INTERVIEW I

DATE: August 21, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM CROOK

INTERVIEWER: David McComb

PLACE: Mr. Crook's residence, San Marcos, Texas

Tape 1.1

M: Would you mind telling me a little bit about your background, just to get up to the point where you meet Lyndon Johnson? Were you raised in [inaudible]?

C: I was born in 1925, in Momence, Illinois. I have lived in Texas since the age of four.

M: Whereabouts in Texas?

C: Aransas Pass, finishing elementary and secondary school there. I went into the service in 1943, into the air force, served for approximately three years.

M: Were you overseas?

C: No, I was *en route* overseas twice, once when we invaded Europe and the second time when we dropped the bomb at Hiroshima. So I spent all my time in the States, which I thought was calamitous at that point.

I went to school on the GI Bill, which was my own poverty program, without which I couldn't have made it.

M: Where did you go to school?

C: I went to Baylor University; I went to the University of Edinburgh. I received a doctorate in theology from Southwestern [Baptist Theological] Seminary in Fort

Worth. At that point I wanted some idealistic expression for a career and went the ministerial route for a few years.

M: Were you a minister for [inaudible]?

C: Yes. And then in 1960, I resigned from my church, which was the First Baptist Church of Nacogdoches, a church of about two thousand members. [I] resigned due to pressures of conscience and the race issue, announced for Congress, ran in 1960 against John Dowdy, who was and is a racist and whose policies were reprehensible and are reprehensible. I was defeated; out of a vote of about seventy thousand I lost by about 2800 votes, after only ninety days of exposure, so it was a good--I wasn't embarrassed by the race.

Before that, I had had several contacts with Lyndon Johnson, once in 1950--I guess it was my first real contact with the man's efficiency. I was to join a group of lecturers to go to Japan. We got as far as California and found that the military permit requirement was very stringent, and we were marooned, a bunch of young men in California, unable to get [General Douglas] MacArthur to let us in, even though he had sort of extended an invitation. And finally we wired Senator Johnson, and within twenty-four hours we had a cablegram from the MacArthur headquarters inviting us to come.

M: What were you to lecture on in Japan?

C: Religion, philosophy. So this was a--though I had voted for Johnson, my family had--my wife's family [inaudible]--this was my first firsthand experience. The fact that the man had set up the kind of office in Washington that was very, very responsive, uniquely so, and remained so, I think--

M: He must have called the MacArthur headquarters.

C: I heard later that he did, that either he himself or somebody else called. [Inaudible] So I came back then as sort of a Johnson fan, not accepting the current opinions that he had somehow tricked his way into that high office, but not being blind to the possibilities that some things may have happened over which he had no control, in the close vote.

M: Right.

C: And that also--not being too naïve, having had some experience with Texas politics. [Laughter]

M: Well, then, when you came back from that, what did you do? What were you working at, at this point?

C: Well, I was in school. I received my doctorate, and was at the same time pastoring. Then, after resigning from the church in 1960, the Academy, San Marcos Academy, asked me to come as an interim president to try to save what was then a near-defunct situation.

M: Does this--let me get this straight. Does this come immediately after your resignation?

C: No, the campaign came after my resignation.

M: Yes, you resigned, you campaigned--

C: I lost, and then the Academy asked me to come and take over the administration of the school here.

M: Why did--

C: Now, it was during this period that--

M: Had you had contact with Johnson between--in that--?

C: Yes. I had contributed some to his campaigns.

M: Did you campaign for him?

C: Yes. The first time I ever heard of Lyndon Johnson, really, I was a--about twenty-three, I suppose, and I was working as a blueprint boy at Texas Corn Products, in Corpus Christi. And one day this helicopter descended, like God Almighty out of the blue, and a great voice, as though it came from Sinai itself, began asking me for our votes! And I thought, "Who in the hell is that?" And it was Lyndon Johnson, with his helicopter, campaigning.

M: [Laughter] This must have been the 1948 campaign.

C: Yes. And that impressed me, that he came out to hover over these great stacks--[Laughter]--and stopped work there for a few minutes while he gave his spiel, and then rotored away.

M: He never did land? He just hovered over?

C: No, he didn't land. That's the reason he had the helicopter with the loudspeaker on it, so he didn't have to land. He could take in a lot of people that way. I suppose he made all the factories--I don't know, but I wouldn't be surprised [if] he did the same thing on the Houston Ship Channel and so forth, all those refineries and chemical plants.

M: Well, in the decade of the fifties, did you talk with him, or meet with him at all?

C: Yes, but never in any intimate way. I had heard him speak, and shaken hands with him. I think he knew who I was, he knew I was a Democrat, he knew I was a liberal.

M: Did you campaign for him in 1954?

C: Well, some precinct-level stuff.

It was after 1960, though, after my race, which he followed, and supported--

M: Did he help you at all?

C: Yes, he sent some advice, in a very discreet way, and was very hopeful, I think, that that area would receive some kind of an articulate voice of protest of what was going on. But this was the time that [Bill] Moyers was moving into the Johnson camp, and Bill, having very much the same background that I have--

M: Right.

C: --sent me a letter.

M: Did you know Moyers?

C: I didn't know him at that time. I didn't know him personally until after the campaign there was over, and the Kennedy campaign was beginning. And, as you'll recall, they had a great dinner here in Austin for Lyndon Johnson, and Sam Rayburn presided. I attended, along with my wife and father-in-law, Mr. H. E. Butt, who has always supported Mr. Johnson financially. And this young man--

M: When did you marry, incidentally?

C: I married in 1952.

This young man stopped me in the aisle of the coliseum and asked me if I was Bill Crook, and I said yes. He said, "I'm Bill Moyers." And that began what has continued to be an exceedingly close friendship. And even though he and the

President have broken, I have managed to maintain close contacts with both camps.

But, anyway, we then spent the night at the hotel talking until sunrise, and he asked me if I was going to support Kennedy. And I said I would. As you know, there was a real Baptist opposition to Kennedy at that time. I think they were looking for just about anybody with a Baptist name--

M: [Laughter]

C: --or ring to it, even though, by this time, the Baptists had gotten very suspicious of me, and I wasn't sure how much good I could do them. But I told them I was going to. I had just come to the Academy, which [had] a very conservative board then. And the next day he called and asked if I could have--I know that the chronology of this maybe isn't too good--

M: [Inaudible]

C: I think, yes, he called and asked if I would have breakfast with Johnson the following morning. And I did. And he was interested in why I was going to support Kennedy.

No; I'm out on this chronology. At that time, of course, I was supporting Lyndon Johnson. Then the convention occurred, and--

M: This was when Lyndon Johnson was pushing himself for president.

C: That's right. He himself was in the running for president.

M: Were you going to support Johnson for the presidency?

C: Yes.

M: Rather than Kennedy at that time?

C: Yes. Naturally. He was a Texan; I knew him. I thought he had a chance to win; I had supported him before, was committed to him. [I] had some reservations about some of the bills that he had sponsored, I suppose, but felt that he was--he had done a damn good job as majority leader, probably the best that I could see in history.

Well, then he went to California; Kennedy got the nomination, Johnson agreed to the vice-presidency. And it was then that Bill asked me to come over and have breakfast with him, because he knew that I would support Kennedy, and they needed Kennedy support. So I went over, and had a very good visit. He said some--

M: Did it bother you that Johnson had accepted the vice-presidency?

C: Never did, never did. It bothered everybody else I know of, but it was--I think it was a very realistic thing for him to do, and I don't think he compromised himself any. I think maybe he compromised some of the support he had, because he had a hard time holding on to some of that.

M: Did you go to Los Angeles for the convention?

C: No. I went to the others, but not the Los Angeles convention.

M: But then he came back, and was soliciting your support.

C: Then he came back. And it was agreed at this meeting that I would take a public stance, as the head of an institution, as the head of a religious institution, a Baptist institution, and that I would come out for Kennedy. Well, my wife, at that point, was not a Johnson person. She went along with us because her father had and because I had, but she really wasn't a fan of his. And she had reservations about

Kennedy, too. In fact, she was just verging on that disease known as Republicanism at that point in her life, from which she's had a thorough cure.

M: [Laughter]

C: After the meeting with the Senator, I returned home. We had worked out an arrangement where I would be interviewed by a Washington columnist and asked, "Why are you supporting a Catholic for president?" And the answer I was going to give was a conscientious answer; I could give it without any qualms at all. I could give a damn what his religion was; I felt that he had something to say to the times.

M: Yes.

C: But an interesting thing then happened. They left for California. Again, I don't know whether he had a speech out there, or whether he was already campaigning. And Moyers called me; I was then out at the--out at our ranch in Kerrville. And he called me and said, "As we took off from Austin, the Senator called me up and said--called me up to the front of the plane and said, 'I've been thinking about Crook. And I believe that I have put him in an unfair position.' He said, 'I know that his board is very conservative. I know that his family, though they've always supported me, is a conservative family. And I think that what I have asked him to do is unfair. Call him and tell him not to do it.'"

M: [Inaudible]

C: This was my first insight into the man's ability to think small, to think in terms of a single individual, and it ran contrary to all that I had heard about the total

ruthlessness of the man, and about his absorbing of individual personalities and destroying them, and so forth.

M: So you never did make your statement?

C: And when I hung up the phone, I told Eleanor what had happened, and she said, "Well, if he's capable of that kind of thoughtfulness, then I'm a Lyndon Johnson man." So it was a small gesture that won her over, and that probably impressed me as much as anything that I had ever seen him do.

I didn't make the statement, but I worked publicly for Kennedy. And it did cause some problems. But I was then able to [work] as a free agent, and I think probably did more good, because I didn't have--I wasn't under charge to do it.

Then, we began to have a few personal contacts. I talked to him a couple of times on the phone. Once I tried to get Bill--we were back in Austin, and the President--the Senator answered the phone himself, and said he was depressed and he had a headache, and he'd just like to talk a while, and we talked about the campaign, how it was going, how he was looking. I began to send in some suggestions to Bill and to the Senator and to some of his other aides. They always responded to them. Some, I think, had some merit; some didn't. Some I think they used--in fact, I know they did.

So it became sort of a supportive advisory role, very informal. I wasn't expecting anything, wasn't asking anything, never dreamed of being actively used at that point with--I knew a vice president didn't have a lot of clout. (Laughter)

So the election occurred.

M: Did you have much contact with the Kennedy people?

C: None at that time, none at all. It was only after--I met President Kennedy in his office after the election. And, by the way, a sideline; this is an interesting one. I was to have had [a] five-minute conference with him in Austin [on] the day he was killed, and was to have been--was to have received an ambassadorial appointment at that time, or so he had hinted strongly.

M: This was the ambassador to what?

C: Well, I don't know. I just received a call from a White House person saying, "The President wants to see you, and wants to talk to you about an ambassadorship." [Whistles]

Let's see. Where were we?

M: Well, we were talking about after the election, when Lyndon Johnson was now vice president. You had much contact with him then?

C: I think, at the usual meetings where he appeared. I believe I was invited out to the Ranch while he was vice president for dinner once. Maybe when--yes, that's true, with some members of the press. I know what it was. He had just finished his tour of India, and it was a--he was in a rare mood. He sat out on the lawn, had the press men squatting all around him, some on the ground, some in the few chairs. And he was earthy, as he is capable of being, and presenting his report on India, and what needed to occur there. I remember well one of his comments was--one of his anecdotes was about talking to an Indian woman who had ten children, and he said she had--"She had ten kids! She had eight on the ground, one in her arms, and one in the belly."

M: [Laughter]

C: The crudity of it repelled me a bit. Then, later, I attended the middle-level manpower conference in Puerto Rico, and the Vice President was there, and they were having a hard time getting him to stay with his script. He rambled quite a bit, and when he rambled he would sometimes get himself in trouble. And he--I was sitting next to [Sargent] Shriver and Moyers and [Richard] Goodwin and [Willard] Wirtz. I forget who else was there. And he began giving anecdotes from India--[Laughter]--and he came to this one! And I had already told Bill about it, and he just froze and said, "Oh, my God, no!" But the [Vice] President refined it. He said, "She had eight on the ground, one in her arms, and one in her stomach."

[Laughter]

C: And everyone heaved a great sigh of relief. The Vice President was refining it.

M: So you had some casual, social-type contact with him while [he was] vice president.

C: Yes. Off and on.

M: And you remained here in San Marcos.

C: I remained in San Marcos. I was in Washington off and on, and would go by his office and shake hands with him, and talk to him briefly. I met John Bailey there for the first time.

Then, the period before the Kennedy visit to Texas, Moyers was in the state, incognito, trying to bring a healing about between [John] Connally and

[Ralph] Yarborough people, so as to improve the climate for the President's appearance.

M: There's a lot of mystery about that, at least from the way it's reported, as to whether there really was a breach between Yarborough and Connally.

C: How could there be a mystery on that subject?

M: Well, there have been denials from the camps involved, and--

C: We'll let the camps answer, but I say there was--always was a breach, is a breach.

M: And so Moyers was down here trying to heal that?

C: Moyers had been sent down here by Kennedy. He was in with the Peace Corps, and he was staying in Austin, working on the dinner, calling for support, calling different congressmen, but also here to try to bring some improvement to the climate of Texas politics.

M: There was no breach between Johnson and the Texas forces, was there?

C: No, not that I know of. Of course, Johnson and Yarborough had never been particularly close.

M: Yes, right.

C: But Johnson has always been a party man, and he's always been able to rise above--something Connally never was able to do--rise above his own personal pride and feelings, and would go the second mile.

M: Then you talked--

C: In fact, one of the criticisms, as you know, in Texas toward Johnson was that he would always do more for his enemies than he would his friends. If he knew a man didn't vote for him, or didn't like him, he was apt to work harder to convince

that man, rather than writing him off, which I think, again, was a unique political quality in Lyndon Johnson. But sometimes people who had always been for him felt that he took them a little for granted, which I--you know, if you know ten, twenty, thirty thousand people by name, as I'm sure he did, you can't exactly call each one before you go to bed at night.

M: Yes. Well, then did you talk to Moyers when he was down in Texas?

C: Yes. Again, we spent the night before the assassination together over at Villa Capri [Motor Hotel], over a bottle of wine, and Moyers told me the difficulties he was encountering. I assume you're going to talk to Moyers, if you haven't already.

M: Yes.

C: And we were preparing for the Kennedy visit. He was telling me the problems he was having. I had been in on the initial meeting at the Governor's Mansion when Governor Connally said that Kennedy was coming, a meeting that really infuriated me to the point that I--I then and there really ceased being a Connally supporter.

M: What does this make you?

C: Well, Connally was not a Kennedy fan, or friend, and he, I think, was pretending that this was something that had been forced on him. And yet I think he knew that he would--he had much to win and gain politically by being seen with Kennedy.

M: Why was it necessary for Kennedy to heal this breach? Why couldn't Johnson do it?

C: Well, Johnson couldn't do it because his credentials with the liberals at that time were rather strained.

M: Yes. He had a problem with Yarborough too.

C: Well, yes, Yarborough always represented the liberal camp.

M: Was it important for Kennedy to do this, politically?

C: That's a question I've asked many times, whether it was that important. I just don't know. Evidently a lot of people thought that it was, if Texas was to be kept in the Democratic column.

M: Did Moyers give you any indication of how Kennedy intended to heal that breach?

C: No. Kennedy wanted the breach healed before he got here. I think it was sort of a pre-influence that he--that was the price of his coming. He wanted Yarborough and Connally to get together and cut out the crap, and get behind his administration.

M: Then Kennedy's coming would sort of cement the--

C: Yes. But he arrived, as you know, into a divided situation.

And one of the first things--no one will ever know what emotions he felt, I guess, in doing this, but one of the first things Johnson did then was to go to Yarborough, after he became President, as you remember. And I think that this had a symbolic meaning for him. I think this was a tribute to Kennedy, in his own thinking, that the first thing he wanted to make sure was that what Kennedy had desired was accomplished, even at the cost of the proud Lyndon Johnson--the mountain going to Mohammed. And it was a great thing for him to do.

M: Did you play any role in trying to heal that breach? Did you contact anybody [inaudible]?

C: I played a role only at the state level. I was known as a Kennedy supporter, and therefore the things I said, I think, were rather neutralized. I tried to temper a little bit some of the harshness of expression toward Kennedy and toward the "eastern liberals," as they were being called. But I certainly wasn't in any--any position to influence, in any major way, what was going on. [I] just wasn't that influential.

M: Did you have anything to do with the trip that Kennedy had in Texas? Were you in on the arrangements? Did you meet Kennedy, or [inaudible]?

C: Yes, as I said, I was in on the first meetings that the Governor had, and I had worked--my wife had worked, she was a member of the Democratic committee, had worked toward the meeting in Austin. And I was scheduled, as I said, to have met with him there. I suppose my--if I did any good, had any [inaudible] at all, it was in talking to Moyers and trying to calm him down a bit, because he was rather discouraged by what he had found here.

M: Moyers thought the breach was too great?

C: I don't know. You'll have to ask Bill what he thought.

M: Okay. Well, did you travel with Kennedy then when he came down?

C: No. You see, he was killed the next day, after this--these arrangements were made. So I did not travel with Kennedy. I didn't go to--I think I would have gone both to Houston and Dallas, except I was trying to make myself available to Moyers with what he was doing here in Austin. He was coordinating the visit.

Both Johnson and Connally were *en route* with the President. And they were in touch with Bill, and he was in touch with them. And there were some interesting things, some interesting sidelights in that. [Pause]

M: Now what were those sidelights?

C: It's obvious I'm not going to tell you! [Laughter]

M: Well, you shouldn't stop and leave me dangling!

Well, then, President Kennedy was killed. Do you have any immediate contact with Johnson?

C: Immediate. [Pause]

M: Of course, he flew back to Washington. Did you have any conversations with him in that short period after [inaudible]?

C: No, I think that his friends felt, at that point, that the greatest role they could play was to be available and to be protective, but not to--not to attempt to contact him directly. We sent the traditional wire of grief to the family, and support to the President. But, again, my contacts were mainly through Moyers. He called quite often, to tell me what was going on. At one point he sent the word that the President said he wanted me up there. But it was a vague kind of thing, and I--I was very involved in the school and couldn't have gone then; I wouldn't have felt fair about going.

Now, it's at this point that I would have to begin looking up dates, but I think it was about four months after he went into office that I was up to speak to a conference. And the President invited me over, and we talked, and he said then that he wanted me to be an ambassador. And—it was my first experience in the

little office off of the oval room, in a very informal setting. And I was impressed with his grasp of small details, and his concern, again, for what this would do to my family life, and how much it would cost me in addition to any salary I might receive, and was I prepared to do this. And I answered in the affirmative; why, he then said, "Stay in touch, let me know where you are, and I'll be back in touch with you."

M: Well, now, you had been considered for an ambassadorship by Kennedy, and now again by Johnson. Now, I can understand that with Johnson, since you had campaigned for him and had contact with him and he knew you. Why Kennedy?

C: Well, I think the President--the Vice President must have sent something in to Kennedy. I think Kennedy was aware of the fact that I had supported him at a time when it caused some--some scars. And, by then--of course, as soon as Kennedy was elected, I more or less became the liaison man between some contrite religious leaders and the new Catholic President of the United States! And I did assist in setting up some interviews for some leaders, some religious leaders, with Kennedy. This picture here, with President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson and Congressman Thornberry, was made immediately after I had taken in a group of Baptist leaders, at which time Kennedy made a statement on separation of church and state which they didn't--they didn't catch, but it was the strongest thing I had ever heard him say, and I wanted them--and he wanted them to come out and quote him. But by the time they got--we got to be quoted, why, he had already gone on record, but in a much less forceful way.

M: Does this picture of Kennedy up here have any significance?

C: No, except it's an unpublished picture [inaudible]--

M: Yes, it's a very fine picture.

C: --and it's a great picture. I came across--it was given to me by a friend of Kennedy's, and--

M: I might say, for the sake of the tape, that this is a picture of Kennedy in a rocking chair looking at some--what appear to be papers of some kind; it's very informal, and President Kennedy is in a relaxed position, without a tie, wearing what looks like a knit shirt of some kind.

C: The interesting thing about that paper is that it's marked "Classified"! [Laughter] And one has the feeling that with a mirror and a little magnification, you can read it!

M: Well, you have this initial contact, you had this contact with Johnson, and he suggests, perhaps, an ambassadorship. This, I assume, is in--what, early 1964?

C: Yes.

M: And a presidential campaign is coming up. Did you work in that 1964 campaign?

C: Yes, yes, I did. But, again, unofficially. I was still connected with an institution.

M: Same problem.

C: But I made contacts, and contributions, and--

M: Speeches?

C: Speeches, yes, but, again, speeches of indirection. I wasn't permitted to be too partisan, in the role that I held. But he didn't need a whole lot in Texas. It was--the picture had changed, and we knew that he was going to carry Texas big.

M: Do you know anything about Lyndon Johnson and Billy Graham, when they met? Did you have anything to do with that?

C: No, I'm not a Billy Graham fan, and I have not followed that relationship too closely.

M: Then, when did you next contact Johnson? Your work in the 1964 campaign? Did he say anything more about this ambassadorship?

C: No. Each time we met after that, he had some other idea, but it was always "I want you in this administration; I want you in Washington."

M: And you weren't always agreeable to this, is that right?

C: Well, I was not disagreeable to it. I wasn't particularly overjoyed, because I didn't know what he had in mind.

M: But you were willing to serve the country, and so forth.

C: Yes, if so called. Then, we gave a reception for him here at the house in 1964. And, as I told you, he, on that particular occasion, underwrote the British pound from here.

M: You might mention that story. For the sake of the tape, over in the corner of this office there is a telephone, unconnected, a black telephone, which has the White House in the center of the dial, and it's sitting on a pedestal. And--so you might relate the story of that telephone.

C: Yes, well, let me clarify: it's sitting on a pedestal because that statuary piece there is off the pedestal. It fell off--[Laughter]--and the phone was just set there. I'm not revering the phone--[Laughter]--or immortalizing it or anything. But it's the phone that was installed by the telephone company for the President's use--

M: For while he was at this reception?

C: For while he was here. And it was a direct line with the White House, which he asked--told me to keep a direct line with the White House, and I did for several months, and really didn't find much for it. I finally had it disconnected, but asked the company if I could keep the instrument.

But he--at that time, he said to me, "Go in and pick up that phone, and tell them"--I never did quite figure out who "them" was--"that I want you in Washington!" It was also on that occasion that he began thinking, I think, in terms of my being helpful in poverty. When he was here, on that occasion, I was preparing a trip to Saudi Arabia. The Academy, by then--by that time, was a rather prosperous school, and we were maintaining a ratio of about 25 percent foreign students on the campus. We were enrolling about six hundred. And we were soliciting and advertising abroad, and this was a trip to get more students from Saudi Arabia, India. And he asked--he didn't ask me to cancel that; he just said, "Shriver's going to be down next week, and I'd like for you to take him over and show him this base out here, and give him a hand."

Well, I didn't know anything about OEO at that point. But I did cancel my trip, or postpone it, which was good for me because the plane that we were scheduled to fly on between Athens and Rome went down--the flight I was chartered on, which I later told the President about, and told him I felt that in one way, at least, he had saved my skin. Though he had taken it off in strips on other occasions.

So, I met--I did meet Shriver. I did take him out to the base, and found him to be a delightful, charming, helpless man who was not able to handle the press, and he had nobody there as an advance man, and so I sort of played that role. We gave him a reception afterwards. And he went back to Washington then, and asked me to become his deputy at Peace Corps.

It was some time before I saw the President after that occasion. The next time I saw him, he was in a bit of a huff, and he said, "I thought I told you to go to Washington!" It didn't occur to him that you don't just go to Washington unless you have an assignment, you know, unless somebody tells you what the hell you're supposed to do in Washington! [Laughter] And I felt that maybe--maybe he was of the opinion that I was dragging my feet, and he didn't like it very much. But it was evidently passing--a passing mood.

M: Well, to pick up this story--do you mind telling the story about underwriting the pound?

C: Oh, I'm sorry! I got off that story. Anyway, this is the [inaudible]: the President came, he arrived at the house, walked straight through the hall into my library, picked up the phone, and said, "Give me [C. Douglas] Dillon!" And, in a moment, he said, "Underwrite the British pound," and hung up. As far as I know, there was no chance for Dillon to say anything but, "Yes, sir." [Laughter] And there was no hesitation on the President's part. I gathered--my impression was that he had made the decision since leaving Washington, and that it was a firm decision in his mind, and he had no reservations about it.

It was also--by way of anecdotal material, I had not met [Jack] Valenti, and Valenti was with him, and we were at the other end of the library. I had offered the President a drink, and he had asked for water, and I had noticed that over the mantle of my fireplace was an ancient Texas rifle, which I felt had--was in very bad taste that I had not taken it down, due to the past history of rifles. And I was wondering why the secret service hadn't asked me to take it down, because they--they were upset when the new bottle of Cutty Sark had been opened, not in their presence; they didn't like that at all. And I thought, "You know, this is a funny kind of carelessness. They're concerned about a bottle of scotch, and yet there's a rifle there on the wall," which was still obviously in good shape.

But, I said to Valenti, in very quiet tones, "Jack, I'm pleased to get to meet you finally." And the President, who was on the other end of the room, said, "Goddammit, Crook, shut up!" [Laughter] Which I had been around him long enough to know was not--wasn't anything to get upset about. But I later told--[Laughter]--I later told this to my family, and my mother-in-law, who was present, was quite indignant that he should say that to me in my own home. And I said, "Well, what did you expect me to do? Say, 'Get out!'" [Laughter]

M: At this reception, how many people were here?

C: Oh, I think we had 150 people, perhaps.

M: Were these mainly local people?

C: These were local people who he knew, people he had known at the college, business people, people who had always supported him. Some of our friends,

some of my family. There was a college professor here who was a bit of a pushy type, and as the President came through, everyone was saying the proper thing to him, but this man said, "Hello, Lyndon!" And I've never seen anyone frozen as effectively as the President froze this prof who, I think, had gone too far, particularly in public, and he really got his comeuppance.

M: Did the President just look at him, or did he say anything?

C: The President never just looked at anybody. He either looked at you with total acceptance, or total rejection, or you're in transit between the two. This was a look of utter rejection.

M: He didn't have to say anything.

C: He said nothing. He did not return the greeting at all. And I thought he handled it exactly as it should have been, with [inaudible].

M: Was this the occasion that he met your poodle, de Gaulle?

C: No. We have a poodle, or we had a poodle, that was named Charles de Gaulle. And, on this occasion, we had him hidden. It was later he met the second de Gaulle.

M: I see. You might tell that story, if you don't mind, since it does give insight into the President's thoughtfulness.

C: Well, we had given in to my little girl's desire for something soft and fuzzy, and I took her out one day and we bought a black poodle, and the children reasoned that it should have a French name, and I think the French name that they were most familiar with at that point was Charles de Gaulle. So, we named him de Gaulle, with no discourtesy intended. And he really was a rather [inaudible]; he was a

quite attractive personality, as a dog. But when we knew the President was coming, we felt not only that we did not want de Gaulle jumping up on him, which he would be prone to do, but the President probably would not approve of his name. [Laughter] So we put him out in the servants' quarters.

Just shortly before the President arrived, the secret service had taken over the house, and directed us--we had a lot of funny experiences. They made us take an antique table out, because the leg was loose, and they were afraid somebody would brush up against it and it would fall and cause a noise. I've never really been impressed by the kind of advance work they do; I mean, they spent a lot of time on the improbables, and pass up some obvious things. Anyway, de Gaulle got out, and my sister, Mrs. Gerald W. Vance, tried to retrieve him. So she rushed to the back yard, and she was shouting, "Here, Charles de Gaulle! Here, Charles de Gaulle!" when two secret service men immediately descended on her. They didn't have nets, but I think they felt they should have had. [Laughter] They felt--either de Gaulle had arrived, or somebody had run amok.

And, while this was happening in the backyard, the President was arriving in the front entranceway.

M: Did he meet de Gaulle then?

C: He did not meet de Gaulle, no.

M: So the two combatants were kept apart.

Then, if you don't mind, you mentioned that later on, when you were ambassador--

C: Well, later on, we had a second dog named "de Gaulle También." Hello, puppy. This is Hobart, one of our two Australian dogs. And the President came to see us in Arlington, he came to have Mexican food with us, which my wife prepares very well, and he particularly liked her pralines. And he brought his dog--Yuki?

M: Yes.

C: And Yuki--I don't know whether you're interviewing anybody about Yuki or not. Yuki is the most power-oriented animal I've ever seen. [Laughter] And I don't know where Yuki is; I used to think maybe he was a Russian spy. But I do know that he knew his master was President of the United States! And he may have gone to Nixon; I don't know. I have the feeling that he was going to stay with power.

Anyway, Yuki came in our house, and immediately Yuki and de Gaulle tangled. The second de Gaulle was, and is, either mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed; we've never figured out what it is, but he's not a fighter. So we called for the butler to retrieve him, and to take him away, and the President said, "What is it--what is your dog's name?" And, by this time--of course, the President doesn't have a great sense of humor; I don't think I'd ever seen him really indulge in raucous laughter. But he does have--you can tell when you got the point across. So I said, "Mr. President, the last time you were in my home, we didn't want you to know the name of our dog. But I think I can tell you now," because the grand Charles had already begun his anti-Americanism. "I think I can tell you that his name is Charles de Gaulle." And he made no comment; he smiled in his eyes. And that was it.

But he evidently remembered that we had a dog, because when I was appointed, he knew Australia well enough to know that you couldn't--you cannot take pets into Australia at all, without a six-month quarantine. And Larry Temple called after the appointment to say that the President wanted to present our children with a little dog, which would be waiting at the Sydney airport, and--which caused me a great deal of trouble because the Australian press immediately thought it was some kind of gimmick to make me look young! And I kept saying, "Hell, I've got three small children. What do I need a dog to look young about?" This dog was named Adelaide, and Adelaide became recognizable on all the front pages of Australia. They followed her closely. She's now expecting her first puppies, and I've already had an inquiry about Addie and her pups.

[Laughter]

M: Well, then, to go back in time: you had this first reception.

C: While I'm thinking of it, on this second visit that he made to our house--and I think it proves a point. This would be--well, again, let me get you the dates--

M: Well, that can be supplied.

C: One of his rare abilities, I've always felt, has been the wide range of his--of his knowledge of small things, as well as great things. He could get as interested in what kind of grass is growing in the field at Camp Gary, and what kind of fertilizer is being used on it, as he was able to concentrate on the pressing problems of Vietnam. And on this particular occasion, as we were sitting around the dinner table, the George Christians and Larry Temples and Marvin Watsons,

the Bill Deasons--the Price Daniels, I think, were there. And I had presented, through my father-in-law, some white buck antelope to the President.

[Interruption]

C: Three years prior to that--I think he was vice president at the time--we knew of his interest in exotic animals. But the President was so proud of these creatures that he kept them in a small pasture where he could show them to his guests, and they didn't breed. They didn't reproduce. Everywhere else, they were reproducing like white rats, but his were not reproducing. And I had heard the reason [was] that he liked to drive and show them off, and he loved to see them jump, and that he had a rather loud horn in his car that he used to make them run and jump.

So, during the course of this dinner, he said to Eleanor, "My antelope aren't breeding!" I was at the other end of the table, and I broke into the conversation, and he kept teasing. And I said, "Well, Mr. President, I understand that you have a rather loud cow horn!" And it was the not right thing to have said, evidently, because he said, "I do not! I do not honk my horn at them!" And I remember everyone looked at me as though I had committed a great heresy, and as if they were saying, "The President doesn't honk his horn at the antelope!"

[Laughter]

So then he--having put me in my place, he turned to Marvin Watson and he said, "Marvin, I want a thorough study on the sex life of black buck antelope!" And Marvin pulled out his ever-present pad, and pen, and made a note. And I asked him just recently, just a few weeks ago, as a matter of fact, if he ever

presented the President with an in-depth study of the sex life of the black buck antelope. And he said to me, "Well, he asked for it, didn't he? If he asked for it, you know he got it."

Well, here again, it was interesting to me that the President of the United States was concerned about the breeding of his antelope.

End of Tape 1 Side A

Tape 1 Side B

C: He was very--that night he was very moody, very alone, very solitary. I remember, as my wife and I saw him leave, we were both a bit tearful. He [We?] walked him to his car, and he was under great pressure and criticism by the country and the world, and it was very sad to see this gaunt, tall man, with his little dog Yuki, get in the back of the big limousine and drive off in sort of a Lincolnesque silhouette.

M: Did he enjoy those kinds of social occasions?

C: I think he enjoyed them more than anything he did. I think this is what Lyndon Johnson most enjoys. And he talks about the recipes for pralines. He was on a diet that night, and he wasn't going to eat anything. He decided he would try a few beans, and they brought him the beans on a serving plate, and he said, "I don't want them that way. I want a bowl." So they went back to the kitchen and got the President a bowl. He had a big bowl of beans, and he had seven pralines. And this led him to give some anecdotes about Johnson City, and diets, and so forth.

I think he always enjoyed--and the interesting thing about Johnson is that he seemed to always be most at ease with the people who worked with him. He

entertained--I think if you were to go over the guest list--most often the people who were with him after hours were the people who were with him formally, which put a great strain on them and their families. But he always wanted people around him whom he trusted, whom he knew, and he seemed to be more himself with those people who worked for him.

M: Did he talk about political matters a great deal on those occasions? I mean, was this always present with him?

C: No. No, I don't think so. I've been with him many times when, of course, political matters were his concerns. But, again, I'll give you an illustration of--of the range of his ability to elevate minutia. Now, this was in Washington, after we had moved there. The phone rang one night, about ten-thirty. I answered it. And the President was on the line. He had evidently dialed direct, because there was no operator. And he just began talking! And he said, "What do you know about bluebonnets?" [Laughter] And, hell, I *thought* it was the President of the United States--[Laughter]--Moyers is also capable of sounding just like him, and more than once I had been sucked in by a Moyers call. So I didn't know whether to say, "Go to hell," and hang up, thinking it was Moyers, or listen for a few more words. And so I listened, and he repeated himself. He said, "I asked you what you knew about bluebonnets!" And I said, "Well, not very much, sir." And he said, "That's what I thought!"

Now, this is the beginning of a conversation at ten-thirty at night! He went on then to tell me that he wanted some bluebonnets planted. And he thought the Job Corps boys should do it, or could do it--he wanted Texas highways

beautified, and particularly the ranch road. And he said, "I don't suppose you even know how to harvest them--the seed." And I said, "No, sir." He said, "Goddamn, don't you know anything? How long have you lived in Texas?" And he was in this sort of bantering, light-hearted abusive mood that he gets in; when he pokes at you, you know that he's being most affectionate.

So, anyway, I ended up with the charge to have fifty miles of roadway planted in bluebonnets. And he said, "I don't mean just spray the seed out." He said, "I want it to come up. And don't think that you've got to have good soil"--he went on--he gave me an in-depth lecture of the growing habits of the Texas bluebonnet. I remember when he hung up--this must have been a forty-minute call, and all we talked about--Texas wildflowers and bluebonnets.

And, when he hung up, it was then going on--it was after eleven. So I called Bert Harding, who was head of OEO on an acting basis, and he was asleep. And his wife was hesitant to wake him, and I said, "No, I think I need to talk to him," so she got him up. And I said, "Bert, what do you know about bluebonnets?" [Laughter] Since Bert was my boss, he didn't feel he had to take that kind of nonsense at that hour of night. But I finally explained what the President wanted, and he was just incredulous. And, later, Isabelle, his wife, told me that she met him in the hall as he was going back to bed, and she said, "What did Bill want?" And he said, "Go back to sleep! You wouldn't believe it."

[Laughter]

C: So that--we got the bluebonnets planted for him. I don't know whether they ever came up or not.

M: Did he ever follow that up, incidentally? Did he ever ask about whether those bluebonnets came up?

C: No. We were out at the Ranch the other night for dinner, and I mentioned the fact that there hadn't been many wildflowers this summer. And he contradicted me, and said that there had been, that I just hadn't been here for them. But I said later to Larry Temple, in a joking way, when I was talking to the White House, I said, "Larry, of all the things that I am interested in, over there, why do I get bluebonnets?" And he said, "Because that's where it is, baby!" [Laughter]

M: Well, now, to pick up your story again, you worked in the campaign of 1964. The President, of course, was reelected. Did he contact you about any appointments, or special tasks, after that?

C: Yes, he offered me several positions after that. One was with the Civil Rights Commission. He asked if I wanted to become commissioner of that. But I was given about thirty seconds to say yes or no. And I didn't know anything about it. I didn't think that my credentials were particularly good in that area, though I had really changed my career over the issue. But I didn't have anything to [inaudible] with civil rights, and so I said, "Well, if I have to say yes or no, at this point, I guess I have to say no." And, again, I felt that I had strained the relationship a bit.

The next contact I had came--

M: Johnson is sort of sensitive about that sort of thing, isn't he?

C: I think he's sensitive about it because it appears to me that he has pretty well thought through an issue, or an offer, before he makes it. He never struck me as having a bag full of things, and--I'll give you this, or I'll give you that. Later, in

my appointment to an ambassadorship, it shows that he had thought through the appointment very clearly, although he changed a couple of times. After the first appointment--I was first appointed ambassador to Spain for four days, and then he changed it to Australia.

[Interruption]

M: He didn't like to be refused, then?

C: No, but, then, no one does. I felt, though, that probably I had been--ruined my chances if I really wanted to work with the administration. Because there had been other overtures, and really--I forget many of them, but "would you be interested in this kind of thing," or that. But this was a definite offer. And the job was then given to Luther Holcomb, who's done a very outstanding, I think, job with it.

Several months passed, and Shriver, then, was wanting me to come up to go to work for him in the Peace Corps.

M: As assistant director?

C: As deputy director. Then some--and I was interested in that. I went to Washington to talk to him about that. But it was at the time that the President had given the poverty thing to Shriver, and Shriver was, at that point, sort of deemphasizing the Peace Corps and trying to get some help with OEO. And I remember he said to me--he said, "I don't know what--what all these things are." He said, "I've got something called Community Action, I have something called Job Corps, and I have something called VISTA." He said, "You can have any one of those." And I wasn't interested in that at that particular point; I had followed

the Economic Opportunity Act, but I wasn't sure just how committed the White House was to it, and I didn't want to get into something where there was really no deep sense of commitment. So I made inquiry, and I found out from Moyers and others that the President really felt this poverty [inaudible], that he really wanted to go down in history as the man who eliminated poverty. And that it was an existential kind of thing with him; it wasn't just a political ploy, that he felt poverty, he felt that he had sampled it. He knew the plight of the Mexican-American. Probably the only American--the only president who's even known what a Mexican-American was. Washington doesn't know what Mexican-Americans are. They think in terms of Puerto Ricans and Spaniards, but there's no feeling up there that we have five million Mexican-Americans in this country, with the poverty level.

So I received a call asking me if I would be interested in opening up--well, after I declined the offers from Shriver, I then felt that the door was really closed.

M: Why did you decline them?

C: Well, I just said, I didn't think the program was going to receive the kind of push and visibility that would make it successful. And--

M: Even though the President [inaudible]?

C: Yes, I was a critic of the welfare system then, and have remained one. And there didn't seem to be--this was in the task force phase, and there just didn't seem to me to be any realistic approach to the issue. But I was very much attracted to Shriver.

M: You liked him.

C: I liked him. Still do.

M: What was it that attracted you?

C: I think, had the President listened to Shriver--had listened to Bill Moyers and made Shriver his vice president, instead of Hubert Humphrey, that the whole picture today might have been somewhat altered. Because I think Shriver is a man of substance. Though he comes across often as just being an opportunist, he is not. He is a man of real substance.

M: Did you like his organizational ability?

C: No! No.

M: What was it that attracted you?

C: He was a wild man [?] organizationally. But he was committed to what he was doing. He was highly articulate. He swayed this country. One of these days they're going to write about Shriver in terms of pre-Shriver and post-Shriver America, in my opinion. Because the theories he put across have changed every institution in this country. You can't name an institution that is the same as it was before the OEO. Of course, I'm highly OEO-oriented. But I just think that this country has been changed more than we'll ever know, about policies and philosophy, [by] the poverty program.

M: So you refused Shriver, though.

C: Yes, I refused Shriver. For one thing, I--I was more interested in the Peace Corps then. But he had lost interest in--well, he never lost interest in it, but he was pushing this other thing, and I believe his thinking was that he then had a deputy who was providing some degree of continuity, and that he was leading Peace

Corps, and that rather than bring in a new man at the deputy level, he wanted me then to come into the OEO end of the operation.

Well, I took--I was offered and accepted the regional job, because I felt that this region, five states, was sort of poverty in microcosm, that we had every kind of poverty that existed in America in these five states. [We] had Indian, Mexican-American, black, urban, rural, you name it, we had it. And so I accepted that job with alacrity, and much enjoyment.

M: Did you have to resign your position at--?

C: Yes, I resigned my position. And it was at this point, then, of accepting that job, that I became controversial between Johnson and Connally, because as a liberal, I didn't want the poverty program to fall into the hands of reactionary governors. I considered John Connally to be a reactionary governor.

M: You wanted to bypass the states, then.

C: Well, no, I wanted the President to know that I worked for *him*. But, you see, I had also been a Connally supporter. And I heard of an occasion--in fact, the President recalled in a cabinet meeting that he had been to Texas, and he was trying to make a point, and he said, "For instance, John Connally was very upset because he said Bill Crook wasn't his man. And I said, 'You're goddamned right he's not your man! He's *my* man! This is *my* program!'" And he was using this to say to the cabinet, "You're not to let this program fall into the hands of the politicians who have kept the poor poor through the years, traditionally. You are to let this be an independent federal program."

M: There's a question about the operations of the poverty program. Why was it set up as an independent sort of agency, rather than, say, under the Department of Labor? Is there a good reason for that?

C: Well, of course. First of all, I think the President wanted to control [it] himself. Vietnam was not large on the horizon. He wanted--he believed in a Great Society. I think he had some messianic instincts there. He--he knew the deadening effect of putting anything in the Department of Labor. He set it out from under the cover of those agencies in the same way that you wouldn't put your child under a blanket. He didn't want it to be smothered. And I think he wanted to keep it in the Executive Office so that he could continue to put his--give his input to it.

And the interesting thing is that everybody said, you know--once the heat got on, and all the congressmen were mad, and all the governors, and all the mayors, and the county judges--they kept saying, "Well, it's too hot for the President now, he'll begin to put it under something else." But until the day he left, he kept it in the Executive Office of the President, and took the heat! And there are those around him who would tell you that it hurt him more than anything he did. But Johnson never interfered. Now, he would get mad as hell, and I've had him call and be very upset by the way things were going. And I've called the White House on occasions when--your idiot mayor in Houston, for instance, was raising hell--[Louie] Welch--and wanting us to sell out. And I'd say, "What are my instructions?" And the answer would come back within twenty-four hours, "Play it straight." So that the President did not sell out on this issue.

M: This raises another point on that. There has been some comment that the President--

C: Would you care for a cigar?

M: No, thank you--that the President didn't exactly lose interest, but was distracted by other things, away from OEO, and more or less let it go without any input from the President.

C: Well, that's not true. The President never lost interest. The President was hurt by OEO.

M: Yes.

C: OEO was never really his. It was Kennedy's. Not because it was Kennedy who put it across. I don't think Kennedy could have passed the Economic Opportunity Act. But it started off with very anti-Johnson people in the saddle. And Johnson tolerated this, and he never really cleaned it out. When I went to OEO, there was not a single picture of the President of the United States in any office in the Brown Building, and every office had a picture of Kennedy. They were a bunch of Kennedy worshippers. Now, I loved John Kennedy, and think, today, that--I'm the kind of guy that would still vote for Teddy, you know. But they were recognizing that what he had done was a bold, innovative, historic thing, and yet they weren't giving him any credit for it. They were questioning his motives and his methods, and many of them--it was almost a fetish with them to hate Lyndon Johnson! And they would embarrass him deliberately. And I think he did damn well to stay with OEO as long as he did.

Now, he had a sort of ambivalent feeling toward Shriver. He thought Shriver was the greatest salesman that ever came down the pike. And one day he'd be very high on him. And then I think some of the people around him would convince--convince him that Shriver too was anti-Johnson, which was not so. Sargent Shriver was absolutely loyal to the President of the United States, and took abuse from him that he shouldn't have had to take.

M: He was able to shift his loyalty from Kennedy people to Johnson people?

C: He shifted his loyalty completely, and I never heard--now, I've been with Sargent Shriver under all kinds of conditions. I've been with him when he's returned from the White House, he's been embarrassed, or humiliated, or upbraided, and I never heard him say one critical thing about Lyndon Johnson. He would say sometimes, "I don't understand him. I don't understand the man." But he never turned, and he was never disloyal.

M: Did you run afoul of the Bureau of the Budget, at all?

C: Yes. How did you know that?

M: Well, we've been working on this sort of thing. We've been talking to OEO people, and I know they--I don't know all of the story here, of course, but I know the Bureau of the Budget--of course, the Bureau of the Budget is in most everything. But I know there was some friction.

C: You mean, between me and the Bureau of the Budget.

M: Well--

C: Or between OEO and the Bureau of the Budget.

M: Between OEO and the Bureau of the Budget. But you were in OEO.

C: Yes.

M: So what happened?

C: Well, I think the Bureau questioned some of the vagaries of OEO.

M: Yes?

C: And probably rightfully so. I think the Bureau was also in the position of having to give and take. There were certain programs that the President liked and wanted them to advance, and we gave them rather low priority in OEO. They were sexy programs. Head Start was one of them. OEO wasn't big enough to handle Head Start. You know, it was a great idea, and we should have spun it off and given it to HEW. Shriver wouldn't do this. And I think Nixon's concept--certainly it isn't new to Nixon--but that it should be a spin-off agency is right. We could have been controlling $20 billion, and really been the innovative agency for Washington. But Sarge was reluctant to let a baby go. It was his idea, and he wanted to see it through the teenage years.

M: That's understandable, of course.

C: It's understandable. And I differed with Sarge, and he knows that--I used to argue for--"You've got it going your way. Now give it to somebody." Even though we--we felt that they would smother it, in many cases. But you can always maintain a supervisory relationship to a program. And, of course, Sarge had great problems with cabinet members who never quite knew who he was. He wasn't fish or fowl; he wasn't at cabinet level, but he still had great clout.

I'm critical of the Bureau of the Budget, but I'm understanding that--I think they were between a rock and a hard place. The President wanted them to save money, and he wanted to spend money.

M: Did the Bureau actively try to hinder OEO by cutting its budget?

C: I never felt that. If you mean, did the Bureau want OEO to fail, I never felt that.

M: It was not that sort of thing?

C: No, I thought the Bureau had a fiscal mentality. And when you begin to talk about "maximum feasible participation of the poor," you know, it was like talking about brain surgery to a plumber. But I never felt that there was any attempt to trip us up. It was a wildcat operation. And it made a lot of mistakes, and the kinds of mistakes that no Bureau man could excuse. But I don't think it would have survived had it been anything other than that, ironically. I think the kind of splash it made, it had to make to survive, a flamboyant kind of "we'll rid this country of poverty in ten years" faith. And we knew we couldn't.

M: Well, during the infighting, when OEO was struggling for its financing and getting its programs going, who did the fighting? Did Shriver do this? If he had an argument with, say, Kermit Gordon or somebody like that, would it be Shriver versus Gordon?

C: No, most of this occurred, as it always does, at the lower levels, and then it would be escalated. The only real personality block that I knew of was a Shriver-Wirtz block. And I think your cabinet members were very jealous of OEO, and they probably biased the Bureau, to some extent. But I can remember meeting with the Bureau, and things were so desperate that if you said something that made any

sense at all, their faces would light up, because, you know, it was just—they didn't know what the hell this program was all about. They just knew the President was hung up on it.

M: Again, Shriver plays a rather--or plays an important role in OEO. But I've heard the criticism of Shriver in that he was good for getting it going, but not for running it. Is this true?

C: Yes, I think Sarge reads all the large print. He had some pretty wild theories about--you know, he'd say, "I'd rather have a good man for six months than a poor one for three years," and he'd get a fixation on a guy's ability, and he'd bring him in, and become disenchanted with him after a month or so, when the guy wanted to really get out and slog through a program. He was no longer exciting. So he'd end up pushed away, [and] there would be somebody else in there. Well, you can't--you can't run an operation on six months' tenures. And, of course, the people who then did stay long, who wouldn't tell Sarge to go to hell, or get indignant and say, "Either you're going to do it this way, or I'm going to quit," or "That's reprehensible; I can't go with that," were not the people he needed. But, again, if Sarge had had some stabilizing voices that could give him his rein without appearing to be pulling back all the time--had they been flexible, I think Sarge would have been a much better administrator.

But I still come back to the fact that I know OEO would have died under a bureaucrat. Under somebody who got along with the Congress, and got along with the White House, OEO would have died, and I think this country--the lid would really have blown off, the summer of the great riots. OEO was never given

credit for the fact that it had established dialogue within a thousand cities, with this Community Action. And we were in dialogue with the poor. And the President was too. And Ben Ramsey was too--not Ben Ramsey; Ramsey Clark. And as bad as it was, it would have been much worse had that dialogue not been established.

M: Yes. This brings up the next question I was going to ask you about, an evaluation--

C: Am I taking too long with these answers?

M: Oh, no, this is fine. An evaluation of the OEO, and you mentioned this dialogue with the poverty people. Did OEO work to your satisfaction? If so, what were the successes and what were the failures?

C: The great success of OEO was in changing the mindset of the country, to the extent that it's been changed.

M: Does this mean an educational--?

C: Yes. First of all, we had to convince a country that was terribly traumatized by the concept of poverty that poverty even existed in America. Because all of our progress had tended to lead us away. We built freeways over it, and we built housing in front of it. We all moved out to the suburbs so that a kid could be born, and schooled, and could court and marry and settle back down in suburbia, and never really see a poor man, never really come in contact with a poor person--and still doesn't. And we were--we had all been baptized into poverty during the Depression, and we just didn't--we didn't want to be bugged with it.

And this is a great thing the President did. When he was elected, at the peak of his popularity, at the peak of prosperity in this country, when everything looked extremely rosy for Lyndon Johnson, he could have chosen any one of a number of subjects, and he picked poverty. And he made the country furious! He made the Congress furious. He rubbed our noses in the ghetto. Now, this was advanced thinking. This was one of the times when Lyndon Johnson was ahead of history. Now, if he had not done that then, even though he only had about a year-and-a-half leeway before things started erupting, what would have happened?

The three main, pressing--the three pressing problems of America today are the young, the poor, and the black. And Johnson was ahead of two of them. He never understood the young. By God, he--on race and poverty, he was ahead of his times, and if he'd had the money and wherewithal, I think he would have been on top of those issues.

M: Of the various programs of OEO, which ones do you think were the most successful?

C: Community Action. Though I hated VISTA, and I believed--

M: Does this include Head Start?

C: Head Start was under Community Action. But, again, not because Community Action was terrifically successful, as such. But it brought new concepts, new precepts, and established dialogue. It said the poor know something about poverty, and should be on your boards. And this is when all of the institutions

became threatened, because even those institutions which were established to deal with the poor would run away from them!

M: You would come in conflict with the Department of Labor on this point, wouldn't you?

C: Oh, yes, we came into conflict with everybody. That's the great thing about it. Sarge Shriver kicked every institution in America. There's not a--as I said, everybody's changed. I said this one day in a speech--I said, "Everybody but the fire department!" And somebody came up afterwards and said, "Hey, listen, I can give you an example of a fire station that's changed because of this," you know, they realized that they'd been neglecting the poor too, that there aren't any fire stations out in the poverty areas--which is something that a lot of people don't know. You've got whole--the university, particularly those in the social area--the University of Texas restructured its department of social work under one concept, that the poor should be consulted, and they should have a voice.

M: All right, the other side of the coin. Where did OEO fail in this? Where did they run into trouble?

C: OEO began failing when it began feeling the budgetary strictures and began having to talk bigger than it was in order to get through. When Sarge said--and I pled with him not to say--that he could eliminate poverty in ten years. What he said was right, given the resources. But that's not what came across in the papers, you see. And he couldn't do that. And this sort of gave a death wish to OEO--that we know we can't do that, and therefore we feel hypocritical about this.

And--but you see, in the history of mankind, no government has ever subsidized opposition before. And that's what Lyndon Johnson did. No president, no leader, no Caesar has ever had the courage. They've always said, "Give them--give them cake." Johnson said, "Give them a voice!" And every congressman was threatened, every county judge. Every vested interest was threatened like hell! Voices from across the railroad track that we'd never heard from began saying to congressmen, "Friend, whitey, we're over here!" And some congressmen rode it out; some got defeated as a result of it, and most of them turned chicken and ran.

M: Did President Johnson ever express any regrets about the pressing financial drain of Vietnam and its impact on things like OEO?

C: Not as such, that I recall, not [inaudible] to me. I went over several times to talk to him about OEO. I sort of became, I think, unfortunately for me in some cases, his voice in OEO, his man in OEO. And I would receive calls saying, "What about this idea, do you think this makes any sense," or "Can't you do something between--or about this governor who's raising so much trouble, and does he have a valid point?" No one ever called me and told me--asked me to sell out, in OEO, which I really appreciated.

But, again, the President's grasp of what we were doing was always impressive. I took him through Camp Gary once, and he had tried to get the camp to be more progressive than it was. They had a lot of broken-down bulldozers, and he said, "It doesn't do any good to spend money to train these kids on this kind of equipment, because I happen to know that the latest equipment"--and then

he went into what bulldozers were, and what tractors were, and--I remember, coming back, Lady Bird asked me how many employees we had, which was a question I had hoped that she wouldn't ask. And I told her, and she immediately gave me the ratio between the employees and the students, and she said, "That's not right! It's too heavy." And she was accurate. And Johnson would say to me--I remember once, out by the swimming pool at the Ranch, he said, "Why are you transporting these boys on airplanes instead of buses?" Well, I didn't know how he knew we were doing that! I knew we were--we were spending far too much money on transportation. But the answer was that you can't take a kid out of a ghetto and send him two thousand miles across the country on a bus that stops twenty or thirty times and expect him to arrive. You can put him on an airplane. Plus the fact that when you add up all of the meals, it really was, I suppose as--nearly broke even, in fact. But he always—he always knew enough that he could put you on the defensive. If you went in there and started talking in terms of great, philosophical things you were going to do, he'd say, "Yes, but what about this money you spent over here, on this project, in Tulsa?" And how he got that kind of information I don't know. But he always had it.

M: This raises another point. Since you mentioned the Job Corps center here, did that Job Corps center have much impact on the town of San Marcos?

C: All positive. The town would fight for the Job Corps center. None of the dire predictions of rape and mayhem and burglary and delinquency, none of those things materialized.

It had the same--it has had, economically, the same effect that an air base would have, of course, although a lot of [inaudible] the kids--if they spend money off the base, it's usually Austin or San Antonio now.

M: The President must have been especially interested in this one.

C: He was especially interested in this one. He was appreciative of the fact that when McNamara--of course, he got the first base here when he was a senator, the helicopter base at Camp Gary. Then, when McNamara cut back the six or seven hundred bases, this was one of them. It was already deactivated, but everybody had been hoping we'd get something else. And there was a great stir in town to send a wire of protest, and I met with some citizens on "what are we going to do?" And we reversed that, and sent a wire of commendation, saying, "This hurts San Marcos, but we believe what you're doing is the right thing to do." And--I don't know that he ever saw that wire or not, but I know that shortly after that, he was saying, "I want to do something for San Marcos." He knew about the base; he knew about the program; he flew over this thing in a helicopter, on the way to making a speech at the college. And when he landed, he announced [that] he took great personal pride and interest and wanted to know why he couldn't have six thousand boys instead of three thousand.

He toured it on several occasions. I saw him stand, watching a boy weld, and saw his suit absolutely ruined by sparks. And he never budged, or backed up. The sparks--it was an electrical weld, you know those sparks. He had on this beautiful blue striped oxford suit, and I saw those sparks land all over him, and

the lapel--I know it burned him! He had one burned spot on his shirt. He never budged.

M: He must have been wearing a mask.

C: He had--no, he had on glasses that they issued, but he didn't have a mask.

M: I need to pick up your point--your career, at this point. Now, last time we mentioned you had taken the regional directorship at OEO. Then what? Did you move into the directorship of VISTA after that?

C: I moved into--he still--he kept saying he wanted me in Washington. By this time, I knew I didn't want to work in the White House. I knew I didn't want to work directly under Lyndon Johnson. I was never--it was never the kind of--it was never a crony kind of relationship, where either one of us, I think, felt particularly at ease with the other one. We differed on enough things, and he knew we did. And yet, every time we met, he'd--even at the convention in Atlantic City, he waggled a finger at me, and said something like, "Why aren't you in Washington?" [Inaudible] [Laughter]

And then the small-business bureau thing came along later. Anyway, I was regional director, and very close to Shriver, and very close to Johnson. And, by this time, the President's suspicions of Shriver sometimes were a little neurotic, and I found myself always saying to people at the White House, "That's not right. That's not true." And saying to the people around Shriver who were trying to turn him against the President, "That's--he's not that way. He's not that way." And I think I played a role there that--that was positive.

Along about this time, I wrote the President to tell him that--and I recommended that Mexico be brought into this program in some way, that we were trying to deal with these border towns, and that we couldn't possibly deal with half a city; something had to happen across the border. And, on the basis of this memo, he later appointed the Mexico-United States Border Commission, which was a joint thing between the president of Mexico and the president of the United States, in which the republics now are sort of put into a Good Neighbor kind of thing. But he wanted to--he wanted it to really attack poverty in both countries. He knew that he--that Mexico was very touchy on this issue, but he felt this was a beginning. And I was very pleased that I had played that--that role. When he went to Mexico, he asked for a copy of the memo, and the next thing I heard on the radio, he'd made the announcement that this was what he was going to do.

So--and we were invited to the White House a couple of times. He always liked my wife. And we hit it off pretty well. We were invited out on the boat once or twice, two or three times, I guess. And so he was behind my going to VISTA, though he didn't know what VISTA was; he just wanted--

End of Tape 1

Beginning of Tape 2

C: --all antelope, and deer, and cattle, and farm, and butter, and--this kind of thing.

M: Were you wondering what was going on, or what he had in mind? Or did you just decide that this was just a pleasant weekend?

C: Well, I knew he always had a motive, although there had been times when we had been with him socially when no motive surfaced, anyway. But I felt, yes, that he had something in mind, at this point. And I think Marvin had hinted that the man wanted to talk to me. There had been some other offers about other agencies. He had, frankly, asked me if I wanted Shriver's job, if I wanted to head up OEO. And I did, very much, more than I wanted the ambassadorship. But by then I knew that--that the OEO future was pretty limited, with the war having escalated the way it did, and that he had--not lost interest but, I think, retreated from it. I think he was still always interested in--but there was a sense of failure there, and a sense of betrayal, that OEO really is his child [but] had not owned him as its parent, and all. The breach had occurred between Johnson and Moyers. And I guess I was one of the few people who survived that. In the President's thinking, I was always identified with Moyers. And I never--I never played my relationship with Moyers down; I never--as a lot of Bill's friends did. A lot of Bill's friends left him. I never did, and the President knew I didn't. He knew that I was in constant touch with Bill. And still he accepted me.

M: Do you want to make any comment about the public criticism that Moyers was trying to grab power, and therefore Johnson dumped him?

C: The public--yes, I'll make some--I don't believe that. I think that there were--there were differences between the two at this time. I think the people around Bill scuttled him by convincing the President that he was really a Bobby Kennedy man, and that he was leaving--he was leaving Johnson and divulging secrets to Kennedy, and that he was part of the Kennedy crowd. This wasn't so. Bill

agonized over this, but he just happened to believe that some of the things happening around the President were bad, that he had too many yes-men at that point, that they were beginning to isolate him and protect him.

I don't think Bill was grabbing power. He had power; he used it. But as far as his building up his own--his own camp, I didn't then and I don't now see any evidence of it.

M: Well, you're still on the airplane, on your way back, and you still don't know--

C: So, the steward came forward, and invited me to come back, and the President was in bed. There was no place to sit, except on the side of the bed, which I was reluctant to do. But he motioned for me to sit down, and he said to me, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "Well, I really don't know. I've been very happy in VISTA." He said, "Well, I would give you OEO, but as a Texan," he said, "I think they wouldn't give you a chance." And this made some sense to me. At that time, the anti-Texan feeling in Washington was pretty bad. And--with some reason. I mean, he brought in some good people, but he also brought in some pretty heavy-handed guys that were using the President's name recklessly. And Texas has not been known as being in the vanguard of social change, and I could see how the Eastern establishment would suspect a man who was heading up a program in trouble that maybe the President was trying to hide or scuttle. For him to put his own man in charge of it--that made political sense to me.

M: Yes.

C: Although I felt--I was ambivalent. I wanted it, and yet I was afraid of it. I knew what it could do to me. I felt, though, that I had something to offer, because by

this time I had seen--almost from the bottom up, I had seen the whole operation of OEO, and really had been--as I look back at it now--had been in line with all the progressive things we did. I didn't know of any philosophies that I would have changed. And I had managed fairly well with the Congress; I had made some people mad, but I felt right about it. I didn't--I didn't have anything to hide with the Congress.

So he named--as I went back, he said, "Well, how about the ambassador? Are you still interested in that?" I said, "Yes, I would be interested in that." He said, "Where?" I said, "South America." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, my wife speaks the language fluently, and I am--I get along in it. And we have an interest in South America, and we've always been interested in the Mexican-American problem and Mexico." And so he named off four or five possibilities in South America, and then he said, "Well, what about Spain?" And I said, "Spain--I think it would be very exciting." He said, "All right. I'll be in touch with you." So, about three days later, I got a call from Angie Biddle Duke, who had just returned from [being] ambassador to Spain, and was head of protocol. And he called, and I went over, and he said, "The President wants you to go to Spain, and I think it's a great idea, and I'm all for it. They need a young man over there." And he told me about the embassy, and I went home and started reading up on Spain.

Then we got a call one Sunday afternoon about two weeks later. By this time I had read everything on Spain I could find. And we got a call to go boating, with the Mahons and the Johnsons.

M: This is George Mahon.

C: Yes. By the way, I want to come back to that; there's an anecdote [inaudible].

And, again, the President called me to his bedroom. He had been taking a nap. And he was dressing, and he said--

M: Is this on shipboard, or is this--?

C: No, this is at the White House.

He said, "I've been thinking about Spain." And he said, "It's an awful--awfully static situation. About all you'd have to do there is renegotiate some treaties." Then he said, "Besides that, Bill, it just doesn't make any sense to send a Baptist preacher to Spain!" [Laughter] Which really gigged me, because I had forgotten that particular emphasis of my life, you know, and I was a little sore that he had rubbed it in. But, again, politically he was exactly right. They would have just [inaudible].

So he named off some other countries: Brazil, and Burma, Poland. But he said, "I think I know a man for Poland." Ireland--he said, "Oh, you don't want to go to Ireland." And he went into the bathroom, and left me. I thought, "Well, this is it. No ambassadorship now. Back to VISTA." But he yelled out--he said, "If I could be ambassador anywhere in the world, you know where I'd go?" And I said, "No, sir." He said, "I'd go to Australia." I said, "Mr. President, if that's your choice, I accept!" [Laughter]

And so we sort of sealed it there, and we went out on the boat, and he called--he said, "Don't say anything to anybody." So, of course, my wife was curious. I couldn't tell--I could just sort of look smug. She was furious with me--[whispers "Where did he say?"] [Laughter] So we got out on the boat, and

he called her topside, and said, "Eleanor, I'm going to send Bill to Australia, and I hope you'll go with him."

But we had--I had a flash insight into the man's dealing, and wheeling, with Mahon, and how he begins, always, with the concrete, and moves into the abstract. I think this is his--I think--you could make a real study of his need to have tangible things, the Ranch, the rocks and trees, illustrations from his own personal experience. He always refers back to bills on these. He was trying to get money out of Mahon for--for health, medicine. Mahon was saying, "Mr. President, we've just got to put the brakes on." And so he said, "You know, George, ten years ago, I had a heart attack. Nothing but scientific advance saved my life." And he said, "That was ten years ago, and every year since then, I have paid about $100,000 personal income tax. That means that I have paid a million dollars back to the government, because I lived ten years longer than I would have."

M: [Laughter]

C: And Mahon just blanched white. And the President swung his swivel chair around, and ordered something to drink, and Mahon said, "What the hell you gonna do with a man like that?" [Laughter]

But, again, it was a concrete thing. It made sense. You couldn't argue with it. What he was saying is, you keep the people living longer, and the government will come out with more money. So, we're not asking you to spend it; we're asking you to invest it.

M: Do you know if Mahon was convinced?

C: I don't--yes, well, he was convinced that day. Now, I don't know what happened in the long, labyrinthine ways of the Congress. But Mahon--he was stunned! He just couldn't argue with that. The President's personal life was involved in it.

M: Well, did you have any difficulty at all with the Senate confirmation?

C: None, no.

M: You just went right through?

C: Went right through.

M: Did you have a hearing--?

C: Ralph Yarborough came in person and made a superlative presentation.

M: Did you contact Yarborough before your name was presented to the Senate? And did you check it out with Yarborough?

C: Yes. Yes, I went to see all the senators on the--

M: And [John] Tower?

C: --on that committee. Yes, and Tower.

M: Is this customary?

C: It's a courtesy that you do well to perform, yes.

M: Before the name is submitted?

C: Yes.

But Yarborough was not on that committee. He was just my senator. But when the hearing came up, Yarborough came in person, and made a presentation, which he had not--I had not asked him to do. Again, I have been in the very uncomfortable but unique position of being a friend of Ralph Yarborough and a

friend of Lyndon Johnson simultaneously, and I don't think I've crossed the line either way as far as personal friendship is concerned.

M: You might have some insight about that, too, then. The two men, Johnson and Yarborough, seemingly have liberal instincts, on a number of points, and yet they don't get along. So wherein lies the difficulty?

C: I think that--one can be very simplistic here, which I'm going to be, and I'm sure it won't explain the cause, but if you were a senator, a junior senator, with never a real voice in the state because the senior senator was so powerful, you would resent it, but you would say, "Well, the time will come when I'll get out from under this man. He'll die, or move on, or something, and I'll get to be senior senator." So the man gets to be vice president, and you become senior senator. But as vice president, he still holds the state, and he still passes on the patronage. And you think, "Well, I'm stuck. I'm senior senator now, and I've got a junior senator under me, but I still don't have any clout in my state!" And, next thing you know, he's the president of the United States! So, as far as I'm concerned, Ralph Yarborough, right now, for the first time, enters into his prerogatives as senior senator, but now it's under a Republican president! The man ought to be frustrated! [Laughter]

I doubt that the difficulties and jealousies are any greater than they are between most senators and their presidents, and so forth. I think Ralph Yarborough is a--also a very temperamental, in some ways very superficial man, who listens too much to a lot of small people around him.

M: You had no trouble with Tower in your appointment?

C: No. [It] would [not] have done any good, because the senior senator speaks on that. Tower--I always went to see Tower, both in the case of the regional office and in VISTA, and the ambassadorial appointment. I did it out of courtesy, and I did it the last two times in spite of Tower's coldness and indifference to the whole thing. Tower is--visiting Tower, the only unpleasant situation I've encountered--he's just a man utterly lacking in warmth or congeniality. If my motivation was an attempt to show courtesy, I don't think he interpreted it that way.

I did it on Moyers' advice the first time, and the second two times because I felt it was the sort of thing I should do. I would never do it again.

M: Well, then, did you visit with the President before you left for Australia?

C: Well, the Prime Minister of Australia came over. And we were invited to that affair, and then we had this hysterical experience. I thought my appearances were fulfilled, and I went to a party at Bert Harding's house, and the Prime Minister flew to New York and was supposed to be out here at the Ranch to meet with General Westmoreland. And the President decided he wanted me there, that he wanted visibility for me, and he wanted me to be the second man off that airplane. And my wife--I left one party in Washington and went to another one. By this time, the White House had been calling for several hours. They were holding a Boeing 707 to fly me to Washington. The White House driver was at the house, and this colonel--I don't know who he was, but he kept calling, and he got very insistent--he kept saying--he said finally, "Mrs. Crook, if your husband is not the second man off that airplane at the Ranch, I cannot be responsible! But I know

I'm going to be!" he said. "I know I'm going to get the rap for this!" [Laughter] When I arrived home, about one o'clock in the morning, and saw all these lights flashing, and—a quite angry wife. She had brought in half my staff to try to locate me, and I said, "Well, how am I going to get there?" She said, "I hope they helicopter all the way! I hope they fly you from Washington to Austin in a helicopter!"

But it worked out, and I went to the Ranch then with Prime Minister [John G.] Gorton, and met with Westmoreland and the President at the summit meeting on Vietnam.

M: Of course, the next question is what did you talk about? [Inaudible]

C: Well, yes, of course, there were classified aspects to it. But, in the main, the progress of the war. I think Westmoreland at that point was overly optimistic, and made us that way. I think the President was beginning to sort of disengage; I think he was beginning to be a little more objective about it. And he didn't seem--he himself was not enthusiastic, but he let Westmoreland be enthusiastic.

M: Then, how soon after that did you leave for Australia?

C: About a month after that.

M: And you got to Australia, and the puppy was there to meet you. Apparently while you were there, you took a tour of Vietnam, did you not? It must have been about October of 1968 or so.

C: Well, it was just before the bombing halt, which came in November, that's right.

M: Was there any particular purpose for that tour?

C: Yes. As far as the public was concerned, it was an orientation tour. But I met with [Amb. Ellsworth] Bunker and [Gen. Creighton] Abrams, and we discussed the bombing halt. I was a part of the--a very minor part of the planning and the coordinating. And I was there the week that it was supposed to have been announced, before [South Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Van] Thieu went sour. I was in on all the activity, and left there thinking it was going to be announced within twenty-four hours. I rushed back to my embassy, to be informed that it had been postponed.

M: Do you have any opinion about the wisdom of the bombing halt? Does it work? Did it work?

C: No, it obviously didn't work, if the purpose of it was to bring a settlement. I think it was the right decision to make, because I'm a--I'm a believer in the territorial imperative theory, that the more you hit the other fellow on his own grounds, the greater his morale becomes, and the greater his determination to withstand you becomes. I think probably militarily, we are worse off than we were. Psychologically, I think we are better off than we were.

M: Well, then, the decision for a bombing halt, as you see it, was announced to the public to bring about a peaceful solution?

C: There's no question about that.

M: A gesture of cooperation?

C: Yes, yes. It was much more than a gesture. A gesture is a painless thing. This was a very painful decision to make. The question being, in the President's mind, I think, which way would we lose the most men.

See, I was with Johnson one night, earlier in the war. It was during the Buddhist-Catholic confrontation. And a very small group in the room. And the President was in a very, very bad mood. He was depressed, he was moody. And I don't know what the subject of discussion was, but I know he had lapsed into silence, very pensive, and he just broke into the conversation by saying, "They want me to pull out. But if I pull out, there will be eighty thousand Catholics slaughtered [in] the first thirty days." And, of course, the room became completely silent. It was a moment I think--I doubt that he even knew at first he was speaking aloud. He was agonizing on this decision. So it was never as easy as the public thought it was. He always had an alternative problem if he did--if he made this move.

M: Do you have any opinion about the military advice that he received on Vietnam? Did they resist this idea of a bombing halt for a minute?

C: Oh, sure, sure. I don't think Abrams did. I think Abrams is a rather enlightened military man, who genuinely hates the war. But neither am I prone to say that the military wants the war. What I think we're up against here is the inability to draw from an experience bank to deal with a situation that has never existed before. And I heard [Theodore] Sorensen on television the other day say that Kennedy would never have escalated this war. I don't believe that. Because even Kennedy had to deal with all the experience that went before him, and all the experience that America's ever known has been "By God, *win* it! Don't lose face. Unconditional surrender." And I don't know that the Johnson-Kennedy-McCarthy generation has produced a man that can yet tell us what to do, in this [case]. I

think, suddenly, the computer has gone dry, and nobody is able to program a new computer yet.

[Interruption]

M: Well, then, the President agonized over Vietnam.

C: Yes. Yes, I think he really agonized over it. I think he agonized over it every bit as much as Lincoln agonized over his war.

M: This brings up another point, somewhat in connection with this. Were you surprised when he decided not to run again?

C: I think everybody was surprised at that. In fact, I not only was surprised, I was embarrassed, because I had said repeatedly, "Well, there's one thing I know, and that is he will run again." After the fact, I wondered why I hadn't seen some of the evidences. Marvin Watson was surprised, and Marvin was the closest man to him at that point. He didn't--Marvin didn't tell his wife until an hour before the speech, when he called her and told her to come over. It was that closely a guarded secret.

M: That must have been an agonizing decision for a man like Lyndon Johnson.

C: Yes, I think there was no question. It probably--he rose to his greatest height of self-discipline in order to do it. And I am sure--I've seen him recently--all the rumors you hear about him being morose, and withdrawn, are false. He's the most relaxed I've ever seen him. I'm sure that--there must be moments of satisfaction, when suddenly the man who had all the answers is having the same problems with no solutions that he had. He's a man--we're all men caught up in our times, and suddenly unable to cope with them.

M: Well, while you were ambassador to Australia, did you report back to Johnson about the missions in Vietnam, and [inaudible] and that sort of thing?

C: Yes, although I tried not to get myself in the same position I had been in in OEO, and did not short-circuit the State Department. I maintained a friendly correspondence with him. I shared some humorous things with him, some light things. And I kept him informed on his popularity in Australia, which, of course, was and is, I suppose, the highest of anywhere in the world. He's an extremely popular man in Australia. And I would tell him, you know, he could be elected prime minister of Australia next if he wanted [inaudible].

M: Is the key to his popularity the Vietnam War?

C: No, not at all. The key to his popularity there, I think, is his personality. He's the kind of man the Aussies understand. He's rough-hewn, he's not effete. He paid more attention to Australia than any president has ever done. They've been terribly flattered by that. He attended the [Harold] Holt funeral. They all knew, had it [not] been for Lyndon Johnson, there would have been no other head of state there. And once he announced it, why, royalty from all over and presidents from everywhere arrived. And they felt that he paid singular honor to their country when he did that.

They've got a real problem. Lyndon Johnson drew the greatest crowds of any living--of any person ever in Australia. And, now that they have the Queen coming next year, they're terribly embarrassed as to how they're going to get the kind of turnout for their Queen that they got for the President of the United States! [Laughter]

M: Well, did you stay on there in Australia then, on to the end of his term?

C: Yes. When he appointed me, he said, "Now, I'm going out of office, but if Humphrey is elected, there's no question that you'll be asked to stay on. If Nixon should be elected," he said, "there will be no hurry." He said, "I didn't change my ambassadors quickly, and it's a very bad thing to do. I think you can stay on for a couple of years, if you want to." And I said, "Well, I'm not sure, Mr. President, that I would stay on under a Republican. I'm sure I would stay on under Mr. Humphrey."

And then, after the election, I sent word to him that I was submitting my resignation. You know, there are two ways you do that. One is the form route, which really says that if you want me to stay on, I will. And one is the personal resignation, which says I mean business, I'm going to resign. And that's the one I sent in. As it turned out, it wouldn't have mattered, because Nixon took all Democrats out, immediately.

M: Well, you wanted to resign, then.

C: I wanted to resign. I would have--I would have stayed on another couple of months for a smoother transition, because Australia was very shaky at that time. But it really didn't matter. I was ready to come home. It was a good experience. I would never be an ambassador again. But I wouldn't take anything for having been one.

M: Did you do anything in particular to ease the transition to the Nixon Administration?

C: Well, I tried to do everything possible. I tried to reassure Australia that Nixon would be Pacific-oriented, which, of course, he's now proven. And [I tried] not to be non-supportive of him. Everyone knew how I felt; I couldn't suddenly switch around and say he's the greatest president we ever had. And, of course, there were two prime minister's visits to America at that time, which I coordinated and worked with.

M: A few questions about individuals. Did you have any difficulty with Dean Rusk?

C: No, because I had very little contact with Dean Rusk. He was there when I was sworn in; I paid him a visit before that. I admired him; I felt that he was a very proper, distant kind of man. For instance, I came back expecting to dislike [William P.] Rogers, and was charmed by him, by his warmth and his amiability. I think Rusk was more of the Dulles type, the aristocrat as a secretary of state.

M: How about other cabinet officers? I don't know how much contact you had with them. Some, I assume.

C: I had some contact with Wirtz. I had more contact with [John] Gardner, who is a personal friend of mine. I had lunch with him yesterday. John Gardner was committed to the kinds of things that I believed in, and he tried to take my program away from me once. He wanted VISTA over in HEW, and we slugged that out toe-to-toe, and came out respecting each other.

The other cabinet members--of course, when Watson went in, I was very close to Marvin, and, again, this is something I'm rather pleased with, that I was able to maintain a friendship with stolid, conservative Marvin Watson and not give up the friendship with the liberal wing of the White House.

M: Now, that's a man who has caught a lot of press criticism, and talk of "Marvin Watsonism" in Washington, these kinds of--is that a misjudgment?

C: I don't know, the press has to polarize things to get them across, and blow it up so you can see it. I think Marvin was exactly what Lyndon Johnson described him to be. He was totally Lyndon Johnson, and whatever he did he thought was for the boss's good. I felt as though he protected him too much, and was not nearly as flexible as Moyers, who would let the President hear criticism, and let him see people who didn't agree with him. Marvin, I think, on civil rights would be far to the right of Johnson, and yet if he knew Johnson wanted the bill, he'd work for it. But he is--he is a conservative. He's a man, I think, of impeccable character. I don't think he's a small person. He's never been that way with me; he's never done small things. But if he's your enemy, you have an enemy on your hands.

M: [Laughter] What was the difficulty with Wirtz? Wirtz apparently had trouble with other cabinet officers--

C: I think Wirtz was tired. He has an unfortunate disposition and personality. He is a good thinker; he makes--the finest speeches of anyone in the administration, at that time, Wirtz would make. He was a petty man; he was threatened. Shriver threatened him.

But, more than that, the whole administration sort of creaked to an end, you know. We were all tired. Hell, you can't work for Lyndon Johnson and not be tired. He could keep six people in a room busy, and still have time to call six other ones.

M: How about [Stewart] Udall?

C: I never--I never knew Udall.

M: Wilbur Cohen?

C: I admired Wilbur. I had only superficial contacts with him; again, programmatic contacts. I did not admire Wilbur's vacillation after he took the job. I felt that he let some courageous decisions sort of go by the board, rather than come out and make them strenuously. I guess, with Wilbur, I really respected the fact that the President respected him more than anything else.

M: How about Joe Fowler?

C: I didn't know Fowler [inaudible].

M: How about the White House staff? Did you have much contact with, say, Joe Califano?

C: Yes, socially and professionally.

M: A man of ability?

C: Oh, no question that Joe is a man of ability. Joe did not have the President's ear, as people thought he did. The President referred to him once to me as "that mechanic."

Joe, I think, was much more ambitious than Moyers, much more.

M: That's an interesting statement.

C: And much less willing to run a risk, with a Califano stamp. If you had an idea, he'd try it out first, and then he--if it was good, Joe would run with it. But he didn't want--I think he was deathly afraid of the President. I think he jumped a foot when that buzzer rang.

M: [Laughter]

C: Which a lot of people did. But those are not the people who served him best.

M: How about Douglass Cater?

C: Doug always struck me--and I guess I had spent more time with Doug professionally than anybody else, but he always struck me as sort of an amiable schoolmarm. And, again, I think Doug limited his influence by his reluctance to stand up to the President.

M: How about George Reedy?

C: Well, I'd almost forgotten about George Reedy.

M: Had he lost his usefulness?

C: No, when I knew him, he was at the height of his usefulness. I think George was one of the smart ones who was able to gauge his own physical stamina to the point to say, "I can't take any more, I've got to get out of this." George was, in my opinion, sometimes abused, because he was the kind of big, cuddly bear that, you know, you could push around a bit. I don't know really how astute George was, but I know that his--you know, was the President popular because of George Reedy, or was George Reedy there when the President was popular? I didn't believe the credibility thing about--the fact that the President's--and I've heard the President say this, that his popularity was at an all-time low when Moyers was there. I don't think it was because of Moyers. And I don't think that all of the king's horses on Wall Street could have put that egg back together again at that particular time, either. The President was unpopular because of the mood of the country and because of some of the things the President had done.

M: That must have [been] a tough job to step into, when Moyers had to take over.

C: Yes, and Moyers didn't want it. Moyers resisted it, pled with him not to make him take it, and they had some long, long sessions on that. Moyers threatened to resign, and meant it on several occasions. The job was thrust on him.

M: How about some of the congressional liaison men in the White House? Barefoot Sanders?

C: Barefoot is a man of great ability. And he's an easygoing--the congressmen understood him, trusted him. He never seemed to panic. He had some tight squeaks, but--I was always anxious to cooperate with Barefoot, because, again, he's a man, I think, of integrity. I don't think he ever threw himself behind something he didn't believe in.

M: Larry O'Brien?

C: I didn't know Larry well. I probably was biased a bit about Larry by some of the--some of the Texas pols that obviously didn't--basically he was still a Kennedy man.

M: How about Walter Jenkins?

C: Walter Jenkins is one of the best men that you could possibly know. A thoroughgoing gentleman. A man who really, I think, gave up everything for Lyndon Johnson, and a tragic figure.

M: I have heard from other sources that when Jenkins left, there was just no one to replace him.

C: I think that's true. Walter knew the President very well. He knew his moods, and his whims, the kind of men he liked, the kind of men that he would depend on. Here, again, Walter--he would always--he was always available. You'd start off

by saying, "Well, the one man I'm not going to bug with this is Walter Jenkins, because I know he's been on the phone five hundred times today." And you'd end up putting a call through to Walter Jenkins, and he'd pick up the phone. He was there.

I don't think he had a mean thought in his whole mental frame. He gave everything to the White House. And had somebody been perceptive--had the President been perceptive, he would have seen, three months before Walter's breakdown, that he had to get him out, that he just had to get him some relief.

M: Did you have much contact with John Macy?

C: Yes. Yes.

M: He plays somewhat of a unique role, apparently, one that hadn't been played before, as a presidential talent scout. Again, is he a man of ability?

C: Oh, sure, John Macy could head up Ford, or Rockefeller, or--he knew people, people liked him. He was totally loyal to the President--at times, I think, in ways that hurt him. He was tough, a good judge of character, available, tried to do what the President wanted, and then when he wasn't able to, I think that--I think they never had a parting of ways, but John lost his influence. Mainly because the President would agree to somebody going into a spot, and then if the fellow didn't turn out, why, John got the rap for it. Or sometimes the President would insist on putting a man in that John didn't want, and if he didn't turn out, John got the rap for it!

M: [Laughter] The President was apparently intensely interested in his appointments, overly so, seemingly, and he scrutinized appointments to a great extent. Do you think that's true?

C: Yes. I don't know what emphasis you're putting on the word "scrutinized."

M: Well, I mean, thoroughly look into a man, and be interested in who he was appointing, even on a lower level.

C: Yes. Which may have slowed down the wheel some, and kept offices vacant for longer periods of time than they should have been. And, also, the President being a man of glands and mood, he would today approve of a man he wouldn't [have] approved of yesterday, and vice versa.

M: Any comment about--any general comment that you might have about the working of the White House staff? Did it operate efficiently, from what you've seen of it?

C: Well, I don't know--it would be very presumptuous of me to say it did or it didn't. My relations with the White House were always satisfactory. I always felt that--I didn't take advantage; I never tried to get the highest guy I could get. I tried to go where I thought the answer might be. There--with Lyndon Johnson, you're--again, you're dealing with a man who expects too much. And had he divided the White House into two separate staffs, a day shift and a night shift, I think he would have had one hell of an operation. But he can never transist [?] between personalities. And if Moyers is there at eight o'clock in the morning, by God, why isn't he here at ten o'clock tonight when I've got this idea?

This is why the wives have never been particularly great fans of Lyndon Johnson, because he takes their husbands and he's apt to tell them that they shouldn't have any more children, and that he wants them out at the Ranch, and that they can cancel their own programs, and if it's a babysitter, you know, get a babysitter to sit with your sick child for three days, I want you out at the Ranch! And if he had time to focus on the problem, it would be different. But he--he was very demanding of his staff. And I think that a lot of the unpleasantness around the White House under Lyndon Johnson was due to the fact that people were irritated and tired, and weary, and sick of Lyndon Johnson, from time to time.

One of the great stories is of one of the aides who--who took off without the President knowing it for a few days, and came back with a suntan. And the President wanted to know how in the hell he got that suntan, and put him in the doghouse for about three weeks, refused to talk to him [or] have anything to do with him, because he was out getting a suntan when everybody else was--had their White House pallor! [Laughter]

M: Well, this would all add up to the point that Lyndon Johnson was a difficult man to work for, and that--

C: Yes, well, I don't--I wouldn't want to be dramatic here, but I think Lyndon Johnson was a difficult man to work for in the way that Alexander the Great [was] a totally difficult man to work for. If a man isn't difficult, if he's on the same wave length of harmony with everybody else, he probably is without great use.

We will see Johnson, to the extent that he was a victim of history, and that his policies were consistent with the body of knowledge available at his time--we

will see Johnson vindicated. I had lunch with John Gardner, as I told you, yesterday, and had lunch with him two weeks ago, and when I left him two weeks ago, he said, "If you see my old friend Lyndon Johnson, you tell him history is going to vindicate him." And, to show you how responsive the President is, still, I came home and dropped him a note, and had the answer back within forty-eight hours, saying, "I appreciate the generous words of John Gardner."

To what extent is the presidency the president? To what extent can he be held accountable for all of the inconsistencies that occurred under his [inaudible]? I don't know. I just know that he--he's one hell of a tall man. And I think he served his country very, very well, and may be called to serve it again in some other capacity.

M: Well, perhaps on that note, I should call the interview at an end.

C: Very good.

End of Tape 2 and Interview I

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