

INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: THOMAS CORCORAN

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Corcoran's office, Commonwealth Building, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

C: With Roosevelt in the White House, I first met Lyndon Johnson. I had come to Washington in 1931 in the very last month of the Hoover Administration, as part of the staff of an administrative agency called the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which was set up on a bipartisan basis mainly to keep the banks from collapsing with the help of government loans and other government aid.

In the course of that, I worked for a Texan named Jesse Jones, who fascinated me as a titanic powerhouse. And I became interested in Texas and the political courage in Texas as exemplified in Jones and in the men of the Southwest who did not seem to share the sense of paralysis of the northeastern part of the country from which I came. This interest in Texas was intensified when I was sent by Roosevelt to testify before the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, headed by Sam Rayburn of Texas, in connection with the big financial bills for fiscal reform in the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission] and the utility field which Roosevelt was pressing. I was particularly fascinated by the Texan contingent for the reason that while the people from Roosevelt's home country of New York and New England who were in some sense identified with the financial community were not willing to back him in the great

Corcoran -- I -- 2

financial reforms the Texans were willing. The anti-colonialism pitch to the Texans to get free of the domination of New York and Chicago finance made them the prime movers in the legislation to regulate the investment houses, the stock exchanges, and the utility holding companies in the reform to which I was assigned by Roosevelt.

F: You had Wright Patman working even back then, didn't you?

C: Oh, yes. In connection with that, I got to know Wright Patman, Hatton Sumners, Tom Connally--until in a certain sense they said I was an unofficial member of the Texas delegation.

After the campaign of 1936 I had intended to go back to the Wall Street office from which I came, but before we went into the campaign of 1936 in which I had participated with Mr. Roosevelt, I had become involved with Mr. Black in an attempt to get a minimum wage bill.

F: This is Hugo?

C: Hugo Black. That minimum wage bill, which is now known as the Fair Labor Standards Act after being passed by the House and the Senate, alone among Mr. Roosevelt's measures, because of the opposition of certain lumber interests in the South, did not get through the Congress in 1935 prior to the campaign of 1936 as had been planned. For that reason, I was asked to stay after the election to finish that job instead of going up to New York City and taking on the job of district attorney. I stayed, among other reasons, because the legislation had certain child labor provisions in it and I had kind of half promised Justice Holmes I would someday get an act in to bolster his famous anti-child labor opinion in *Hammer v. Dajenharb*.

Corcoran -- I -- 3

At any rate, I was in the Texas circle at the time of the election of Roosevelt in 1936. And having stayed on for purposes of the minimum wage bill alone, as I had intended, I soon found myself additionally caught up unwillingly in the so-called Court fight. At that time the Texas delegation that attorned to Mr. [John Nance] Garner in particular took a position against Mr. Roosevelt in the Court fight. I remember particularly Mr. Hatton Sumners, who was at that time the chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives, being reported as saying after Mr. Roosevelt called the delegation to the White House to explain his court plan message, "Here's where I cash in my chips." Mr. Garner took a position openly antagonistic to Mr. Roosevelt, and Mr. Rayburn was much more judicious in his attitude. But in view of the fact that his colleague Hatton Sumners, the ranking judiciary member of Mr. Rayburn's House, took the position he did, and in view of the fact that Mr. Rayburn had very deep relationships with Mr. Garner, even Mr. Rayburn refused to help Mr. Roosevelt get the bill up in the House first. It was thus forced into a Senate Judiciary Committee where its fate is well known.

F: I've always credited the Texas delegation in general and Hatton Sumners in the House and Tom Connally in the Senate as having scuttled this Court reform. Is that correct?

C: It is correct. In substance it is. More than that was involved, but that combination was the backbone that encouraged other people to emerge from the woodwork and scuttle the [Court] reform.

At any rate when the Court plan was all over and Mr. Roosevelt had been thoroughly humiliated, there came news of a by-election in Texas for the seat of a

Corcoran -- I -- 4

deceased congressman named, I think, [James] Buchanan.

At that time I had known there was a young man on the Hill named Lyndon Johnson, who was the secretary for a congressman named [Richard] Kleberg and who had been head of the administrative assistants association in the House. I had known through other connections he had later become head of the [National] Youth Administration of Texas through my acquaintance with another young man who had the same job in the Youth Administration in Illinois named Campbell, in turn a protégé of the famous Bishop [Bernard] Shiel of Chicago, in turn a friend of Bishop [Robert Emmet] Lucey of Texas. I had never met Johnson. But I had known well his chief Aubrey Williams, who was also a Texan, who was the [national] head of the Youth Administration. One day Aubrey Williams came to my office in the RFC Building and asked me and President Roosevelt to intervene to prevent Williams' young assistant in Texas, Lyndon Johnson, from running for the Congress for Buchanan's seat on the grounds that Johnson was so much more important to the Youth Administration activities than he would be as a Texas congressman, particularly since Mr. Williams, after living through the record of the Texas contingent in the Court fight, had a feeling that from now on the Texas delegation would be undependable for Mr. Roosevelt. It seemed to Williams so much more important to have Johnson in the Youth Administration than to have him a member of a captive delegation in Congress that Williams hoped somehow Mr. Roosevelt would get a message down to Johnson that he shouldn't run for Congress.

This was the first I had ever really thought about Lyndon Johnson. I dutifully transmitted Williams' message to Mr. Roosevelt, but before Mr. Roosevelt acted, so far as

Corcoran -- I -- 5

I know, to attempt to dissuade Mr. Johnson, there came news from Texas that Mr. Johnson was running on a complete support of FDR ticket against all the ties of the Texas delegation and that he had taken on, on behalf of Mr. Roosevelt, the entire hierarchy of the party in the state, Mr. Garner, Mr. Hatton Sumners, and everybody down. That certainly was enough to make Mr. Roosevelt feel that he was not going to intervene against Mr. Johnson's running for Congress. And as I understand it, Mr. Johnson ran the first of his field of ten, and was elected. Particularly because of his feeling that Texas had failed him in the Court fight, and particularly because he wanted to make a gesture of defiance against the people who had whipped him, including particularly Mr. Garner, Mr. Roosevelt, then going somewhere into the Southwest, picked up Mr. Johnson in his private railroad car and brought him back to Washington.

F: You weren't along on that trip?

C: I wasn't on the trip. But I was Mr. Roosevelt's liaison to the Young Turks at that time, including the Maverick Committee, the young liberals, which Maury Maverick was organizing at that time. Mr. Roosevelt, at the White House, told me about Johnson and told me he had instructed Johnson to be able to call on me for any assistance I could give him, as he had similarly instructed others who had stood with him in the Court fight, particularly Harold Ickes, and that I would possibly be hearing from Johnson. I can't remember how many days it was after that message from Mr. Roosevelt, but within a very short time, Mr. Johnson showed up at my office at the RFC with a portfolio about a dam on the Colorado River on which he needed help. And he had with him, either at that time or shortly thereafter, an impressive older friend named [Alvin] Wirtz, who was the

Corcoran -- I -- 6

counsel for a Colorado River Authority, to which post he had succeeded after being appointed receiver of an Insull company that had a half finished dam on the Colorado River. I was very impressed by Wirtz, as well as by Johnson, and I always later in my life considered Wirtz to be probably the best angel in his earlier period that Mr. Johnson had.

F: I think he was his political mentor and a great influence on him.

C: Mr. Wirtz was the senior partner of a law firm in which there was a junior partner named John Connally. The firm name was Powell and Wirtz. Mr. [Benjamin Harrison] Powell had a niece named Mary Rather, with whom I have always had the most cordial relations, who is now, isn't she, Johnson's secretary?

F: Yes.

C: Mary was acting in a certain sense under Mr. Wirtz's direction as Lyndon Johnson's political secretary. Mr. Ickes called me shortly after and told me also that he had heard from Mr. Roosevelt and had seen Mr. Johnson, and I remember advising Mr. Johnson that while the rest of us would help him, the way to sell any project to Mr. Roosevelt--who hated to read more than one side of one sheet of paper--was to show him a picture, which Johnson did. Between myself and Ickes in the Public Works Administration, of which Ickes was then the head, we managed to shortcut everything to give Mr. Johnson and Mr. Wirtz, who later became Mr. Ickes' under secretary of the interior, the first patronage of a big kind which Mr. Johnson had, that is PWA [Public Works Administration?] financing to complete the Colorado River dam.

This was important to Mr. Johnson because the contractor of that dam and the

Corcoran -- I -- 7

contractor for the work of all the Colorado River Authority was Mr. Wirtz' client, Mr. Herman Brown. There was also another contractor tied up with the Browns at that time, Bigelow or something like that. I remember that name in connection with the construction of the Corpus Christi air base for the Air Force which followed the Colorado Dam contract. I had brought down my old client from New York, Mr. [James] Forrestal, to be an assistant at the White House, with particular relationship to the Navy. The next big operation that we managed to do to help Mr. Johnson and Mr. Wirtz was to procure the Corpus Christi air base contract for Mr. Johnson's patronage, also for the Brown brothers, and for some other firm that was associated with the Brown brothers that I can't--

F: Root? It was Brown and Root at one time.

C: No, it was Bigelow or someone. There was a big, big contract. I particularly remember this because at that time Mr. Johnson invited me down to Texas to see the dam and to see this group of contractors, which is where I first met the Browns, George and Herman. I remember--although my dates are not completely clear but I can establish it from my own memoranda--I was invited down to Austin, and there was a man there named Tom Miller. And with Tom Miller and the contracting group-

F: Another down-the-line-with-Roosevelt man, too.

C: That's right, very strong Roosevelt. We all went up to some place on the Guadalupe River, another dam, where there was a sheriff--a great, big, tall sheriff--who was sort of in charge of the dam. There was a big camp up there and it was a deer hunting expedition. I'm always going to remember that because I never was a particularly good

Corcoran -- I -- 8

shot since I was a city boy. I missed my cracks at a deer for a couple of days and began to learn that the camp was being held open and the rest of the boys were staying just because it was the polite thing to do not to leave the camp until everybody had gotten a deer. So I was waked up one morning very early, around five, and taken out with a guide. I remember he told me "there was a deer over there behind a rock" about two hundred yards away and to pull the trigger. I pulled the trigger but I'm sure he pulled his at the same time. At any rate I was presented with a deer that I never was sure I shot. Later Lyndon brought it up and had it hung up in a refrigerator here for me, and out of a shame that I wasn't sure I shot the deer myself I never took the deer out of the refrigerator. We finally took it out and disposed of it.

At any rate, I was at that time introduced on the spot to the problems of the Colorado River Authority and the problems in connection with the Corpus Christi area. Also at that time I got to know fairly well on a personal basis the inside Johnson entourage, the Browns, the Wirtzes, the Connallys, the Millers, and the crowd in lower Texas from Austin and San Antonio, which included the Mavericks. Although the Mavericks and the Johnsons eventually did not wear very well together.

F: Was Roy Miller of Corpus, Dale Miller's father, in this group?

C: I think yes. Now from that time on, because of the specific instructions of Mr. Roosevelt, the consequent visits of Mr. Johnson to me, my relationships with him and with Ickes and with the triangle on the Colorado River Authority and the Corpus Christi air base contract, I became in a certain sense one of the Johnson working family. I worked with him on something else, as I remember, it was the rural electrification operation of the

Corcoran -- I -- 9

Pedernales River Authority, the Blanco--which had a larger acreage, a larger spread for a rural electrification project, probably fewer farms per mile than any other--that is, the largest electric cooperative in the country.

We did this for Johnson. At that time I was assigned to Morris Cook, who at that time was head of the Rural Electrification business. Rayburn in particular was very interested in the rural electrification business, and through that association also I got to know, become a part in a certain sense, of the Johnson relationships. I then remember most vividly when he first decided to announce for the Senate.

F: Let me intrude just a moment. In 1940 of course there was the third term issue and the break with Mr. Garner, and there was also the fact that in 1938--

C: When did he announce for the Senate?

F: He announced in 1941. And in 1938 you had a loss or rather a heavy loss of seats to the Republicans in the mid-term elections. Then in 1940 you were of course concerned because of 1) just the general disenchantment of any administration in office, that the Democrats would lose still more and I know Congressman Johnson wanted to be two things: he wanted to be secretary to the Democratic National Committee and also he wanted to be more or less the fund raiser and the director for the congressional candidates in the fall of 1940.

Do you have any [memory of that]?

C: Yes, I remember that. After the defeat of the Court plan, it was very clear that the Democratic Party was so badly divided that it was impossible to elect anybody else than Roosevelt as a successor to Roosevelt at the end of the second term. This was

Corcoran -- I -- 10

particularly evident to those of us who in the course of the Court fight, with which I personally had never wanted to get embroiled, understood that the Court fight was only the rationalization for a general revolt against what was considered by [Farley?] Wheeler and Garner and [Joseph] O'Mahoney to be a threat to their own power.

F: This was the first thing you could get a grip on, really.

C: Get a grip on. I remember Wheeler telling me this in so many words and using the example of the destruction of Huey Long by Roosevelt as a warning to the rest of them that if they didn't get rid of him, he would eventually destroy them all. For that reason I was very early sent out in a subtle way by Mr. Roosevelt, as somebody he could talk to as he couldn't talk to Jim Farley and the party people, to start talk about a third term so that the country would have been used to the idea and be willing to think about it in terms of personalities, rather than a ideological issue, well in advance of any campaign in 1940.

Ernie [Ernest] Cuneo and myself were more or less in charge of the idea of getting the third term idea out and getting it publicized, getting it talked about in time. We were of course very concerned about the makeup of the Democratic National Committee, and very concerned about the relationship of the committee to the financing of the congressional elections. The New Deal had had a very bad time in 1938. I particularly remember 1938 because in 1938 Ben [Benjamin] Cohen and myself, Hugo Black, and people who had put through the minimum wage law and were interested in legal matters had, prior to the nomination of Black to the Supreme Court, taken as our next job in cleaning up the law, the rewriting of the anti-trust laws. And the political situation of the time, the old Texas power that had helped us in relationship to the

Corcoran -- I -- 11

financial statutes was simply not similarly mobilizable for any rewriting of the anti-trust law. What we had to be satisfied with was something which in the end probably proved to be more valuable than any kind of attempt to write again the antitrust law--which is twenty-seven messed up laws. That was the Temporary National Economic Committee. And Mr. Johnson had a part with us in getting that committee established.

Also in relationship to Roosevelt's strategy was concern as to who was going to be the machinery of the Democratic National Committee, particularly with the certainty Roosevelt had that Jim Farley wanted to run himself, and that Jim, in all honorable relationship with his own ambitions, ideologically was against the third term idea. I think I normally would be against it, too. But Roosevelt and 1940 were not normal circumstances. We did a great deal of talking about whether these new fellows from Texas like Johnson or the other young fellows who survived the defection of the Court fight could be available to be in charge of such things as raising the money for or being in charge of the Congressional Committee in charge of the re-election of House members. But I don't remember anything came of it, because Roosevelt didn't want to challenge openly at that time, and he left the thing in the hands of the older men.

F: Nothing came of it, I didn't know for what reason.

C: I don't think at that time the relationship which later developed between Rayburn and Johnson was as close as it later became.

F: No, I don't think so.

C: In order to push for Johnson, we'd have had to have the support of Rayburn, and Rayburn was a cautious man! Rayburn's old position wasn't challenged in the 1938--

Corcoran -- I -- 12

F: Maury Maverick, who by then was mayor of San Antonio, having been defeated for Congress, was pushing Johnson for the job at the time, but I don't think it ever got off the ground, really.

C: No, but I mean we talked about it. But Roosevelt at that time didn't dare to intervene because he was playing possum himself to the point where he didn't want to be surfaced. He was playing a game which worked out. We went through the 1940 elections--am I wrong, didn't Lyndon begin to play around with the Senate before the 1940 elections?

F: No, this was when Morris Sheppard died and Pappy O'Daniel was governor, and Gerald Mann who had been attorney general and Johnson and Pappy were the three primary people in that special election. Pappy O'Daniel picked as an interim person that almost unthinkable Andrew Jackson Houston, who had really to be resurrected by his two spinster daughters; he just barely got sworn in before he died, and so here then was an opportunity for someone to get a sure thing for the 1942 election. I don't know about this--Johnson may have been playing around toward running in 1942 in view of maybe the age of Morris Sheppard, that I don't know. But at any rate--if he had senatorial ambitions prior to this, I don't know--this is the first obvious emergence of such ambition.

C: I may be able to fill in for you some other things.

I went to the third term inauguration in 1940 and sat in the President's box, and then went over and saw my new daughter who was born that day and quit for reasons that are very simple, though nobody's ever understood it. I was one hundred thousand dollars in debt and broke; and I told Mr. Roosevelt that I'd be back if I got my debts paid. The war came along and by that time he had me involved with the China lend-lease, the

Corcoran -- I -- 13

Flying Tigers, and I couldn't leave them. It was very important to be effective in those jobs for me to stay outside formal government employment.

But I kept my interest in politics, and I remember helping on the money in the first campaign of Johnson's, in which Mary Rather was his secretary, and John Connally, as I remember it, was his manager. George Brown was the chief fellow raising the money.

F: There were, you may recall, just to refresh you, he and O'Daniel led the ticket, no one received a majority. This was in late June, the twenty-eighth, I think. Then a month later they had to have a runoff between the two.

C: I remember at that time that we were convinced that we'd been counted out. That is, I remember he came back here in the Congress; he hadn't resigned his seat.

F: That's right. This is a special election. He barely lost. This was when Texas was still withholding votes.

C: That's right. I remember the next time we tried. One time it looked so damned impossible that if he didn't have five thousand dollars in cash, we would have had to chuck out. I have never forgotten how desperately close they were playing at that time, because John Connally's brother was sent way up here on a special plane to get five thousand dollars from me. It must have been a desperate election, but as I remember, also, Mary Rather has told me how tired and how sick Lyndon was at that time. Do I remember correctly, is this the time that he had the gallstones?

F: The gallstones were in 1948 when he ran and was elected.

C: That was the second time. That's what we're talking about now. I've lost some

Corcoran -- I -- 14

intervening time in here.

F: Yes.

C: For how long was he back as a congressman?

F: He came back then after the 1941 election, which he didn't win, and stayed until 1948.

C: From 1942 to 1948.

F: Yes.

C: Then he tried the second time.

F: Now you may have been involved in one thing. When Pearl Harbor broke, Congressman Johnson became commissioned in the navy, and of course a number of them for one reason or another went on active duty, and there was mixed feeling about this--whether congressmen were more valuable in Congress or in the armed services, and eventually Mr. Roosevelt called them back home.

C: He called them back in about a year, didn't he?

F: Now, were you involved in that at all?

C: I knew of it at the time because Forrestal told me about it. Forrestal wanted him back, because Forrestal wanted him. Forrestal had worked with Johnson ever since the first instruction from Roosevelt about the Corpus Christi base. And Forrestal was the man who wanted him back because Lyndon had served previous to that on the Naval Affairs Committee, hadn't he?

F: That's right.

C: Forrestal was the one who asked Roosevelt to bring him back, and Lyndon was thereafter always close to Forrestal, who had a very tragic finish.

Corcoran -- I -- 15

In those days I was all involved in the [Anna] Chennault business, the Flying Tigers business, and the pipeline to China. But because Lyndon had been in the Pacific, I could go to him and talk to him about the situation in the Pacific with a sympathy I couldn't get with the general concentration of everybody else on events in Europe.

I shall try to remember that later, but right now my mind's running on this 1948 election. Wirtz was still living at that time of the 1948 election. In my mind are three or four things about that election. I think it was the time he was struck with the gallstones.

F: That's right. In fact he finally had to be moved to Mayo.

C: I heard this story, and I remember that he was taken to a hospital in Minnesota. I was later to go to that hospital in Minnesota with him myself.

F: This was when Stuart Symington was secretary of the air force under Truman.

C: There's an intervening time when he had gallstones; maybe it was before or after.

F: He had a history of them.

C: Maybe it was before this second election. But let's go on--Symington was head of the air force. And the wife of Floyd Odlum who was Jacqueline Cochran told me her side of that story. They were in a hotel in Dallas. And if Lyndon had to be cut, he would have been completely out of the election. She told me about some surgeon she knew in Minnesota who could by manipulation break the stones and get them out without cutting. She had a private plane down on the airport, and I think with Symington's help brought Lyndon down a back way where nobody would recognize him and got him in her plane. She piloted the plane but she was also a trained nurse. She piloted the plane at the same time putting a nurse's hand over him to quiet him when he was squirming in pain. And

Corcoran -- I -- 16

they got him into the hospital and the operation was successful

I always felt a little badly about the way she was treated. When she came to me and told me that story when Lyndon was president and asked me to tell Lady Bird who had also been on the plane that she wanted to be made ambassador to Spain and she felt she was entitled to it. I went over to talk to Lady Bird about it, rather than talk to Lyndon, because I didn't want him turning it down directly. Lady Bird told me how sorry she was, but in the situation--Franco's Spain--she wasn't able to do anything for Jacqueline Cochran.

As I remember it, Mary Rather told me, and I'm getting to the point of my story in a minute, Lyndon then introduced the first helicopter into Texas for the big, wide open spaces. He had a loud-speaker on the helicopter and they'd circle around an area a couple hundred miles and say, "Lyndon Johnson is about to make a speech at ____ time in the middle of this circle. He'll land in an hour. If you want to see a helicopter and want to hear him, come in to town." Although he had no time left, very little time left after the operation, by the ingenuity of using the helicopter, he made up for the operation. We came up--I think it was in that campaign at one desperate point when we were so close to the edge that I had to get five thousand dollars, for which Connally's brother came up. When Connally called me, he said, "If I can't get five thousand dollars, it's curtains," I never understood how in the hell we got so close to it, but apparently at one time he really resurrected from the depths.

When the election came off, I had been in Guatemala and I was on a United Fruit boat headed up the Gulf of Mexico. As soon as I could get within radio distance, I kept

Corcoran -- I -- 17

hearing by the radio how we were behind by so many votes. Just before I got into the mouth of the Mississippi River, I managed by ship telephone to get in touch with Wirtz, who told me, "By God, he'd been counted out once, he wasn't going to be counted out again, and that there were still several boxes out." When we got up to New Orleans, it took two or three days, and then Duval County put us over.

I had had a great deal to do with Hugo Black. I had been working with Black on the minimum wage bill along with Ben Cohen at the time the Court plan came along. And then after we lost the Court fight, the minimum wage law to me was always a miracle. The only reason we ever won that was that we had an analog to Lyndon in Claude Pepper, a classmate of mine at Harvard Law School and for whom I raised some of the money in that campaign, who ran in a by-election like Lyndon on an all-behind Roosevelt ticket. Claude's victory was so remarkable that the blockage in the House and Senate just evaporated. Roosevelt still had power.

I was in the conversation about who should be appointed to the Court when Black was appointed. I was for Black because Black had been, beyond question, the most effective man defending the President in the Court fight. Even though the Court plan itself might have been wrong in detail, it faced a situation in which something had to be done! There was no completely right way to correct the situation in the way the Court had handled itself, and so it didn't make much difference what you did. When Black was accused of Ku Klux Klan relationship, I was the fellow who was assigned to do the talking with Black at a time when Jimmy Roosevelt wanted the President to withdraw the nomination, and the President himself was worried about what Black was going to say in

Corcoran -- I -- 18

his radio speech to the nation. I talked with Black on the RFC telephone. He was with Cliff Durr in Durr's RFC office above mine, deciding what he was going to say. At that time a lot of people were trying to get him to say that he [Black] repudiated the Klan and was sorry he ever joined it. You remember he didn't say that and how adroitly he handled the whole problem.

Although Abe Fortas handled the legal business of applying to Black as a Justice, I had kept Black as a Roosevelt New Dealer aware about what was going on in the Texas election. Black has always been one of my best friends. He did me a last great favor about two years ago--he appointed my daughter one of his secretaries in the Court.

I remember the problem was whether Lyndon's election could be certified in time to get him on the ballot. And the other side's game was to hold up so Lyndon's name couldn't be printed as the Democratic nominee on the ballot. Black broke that plan, the certification by his actions on appeal from a local circuit court of appeals.

F: It had been contested in Atlanta and then was forwarded from there, and Black handled it in his chambers. I don't quite know the legal procedure here; you may.

C: I wasn't there. Wirtz talked to me. Then Abe Fortas went down and appeared before Black. But now Lyndon was a senator.

F: How, incidentally, did Johnson get in touch with Abe Fortas?

C: Johnson got in touch with Abe Fortas through Wirtz, who had met Abe Fortas in connection with the Colorado River Authority, when Abe Fortas was a lawyer in the PWA and Interior Department. That is, Fortas had been assigned by Ickes to help Wirtz on the problems of the power division of the PWA.

Corcoran -- I -- 19

F: And Fortas was in private practice by this time, by 1948.

C: By this time Fortas had left the Department of Interior and was in private practice over here on 15th Street in the Bowen Building.

F: All right, we're back in 1948 and we have elected Johnson, we've certified him. And he is now senator. Do you want to pick the story up from that time and go forward?

C: Prior to his becoming senator I had had only one disagreement with him. It happened while he was in the House. I always deeply regretted his part in the denial of Leland Olds confirmation as chairman of the Federal Power Commission. I think Lyndon always regretted it, too. He'd been talked into it by the natural gas people who I understand put in the specific charge that Olds was a "communist," and fought it on that basis despite the fact that Lyndon had made himself a reputation as the effective liberal of the younger group. By this time the original Maverick group was gone and Lyndon was almost alone as an effective sponsor of the liberal cause.

Then Lyndon went over to the Senate and Jim Rowe took over. I don't know exactly at what point Jim Rowe went to work for Johnson. After Rowe came back from the war, he was made a member of the second Hoover Commission on the reorganization bill. Then he came over to this office. From this point on, as Lyndon took over his senatorial position, and as Rowe, with the war over, became available to me, I had many other things to do as business expanded after the war and as we reorganized the firm, and I more or less deputed my relationship with Johnson to Rowe. But I remember distinctly personal involvement at the time when the problem of the majority leadership came up. Was this before or after the Chicago convention at which Adlai Stevenson was

Corcoran -- I -- 20

nominated?

F: No, in 1952 Adlai was nominated for the first time and of course you had that rump delegation from Texas. You had two delegations, which is almost normal, in which Allan Shivers went up and confronted Adlai Stevenson with how his stand was going to be on the tidelands, and then announced Texas could not support him. But Johnson stayed with the Stevenson camp and the regular Democratic machinery. The result of that election, of course, was Eisenhower's victory and a Republican victory in the Senate, which meant an overturn of leadership there. This is when Johnson was made minority leader for two years. Then, as a result of the mid-term elections in 1954, the Democrats regained the majority, and he became majority leader.

C: What was the year in which [Estes] Kefauver ran?

F: Kefauver ran in 1956.

C: I remember Lyndon came in 1948. Then I remember--who was it dropped dead or was defeated? It was Scott Lucas, wasn't it?

F: Yes.

C: I remember at that time all of the talk about who would become the minority leader of the Democratic Party, and I have never more admired Lyndon's courage than the fact that he was willing to take the job when other people were afraid to take it.

F: Richard Russell was more or less heir apparent, wasn't he?

C: Richard Russell could have had it, but there were two other fellows who passed it over. Richard Russell's first choice would have been his very close friend Lister Hill. But Lister was afraid to take it; Lister talked to me about it. He was up for re-election at that

Corcoran -- I -- 21

time and concerned about the tradition that anybody who took that leadership got liquidated as senator, as was certainly the case with Scott Lucas and the predecessor of Lucas, wasn't it?

F: I don't remember.

C: Anyway Lister Hill was afraid to take it.

F: It was a position of exposure, though. You had to declare yourself.

C: Hill, as a southerner, was afraid to take the job. The other fellow who was competing for the job was Brian McMahon up in Connecticut--he really wanted the job. Finally Russell gave Lyndon the job, but it was considered to be a most dangerous thing for a fellow in the political currents of Texas to take at the time. You were risking your neck on the block. Hill prophesized to him that Johnson would lose his senatorship if he took the job. But he had the nerve to take the job. It was after that, the next election, that Rowe went down to the Hill to work with Johnson.

I went to both the conventions in Chicago and was with Lyndon and with Sam much of the time. I don't remember that Lyndon emerged as a candidate on the national ticket in the 1952 convention. Did he?

F: No, he was pretty junior then.

C: But I remember very well in the 1956 convention sitting with him and Sam--and this is important--in Sam's room while they conferred about having Adlai accept Lyndon for the vice president. Sam went in to talk to Adlai, and Adlai told Sam that Adlai had to abide by a promise he had given to Walter Reuther, to have an open convention. Now we knew that meant Kefauver. First Sam went in to talk with Adlai and came back with this

Corcoran -- I -- 22

answer; he couldn't bless Lyndon, he couldn't put his hand on Lyndon. Then Lyndon went in and asked him to support Sam. I'll never forget what answer came back. As Lyndon reported to Sam and me, "He says, Sam, you're too old." Sam never forgot it. Then we decided we were going to take on Kefauver. Lyndon went out to back Jack Kennedy for vice president and almost overnight with all of us working together, we almost did it. I remember Lyndon sent me out with orders to go to certain people, but after it was all over, Sam couldn't quite take Kennedy and he recognized--who was it from Tennessee?

F: Albert Gore.

C: It took a long time to bring Sam around about the Kennedys. So it went to Kefauver.

But I remember Lyndon saying to me, "Now run right away and tell Jack Kennedy that one of the reasons I did this for him is that we both have a friend in Bill Douglas." Jack was left, when it was all over, standing alone up on the stage, and I went up to give him that message. Now I reminded both Kennedy and Johnson of that message and of Lyndon's effort to make Jack the vice president then, even though he failed, at the time that we were doing the monkey business or doing the backing and the forwarding and the passing here now, in the final convention in which Lyndon became Jack Kennedy's vice president. Although you always want to remember that Mr. Kennedy at that time really made Johnson the vice president, although Bobby wanted [Senator Henry] Scoop Jackson, and Kenny O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien wanted [Stuart] Symington, because Jack was convinced that by God, without Lyndon he could fail.

F: Had they been cordial prior to 1956 in the Senate?

Corcoran -- I -- 23

C: I think so.

F: They hadn't been close, and Kennedy never really joined the sort of Senate establishment.

C: Oh, no, Kennedy didn't work at it. Lyndon was really working at the management of the Senate. Jack Kennedy was never a senator. He was just running for the presidency all the time.

F: Was Senator Johnson at all in contact with Joe Kennedy?

C: He knew Joe Kennedy.

F: Did they have much of a pipeline to each other?

C: He knew Joe and among other things he--there was always a pipeline. One pipeline was always the attraction of Joe Kennedy to Bill Douglas. Bill was awfully close to Lyndon in those days, and maybe he still is. They used to run around in a pack together--Clark Clifford, Lyndon, I think Stu Symington, and Bill Douglas. They bachelored around together on parties and the rest of it, and Bill Douglas had become close to Joe Kennedy. Joe was a strange guy in a way.

F: Does this go back to the SEC days?

C: Going back to the SEC days. Lyndon had tried very hard to make Bill Douglas the vice president at the time when Roosevelt picked Truman. This went back to SEC days, and as I say, it all tied together--Bill Douglas, Fortas, Lyndon, myself, all that crowd. Douglas never recovered from what was a lapse on Mr. Roosevelt's part in that there was no question Roosevelt had agreed to put Douglas on. One of the things that is interesting about Lyndon, I very seldom have seen a fellow--but Nixon's a case and Lyndon's a case--who didn't collapse inside when having screwed his courage to the sticking point to

Corcoran -- I -- 24

try to be president, he failed. Kefauver, you know, broke down. Adlai Stevenson really broke down. But Lyndon managed to keep himself together. But Douglas completely broke down. Douglas today is an utterly different guy than what he was in the great days of the forties. The disappointments, the conflicts of interest--

F: You reach for it and don't quite get it. Then there is just no resiliency.

C: And it always breaks yourself up with your wife, you know. [Eugene] McCarthy now and his wife are breaking up. Somehow you're always to blame because she didn't let you do this, or you chased around with other women, campaign workers or something.

But I remember at that time being sent up to tell about--I knew the Kennedys terribly well. I knew Joe Kennedy, of course, on the SEC; I knew Joe Kennedy, I came from New England and Joe came from New England. But Joe tied Bill to him very tightly when Bill fell off the horse, or the horse fell on Bill. And Joe picked up the chit, and Joe who was very tight in some ways was like all unpredictable Irishmen terribly generous in others. And Bill Douglas was always a liaison between the Kennedys and Lyndon.

But in this particular case Lyndon really went to work for Jack and I'll always think that although Bobby hated Lyndon, Jack always admired Lyndon. I remember Jack saying to me that if he couldn't make it there was only one guy that should have it, and that was Lyndon because he was the best qualified man in the United States.

F: I've picked that up in other areas.

C: Now let me tell you about how I happen to know about that. Maybe we're jumping some things, I don't know, but I've only got a few more minutes and I want to get this in. I'll

Corcoran -- I -- 25

talk to you about it later.

This is the year before the convention that nominated Jack. Although I made up my mind in 1940 after seeing what I saw in the ten years I was down here, as far as I was concerned this business of politics was the nearest thing to Russian Roulette that was permitted in a sophisticated society--and you only have to see that last night--and that I wanted to be a lawyer and I didn't want to be a politician. Among other things I wasn't willing to take the risk of taking money from other people, and I just didn't have it to put up for myself. My children can run for public office.

Parenthetically, one of the saddest things I've ever seen was the big money-raising party where you had to put up ten thousand dollars apiece that was thrown for Lyndon up in New York during his second-term campaign. Jim Farley and I were up there just to put some kind of a gentile show on it. The most rapacious bunch of people that God ever saw, all of whom I knew wanted something--and wanted something for their dough--were lined up, and Lyndon was shaking hands with them. Jim and I stood apart and we said, "I wonder what this guy wants worth a million dollars for his ten thousand dollars?" You know I'm not saying--some of my best friends are Jewish. You know goddamned well my best friend is. That's Ben Cohen, who's practically my brother. But these are the strangest people in politics. They're the most generous and honest-to-God idealistic people that you'll ever know. I financed Pepper, rather some of the finance of it. Then you get a certain kind of group like that goddamn bunch up in New York, and Jesus Christ, they'd take your blood! For a thousand bucks. I wound up with that gang and I know them so well because, God, New York politics is the most cynical business in the

Corcoran -- I -- 26

world. Oh. I'm getting off the track.

But I'd known Joe for an awful long time. I'd known him in relationship to Ben's and my sponsorship of--the association with the SEC when Joe came down. And I knew him through Cardinal [Francis Joseph] Spellman up in Boston. Remember I'm a New England Irishman.

But about that time--there are two things I wanted to tell you to be sure I tell you today before I forget them. When did Sputnik come?

F: 1957.

C: All right. I thought of it the other night. I was down at the blast-off, but I didn't go over. I was sitting up with my friends down there. I remember the night Sputnik went up, I was at the Ranch, and we were having a hell of a time with a guy named [Governor Orval] Faubus [of Arkansas], who at that time was making things awfully difficult for the Democratic leadership, or rather for Lyndon in relationship to civil rights. Lyndon was the majority leader. And we went down the river, Mary Margaret [Wiley Valenti] and myself and Lyndon, for a walk to see if we could see Sputnik. Somebody had told us that you could look up and you could see it. We walked down the Ranch side of the river, crossed the bridge, and started up the other side of the river. I'll never forget it because Mary Margaret lost her shoe and she had to walk in her stocking feet. I always liked Mary Margaret. And I remember saying to Lyndon, "If it's handled right, Sputnik will liquidate Faubus." When I saw that guy down there, goddamn it, don't you ever kid yourself, he did that shot to the moon, and I was terribly happy to see him get credit. Because he went right back up the line and he started--he'd been fiddling around with this

Corcoran -- I -- 27

Preparedness Committee, Lyndon right then and there was the guy whose guts put this damn thing through, and anybody who tries to take the credit--horse-shit!

When I saw Nixon the other day, you know, I keep thinking of that famous old Greek myth of the contest between the birds who could fly the highest, and the eagle flew up and flew up and then a little wren jumped off the eagle and flew up one higher. I said, "Christ! This wren on the back of the eagle! Christ Almighty! I thought he'd at least have the decency to associate Lyndon in the talk to the moon if anybody should talk to the moon."

Anyway we went through this goddamned civil rights struggle, and Lyndon, wanting to be a candidate, was still afraid that he'd lose his base in Texas if he took a civil rights position that was adequate to make him tolerable as a southerner to the North. Then Joe Kennedy called me up to New York. Jim Landis was there, and Bob Kennedy and myself and Joe. Joe had an apartment on Park Avenue, and we went over to this famous French restaurant, one of George Soule's--what is it, now, the most expensive one in New York? Then Joe took me back into the--or maybe it was before dinner--and said, "Tommy, I'm going to offer you the most interesting and profitable job you ever had in your life. I want you to manage Jack. And we're going to run." I said, "Well, Joe, I'm committed to Lyndon by long, long association." And I said, "Joe, I'm an Irish Catholic, too, and I broke my heart on Al Smith, too. But, Joe, if you shoot the works and you lose again, my children and your children will be second-class citizens for generations."

Joe said, "Is Lyndon going to run?" I said, "I think he's going to run. He won't tell anybody he's going to run. He's got civil rights problems on his hands, Joe, and he's

Corcoran -- I -- 28

got a Texas problem on his hands." Joe said, "Listen, he doesn't have to say anything, but if he'll tell me, Tommy, I agree with you. I want my boy to be president, but I understand the relationship. If Lyndon Johnson will tell you and you will tell me privately that he'll run and he'll take Jack as his vice president, I'll hand it to him right now!" And I came back with the message, and Lyndon said, "I'm not running for president." I said, "Jesus Christ, Lyndon, you know goddamn well you're running for president! For Christ sake, I can tell you, I know the North and I know the Kennedy machine. I know it's got what you need. Lyndon, I'm giving you the nomination on a platter right now. Let me go back." He said, "You'll blab." I said, "Let me go back. We'll take our chances. Why in the hell should it be in his interest to blab?" "Well, anyway, I'm not running."

I went down to see Sam and I said, "Sam, for Christ sake, I know you don't like the Kennedys, but, Sam, we're southerners!" And I said, "It's only the vice presidency and, Sam, if you'll let me say this to Kennedy right now, he won't dare run. I've got enough whack in this place, he wouldn't dare ever double me." And Sam went back to Lyndon, and Lyndon said, "No, I'm not running."

F: Sam would have gone with it.

C: Well, Sam would have gone with that; boy, would he have gone with that one! I said, "But, Lyndon, we tried to make Jack Kennedy the vice president for Adlai Stevenson," and he said, "I'm not running, I'm not running. I want to be majority leader." So I went to old man Green.

F: Who's old man Green?

C: Old man [Theodore Francis] Green was the senator from Rhode Island. He was Lyndon's

Corcoran -- I -- 29

great, great friend there. One of the great mistakes that Lyndon ever made was to go and ask Theodore Francis Green to resign as the head of the Foreign Relations Committee, so Lyndon could appoint Fulbright for some little thing that Lyndon wanted to get with Fulbright then. What Lyndon did was ruin that Foreign Relations Committee with all these goddamn appointments of people for specific purposes, forgetting the power of the committee.

And Lyndon said no, and I had to go back and tell Joe that Lyndon wouldn't say yes. He said, "Tommy, these things take time. If he won't say yes in time, I can't wait to start." And he started. Later on, you know, we tried to put up some headquarters signs down here on the Ambassador Hotel--and [incidentally] John Connally and I were riding down from Houston or San Antonio the other night--and Lyndon insisted on taking the signs down. Now we had it in our hands right then.

F: What was this--a reluctance to stick his neck out for fear of defeat, or did he really think the Senate Majority Leader's job was the greatest of all jobs?

C: Now let me get around to Green. Green said, "You tell Lyndon to take this. Tommy, I'm telling you, Lyndon has done a wonderful job with the majority leadership, but in order to do it, he has had to screw and pull and contrive so much that after this term and he doesn't get the presidency, the majority leadership will never again be what Lyndon's made it. He's wrung it as dry as he can wring it!"

I don't know why he didn't take it. Was he afraid to get licked? I don't know. You know the Texas mentality better than I do. I never understood why he couldn't take it.

Corcoran -- I -- 30

That got me in so goddamned much trouble later on. Because from then on, Joe Kennedy, who thought he had made me a decent offer, although my relations with Jack were decent, Jesus Christ, from that time on, Joe Kennedy thought I was a double-crossing son-of-a-bitch, or something.

F: Joe really thought you'd turned on him?

C: He thought I'd turned on him, you see, because I was still for Lyndon after he made me the offer and Lyndon turned it down. Then when I was for Lyndon later, Joe thought it wasn't in good faith. And, you know, there was something to what Joe said.

F: Yes.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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