INTERVIEW III

DATE: March 21, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: KERMIT GORDON

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. McCOMB

PLACE: Mr. Gordon's office, Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

M: Last time, Dr. Gordon, we were talking about the transition to Lyndon Johnson after the death of President Kennedy. And you talked about the formation of the budget at that point in time and how you worked with Lyndon Johnson.

According to the books written about this event, there is the idea that Lyndon Johnson worked very hard to keep this budget under a hundred billion dollars in an effort to release a legislative road-block in Congress. Is there any truth in this?

G: Oh, yes. This was the key element in his economic strategy when he took over the presidency. You remember that the Kennedy Administration, President Kennedy, had proposed to the Congress a major reduction in income taxes to stimulate the economy early in 1963.

M: Were you in agreement with that?

G; Oh, yes, yes indeed! Not only in agreement, but strongly urging and promoting it within the councils of the administration. The congressional opposition to the enactment of the tax cut was very strong. In part, it was a kind of traditional conservatism--the view that since the budget was in deficit it was irresponsible to cut taxes because it was felt by the conservatives of the Congress to cut taxes in the face of a

pre-existing budget deficit would of course in their judgment greatly increase the deficit, raise the specter of inflation, constitute irresponsibility in the management of the government federal finances etc. And it was stalled. I could go into some of the political details of Kennedy's struggle with the Congress in 1963, but the tax cut was stalled when Lyndon Johnson became President on November 22.

M: Was the major obstacle Harry Byrd on that?

G: My memory isn't sharp enough to say whether--let me take that back. As I remember the situation, the answer to your question is yes. The major obstacle was Harry Byrd, who was then of course chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, who dominated the committee I think in a way that Senator Long, his successor, has never dominated the committee. He was implacably opposed to the tax cut in 1963 in the budgetary and general economic environment then prevailing.

When Lyndon Johnson became President, he talked, I remember, very early in those first days with General Eisenhower. If my memory serves me correctly, it was General Eisenhower who first urged upon him the necessity of holding the budget which was to go to Congress in January under a hundred billion dollars. I can't be absolutely sure, but my recollection is that he talked to Eisenhower very early, certainly in the first few days of his presidency.

There were then extensive direct discussions between the President and Senator Byrd which filtered through to me in this form. I derived the understanding that at the very least that Senator Byrd's opposition to reporting out the tax cut would diminish substantially if the President were able to submit a budget which Harry Byrd thought sufficiently

austere; and the magic figure in that case was also under a hundred billion dollars. I don't believe he ever undertook to support the tax cut; I think he undertook perhaps to adopt a position of neutrality with respect to it.

M: What's so magic about a hundred billion?

G: Nothing's magic about it except it was symbolic, you see. The federal budget--I'm wondering whether it ever reached, my memory fails me whether it ever reached a hundred billion in the course of the second world war, but I can't be certain. But, in any case, this became the symbol of fiscal irresponsibility and recklessness in the eyes of the Congressional conservatives--that a hundred billion added another digit to the size of the budget. This made it easier to dramatize the growing size of the federal government, and this became a threshold that the conservatives were determined we were not to cross. That's all. That's the only significance.

M: Then you and President Johnson worked very hard to keep that under a hundred billion?

G: Not as hard as you might think.

M: It wasn't very difficult?

G: It wasn't very difficult. If I remember correctly, and I think I do remember these figures pretty well--as of the day that Lyndon Johnson became President, November 22, we were working with--this was fairly early in the budget process. Remember that the month of December and early January is the period in which the really difficult choices are made in the budget. President Kennedy, I might say, had never himself addressed

in any sustained way the strategy problems, the policy problems, which would be raised by the budget to go to the Congress in January. He was assassinated, you'll remember, on a Friday. I saw him two days before in his office on another matter, and he set aside an hour-and-a-half for the first review of major budget issues for the following Wednesday. Well, of course, the following Wednesday he was dead, so he never really addressed himself, in the way he otherwise would have, to the major issues of the upcoming budget because of the timing of the assassination.

We were working in the Budget Bureau about that time with a planning figure of about 101.5 billion. This was a very soft figure, and it was not at all difficult to trim that number to a figure under a hundred billion. There was some painful surgery in getting it down to the ultimate expenditure estimate which, if I remember correctly, was 97.9 billion. Those last two billion--last billion or billion-and-a half--did involve some hard choices and some difficult surgery, as I say. But getting it under a hundred was fairly easy. I think it's very likely given the symbolic importance which was attached to the figure of a hundred billion, that Kennedy, had he lived, would have come to the Congress with a figure of less than a hundred billion. I don't think it would have been as low as the 97.9 figure that Lyndon Johnson ultimately came out with.

M: Do you remember what the major cuts were?

G: I can't, I'm sorry, I'd have to go back to the papers to identify them.

M: Well, there wasn't any great argument over where--

G: Oh, there were a number of quite important issues settled in the final month of preparation for that budget. I remember in the atomic energy field there was the MURA issue, the Midwestern University's Research Association, which was a proposal for a new and very expensive high energy accelerator to be built in Madison, Wisconsin, with federal funds as a consortium of about ten or a dozen midwestern universities. The President killed the project, and this was a very painful decision that involved a great many political ramifications. I might say without going into it very intensively, it was this decision of the President that caused the midwestern university presidents and politicians to mobilize in a kind of informal coalition to apply pressure on the federal government to get more scientific funds for the midwest. It became a regional issue, and I'm quite sure that the ultimate decision put the next high energy accelerator at the Argonne National Laboratories outside Chicago was a consequence of the political pressures that built up at the time of the cancellation of the MURA project. If I remember the number correctly, the capital costs of MURA were about $170 million, and operating costs of about $30 or $40 million a year--something in that range. This was certainly one major and very difficult decision.

There were some cutbacks in parts of the Space Program which were very painful. There was the decision to reduce the production of enriched uranium at the Hanford, Washington works, and I think at the Savannah River works. This too involved some political backfire. It was in connection with these decisions that the President said, "I am not going to produce atomic bombs as a WPA project." This was a widely quoted

observation. And, in effect, people were arguing that he should not reduce the production of the enriched plutonium which was clearly excessive to our needs because of the harmful employment effects on local workers of this decision. It was in response to that that he gave this WPA statement.

Well, those are just some examples of some tough hard decisions that were made toward the very end of the period in trimming the budget back to 97.9 billion.

You know, I think it's important to trace back the origins of what came to be called the credibility gap problem of the Johnson Administration. It's important to trace that back to its origins in this budget trimming episode. The press concluded that the President was misleading in suggesting to them during the month of December that it was going to be very difficult, if not impossible, to get the budget much below 101 or 102 billion, when in the judgment of the press it was not all that difficult in fact, and that he had already made these reductions. You remember that period. A number of reporters said to me afterwards that they thought they were being deceived by the President who was suggesting the impossibility of getting below a hundred billion, just, in their judgment, to build up the tension, and to make the achievement of getting it below a hundred billion even more dramatic than it would have been in any case.

When the budget was submitted it was surprisingly low to most people. The President asked me to deliver a copy of the budget hot off the press before release to Senator Byrd and to brief him on it. Senator Byrd lived, if I remember correctly, he had an apartment

up at the Sheraton Park. I went up early one morning, 7 or 7:30 one morning, and was greeted by Senator Byrd in his bathrobe and carpet slippers; and I delivered a still warm copy of the budget and spent about a half-hour with him briefing him on the details of the budget. He was, of course, a crusty individual who had not long prior to that demanded my dismissal, so that I can't say it was a very friendly discussion. But I think the President's courtesy in sending the Budget Director to brief Senator Byrd played up to the old man's vanity and probably helped somewhat to moderate his opposition to the tax legislation that the President was determined to have enacted.

M: Was Byrd pleased with the report you gave him that morning?

G: It was very hard to tell whether Byrd was pleased or not. He was not a man given to outward manifestations of inner feelings, but he was polite.

M: You mentioned this credibility gap business, and the President's announcements about the size of the budget. Did he deliberately deceive the press? Is this part of Lyndon Johnson's character to do something like that?

G: I don't know that I would have chosen that phrase. I think he was consciously building up the drama in the situation, knowing in advance that it would have a happy outcome from his point of view because he knew when he was building up to this drama that he was going to produce a budget significantly under a hundred billion, so that I guess this was the kind of theatrical performance that most Presidents engage in from time to time. I don't know that this is any different

from similar episodes I remember in the Kennedy Administration. But he certainly was not being wholly candid and forthright with the press about budget matters at the time.

You remember, in the Kennedy Administration the same phenomenon was called "managed news." That was the Kennedy Administration phrase and it became the credibility gap in the Johnson Administration. It referred to the same phenomenon.

M: This might well lead us into an analysis of Lyndon Johnson's character and role as chief executive. In working with him on budgetary matters, can you say that Johnson understood what you were talking about and had a grasp of the economic matters?

G: One of the things that struck me at the very beginning in this very intensive month or five weeks in which I spent part of every day with him was the striking observation, which I had also seen in the case of Kennedy, that the perspective on government affairs that one obtains as a Senator is so different from the perspective that one gains from the vantage point of the White House that no matter how extensive a new president's experience with government from a legislative point of view, he has got to start learning virtually from scratch when he arrives at the White House.

Johnson was a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee for many years. He did not have a very good technical understanding of budget matters despite his role in the Senate Appropriations Committee when he came to the White House. And here I'm talking about technical matters; the Executive Branch is a much more technically oriented institution than is the Congress. The Congress has its own technical

problems having to do with the organization procedures, management of the Congress, etc. But I was surprised at how little either Kennedy or Johnson understood of the procedural technical problems of the presidency when they moved into the White House. I suspect Richard Nixon right now is going through the same kind of cram course despite his lengthy experience. And Johnson I don't think learned a great deal as Vice President because he was not really a central figure in the Kennedy Administration during his role as Vice President. Vice Presidents rarely are. Certainly Humphrey was not under Johnson. Having said that, let me say that he learned very, very fast.

M: Did Kennedy learn the same way?

G: Yes, they were both very quick studies. That first memorandum I sent to President Johnson on the day after the assassination, I tried to explain very briefly in a few sentences what the Budget Bureau was about and what it did; because on the basis of my previous experience with Kennedy, I couldn't assume that Johnson understood. As a matter of fact, it's astonishing how little the Congress understands about the role of the Budget Bureau. One Congressman once told me that he took an informal poll of the Congressmen on his corridor in one of the House office buildings [and] asked them the simple question: "How many employees do you think there are in the Bureau of the Budget?" He told me that the lowest estimate that he got was 1500, and the highest was 14,000. At that time, the Bureau had slightly under 500 employees. This is just one indication of the remoteness of Congress--particularly from the executive office of the President, from the role of the Bureau of the Budget.

M: Did Johnson have the intelligence to grasp--?

G: I was just trying to think of a couple of sentences I used in that first memorandum, trying to explain what the Budget Bureau was all about. The key words I used were spending, any matters relating to government spending, legislation referring to the role of the Bureau in coordinating the Administration's position on pending legislation; and management--problems of improving the management. The Bureau really can be described under those three headings--spending, legislation, and management. I was very amused that for the first week or so every time I came into the President's office, he would look at me and he would say sotto voce "Spending, legislation, management." He'd obviously committed them to memory. So very early he got a sense of what the scope of the Bureau was and an indication of the issues on which it was able to help him.

He learned very fast. I can remember for example his confusion in the first few days between what the Bureau then called "new obligational authority," or appropriations, in effect--they are not quite synonymous but almost--and spending, expenditures, a simple distinction that anybody in the executive branch understand. This had to be explained to him the first time, but never again. The distinction was perfectly clear, and I know that he retained it and was able to talk and to make clear by asking questions--"Are you talking about a level of appropriations; are you talking about spending?" He would frequently make this distinction in his discussions. He learned very fast. I must say that the immersion he had in the nuts and bolts of the budget that first

month was probably the most intensive cram course in Executive Branch policy-making that any President has ever had, and by the end of the period he was at home with the problems of budgeting.

M: How much time did you spend with him that first month? Did you meet him every day?

G: Every day.

M: For what--a couple of hours?

G: Well, it would range--every day including Saturdays and Sundays. I don't think there was any day on which it was less than an hour and a half or so, and it ranged up to four or five hours, sometimes in three segments--morning, afternoon, evening.

M: What did you do, go through the budget bit by bit?

G: Yes. First, trying to give him an understanding of the broad composition of the budget; where the big money went; what issues were involved; what issues were up for decision that could affect the magnitude of the budget. Of course, he quickly understood, quickly grasped something that some people never have, that budget making is policy making; that it is in a context of making the budget decisions that you make a policy decision; that you make your decisions about where you want the Space Program to go, where the government ought to concentrate its efforts in aid to education. Right now, at this moment, we're in a crisis of defense budgeting. Well, these are not only money problems, they are weapons problems, they're strategy problems, etc. He saw that very quickly, and became deeply immersed in a number of these substantive issues.

I remember when we were able to get the total under a hundred billion,

very early, I relaxed a bit, feeling that this would meet the major political requirements of the situation and was surprised that he continued to exert pressure. I thought perhaps by the middle of December that we pretty much had it wound up--the budget then was significantly under a hundred billion, but the pressure continued. I'd come in with a series of proposals all consistent with the budget under a hundred billion. He would send me back to look at this, to look at that, look at opportunities for trimming there, or for contraction there, for elimination there, and this went up into early January. There was a period--I forget exactly when it came, perhaps three days--when we were making the final decisions at the ranch in Johnson City.

M: Had you had much contact with him prior to this time?

G: Did I tell you the story before? I forgot, that story on the SST.

M: No. You mentioned before that you had had only one major contact with him, and we never explored this.

G: I met him frequently. I used to sit in the back row at Cabinet meetings. He was always at the Cabinet table, and we chatted. But in the Kennedy Administration, I had only one real substantive encounter with him; and that was not a very happy one. So it was with some trepidation that I moved into the new situation after he was sworn in as President.

President Kennedy appointed him as chairman of a Cabinet committee on the supersonic transport which was some time in '63 perhaps. As Director of the Budget, I was a member of this committee. There were perhaps five or six or seven Cabinet members, the administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency; I remember Bob McNamara was a member; the Secretary of Commerce; I think Averell Harriman sat in for the Secretary of State; roughly a group of ten or twelve or fourteen people. At the first meeting it was clear to me that the Vice President

was very favorably disposed toward the supersonic transport proposal and seemed set on having the committee approve a report to President Kennedy which was a clear go-ahead for the SST project on the basis of very generous federal financing. At that meeting as he went around the table--and it was perfectly clear what his view was--in effect, he was asking others at the table whether they cared to challenge him. And it got around to me, and I did. I raised a lot of questions that had been bothering me about the SST project.

M: Do you remember what these questions were?

G: Yes. I guess the basic question was really deep reservations as to whether the research and development work on the SST had brought it to the point at which the project was really technologically feasible and economically defensible as a commercial airliner development. There was a good deal of evidence then that there were design problems that had not been licked. There were material problems. We were talking about a Mach 3 SST which clearly required a titanium skin rather than aluminum, and there was a lot unknown about the technology of titanium. There were sonic boom questions being raised even then.

And I guess my basic view--I remember pretty clearly because I spent a lot of time on this and felt kind of strongly about it--was that we were in no position to decide whether this was an economically defensible project. And the only decision I would trust would be a decision of the manufacturers--the engine and air frame manufacturers--who were willing to risk enough of their own money on the project to convince me that they decided it was a good commercial and economic proposition. So the basic position I was arguing was that we

ought to insist on a very substantial investment of risk capital by the manufacturers including the engine producers if there was to be any federal money in the project. I didn't look on this particularly as a way of reducing the amount of the federal contribution. I looked on it really as a test of the conviction of the aircraft industry. That, in fact, the project was an economically attractive project. The only way we could be sure that they believed in it was their willingness to put their money where their mouth was.

This was the argument I made at the meeting, and unhappily they got to me first. McNamara took essentially the same position; and the relationship with the Vice President was a bit strained. Kennedy, I remember, was in a position where he felt he had to make some kind of a statement on the SST that summer. This must have been perhaps in the late spring or early summer of 1963. We did submit a report to the President which was modified in a number of ways to meet the points that McNamara and I made. I can remember working with Ted Sorensen to modify a speech which Kennedy was giving, I think, if I'm not mistaken, to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Spring. We changed the tone of the speech to make his endorsement of the SST project a good deal more reserved and tentative and conditional than I think the Vice President wanted.

M: Did you settle, at the meeting with the Vice President, the issue? It doesn't sound like you did.

G: No. That issue was not settled for at least a year. In the Johnson Administration, the President appointed a committee of two men, Eugene Black and Harold Osborne--is that his name?--I forget, a New York

investment banker--to study the SST project and report to the President on the appropriate character of federal financial support for the project. That report went, in my judgment, beyond what I thought was a sensible view of federal financial involvement, and, if I remember correctly, asked only for a 10 percent cost sharing contribution by the industry. I thought that was wholly inadequate and not enough really to test their assessment of the economic merit of the project. Clearly, if the federal government was putting up all of the money, they would go ahead with it because they were not risking any significant capital of their own. I wanted them to risk enough of their own capital so that they wouldn't go ahead unless they thought it was a good businessman's risk.

M: As Vice President did Johnson fairly well take a back seat in Cabinet meetings and keep quiet?

G: In Cabinet meetings, the answer certainly was "yes." In retrospect, on the basis of what I now know about the man, it must have been excruciating pain for him to sit through Cabinet meetings submissively as he did for so long. I didn't realize at the time. But he was not an active participant. To the best of my knowledge, he never said anything in the Cabinet meetings which I attended which proposed any view different from the view that President Kennedy had proposed or a view that President Kennedy was known to have. There may have been policy differences between the two men. They never came out in Cabinet meetings.

M: Could this be possibly a key to his intense interest in the SST? I mean, this was something for him to do.

G: Well, it was something for him to do, that's right. He was clearly an under-employed man. And as I say, in relation to what I know about him now, it must have been a very painful and difficult experience for him to have been so inactive and so peripheral to the work of the Kennedy Administration.

M: But this earlier conflict between you two never bothered your later relationships?

G: No, I don't think he ever mentioned it, although I'm sure he remembered it. And I didn't certainly!

M: Was Lyndon Johnson a man of great physical energy? You know, you read these stories about him, and how he worked two days, and would take an afternoon nap, and had really two long work sessions in his daily pattern of work?

G: He always seemed to me to have prodigious, bottomless energy. One of the things I noticed about him, and I noticed this on several occasions, was that he was certainly not a man who disguised fatigue very well. When he was tired, he looked tired. You could read it in his face.

But one of the things that struck me so often when he had been pushing very, very hard on something or other and I'd see him on a Thursday or Friday, I remember being struck with how exhausted he looked--the lines in his face, the color under his eyes clearly betrayed fatigue. He couldn't conceal it. But the striking thing was that a weekend at the ranch--a Saturday and Sunday at the ranch and back to the office on Monday--and he'd seem a new man. He'd bounce back very fast. Now in later years, he may have lost this capacity to

bounce back as fast as he did, but this struck me on several occasions--the man's rapid recuperative talents.

On several occasions I can remember going home on a Friday and saying to my wife that I was getting worried, the President just looked more tired than he ought to. Then I'd come back on Monday and say, "You ought to see the man; he's full of beans today." It was usually a trip to the ranch that intervened there.

M: In your dealings with him, did he spend much time on trivial talk, or was he one to delve directly into the subject?

G: He was one to spend a great deal of time on matters not visibly and directly relevant to what you were coming in to talk about. He was very eager to talk about what was at the front of his mind. It was a standard part of a visit to his office to have him soliloquize for ten or fifteen minutes about the problem that he had been worrying about just before you walked in--I felt often simply as a way of helping him to clarify his own thinking. And of course he loved to set a gay and friendly tone before a serious discussion opened up, and he would tell in dialect stories and jokes and an amusing turn of phrase all to lighten the atmosphere before turning to a difficult issue.

M: I have heard from various sources and in the books and so on, especially from his enemies, that Lyndon Johnson is a rather crude man in the way he talked. Is this true or not?

G: Well, what do you mean by crude? You know, there are all kinds of crudities.

M: Using earthy language--?

G: He was very earthy, yes. He often used earthy language, rarely, never I think I would say, obscene language. It's a very important distinction.

M: It was not offensive to you then?

G: No. Ordinarily the earthy language came in a context of a Texas story of some kind. It was usually hilariously funny. I think really the distinction is the one I've made, he was earthy, sometimes vulgar--never in my presence obscene.

M: As a chief executive was he the expert in legislative matters that he has a reputation for having?

G: I think he was. From my perspective I stood in awe of his understanding of the legislative process, and the principal figures in the legislative process, and his ability to manipulate the system. Let me tell you a story which I think illustrates this. There are several, but this one particularly sticks in my mind. I always have difficulty pinning down dates. I guess it was some time in 1964 that there was a big earthquake and tidal wave in Alaska. Do you remember that?

M: Yes. Anchorage.

G: Anchorage was badly damaged--several other cities were. He called me in on that almost immediately. Clearly, extensive federal aid was going to be necessary to help Alaska rebuild and recover, and he decided he was going to set up an Alaska reconstruction commission with federal funds to supervise the use of federal funds in reconstruction. He asked me to think of some names of someone outside the Executive Branch as a distinguished chairman for this commission, and I thought of a number of the obvious names.

I came into his office one day to talk with him about it. By that time the politics of the situation had become a bit clearer, and it was perfectly obvious that the two Senators from Alaska--Bartlett and Gruening--were mounting a campaign to use the occasion of the earthquake and flood to dip into the federal treasury as far as their arm would go for Alaskan needs. Alaska, although it's a state now, is in a very special relationship to the federal government. It is still much more of a federal dependency than any of the other states. It has always been used to very generous federal financial support, and the appetite of the Alaska politicians for federal funds is virtually unlimited. And it was perfectly clear that Bartlett and Gruening were going to mount an all-out assault on the federal treasury, not only to make good the damages of the earthquake and the tidal wave, but a good deal more besides.

This day when I walked into the President's office, he told me he'd decided who he was going to ask to be chairman of this commission. I'd given him a list of a number of names, and the name he mentioned was one that was not on my list. When he mentioned it, I thought he'd gone off his rocker. He said Senator [Clinton] Anderson. I said, "Senator Anderson? You want a Senator running an Executive Branch Commission that is going to be making Administrative decisions affecting a dozen agencies of government on their programs in Alaska, on their allocation of funds to Alaska?" He didn't answer, but while I was there he called Anderson on the phone. He got him somewhere in New Mexico. Anderson was ill--very reluctant to do it--but the President was marvelously persuasive, used humor and mutual recollections of episodes they'd been through

together, used these to very good effect. And Anderson agreed.

I walked out of there shaking my head, thinking this was an inexplicable choice and one he would be bound to regret. You don't let representatives of the Legislative Branch get that close to Administrative decision-making if you can help it!

Well, within a week it was perfectly clear that this was a brilliant decision, just a brilliant decision! He had seen it--never even occurred to me--he knew that Gruening and Bartlett were out to raid the Treasury. He knew that one of the few men in the United States who could sit on Gruening and Bartlett effectively was Clinton Anderson, whose role in the Senate power structure is clearly superior to theirs. And it worked precisely that way. Anderson's effectiveness in that role was enormous and displayed mainly in his ability to temper somewhat the excessive demands for funds coming out of the Alaskans in Congress. He never explained why he was doing it, but in retrospect it was so clear and betrayed such a clear understanding of what motivates Senators and how you play off one Senator against another. Well, that's just one example.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson have any faults as a President that bothered you? Did he, for example, neglect to come to decisions when they were necessary? Or would he ignore making a decision?

G: I find that hard to generalize. Perhaps the best thing I can do is to talk about my own relations--my own business with him. And there I must say I would have no complaints on that score at all. He was a prompt and efficient and orderly decision-maker on the kinds of issues that I brought to him. He was a prodigious worker. I'm sure you're familiar

with his night reading practice.

M: Did you give a lot of material to him to read?

G: Yes. I was in that box almost every day. What was her name--the secretary that used to put the night reading together, a very attractive woman?

M: Mary Rather? [Juanita Roberts]

G: No. Well, it's not relevant. But I knew the procedures on the night reading and when I had to get a piece of paper in to her to put in the box I soon got on the right wave length. The memoranda were brief. I tried to lay out the problem, to lay out the consideration, to lay out the pros and cons; and to state the issue for decision in a way which would enable him to indicate his preference either as a "yes"or a "no" or "it can't be yes or no, there's a problem here." You send the memoranda up--a couple of pages--and at the end he'd write "yes," "no," "see me," or something of the kind that indicated that it couldn't be resolved this quickly. But it was astonishing what prompt service I got from him. I would say that in 90 percent of the cases, and I used to get papers in the box almost every night, I'd have my answer the next morning.

M: The next morning would be ten o'clock?

G: Before noon. I can't testify about the area of foreign policy and a lot of areas of decision-making, but the kinds of issues that I had to submit to him--and I didn't submit frivolous things to him. I sent things to him only where I felt these were matters that required direct presidential decision where I didn't feel that I ought to substitute my judgment for his--he was remarkably prompt, responsive, efficient in the process. And Mrs. Roberts--Mrs. Roberts! his secretary, told me that

often there were over a hundred items in the night reading box. He would typically get through them some time between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m.

M: The night reading was generally a short memo? One page--two pages?

G: I never looked through the box. The kinds of things I submitted I tried to keep very brief. Occasionally there was a complicated document that I'd have to attach as an appendix in case he wanted to go through it. But I tried to get the basic description of the issue, an explanation of the significance of the issue, a statement of the considerations involved, the pros and cons, in a couple of pages.

M: Well, it's 11:30.

G: Yes. I'm afraid I've got somebody waiting.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III]

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