INTERVIEW V

DATE: May 3, 1990

INTERVIEWEE: E. ERNEST GOLDSTEIN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: LBJ Library, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

G: Do you want to begin with a discussion of the [Craig] Raupe--?

EG: As a preliminary to the Raupe story and the Joe [Henry H.] Fowler story, I want to go back to the Labor Day weekend when we were on the ***Sequoia*** and the President had not yet made it official that I was going to be announced. Before we docked he got word from the FBI that I was good, so he called me aft. Among other things he said to me, there were two which are relevant to what we're going to discuss this morning. First, he said to me, "I brought you over from Paris. I have no idea whether you are for or against General [Charles] de Gaulle, but we have one rule around here and that is nobody who works for me says, publicly or privately, a single word against the General." I thought [that] was more than magnanimous because in 1965 the General had gone to Phnom Penh and stood there on the border of Vietnam and gave us unshirted hell.

G: Why did he feel that way about de Gaulle?

EG: I don't know whether it was only de Gaulle, because basically Johnson really did not like to have people going around bad-mouthing. At various times he'd say, "Look, if you say it and it's something unpleasant, you can't take it back."

This was a little bit like the story of the press conference that was told yesterday, where he had made some remark. And that, I think,

was basic policy. He carried it on to the last night when we all had the last evening together in the White House--the night before the inauguration of Nixon--we had a party. He said that he didn't want to hear any of us being quoted in the press as bad-mouthing Nixon, for the simple reason--he gave the analogy of the airplane and the pilot; whether we like the pilot or not, he is the only one we've got. So I think it was probably within his general philosophy, but the fact [was] that I had come out of France, [and] he didn't know where I stood on French politics. I think he just wanted to make doubly sure in that direction.

G: Did he have a sense of the historic friendship between France and the United States?

EG: Very much so, and I will get into that. I haven't got it on the list here, but that's--yes, the relationship showed up in a number of ways. Probably the most dramatic one was the October day in 1968 when the first Apollo flight lift-off took place. Michel Debré was then the French Foreign Minister, and I participated in the discussions. The discussions were conducted--as the French typically do, everything they say is in French and they have to have it translated no matter how good their English is. But that's the official language. When the official palaver was over and the President and Monsieur Debré, who is very tiny--smaller than I am, and therefore the President towered [over him]--were seated side by side in two armchairs in front of the TV set, getting ready to watch the Apollo lift-off. Debré, in very good English, which I knew he had, turned and put his hand on the President's arm above the wrist and below the elbow. He looked up to the President

and said, "Mr. President, despite everything you hear, despite everything that people may say, we consider you to have been a very good friend of France." President Johnson's reaction was clearly a very sincere one of being moved. He expressed himself very clearly to Debré in terms of saying that this was as fine an honor as he could have and so forth. I think he felt very strongly about it. Unfortunately the general level of French [popular] attitude was so captivated by Kennedy--there were streets named after Kennedy, buildings named after Kennedy--that they never quite got a grip on him [LBJ]. Because of the general French interest in American foreign policy and very little in domestic, it was only a special level of the French populace that had an understanding of what Johnson stood for.

I know when I got back in March 1969--I took the long way home from Washington to Paris--Lucie Faure, whose husband Edgar had been Prime Minister in the Fourth Republic and was *the* leading politician in the Fifth, she had a magazine called--well, it's like the forepeak of a vessel, a *nef*, so it's called ***La Nef***. It's sort of like ***Harper's*** or ***Atlantic Monthly***. She asked me to do a twenty-page article on the War on Poverty. [***La Nef***, June-September, 1970, No. 40; pp. 103-122, "*La Guerre Contre La Pauvreté*".] I think that probably is for the French and for most Europeans the most dramatic aspect [of LBJ's Administration]. I gave Mrs. Johnson and Harry [Middleton] letters yesterday that I had received from various ambassadors, to get an evaluation of what they thought [of LBJ]. I thought this program was too oriented to American views and old-timers' views instead of [toward] how the rest of the world looks [at LBJ]. Recurrent themes, whether from a Dutch

lawyer, who is now practicing in Milan, or a professor in England, or Sir Patrick Dean and all the others, [are] civil rights and the War on Poverty. It was interesting hearing it echo here [at the reunion]. A Swiss journalist that I had lunch with back in March, the first thing he said to me was, "You know, if your President Johnson's war on poverty had continued, there'd be no war on drugs." So this is apparently spreading around.

Anyhow, to get back to my story. The Debré-Johnson incident was particularly important within the context of the fact that during that whole period of time that I was in the White House we were at war with the French, or the French were at war with us, more properly, on our monetary policy. The Financial Editor of ***Le Monde***, a fellow named Paul Fabra, was really, admittedly, the mouthpiece of the Ministry of Finance. The great guru of French monetary theory was a man named Jacques Rueff. He would come over here, and there'd be symposia at the French Embassy, and they would tell us we were wrong on our dollar-gold relationship and everything else we were doing. They really were sniping. But the President let all that go by. Even at the time when the French were ready to devalue their money and decided not to, instead of reading a morality lesson to them the way they were doing to us, telling us to get our house in order, he sent a telegram to General de Gaulle saying, "Glad you took your decision. We will support you."

Anyhow, now this gets me back to where I was [at the] beginning [of this interview]. Then I'll go back to Debré and Mrs. Johnson because I don't think you have anything on Debré and Mrs. Johnson. When I was the General Counsel of the Anti-Trust Subcommittee [of the House

Judiciary Committee], Joe Fowler in the early 1950s was the Administrator of the National Production Authority, NPA. We investigated NPA because there were lots of shortages of steel. NPA was responsible for the allocation of materials and setting up of priorities: who got steel and who got copper, all the things that were relevant to fighting the Korean War.

So I got to know Joe. And to know Joe is to sort of love Joe, because Joe Fowler is a very special guy. I told Joe I was going to make this story public. I didn't do it during the first interviews because I didn't know how he'd feel. He knows this is coming out. I date [the incident] as the Fall of 1967 because of my recollection of the sunny, autumnal day. The way you can be sure of the exact time is to know when Joe Fowler's gallbladder was bothering him.

One Sunday morning about six o'clock the White House phone rings next to the bed our Tiber Island house. "Yes, Mr. President." He says, "Ernie, have you read the ***Washington Post*** this morning?" "No, Mr. President. It's six o'clock and we worked late last night." He said, "Well, you read the ***Washington Post*** and you call me back." I said, "Mr. President, it's Sunday and the ***Washington Post*** is very, very big. Would you give me a clue and then I'll call you back." He said, "Read the society pages." So I go tumbling out of bed, put on a bathrobe and go groping out the front door of this little townhouse. There's the ***Washington Post***, weighing about ten and a half tons. I open the society pages and somewhere there was a gossip columnist discussing a Saturday night cocktail party attended by the Secretary of the Treasury. And they quoted him as responding to a question as to how he was feeling.

His reply was, "I'm all right for except for my de Gaulle bladder," which was a perfectly legitimate pun as far as I was concerned. So I read it and digested it and picked up the phone, [and] got the President. I said, "Mr. President, I've read it." He said, "Well, you call Joe and you tell him that his President is very displeased. He doesn't believe that this is the way we should be talking about General de Gaulle." I said, "Yes, Mr. President."

So I told the White House switchboard I wanted to talk to the Secretary of the Treasury. As a parenthesis, the President always said, "You can call him Joe when you're around him, if he allows you to. But you represent me in dealing with him and you refer to him in your memos and everything you say as the Secretary of the Treasury. He's been approved by the Senate; you haven't."

Anyhow, Trudy Fowler answers the phone and I said, "Trudy, I'm terribly sorry to be calling you so early on a Sunday morning but I am acting on orders of the President." She really couldn't believe it. She put Joe on and I said, "Joe, I'm terribly sorry but this is what the President asked me to do." He said, "Okay," and that ended that incident. But it illustrates a lot of things about the President which I needn't underscore.

Then this whole French thing continues along, because the night of the October day when the President and Foreign Minister Debré were together, we went to the French Embassy that night for the dinner for Mr. Debré. I sat next to him. At that time he was mayor of the town of Amboise, which is in the Loire Valley where all the fine chateaux are. Mrs. Johnson had already been talking about the possibility of coming to

Europe; I was going to advance. So I said to him that it was very likely that I would bring her to Amboise. By the time Mrs. Johnson came to France he was Minister of Defense and in charge of the airport security. So we dealt with his Ministry in order to make it possible for Mrs. Johnson to come incognito. She made it very clear that on this trip she didn't want anybody to know what she was doing or who she was. To that end, I made all hotel reservations and everything else in my name--five rooms here, ten rooms there, whatever. And we went traipsing around France and had a great time, and we came to the town of Amboise.

We got to the town of Amboise and we pull in--I had my old Mustang with Peggy and Mrs. Johnson and Lynda in the car, and we had two Secret Service cars behind us. We drive into the courtyard of the Hotel Choiseul in Amboise and the proprietress, whom I had known from previous days, comes out to this motorcade and I introduce Mrs. Johnson. I had made five or six room reservations in my name. She turned pale. She said, "But why didn't you tell me?" I said, "Why didn't I tell you what?" She said, "But the Mayor, Monsieur Debré, had to go to Corsica because it's the centenary" or bicentenary of Napoleon, whatever it was. "And he told me that if I get a reservation for Mrs. Johnson that that was the Mrs. Johnson who was the first lady of the United States." And she said, "I did have a reservation this week for a Mrs. Johnson, but she's from Chicago. My God, we have taken our best room; we've put in all new wallpaper, all new drapes, a new mattress, new everything, but Mrs. Johnson from Chicago is in there. Why didn't you tell me? I can't give you as nice a room for Mrs. [Lyndon B.] Johnson."

Well, you know Mrs. Johnson and she wasn't fazed a bit by all this. She countered by asking me to tell the story of when she was campaigning out in Indiana or someplace, and she went into a Howard Johnson with her group that were out campaigning--you know the story, probably. In typical Mrs. Johnson fashion, when she was finished with the meal she thanked the waitress and she thanked the hostess that seated them and so forth. The hostess had obviously heard the name Johnson in discussion so she turned to Mrs. Johnson and said, "Mrs. Johnson, any time the wife of the proprietor of Howard Johnson comes in, we are delighted to serve her." And Mrs. Johnson tells that story on herself, and I think it's in her book. Anyhow, she asked me to repeat the story to put the woman at ease.

Apparently with the connivance of the municipal authorities the proprietors of the Choiseul visited specially opened antique and other boutiques in town [at] around four o'clock in the morning. They presented gorgeous, Limoges, antique coffee cups and saucers for the President and Mrs. Johnson, scarves for Peggy and Lynda and gifts for everybody else at six o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Johnson's breakfast tray had, I think, fifty Peace roses on it.

The other story, which leads us into the Craig Raupe dossier, is the other thing the President said [on the ***Sequoia***]. [He said] that he works late and he expects his Special Assistants to work late. He prowls the halls, and if he hears anybody working for him chew out somebody else because they're frustrated or tired or what-all, he's going to get kicked out on his ass. He said, "If you're so tired and so frustrated that you really have to get it out of your system, you pick

on somebody bigger than yourself. And the person in this place that's bigger than you is me. So you come and chew me out."

I think everybody who worked in the White House had that sort of sense of--certainly my secretaries had a feeling of being protected by the President. So I never bought many of the myths that I had heard about what an ogre he was, long before Bob Caro [found] people with stories to tell.

One of the jobs I had was to work with the independent agencies--SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission], FTC [Federal Trade Commission] and the rest. And one of the ones that had the biggest social life was the CAB [Civil Aeronautics Board] because the airlines were always looking for favors. One night I was at an airline cocktail party and I was talking to somebody and he said, "Oh, you work in the White House. Johnson must be terrible to work for. How can you stand it?" and so forth. There was a nice looking chap standing close by. He came over and he said, "Well, I'll tell you. I used to work in the White House. One of the other myths you haven't mentioned is that nobody who leaves President Johnson without his permission, or leaves voluntarily, is ever permitted to come back in the fold. He's just finished. He can't stand it." So this fellow introduced himself and he said his name was Craig Raupe. He said, "I'm living proof that all these myths about the hard-hearted Mr. Johnson are a lot of baloney."

Raupe had taught college some place, and he had worked with Jim Wright. He was a Foreign Service Officer and he had worked in Vietnam and Indonesia. He resigned from the Foreign Service, so that he could work on the 1964 campaign, dealing with ethnic groups. Then after that

was done, instead of going to the White House, as he was asked to, he went to work for Eastern Airlines. He said one Saturday morning he was driving home, I believe to Alexandria, with a nine- or ten-year-old-son in the car with him, and all of a sudden he went blind. By some miracle he explained to his son how to steer them back home. He was taken to the local hospital and all the diagnoses were negative. He was ready to be buried momentarily, and his wife was panicky, and she didn't know where to go and what to do.

Finally she got the bright idea of calling the President, and I don't know through what miracle she got through to him but apparently we had no [John] Sununus or [Donald] Regans to stop people from communicating with the President. The President got the message and the next thing there was an ambulance. [It] took him to Walter Reed; they changed the diagnosis, they found the brain tumor, they took it out and Craig Raupe said that the bills were paid for by the President. The whole thing was taken care of. Well, that's his story. Well, the fellow who was criticizing Johnson turned off his water very quickly. [Goldstein's Note: Since giving the interview, I have been told that Mrs. Raupe called Jim Wright, and that Jim Wright called the President. In any event, the President helped Raupe.] I think there probably are a lot more stories like that around but they're not the ones [Caro uses]--I'm pretty sure I told that story to Caro when he was interviewing me a few years back, along with the story which he hasn't done yet on Johnson, integration and Grace Tully. You probably have seen the piece I did.

So this covers both the French and the employment thing. The last thing was [that] Peggy and I were very lucky. We were invited to spend some time--I think it was three days--at the Ranch beginning on the fourth of January, 1973. We got to the Ranch and the President and Luci hadn't come back yet. They had gone to New Orleans for the Hale Boggs funeral. The President came in and he was tired. He was very tired. Luci was very tired. He said, "I sat all scrunched up there for four hours in that long service." He was really just beat down. "Then I was all scrunched up on that little airplane coming back." He was tired and physically worn down. I think we all went to bed very early that night. Luci went off somewhere else. I can't even remember whether she got to the Ranch.

But the succeeding two or three days were absolutely--I don't know what word I can use to describe it. The President let his hair down. We'd sit around and have coffee after breakfast in our bathrobes, pajamas and slippers for I don't know how many hours and talk and talk and talk. And he was in a very contemplative and philosophical mood. He'd keep coming back time and again to wondering about where he made mistakes, not in a very picky way, but just an overall overview of the whole situation. Along with this sort of self-examination, there was also a certain serenity. He was making his peace with himself and recognizing the good and the bad. That's the best way I can put it. That was very positive.

What he had to say I think was very revealing. He began by pointing out in [the] initial discussion that he had very deep concerns when he moved into the White House following on the Kennedy tragedy. He

didn't want to move too fast in dislocating the government or the public opinion tied to the Kennedys. So he went very slowly in displacing the Kennedy people with his people. And the bottom line was that in January of 1973 he began to wonder whether he had made a mistake in keeping so many of them on for so long. I think he did. That's my personal opinion.

G: He did feel that he had made a mistake.

EG: He felt that he might have gone in different directions on some things. He didn't pick on any particular person by name or by function but he felt that maybe, if he had more of his people around him from the very beginning, he might have gotten different advice, different perspectives on a number of things, most primarily Vietnam.

Parenthetically, among the papers that I gave to Harry [Middleton] was an interview, or rather a lunch that was an interview with a Swiss reporter who I guess is the only person who asked for anonymity; don't ask me why. He's the same one who had the war on drugs, War on Poverty thing. He was more specific. He said, "How could anyone who is as astute a politician as Johnson, who probably after Roosevelt was the greatest one in this century, make the mistake of allowing the people who were responsible for the Bay of Pigs to advise him?" He specifically left out Mr. [Dean] Rusk. He specifically said that he thought Dean Rusk was the exception. He didn't explain himself but that was his view of the situation.

And I was very impressed with the way in which the President accepted everything that he had done in the past. He was the greatest realist I ever knew; he knew it couldn't be undone but he was trying to

put all the pieces together and see where they weighed, and it wasn't only I think Vietnam.

And that was the last time I saw him until I flew back for the funeral.

G: During that time in January, 1973 did he second-guess himself on Vietnam or did he have anything--in retrospect, he might have done this or he should have done that?

EG: No. I don't remember his dealing with any specific bombing halt or non-bombing halt or any of the nuts or bolts. I think it was a much broader overview. Well, the tone was not a lugubrious one; it was not, "Oh my God, I made so many mistakes." Or, "I should have done this. I should have done [that]." He was trying to understand why he did things or how he did things or how things [were] arrived [at], but all with good humor.

And in the course of it he told us the story which I'm sure he told to a lot of other people: the Christmas portrait which had him with the cowboy hat and the checked shirt. He told the story then--I don't know whether I put it down anywhere--of going across the border dressed that way into Mexico with Bird and a couple of Secret Service [people], obviously. They just spent a day and went into some cantina or restaurant and were having beer or whatnot. There were some youngsters--teenagers, adolescents--at one of the tables and they were whispering and whispering. So one of the Secret Service got up to go to the bar or something to get something for the President and one of the youngsters turned to the Secret Service and said, "Is that who I think it is?" And the Secret Service, being its usual self said, "Of course it is." So

they sat down and the next thing is this little voice piping out, "I told you so. It *is* John Wayne." He loved that. He thought that was great.

When I left I was feeling good about him in the sense that for him, he had a sense of peace and serenity that was real. Despite his thinking things over and through, it hadn't torn him apart. It hadn't made him doubt--he didn't have doubts about specific things. He was thinking in a much larger framework.

G: There's been some suggestion that toward the end of his life his thinking on civil rights evolved more to affirmative action than he had previously embraced. Did he talk about that at all or do you think that was part of it?

EG: No, I don't remember the words affirmative action or anything similar being used. He himself of course was the ultimate affirmative actor in his own way of doing things. Who was it yesterday told me they saw in Washington the black secretary that he brought to the Forty Acres Club?

G: Gerri Wittington.

EG: Yes.

(Interruption)

G: The date for Debré was October 11, 1968.

EG: With the liftoff of Apollo.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview V

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of

E. ERNEST GOLDSTEIN

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, E. Ernest Goldstein, of Paris, France, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on May 3, 1990 in Austin, Texas, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

E. Ernest Goldstein
Donor

24-XI-91
Date

Archivist of the United States

12-12-91
Date