

## INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 29, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: SAMUEL GAMMON

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Gammon's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

SG: This is essentially a political vignette. When LBJ came back as president on the plane, on *Air Force One*, they, of course, as a courtesy to Mrs. Kennedy kept--stayed on at The Elms, as you know, for several days, and Johnson inevitably relied on his State Department liaison person whom he knew, Lee Stull, in my absence. Lee I had placed in the--we had a little office on the seventh floor of the State Department with access to material through the Secretariat of State, sensitive material to follow the line which we both--which I had envisaged and had structured for the foreign affairs aide, which was to serve like an attaché in an overseas embassy to keep the vice president informed on what is going on in foreign policy, because in those days, alas, and still to a degree sometimes, the vice president is the fifth wheel. Without referring to John Garner's memorable aphorism, we weren't in the mid-sixties all that far from those days. Thomas R. Marshall, Wilson's vice president, once said that the vice president had two jobs: one was to preside over the Senate and the other is to call the president every morning and ask how he feels.

But at any rate, this liaison job--and, of course, with the entire world converging on Washington for the funeral, with getting material and handling the high-level visitors, De Gaulle, the emperor of Ethiopia, and everybody else under the sun--there was a

Gammon -- I -- 2

tremendous need for a close-in liaison. Normally, that was done--that all had to be filtered through the National Security Council in the Kennedy period, Mac [McGeorge] Bundy and Brom [Bromley] Smith, his deputy, and then the entire NSC staff, but they were then suddenly bypassed because Johnson didn't know them. He knew Bundy, whom he once characterized--about a month earlier he characterized Bundy to me as "one of these people who knows what power is and goes to it." Not a bad characterization. That was apropos of my role, and sort of how I was in doing it. So Lee Stull, my deputy and designated successor, was going directly to the President, including in the Oval Office and multiple times a day, and it was driving NSC right up the walls. The source for this is Stull, who told me a week or so later that Bundy summoned him into the office after about five days of all this bypass, direct access, and Bundy offered Stull a job on the NSC staff to co-opt him into the NSC. Stull declined, and then Bundy said, "Well, in that case, you will not be allowed to see the Vice President--the President hereafter."

But the background to all this was that George Ball, as-- deputy under secretary of state; I guess they'd changed the title by then--saw Lee and this unusual access as a bureaucratic means of unhorsing NSC, reducing its--clipping its wings, and giving State the kind of privacy and unimpeded access that is the inevitable pipe dream of any secretary of state in the inevitable "pull and haul" at the top level. Of course, it didn't work, because the politics of the situation were that LBJ needed to reassure the country that this was a continuity, and therefore we had that curious period when so many offices in the White House were almost double-staffed, when George Reedy and the previous spokesman--

Gammon -- I -- 3

MG: Pierre Salinger?

SG: Yes, Pierre--were working closely together, and then ultimately that sorted out over a period of time. So there was no chance whatsoever that the Ball ploy would work. The thing that has always amused me is that the press never smelt even a whisker of that story, of what was going on. Well, of course, it was a traumatic time, and the public sense of unification and so forth was affecting even the best journalists, but I use that occasionally in discussions with journalists when they brag too much about how clever they are.

MG: Did Bundy's success have a substantive impact on policy?

SG: Probably [not]--that would be very arguable. My guess would be that it did not, although you could argue, perhaps, that in the role that evolved for George Ball, though not necessarily shared by Dean Rusk, on the whole Vietnam thing, that if the NSC's wings had been severely clipped, which, of course, has never happened. It's continued to get more and more powerful clear up through the Poindexter era, as we know, and the final access to the President, either to his ear or to his eyes in the last piece of paper that you put on the stack going in, is clearly a crucial matter. We're not very different--[a] historical aside--from the medieval English monarchy, when everything depended on the circles of access to the throne, and we do have, to a degree, a monarchic system, [in] that the president is the source of power, promotion, influence, everything else. The checks and balances do work in the sense of the three branches of government and all the built-in frustrations. Harry Truman once commented that he spent all of his time as president begging, pleading, imploring, and doing his damndest to get people to do the most

Gammon -- I -- 4

obvious, sensible, intelligent things that they seemed to be reluctant to do. That's what it takes to move the American government.

But--so that episode, it is fascinating, and if you play might-have-beens, yes, it could have had some connotations. Of course, I'm a State product myself, and I strongly believe that State should have a much stronger role in foreign affairs than it ever has managed to have except during the brief Kissinger regime.

MG: Yes.

SG: A personal note: I also worked for Kissinger as deputy executive secretary of the department for about a year and a half--no, about two years. I started that job about six weeks before he came over from the White House to succeed Bill Rogers as secretary, so I saw--I sometimes comment that I've worked for two men of genius, Kissinger and Johnson, and in curious ways, they were somewhat similar.

MG: How were they similar?

SG: Well, my theory--personal speculation--is that a genius is by definition a giant among ordinary mortals, and, therefore, in part you cannot apply the same rules that you apply to mortals. They just don't apply. So a giant on the political and diplomatic scene can also be an unmitigated s.o.b. to his people, and I've seen both LBJ and Henry misbehave shockingly on occasion. But in that sense, I would compare them to LBJ's advantage because he had a paternal, avuncular side to him to those that were his people, for whom he accepted responsibility. Very paternal. Didn't prevent him from punishing them when they needed it for their own best interests. LBJ's quote on the subject of speeches when Buzz [Horace Busby] and I and others had crafted a speech for him--I guess it was--I can't remember whether it was on the Scandinavian or Benelux trip; probably Benelux. It

Gammon -- I -- 5

was a great speech, but it ran over his limitation. You know, you had to put the number of words on the last card, on the three-by-fives with one ring in the corner, et cetera, and it ran over. And he tossed it back to us at three in the afternoon--it was a speech for eight o'clock in the evening--and in the paternal mode said, "Well, I've told you and told you and told you that the limitation on these speeches is"--was it fifteen hundred or seventeen hundred words, whatever--"and now you're just going to have to learn!" And we argued and pled with him, "It's a great speech! It's got humor! It's got emotion! It's got wit." "Nope. Do it over." So we spent a frantic three hours--mostly Buzz, of course--trimming out sections and dropping parts of it and so forth, and it still came out about two hundred words too long, but that didn't bother us. We just put the correct number on the last card, knowing he wouldn't have time to count it, and got it to him about fifteen minutes before speech time.

Well, back to the scenario. I was pitchforked into the job, more or less at gunpoint, by Bill [William J.] Crockett, who was under secretary. I saw it mainly as an interference with my prospects for getting overseas on schedule to get this job that I very much wanted over in Ethiopia after five years in Washington, five years plus by then. So I spent the entire time I was with LBJ in figuring, "How can I solve this problem? If I do a good job, he will keep me willy-nilly. If I do a bad job, my career is damaged. I might be fired from the service." And I finally staked everything on one throw of the dice. I think it was on the first of October. Haile Selassie came for one of his every-year or year-and-a-half visits to Washington to see Kennedy and so forth, and as part of the scenario, he was to be received by LBJ up in the ceremonial room of the Capitol. And, showing the then-status of the Vice President, I used to write up his talking points, which

Gammon -- I -- 6

I did not have to clear with anybody else under the sun because nobody gave a damn about the Vice President. So I would sit down and look at the big picture and write up some talking points, and by then, I knew Johnson well enough to know that he was a sucker for the personal touch, particularly in dealing with foreigners, to find some bond or some connection that--and everybody in diplomacy or politics seeks for a common ground. So after the four or five talking points I put as the last one down at the end, "You may wish to tell the Emperor that I have been assigned as consul-general in Asmara in northern Ethiopia," and I figured that Johnson would either call me in and chew me out, tear off a strip, and say, "You aren't going anywhere," but more likely he would be tempted by this. And I won the gamble, because on that particular day there was a meeting at the White House that he wanted to be at very much, and he was grumbling like mad about having to come back to the Capitol to receive [the Emperor], and muttered some memorable words, anecdotal, on protocol, because for Johnson anything that--any ceremony he would condemn pejoratively as being "protocol." And he slammed his hand down on the corner of the desk and said, "If I'm ever president, I'm going to *abolish* protocol!" And of course, he never could. Nobody can. And I remember arguing back, "Well, of course, to busy people like yourself, these interruptions and the ceremonials and so forth are terrible, but to somebody from the third world, the symbolism is very important, and it has a lot of impact for them." Well, grumblingly, he did come back from the White House. He arrived in the bare nick of time. Haile Selassie was coming down the hall, being escorted by Mike Mansfield, who as majority leader was filling in for the Vice President, and then Johnson spurted into the room where we were waiting, and I started to fade toward the background, and he

Gammon -- I -- 7

grabbed me by the shoulder and towed me forward, and I became talking point number one. "Your Majesty, I think so much of your country I'm sending this fine young officer!" So then my escape was arranged, and, of course, all this plotting and so forth was totally unnecessary because, among his other achievements, Lee Harvey Oswald abolished the vice-presidency. So I would have had no trouble making--when everybody was flocking in to try to beat a path to the President, anybody retreating toward the door would have been utterly unimpeded. But one of the minor ironies.

MG: How did you become acquainted with LBJ to begin with?

SG: I was selected--well, [Robert] Skiff had done a two-and-a-half year job, just about, as basically a flunky, not really much substance to it, and he was being moved routinely, and Johnson was not resisting. The State Department then selected, to be his successor and to do sort of a new job as foreign affairs aide with some substantive overtones--selected Eugene McAuliffe. Gene was somewhat senior to me, a fairly hotshot officer but a little heavy-handed, and while I did not know this until much later, around the time of the funeral in Italy [of] Pope John, Gene had just been canned from the job, not by Johnson but largely by the old-time--the Texas palace guard, who perceived McAuliffe as a threat. He had too many ideas about how he was going to structure the job, and, you know, sort of--and they didn't like that. I never talked to Buzz about this, but my theory was that he was seen as being not suitable for the job, and it may very well--I'm not saying that Johnson wasn't aware of this, but they didn't click, and so Gene was dumped very quickly. Then the department had to find somebody else, and Bill Crockett, whom I had known slightly in Italy--I had been a bright young junior officer in Milan when he succeeded from deputy admin officer to admin officer, and his former boss was then the

Gammon -- I -- 8

consul-general of Milan--so we had this long-time connection. He knew I was a Texan. In fact, I tried to beat the assignment, seeing it as a threat to my onward plans to leave shortly after, by saying, "Well, I'm a Yarborough supporter." (Laughter) That gave Crockett pause for maybe a quarter of a--five seconds, and then he said, "Well, just don't tell him."

MG: Is that right?

SG: So I was more or less marched in at gunpoint. But the way that happened was, I was on the Italian desk, and Frank [Francis E.] Meloy was the director of western European affairs, who had been with Johnson to Vietnam, and Johnson was always trying to get Frank, who was a wonderful guy and a hotshot, very senior officer. Frank didn't want the job for a variety of reasons, and always succeeded in dodging--but Frank was afraid to go to Italy with LBJ for fear this might stir up the attempts to kidnap him for LBJ's staff. So he sent me as the desk officer. And, all unwitting, [I] was being looked over by Crockett, that I was along on the trip, and that I was a Texan and the staff would have its eye on me; well, my whole approach to working with Johnson was to stay out of his hair unless there was something that I felt he needed to have. So I didn't want to climb in his lap or schmoozy around the political scene or maneuver for power, et cetera. And I structured the job feeling that you could not cover the Vice President's needs for information on foreign affairs just from State, even though I had been in the secretariat on an earlier assignment, knew where all the very sensitive telegrams flowed, and could arrange access there. But I knew that NSC was where power was. It was a split-power situation. So very early on I talked to Brom Smith, who related to Mac Bundy that I should be assigned to the NSC, which I was. I was detailed to the NSC, not to do NSC work but as



Gammon -- I -- 9

a legal--as an attaché, a military attaché, a legal spy. And I told Bundy and Smith--I said, "I will keep my ear to the ground, and I will try to ensure that the Vice President is briefed on those important things that are going on that he should be knowledgeable about." What I also said--which might not have been too smart--is "I regard myself as working for the Secretary of State, the President, and the Vice President in that order. So if there is something which you are doing or thinking about or planning that you do not want passed to the Vice President, warn me off, and I will not." In other words, "If I start--if there's something you don't want me stumbling on to be passed to the Vice President, tell me." Well, they never did. There never was.

But what gave me my insight was when Averell Harriman came back from Moscow--and I've forgotten the date, but it was some time in July, I suppose, maybe even as late as early August--with the [Limited] Test-Ban Treaty in his pocket, and headlines--boom!--exploding all over. Wham! Here it was. Johnson was down at the Ranch for the weekend. I guess it was Friday. So I stirred around. I knew there had been a lot of--there must have been an awful lot of sensitive traffic because Harriman was over there for a long time--I knew there must have been a lot of NODIS, Cherokee traffic between him and the President and NSC and Rusk about the course of negotiations. But I went to Brom Smith and said, "Who's been briefing the Vice President on this as it's been evolving towards this happy solution, toward this breakthrough?" He said, "Well, State--I, I guess nobody has." And I thought, "Oh, my God! Here we are with a treaty, which is going to have to be run through the Senate for a two-thirds vote, and Mr. Senate, the Vice President, who had the Senate trained to jump through hoops as majority leader, hasn't even been given the courtesy of being told what's going on." So I thought, "Holy Jesus!"

Gammon -- I -- 10

I raced back over to the department and went up to Harriman's office, and William--Bill Sullivan was his executive assistant, principal honcho, and I got to Bill, and I said, "Hey! The Veep is coming back tonight,"--and this was on Monday morning, I guess--"coming back tonight from the Ranch, and I need something to be able to tell him, or--from Harriman," and Sullivan was rather skeptical and went in and talked to Harriman, who saw it instantly, and wrote out, I think by hand, a note to be given to the Veep at planeside, when he debarked at Andrews, saying in effect, "Mr. Vice President, I am just back with the treaty, as you know. I'm very anxious to talk to you and get your sort of view, et cetera." The gesture. The note was delivered. The briefing never took place, as Johnson never called Harriman to do so, but the important thing was that the gesture had been taken, because Johnson was a very sensitive man, and he saw slights that he did not react to.

An aside: The key to his very great esteem for Dean Rusk--apart from the fact that they were both southern boys from land-poor, middle-class families, and so on, Establishment but impoverished--the real bond was that Rusk was meticulous always to keep the Vice President informed, to be aware of his constitutional role, and so forth, and to really ensure that that was done. Once, after a bobtail NSC session in the department, in Rusk's office, rather than over in the White House, which was on Vietnam, Johnson came--I was waiting outside. I didn't go in and attend these things. This was on a Saturday or a Sunday, I think. It must have been Sunday, judging [from] my recollection of the traffic. Johnson came out, saw me, and then turned and went back in and spent another ten or fifteen minutes with Rusk, and then he came out and he told me--he said,

Gammon -- I -- 11

"Well, I told Secretary Rusk that you and Bill Crockett have assigned this fellow Gammon to me, and I want him to be told everything."

Now the reason for that--and here's a Vietnam tidbit--I found out a couple of days before the coup against Diem in Vietnam--actually I got it from one of my friends in the secretariat who shared some of the EXDIS traffic coming in from Saigon--that there was a coup brewing among the generals against Diem, which the embassy was aware of though not directly involved in. At least that was the impression I gathered. (Though I had a role during the Watergate period, I was the man who let E. Howard Hunt into the Saigon files when he was trying to doctor them for the Nixon White House, but that's another story.)

At any rate, I was told that the coup was coming, Vietnam whammo! So I went scooting up to the Capitol, got in, had to wait about ten or fifteen minutes before I could see Johnson, got into his office, and then gasped out the story, that "this is cooking, and it's very important, and you should be aware of it." And Johnson didn't say anything. He listened carefully. He may have asked one question or so. I volleyed out my story in six or seven minutes. He looked at his watch, jumped up, darted across the corridor to go over and bang the gavel to convene the Senate at high noon, and as he crossed the corridor, he told one of the Capitol policemen, "Go back and tell that fellow Gammon to wait." So I waited, and he came back in ten or twelve minutes after getting the Senate launched and turning over the gavel to another presiding officer. He said, "Come on. We're going down to the White House."

And what I did not know was that there was an NSC meeting convened for 12:30 at which the outer circle of the inner circle of high-level foreign affairs people, people

Gammon -- I -- 12

like Ed Murrow from USIA and Doug Dillon, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Vice President and others of that sort of ilk were going to be told about the impending coup, which had been known about for two or three days by the inner inner circle, including presumably the Attorney General and the Secretary of State and probably Ball and certainly Bundy and some of the key NSC staffers. So from Johnson's point of view, how he perceived this--I only became aware of this later--I had demonstrated, then, loyalty, because I was the person who had told him what was going on. *I* was looking after the Vice President's interests, not the NSC staff or the White House people. So from then on that was my credential. I was then totally part of the--I had been tolerated beforehand--but from then on I was then part of the team and could be relied on to look after the essential needs of the Vice President.

And he took a very dim view, as he told me after the meeting, about this pending coup. He said, "This is cops-and-robbers stuff. We shouldn't be"--he felt that Diem, whatever his faults, was still a strong, able--et cetera, and that impossible brother of his should not have been--that we should not hold still for a toppling event.

MG: Was he aware of the United States involvement, or--?

SG: Well, he wasn't even aware of anything going on. He must have been aware, and discussion undoubtedly took place in that NSC session, of just how much we did know. We knew what was cooking. We did not, of course, very obviously know that Diem and his brother were going to be massacred by the coup types. They were just going to be shoved aside or something, and then there would be a new, efficient, honest, et cetera, light at the end of the tunnel, a South Vietnamese equivalent to South Korea which would pull up its socks--which, of course, as we know, never took place.

Gammon -- I -- 13

But he was not very happy with that, and he did use the cops-and-robbers term, so he told me.

MG: But did Johnson feel that the United States had sort of served as a catalyst for that coup?

SG: I couldn't tell you that from what he said to me. As far as I could go would be to say that he felt that the fact that we knew about it [meant that] we obviously could have discouraged it--

MG: Yes.

SG: --and we should discourage it. We should stick by Diem. He may have been a son of a bitch, but he was our son of a bitch, sort of. That was why he used that pejorative term about us playing games with [him].

MG: To what extent did Johnson recognize Diem's weaknesses?

SG: We never discussed it. He was certainly--I would speculate he was certainly aware of the bad press Diem was getting by then, the journalists' writing on the corruption and so forth and tracing it all back to blaming it on Diem and his brother. But in any case, he clearly felt that Diem was a positive force in our effort in Vietnam on balance. And that therefore we should not be holding still for something that we knew was cooking. Now as to--I don't to this day know, until the happy millennium when CIA sources are opened, I don't know how much of a quote "hand" in the coup we may have had. One can speculate whether there was just benevolent winking or whether it was actually some degree of involvement.

MG: You've described a man who was really not inside the--

SG: In the innermost circles, and he was not, and he resented that. Another evidence of the resentment is, he asked me, "Do you know what the statute says about the National

Gammon -- I -- 14

Security Council?" I said, "Well, its members are the president and vice president, the secretary of state, the secretary of the treasury--or the secretary of defense, and the NSC adviser." And then I said, "Also, nowadays, I guess the attorney general and the secretary of the treasury. And then he interrupted me and he said, "The members by statute are those whom you said: The vice president, the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, and the NSC adviser. They belong because the law says they belong, and the others are just add-ons." And he resented--I know he resented being relegated to the add-on role.

MG: Why do you think he was not made more a part of the inner circle?

SG: There you are getting--my personal view is [that] you're reaching to the same question, which is why is the relationship between the--the traditional relationship between the king and the heir presumptive--or the heir apparent--always bad? Why do the kings and princes of Wales always bicker and fight in rivalry? On the question of the relationship between Kennedy and Johnson I had several observations, and some what I think are insights also, that go very far into illustrating the personality of Johnson, who is, may I say in my view, a tragic figure of American history, because he was a dinosaur in the age of mammals. He was the traditional American political giant of the Andrew Jackson, the Teddy Roosevelt, the Lincoln [type], the intuitive, instinctive politician. Johnson was absolutely one hundred per cent political to the very tips of his fingernails. Therefore--and I saw this repeatedly, and this was the key to the Johnson treatment--he deeply, honestly, and genuinely and wholeheartedly believed those things which were in his own best political interest, he believed. Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? I don't know. They're simultaneous. But I saw that--and this is particularly the case with his

Gammon -- I -- 15

attitude toward President Kennedy. He was abso-damn-lutely loyal to the President in the sense--and he was a very old-fashioned figure, almost out of McGuffey's *Reader*, to use another image, or "West Point-Duty-Honor-Country." These things meant a lot to Johnson. These were values, and loyalty to one's president--total! The trouble came with the staffs, because the White House crowd and, to a degree, the Johnson staff, in a much weaker position--there was bitterness, sniping back and forth, and so forth, including some very major figures in the White House and the NSC who later were major figures in--Robert Komer I knew slightly, partly because I shared an office with Bob in the Executive Office Building after I was assigned to the NSC, a little cubbyhole closet next to his office.

MG: Can you think of an example of this kind of sniping?

SG: Well, Komer used to make rude remarks about the vice president, but when Johnson became president, he was very loyal and a good, faithful, zealous operative and in Vietnam and so forth. But this is the petty stuff of politics, and staff members are always more Catholic than the Pope, so that everything is reinforced. But on the loyalty to the President, one episode, which is hearsay--I think Buzz may have told me about it--that on the Middle East trip that went to Greece before my time on the staff, when he was closeted with the Greek government for the ritual meeting of the visiting Vice President, somebody from the Greek government very early on made some comment about, "Well, thank God the United States is finally sending somebody who understands us and our problems." And Johnson got furious with them, blew up at them within, I assume, the parameters of good manners. But [he] made it clear he was very upset because he took this as a reflection on the President and sort of driving a wedge that he, Johnson, was

Gammon -- I -- 16

sympathetic to the Greeks and the United States government and the President and so forth wasn't, and he bitterly resented that.

I did--I saw him particularly--well, the Italy trip was a funny--that was purely ceremonial protocol, purely ceremonial, and he even consented to wear evening dress in the middle of the day to the funeral, which Vatican protocol required, except with a black waistcoat and a black tie, but the wing-collar, the whole schmier. You know, he *hated* white-tie outfits. We changed the whole schedule in Sweden because the king wanted to have a dinner, and the Swedish court is very stuffy, and royal events are white-tie in the evening, and Johnson hated to dress up in a white tie. I don't know why. He regarded it as a monkey-suit or something. But he loathed it, and, of course, he looked superb. He looked tremendous. Fine, great big figure of a man, and he looked broad-shouldered. He looked tremendous in full rig, but he wouldn't do it. So in the late stages of arranging the Scandinavian trip he objected to having dinner with the king because of the white tie. So instead the palace had him to lunch, *tenue de ville*, street dress--

MG: What excuse did he--

SG: --and the prime minister gave a dinner which could then be black tie. Don't ask me.

And he would do things that would get you in trouble with protocol, from a protocolary point of view. For instance, I heard that when he came back from the [Dag] Hammarskjöld funeral, the Swedish court wanted to have a dinner and entertain the visiting mourners to the funeral, including LBJ, and--I'm sure I heard this from the crowd that had been with him. And he pled the pressure of business back in Washington. He had to leave in the afternoon, mid-to-late afternoon, and then they stopped in Paris, and he was photographed in the Lido that night. (Laughter) I used that once with [Walter]



Gammon -- I -- 17

Mondale in Paris when I was chargé. I told it because there had been a foul-up there. Mondale had been invited--the early instructions for the Mondale trip, which was in the first two or three weeks of the Carter Administration, was "No other events to be planned other than what we've requested." And he wanted to have a meeting with President Giscard in France, and we responded saying, "Hey! There's nothing in here for the prime minister, Raymond Barre." And I put in the message--I think by telephone to the department, western Europe office--I said, "We could fairly easily stir up a sort of supper, an informal evening-of-arrival thing," and I was told--I was called back and--"Yes, go ahead with it." So we did stimulate a supper by the prime minister, Raymond Barre, and then we duly sent the message in with this, then we got a telegram back saying, "Turn it down." (Laughter) Well, that was--so when I met Mondale at the airport, I said, "Well, we--everything is on the track except we may have broken a few dishes here." He said, "Oh, I never heard about it." I said, "Well, you will want to be particularly attentive to Prime Minister Barre at the president's luncheon tomorrow," and he said, "I'll call him up as soon as I get to the hotel and explain how busy we are." Then he added to me that Pierre Salinger, who was a journalist, had joined them and had boarded *Air Force Two* in London to fly over to Paris and had invited everybody to come over to supper at his house, and everybody had more or less [said], "Okay, that's a great idea," because it was an evening with nothing on the official schedule. So Mondale told me about that and said, "I guess we better not do that," and that was when I told him the Johnson Lido anecdote. I've never talked to Pierre about that subsequently, but I dished his supper party. (Laughter)

MG: Tell me about the Rome trip.

Gammon -- I -- 18

SG: The Rome trip. I saw very little. That was just an over-and-back. One night we got in very late, midnight or somewhere thereabouts, Rome time. There was the day flight from Andrews. I peeled off because I was--Italian desk officer was my real job. I was just along in case of any feed-in or lead-in of the party. Crockett was there. Crockett was--I was very much on the periphery, and I didn't know I was being looked over by staffers like Buzz and George Reedy and Walter Jenkins and so on along on the trip. I behaved myself, never impinged on the Veep, or--I don't think I even spoke to him. So that was ceremonial, largely, and I darted off to the embassy and did business with embassy staff and with Ambassador Freddy [George Frederick] Reinhardt and so on. And it was only about a week afterwards that I was suddenly pitchforked into the job [inaudible].

MG: So your first trip was really the Scandinavian trip? [inaudible]

SG: Yes. The first real trip in which I was substantively involved was Scandinavia and then after that Benelux.

MG: Did you do any advance work on the Scandinavian trip? Did you go--?

SG: No. The technical advance, the logistical concerns, were, curiously enough--you know, the White House always advances presidential [trips]. They have done that for many presidencies. A vice presidential trip, however, is handled by the Bureau of Administration at the State Department. Presidential events are paid for out of White House money; vice presidents' are charged to the State Department. It's an anomaly, a peculiarity.

MG: Yes.

SG: So the logistics would be done by administrative managerial people from State. I would be on the phone a bit, but doing more in terms of the substantive content, which brings

Gammon -- I -- 19

me back to the point I was starting to make, the Vice Presidential resentment at being excluded.

Now of the--was it eight ambassadors or nine that we visited?--all but two--their only concern was--their basic attitude was, "Oh my God! Here comes the Vice President. We've heard about him. Let's just try to wrap him in cotton wool, get him in and out of town without breaking any dishes." And he knew that. He was certainly no dummy, and he resented it. It was part of the fifth-wheeling vice-presidential role. He resented it and he couldn't do anything about it. To some extent that was why he very often misbehaved on trips, I'm sure, but all in the privacy of--et cetera.

MG: When you say--

SG: The anecdotal stuff is legion there.

MG: When you say misbehave, what--give me some examples of his misbehavior.

SG: Okay. Well, this is hearsay. There was the time when he was--he would go on dietary kicks, you know. He was on a bean-soup kick on one of the trips, and they ran out of bean soup on *Air Force Two* at thirty-five thousand feet over India, and he ripped the hell out of his air force aide. You know, it was the Johnson line--"I'm a reasonable man. I have very few requests, but why I can't have my bean soup?" (Growling sound). But the other one [was] in the Hilton in Istanbul where he insisted on having a wall built down the corridor to protect the entrance door to the vice-presidential suite. He hated to have people hanging around outside the suite because he wanted things done decently and in order. But the trouble is if you're a functionaire, a spear-bearer on the trip, you can't really tell what the hell is going on from the official schedule. You have to keep your ear to the ground, and the control-room concept doesn't work--did not work as well on LBJ

Gammon -- I -- 20

trips as it does for secretary of state or presidentials. I've handled, later, the substantive side of two presidential visits--three, I guess. Nixon to Rome. I was away from Rome on home leave when Johnson came there as president. Buzz once accused me of doing it deliberately to avoid it. I handled Ford's first economic summit in Paris; as DCM [deputy chief of mission] I made myself control officer. And I handled the Carter visit, in November of his first year as president, to Giscard. I once said I was going to write a manual on visits, except I was going to label them "Visitations." You can imagine what the impact is on an embassy of a monster incursion. But ambassadors--and I could call the roll of names of those who just wanted to get Johnson out of town quietly. They'd be polite and deferential and so forth, but "For God's sake, don't let him touch anything!" Bull in the china shop, and you're walking through with flowers tied to his horns and hope he gets out without breaking.

The two exceptions were William McCormick Blair in Copenhagen and Douglas MacArthur II in Brussels, one a career man, one a political appointee. Blair, of course, was a strong Adlai supporter, and Johnson was, I think, from a few things he said, a few indications--I think he was nervous, because Johnson never really cared in his deep heart of hearts about foreign affairs. That's my theory. He knew that foreign policy was something that a president did, and, therefore, he had to be involved, but it wasn't a deep, burning, emotional thing like domestic policy.

MG: Yes.

Side 2, Tape 1

SG: --if he was going to be president, he had to be equally good in foreign affairs as in domestic affairs. But this was not a deep feeling in his heart, so he was a little nervous

Gammon -- I -- 21

on foreign trips, I sensed, and I think he felt there was a real risk that Blair, as a Stevenson man, would not--might somehow mousetrap him or let him get into an embarrassing situation.

MG: Why did you think that he thought that? Did he say anything to that--

SG: A few minor comments, and then--it was mostly an intuitive reaction on my part because of how so many other ambassadors really did treat the Vice President with great respect and so forth, but they never made any use of him. And Blair and MacArthur, one a pro and one a non-pro, both said to the Vice President by their actions primarily and to some extent in their words, "Mr. Vice President, so glad you're here. Here are the problems we and United States foreign policy is concerned with in dealing with Denmark, Belgium, and here is how if you can help us on this, if you can put a little more spin on what we're doing here, it will be a real help."

MG: Yes.

SG: That was music to his ears, because everybody tends to forget that Johnson was--remember those basic McGuffey virtues--he was a dedicated, patriotic person, and he cared deeply, and he wanted to be useful, and most people are treating him as some kind of a monster, getting him out of town and so forth. And here are two--and the data will bear me out that Blair got another embassy in the Johnson Administration--he went to the Philippines--and Doug MacArthur continued his distinguished professional career, always very high on the Johnson list. The same thing, as I said earlier, I think applied to Rusk in the sense that Rusk was somebody that knows what a vice president is under the Constitution and was always considerate, respectful, and wanted to be sure that the Vice President was fully included. And that made a difference. Johnson--as the intense

Gammon -- I -- 22

political animal, he did not hold grudges against people who were not a threat. Well, the whole sort of kiss-and-make-up with Yarborough, the minute he became president, the feud was, "What feud?" Liberal schmiberal, what the heck? A senator from Texas is no threat under any circumstance to the president. The whole nature of the ball game--and his total emotional structure would back up this totality of political involvement. So in those two cases--now, I can't resist telling a little anecdote which illustrates the Johnson--the old-fashioned virtues.

In Brussels, we had a little--set a little time in the schedule, and I, with connivance from MacArthur, asked the Vice President whether he would be willing to go over to the chancery and talk to the assembled embassy staff, both American and Belgian employees. I think we did it in one or two other cases. And he said he would. We went there, and a big rally in the front--sort of reception area of the lobby, and everybody around there, and Johnson made a brief off-the-cuff talk, the gist of which was, "You people are doing a fine job! As you know, I've got two daughters, but if I had sons"--pre-feminist era--"I would want them either to be teachers or preachers or go into the foreign service, do something worthwhile." Well, of course, everybody loved that. Johnson was--when he was in tune with his audience, and I'll come back to that in a minute because I've seen that, too--terrific. The rapport there was incredible. It didn't always happen, but when he took the pain--

So in the limo, we were going back to the Westbury Hotel--I was riding in the jump seat, and Johnson was sitting on the right, and Doug MacArthur beside him, and I said something about, "Well, Mr. Vice President, I think the staff deeply appreciates your remarks, and it really made their day and set them up," and Doug MacArthur--who by the

Gammon -- I -- 23

way, lives in elderly--lives in the same building I do here in Washington now (laughter)--reinforced this comment. And Johnson then told us an anecdote about sort of which--it was a straight out of a McGuffey's *Reader*-type story, and the gist of it was an episode happening in a small Western town of--on a bitter cold, icy day when Slim is in the barber shop and in the chair, and some of his pals are sitting around, and they see the little old lady starting to cross the street, and she slips on the ice and lands on her fanny--kerplunk! And he leaps up out of the chair and goes out--and about this time we arrived in front of the Westbury, and the driver and the Secret Service are ready to open the door, but Johnson finished the anecdote, so we sat there, the crowd on the sidewalk waiting for us to get out--and Slim goes out, helps the little old lady up and dusts her off, helps her across the street, and then he comes back into the barber shop to total silence. And one of the louts in the shop says, "Well, Slim, what did you do that for?" And Slim responded, "Well, fellows, I just thought she may be somebody's mother."

Well, I refrained from catching MacArthur's eye because the inclination of sophisticates is to sort of snicker at a homely tale--or would-be sophisticates. But, you see, Johnson--these were not homespun tales. These are things which I think that he really--this was the real Johnson. This was the type of virtues that he stood for and that he respected. So what he was saying was what I had to say about teaching, preaching, and diplomacy, that "these are eternal verities, and they're worth respecting and honoring them, and I do." Then we got out and went into the hotel.

My other rapport comment, anecdotal, is in Helsinki on the Scandinavian trip, the second stop, second country. One of the visits was to go down to the fish market, and he went to--I was--in the very early stages I was still pretty skeptical about the Johnson

Gammon -- I -- 24

ability and the press-the-flesh bit, but I saw him operating with, literally, Finnish fishwives who didn't speak a word of English, and I know he didn't speak any Finnish, in spite of the fact there was an interpreter hovering around, and he was just moving through and shaking hands and talking to them, and you could see a spark going back and forth. They were communicating with each other. My colleagues in State could never believe that could and did take place. A minor point.

MG: Why don't you go through that Scandinavian trip and talk first about the purpose of the trip.

SG: The basic purpose was the Scandinavians, of course, are a mixed bag. Norway and Denmark were, and still are, part of NATO. Iceland is in NATO, but only because it can't really do anything else. With 350,000 people and God knows how many thousand Americans stationed at Keflavík, there were always problems, and they resented this external intrusion, et cetera, but still they're part of NATO nominally. Finland is neutral. Sweden is neutral. So there was--it was a--doing all of the Scans and Finland, which is technically not Scandinavian but usually grouped with the Nordics, was to reinforce the United States presence, a high-level visit to solidify, you might say, the friendship and the understanding of Sweden and Finland and make it plain to the three NATO members that the United States cared and respected and would send the Number Two guy on a visit and so forth. That was basically it. I don't to this day know whether Johnson liked these trips or disliked them. He made a lot of them. In some ways doing them, I think, satisfied his need to be doing something more useful, which is why when he was given the quick "Welcome, Mr. Vice President, glad you could come; bye-bye" treatment, it



Gammon -- I -- 25

bothered him. So I think it was--to a degree, it was activism on his part, a feeling of "Well, here I have a chance to do something."

Now I discovered on the--I had made occasional trips out to The Elms at various hours of the day and night with telegrams that I thought were essential for him to see relating to the normal conduct of foreign affairs, or things it seemed to me worth showing to him out of normal hours. And, of course, that was where I developed a crush on Lady Bird, who was marvelous--is a marvelous person and so forth, was always, whatever the day, hour of the day or night, there to do the honors of the house--"How about a cup of coffee," or "Have you had breakfast?" or "How about a?"--you know. A very, very wonderful person. But I had never really been sort of in Johnson's lap or his business, and I would pop in. He might be in bed, or he might be wherever with the papers on a Sunday morning. On a trip, of course, the drill was as soon as the Secret Service said he was awake, I would go in with the morning take, the telegrams that I thought were essential for him to see. And I discovered the very first day that he didn't like to read! He'd scare the hell out of me because I wouldn't know whether he'd read his briefing book or not. I think he would have flipped through it, but to me, it always seemed he was flying by the seat of his pants, never poring over briefing books. And similarly, he would very seldom read a telegram. I would have four or five messages of some importance for him to see and would have them in my hand, and he would say, "Well, tell me about them." So he would want them talked. And I would summarize. I would say, "Well, here's something in from wherever, from Saigon, that indicates thus and so," or from New Delhi, or--the things that I felt were important, plus the telegraphic copy of the morning top-secret summary, which is done in the State Department for the president, the vice

Gammon -- I -- 26

president, the two or three top people including the director of the CIA and so forth. In my first incarnation, I had been responsible for the production of that document, and then I saw it again under Kissinger, when I was again in the secretariat fairly regularly. That's the distillation of the State point of view of everything that has happened sort of overnight and the evening before, which is prepared usually between three-thirty and five-thirty in the morning and reproduced and distributed in ten or eleven copies to the ten or eleven top people. So that would be part of the morning prep. But he would never read these. He wanted to be talked, "Tell me about them," which would take me maybe ten or twelve minutes or so.

There might be somebody else coming or going--oh, anecdote; vice-presidential misbehavior, with staff, in this case. Paul Glynn--who was his valet, air force sergeant, who was extremely good, knew how to handle the Vice President to provide the maximum of service with the minimum of fuss--was trying to break in a successor. And some poor--I think it was--it must have been an air force sergeant, five-striper, was along on the trip to be broken in. And while I was with Johnson in Stockholm, so it must have been really sort of the first morning of the trip, this guy came in with the breakfast cart, and the breakfast--Lady Bird was not up, was not present in the sitting room of the suite, and the breakfast was cold. Scrambled eggs and tea, and the tea was lukewarm, and the eggs were lukewarm at best. And Johnson got furious, and he chewed out this poor sergeant, really bullied the hell out of him, tore a strip off in effect, metaphorically, just chewing him out for not being able to provide a decent hot breakfast. Of course--"Oh, Mr. Vice President, let me go get you another. Let me get another," and Johnson could be like a spoiled little boy on occasion, and he wouldn't let him do it. He wouldn't--"No,

Gammon -- I -- 27

it's here, and it's not right, and I'm not going to eat it! No, you can't go get another one!"

And finally he made the sergeant sit down and eat the breakfast, which I thought was bad show. He was being a bully. But he wasn't going to have any breakfast himself because he couldn't have it when he wanted it and a proper hot breakfast. So the tail end of this-- the poor sergeant had eaten a token part of it and departed, and Lady Bird came in and discovered that Johnson was romping and snorting a certain amount, and that was a great insight on how she handled him. She didn't take it on directly. Three or four minutes later, her breakfast arrived, which was scrambled eggs and tea, and she knew that Johnson was not going to have any breakfast because his breakfast hadn't been right, so she sat down at the cart and had the first bite, and she said, "Mmmm! Honey, these eggs are delicious. Here, taste them." So he then ate her breakfast and departed for the day with the proper fuel in him, and so forth. Very deft.

MG: Well, if he had one of these eruptions, would he normally stay mad the entire day or so, or would they all--?

SG: The worst one was on the second stop, in Helsinki. Carl Rowan was the ambassador there, and Carl is an exception to my Get-him-out-of-town, because, of course, they were close friends, and Carl is a wonderful guy. But Carl had made the mistake one often does with high-level visitors. He had over-programmed LBJ. There were too many events on the schedule, and that increases the stress and the pressure. My experience and observation, which I would pass on afterwards--I certainly did on the Benelux trip--is that I said, "The Vice President can do no more than four events in one day. Better if it's only three. He can do something in a meeting with the government in the morning and a lunch. Then he can lay a wreath or do something in the afternoon, and, if he has to, he

Gammon -- I -- 28

can have a dinner with a speech part of it. But that's a very full schedule, and you put anything else in there, something's going to go wrong. You're over-stressing because each one involves a motorcade and getting assembled from Point A to Point B, and some stress or pressure on the Vice President." Now some leaders are workaholics on trips and will do a lot more, and still with a risk of things going wrong. But generally a three- or four-event day is a full schedule for a president or a vice president.

And Carl had five or maybe six. And at one--I did not make the side trip to Lapland, which was sort of tourism, and then a visit to the cemetery in Rovaniemi, where there was an episode that put Johnson in a bad mood because it was in a Finnish war cemetery, fallen heroes of the war, the two wars with the Russians. Johnson made a little impromptu speech, and as he always did, he invited people to come on in and gather around, and a lot of the Finns were sort of swarming over, and they were cutting across some of the graves of their own fellow citizens. And somebody was shocked or told Johnson, "Oh, that's terrible," you know, "They desecrated the cemetery!" Very minor episode; the Finns didn't think anything at all about it. But somehow Johnson was told, or persuaded, that he had made a boo-boo, which, of course, he blamed on his poor army [aide]. As I recall it was Colonel [William F.] Jackson, and poor Jackson took a fear--he was the only attaché left with him by then. The Air Force aide had departed. He had his army aide, though, on both trips, and poor Jackson took just a tremendous shellacking. Johnson was always chewing him out for minor things going wrong. He became in a sense a whipping-boy.

But at any rate, [Johnson] blamed Jackson for this, he blamed everybody, and he sulked for nearly twenty-four hours, and what got him out of his bad mood was the

Gammon -- I -- 29

following day--again, I never lived in his pocket when I could avoid it. I didn't go to many of the lunches, banquets, or dinners because I preferred to be behind the scenes unless I needed to see him on a substantive matter. But when they were visiting the Seppalas, the Finnish ambassador to the United States and his wife, Madame Seppala, who was a rather attractive blonde lady some twenty-five years younger than her husband [and] who Johnson thought was pretty cute. The Seppalas had him out to their country place out on a lake, which had no indoor plumbing. The facility was on a path about twenty yards or thirty yards away from the house, and I gather from what I was told by those that were there that it was a rather large facility, a privy, a three-holer--could accommodate three people at one time. And at some point during--Johnson was still sulking--and then at some point he needed to go out to the john, and he turned to Connie Kallenberg, a very ravishingly attractive blonde from protocol, and invited her to come along and arrange the seating, which--that rather crude witticism put him in a swell mood again. But that was the longest I was ever aware of.

What put him in the bad mood was that while he was sulking that evening and the next morning, some of the journalists, not foreign journalists but one or other of the American journalists, said something that--the Vice President "seemed subdued," were the two offending words, and that infuriated him because--and I know what his thought processes were there. I figured out why it was that that upset him so: because he had had the heart attack, you know, four years before or whenever it was, a very serious one, and he was always worried about the subject of the health of a candidate for president. And I'm sure that his game plan when he accepted the vice presidency was that after one or two terms of JFK, he would be the heir presumptive and the successor, a la George Bush,

Gammon -- I -- 30

and then there would be a Johnson presidency. So anything that was critical on his health, or "would he be up to the job?"--that was a very neuralgic point for him. So he took the "seemed subdued" as being a criticism.

Just after the Scandinavian trip--jumping ahead--we had a meeting over in the Executive Office Building in the big room, and everybody there sitting around the table-- I was sitting at one end--and Johnson got going on the subject of the "seemed subdued." He was chewing everybody out collectively at the table--he knew how that happened, and he knew who'd talked to which journalist--and he cut that eye over us sort of like Moby Dick on a rampage, glaring around the table. Well, I have to add that he never-- incredible!--he never chewed me out, not once in the five-plus months I was with him. And I'm sure I deserved it on more than one occasion, including at least once when I was deliberately misleading him as part of my disengagement scheming. I played hooky in Oslo one morning, pretending to have a tummy upset, and sent Lee Stull in as my deputy with the morning telegrams, and then I rejoined the party when we were going up to the Storting about eleven o'clock, feeling guilty as hell, because Johnson was very sort of "How are you feeling? Are you okay? Are you sure you're up to this [inaudible]?" It made me feel guilty as hell, but that was to establish Lee, to get him acquainted as somebody who would be acceptable and be able to fill my job.

MG: One more question on that cemetery scene. Was that publicized in the press, that he had--?

SG: I don't think it was played up particularly in the Finnish papers. Carl would remember and would know for sure, but it certainly--it was a thing inside the traveling party, and then there was that "seemed subdued" crack. But finishing up that later episode, when he

Gammon -- I -- 31

was referring back to it and was romping and snorting around, chewing everybody out collectively, the whole thing tickled me, and I was sitting there chortling. And he cut that eye over to me, and I thought, "Oh, oh. He's really going to chew me out now! I'm asking for it." But he didn't, and I was prepared. If he jumped me--"What are you laughing at?"--I would have said, "Mr. Vice President, the idea of you being subdued just strikes me as funny." But he never--he didn't jump me. I can only say I led a charmed life, which probably accounts for why I really became very fond of him.

The Sweden trip--I really don't even recall the substantive talks. There was nothing, no big deal going there. Our ambassador just wanted to get him out of town quietly. No big deal.

MG: That was--[James G.] Parsons was the ambassador?

SG: Yes. Jeff Parsons. A side-trip which I played hooky from. No substance particularly. From there to Finland. Again, the meeting with Kekkonen and the Finnish government went very smoothly, and I remember taking frantic notes in my book to be able to write up the subsequent airgram. I think we did an air--we may have done a telegram on that one; I can't remember. The airgram, of course, went by pouch and took three days to reach Washington, and a telegram would be sent instantly.

Oslo: We landed in Bodo, a sort of dedicated Norwegian base, air and navy, up in northern--up north of the Arctic Circle, and then had sort of a mid-day stop there, and then flew on down to Oslo that evening. I jumped the plane then and volunteered to fly down on the air attaché's amphibian because the Norwegian foreign minister met us up there, and then he flew down on *Air Force Two*, which of course was filled. So two or three of us volunteered to debark and fly on the slower amphibian, but we had a

Gammon -- I -- 32

wonderful trip because it flew at about five thousand feet across the mouth of all the fjords, so we had wonderful scenery, which you'd miss on *Air Force Two*. We arrived an hour later, but no big deal. The talks with the Norwegian government, fine; no problem there. We touched all the right bases on NATO and the continuing Russian threat--temper of the times. No surprises and so on. There was a wonderful dinner that the Norwegians staged, black-tie naturally, at the big fortress, Akershus at the mouth of the fjord, with torch light and uniformed, costumed attendants and so on. Great occasion and a motorcade back to the hotel. I made the mistake back at the--very nearly missed the motorcade because I was making sure people were in the right cars, so I just barely managed to jump the last car, which contained, quote, "the girls." You know, on trips there was always detachment of attractive--sometimes contemporaries of Lynda Bird's, who was on both trips, or younger secretaries, who were referred to collectively as "the girls." And Johnson kind of liked to have these attractive young ladies along. I ended up riding in the last car, which was with them, going back to the hotel and was starting up in the elevator, going up to our respective floors, when Johnson came up behind me and said, "Where are *you* going?" And he got in and I got out. And very often on the trips, the routine would be--he would very often have an unwinding session in his suite, in which some of the party would be there, usually the family and Buzz and very often mostly "the girls," and then he would talk a bit. He would drink--he would nurse one Cutty Sark and branch water. He never drank bourbon that I saw, and he was fairly tightfisted. He would have one Scotch and nurse it for a while. And he never smoked at all in those days. He would occasionally take a cigarette and play with it in his hands,



Gammon -- I -- 33

but he never took up smoking until after he left the presidency. I think he was "The hell with it!" then.

MG: Did he buy souvenirs, or go shopping?

SG: He did. And that gets us into the art. There was a problem in Sweden, which we heard about on the next stop because some of the--he was buying the art, I'm afraid, not because he cared all that much for it but because the Kennedys and Jacqueline, et cetera, were into culture with a capital "C" and redecorating and all this sort of thing. So he got interested in buying art, and some of it was pretty bad stuff in my view, but okay, we all have our likes and dislikes. But he did buy some painting from a Swedish painter, who turned out later to have communist connections. There was a mild and brief panic in the traveling party over that. Trivial, so what the hell?

MG: Would he dicker with the--on the price?

SG: Yes. He would beat them down to something and sometimes well below what they were willing to sell at, and then the embassy would slip them the difference afterwards, which all came out of the appropriation for emergencies in the diplomatic service which funds State Department domestic entertainment and vice-presidential travels and so on. And that was always a totally unaudited fund, because John Rooney, in the House Ways and Means [Committee], who was sort of the State Department's nemesis, and whom Crockett turned into a friend ultimately, never wanted to know. These were for emergencies in the diplomatic service, and that fund originally began as money appropriated to Thomas Jefferson, the first secretary of state, for any intelligence or CIA-type things that the infant government did. So the tradition was ancient, but it was never audited and nobody ever kept track of it and so forth. In fact, once in a later period, I know somebody stole

Gammon -- I -- 34

eight or ten thousand dollars out of the safe where it was kept, and they never found out who it was because twelve or fifteen people had access to the safe. It's different now.

The fund is audited, and there are strict accounts kept and so on.

But at any rate, the art buying in--must have been in--yes, it had to be Rotterdam.

I was going up to the suite to escort him down to the black-tie dinner in which he was making a speech, and when I came up into the--I think it's in the log; I remember seeing it, that people were looking at the art there. The whole sitting room of the suite was lined; there must have been fifteen or twenty paintings, Dutch, and most of it struck me as airport art. There were windmills, and there were wooden shoes, and the Dutchness of it was undeniable--(laughter)--and there was one painting of a bridge over a canal that wasn't bad, I remember, but--and he asked me, "What do you think of it?" And I sort of looked around, without shuddering, and there was one still life of flowers or fruit in a pewter jug or something, and I said, "I kind of like that still life." "You've been talking to the women." (Laughter) He'd got the same advice from some of them and didn't agree with it and immediately suspected that somehow my testimony had been flawed.

Amusing and touching in a way.

MG: Did he buy the still life?

SG: Oh, he bought everywhere. No, he didn't buy the still life. I don't know what he did get there, but these things were all picked up and taken along. And this was all charged to the appropriated funds, emergencies in the diplomatic service. Not only that, but this was one thing that shocked me at the time and still shocked me; those of us who were on the party--on the trip--on the plane, if we were going out somewhere on our own, we would go into the budget and fiscal man on the plane and say, "Hey, I'm going shopping and

Gammon -- I -- 35

need some money," and you would be given unvouchered money in local currency to go out and do whatever you pleased with. That, I don't think the--I never did, and the State Department people didn't do this, but this was sort of a facility that was a loan. And on the Benelux trip, Bill Crockett raided one of the embassy commissaries, and when we arrived back at Andrews, he gave--I know he presented me with a case of Old Grandd. Well, I accepted it at that point, and I'm sure that's where it came from. A simpler era. (Laughter) Waste, fraud, and mismanagement in the government.

But he did--he was on the art-buying kick on both trips. He did look into things. He also--there were other crises. In Brussels on our arrival there, which was the second stop, second country--no, third country. We went to Luxemburg, Netherlands, Belgium, and then back, and in Brussels he'd broken his glasses.

MG: He did what?

SG: He'd broken his glasses--

MG: Did he?

SG: --and one of my friends, who was on the embassy staff, was on the midnight patrol on duty in the control room, and he was in charge--he found some optometrist and stirred him up in the middle of the night to fix the glasses, and they were delivered back the next morning. But Johnson was not particularly grateful because he said he had a spare pair. (Laughter) This type.

Then there was the--oh, I mentioned the dietetic. Too many anecdotes, I'm sure, but you can weed those out. In Rome, on that first trip, he was on a corn flakes-and-Sucaryl dietetic kick. And corn flakes he had in plenty, but he'd run out of Sucaryl. He was always worrying about his weight and dieting and so forth. And it so happens that

Gammon -- I -- 36

one of the people in the control room at the hotel--I can't remember which hotel we stayed in; funny, I should--but in the control room, one of the secretaries from the embassy was working in a late-night shift said, "Oh, I"--because they had no Sucaryl in the embassy commissary, or none in Rome, and she said, "Oh, I've got a bottle about half-full in the drawer of my desk." So she called the marine guard in the embassy, and he went up to her office, and then she talked him on that phone into whichever drawer he would find the Sucaryl so it could be over in time for breakfast with the corn flakes. So the bean soup was not the only one.

MG: How did he get along with King Olav?

SG: There was the A. W. Moursund episode. My impression was that he and Olav were sort of bluff, hearty types and no problem, but I--that was a purely ceremonial visit, so I was not along for any notetaking. I was with the prime minister session, so I wouldn't know if there were any--my guess would be no problem, but I have no evidence on that

But the A. W. Moursund bit. At the luncheon that the prime minister gave, I happened to be seated with Eric[Johan Georg] Raeder--Eric?--anyway, Ambassador Raeder, who was the secretary-general of the Norwegian foreign ministry who was--later was ambassador to Italy when I was in Rome as political counselor some years later. And I reminded him of this episode. Johnson's great friend, Judge Moursund, had come from near Oslo, and Johnson tried to get him to come along on the trip--"Go back to see your brother." Well, he couldn't make the trip, but Johnson was all fired up. He was bound and determined he was going to see the brother of Judge Moursund, his great and good friend. And all during the lunch, he kept demanding to know, "Where is A. W. Moursund[']s brother]?" Then there would be great scurrying around, and the

Gammon -- I -- 37

Norwegians were trying to find out who had been in charge of trying to locate him and bring him in and so forth. And at one point, Raeder, [the] secretary-general, remarked to me with some acerbity, "Maybe we could bring him in on a platter with an apple in his mouth." (Laughter) That--what I'm referring to [was] slight misbehavior. No big deal. I reminded Raeder of it in Rome five years later--no, it was four years later--and he was somewhat abashed that I remembered it. I thought it was funny, but--

The Icelandic stop, which was the last stop on the Scan--no, after--Denmark was very short [and] substantive. He took about a day of R&R there to recover from the trip before the long trip home with a stop in Iceland, and I had never told him that I have Danish relatives because I knew how much he loved--I'd already found out how much he loved the personal touch. And I remember in Sweden, he took along the masseur from the Senate, who happened to be Swedish--

SG: Olav Anderson, was it?

SG: Yes. Olav was introduced to the entire dinner party. "Stand up, Olav, and let all of these nice folks see you." Well, I wasn't about to be used that way in Denmark, so very cannily, in the car as we were leaving Frederiksberg Castle and the meeting with the Danish prime minister and government--where I'd been as notetaker together with Bill Blair, as the ambassador; we were the three Americans present--as we were leaving in the car, knowing that the late afternoon and the next day were holiday, R&R time, I said, "Mr. Vice President, would it be all right if I take tomorrow off to go see my kinfolks?" "Why, Sam, you never told me you had Danish kinfolks." And I was sort of "Aw shucks," you know. "I didn't know you cared, Mr. Vice President." But I was being very canny because I didn't want him saying, "Stand up, Sam, and let all these nice folks see

Gammon -- I -- 38

you," and going on about my Danish relations. (Laughter) So I had--you know, I knew him pretty well by then.

The Iceland stop--there was one funny there. He had a good--this was the last stop. We flew into Keflavík. We got there, I suppose, about 9:30 in the morning, and *Air Force Two* could not land at the Reykjavik airport, which was smaller than Keflavík, so we had transferred to a Convair and shuttled--some people went in by car, and the rest of us shuttled in on the Convair for essentially a meeting with the Icelandic government and then a luncheon. The meeting with the government ran--and Johnson, by this time, was impatient. He'd been through his script many times, so he rattled through what he had to say fairly fast: NATO and strong, enduring friendship, et cetera, and then he asked for any questions. None. The Icelandic capitol building is about the size of a small schoolhouse, a small, two-story sort of frame building in those days, and there we were in a big room like the high school faculty sitting around a large table, and Johnson went around, "Any questions? You, Mr. Minister? You, Mr. Minister? You, Mr. Minister?" Like that. All done.

Then he said, "I want to get out and get with your people." So we trotted out the door, and he had a good Icelandic interpreter, and he climbed up on the fence, which was sort of a low stone parapet with an iron fence around it and a pillar at one end, and he got up sort of on the pillar at the end, and there was a crowd of Icelanders around, I judge several hundred, and he made a brief stump speech, interpreted by the interpreter. Not simultaneous, but pauses and so forth. It was a good--a very nice speech, and he was meeting the people and so forth and getting together with them, and it was a--"We, none of us want war. We're all in favor of--I'm in favor of peace. You're in favor of peace."

Gammon -- I -- 39

Very simple, but it made a hit. The Icelanders liked it. But I still remember the ambassador, who was sort of scuttling around behind the fence for fear the Vice President might fall off or something. He was quite nervous and didn't know what to do, and out of his depth really in that situation.

Then after the lunch--no, by golly! It wasn't a lunch. It was an afternoon of some sightseeing and then a dinner, and we flew back in black tie to *Air Force Two*, and we changed on *Air Force Two* back into our traveling clothes for the flight in, and we got in, I suppose, at 1:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m. in the morning, back at Andrews. But that visit--the substantive part of that, there was not a great deal of substance, but it went well. The Danish one, I thought he was particularly effective. I don't remember the details, but Bill Blair had in effect said, "Well, we're interested in this," and it was sort of the day-to-day diplomacy of things, and be sure the Vice President knew and could be helpful in what we're trying to do by stressing this or referring to it or letting him know it was important.

MG: There have been some suggestions that he was too informal and violated some of their codes or--you mentioned the cemetery incident.

SG: I don't think so. I think in general he was liked, he was popular, as a visitor because he came with--he comes across to a crowd of foreigners, whether they know the language or not or whether it was interpreted, as someone of immense good will who likes them. And the fact that he wouldn't be--that he might not be stuffy in Sweden or too rigid in Finland or something like that, I don't think there was any fallout at all. In fact, I would say in general, even on trips in which--even after the A. W. Moursund and so on, nobody minded. That's part of what made him a human being, that he could act up.

Gammon -- I -- 40

MG: There was one occasion, I believe, in which he had the furniture removed. He perhaps felt the bed was uncomfortable, or some--

SG: Well, there was always--there were always bed problems. That had been on the early trips because foreign beds are not always more than six-foot-four or six-foot five inches long, and he couldn't--he--what was he? Six-three, or six-three-and-a-quarter? Anyway, he was big, and he didn't want to sleep crossways in a lumpy, foreign bed. So part of the advance logistics that State learned to do was to be damn sure there was a long enough bed. And I'm sure on one of the early trips, he probably did [inaudible]. It was just lucky he didn't throw it out the window! But no, I never felt embarrassed for him or for the United States in seeing him operate. He would scare the hell out of me because I felt he hadn't been properly briefed in going in. You see, a lot of the briefing stuff that he would have would be papers from the appropriate desk in the State Department, properly cleared and so forth, and full of--sort of carefully fudged to be nuanced, and so on. I would be afraid that he might go too far on a particular topic and that he might not be sensitive to nuances, but--he flew by the seat of his pants, but he was a damn good flyer, in my observation.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I



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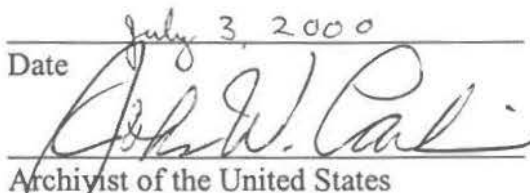
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