INTERVIEW II

DATE: October 1, 1981

INTERVIEWEE: DONALD C. COOK

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mr. Cook's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 2

By terms of the legal agreement, pages 1 through 10 will not be available during the lifetime of Robert McNamara.

You've covered some of this material in the earlier interview, but what I hoped we could do is go into much more detail, particularly in two areas: one, your work with the subcommittee, investigating the--

C: Which [subcommittee]?

G: The Naval Affairs Subcommittee during World War II.

C: Oh, yes.

G: Secondly, that trip to Europe in May and June of 1945.

C: Yes.

G: I want to start by asking you why you feel that your particular talents were sought by Congressman Johnson?

C: Well, when I first went as counsel to the Senator's subcommittee of the House Naval Affairs Committee, I was in the public utilities division of the Securities and Exchange Commission. I did not prior to that know the President. However, I was known to a succession of chairmen of the commission, and it happened that one of them, a man by the name of Ganson Purcell, who was then chairman, was I think I could say a fairly close friend of Justice [William O.] Douglas, who as you know was one of the early chairmen of the SEC and who was put on the Supreme Court by President Roosevelt in gratitude for the fact that it was while Douglas was chairman of the SEC that the commission uncovered the New York Stock Exchange scandal involving Richard Whitney, who systematically looted the stock exchange welfare fund in order to maintain his own rather elaborate establishment and position.

Whitney had a brother who was a Morgan partner, and for a long time had been one of the important figures at the New York Stock Exchange. When Whitney was discovered for what he was and was doing and later sent to jail, Roosevelt, who had had a lot of trouble with Wall Street generally, saw this as breaking the back of the Wall Street resistance.

So Douglas was on the Court, Ganson Purcell was chairman of the commission and I think by that time, I was probably assistant director of the Public Utilities Division as I remember it. Johnson and Douglas had become very close friends, saw one another regularly. Douglas and his wife at that time, whose name was Mildred, were frequent visitors at the Johnson house for buffet suppers and so on. Johnson asked Douglas, Douglas talked to Purcell and somewhere in that Purcell-Douglas combination, I was tapped for mortarboard and was asked to go down and see the then Congressman, which I did. He had quite an extensive interrogation of me on a lot of different subjects. He found that I knew accounting, that I was a lawyer, that I was skilled in the financial field, and he thought I gave him a pretty broad coverage.

He was concerned, however, about the fact that I was not in the service. I told him how right after Pearl Harbor I had gone over to the Navy Department and tried to enlist and I talked to half a dozen different people over there and I finally ended up with a lieutenant (j.g.) and was ushered out the front door. They had a lot of other better candidates than I was. I ought to be fair

about it; I have always been very nearsighted and any test I'd ever get, of course, it was so bad they'd throw me out. It's true, there was a lot of work that could be done behind a desk that I could do, but the policy of the navy was it wanted all able-bodied people, and I wasn't regarded as able-bodied. So as a result of that, I was turned down. Then and later I responded to the draft, and I was turned down a second time for the same reason. The President didn't want to lay himself open to any criticism, so he asked me if I would have a third examination by the Navy Department, and I said of course. So I was sent out to be examined a third time and I was turned down a third time and then he felt that that was not any kind of a barrier.

G: Did you have any reluctance to leave your own position with the SEC and go with that subcommittee?

C: Well, I was torn. On the one hand, I was making excellent progress within the commission and I didn't want to interrupt that. On the other hand, as an employee of the commission, right from the beginning I had done a great deal of investigative activity and I felt I could do the job for him, and he really sold me on the idea that this was something that was in the public interest and ought to be done. And I was a little sensitive about the fact that I was of military age, not in the service, and I have to say to you that the Congressman got the idea across to me that I owed the country some service. So I felt that I probably did.

G: How were the other staff members of the subcommittee chosen?

C: Well, they were chosen in a very interesting way. Almost every one of them was then on active service in the navy. What we did was the Chairman prepared a list of individuals that he knew, knew well, had confidence in; I prepared a list of people who were known to me in the service, had background at the SEC, and then from this list we picked a group. The President then got hold of I don't know whether it was Frank Knox that he talked to--who was then the secretary--or [James] Forrestal, who I believe was then the under secretary or he might even have gone directly to Randall Jacobs, who was the head of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. They called it in shorthand BuPers. But in any event, he asked for these men and the navy issued immediately proceed orders, and in a matter of twenty-four hours or a little more they were all assembled in Washington and told what their assignment was going to be.

G: Did all of you work on the same investigations at once or were there several going on at the same time?

C: In the early stage we were all working on a major one. Later we had a number going on simultaneously and there were various assignments then.

G: Do you recall the first major [investigation]?

C: Yes. The one that was by far the largest, most important, most significant was an investigation into the circumstances under which the Navy Department had entered into a contract with Standard Oil of California with respect to the exploitation of the Elk Hills Naval Petroleum Reserve.

G: What was the genesis of this investigation? How did it come to your attention?

C: I, in trying to get the thing started, asked for various types of documents and also for the right to interview some of the naval officers who were on duty in Washington. I ran across, in this connection, I think he was a lieutenant and I seem to recall his name was Smith. I ran across the Elk Hills contract and then talked to Smith, and lo and behold it developed that there had been great controversy within the Navy Department itself on this contract. Smith, if I have the name correctly, was the young naval officer who took this contract apart and reached the conclusion which was embodied in a memorandum to the effect that this was highly detrimental to the interest of the United States. I then analyzed the contract myself and came to the same conclusion, that there wasn't a balance in the bargain that was struck. It was too great an advantage, I thought, that went to Standard of California. And I must say that while the Congressman was from Texas, where oil and gas was king in a real, real sense, along with cattle and cotton, but oil and gas particularly, he didn't flinch from doing what needed to be done.

I personally wrote that report for the committee. It was approved by the subcommittee and it thereafter was approved by the full committee. If I remember correctly, the full committee had a counsel, a chief counsel. I think his name was Robert Kline, Bob Kline. He was a man who was a lawyer and at one time was with the

SEC. For some reason or other, Carl Vinson did not want the Kline group to deal with this matter. Therefore, so far as the handling of the Elk Hills matter was concerned, I was really the special counsel to the full House Naval Affairs Committee. Now, in this report, as you know, we made certain recommendations. As a result of it, there was new legislation introduced and a new contract entered into, and we were all very well satisfied with those results.

G: Was the contract initially a question, do you think, of poor judgment or poor business sense, or rather a case of just throwing money to the oil company?

C: No, I think it was just handled by people who were service people and were not skilled in the evaluation of these complex matters.

G: I have the impression that in later years that President Johnson saw this as a minor Republican scandal.

C: That's a new thought to me.

G: You didn't see that?

C: I didn't see that at all. I always thought of it as an example of what happens when you have people who don't know a field entering into complicated contracts with people who know it inside out. Now, Standard of California was very, very ably represented by counsel. I believe the firm was Madison and Sutro [?]. But that could be verified, and they knew what they were doing.

G: Was there ever a situation during the investigation where your subcommittee confronted the law firm or the oil company?

C: No. I never did. I can't tell you whether the Congressman ever had any meetings with officials of Standard of Cal. or not, but I never did. I didn't need to because I was simply assembling the facts, analyzing them and making recommendations, not on the basis of how they came to be, but on the basis of what they were.

G: Are there any other contracts of significance that you investigated?

C: No. That was the largest, most important single contract that we really made the subject of committee scrutiny.

G: How about the navy's utilization of personnel?

C: Well, we paid quite a bit of attention to that, and our feeling was that there was a tremendous failure on the part of the navy to properly utilize the personnel that they had.

G: Was this related at all to your own experience where they had turned down someone who was qualified to hold many jobs in the navy but--?

C: Well, I don't want to have this rest on what happened to me, but I believe that there was a case involving [Irving] Goldberg, later Judge Goldberg, and I think that he was drafted into the navy--he was a superb lawyer, no question about that--and I think for a considerable period of time he was hauling bedpans around in a naval hospital. So there I've given you the name of a man still alive and an event that I'm sure took place and you could verify it by talking to Judge Goldberg. There were other cases, but that's a specific one that I know of personally, know the man, know the episode. But this was widespread. I suppose where you're dealing with very large amounts of numbers of personnel it's inevitable.

But we thought with all of the means they had, all of the records they had, they could have had a much better utilization of personnel.

G: How did you proceed to improve this situation?

C: Well, raised Cain about it. All you can do, really, with a department of that kind, size, is lay out what you've found and make recommendations and then have them either accept or reject those recommendations, and if they reject them, you want to know why, and if they accept them, you want to know when they're going to carry them out. That's about the best that you can do.

I want to advert to one problem that we ran into. There were a lot of conflicts, if you will, between bureaus. I've forgotten all the bureaus, but the Bureau of Naval Personnel is one, there was a Bureau of Ships, so on and so on. Oftentimes there would be a matter that would fall under the cognizance of a particular bureau and [because of] the failure of the bureau to take certain action, or the taking of certain actions that were detrimental to whatever matter was involved, you'd try to do something about it. And it would finally lead you to the conclusion that there ought to be a reallocation of functions within the department. Then I learned what I had not theretofore known: the functions of the bureaus within the Navy Department at that time--I don't know if it's been changed--were actually determined by statute and, my gosh, there was nothing you could do about the reorganization without having massive legislation. I have a hunch there's a lot of that yet today.

G: Did you attempt then to work on the legislative front and change some of the statutes?

C: Well, we always tried to put pressure on through whoever was the secretary. When Frank Knox was there, we put a lot of pressure on him; when Forrestal was there, we did the same thing. The theory being that obviously the secretaries had the ear of the President, and the secretaries had the responsibility for the departments and the appropriations and if you could put the arm on the secretaries, you had the best possibilities of getting the admirals to do what needed to be done.

G: Did the Navy Department resent this sort of investigation of their operation?

C: Well, I think they had mixed feelings. Normally you run into a situation in which the secretary himself had been wanting to do certain things but he could never get it done because he didn't have really the power over the bureaus. The bureau chiefs--like, hell, when Randall Jacobs was head of BuPers, there was no man in America who could do anything with Jacobs except Carl Vinson, and when Admiral [W. H. P.] Blandy--I think they called him Spike Blandy--was head of his bureau, it was either Ships or Ordnance, by God, there was no man alive who could do anything with Blandy except maybe Carl Vinson, who was the top admiral of them all.

Now, to that extent, just as we would try to use the Secretary to put the arm on the admirals, the Secretary would quite often try to use us as the basis for enabling him to accomplish something with

the admirals that he thought ought to be done. Of course, to the extent that we believed in the position of the Secretary, we cooperated with him very, very closely. I had many, many talks with--not with Knox. I had Knox on the stand, but I had talks over at the Navy Department with Forrestal, and he was a very able, very helpful man. Early in the game, Forrestal had created within the Navy Department a group called the Procurement Legal Division. And why did he do it? He did it because he felt the people in the service did not have the skills and the know-how to enter into these enormous contracts. And you know, he was right. What happened in Elk Hills is the best example of how wise he was in creating the bureau. He put at the head of it a distinguished New York lawyer by the name of Struve Hensel--I think it's H-E-N-S-E-L--who did a fabulous job as head of that division and later I think became, I don't know, assistant secretary, under secretary, something like that.

G: Did Congressman Johnson ever go to President Roosevelt to get a policy implemented with regard to the navy?

C: He might have, but I would have no knowledge of that.

G: Any insight on the relationship between Johnson and Forrestal?

C: Good, yes, good. And Forrestal was extremely cooperative, very helpful. Forrestal is an example of what I said earlier. There were a lot of things that Forrestal knew were wrong in the navy, but he couldn't do anything. I remember one day we were talking about something, and I was pushing him pretty hard about, by God,

forcing the admirals to do something. And he said, "Look. All I can do is try to persuade them. I don't have the power to make them do it." He said, "If they don't do it, I can't take them out and shoot them." I'll always remember that conversation. So what he was saying was, "Look. I'll go all the way, do what I can, but remember, in the final analysis I don't have the power." This is where Carl Vinson came in.

G: How much of Congressman Johnson's day during this period was occupied with that subcommittee?

C: Well, my recollection is that his days were largely occupied with other things except when we were holding hearings, and then of course he'd preside at the hearings. But I used to meet with him almost every day at the end of the day, five o'clock, five-thirty, and at that time I didn't have any life of my own. I was working during the day with the staff and during the night with the Congressman.

G: Was this primarily briefing him on what you had [been working on]?

C: Yes, keeping him up-to-date on. . . . He always wanted to know all the details of what was going on.

G: Did he show a facility for grasping the implications of the things that you [were working on]?

C: Just incredible. Just incredible it would come so fast. He had deep insights, great intuition; he could cut through all of the garbage and get right to the heart of the matter. Uncanny. That's one of the great things I learned from him. Really, with everything that you have to deal, when you get into it, you'll always find one

or two or three central points and if you focus on those, you're then really making the approach to finding the answers. Many people are distracted and they go off in all kinds of different directions, but he had an instinct for the jugular.

G: He also explored a lot of the shipbuilding programs around the country.

C: Oh, yes.

G: Do you recall any trips that you might have taken with him? In Houston or--?

C: Yes, I remember. I've forgotten now exactly what it is they were building down there, but they had a big shipbuilding program going on, and I know that I was down there and spent a lot of time in connection with an investigation there. There must be a committee report on it someplace.

G: I think there absenteeism was a major problem as far as the shipbuilders were concerned.

C: This one is a little vague in my mind now.

G: Anything on the Brooklyn Shipyard? I think you visited that.

C: I don't recall that.

G: Or the Newport Torpedo Station?

C: Probably some people on the staff; I don't think I personally visited either one of those.

G: I know that you did go to Corpus [Christi] to the naval air station there.

C: Oh, spent a lot of time in Corpus at the Naval Air Training Center.

G: But he went along also on that.

C: Oh, yes, yes.

G: Can you recall that visit in particular and give me the details of it?

C: There must be a report on this, too, but as I recall, the particular reason that brought us down there was there had been quite a number of very bad accidents involving young men who had gone into the service who were learning to fly. I think they were being trained on some very light aircraft. I seem to recall they were spoken of generally as Yellow Perils. But there were some terrible accidents, mostly in connection with landings. The principal purpose for going down there was to try and find out what in God's name was going on to produce this high accident rate. I visited their medical facilities and, oh, gosh, I'll always remember seeing one young fellow who had crashed and his whole face was literally smashed in. Yes, I remember that.

G: Did Congressman Johnson take an active role in this himself?

C: He went down there, and he introduced me to all of the top people that I'd have to be dealing with, and then he returned to Washington. But he followed that very, very closely because obviously this was a Texas matter. Wherever there were Texas matters, he paid very close attention, but I can tell you that he never in any way ever sought to influence our judgment or to influence the contents of a report that we would write. I know that because I either wrote the entire report, as I did in Elk Hills, or later when we had a

bigger staff and were turning out a lot, there never was a report issued that I did not personally make the final revisions on every one.

G: Was it his policy to give the Navy Department a chance to look over the report before it was submitted?

C: Yes. Not in every case, but in a lot of cases, they were given an opportunity to look at something and give us their comments. But not on everything. That was not done, for example, in connection with the Elk Hills report.

G: Why was that?

C: Well, I think that, as I remember it, the factual report was so good that there wasn't really anything they could controvert.

G: Let me just ask you about some extraneous matters. Do you recall any of the details of Congressman Johnson's defense of Walter Winchell?

C: No.

G: Perhaps [it] took place prior to your service.

C. No. That I'm not familiar with it.

G: Anything on the Dutch Harbor, Alaska matter?

C: No.

G: Anything on this dispute with the manpower specialist, I think his name was Paul McNutt?

C: No. No, that I'm not familiar with.

G: How about the Work or Fight Bill that he promoted during this period?

C: No, I had no contact with that either.

G: Anything on the duplication of services among the different departments?

C: You mean within the overall Defense Department?

G: Yes.

C: Well, I know that was a problem, but I can't give you anything specific on that. I just don't have a clear recollection of it.

G: Anything on the Big Inch Pipeline and its significance in the supply of oil to the East Coast?

C: No. We didn't have anything to do with that.

G: Anything on the Disney Oil Bill?

C: No.

G: There were a considerable number of rumors when Secretary Knox died that Congressman Johnson might be named secretary of the navy. Do you have any insight into that?

C: No. No, I know nothing about that.

G: Do you think he would have liked to have been secretary of the navy?

C: Yes.

G: Well, did he talk about this?

C: No. Bear in mind he was a young naval officer who had had service out in the Pacific and he came back only when Roosevelt told the congressmen they'd better either go all the way into the service or they'd better come back and legislate. So to have gone from being a young naval officer to secretary of the navy would have, I think, been very attractive.

G: Well, let's talk about the trip to Europe in 1945.

C: That was May, wasn't it?

G: Yes. May to June. Do you recall how the trip originated?

C: Yes. First of all, I should say that if President Truman had taken us into his confidence and told us that we had the bomb, our trip to Europe would never have been made. The purpose of the trip was this: we knew that there was in the European theater of operations and in England vast amounts of military equipment and supplies. There had been the unconditional surrender of Germany. The war in the Pacific was still going on, and the general feeling in the country was that we were going to have to fight, bleed and die for every square foot of soil that we would take in the Pacific, that the Japanese would never surrender. They would die by the thousands before they would ever give up. Our concern therefore was that with this vast amount of equipment and supplies in that theater, how could we best get hold of the inventories of it, determine what could be useful in the Pacific, get the ships to haul it, determine where it ought to be hauled, and get it out there to be used in the Pacific theater. That was the origin of it, it was the whole purpose of it. But we did not know that it would never be needed out there. It was only after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and then on Nagasaki that the Japanese caved and that really was the end of it. So we had what we thought was an extremely important mission. Turned out it wasn't important at all.

G: Was it normal for a congressional subcommittee to make these determinations rather than the military branches of service themselves?

C: Well, it wasn't making the determination, it was finding the facts so that we could make recommendations to the military. And, you see, once we knew the facts and could make recommendations, we then were in a position to follow up to see what was or was not being done. But it was unusual. I must say so.

G: The trip took place something around a week after the victory in Europe.

C: Yes.

G: Had it been planned before? Was it something that was in the works, simply waiting for Germany [to surrender]?

C: Well, this was always in the back of everybody's mind, but the determination to go was made very, very fast. I think that this was set in motion by the Congressman right after, let's see, what was the document signed in the Little Red Schoolhouse? Was it a cease-fire document or--well, I know that as soon as the announcement was made of the suspension of hostilities, work went forward on setting this up, and the first meeting we had was in France with General Eisenhower and General Clay in what was called the Little Red Schoolhouse where this document was signed, and I think it was the cease-fire document. So that came up very, very fast.

G: Did you yourself have much advance notice?

C: No. I learned about it only a couple of days before the matter of making the arrangements got under way in a very serious way. That trip was greatly facilitated by--we had a navy captain who was assigned to the committee by the name of [Captain Donald] Ramsey,

and then we had an army colonel who also was assigned to the group. His name doesn't come back to me, but they were very helpful in all of these things involving the military, because they had their instructions from the Secretary to expedite and facilitate this visit.

G: I have a letter as a result of this trip.

C: Oh, yes.

G: And also a long report or memorandum. Looks like it might have been written by you.

C: No.

G: Can you recall the details of the meeting with President Eisenhower?

C: Well, not really the details now.

G: Here were two future presidents meeting in Europe.

C: Except that he was a man of very great personal charm, and in my opinion he had all the congressmen just eating right out of his hand. He did a fabulous public relations job. The man who was the more behind-the-scenes operator, the analyst, the doer, the man who saw that what General Eisenhower wanted done got done was Lucius Clay. He was a real powerhouse.

G: You met Paul Porter that evening at Orly Field, Paris. Do you recall that?

C: Well, I don't recall that particular meeting, but I came to know Paul Porter very well. He was a close friend of the President's, of course.

I don't think I was the author of this.

G: Others have indicated that you were doing a great deal of writing during that trip.

C: Oh, yes. Yes. No question about it. But this looks to me to be more likely [Edward] Hebert's work. I wrote a report that was related to the basic problem that we went there to examine, and that basic problem was how we could get the equipment and supplies that were out there into the Pacific where they could be utilized. I seem to recall that one of the things that we talked about very considerably was the putting together of what was called castor loads, I think it's C-A-S-T-O-R. I can't give you the derivation of it, but in the material there must be some reference to it. That is a shipload of equipment and supplies that all had some functional relationship so that when the ship got there you didn't get a load of something that was no damn good without something else to go with it. I recall I spent a considerable amount of time looking into that aspect of it and I think our recommendations probably included something to that effect.

G: Mr. Cook, here is a chronology beginning midway of that trip. I wish you would just look that over and see if anything comes to mind about President Johnson's own activities during that trip. If you can recall his visit to the Folies Bergere, for example, the trip to Rome or Marseilles.

C: Yes. I thought that colonel was an army colonel, but this is right, he was a Marine Corps colonel.

G: [Colonel Joseph B.] Knighton.

C: Yes, yes.

G: There was also a man named Pierre Baylly, I understand, who served as an interpreter. Do you recall that?

C: No, I don't recall Baylly. Was he in the group together that flew to Europe?

G: No, I think that he met the group over there.

C: Must have, yes.

G: One aspect that other people have recalled is the fact that Congressman Johnson would always try to find Texans over there and bring them to his hotel or wherever, take them out to dinner. Do you recall that?

C: No. No, I don't. I recall our first stop at Bermuda. I've forgotten who was the head of the Bermuda establishment at that time, but I do remember that the congressional party when we arrived in Bermuda, we were met there and then taken to visit whoever was the top British authority at that time, and we were ushered into his office. Here was this group of congressmen who expected to talk with him, and by God, he never asked them to sit down, he never offered them any chairs, he just kept them all standing there as if they were, you know, somebody who were coming in for an interview for a job or something of that sort. When we got out of there, the Congressman, Congressman Johnson, he was hopping mad. He thought that the congressmen had had very insulting treatment. Everybody was talking about the enormous help that we had been to Britain, about all the lend-lease, about everything that we were

doing, and to treat this important group in this way was believed to be a show of an ingrate. That's the one episode in Bermuda that I remember.

I recall that when we were coming in to the Azores, we were in a violent wind and rainstorm, and I'm sure some people must have wondered whether we'd ever make it.

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G: The plane you were flying in was a military plane, is that correct?

C: Yes.

G: Without any of the conveniences?

C: I seem to remember that it was a DC-4 that was pretty creaky. I recall the stay at the Hotel Rafael. While we were there one day there was a big crowd that gathered outside of the hotel, and in a very few minutes an automobile behind an escort with sirens going pulled up in front of the hotel and out stepped General [George] Patton. He had a pair of revolvers, pearl-handled revolvers, strapped one on each side, which I thought was an odd little touch.

Yes, I remember the trip to Bremen and Bremerhaven. Bremen was absolutely pounded. I have never seen such devastation. It had a profound effect on the members of the committee.

G: Do you recall Lyndon Johnson's reaction there?

C: Oh, yes, yes. Even with his background and experience, he, until he saw it, didn't realize the extent of the devastation that had taken place there. They had bombed the daylights out of it.

The weather was just beginning to warm up, and there was that odd kind of sweet, sickly smell coming out of the ruins which told you that there was undoubtedly thousands of people dead in that wreckage, and they were beginning to rot away. Bremerhaven, we saw the submarine pens and I think we could have bombed those all day long and never penetrated the concrete protection they had.

I think this is incomplete in one particular. While we were in Paris, a trip was set up to go into Germany to see firsthand the concentration camps. Congressman Johnson was a little indisposed, and he did not go. He asked me if I would stay behind and stay with him, and there were a lot of things he wanted to talk about. So I think all the members of the party except the Congressman and I went into Germany to look at a concentration camp, but we did not go.

G: That was Dachau?

C: I've forgotten which one it was.

G: What did you do instead of going? What matters did you discuss?

C: Well, we largely discussed a matter which he raised with me, and that is he told me that President Truman was going to appoint Tom Clark attorney general and he also told me that Mr. Clark was a very gregarious, very friendly, very accommodating person, and he and Sam Rayburn--

(Interruption)

The Congressman told me of this impending appointment, and what a wonderful, accommodating person Tom Clark was. He also told me

that he and the Speaker were very concerned that there were over in the Justice Department a lot of curve ball artists. They felt that someone ought to be over there as his executive assistant to screen things on the way from the divisions and the offices, like the anti-trust division, the criminal division, the Bureau of Prisons, the Pardon Attorney, all of these things to spot the curve balls and keep any of these operators from imposing on the attorney general. He asked me if I would be willing to leave the SEC and go to the Justice Department as the Attorney General's executive assistant. That's how that came about. I told him, yes, I'd be glad to undertake it.

G: Did you know Tom Clark at this point?

C: I had met him because by this time I had met a great many people in the Texas circle, but I met him through Lyndon Johnson just as I met the Speaker through him.

G: Was it your conclusion then that this appointment had been arranged by Johnson and Rayburn?

C: Yes.

G: Well, back to Paris. I understand that Countess X was there as well. Do you recall meeting her?

C: I believe Countess X was a friend of Captain Ramsey, wasn't she? I think so.

G: Any significance of her presence?

C: No, except that I believe that some of the military people--I'm not sure enough to name who--had come plentifully provided with silk

stockings, nylon stockings, whatever they were at that time, cigarettes, Hershey bars, that was the great currency of the period.

G: There seems to have been an enormous amount of poverty in Europe at this time.

C: Terrible. The worst I saw was down at Palermo when we got into Italy where there were tremendous lines of people who would form with their pots and pans and dishes to get a ration of soup from the navy, which was turning out this stuff out of the garbage from the vessels. It was a saddening episode. But it kept them alive.

G: Do you recall Congressman Johnson's reaction to this?

C: He was appalled. I think the realities of war made a very, very deep impression on him, and I think that a recollection of those realities undoubtedly played a part in his initial opposition to going into Vietnam. That's one of the reasons why I'm sure that a tremendous selling job was done on him, as I earlier spoke about.

G: There also seems to have been a fear that communism might take over western Europe.

C: Oh, and I think there was every reason in the world to fear it. That fear was widespread, and there's no question in my mind but that but for the Marshall Plan that would have happened, and I think that the influence of Johnson through Rayburn and through others was of enormous help in getting that program through Congress.

G: Really?

C: Yes. No doubt about it.

G: Do you think that this trip, in turn, influenced his support of the Marshall Plan?

C: Oh, yes, yes. I think that that trip gave him firsthand knowledge of the devastation, the condition of the people and the political temper of the people in the area. And without a doubt that influenced his judgment.

G: In later trips throughout his life, he would always attempt to communicate with the local people in one way or another. Did he try to do it on this trip?

C: I didn't see much of that. No. But it was all there for one to see, and through the people in the military and the political people that we met, he was able to get these insights into the political situation.

G: He had an audience with the Pope while he was there, too.

C: I was with him at that audience.

G: Do you recall that?

C: Oh, this was Pope Pius [XII]. I think that the Congressman was more deeply impressed by meeting Pope Pius than any other meeting he had this entire trip. I was with him, and I saw this at firsthand. And I have to say to you that Pope Pius was one of the most fascinating men you could ever hope to see. He projected the personality that was at one and the same time austere, understanding, sympathetic, magnetic, almost ethereal and then finally no-nonsense. You could see it all. A fabulous experience. Before we went there, we bought, at one of the little shops near the

Vatican, several dozen rosaries and we had those rosaries blessed by the Pope and we brought them back for some of our friends.

G: Do you recall what Lyndon Johnson and the Pope talked about during that meeting?

C: I recall it as the sadness of the struggle, the terrible consequences of the war, the necessity for peace and rehabilitation and the drawing together again of mankind to the extent that it was possible.

G: Were the other members of the committee there as well?

C: I only remember being there with Johnson. I don't recall the others. They might have been. But this was very impressive and I was tagging very closely along with the Congressman.

G: Were there any sights in Europe that he particularly enjoyed seeing or had an interest in seeing?

C: Well, I remember we were in Naples, and we had a dinner one night given by Admiral [William A.] Glassford, who was in charge of the Mediterranean Sea frontier. Apparently Glassford or somebody on his behalf had requisitioned a fabulous villa up in the hills that had the most magnificent view of the Bay of Naples I've ever seen. And I tell you if you were in that villa and at that dinner, the variety of the food, the quality of the food, the wines, everything, and then the Admiral had also provided entertainment, music and so on, you wouldn't have believed that you were within fifty years of war. It was unreal and I thought in incredibly bad taste to have this spread under these conditions. And when you left the Admiral's villa, within a hundred yards you would have found the most abject

poverty. The hovels, the slums, you wouldn't have believed it. So there was this fantastic juxtaposition of the poverty, the wretchedness on the one hand and the opulent splendor on the other.

G: Did Congressman Johnson observe this?

C: Oh, yes. Sure.

G: What did he say?

C: He smiled. I think he said at one point to me that those military cats really live. And of course they did. They had airplanes to go out and pick up antiques to furnish the chateaus. They had the best food, the best everything that was available. Of course, they were putting their lives on the line, so maybe that's part of the compensation for doing it. But not many of the dogfaces were invited guests at the Glassford's villa.

G: Anything else about the touring around? I know you went to Pompeii.

C: Oh, yes. Yes. A junket. I don't think we learned anything there. Strictly tourism.

My gosh, I see in this chronology, it was July 1, not much after that time I spent with the Congressman in Paris, that Tom Clark was appointed to replace [Francis] Biddle.

G: Do you recall anything in particular about the trip to Marseilles?

C: No. Nothing special there.

G: How about Casablanca?

C: Yes. That again really didn't have much military significance. It was a very interesting place. As I remember, it had a stockaded area that was a native area. The name of it was something like

the Bouse-Bier, and we were given a tour through there in jeeps at night by torchlight, and it was a spectacular tour, but nothing more than an interesting experience.

G: Was Congressman Johnson more interested in the sights of touring around and the people than the naval equipment and that sort of thing?

C: No, no. I think these other things were strictly incidental. There may have been some members of the congressional party who regarded it as a frolic, or I guess it's called a junket, and wanted to enjoy the trip, but that wasn't Johnson's attitude. His attitude was that he knew when he got back to Washington he had to have a report for Carl Vinson and it better have some meat in it. And I think that I had a report ready the day we landed.

G: Was there any consideration of captured German supplies and materials?

C: I don't recall any outside of the usual trophies: the helmets and the pistols and the flags and that kind of stuff. That was sort of another aspect of what some people thought was part of the trip.

I believe that Congressman Johnson was very conscious of the fact that dealing with war matters, dealing with military matters, he had to have a solid record and unless he had a solid record, he'd be vulnerable to a great deal of criticism. He also realized that to be effective he had to have the support of all of the members of his committee and he knew each member very well, his strengths, his weaknesses, idiosyncrasies, and he was prepared to

do whatever was necessary to keep them in the right frame of mind and the right posture to that end.

G: Can you give an example of this?

C: Well, I think Ed Hebert, for example. Hebert was sort of the playboy of the western world. But he was a member of the committee and an important one, and the Congressman wanted his vote. Now, if Hebert wanted to inspect a house of ill-fame, Johnson wasn't interested in houses of ill-fame, but if Hebert was, well, who cares? The hard-core of the Congressman's committee was to do the solid work. I know that, because I was on the receiving end of that, and I had to make sure that we did solid work so that he wouldn't be discredited. And beyond the personal aspect, he really wanted to make a contribution to ending the damn war, and if it took permitting a few frolics along the way, a little tourism, some poker games in the airplane, okay, so he took it. It was all for a good cause.

G: There's some indication that he got up and walked out of the Folies Bergere. Do you remember that?

C: No, I don't recall that. I can't say that it didn't happen, but I just don't have any knowledge of that.

G: Did you go to Munich?

C: I don't think so. I don't remember Munich. I've been to Munich myself in later years, but I don't think so on this trip.

G: How about Salzburg?

C: No. I don't recall Salzburg.

G: You went back to England and Scotland, as I recall, on the way back?

C: Yes.

G: Do you remember that aspect of the trip?

C: Yes. There we were largely concerned with what was going to be the disposition of the materiel that was there, and we even began a little bit to touch on the lend-lease settlement problems. For example, there were fully equipped hospitals and a lot of other functional things, and the question was what ought to be done with them and on what basis.

I remember one other episode. We landed in Gibralter, I think it was on the way down to North Africa, as I recall, but it could have been the reverse. But I know we landed in Gibralter. There we were met by a British official who was I think a customs official. He was one of these officious people, lived by the book and he wanted to know, by God, what we were importing into the Rock. When we remonstrated a little bit and complained about all this paper work and the delay of this party for this purpose, he said that he had to do this because of lend-lease. They got certain credits against the lend-lease obligation and if there was anything here that would result in getting these monetary credits, he felt it was his obligation to get them. Now here, can you imagine this permanent bureaucrat worried about whether tariff would be due on ten dollars worth of merchandise passing through the Rock? That was another incredible experience.

G: What about Johnson's reaction?

C: Oh, God, he thought it was awful. Just terrible. And you know, it was. If this fellow had had any brains, he would have recognized that he was dealing with people with muscle.

G: Anything else about the trip that we haven't discussed?

C: Well, I would only say this. That the trip obviously resulted in failure, but for the most glorious reason that anyone could ever imagine. Our mission was to expedite the flow of materiel to the Pacific, and in this I think the committee played a major role, and it was all getting geared up. However, before anything could happen the bombs were dropped, and that was the end of it. So all of our work was worthless, except maybe some of the observations that we had on the political condition, the condition of the people, the importance of preventing the spread of communism in the areas and beginning to nibble a little bit at the lend-lease settlement problem. But so far as accomplishing anything in the way of expediting the shipment of needed materiel to the Pacific, happily it proved to be unnecessary. I was never happier to be associated with a failure as with that.

G: Well, you've discussed in the earlier interview Congressman Johnson's relationship with Chairman Vinson, but I'm just wondering if you can recall any particular examples that point to their interaction or mutual respect?

C: Well, I was in any number of meetings where the Congressman--Congressman Johnson--and the Chairman--Chairman Vinson--discussed matters of very considerable importance. I must say to you that

in all of those discussions, the Chairman dealt with Lyndon almost as an equal. Everybody always remembered he was the chairman and he had the power and the last word, but in all of the discussions, the Chairman was comporting himself not as a boss versus an employee, but he was comporting himself on the basis of two congressmen each of whom had enormous talent and recognized talent.

G: Traditionally, he's been described as running the committee with an iron hand and now allowing a great deal of input from others.

C: Johnson?

G: No, Vinson.

C: That wasn't true in his relations with the Johnson committee.

G: Is there any particular example where his opinion may have prevailed over Vinson's original notion of how something should be done or a policy that you recall?

G: No, but I can give you an example of where Vinson's conclusion prevailed over Johnson's. Remember I spoke earlier of the Elk Hills Naval Petroleum Reserve matter. I believe it was in that connection and I'm not quite sure of the chronology. My recollection is that Frank Knox was then secretary and that Forrestal came later. But it was in connection with one of our reports. I believe it was Elk Hills, but that could be determined. I produced a report, draft report, that had very serious criticisms of the Secretary of the Navy included in it. Congressman Johnson authorized the printing of that report and it went to Vinson. Then there was a meeting, and Vinson insisted that the section containing the severe criticisms

of the Secretary be materially toned down. That was his decision, and I rewrote it.

G: Was that the one which subsequently was commented on by Drew Pearson?

C: No, that was an entirely different thing. That was the first time that politics, in my experience on the committee, ever became a major issue and the first time that any congressman--oh, I think by that time we were in the Senate.

G: Well, there was one here during this period where I think it had to do with manpower.

C: Kefauver was on the committee, and Johnson gave Kefauver the right to name a staff counsel. I was the chief counsel, but there was a staff counsel, whose name escapes me at the moment, but that could be determined. There was an important question of the interpretation of a certain set of facts. I had one interpretation, and this other fellow who was a creature of Estes Kefauver, who had enormous political ambitions, this other fellow had a different interpretation. He wanted to write the report one way, and I wouldn't do it, and I wrote the report the way I thought it ought to be. And there was a real struggle--the only fight we had within the committee--over how that report was going to be written. This fellow, whatever his name was, had actually written a document, and I had written the report. He wanted his document to supersede the report. And I finally recommended to Congressman Johnson, or Senator Johnson, I think by that time--he wouldn't resolve the

question, he wouldn't choose. I realized this, and I wouldn't give, and neither would Kefauver's fellow. So I finally suggested the thing to do was to rewrite our report as the report. We'll take this whole damn memorandum that this other fellow had prepared, and we will put that in as an appendix as additional views, and that's what we did. That's the only way the damn thing got completed. Then, as I recall, the report never saw the light of day. But it's the only report where we ever had a dissenting view, and this was involved with the Kefauver politicking.

G: I should have asked you on the earlier example of Carl Vinson and Lyndon Johnson having a difference of opinion, what was the basis for Chairman Vinson's decision not to have the criticism of the Secretary a part of that report?

C: Well, he didn't object to the criticism of the Secretary, but I had suggested that some very harsh action with respect to the Secretary be taken, and the Chairman's view was that the harsh action wasn't warranted by the facts. That was a matter of opinion, and I understood that. In retrospect, I think he, the Chairman, was right. But that's the only time that--I've given you two examples. Now, the only two aberrations that I can remember we ever had, one was when Vinson wrote the ticket on the final conclusion on a major point, and the other was when Kefauver's henchman was trying to use this report that we were preparing involving General Motors for political purposes. There ought to

be the draft of this thing that was never issued in the official files someplace. Have you run across it?

G: I don't recall, but perhaps all those reports are in there.

C: You ought to look at this one. I don't know of any other congressional committee report like it. And you won't understand this unless you have in mind what Kefauver was trying to do.

G: That's fascinating. Now, there was another example where Mary Norton thought that her committee should have jurisdiction over the absenteeism bill, the Work or Fight Bill. This was one that LBJ was sponsoring and she was opposed to it, of course. She felt it was a slave labor sort of thing, and it was turned over to the Naval Affairs Committee, I think. Do you recall any--?

C: No. This one I don't recall. It may not have been to the subcommittee. It may have gone to the full committee.

G: Well, I certainly do appreciate your taking this time.

C: Well, I'm delighted.

G: I hope we can have another session at a later date on the Senate years again.

C: Of course. You know, this was a long time ago, and when my recollection gets refreshed, I remember a lot of things that if I were just told to write down what you remember, this wouldn't have come.

G: Well, you've been enormously helpful.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II]

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Legal Agreement pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of Donald C. Cook

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Winnifred C. Cook of New York City, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on June 30, 1969 and October 1, 1981 in New York City, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts of the June 30, 1969 and the October 1, 1981 interviews shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, except that pages 1 through 10 of the transcript of the interview of October 1, 1981 shall not be made available during the lifetime of Robert McNamara, former secretary of defense, after which time these pages may be made available as part of the transcript.

(2) The tape recordings of the June 30, 1969 and the October 1, 1981 interviews shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcripts, except that that portion of the tape recording covering pages 1 through 10 of the transcript of the interview of October 1, 1981 shall not be made available during the lifetime of the said Robert McNamara, after which time this portion may be made available as part of the tape recording.

(3) Subject to the foregoing, I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.

(4) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request, provided, however, that pages 1 through 10 of the transcript of the interview of October 1, 1981 and the corresponding portion of the tape recording shall not be made available during the lifetime of the said Robert McNamara, after which time these pages of the transcript and the corresponding portion of the tape recording may be provided to researchers.

(5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, provided, however, that pages 1 through 10 of the transcript of the interview of October 1, 1981 and the corresponding portion of the tape recording shall not be deposited in or loaned to other institutions during the lifetime

of the said Robert McNamara, after which time these pages of the transcript and the corresponding portion of the tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.

ESTATE OF DONALD C. COOK

By Winnifred C. Cook
Winnifred C. Cook, Executrix, Donor

July 28, 1983
Date

Robert M. Warner
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Aug 29, 1983