INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL V. DI SALLE

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

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B: This is the interview with Governor Michael V. DiSalle. Sir, if I may, subject to your additions and corrections, just outline very briefly your background. You were born in 1908 in Toledo; law degree from Georgetown in Washington. In the '30's and '40's you held various positions in the Ohio legislature and the Toledo city government, climaxing in 1948 with two terms as mayor of Toledo. And in the '50's you were here in Washington as Director of Price Stabilization. Then from '59 to '63 governor of Ohio; and since '63 you've been in private law practice, first in Columbus and since 1966 in Washington.

D: There are a few corrections. I was born in New York City instead of Toledo. And I was elected mayor of Toledo in 1948 and served one term, was reelected for a second term, and resigned in the middle of my second term at the request of President Truman. I came down to Washington to serve as Director of Price Stabilization. My term for governor ran from 1959 to 1963.

B: When did you first meet Mr. Johnson?

D: It was during my tenure as Director of the Office of Price Stabilization. I'd heard of Lyndon Johnson over the years. Of particular interest were his two campaigns for the Senate which brought him a great deal of publicity. I knew of him as NYA administrator, but never got to meet him until he became Majority Whip.

B: Is it fair to say that he was known among Democratic party workers

before he became a leader in the Senate?

D: I don't think so. I don't think he was known. He was known in Washington, but I don't think he was known among Democrats across the country.

B: For example, yourself, being a party leader in Ohio, you just heard generally that there is such a person as Lyndon Johnson?

D: Yes, I knew of him, but didn't know much about him. But then, as Director of the Office of Price Stabilization, I had occasion to meet with him in the White House and in connection with our legislative programs. And I found that he already was the leader in fact. Although Senator McFarland was the Majority Leader, it was Senator Johnson that was the strong man in that combination. That was very obvious.

B: You mean if you wanted legislation passed, you maybe paid a courtesy call on Senator McFarland, but went to Lyndon Johnson?

D: I think that it was very evident that he was the mover in that duo. But, of course, we were controllers at the time. I think that Senator Johnson at that time was the Senator from Texas and he was deeply interested in the Texas interests--cattle, oil, things of that kind, cotton. Since we had the control of all three, there were points where we might have separated company.

B: Did that actually occur, sir? Did you and he have ever debate the merits--?

D: Oh, we never had any debate, but we noticed that he was much more effective on other pieces of legislation than the legislation that might affect those special interests.

B: Did you look upon that as something that a Senator from a cattle, oil,

and gas state would have to do?

D: We learned to understand this. It wasn't something that I personally felt I would want to do if I was a Senator. But Senators who did have a better record of being elected and reelected than I did.

B: In this kind of work, was there ever anything like Mr. Johnson having to, say, publicly oppose controls in those areas for the benefit of his constituents but still, more privately, giving assistance to the Administrative program?

D: I don't believe so. I don't think he publicly opposed. I think his opposition was much more effective--

B: It really worked--

D: Within the legislative halls. Actually, although he disagreed, I never knew of him to publicly disagree. It was more a foot-dragging operation. And I knew that even when we met with the President, it was quite evident where he stood.

B: Did this actually affect the state of the control program?

D: I think it did. At that time we had Sam Rayburn as Speaker. Sam wasn't very much in sympathy with controls on cattle. It might have been, too, that I was not smart enough or experienced enough to have gone in and cleared some of these regulations with them before announcing them. But the chances are if I had tried to clear them, we'd have had real problems.

B: You might not have gotten any farther than--?

D: That's right.

B: Did you see anything of the relationship between then Senator Johnson and President Truman? How did they get along?

D: Actually, not as well as later day historians seem to think. I think

there was real pull. I don't think that Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson at that time--who worked pretty much as a team--were in total sympathy with Truman's programs. I think this accounted for a lot of the problems that Truman had with his programs on the Hill.

B: Could you tell if there were any particular parts of President Truman's Fair Deal program that Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson particularly disliked?

D: I wasn't that close to the whole program because at that time I was working full-time on the price side. We had in at least part of that period, people like Charlie Wilson--from General Electric, not General Motors--and Lucius Clay in the Office of Defense Mobilization. There was a great deal of conflict there with what we thought ought to be controls and what they thought ought to be controls. I would think that the legislative leadership, with people like Johnson and Rayburn, would be more in tune with their idea of what controls ought to be.

B: Did you have any contact with Mr. Johnson in these years in Democratic party matters?

D: No, I didn't. I don't really think that there was a great deal of activity on Mr. Johnson's part in Democratic party matters. He was a Senator from Texas. He was interested in the legislative process. He was excellent in being able to secure the things he really wanted, and to keep from happening the things he didn't want.

B: By the late '50's there was apparently some differences of opinion between the Democratic National Committee, particularly its advisory council, and Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn.

D: Yes, there was, and I think that possibly they were right--Rayburn

and Johnson were right. They were the leaders of the Democratic minority--and majority. Certainly I don't think they should have been bound by a policy that was completely partisan in nature.

B: Is it possible that in that antagonism there were personalities too--that Mr. Johnson and Paul Butler just didn't get along?

D: I'm sure that Johnson and Paul Butler never got along very well. Rayburn and Paul Butler seemed to get along better. But I think that Johnson had a certain arrogance. He kept himself to the Senate pretty well and to legislation where he always looked to Rayburn for a partnership.

Paul Butler of course had a different function. And, of course, I know something about it because in 1954 I was a candidate for national chairman with Mr. Truman's implied, and very often his implicit, support. Sam Rayburn came into New Orleans, where the national committee meeting was held, and wanted to withhold any decision. But when this was impossible he supported Paul Butler who was then elected with the support of Rayburn and Stevenson.

B: Was Mr. Johnson involved in that too?

D: I think only as it was related to Sam Rayburn's appearance there. You know, it was later that Rayburn and Truman, and Johnson and Truman were to become close. But in those days there was very little consultation between them.

B: Is it in those days that in party matters like that Johnson just deferred to Rayburn?

D: I think so because he had his own job to do, and he worked full time at it.

B: When did you as an active Democratic leader first begin to see signs

of ambitions beyond the Senate in Mr. Johnson?

D: I think immediately.

B: As soon as you knew him?

D: He was chairman of the Senate Preparedness Committee in 1951--in the early days of the price job. His committee was one that took interest in the control program as part of that. I never had any question in my mind that he would never be content just to be a Senator from Texas.

B: Which meant that he must have been looking for the Presidency.

D: Yes.

B: Do you think then in 1956, when he was a favorite son nominee of the Democratic convention, that he might have had in mind being something more than just a favorite son?

D: I don't think he was serious at the time. I think he realized that Stevenson was a cinch. But I think he was looking ahead to 1960.

B: That brings us up to the 1960 preconvention campaign. You were governor of Ohio at the time. Did Mr. Johnson make a real attempt, so far as you could tell to get the nomination, and how did he go about it?

D: I think that he was interested. I think his strategy was wrong, tactics were wrong. I think that he misconstrued the power he had in Washington with power in the Democratic party. I think he relied greatly on the power that his colleagues in the Senate might have within their own states. At the time the state organizations were actually influenced by the governors of those states rather than the Senators.

Then I think possibly the strategy was tried in some sort of

attempt to stop Jack Kennedy, who was the early front runner. I remember getting calls from people in Washington saying that if I wanted to oppose Jack Kennedy in the Ohio primary that I would not have to be concerned about funds. These were people I'd known for some time and people that I felt were close to Johnson, although there was nothing that they said that would indicate that they were speaking for Johnson--on his behalf, or even related directly or indirectly.

For example, I had one visitor, Hubert Humphrey with Jim Rowe. This was after I had announced for Kennedy. Jim Rowe and Humphrey both felt that they were going to beat Kennedy in Wisconsin and in West Virginia and then they'd be back to see me. I told them that that would be fine, I'd love to see them, but I wished that they wouldn't wait that long because I didn't think that they'd ever come back if they were going to wait for those two eventualities.

But the next time I saw Jim Rowe was at the convention when he was floor managing Johnson's campaign. I had no reason to feel that Jim Rowe was--or that Humphrey was a stalking horse for Johnson in this campaign. But the presence of Jim Rowe that I had known as a long time Johnson friend certainly gave me that feeling. Of course I didn't care. I thought Jim Rowe certainly was entitled to support his friend Lyndon Johnson if he wanted to.

B: If this isn't too impertinent a question, but at that time what was the reason for your decision to opt for Kennedy rather than Johnson or anyone else?

D: It's contained better in a memorandum I wrote in February of 1960. A friend of mine in Cincinnati was going to have to make a speech before a service club on conventions, and he wanted some anecdotes.

So I wrote some anecdotes for him. I said, "I might as well tell you what's going to happen at the convention. On the first ballot, we're going to be faced with a choice between Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. And at that time people like Dave Lawrence, DiSapio, Dick Daley, Williams, Pat Brown, are all going to have to make the decision I've already made. In a Northern state they just would have no reason to go for Johnson. They'd just have to go for Jack Kennedy." At that time Johnson did not have the reputation of being liberal. He was associated with conservative causes and conservative people. The leaders in the North would have to go for a liberal candidate. I thought it was just that obvious.

Of course, one other reason is I knew Jack Kennedy better. One of the problems with Lyndon Johnson at that time as far as the national Democratic party was concerned was that he was not known in the North. He was known, but not on a personal basis. If we had a fund-raising dinner or we had our state convention, if we'd try to get Lyndon Johnson, it was impossible. Jack Kennedy was available, and he'd come into the state and he made friends. I opposed him for the Vice Presidential nomination in 1956. In fact, I put Estes Kefauver's name in nomination. But in spite of that--I was a candidate for governor that year--Kennedy kept coming in. And he came in '58 during my campaign. He came in for the state convention, and he was always there. So we got to know him, and we liked him.

B: And you would ask Mr. Johnson for this kind of help and--

D: He just was too busy in Washington. I may be wrong on this, but if I am, I'm not too far wrong. I don't recall Lyndon Johnson making an appearance at a political affair in Ohio during the '50's, up

until possibly late '59 or something at that time--but not before that.

B: You know, it's curious for a man whom everyone describes as being a consummate politician to have what I guess amounts to a strategic or tactical shortsightedness as to how national conventions work.

D: I don't think this is unusual. I think people who are Washington-oriented misjudge the rest of the country. They misjudge their prominence in Washington for prominence in Cleveland or Columbus. Then they find out that they're not known in Cleveland or Columbus or Kalamazoo or Lansing or Chicago.

B: Kennedy was shrewd enough to figure this out?

D: He had been across the country many, many times.

B: Did this memorandum you wrote early in 1960 go on to include what might happen to the Vice Presidential position?

D: No, it did not. I went on to say that Humphrey would be knocked out by double defeats in Wisconsin and West Virginia; that Symington would be waiting for a deadlock that wouldn't occur and would be left at the post. But in connection with this Vice Presidency, if I was going to select a candidate for Vice President, it wouldn't have been Lyndon Johnson for the same reasons. There are other people that I knew better like Symington or Humphrey or other people like that. But when Jack Kennedy asked a group of the people that supported him what they thought about Lyndon Johnson, I was quick to tell him that he had traveled the country. He knew the country. He was the man who would have to work with the Vice President, and certainly whoever he selected we would support. As soon as he said Lyndon Johnson was his choice, I brought the message back to the Ohio caucus and they unanimously supported Johnson.

B: This group that you say Mr. Kennedy asked for advice--do you recall who else was included in that?

D: There were two groups. Abe Ribicoff and I sat through both meetings. The first meeting was held with Northern leaders, and I think in that group were Soapy Williams, Dave Lawrence, Carmine DiSapio, Dick Daley, Pat Brown, possibly Mike Pendergast from New York, myself, Ribicoff, John Bailey. Of that group the only person who spoke out in opposition to Johnson was Williams because of his strong labor organization he had in Detriot and the fact that Johnson had opposed civil rights and liberal legislation generally. At least this is what they thought.

B: When was this? Was this that night after--?

D: It was the morning following the nomination. Then, later, right after this meeting broke up, came Southern leaders like Terry Sanford, Luther Hodges, Senator Ed Brown from South Carolina, Beuford Ellington--a number of the people from the South, governors and state leaders. And, of course, they were unanimous in support of Johnson.

B: At the meeting of the Northern leaders, did you get the impression that Kennedy had already decided, that he was just asking for ratification or possible veto?

D: I think so. I think that possibly he was surprised that Johnson was interested.

B: My next question was whether or not there was any hint at that time that Mr. Kennedy or the Kennedy staff felt obligated to offer the post to Johnson, and maybe were pretty sure he would decline it.

D: I can tell you an incident totally unrelated. At the Governors

Conference in Glacier Park, Montana, in June or July of 1960, I thought then that Kennedy was a first ballot winner. I was talking to Abe Ribicoff and John Bailey and talking about possible candidates for the Vice Presidency. Ribicoff said, "Well, he'll have to offer it to Lyndon Johnson."

And I said, "Well, don't offer it to him if you don't want him to take it, because I feel that he would accept it."

Bailey said, "Well, why should he? He's the most powerful man in the United States today."

And I said, "If we have a Democratic President, the Majority Leader won't be the most powerful man in the United States. And besides, I think that Mrs. Johnson would like to see him step out of the more strenuous job of Majority Leader. The Vice Presidency would be a good place to get a national platform. If he has any ambitions, this would be a good spot for him."

Well, I felt this, because at the time that Lyndon Johnson announced his candidacy for the Presidency, he was asked whether he would accept the Vice Presidency. The only announced candidate who said, "I will serve in whatever capacity I can best serve my nation." He didn't back away from the Vice Presidency. And I too at that time thought he was too shrewd a politician, too knowledgeable a politician, not to know that he was announcing too late for the Presidency--that the ball game was over. Now he may not have.

Oscar Chapman, who was in my office, was the chairman of the Johnson for President Citizens committee, the independent committee. And he had told Lyndon Johnson that he thought he was announcing too late. He said, "I'll be for you. I'll do whatever I can, but I

think it's impossible at this time to catch up." So other people felt the same way. It may be that Johnson, and candidates--and I'm not excluding myself when I'm a candidate--are totally blind. They're so emotionally involved with what they're doing that they can't see the picture like a more objective person might be able to see it.

B: On that day that Johnson was offered the Vice Presidential position, there seems to have been a good deal of confusion--maybe just simple organizational confusion. Were you active that day in maybe trying to talk to Mr. Johnson?

D: No, I was not. I just felt that this was a selection that the Presidential nominee would make. I only ran into one little incident. As I was leaving the Biltmore after the decision had been announced --it hadn't been announced publicly, at least I knew what the decision was--I ran into Art Goldberg and Walter Reuther. Both of them were furious. They had heard that this was in the wind. They felt it would destroy the ticket, that labor would back away. They talked about a fight on the floor to keep the convention from accepting Johnson.

Later I found out that this seemed to be a reflection of a feeling of other liberals, especially in the Michigan delegation. They're the only ones that voiced any protest on the floor. But I felt that it was a Presidential selection, and I had no objection to Lyndon Johnson. I felt that his experience in the Senate would be helpful to the President. I felt that he was a man of stature, and he would bring balance to the ticket. So I had no problem with it.

B: Did you do anything to help calm down Governor Williams' Michigan

delegation?

D: People who were objecting, yes. Not specifically those, but others who objected. In fact we were the first delegation to report back to President Kennedy that the Ohio delegation was unanimous for Johnson.

Later, during the campaign, Johnson came into Columbus at the time that top picture there was taken, and he told me that--these are his words--that Jack Kennedy had told him about my call and that this helped Johnson make up his mind to stand for the Vice Presidency even though there might be a fight.

B: The fact that at least one major Northern delegation had--

D: That's right.

B: Incidentally, was there any difficulty in getting unanimous consent from your delegation?

D: No, there was none at all. There was some disappointment. Symington had a lot of friends in the delegation, but there was no problem with it.

B: Is it fair to say that still at that time to, say, members of your delegation Johnson was still not really known but was just looked upon as a collection of labels?

D: That's right. He was not known. I don't know if there were ten people in our delegation who had ever met Lyndon Johnson. And most of those were people who were either members of the Congress or had been members of the Congress--or were members of the Senate. Steve Young was in the Senate at that time and was very, very strong for Johnson. In fact, we had a little trouble keeping him from voting for Johnson on the first ballot. But we were committed and he stayed

with his commitment.

B: How do you keep a man from breaking from the delegation?

D: We had sixty-four delegates. We cast sixty-four votes for Jack Kennedy. It's the only large state that cast a unanimous vote. There were other states that cast more votes, but we cast the only unanimous vote. And I think largely because at the time I made my announcement for Kennedy, I said that I would be a candidate for favorite son, but anyone who voted for me would be in effect voting for Jack Kennedy. And this was a commitment that went before the voters, and I think that politicans, in spite of what some people might think, are more apt to keep these kind of commitments than other people are.

B: During the campaign itself, did Mr. Johnson campaign in Ohio?

D: Yes, he did. Not as much as we would liked to have had him, and not as much as we'd liked to have had him in some parts of the state. We felt he would have been a lot more effective for us in the southern part of the state, but there was something in this campaign which indicated that he would prefer just going into the large cities. We didn't need him in the large cities, but we needed him in those areas of the state where the religious issue was the most difficult. I thought he handled it head-on during the campaign and it was very, very effective.

B: Did he have to meet it squarely on Ohio?

D: Sure. This was the biggest problem we had.

B: I've heard it said that the religious issue--the issue of John Kennedy's Catholicism--might have been stronger in the Midwest than it was in the South.

D: I think there was no question about it. I'll tell you--maybe

it isn't--I don't think it's right to say that. You take a state like Georgia where at that time we had an 85-percent Democratic vote. If we lost 20-percent, this wouldn't be bad. But a state like Ohio where 5-percent can change the election--if you lose 5, you're in real trouble.

B: But you feel that it was that important in Ohio?

D: There's just no question.

B: For example, you're a Roman Catholic yourself, and you were governor of the state.

D: There's a Methodist minister in Lancaster, Ohio, who preached six sermons in a row--every Sunday for six weeks--against the election of Jack Kennedy. And in one of the speeches he said, "Little did we know when we elected Mike DiSalle governor that two years later he would be engaged in a Catholic conspiracy to elect a Catholic President."

B: Was that kind of thing widespread?

D: Yes it was. I had more hate mail during that campaign. I think it was one of the real damaging things that happened to me politically in Ohio.

B: Hate mail directed to you?

D: Sure, because of that.

B: Then I suppose your evaluation would be that's why Ohio went Republican in that election.

D: There's just no question. I can show you specific instances--counties, precincts. Precincts in Summit County--that's the county in which Akron is the major city--that had gone for Stevenson against Eisenhower went for Nixon against Kennedy. One of the chairmen in the Southern

part of the state said the Mason-Dixon Line had moved north about forty miles.

B: Southern Ohio is Southern in that sense, isn't it?

D: You see, Ohio doesn't have the large percentage of migration that states like Pennsylvania and New York, Illinois, and California might have --Massachusetts and the East Coast generally. The percentage of Catholics in the state is not nearly as large as it is in those other states. It has been, I suppose, as a large state the strongest Protestant state north of the Mason-Dixon Line. And we don't have any one large city that dominates the state. Columbus is almost the capital of the Protestant Church. We have so many denominations.

B: Did you explain all of this to Mr. Johnson or to whomever was making the campaign plans?

D: I talked to Senator Johnson at the time he was in Ohio and told him this problem. And he recognized it. He made a speech from the steps of the Capitol in which he really hit at it. Then we took him down to Chillicothe in Ross County, which is a small county, a small community--first capital of Ohio--and he hit it again. I think if we could have had more of him, it might have made the difference between carrying or losing Ohio.

B: After the election during Mr. Kennedy's Presidency, did you have any further contacts with Mr. Johnson as Vice President?

D: I was trying to think. One. I'd see him on different occasions, exchanged greetings. But I was in New York for a Georgetown University alumni dinner. The John Carroll Award was being given. This was in October of '63. The Vice President was to get an award that evening, the John Carroll Award, presented to the outstanding alumni

members. So I thought I was kidding him, and I said, "I got that award seven or eight years ago. You must have been a slow learner."

And he said, "I was only in school a short time there." I was kidding, and he took it seriously. About a month afterwards, he was President.

B: Some people say that he really doesn't have much of a sense of humor.

D: I don't think he has when it comes to him, although he's one of the most delightful story tellers, in that earthy way, that I've ever heard tell a story--and great at mimicry.

B: During this time, were there any rumors or talk going around in Democratic political circles that perhaps Mr. Johnson might not be on the Kennedy ticket in 1964?

D: There was a lot of talk, but I never felt that this would be the case. And I never heard Jack Kennedy say anything about it. I had talked to him about it on occasion.

B: Was it also fairly obvious to political observers that there was some antagonism between Mr. Johnson and the Kennedy staff?

D: I think that was talked about. And you could tell from the attitude of some of the Kennedy people that Johnson didn't fit their mold.

B: Was it general or just a few individuals around?

D: I think it was more or less general.

B: Did President Kennedy himself share it?

D: He didn't. He seemed to enjoy Johnson. You know, there's always this thing between a President and Vice President, or governor and lieutenant governor--that the lieutenant governor's moving up and the governor is afraid he might. And the President and Vice President share this feeling. The Vice President isn't nearly as close to the

President as a Cabinet officer might be, or his staff people are. He sees them all the time. The Vice President has his own duties. He goes off. He's sort of a ceremonial chief of government. It's hard for the President to get every place and people turn to the Vice President. It's almost by nature a relationship that is not close.

Recently I read some columnist in which he pointed out that the Nixon-Agnew relationship was much closer and Nixon was trying to break Agnew into the Presidency, quite contrary to the Roosevelt-Truman relationship. Truman was Vice President about three months under Roosevelt, and Roosevelt was in this time busy with the war, trying to wind it up. How could he take time out to tutor a Vice President whose primary interest had been the Senate anyway, and who was enjoying presiding over the Senate, and who felt right at home there? How could the Vice President in that short time pick up the problems of the war that had been going on this long and in which Roosevelt had an intimate knowledge. He knew what was happening all of the time. He was busy with the atom bomb at the time. He was busy with the break up in Germany, the possible end of the war in Japan. So in three months you hardly would think about trying to take the Vice President into your confidence.

B: Mr. Johnson as Vice President was already an expert in certainly one area, in the legislative field. Do you know if President Kennedy called upon this expertise?

D: I don't know whether he did or not. I think I remember him complaining at one time that he didn't think that Johnson was doing as much as he might be able to do in trying to get the program through. In fact, one of the reasons he had given in selecting Lyndon Johnson was that

Johnson would be helpful in the legislative end of the Administration. And I do think he had a feeling that Johnson wasn't really performing there.

B: I was wondering how well the Vice President, even a former Majority Leader, can exercise power in the Senate or in the House?

D: It's a lot different.

B: It must be.

D: But you know, when he was Majority Leader, the members of the Senate realized that committee assignments, possibly direction of campaign contributions, campaign help of one kind or another, could come from the Majority Leader. And as Vice President, they wouldn't have that same feeling.

B: In the period right after the assassination of President Kennedy when Mr. Johnson was taking hold of the reins of government, were you contacted by him?

D: No, I was not. I didn't have any contact to speak of with President Johnson. I was over at the White House once to a luncheon and a couple of times in connection with the President's Club activities. This one photograph which was taken one day in July of 1965, and it was a typical day at the White House. This was the day he announced the acceleration in Viet Nam. And twenty or twenty-five men, I guess, were over there waiting on the President's Club drive. And he frightened me half to death that day because he came in and he saw me sitting there. And incidentally, Senator Fulbright was with him when he came in. He introduced Fulbright to the people and said to Fulbright, "These are the men who feed the bear."

B: A reference to your financial abilities.

D: Yes. And then he turned to me and he said, "Mike, you almost had another OPA on your hands this morning." This was in reference--I guess they were deciding whether to go much further than they finally decided to go. I think they were considering all-out mobilization.

B: The implication was that they were considering at least instituting price controls?

D: That's right.

B: Did you ever hear any more about that?

D: Never any more.

B: Did you participate in the 1964 campaign?

D: Largely in a fund-raising capacity, and mostly in Ohio.

B: Was it fairly easy to raise money in that one?

D: Yes, for two reasons. One, people thought Lyndon Johnson would win; and secondly, they were afraid that Goldwater might. So this made it very easy. I, maybe, raised a hundred and thirty-five to a hundred and forty thousand, which is unheard of in Ohio.

B: Is it possible for a working politician to distinguish whether people in that election mostly voted for Johnson or mostly voted against Goldwater?

D: I think one of the unfortunate things in that election, I always felt it anyway, was that Johnson didn't have a more substantial opponent. Because if the election had been closer, I think it might have had more influence on him in the method of conducting office after that.

B: You mean you feel that he got an incorrect--an exaggerated notion of--

D: The mandate.

B: --how far the people were behind him?

D: That's right.

B: It has been said, too, that Mr. Johnson was out to win that election by as big a margin as possible. Was this noticeable in--?

D: There's no question about it. He went at that election like he was running for county sheriff. He was going to make as many stops as humanly possible, and even more.

B: Did that attitude get offensive, too pushy?

D: I don't think it did. I think that people feel that candidates normally react this way.

B: I meant among the professional politicians.

D: I think there were comments about it. But you know, large expenditures for television at the last minute there at the last when everyone knew that the election was settled.

B: Something must have worked. He carried Ohio by more than--

D: A million votes. And it elected Steve Young. I don't think there was any question about it.

B: Meaning he carried him with--

D: Sure, Steve won by fifteen thousand votes while Johnson was carrying the state by a million, sixty thousand. And he also elected some Congressmen.

B: Which, I suppose is the kind of thing they remembered later on--

D: That isn't true. You just don't know politicians. If they lose and the head of the ticket goes down, they blame it on the head of the ticket. If they win and the head of the ticket wins by a landslide, they have won on their own.

B: That's the way it works.

D: That's right.

B: One thing that comes up in connection, not with the '64 campaign

itself, but after '64. I've also heard it said that the Democratic National Committee in Johnson's Presidency sort of fell on hard times, became a not very effective organization.

D: I don't think there's any question about that. I think that possibly Johnson during the campaign developed the idea that he and his immediate staff won the election, and that the national committee was a drag, and that they'd run up large bills, and he was stuck with--I don't know--a four million dollar deficit I think he talked about at this meeting at the White House shortly after that. And I think the truth of the matter is that it wasn't Johnson or his staff or the national committee or anybody else except the times. Johnson was going to win. He had taken office in November 1963 under very tough circumstances. The nation was very sympathetic. He had a good year after that. I don't think Goldwater or any Republican could have come close to beating him.

B: Is it possible that still in 1964 that Mr. Johnson didn't really understand the organization of national politics?

D: I don't think he did. I don't think he realized the function of the national committee. I've always felt that there are two separate jobs to be done: one by the office holder and the candidate; one by a political committee, or organized state committee, or national committee, and that is, they carry the message to get people interested in activities, to encourage registration, to encourage participation. This a President is too busy with his own functions to really do. He may be a great President, but unless he has a sales organization he's going to have trouble selling his programs.

B: And this is where the national committee was lacking during the Johnson

years?

D: Sure. They just didn't have the manpower to do it or the money with which to function, and I could understand Johnson's point of view. He was interested in getting that debt retired which he felt really was a spot on his own record--the fact that he had this obligation.

B: Did he continue to put pressure on people to get rid of that obligation?

D: The President's Club kept functioning. But after '64, it became more and more difficult. '65 it was a little better than '66. '66 it was worse than '65, and it just kept deteriorating because they just didn't feel that there was any immediate reason or pressure for doing anything. The national committee was not functioning, and this was the only contact these people had with politics--many of them.

B: Did this create some antagonisms among possible sources of money?

D: There's no question about it. They just felt that they were being used, many of them did.

B: All this leads up to the '68 campaign. Did you get involved in that --in any aspects of it?

D: I was a delegate from Ohio, and in the original instance we were committed to Johnson. I would have lived with that commitment. I felt that Johnson was a better President than he had been given credit for being. I trusted the fact that he had the best intelligence available and that he wasn't stupid. He certainly was a patriotic American. He wasn't going to do anything to damage the country. He was going to use his best judgment to do what was best. However, when he announced that he was withdrawing from the race and that he was going to stop the bombing, which was adopting the position that had been taken by most of his critics, I began to have my doubts about

whether or not I had been right in following his leadership on this matter. Instead of going with Hubert Humphrey, I then began to help Bobby Kennedy.

B: Had you been contacted earlier by anyone representing Bobby Kennedy?

D: Yes, and I had told them that I was committed to Johnson and was going to stay there.

B: The doubts that the March 31st speech created in you, were these in the area of just politics, or more of broader policy?

D: Broader policy. I knew that nothing could have happened between New Hampshire and March 31st that would have made stopping the bombing any better on March 31st than it had been before New Hampshire.

B: You mean nothing had happened in Viet Nam?

D: That's right.

B: Do I infer then that you thought perhaps Johnson was doing this just to take the wind out of Bobby Kennedy's sails?

D: No. I don't think Bobby Kennedy's sails, but I think that he began to realize for the first time that the country was not supporting him, and that he was looking for a way out. I was sympathetic to the fact that he withdrew.

I tried to do the same thing in Ohio. I ran into problems with my program. I was sponsoring more appropriations for higher education, better mental health programs, the things that I felt were necessary that I just couldn't get through to the people. So I felt that maybe I could do a better job by withdrawing from the race. And I had thought about it and even announced the withdrawal, and then changed my mind, which was a bad thing to do. I think maybe if I had stayed with the withdrawal I'd have been much better off.

But I was closer to the Kennedys. But in spite of that, I'd have stayed with Johnson if he had stayed in the race. I felt no obligation to Hubert Humphrey at the time. I felt that Hubert had sort of been blindly following Johnson, and then I began to notice he was trying to pull away, and I didn't understand this. He was either right before, or he was admitting that it was a convenience thing.

So I supported Bobby until he was killed, and then a month later I announced that I was going to try to draft Teddy. But after the convention I did all I could for Humphrey. I made speeches in New Jersey, Massachusetts, in Pennsylvania, Indiana.

B: How close did the draft movement for Edward Kennedy come to success?

D: On Tuesday night it was ready to go. Wednesday morning Teddy announced that he would not accept the nomination and that killed it. If he'd have just not said anything, he'd have been nominated.

B: Who was in direct contact with him, trying to talk him into accepting?

D: I don't know that. I was not in contact with him. He called me on Monday, and asked me not to place his name in nomination. I understood that he'd say he was not a candidate, and people said, "Well, you know Mike DiSalle. Why don't you call and tell him not to put your name in nomination if you're not a candidate!" And he wanted to eliminate any semblance of contrivance. I was convinced that if he felt it was a genuine draft, he would have accepted.

B: You did get the impression then on Monday there that he would accept a draft?

D: Yes.

B: Was there anyone representing Lyndon Johnson in the workings of the

convention?

D: Oh I think so. Charlie Murphy was, and others.

B: What position were they taking?

D: Charlie Murphy was the one who took the draft of the minority plank to Johnson. The story we got back was that Johnson exploded and threatened to fight it. And this led to a modification.

B: As I recall, the modification wasn't that much.

D: It wasn't that much, no, it really wasn't--just enough to leave room to fight about. I was asked by a member of Humphrey's staff to make a speech for the majority plank. But I had been so close to the Kennedy thing that I just didn't feel so soon after that anybody would ever believe that I wasn't doing anything except trying to grab some cheap television time.

B: Was there ever any thought given to Ted Kennedy as the Vice Presidential nominee?

D: Oh, of course. But never any thought by Ted to it.

B: That was really the question. Was it ever presented to him?

D: It was presented to him. He turned it down several times--and by many people.

B: You then after the convention went ahead and campaigned for Humphrey?

D: Sure.

B: Again, among the good politicians during the campaign, this question of Johnson's relation to Humphrey and to the Humphrey campaign was one of the tortured ones. Was there ever any thought given to trying to bring Johnson into the campaign more openly?

D: I think that people close to Humphrey in the campaign felt it would be a liability. And they deliberately stayed away from him, which I

think was a mistake. There was no way of disassociating Humphrey from Johnson. It then became a question as to whether he was trying to duck and trying to--it gave the appearance of being wishy-washy. I think it hurt him a lot more than if Johnson had been in the campaign. Of course, the fact that Johnson did not attend the convention, and was advised not to attend, was a pretty good indication of the feeling that politicians had about Johnson's standing at that time.

B: There was a rumor going around toward the end of the convention that Johnson just might show up.

D: Yes, the rumor was there, and a lot of the Humphrey people were very concerned about it.

B: You mean afraid that he might show up?

D: Yes.

B: Incidentally, did you see anything of the disturbances in Chicago?

D: I didn't. When I was busy with the Ted Kennedy thing, I was driving from hotel to hotel traveling all around Chicago--never saw anything except the front of the Conrad Hilton. I think that was largely staged.

B: You mean by the television people?

D: No. By the people who had come to Chicago with this in mind.

B: The demonstrators themselves.

D: Yes. And the police over-reacted, which was what the demonstrators wanted--at least, the leaders of the demonstrators. But you know, all around the convention, up and down the streets, never any incident of any kind. I never was bothered or disturbed, never saw anything.

B: Getting toward the end now. Can you make an evaluation of Lyndon Johnson

as man as President--his strengths and his weaknesses?

D: Yes, I think that he was awfully right on big things. He hurt himself by a preoccupation with small things--personal feuds. The Kennedys became an obsession with him. One time when Bobby had announced he was going to make a speech on Viet Nam in two or three days, the President spent most of the two or three days doing things that would try to take the edge off the speech. This type of thing.

B: Was there any justification for that attitude toward Robert Kennedy?

D: There might have been as far as Johnson is concerned. I would imagine he was concerned about him, that he was upset about him. He didn't like him. I think that was reciprocated. But certainly when you're President of the United States, you have a lot more important things to do than involve your important time with a petty struggle with someone that you consider a threat or an enemy.

B: Did you ever hear Robert Kennedy on Lyndon Johnson?

D: No, I never had.

B: It's a relationship that future scholars are going to want to inquire into. Tragically of course Robert Kennedy's death cuts off a large source of information.

D: There were a lot of people who had heard about his feeling about Lyndon Johnson. They weren't very complimentary. But Lyndon Johnson doesn't give off much warmth, never has. I don't think he endears himself to people, even the people closest to him. There are a lot of people that are close to him who are loyal to him--not close to him, but have worked closely with him who do not feel close to him.

I talked to one man who had worked with him over many, many years

when I was concerned about the national committee and the way it was being allowed to drift and to fall apart, and I asked this fellow, "Isn't there someone who's close to him who can talk to him."

He says, "A lot of us have known him a long time, but no one is close enough. And if you take the subject up with him, he'll just spend most of his time telling you why you're wrong and not listening."

B: You also said earlier that he could be an accomplished story teller in private. No warmth comes through out of this?

D: No. It's usually stories that are used to make a point about somebody else's weakness.

B: Someone else specific? You mean petty picking at other people?

D: Yes. Even people that might work closely with him.

B: Can you give an example of that kind of thing to clarify--?

D: Even in a closed interview, I don't think I'd want to tell some of the stories that have been related. They're really not anything pornographic or anything like that, but the language is farm yard.

B: Have you yourself ever been the subject of Mr. Johnson's anger?

D: I would imagine so. I don't know. I know that I never was asked to participate in anything. I suppose he never forgot that I was the first governor to announce for Jack Kennedy.

B: He would remember that kind of thing?

D: Oh sure, of course.

B: I noticed that so far as I could tell you, in spite of your background, you have not served in the Johnson years on commissions, panels, committees.

D: He appointed me to one commission.

B: Which one was that, sir?

D: I was appointed on the U.S. Panel of Arbitrators for the Settlement of International Disputes--investment disputes. He appointed me in some very good company. Leon Jaworski, Judge Thurmond Arnold, and a professor at the University of Chicago whose name I just don't recall. It was very inactive. We never had a dispute. It's one in which the arbitrators are not permitted to sit on disputes between their country and another country. Since the United States is a major source of investments in other countries, it was doubtful that there would be many occasions that we would sit in a dispute between Ethiopia and Italy or something like that.

B: If this is not an impertinent question, do you feel perhaps that your service to the country and the party might have warranted some kind of more notice than you got under the Johnson years?

D: I would think so. There were many commissions where I might have been helpful.

B: I ask because I know that in the Kennedy years you had been an adviser to the Conference of Mayors and things like that.

D: I've been in many instances, but I never was that close to Lyndon Johnson or any of the people around him. The only person in the White House that I had any contact with so to speak of was Marvin Watson. And I'd have to say that he was extremely efficient as far as I was concerned. If I called him, he'd call back; if I asked a question, I'd get an answer.

B: In what connection would you see Mr. Watson--party matters?

D: Party matters, largely.

B: Incidentally, do you feel that the disarray of the Democratic National Committee might have made a significant difference in Humphrey's

campaign?

D: There's no question. If that committee had been organized and functioning, we would not have missed the registration drive required in 1968. The fact that many Democrats were not registered cost Hubert some key states. I think Ohio might very well be one.

B: You mentioned earlier a kind of reluctance on the part of the people with money. Did that affect Humphrey's campaign too?

D: Humphrey started out with all kinds of money--with lots of money. But after the convention, I suppose the sources of money kind of dried up when it looked like he didn't have a possible chance of winning. But his preconvention money was ample. Another time his source of money dried up was when Bobby Kennedy was killed. A lot of the contributors were more anti-Kennedy than anything else--anti-Bobby Kennedy. I think that this caused Humphrey's money to dry up. They felt for two reasons: first, Kennedy was no longer a threat; and secondly, they felt Humphrey would be an easy convention winner.

B: Do you know or do you have any indication of whether or not Mr. Johnson's animus toward the Kennedys extends to Ted Kennedy, too?

D: I have a feeling that it certainly isn't the all-consuming preoccupation, but people who have been close to Johnson--certainly I don't find many Ted Kennedy fans there.

B: Presumably they're reflecting Mr. Johnson himself?

D: I would think so. I would think that Johnson would have his own ideas on who might be the Democratic nominee.

B: Would you care to make a guess?

D: No, gosh, I have no idea at this time.

B: It's a long way until the next election.

D: Although I think that if Ted Kennedy wants the nomination, there's no one going to be able to stop him.

B: Actually, I interrupted you when you were in the middle of evaluating Lyndon Johnson. Have you more to add to that?

D: I think that history will treat him more kindly than his contemporary critics. I think he has put an awful lot of legislation on the books. I think the administration of those programs has left a lot to be desired.

B: Do you feel that that's Mr. Johnson's fault too?

D: I think so, because he has tried to do everything himself. I felt that with all these new programs, if he had placed one strong man at his right arm in the White House, authorized to talk for him and to see that those programs got moving, that the domestic side of his Administration would look a lot better.

B: You mean a Sherman Adams type figure?

D: I won't use that name exactly. But I mean a strong right arm, a man who was knowledgeable in government and whom he had confidence in and could speak for him and could get to these people in the new programs and say, "We've got to move." I think that HUD would have moved better. I think HEW might move better. I think the poverty program definitely might have moved better. It certainly needed a lot of attention. AID would have moved better.

B: You suggested that as firmly as if you almost had an individual in mind for the position.

D: No, I didn't have an individual in mind, but I felt a strong need for it because I've been in and out of Washington for a long time. I went to school here. I've seen the federal government operation.

I have been in the federal government. I know that it just doesn't move unless there's some attention given to it. A lot of people get the idea that if they don't do anything, they won't make mistakes, and consequently they won't be criticized. A day goes awfully, awfully fast, and then it's tomorrow, and then it's the next day, and nothing happens. This hurt Johnson tremendously.

B: Is this an unwillingness to delegate a kind of personal vanity?

D: I think so. Then I think that as administrator, he had had very little experience as an administrator. His field had been legislative, and so he had this reluctance to delegate. Then he had a tendency to second-guess. If somebody did do something and it was wrong or criticized by the papers, he'd be on the telephone.

B: To that individual?

D: To that individual. So the next time this fellow was going to be more reluctant to do anything on his own.

B: Did this apply up to the highest level too?

D: Oh sure, of course. Of course, Cabinet officers are now saying that they had disagreed with Johnson on this or that, or the other thing, but this is sort of empty now.

B: Were you close to the Kennedy Cabinet officers who stayed the distance with Johnson?

D: I wasn't close to them. I knew them all. I knew Orville Freeman. He had been governor at the same time I was governor. I had known Stuart Udall over the years. Wirtz was on Wage Stabilization while I was in Price Stabilization. So I knew many of them.

B: I was wondering if you were close enough to them to know how well they got along with Mr. Johnson.

D: No. I would just be repeating rumors, and I just don't know from my own knowledge.

B: Sir, is there anything else you'd like to add to this kind of record?

D: I can't think of anything. Maybe when the transcript comes, I might have some things.

B: Okay.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Michael V. DiSalle

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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

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Signed Michael V. DiSalle

Date June 14, 1972

Accepted Harry J. Middleton - For
Archivist of the United States

Date October 1, 1974

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