INTERVIEW II

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INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

Tape 1 of 1

G: A night flight. An overnight.

MG: I see. Let's start by focusing on the purpose of the trip. What was the Vice President's mission on that Luxembourg trip in November of 1963?

G: Not unlike the Scandinavian trip. There was not a crucial single key objective to do. It was partly a make-work in the sense that, as you know, he was deeply frustrated and restless, and this was a chance to go somewhere and do something. The Luxembourg one--we had very little going at any given time. That's a more social embassy than most. It's always a political appointee, whether Perle Mesta or later, so that was--we stopped in Luxembourg because it was there and because we were doing the Benelux [nations]. And then, let's see. I guess we went from there to the Netherlands and then back to Brussels, was the last stop. But we actually flew from Amsterdam to Brussels, if you can believe that, on *Air Force Two*.

MG: Straight up and down.

G: Thirty-five miles, and it took us half an hour or something to get there. There was a funny, which I jotted down to remind me to remember to tell you. Somehow or other, the

Belgian government got the wrong information about the ETA at the airport, and they came out about--I think they telephoned somebody in Amsterdam, who'd given them the wrong answer, so they thought we were coming in about four in the afternoon, and they were all out there at three-forty-five. And Doug MacArthur and Wawee [Laura Louise], his wife, who was Alben Barkley's daughter, they had gone out to the airport well in advance, and they literally arrived about a minute or so before [Paul-Henri] Spaak and the whole crowd of dignitaries. And we didn't come in until nearly six as I recall. So there they were with the dignitaries on hand and nothing to do. Well, Wawee had quite a reputation in the service as being extremely difficult and so on, but it didn't faze her for a moment. She sent [for] the number two, the embassy counselor: "You got any cards?" "*Cards* cards?" He fumbled for his cards. "No, playing cards!" He rushed around to the duty-free shop or something and got a deck of cards. So Wawee and Doug and Spaak and one other sat down and played a couple of rubbers of bridge while waiting. (Laughter) Diplomatic serenity in a tempest-in-a-teapot moment of crisis.

The general mission at each stop was to reinforce the bonds that connected us with three NATO allies, and the usual concerns about making sure that there was understanding and support for U.S. policies in other parts of the world, et cetera, but in a sense the visit was as much tourism as substance. Doug MacArthur, like Bill Blair in Denmark, of course handled the Vice President brilliantly in terms of stressing whatever minor negotiating problems existed and asking for the Vice President's help, and of course he was always delighted to be useful. Something of that sort.

I think I told you--did I tell you last time the anecdote in Brussels when we--after the meeting with--I guess it was a luncheon with Spaak, which was deeply frustrating for

me because we were six people at a luncheon table, and it was a working lunch, and Spaak and LBJ talked shop, and Doug MacArthur was there, and I think the Minister of Finance for some reason, and one of Spaak's senior people. And I was doing the notetaking on the American side, so I had the notebook down in my lap, scratching down enough notes so I could reconstruct the conversation--I did the memcon later on--but the frustrating part is that Spaak was a great gourmet, and it was a superb luncheon. Fine wines and marvelous food, and here I was grabbing a bite when I could. (Laughter)

MG: Trying to eat and write at the same time.

G: Trying to properly enjoy that and write at the same time.

MG: There was a luncheon for the Grand Duchess Charlotte--

G: Right.

MG: --on the first day.

G: Yes.

MG: Anything significant?

G: Nothing that--I think Buzz[Horace Busby] was at that one. I was not, and that was primarily social. The Luxembourg stop was interesting in the sense that the American ambassador was another Stevenson man, and who was rather anti-Johnson. I remember in the control room fairly late in the evening, it must have been on the end of the first day--

MG: That was [William R.] Rivkin?

G: Yes. Bill Rivkin, having an argument with--he died quite early, rather tragically, I think, unexpected, but his widow remarried, and he left a generous sum of money to endow a prize for foreign service career officers, the best young officer--I've forgotten whether it

was mid-career or junior officer prize--and his widow, although long remarried, always attends the presentation ceremonies. Rivkin was making snide digs about Johnson and so on, and I remember I was defending Johnson. And Bill Crockett, who was standing nearby said to me, in effect, "Well, I see you've come on board." Of course, he knew I had to be frog-marched into the job. Rivkin, as a Stevenson supporter, had no understanding or appreciation for Johnson's style and so on.

MG: What were his arguments against Johnson?

G: Personal, mostly. The homespun, the general cornpone sort of not-sophisticated--eastern establishment, basically--which, of course, was a criticism that always infuriated Johnson and of which he was well aware. He tended always in criticizing this framework--he would blame it on "all those Harvard professors." It was essentially one of the many discomforts in being vice president to such a quintessential Harvard-establishment figure as JFK, though Johnson was always a hundred per cent loyal to the President. That was just built in, the way he was. Of course, there was also--and this was part of the paradox of Johnson that I alluded to before--his political interest as vice president wanting very much to be president. And probably, after eight years as vice president--may I call it the Bush syndrome?--he didn't have a prayer unless the outgoing president was benevolent or neutral or favorable or something, so his own best political interests called for him to be intensely loyal. But he *was* intensely loyal, and that was Johnson all over. You could never tell which came first, the chicken or the egg, because the chicken and the egg were one. He was such a totally political animal that he always sincerely and genuinely and passionately desired those things which were in his own best political interests. And you cannot say with Johnson that he was calculating or self-serving because that was so much

a part of the fabric, the nature of the beast, that you could not separate that out and say that he said to himself, "Well, I've got to be loyal to Kennedy in order to--"That's why I come back to--I can't remember whether I mentioned the anecdote. As we were coming back from the Spaak luncheon--yes, I think I did tell you--in the limo, we pulled up in front of the Westbury. The driver and the Secret Service man got out, but Johnson was in the middle of a story, so we stayed in the back of the car for about two or three minutes, and his story was the one about--I told you the one about Slim and the barber shop, and so on.

MG: Yes.

G: I mean, that was corny, if you will, but that also was genuine, and that put sophisticates off and establishment figures and so on. Here is this corny guy. They couldn't quite believe it. So they were convinced he was somehow fraudulent or something fishy. But he was a simple, genuine, patriotic, decent guy beneath a very thick layer of great complexity. And the [inaudible]--

MG: "A thick layer of great complexity?"

G: Yes.

MG: What do you mean by that?

G: Personality traits. You know: the low flashpoint, the bullying instinct, which he definitely had. The worst thing you could do was to--if he smelled fear in his staff, he would chew the hell out of them. But he was very paternal towards "his people." He might chastise you, but it was always, "This hurts me more than it does you," and "It's for your own good." And he was a very warm, caring person to those who were part of his establishment. He was also a very bad enemy, except that the enmity was always

political. I don't think he ever hated anybody who was not a political threat. And the classic--two classic examples, one each way, was--you remember right after he became president, the feud with [Ralph] Yarborough vanished because the senator from Texas was no threat to President Johnson. He might be a threat to the Texas power base of a vice president with ambitions, but Johnson--I mean, "Ralph, old buddy!" On the other side of that was the relationship with Bobby, because he knew Bobby was a threat. So he never forgave Bobby the many slights and criticisms and the opposition of him being the vice-presidential candidate--the whole schmier, and he hated Bobby with a deep and abiding passion, I'm sure.

MG: Did you ever have any first-hand insights regarding his relationship with Robert Kennedy during any of this period?

G: No. We never discussed--

MG: He never mentioned that.

G: This was more nearly in terms of what I saw of Johnson the man and then connecting it with the--but even there, you remember, when he ruled Bobby ineligible for vice president, it was that he didn't think anybody in the cabinet--

G: Yes.

MG: --and Bobby's crack was, "I don't mind going over the side, but I'm sorry to take so many of you with me." (Laughter)

MG: Also in Luxembourg he met with the European Coal and Steel Community.

G: Yes.

MG: Do you remember that? Anything significant there?

G: A familiarization visit, really. He had a talking paper supplied by the European Bureau, Regional Economic Affairs. No big--no major events there. I didn't go alone on that one, didn't take the notes. In fact, I think in Luxembourg I didn't do any of the meetings there. I did them in Belgium and in the Netherlands.

MG: And that night, he did buy some paintings, apparently.

G: That's right. Yes.

MG: Any recollection there?

G: No, he didn't call on me for artistic advice that evening, but he was definitely still in the collecting. It was in Amsterdam--no, in Rotterdam--that he criticized my taste in art as having been--"You've been talking to the women-folks."

(Interruption)

MG: He was briefed by you each morning, I gather.

G: The ritual was that I would be up and ready with a handful of four or five or a half dozen telegrams, one of them being the ritual State Department one, which is the telegraphic version of the top secret morning summary that goes to [the] president, vice president, secretary of defense, CIA director, and secretary of state. That would come in telegraphic form, usually arriving some time around four or five or six in the morning. And that would be hot off the wires. I'd have that, plus three or four other telegrams that would have been repeated on substantive matters. And I would be there, and the minute Secret Service said, "Okay, he's awake," then I would slide in, with a "Good morning," and "What have we got?" He would usually read the top secret summary, which would be maybe a two-page, two-and-a-half-page telegram, but he would not read the other

messages that I would have. He'd say, “Well, what else is there?” and I'd say, "Well, in Pakistan such-and-so." He wanted those talked to him.

And then there was the morning when Lynda Bird was in the room, and she, in effect, asked to see one of the classified telegrams, but it wasn't clear which one she wanted, so I slid an unclassified one out from the same sheaf and handed it to her. (Laughter)

MG: And he visited the grave of George Patton?

G: Yes. He went to Patton. He went out to the cemetery in Luxembourg, to Patton's grave and the military cemetery there. That was a natural photo occasion and so on. I don't recall--he might have said a few words there, but there was not a major ceremony to the best of my recollection.

MG: Had he ever met Patton? Did he have any reflections--?

G: I don't think that he had, because Patton was a staffer in the war department on MacArthur's staff like Eisenhower was at the time of the bonus marchers business, but then he was off on subsequent assignments and only really sort of caught fire in 1941, 1942, or early in the war, and then [they] sent him overseas, so that if they ever met, it would have been very brief. He never mentioned any of that to me.

MG: Okay. Did he stay in hotels during this time, or did he stay in--

G: We were hotelled in Luxem--yes, he preferred hotels. He did not like to be a guest of the monarch or president or prime minister or whatever. In Finland, we stayed in the Marski Hotel and Stockholm in the Grand there--or was that Oslo?--et cetera. He preferred hotels partly, I think, because Johnson was--my interpretation was Johnson was uneasy in a guest relationship. He liked to be the master of his own turf, and when we were renting

a hotel space, then, by golly, he's at home. He's the lord of the manor even if it's a rented manor. And we were in--we stayed in the Amstel in Amsterdam, which was one of the great old, splendid old hotels of Europe, and he complained that the canal boats kept him awake there. He preferred the more modern, the Westbury style, with skyscrapers--

MG: Hilton?

G: Yes, Hilton. And in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Brussels, we were hoteling.

One little note I see I've jotted down for myself is the contrast between Crockett and Dwight Porter as the senior State rep. It was very considerable because Crockett did most of the trips with the Veep, except he did not do the Scan[dinavian], and he sent Dwight Porter, who was the assistant secretary for administration. But Porter was essentially a substantive officer rather than a manager/administrator, and he and Johnson did not get along very well. There were several eruptions, I think, when Johnson chewed him out, and I know Dwight loathed the duty and the trip. Now Crockett was much better at handling the Veep, was more attentive and less argumentative and so forth and knew how to manipulate things more smoothly.

MG: Was there a substantive problem in terms of Porter's--

G: No. I think it was mostly--oh, there would be minor things in which Johnson might say, "Well, why don't we tell them so-and-so?" Usually it would be in the nature of a goodie, some sort of something that the U.S. could do, sort of a hostess-gift policy gesture, which would probably be contrary to accepted policy, and rather than explaining in great detail why this couldn't be done just now but sort of dangle a little hope on that and don't make him a flat promise, Porter would try, "No, no. We can't do that." And Crockett would say, "Well now, you know, yes, that's very interesting, and when we get back, try [and]

work it around," because Johnson, being a generous soul, did like to arrive with goodies, and usually there were very few goodies that you had. Oh, there may be a minor agreement on exchange of something or other to be signed, but no real headline makers.

MG: Okay.

G: Did I mention to you that on the Scandinavian trip--the Hyannis Port stop?

MG: No.

G: When we flew out going over to Scandinavia, the first stop was up at whatever the air force base--Otis?--up near Fort Devens, the base at the cape, and then Johnson and Porter and three or four others helicoptered over to the compound where the President was, and it was seven-thirty or eight in the evening, and reported seeing the President before he left and getting the word and so on.

MG: Anything significant to--

G: No, no. It was just basically social there, but it was a stop that Johnson very much wanted to do, and the President was very amenable, and it provided better imagery, that "I come with the word from the President," sort of.

MG: Anything--?

G: And he usually after a trip would make a point of going to the President fairly soon to have a session to explain sort of a brief synopsis of what had happened, that this was part of his feeling--"Well, I'm the President's man, and I owe him a report," and so on. There was one amusing episode after the Rome--after the funeral of Pope John, which was just a quick, one-night stand over and back, but he picked up Congressman John Rooney in Rome, who I guess had been over for the funeral or [inaudible] ending a foreign trip and offered him a ride back on *Air Force Two*. So Rooney came back on the plane and was

being plied with vodka, as I recall--he was a vodka drinker--all the way back by the stewards on the plane. So Rooney was absolutely smashed when they got in at Andrews, but Johnson took him along to see the President, and he was practically--his feet were limp and dragging in the grass almost. (Laughter) And Rooney was afterwards very annoyed with Johnson for taking him in in that condition to see the President, even though he didn't disgrace himself or anything, but he knew he was tight, and Rooney, also an old-style pol, had the sense of what was meet, right, and proper.

The Benelux trip--one of my recollections on that one was I was getting fairly close to the time I would be making my getaway from the Veep. Had it not been for Dallas I would have probably gone in to see him sometime late in November to make my farewells for the departure for Ethiopia. Lee Stull, my deputy, was well established and very acceptable [as] my alter ego then. But I remember one episode as we were flying back from Brussels. Actually, it was the last time--I guess the last time I saw Johnson face to face. [It was] very late at night; it must have been after midnight, one a.m., two a.m., and everybody was in the back part of *Air Force Two*. All the lights were out except Lee Stull and I were in two seats, and we were just finishing up the draft, the outline, of a report on the trip, which I'm sure is somewhere in the files. And the door up to the cabin opened, and Johnson came out, wearing, as I recall, a fairly vivid pair of crimson pajamas with yellow somethings on them, flowers, and so he stood there, and he was looking around. I think he was looking either for Buzz or George Reedy or maybe Walter Jenkins, one or the other of the key staffers, and they were sound asleep, sitting closer up, so he sort of--he didn't want to wake them up, and so he stood there for a minute--he was barefoot--and looked around, and then he saw our light on, and I looked

up and waved, and so he came sort of padding down the aisle (laughter) in his bare feet, and sort of leaned on the seat in front of us, just stood around and gossiped with us for, I suppose, ten or twelve minutes or so, nothing too important and so on. We were telling him how well we thought the trip had gone, which had been--it was a very smooth trip, and he had seemed to be in good spirits, and no scratchy episodes such as in the Scan trip, and so on. Just a very pleasant episode, and then he padded back up to the cabin and went back to bed, I'm sure. But I thought the touch of his not waking up the staff was the sort of consideration that he would be perfectly capable of overriding if he felt like it, but he didn't on this occasion.

MG: In Amsterdam, the dinner at the palace--

G: Yes.

MG: --hosted by Queen Juliana and--

G: Prince Bernard--

MG: Yes. Anything significant there?

G: Basically, only phony substance. IE [?] has a responsible government and a prime minister and so forth, where the decisions were made. This was ceremonial, or, as Johnson would say, "Protocol!"

MG: He purchased some bulbs. I guess they were tulip bulbs.

G: Yes.

MG: And then flew to Brussels on November 7?

G: Right, where we got in about six in the evening. It was a rainy evening as I recall, and I caught a hell of a cold out on the airport tarmac. It was quite chilly, must have been in the upper forties or something, and raining steadily. As I recall, I think Johnson cut the

ceremonies short a little bit saying, "Come on, let's get out of the rain," even though he was under an umbrella, but not wanting to impose on the crowd.

MG: He had with him--in addition to yourself and Busby, Dick [Richard] Nelson, Willis Hurst, and Bob [Robert E.] Waldron went along.

G: Yes.

MG: Hurst was his physician, of course.

G: Right.

MG: Did he seem to fare well in these other countries physically? Did he do--?

G: Yes. Oh, I think so. No question about it. Johnson in my observation was a bit of a hypochondriac. Oh, with good reason, of course, because he had had that very severe heart attack, and in all the time I was with him, I never saw him smoke a cigarette. He would occasionally take one and roll it in his fingers, and in the standard late-evening Cutty-Sark-and-branch-water session--though I was at very, very few of those; I tended to avoid those--he almost never had more than one, which he would nurse all evening. And he'd given up smoking entirely. But he worried about his health, and he liked to have a masseur or masseuse as the case may be, and he fussed about having his health well tended to. I think it was in Amsterdam where we were starting out for some ceremony at city hall, as I recall, and the motorcade was scooging along, and all of a sudden, it swerved into a hotel that wasn't on the schedule and pulled to a stop. And I was well back in the--you know, eight or nine or ten cars, and I was probably back in number ten, so I leaped out and raced up to the front and went into the hotel and saw--I guess it was Youngblood of the Secret Service--

MG: Rufus Youngblood.

G: Yes--leaning on a pillar, and I said, "What's going on, Rufe? This is not on the schedule." "Had to go to the john." (Laughter) It was a quick stop for a pit stop. Rufe was a first-class guy, really an effective chief of the detail.

MG: Were the Secret Service in practice more than simply security? I mean, did they, in addition to preventing an attempt on the Vice President's life, did they--were they pressed into service to help him in other--?

G: A little. Not much. My impression was that with Johnson whoever is around and whom he knows is part of the family, and they may get asked to do things, but I don't think that was--my impression was that was not particularly burdensome because there were always other people around. The family tended not to--in fact, it would bother Johnson sometimes if people were always hanging around, and he didn't want people hanging around unless their job required them to be there or that he wanted them present.

There was once--what was it? Oslo, I guess--where he came out of his suite, and there was the usual crowd hanging around in a corridor, and he chewed everybody out and told them, "Now go back--go back to your rooms and stay there, and I'll tell you when to come out!" Whisht! Everybody vanished. Of course, you had to hang around in the sense because you never could quite be sure what was happening unless you were hanging out, so it was conflicting. But he did not want this kind of fussing. He hated police escorts.

MG: Did he? Why did--?

G: Too much show. He didn't want to be--it would be like having a very enlarged vice-presidential staff. That's why everybody was on detail. I mean, he had plenty of people working for him, but he didn't want them showing in budget-line items [as] "vice-

presidential staff." So he kept--it was a point of pride to keep it smaller than the Nixon vice-presidential staff, even though he [inaudible]--

MG: I see.

G: And Juanita Roberts was on detail from the Pentagon, and I was, of course--I was on the State Department rolls, and so a lot of people were a part of the family without being officially on the staff. That is why, when I felt I had to be officed over in the EOB to be close to the vice-presidential seat there, I couldn't get myself assigned to the vice president's staff because it would enlarge the total by one. So what I did was I got the NSC to pick me up as an NSC staffer, and could be there and give me office space. I shared with Bob Komer, in fact.

MG: You've talked about his--shall we say disdain for protocol. In dealing with foreign heads of state, was he sufficiently formal, do you think, or--

G: Yes. There was no problem. What he objected to under the heading of "protocol" is empty ceremony that did not in any way touch him personally. If he were the arriving guest, and the king or queen wanted, as the case may be, to entertain, sure, that was fine, though preferably not in the evening and white tie. But an empty ceremony, in which he would have to be present for somebody else's, which was a waste of time or of something else he might want to do--that's what he objected to, you know. "Idle ceremony" was to him "protocol."

MG: But someone like a king or queen--

G: No, he was--

MG: --would he address them--

G: No, he would do fine under those circumstances.

MG: --with the proper title, or--?

G: He would always strive for the personal touch and some sort of a connection, which, of course, I'm sure is just as welcome to a king or queen as it is to a man in the street. It's some sort of--when you're in Washington, "Ma'am, I have the pleasure of--" some shared experience or bond or some tie. That's what it took. No problem there. He didn't pick his nose at the table or any of those things which malignant critics would probably loved to have been able to believe. No problem.

MG: Yes.

G: For one thing, Lady Bird would have taken care that he would be on his best behavior.

MG: You mentioned earlier that he had been restless as vice president and that these trips provided him with an outlet, something to do.

G: Yes, and you may recall--I can't remember when it was. My recollection is it was probably sort of April-May of 1963 that there was even some press snipings, "Whatever happened to Lyndon Johnson?" sort of thing, and boy was he sensitive to that sort of thing!

MG: Was he? How--any first-hand--?

G: Just signs and sort of how he would feel and sort of planning the trip and getting going and, "Let's go there! Let's go! Let's be about it." There were also, of course, on all the trips signs that he hated to be locked into things that could--he would, of course, chomp off on the program. I was not involved in that because this is basically State haggling or Crockett or Border [?] and the regional bureau haggling with the vice president for "Okay. You're gonna go to here. Well, now, here are the options. You can lay a wreath on that and make a speech here and have dinner there," and so forth. And so I didn't get

involved in negotiating those, although I became aware after Finland that there better not be too many of them in a day or he'd get frazzled. Too much to do. But three or four events is a full schedule for a president or vice president, and if you pack and jam in too many things, yes, you can do it for one day or a particular city, but if you're on a trip of multiple stops and doing that every day, it's just--it's fatal. Something is bound to go wrong. There may be a mess on the carpet somewhere.

MG: Anything else about these trips that we haven't talked about?

G: Trying to recall if anything else--one very minor thing at the end. After I got back to Washington and after he had been president for three days, I guess, some of my old friends that I hadn't seen much of became very interested in seeing me as some sort of a lead-in. The one case in particular was the columnist Joe Kraft. Joe and I were graduate students together at Princeton, and then we'd gone our separate ways and would see something of one another at long, long intervals, or hear something. Joe knew I was working with the Vice President, but of course he was a Kennedy staffer in the campaign, or was close to them, close to Hyannis Port and the Irish Mafia, and I remember Joe was going to great pains to get hold of me and wanting to know what job was I going to do in the White House and was urging--"Well, go ahead. I mean, you've got the entrée, you know," et cetera. "No way, no way. I'm going to Ethiopia. I'm not going to go near him!" Which is the press at work trying to shine up a contact that might be useful in the future.

I did stop in once to say--I stopped in to see Buzz once when I was back on home leave from Rome in December of 1967--December or January of 1967. That was just

before the Tet business, and I miscalled a letter from Buzz very badly because Tet, as I recall, was early March [January 31-February 1, 1968].

MG: Well, February.

G: Yes. The end of February. And I got a letter in the very beginning of March from Buzz, which, if I'd had my wits about me and had checked the dates, I would have seen that it was just before Tet, so it was not Tet fall-out. And it was a very gloomy, pessimistic letter, and I'm quite sure that Buzz was one of the very few who had been told by Johnson that he was going to make the renunciation speech, that "I'm not going to run again," and that that was what accounted for Buzz' very, very gloomy, downbeat, curious letter. I remember thinking, "Oh, I guess this is Tet," which was, of course, a major shocker even though it was a tremendous tactical victory for the U.S., but it was a strategic loss under the circumstances and sort of the last nail in the coffin of the administration in one sense. Then I subsequently kicked myself after the speech, saying, "Good God! I should have been able to guess this if I'd really paid attention to Buzz' letter, to deduce. I'm not a very successful political officer in the diplomatic service."

MG: Critics charge that Lyndon Johnson, prior to becoming president, really hadn't had much experience in foreign affairs. He had not been on the Foreign Relations Committee [inaudible].

G: He was not interested in foreign affairs, was my observation. He didn't have a gut interest in foreign affairs. Domestic affairs was his bag. That was what he was interested in and excited about. On the other hand, he knew instinctively and with his whole political being, which was all of him, that a president has got to be a foreign affairs star, too. So that was why--I think that was a good part of a lot of the trips, was this was

giving him exposure and visibility and building up his contacts and so on abroad. But it was not a burning feeling in foreign policy, and it didn't grip him in the way, for example, that it gripped JFK or gripped Nixon, who--Nixon didn't care all that much about domestic affairs, except that he knew to be president you've got to have a domestic policy and et cetera, and Johnson is the other way around. Domestic was the thing that to him was important. "We've got to do something!" The Great Society--that was Johnson. And foreign affairs--yes, the ritual genuflections toward NATO and our allies and opposing the communists and et cetera, but it was not a burning, deep drive. That was at least my observation on the trips and sort of dealing with him on that. In other words, he didn't sit up at night and sweat over his briefing books. It used to scare me that--I was afraid he was flying by the seat of his pants, but he was a damned good flyer, and he never put a foot wrong that I heard in the various meetings that I went to with him.

MG: Do you think these trips served him in the way of orientation, or giving him a better sense of what the world was like?

G: Yes, marginally, would be my comment because he was a very--yes, unquestionably he learned, and trips do--travel is valuable. I've maintained that for years, and travel money in the government is usually one of the first things that's slashed. Not for the vice president, however. But on-the-ground experience, just the absorbing through your pores what is going on, and I think it was particularly important to Johnson because of his incredible subliminal communication with people, for the press-the-flesh, the man in the streets, the Finnish fishwife, the crowd outside the embassy--a small crowd outside the embassy in Reykjavik, moving with the people and having a feel for what this is like. This was as important to him, I would say--though at a much later date--as teaching in

San Marcos, and that's how he got some sort of a feel about what people are interested in and what concerns them and what their needs are. So unquestionably he learned. He learned a lot on the trips. He also used the trips as best he could as--well, you see the vice president is doing this, and "Let's be sure we get our coverage, and what are the pictures from all the press in all the countries visited, and also what's going on back in"--the press summary from the States always, what the papers are saying, what they're covering. So they were definitely learning experiences. On the other hand, they did not make a Henry Kissinger of him.

MG: Yes. In the Benelux trip there do not appear to have been these instances of contact with the ordinary people.

G: Less there than in the Scandinavian ones. There was some pressing-the-flesh, you know--

MG: Really?

G: Yes. But they were not set pieces. We'd pull up in front of the Westbury Hotel, even though he kept Doug and me in the car for two or three minutes. Then he'd get out, and then there were people applauding, a crowd sort of held back behind lines, and he'd work the line on one side and go in, "How are you?" you know, going in. Second nature for an experienced politician. And even the ones that don't like it, like Nixon, can work the fence at the airport.

MG: Yes.

G: So there were small occasions of that sort. [At] the cemetery at Luxembourg or any of those occasions, he would take advantage of the opportunity. And he was always insistent whereever he was going that there had to be an interpreter, usually supplied

from the embassy, who would be close by, in case he delivered any remarks or did anything impromptu, there would be somebody who could give him sentence-by-sentence or practically simultaneous translation.

MG: Did these--?

G: I once even commented that what really destroyed the Johnson presidency was the security problem and the Secret Service isolating him in the White House. I think they starved him to death for people contact. They couldn't cut it off completely, and there was some, a little bit, but not the kind that he thrived on. Like that great mythological giant Antaeus who, every time he touched the ground he drew strength from it, and Hercules did him in by holding him up in the air and strangling him.

MG: Anything else that we--?

G: I think I've jotted down a few things, which I think I've touched on, feeding them in, some anecdotes and so forth that--

MG: Good, [inaudible].

G: In sum he was the giant, and there won't be any more like him.

End of Tape 1 and Interview II

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