroughly enjoyed seeing you and being with you on the train as it passed through Texas. I just wanted to drop you this brief note of appreciation as well as to say thanks for your congratulatory message of September 14."

I'm not sure what my congratulatory message was--

F: He probably had passed certification by the State Democratic Convention which meets after the primaries.

C: That obviously was it. He goes on to say:

F: It was a contest.

C: I do recall that now.

> "Everyone here was happy with the wonderful reception received by the President at every stop in Texas. As a result, Texas electoral votes are safe now, I do believe. I hope the campaign is doing as well in other parts of the country. With my very best personal regards, Sincerely, Lyndon."

I recall that in September when we did go into Texas, or this was October, President Truman's campaign was beginning to pick up. As you may recall, President Truman was given practically no chance at all.

F: I remember very well.

C: For re-election. By the middle of October sometime when we made the Texas trip the crowds were getting larger, you could begin to feel a groundswell of support and enthusiasm that had been missing before. And I know President Truman felt that his trip through Texas had been a welcome lift to the entire effort. And we associated that to some extent with candidate Johnson getting on the train and moving through Texas with us.

F: Now Congressman Johnson was fighting for his own political life and as you know it was a squeaker. Did President Truman call on him for any special campaigning in his behalf or did he more or less recognize that Congressman Johnson had his own hands full?

C: I think very definitely the latter. I think that candidate Johnson at the time wanted to be associated with the President's entourage, he wanted to be able to appear with him on the back platform and all. I had very much the feeling that candidate Johnson's presence on the train at that time came more from the desire of Mr. Johnson to be part of it than any request from President Truman. Of course that would apply in almost any state, because the men who got on the President's train as it went through any one state were those selected by the state committee anyway for the benefit they would get and exposure they would get in going through their state with the President.

F: As far as you can recall did the President, meaning Truman, show any more than ordinary interest in Mr. Johnson's senatorial campaign in that year? I know of course that as the party leader he was interested in Democrats getting elected all over the country, and of course he had the 80th Congress as a target--

C: I would say in that regard and my recollection is not too distinct because of course we're going back twenty-one years.

F: Yes, I know.

C: But President Truman had a great personal fondness for Congressman Johnson. Their philosophy was very much the same. They were both liberals, they were both progressives, and President Truman liked Congressman Johnson. The fact is that after the election of 1948 I can recall that from time to time Senator Johnson would be included in the small group that would go down the river on weekends with President Truman. He had the ship then, The Williamsburg, and he would get a group, usually eight, because that made the right kind of group to sit around the table, and he'd take the group down the weekend and there would be lots of good political talk and some occasional poker playing over the weekend, which he enjoyed very much and from time to time he included Senator Johnson in the group. So that I had the feeling that their personal relationship was developing and becoming closer.

F: It's trivial, but I have known President Johnson as a domino player but never thought of him as a poker player. Do you have any memory whether he ever engaged in the poker sessions?

C: He did, and I think he did because it gave him the chance to be with President Truman and to engage in the conversation that went on during the game. I never had the feeling that he took too much interest in the game itself.

F: He was more interested in being there?

C: He was more interested in being there. The poker game was but an adjunct of the trip. It provided the group, the President and seven others, he always liked eight on the trip--it gave them an opportunity three times a day at meal time to talk and exchange views and ideas. Oftentimes at breakfast he would talk as much as two hours. Everybody would come and show up in the dining room for breakfast and they'd talk about conventions, and they'd talk about past experiences and the past political giants of the Democratic party; it was really a fascinating period, and it was that phase of those trips that I know Senator Johnson enjoyed more than he did the poker game.

F: Did Sam Rayburn come along occasionally?

C: I don't ever remember his being on one of those trips. It just wasn't the circumstances under which President Truman saw Mr. Rayburn.

F: How big a role did you play in the '52 elections, in the nomination for the Democrats and then in the election itself? Mr. Truman, of course, sat it out. Did you sit it out with him?

C: I played practically no part in it at all. I remember one very interesting incident; I think it's never come out; I might put it in here; and that is I recall in the early part of '52, maybe in the first three months of '52 of having Sunday evening supper in the Blair House with President Truman and Chief Justice Vinson, at which time President Truman asked Chief Justice Vinson to become the Democratic nominee in 1952. He did his best to persuade him as the three of us had supper that evening together. The President had moved out of the White House at that time because it was being revamped. And then when that supper meeting broke up and the Chief Justice had left, President Truman told me to wait a few days and then go out and add any additional arguments that I thought that I might bring to bear on the Chief Justice to persuade him to do it. And I remember waiting three or four days and going up and having luncheon with the Chief Justice and adding what I considered to be some persuasive arguments to those presented by President Truman, but to no avail. He could not be persuaded.

F: The Chief Justice didn't want to leave his post, I presume.

C: First, he did not want to leave his post; and second, there was a good deal of feeling at the time that there might be a Republican Administration in the offing, for 1952 was the twentieth year that the Democrats had been in power and there was some general feeling that maybe the public was ready for a change. There had been five Democratic victories in a row adding to a total of twenty years.

F: Also, you had the feeling that if Mr. Eisenhower could get past the Republican nominating convention you had a pretty powerful candidate.

C: That may have been a little too early for that, I'm not sure his name had started to come into very clear focus at the time. I'm sure it had been mentioned-

F: He may not have declared which party he was with then.

C: That's right. I'm not sure it had come into focus then. But during this period then, the last four years of President Truman's term, which would be '48 through '52, my relationship with Senator Johnson I think gradually deepened and widened. It never was close during that period; I think that Mrs. Clifford and I might have been over there once or twice for dinner and maybe Senator and Mrs. Johnson might have been at our house once or twice. It was friendly but it was not close at all.

Senator Johnson had a group of old friends in Washington. He'd been here since 1937 or even earlier, since '31 I guess, so he had a group of old friends. They were men like Abe Fortas, Tommy Corcoran, Jim Rowe, and then friends up in the House and Senate, and at no time was our relationship anything like as close at those. It had just come about, really, as a result of dealing we'd had between executive and legislative branches. It had become closer in that last four years of President Truman's term, and I can remember, oh, as many as four, five, or six occasions we'd have the weekend together on the boat and that had a tendency to bring men together.

Then I left government at the beginning of the year 1950. I had then been in the White House five years approximately, and I had a theory that that's long enough to stay in government. I believe some men stayed too long. And so I left in the early part of '50, started a law firm in Washington and then during the, let's say, eight years of President Eisenhower, I can remember on occasions, maybe not more than once or twice a year, being called by Senator Johnson and asked to come either to his office or to his home to discuss some problem that he had.

F: Legislative problems, legal problems, personal problems?

C: Governmental problems, not personal. I can remember as many as three or four occasions he might call Abe Fortas and Jim Rowe and me, and the three of us would meet with him at his home. That's when he lived out Connecticut some distance then, and he would have

some governmental problem of more than passing significance that he would like--would want to sit down and possibly talk out with the three of us. Jim Rowe had had experience in government; Abe Fortas, of course, had been in the Department of Interior; I'd been at the White House for five years; and I think he felt that maybe we brought some combined background that would be helpful, and I think he may have mentioned sometime he'd like to sit down and offer a problem and then watch the cross-fertilization of ideas take place among the three of us as we would talk it out with him.

F: What problems? Can you be more specific?

C: I can't remember any specific matter. It would not be routine; he had regular advisers for routine; it would be something that would be more likely to involve maybe some question between the legislative branch and the executive branch.

F: Were you privy--you know Ernest McFarland lost in '52 and they needed a new leader for the Democrats, and after some backing and filling Senator Johnson became then the Minority Leader. Were you in on any of that talk with the Senator in the days that this was getting formed?

C: I was not. I was not that close to him. That would have been a personal matter of his; I've no doubt but what he very likely talked to Fortas and Rowe about that, who would be to some extent more in the role of political advisers. I think I would have been called in only in instances in which he felt that maybe that five years experience I'd had in the White House would be valuable on some problems that he might have.

F: This is a little digressive, but at this same time you were--you didn't show your hand, but you were active in the Joe McCarthy days, particularly in the controversy between him and Secretary Stevens. Is this a good time to talk about that? Have you put this on record?

C: No, I've never put it on the record; I can refer to it briefly; I think it's really quite an interesting story.

I, as millions of other Americans, had become outraged at the attitude of Senator Joe McCarthy. I had the feeling that, if permitted to go on, permanent damage might result to the country as a result of his efforts. And one day as a practicing lawyer, Senator Symington called me and said that an old college friend of his was in his office, Secretary of the Army Stevens, and he had a serious problem. Senator Symington had recommended that Stevens should come to see me, and I said that I would be glad to see him. And this very likely was in the year '53 when they were taking on everyone, and Stevens came to see me and was deeply concerned over the manner in which McCarthy had treated a general, who was a witness, who had appeared up there. Now McCarthy had badgered him, harassed, insulted him and humiliated him, and the man was an

outstanding man who wore one of our country's highest decorations for unusual bravery on the battlefield.

And as Stevens told me the story, I began to see here a marvelous opportunity to have a real issue with McCarthy. No one up to that time had been willing to take him on. Everybody was afraid of him, and so I counseled Secretary Stevens on a course of action that would bring about a real confrontation between him and McCarthy, for I said I thought this really was probably the first major mistake that McCarthy had made. And I thought he had made a mistake because as one looked at the transcript, which the public did not see, of his interrogation of this general, you were not only offended but shocked and revolted by it, that any one man could feel that he had acquired as much power as McCarthy obviously felt he had acquired.

F: Well, the other people he'd gone after always had an element of doubt about it, and this is the first one you could hold up as absolutely pure and clean.

C: Just as clean as a whistle. The general himself was above reproach; all of the innuendo and suspicion and sinister motives that McCarthy was attributing to this general disappeared in the light of evidence and fact when you went into it.

Stevens himself came from an old-line conservative, Republican family who wouldn't have known a communist if they had seen one, and I remember saying to Secretary Stevens, "This is really what we've been waiting for, and you have an enormous opportunity to render a unique service to the country." And I think that Secretary Stevens left my office excited and exhilarated by the opportunity because he was deeply offended at the treatment McCarthy had given the general. However, before making the decision to adopt this course of action, he consulted others, and they advised him against this course of action. I think he ended up having a talk at the White House and the attitude at the White House then was to try to get along with McCarthy. President Eisenhower tried to, Secretary of State Dulles made every effort to get along with him; in fact going much farther than Dulles wanted to go. And persons persuaded Secretary Stevens not to have this confrontation with McCarthy. And it ended up with their having a conference on the Hill and McCarthy dismissing the matter as having no consequence, and we lost the opportunity. But out of that came some of the seeds that bore fruit later on in the Army-McCarthy hearings, which ultimately constituted the destruction of Joe McCarthy, and it didn't come any too early, for the country was suffering very badly from it. In the Army-McCarthy hearings I, from time to time, advised Secretary Stevens and almost daily advised Senator Symington, for he took an active part in those hearings.

F: Did you testify personally before the Senate Sub-committee on Internal Security?

C: I did not.

F: You were spared that.

C: Well, yes, but I was ready to testify and on three separate occasions. There is an interesting commentary, on three separate occasions, McCarthy over radio and TV while the hearings were on would thunder that he saw behind a certain action the Machiavellian hand of Clark Clifford and he demanded that he be brought up to testify. And I would hear all this, and I would be ready. I would learn later from other members of the committee that in executive session when the hearing was over, they would ask McCarthy, "Well, you said something about wanting Clifford; when do you want him?" And the answer was, "I'm not ready for him yet. I just wanted the record to show it." He never did get ready for me, and I was never called.

F: You don't know whether you missed an opportunity or an experience, do you?

C: I'm sure it would have been an experience. I was well prepared and was available. All it took was a phone call to get me up there, but because McCarthy never insisted upon it the rest of the committee didn't insist upon it and so it came and went.

F: Did you talk with Senator Johnson at all about the McCarthy situation?

C: I do not recall any specific conversation. During that period I would see him from time to time, and I have no doubt we had some casual conversation on it, but I do not recall any incident.

F: Now after 1954 he was the Senate Majority Leader and that thrust him into greater prominence. Also, of course, it meant that if you were interested in something he was the person for you to start with.

C: Yes, I would say that there would be a six-year period there, from '54 to '60; '60 would constitute an entirely different approach then because then there was the campaign of '60--

F: We're talking about something else there.

C: We get into an entirely different chapter. We can haul off and get into that on another occasion, I'm sure. But I would say during those six years, from 1954 to 1960, that the relationship continued at something on the same level. As I looked back over my correspondence, I find quite a lengthy letter I wrote to him in 1955 after his coronary attack, and then I see I also wrote a letter to Mrs. Johnson at the time and had the most gracious letters back from her. I even went to see his doctor, I note in here, at the time, so that I might get a full report from his doctor regarding the severity of the coronary, so that our relationship was sufficiently close to him that I had that degree of interest. Also, I note later on in 1955 that I wrote a letter to Senator Johnson at his ranch, in which I say, "My dear Lyndon, I shall be delighted to come visit you. I've been greatly pleased at the

reports we receive here regarding your progress and the complete recovery you are making." So I'd obviously either talked to him on the phone or someone who was calling in his behalf, and invited me down there, and at the same time invited Senator Robert Kerr. So I remember, and I referred to that here, I met Senator Kerr some place, and he and I then went down, and my recollection is that I spent a weekend with Senator and Mrs. Johnson down at the ranch; that would have been in 1955.

F: And during his convalescent period.

C: That's right. I note a letter, for instance, in 1955 in which Senator Johnson wrote--, he said, "Bird and I are looking forward to seeing you and Bob November 1. Enclosed is a preview. That an outdoor dinner gong for the meals we eat outside. It reminded us of the many pleasant suppers we've had in the Clifford yard and I wanted you to have it. The best always," so apparently during the years from time to time they would have been out to our house. We'd oftentimes have dinner out in the garden in the warm summertime, and November 4 I find I wrote Mrs. Johnson thanking her for the lovely time I'd had visiting them at the ranch. Then I find again just a short letter, and I don't know what the occasion of it was, but it shows certainly the continuation of the friendly feeling, February 7, 1956, a very short note, I say, "My dear Lyndon, I have the most profound respect for your magnificent accomplishment. No one else exists who could have steered the ship so expertly and so courageously. You have my sincerest congratulations, my deepest affection and my eternal support. Faithfully yours,"

F: Now we have to find out what he steered?

C: The date of that is February 7, '56, so apparently whatever it was it had made a great impression on me.

F: In '56 Mr. Truman had at the National Convention an alternative to Adlai Stevenson's possible renomination. Were you involved in that?

C: No, I mentioned I took practically no part at all in the '52 campaign, and I think even less in '56. I believe I went to both those conventions just in order to keep in touch, to see old friends, and one thing and another. Well, Senator Kerr and I were very good friends then, and I think that he and I went to both of those together, perhaps even stayed together.

F: Senator Kerr is a source I'm sorry I missed.

C: Oh, yes, oh, he was a pistol.

F: In '57 you had passed the first Civil Rights Act in eighty-two years, and it was controversial then and some controversy continues, so that Senate Majority Leader Johnson did seek your advice on some of the provisions, most particularly the so-called

Part III which dealt with whether the Attorney General should institute action, civil action, against civil rights violators or whether he should wait to be invited. Does that ring a bell?

C: My recollection is faulty in that regard. I'm looking at my correspondence file, and I see on September 9, 1957, I wrote him a letter, and again I don't refer to the subject so it means obviously we either talked about it or it was so prominent in his mind. I say, "Dear Lyndon (September 9, 1957), I am back in my office now after a pleasant sojourn with my family in Nantucket. I am sorry I was not here when you wanted to talk with me, for I'm always eager to be of any assistance possible when you need me. You performed a magnificent service for our country and our party during this last session of Congress, and I'm inordinately proud of you. There's no one else alive who would have stood the ghost of a chance to keep our party from splitting irretrievably." It sounds to me like that is very likely the issue.

F: Well, it was in the summer that this act was passed. The big hangup was on this matter of who initiates the civil action, and that was settled in the Senate when Senator Clinton Anderson, instead of Senator Johnson, I think it was, thought it would be more astute to let a Western Senator rather than one with a Southern connection introduce the amendment to do away with Part III, which was one of the things which was holding up any kind of--

C: It would appear to me from this letter that I did not take any part. I go on to say, "As it is, we stand united with the degree of unity I would not have believed possible. Every American and every Democrat owes you a debt of gratitude, and this is my effort to let you know how strongly I feel about it. With sincere best wishes, Affectionately yours." So what I am doing is congratulating him on the outstanding service that he rendered both to the party and the country, and it would appear that I took no part in it. At some stage it's entirely possible that he might have consulted with me about it because I wouldn't have been up there long. I don't think I've ever been away more than ten days in my life, so I wouldn't have been away very long. But obviously something important took place; I guess they had the final vote while I happened to be away.

F: You had, of course, a lot of strategy involved in getting this put through.

C: Right.

F: All right, coming on down, you also, I think, participated in getting President Truman's memoirs underway about 1956.

C: Yes, yes, I gave some time to that. I don't know that I came into any particular contact with Senator Johnson about it. I find here in September of '57 my writing him a rather long letter which I start out by saying, "I am enclosing a memorandum on the subject of inflation. I'm not particularly happy about it because it's difficult for me to delineate a

clear and concise course of action for a speech on the subject." Then I go on and talk about it. Apparently he had asked that I get this up, because a letter came back from him shortly thereafter: "Dear Clark, Your memorandum was extremely helpful. It came at the right time. It serves as an excellent basis for a number of projects that lie ahead. I do not know how you find so much time to be so generous with your talent and your experience. I count upon you heavily for many things and you have never failed me. You are a wonderful friend, and I'm looking forward to any further advice you have on the subject. Warm personal regards."

I greatly prize that letter, as you might suppose. It was warm and friendly and would indicate that he called on me more than I can now remember that he did. But as you can see, it's twelve years ago, they were busy active years, I was practicing law, and I think he felt that he was in a position to phone at any time in some area that I might have had some competence of some sort, and I find that this goes along. Here again later that same year, "Dear Lyndon, I enclose herewith a memorandum entitled 'Tight Money and High Interest Rates.'"

F: You were evidently helping him delineate policy in that second Eisenhower Administration.

C: That's right, that's right. He was calling on me, and he was most gracious. A short note came back, "Dear Clark, The memorandum on 'Tight Money and High Interest Rates' was precisely what I wanted. I will never cease to marvel at your inexhaustible capacity to produce sound advice and wise counsel. Thank you ever so much." And then he said, "I may not be healthy, wealthy and wise, but I sure am fortunate in my friends." So he was always tremendously appreciative all through here.

F: Did he ever in those days call you in the middle of the night. Were most of the calls during business--

C: He might call me in the evening. Then I see I write him a note thanking him--he took me to the Alfalfa Club dinner in 1958; he was one of the officers; that's a men's club in Washington, right unique. They give a dinner every year, always a very interesting and--

F: Primarily political?

C: Entertaining dinner. It's a group of men who--oh, the club has been in existence eighty years or so and the one unique aspect of it is that in this one dinner they have each year after the formal part of the dinner is over, the president of the club gets up and says the Alfalfa Club dinner is in recess and we will now go into the convention of the Alfalfa party, and we will have the nominating speech for nomination of the man to be President of the United States on the Alfalfa ticket. Then they have a short nominating speech and then a man will give a very humorous acceptance speech just as though he were at one of

the major party conventions. And everybody turns out for it from the President of the United States on down. They've had some marvelously entertaining dinners.

I notice, too, that we continued to work together in '58; I recommend to him that he read an article in Harpers magazine because I say it offers a valuable contribution on the cause and cure of our present economic recession. We were going through something in '58 that was really right serious. Also, I recall at that time from time to time I helped on speeches. I had done a great deal of the speech writing for President Truman and I note here he says in '58 at the end of a letter, "George [that would mean George Reedy, I suppose] has told me how helpful you are being on the speech. And I am certainly grateful for friends like Clark Clifford." And then he says in '58, "Dear Clark, I had a great deal of confidence when I went before the editors Saturday night, simply because the speech reflected so many of your suggestions and because you had read it and approved of it. Thanks, my friend; it certainly helps to have your advice, your counsel, and your friendship."

So the fact is that it really was rather--there was more going on there than I would have remembered independently, I think, had I not stopped to look back at the correspondence. I was obviously there at the dinner. I say, "Dear Lyndon, The speech to the editors Saturday night was very well received. Your delivery was, in my opinion, your best to date. Your voice was excellent and your presence an exceedingly commanding one. I was very proud." So the relationship goes right along. Here he thanks me for writing a letter to the Board of Governors of the Chevy Chase Club recommending him for membership of the Chevy Chase Club. Here's a rather political comment, I guess. I'm just whipping through these because I think it adds a little color to it. This is August 26, 1958. "Dear Lyndon, I'm bursting with pride over the magnificent job you did in this Congress. When I contemplate what would have happened up there without you it makes me believe that a beneficent God has an interest in our destiny. The lack of leadership in the White House is so appalling that I shudder to think what would have happened to our country had you not provided that missing leadership." Now I know I felt that very deeply. "My congratulations, my sincere admiration, and my deep affection, Faithfully yours." He really did, during those six years, '54 to '60. I introduced him one time at a luncheon and I said I thought in later years that this period would not be known really as the Eisenhower years, they would likely be known as the Lyndon Baines Johnson years because he was supplying the leadership that the country needed. And I didn't make it up, and I didn't say it merely to be agreeable; I felt it very deeply. It had become a conviction with me.

F: It not only wasn't coming out of the White House, it wasn't coming out of the President's party.

C: Exactly.

F: I've often wondered myself just how barren those years would have been if we had an obstructionist Congress.

C: Right. Then I see an exchange of letters that happened in September, '58, at the time of the death of his mother, and those are really quite nice and warm and affectionate. I'm not sure, November 8, '58, well that would be off-term election, he said, "Dear Clark, Just wanted you to know how very grateful that we are for the fine work that you did. The Democratic victory was made up of many things, but one of the most important was the fine mind of Clark Clifford. Best regards, Sincerely, Lyndon."

F: What had you done?

C: Heaven only knows.

F: You must have gotten together on some strategy.

C: Oh, I'm sure. We were together a good deal at that particular time. That would have been the off-term election of 1958.

F: Overwhelming victory for the Democrats.

C: That's right, and it had a tendency to presage the coming victory in 1960 for the Democratic party. And let's see, this is still running through '58, and I see in December 5 he writes me a note, "Dear Clark, I was terribly sorry to have missed seeing you when I was in Washington, but I wanted very much to discuss with you your ideas for a program." That would mean the new program of the new Senate coming in '59. "But my stopover there was very brief and not enough time to do all I wanted. I will be looking forward to a visit soon." Now we did use to talk about that. We did use to talk about the legislative program and the needs of the country and so forth.

F: Did he takes notes, or did he just listen?

C: I don't recall his ever taking notes. It was more of a general review and exchange of thoughts. Then I get on into the year '59 and I find that he had asked me to get up a group of persons, a list of names, as representatives of industry on a commission to investigate unemployment conditions in the country. Apparently he was getting up a group from industry, from labor, maybe from the universities to go into it. I list ten men, I say, "I'm enclosing a brief paragraph on each man so you'll have some notion on his experience and his present position."

What seems to me to be a correct analysis of the relationship was that he had a very big job as Majority Leader in the Senate at a time when there was weak leadership or no leadership in the Executive Branch and he called on different persons to serve as

advisors and I would say that I was a consultant or advisor during that time and made it clear to him that he could call on me at any time for any kind of service. And I can see through the years he did quite a good deal and I was always very happy to respond.

F: Well, now, by '59, and this may be anticipating something we'll want to get into next time, but by '59 you were getting more or less on the line for Senator Symington as the candidate for the Democratic nomination in 1960. This did not make any difference in your relationship with the Majority Leader?

C: Probably did some. I think it did to some extent. He and Senator Symington had been really quite close friends at one time and as time went on, it may have been about this time, that relationship began to cool, and I have the feeling that as that relationship cooled between them and we got into '60 and I threw my lot in with Senator Symington, I think temporarily it had an adverse affect upon my relationship with Senator Johnson. I remember in the spring sometime in '60 for instance, Senator Kennedy, whom I represented in some rather important legal problems that he had at that time, indicating that he was going to get in the race and saying then to me that he would be glad to have me on the team along with other men, and I told him at the time that I had already assured Senator Symington I was going to be for him. That Senator Symington had been a friend over twenty-five years, and I remember Senator Kennedy saying, "Well, I would expect you to be for him, Clark. I wouldn't have any real respect for a man who after twenty-five years of friendship left him." He said, "I hope my old friends don't leave me." And it had no affect at all on the relationship between Senator Kennedy and me because that was a comparatively new relationship.

But here I had a long-time relationship with Senator Johnson, and I don't know, there's a possibility that my throwing in with Senator Symington without checking first to see about Senator Johnson may have affected it; I doubt that. I think more, he knew Senator Symington and I were good friends and as his relationship cooled with Senator Symington, I had the feeling that it cooled some with me.

F: Well, there would probably be things he wouldn't talk with you about just simply because you were in a sense--

C: But here in early '60 I note I got a most gracious letter from him that he and Bird had just been accepted to membership in the Chevy Chase Club and he was writing a letter thanking me for what I had done; that's February of '60, very gracious and very friendly, and I see I respond to it and say we'll be glad to see more of him out there.

F: Jumping way ahead, do you think the appointment of James Symington as Chief of Protocol was sort of an olive branch? This is leaving out Jimmy's not inconsiderable charms and abilities.

C: I rather think so. President Johnson, in one curious respect, is a pretty sentimental fellow, and at one time he and Mrs. Johnson and Senator Symington were really very close, and I think that he was conscious of the fact that the relationship had not remained nearly so close, and I think that as a matter of fact the appointment of James Symington was a gesture to bring to Senator and Mrs. Symington's attention that President Johnson had not forgotten that they were old friends. I think your instinct on that's really quite good.

Here I write him a letter on July 19, 1960, don't quite understand--

F: This is getting right down in the middle of things.

C: Of course, here is it, sure. I say, "My dear Lyndon, I wanted to congratulate you personally in Los Angeles but a family emergency necessitated my leaving hurriedly." I remember we had a problem about one of our daughters; I think she became ill. "I'm convinced the Republican party does not have the spirit, the strength, or the conviction to meet the demands of the next four years. Our party can find the answers if the American people will give us the chance. It is an awesome responsibility that you and Jack have, but you have met grave responsibility in your life many times before and you will meet it again with courage and fortitude." That's with reference to his selection as Vice President. In July I got a note back, "Dear Clark, You will never know how pleased I was to get your letter. There is no one else quite like you. I was very deeply grateful to receive your offer of assistance. Your confidence and your friendship are two things I hold very dear." Well, certainly this is quite warm at that time, so any little period--

F: The convention's over and we've called a halt.

C: The convention's over, I went through very much the same situation with Senator Kennedy, because I'd gone out and done everything I could for Senator Symington. One week later when the convention was over and we were back, my phone rang, he said would I come and have breakfast with him--that is, Senator Kennedy. He wanted to talk over the campaign of '48, and we sat there I know from nine o'clock in the morning until--we had people waiting for him for lunch--talking the whole campaign of '48 out and also at that time I received the assignment to work during that summer on a plan of take-over of the Executive Branch of the government if he were elected in November. Now he was really quite far-seeing. Then I see my wife and I sent telegrams to Senator Johnson and to Mrs. Johnson after the election; we sent them down to the ranch after he and Senator Kennedy were elected. Then he writes, November of 1960, "Dear Clark, It means very much to me to hear from such a close and trusted friend. Both Lady Bird and I are grateful to you for your warm messages, and I hope and pray I can always merit your confidences. Warm regards."

Then he lost two friends in this plane, that was in February of '61, and I wrote him then and got a letter back, and then I find in September 14, 1961, that's when he's serving

as Vice President, I write him a note thanking him for a lovely dinner party he had had on the Sequoia, that was one of the ships that belonged to the President, and we'd gone down the river.

That concludes that particular file. So that I might, in the process of concluding this phase of it, say that my relationship from '45 or '46, whenever it began, on to the time when he became Vice President and through the period of his vice presidency which ended in November of '63, was that of a friend who was available to him as a consultant and as an advisor. We had--my wife and I did--a friendly relationship with him and Mrs. Johnson, but it was not a real close one. They had older and closer friends, and we always felt and knew that we were newer friends of theirs and that the roots of our friendship did not go nearly so deep as many other friendships. We might see them during the time he was Vice President, we might see them four or five times a year--that's not very much--that shows the friendship of that kind that exists in Washington, but because he was so busy and I was so busy, it didn't develop into the sort of relationship that it later developed into.

F: When you needed each other, either of you was there but you didn't need each other that much.

C: That much, that's right. And whenever the need occurred, each was there and available and ready and willing to help in any way that he could. However, after he became President in November of '63, within three or four days after that he phoned me and I went over; my recollection of it was a Saturday, and I went over about the middle of Saturday afternoon and we started having a talk and it went on and on and on and it was eight or nine o'clock that evening when Bird came down to the President's office to tell him that just because he was President was no reason why he didn't have to have dinner. And from then on the relationship which had, as you can see, a rather firm footing over a period of years, really achieved an entirely different image and purpose and function. He had this mean job, a very difficult and I had served as a presidential adviser for some four or five years before. [interrupted for a telephone call].

The relationship changed, for the burdens on him became infinitely greater and he needed more help and toward the end of--that last month or two in '63 and even more so in '64, the calls for meetings and counseling sessions at the White House gradually increased as time went on. And I would say that '65 I was there a good deal more than I was in '64, and in '66 I was there more than I was in '65, and in '67 it increased also. Through this period of two or three years from time to time we would also discuss the possibility of my coming into government, but we'll go into that on some other occasion, and then the increasingly close relationship and the mutuality of our working together on problems led ultimately to the change, so that by the end of '67 he was convinced that I should go into the Defense Department. I had agreed, and I think the announcement was made in the very early part of '68 and I went in shortly thereafter.

Maybe that will take care of us for our first session.

F: Right. Thank you.

(End of Tape 1)

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Gift of Personal Statement

By Clark M. Clifford

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Clark M. Clifford, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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