INTERVIEWEE: MRS. KATHARINE (PHILIP) GRAHAM
Publisher of Washington Post

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

March 13, 1969

F: Mrs. Graham, when did you first get to know the Johnsons beyond just an ordinary business relationship in your position with the newspaper?

G: I got to know them through my husband in about 1956. I believe it was then that we perhaps had dinner with them two or three times.

F: You didn't have more than a casual social relationship during his early days as a Senator?

G: No, we knew them a little bit, but I would describe it as very peripherally. I believe we saw them a few times in those days at big parties or, in fact, probably went to their house maybe.

F: Was there any particular reason why, beginning in '56, you should become closer to them?

G: Yes, my husband worked with Senator Johnson on a Clean Elections Bill and got to know him much better during that time than he had before. That's my memory of when they really got to know each other well.

F: Do you have a clear memory, or were you privy to the facts of your husband's relationship during the sponsorship of this bill?

G: I had some skepticism that the President was really for it. I told my husband that I thought he was being had, and that I suspected that Senator Johnson was not all that enthusiastic for his bill. My husband assured me that he was, and that he was going to get it passed.

F: Did your husband seek out Senator Johnson because he was Majority Leader

or because he thought he was a man who, more or less, had--oh, I suppose you would say--an affinity for this kind of bill?

G: I think my husband and Senator Johnson had a lot in common. My husband was from Florida, from the South. They regarded a lot of issues in the same way. The main thing about them, as I look back on it, is that they both had a fascination with power, and with the use of power. I think Phil admired the way Senator Johnson ran the Senate, the way he got done what he wanted to get done. In general, I think he agreed with what he [Johnson] was trying to do, and I think he had a deep sympathy with his inferiority feelings about the South.

F: Very briefly, let's run through your husband's career to the time when he came with the Washington Post so we can establish this sort of background.

G: He came from a very simple background. In fact, I always thought of his youth as almost a pioneering one. He grew up in the Everglades of Florida, an hour outside of Miami. His father, who was originally a mining engineer from the North, had moved down when Phil was four or five years old. He was very poor. It was depression down there. He went to school wherever the ice trucks stopped in Miami. [He] went to Miami public high schools. He, then, went to the University of Florida. He dropped out a year and ran his father's farm. His mother was a schoolteacher. He went to the Harvard Law School at which he did very, very well and got to know Professor Frankfurter up there who, in turn, brought him down here to be a law clerk at the Supreme Court. He was a law clerk first for Justice Reed and then for Justice Frankfurter, which is where I met him. I believe he told me that it was very hard for him to go right from Florida to the Harvard Law School and I suppose that he

had some of the same feelings that President Johnson must have had coming from the South to the North. I think that this is an experience that may have bound them closely together. He, also, had a sympathy with the South's problems, and he was a Liberal--liberally minded. And I think all of that they may have had in common.

F: Did he take an active role in politics in Washington?

G: Yes, he did in a way. He was tremendously interested in getting things done. It may have been for the city or it may have been legislation that he thought should be passed. He spent a long time working to better Washington by redeveloping the Southwest, and at that point he would go to the White House and get them to help him.

For all I know, he may have been to [see] Senator Johnson at that time, too. He would use anybody he knew in any facility to bring about something he wanted to get done. And at that time, he had several interests. One was getting home rule for Washington. One was making Washington a better place to live in in every way.

And he was very concerned that democracy was being perverted by the way in which people had to raise money during the campaigns--by the amount of money they had to raise, and by the fact that most of it was undeclared. So this led him to sponsor this election bill which, as I remember, gave a tax deduction of a certain amount and did a lot of other things to try to help clean up the election situation here.

F: Did he more or less write the bill that Mr. Johnson was pushing in the Senate?

G: I wish I could remember the details of that, but, yes, I think he probably had helped create it in some way. And he, then, went to Senator Johnson and asked him if he was for it. I'm really very vague on the

subject of the Clean Elections Bill.

F: Did he meet regularly with Mr. Johnson on this?

G: Yes. When they got to know each other, and I'm not absolutely clear what year it was or under what circumstances, I just think it was over this bill. They then developed a real affinity for each other, and they used to see each other, I would say--oh, it might have been frequently at moments and then, honestly, long months or even years would pass in which I don't think they did see each other.

F: When they had need for each other--

G: Yes, when they had need for each other, exactly. That's a very good way of putting it. The next time that I remember that they were very close was during the civil rights legislation in 1957. At that point I think it was that summer that we were down at our country place an hour away, and Senator Johnson called my husband up and asked him if he would come up and help him on the civil rights legislation. So my husband just moved in with him for three days.

F: By "help," is that trying to draft a good bill?

G: Exactly. I think it was touching a lot of bases to see who would stand still for what.

F: Your husband had a good combination of assets, with legal training and a major newspaper.

G: And he had a sort of sense--he had a political sense of the do-able and he had a tremendous desire to see the best civil rights legislation passed that could be passed, as I think the Senator did. I think that Phil probably saw Joe Rauh and the civil rights leaders and, at the same time, he had a great sense of how much the Senate would pass.

F: At this stage, would you say that he was equally close to Speaker Rayburn,

or was Senator Johnson his chief contact?

G: No, he wasn't close to Speaker Rayburn. He hardly knew him. I think it was just Senator Johnson.

F: I know you don't get all you ask for on these bills, but did he seem satisfied with Mr. Johnson's efforts on these bills?

G: Yes, he was. He thought that he had done a really pretty magnificent job on it, and Senator Johnson told me many times--President Johnson, later--that he thought Phil was instrumental in getting this legislation passed. Why he thought that I was really never very clear--whether it was the art of the possible that he meant or whether he was advising him on how the legislation could be drawn up. I really don't know, but he said--and there's a letter in these files, that says, "Without you there wouldn't have been one."

F: In my interviewing it has struck me that the Johnsons entertained, and were entertained by, people they worked with. [They] did not, as so many people, have one set of friends socially and another set of everyday contacts. Is this your experience with them?

G: Yes, it certainly was. Whenever I saw them, which was not nearly as frequently as some of the others, the people there were people who were old friends who had worked with him at some time, or people who, like my husband, had advised him over the years. I remember going to dinner in which either Jim Rowe, or Tommy Corcoran, or Abe Fortas were the guests. Or quite often it was the staff--Walter Jenkins, or whoever were the secretaries at the time. He just, as you know, always had them to dinner. Usually dinner started any time. Nine o'clock was a good hour.

F: Whenever they could tie him down.

G: Yes.

F: Did your husband show any interest in sponsoring him in the 1960 election?

G: Yes, he did. He was for him throughout the year. I'm not sure in my own mind whether he was for him in the sense that he really thought he was going to be President, or be the nominee. I think he didn't because both President Johnson and my husband were rather realistic about the possibility of a Southerner being nominated. I think he was.

During that year, actually, or during those two years, we had gotten to know Senator Kennedy. We were not close to him, but Phil admired him too.

But nevertheless he was for Johnson, and he went to him and he gave him some money. I don't think it was a great deal of money. I think it was, may have been $5,000 or $10,000, to support his candidacy for the nomination. He also was in close touch with him all that year. I've looked in the files, and there is a series of speeches that he wrote for him, and I remember, in particular, his telling me about the announcement which he wrote. He went up there--and Senator Johnson had just begun to use contact lenses--and Phil wrote the announcement that he wanted to make. At some crucial moment one of the contact lenses fell out, and, so, the moments before the big announcement were spent crawling around on his hands and knees looking for the contact lens. It seems to be the case in most serious moments of history.

F: Prior to the 1960 nominating convention, did your husband give him any other tangible assistance?

G: It was mostly personal. There were moments at that time, and before that time, when I believe--and I would have to check the editors at that time--that there were moments when my husband insisted that they run stories that Senator Johnson wanted run in the way he wanted them run. I think

that Phil did this because he believed in him and believed in the stories. But there was a feeling around the paper that the paper was being used by Senator Johnson, a little bit.

F: By tangible, though, I meant financial assistance. Didn't he help with a house?

G: No, he didn't at all. There was a moment when the Johnsons were not sure which house they wanted to buy, and he used my husband as an adviser on two or three houses. At one point I was in bed. I was sick. I had tuberculosis. And Phil was asked by Senator Johnson to go and look at a couple of houses to see what he thought about them. Finally, the third house, I believe, he looked at was the house that Senator Johnson later bought. In fact, Phil did the transaction for him. But it was only because he was on his way around the world for some official visit. I can't remember what it was, and it was Mrs. Mesta's house that he bought. And I remember his saying, "I don't want to hear from you and Polly Wisner how you don't like the house. It's a great house. It's good for them and they'll like it. It's just right." I think he was worried that we would think the house was not in good taste.

F: You got the feeling he was buying the house as an almost "official" residence?

G: Yes.

F: What I meant by "official", that should be a place to operate from.

G: Yes, well, they had been living in a very small house on Thirtieth Place, was it? And they really did need more room. But it was a big jump, and it was curious when you think about it. Well, I think Mrs. Johnson had looked at it. She had sort of left it that either one of two houses would be all right. I remember that Abe Fortas, for instance,

argued with Phil that it was an unsuitable house and would hurt him politically, and tried to get him not to buy that house. Phil was equally determined that this was a house they should have, and that he thought they wanted it. Mr. Johnson had left him his proxy, and so with his proxy he bought the house--or, power of attorney. He talked to him in Honolulu, as I remember, and said that this was what he advised, and should he go ahead, and they said, "Yes, go ahead." So he went ahead and bought the house for them. As I remember, they were very nice and when they moved into the house, they gave a dinner for Phil whom they didn't realize then was very, very ill already and was not feeling well. But he concealed it for the evening, and we went there and he got through the evening. But it was very difficult for him because he was very depressed. But I think he was very touched by having a dinner given for us. As I remember, they had some of their friends, and then they asked us which of our friends we would like to have, and we would have liked to have had asked. I just can't remember who we suggested. I just remember Joe and Susan Mary Alsop.

F: Are we talking about twenty or fifty or--?

G: No, we are talking about twenty.

F: Did you have the feeling in the selection of the house that Mrs. Johnson was making the decision or that the Vice President was?

G: I had a feeling the Vice President was and that Phil was pretty influential with him in a thing like that.

F: Did you ever notice that it hurt the Senator politically?

G: I really don't think it did. I think Phil was right, and I think they did like the house. I remember very well thinking of all this, because two or three days after Senator [President] Kennedy was shot, I was in my

office at Newsweek in New York, and Mrs. Johnson called up and suggested that I come and have a cozy evening, more or less alone, with them.

F: This was while they were still living in the house?

G: [It was] before they moved into the White House, and I remember the eerie feeling of going back with all the lights and Secret Service and the Presidential aura around that house.

F: It changed the complexion a bit.

G: Yes, and that night, Joe and Susan Mary Alsop were there.

F: Who is this?

G: Joseph Alsop, the columnist, and his wife, and Judge Thornberry was there, and I believe that was all. And the President looked at Rayburn's portrait on the wall and said that the people he was going to miss in the office he was going into were Rayburn and my husband. The President really was very, very devoted to Phil, and Phil to him.

F: He has said that in my presence. I mean it was more than just a courtesy to you.

G: No, I've heard of him saying it several times, and I know he thought very highly of Phil's advice, and I can see why.

I know what I was going to tell you. It's a pretty interesting story. In about 1958 we were having dinner at the Alsops with Senator Kennedy, whom we did not know intimately at that time--or in fact ever--although we got to know him much better later. After most of the people went home, several of us sat down, including, I believe, Mrs. Longworth and the Kennedys and ourselves and Joe--who was then not married. And my husband said to Senator Kennedy, "Jack, you're awfully good. I'm sure you will be President some day, but I think you are too young to run now and I hope you don't."

President Kennedy said, "Well, Phil, I'm sorry, but I'm running, and

this is why. There are three reasons. One is that I think I'm better than any other of the possible candidates except Lyndon Johnson." The second reason was that if he didn't run now somebody else would run and be in for eight years and probably dictate their successor. The third reason was that he said if he stayed eight years in the Senate intending to run, he'd end up being a lousy Senator and a lousy candidate. Those were his three reasons, but I think the interesting and the relevant point is that he thought he was more qualified than anybody except President Johnson.

F: That is. Before we get into the politics of 1960, how does the Post arrive at an editorial policy?

G: It's a pretty good system, but it's pretty hard to describe. Within the context of what the paper stands for and what my family--whether it is my father or my husband or now myself stands for--the editor has a good deal of freedom. The editorial writers under him also have a certain amount of freedom. In other words, we would never expect somebody to write an editorial which they didn't agree with.

There is an editorial board meeting every morning in which there are sometimes some pretty big arguments and in which everybody presents their point of view, and differences are ironed out. But if they are not ironed out, in the end the editor just decides. And so he shapes the opinion.

Now he does this in the context of, in his day, Phil's opinion, or mine. If the subject was a very big one, they would talk about it. Obviously, if there was any deep disagreement, I guess that the editor would leave. But, within that framework, he had some leeway to express his own opinions. Usually, there has been some difference in detail

between the editor's opinion and whoever is sitting at my desk. There were rare occasions when Phil just went down and said, "I want it done this way." It created a lot of unhappiness, but it did happen upon occasion.

It happened on one rather silly occasion, but it became a terrible fracas. Representative Kirwan sponsored an aquarium, and the editorial board was against it on the theory that the district needed a lot of things more than a ten million dollar aquarium. Phil was for it on practical grounds that Kirwan was very good for the district and was very influential, and, therefore, if he wanted an aquarium, it was okay with him.

F: It wasn't a bad price to pay.

G: Yes. That's exactly why he and Johnson got along. And so finally they supported the aquarium very unqillingly. My husband sent a miniture aquarium down to Russ Wiggins at the end of this fracas in which Russ had ended up finally supporting the aquarium against his will, but that was a very unusual instance of it.

F: Before we get away from this, would Russ Wiggins be close enough that I should see him? I have him on my tentative list.

G: I definitely would, yes, because he not only would remember those moments and he would remember Johnson at that time, but I think he saw him several times recently. Of course, he has worked with him in those last three months when he was at the United Nations, so I certainly would see him.

F: Well, now then, back to 1960. Did your husband informally, or formally, lead a movement for Johnson for the nomination?

G: Oh, not at all, no. He was out there in a strictly working capacity, but being my husband he really was irresistably drawn to politics. And so

what he would do would be to go around and politick on his own. For instance, I'll give you the memorandum he gave to Teddy White. As you will see, he goes to see either Adlai Stevenson, or Johnson, or Kennedy suggesting things. And then he would test one out--one possibility out--with the other one.

F: He kept his lines open to all possible candidates?

G: Yes, and some of what he found out he would write. Now, this becomes very relevant because I noticed in a review of--what was her name, Kennedy's secretary that wrote a book--

F: Evelyn Lincoln?

G: Evelyn Lincoln's book. In that, I just happened to have come across a clipping in the file, that says that the Post ran a story saying that Kennedy was for Johnson for Vice President, and that this influenced events. What had in fact happened, as is in the memorandum, is that Joseph Alsop, who as you can see, was a close friend, was out there. Now Joe was a close friend of Kennedy's. By this time, it was absolutely clear that Kennedy had the nomination sewn up. So Phil and Joe were talking together about the necessity for having Johnson on the ticket as Vice President.

Joe said to Phil, "Why don't we go up and talk to him--to Kennedy and just see what he is thinking about this."

And Phil said, "You go, Joe, because I don't know him that well."

Joe said, "No, I'll only go if you will go."

They were something like little boys. And finally they both went and said to Senator Kennedy that they assumed he was going to be nominated and that they hoped he would not only ask Johnson to become Vice President, but mean it. Not just offer it to him for the record but make him take it.

And he said, "I intend to." He said it very convincingly and sort of went over the strength he would bring from the South, and how Symington wouldn't add all that much, and how this was the way his thinking was going.

Well, at this point, you see, when Phil was politicking, there was always a little bit of a tear between being a newspaperman and being a politician.

So he did use stories whenever he thought he could, and he used that story. And this is the one that Mrs. Lincoln said influenced events.

F: Did it? We have Mrs. Lincoln's book on the 1960 nomination. Do you have some comment on that, or something to say on it?

G: Well, this is just a review. It says, "A story which he sent to the Post (he meaning my husband) the night of Kennedy's nomination [is] entirely without foundation," she claims, said, "there was no reason to doubt that Senator Kennedy's own personal preference was to offer the Vice Presidential nomination to Lyndon Johnson." Well, you can see that he was saying that with reason.

She then claims that this helped make it come true. She claims that Kennedy felt that since the news leak had occurred, he had to offer the nomination to Johnson.

Now, I would like to add one thing here that you can check with Teddy White. Well, there must be some way to check this, but what happened about the publication of Phil's memorandum was this. First of all, after this extraordinary sequence of events which he has told about, he came and got me as he says at the end, and he was absolutely trembling with tenseness and excitement. He told me this story. We went out to the convention, and he said, "I can't go into the hall, I'm too nervous. Let's go and get a drink, and then I will tell you what happened." And

he told me the story more or less as he wrote it.

F: This is the story that is in the memo?

G: This is the story that is in the memo. So I urged him and he had thought anyway of writing it down and he did. He really wrote it down for his own purposes and stuck it in the files, and I'm sure he never thought of using it. He then got very ill toward the end of his life, and I don't know whether he would have given the memorandum out. I think he would not have. But apparently he had an argument with Teddy White about 1960. He said to Teddy that his facts were wrong and that he, Phil, would tell him how Johnson was nominated. And at that point he sent the memorandum to him.

I met Teddy, who is a friend, at a big cocktail party that the New York Times gives every year for publishers in New York, and he said to me, "Can I use the memorandum in the next book?" I honestly thought that he meant use the contents of it, and I didn't see that I had any say about that because Phil had given it to him.

And so I said, "Well, it's yours and you have it. And so I don't know why you shouldn't use it."

I was quite horrified and had rather a fuss with Teddy at the time about the fact that he used it verbatim because I thought it was too early and I was embarrassed, and I think Phil would not have wanted that. Teddy was rather upset because I was upset and he thought that I had given him permission to do it.

So, as I suspected, several other people were upset, and among them was Senator Kennedy--Robert Kennedy--who was furious and denied it. He didn't deny about the Lincoln book saying that the meeting had taken place as Phil had said. He didn't deny that Phil had been the go-between, but

he said that the facts were wrong.

I said, "Well, Bobby, I don't know what to do about it. I didn't mean to give Teddy permission to use the memorandum and it wasn't I who gave him the memorandum."

And Bobby said, "Phil didn't know us then as well as he knew us later or he would have known that that wasn't right."

F: Do you think he was objecting to the fact that it looked as if Bobby were trying to scuttle Jack's decision in this case?

G: Yes, I think that from what Bobby said, and he was very oblique. He said, "He didn't know us, we, my brother and I, never would have been apart," was what my memory of the contents of what he said.

And I said, "Well, what happened--Is there anything I can do, or anything I can publish, to get across what really happened."

And he said, "No, I don't want to talk about it now. I just don't feel it would help anything."

Well, then time passed, and the President had gotten cross with me for various reasons and annoyed with the paper and the magazine. I hadn't seen him for a long, long time, maybe a year and a half or two. And he suddenly called me up--I think he had Bill Moyers call me up and ask me to come over. There were two times I met with him alone about that moment before he got cross again. One was about the fact that he wanted to appoint John Hays, the head of our television station, as Ambassador to Switzerland, and the other one--As a part of that, I think he asked me to bring Russ Wiggins with him and he thanked Russ for his editorial support on Viet Nam. At that time, it was sort of a two-headed meeting. We went over together and he kept us waiting quite a long time. I think we were supposed to have seen him at 5:30 and it got later. At eight o'clock

I looked up and we were still there. And I realized that Bobby Kennedy was coming for dinner which was sort of funny. I thought, "The one time I'm in the White House, I would have Bobby waiting for me."

F: Bobby was coming to dinner with you?

G: Yes. And with some other people. I was giving a small dinner. Which was rather extraordinary, too, because I didn't know Senator Kennedy that well, even though I saw him casually. I liked him a lot--admired him--and increasingly, as time went on. I must say I didn't so much in the early days. Anyway, in the course of the evening's conversation at dinner, I said that I had seen the President for the first time in a year and a half that night and that I had been stuck in the White House thinking I was going to be late.

And he said, "What do you mean you don't see him?"

I said, "He has been furious with me and for months I haven't seen him."

He said, "How can he be furious at you when Phil made him President?"

I said, "Well, Bobby, I'm just confused by your saying that because I thought you said the contents of that memorandum were wrong and that, therefore, I thought you meant that Phil was not as instrumental in bringing the two together as he had thought he had been."

Bobby said, "Well, that's quite wrong. Because of what you don't know, Phil was more important, not less."

F: Did he ever elaborate?

G: Well, then he said, "Some day I'll tell you all about it."

I talked to Teddy White about this--you better talk to him about it. I think what Teddy implied he knew about--and I don't know whether he will even put it on tape--but from what Teddy implied to me was that Bobby

was acting in behalf of JFK when he said, "Please don't. There's too much opposition. You should get off the ticket." I think that was what he had been told to do, but I'm just guessing. And Phil, who didn't want to think that of JFK, thought that Bobby was out of touch and that--

F: Your impression is, then, that JFK thought that he made the offer of the Vice Presidency, either as a token offer, or he made it and expected to be turned down.

G: Or regretted it--either one of the three possibilities. And I just don't know which.

F: You don't know what your husband had in mind when he scribbled a note at the bottom of the memo that he gave to Teddy White saying that he had later found out why LBJ wanted the Vice Presidency?

G: No, I really don't know what he meant. I have no idea what that meant.

F: That's probably lost.

G: I'm afraid [so].

F: What happened then? Was your husband surprised, when he finally took you for that drink, at the turn of events? Had he anticipated that Johnson would accept the Vice Presidency, if offered?

G: Yes, he had. I mean, he thought he should accept and would.

F: Was he concerned about Johnson's acceptance by, particularly, the party liberals?

G: Well, no, because he thought they had to and would, and when we went back on the floor--

F: This incipient revolt didn't really perturb him?

G: No, we instantly on the floor ran into Galbraith and Schlesinger. Arthur, in particular, started to have a terrible fight with him, and I rather tried to separate them. Ken, as I remember, was more accepting of the

fact. There was a picture of Phil on the floor later arguing with his friend, Joe Rauh, and trying to stop him because Rauh was going to get on three networks and denounce--, He was head of ADA then, I think, or certainly influential in it, and he was going to get on three networks and denounce the nomination. This was on the floor before the nomination had taken place. Phil asked him to calm down and not to do that. Of course, his point was that Kennedy couldn't get elected without Johnson and, therefore, even the liberals shouldn't mind and shouldn't object. Of course, he didn't think they should object to Johnson anyway because fundamentally he was liberal minded.

F: Did you or your husband take any active part in the campaign beyond just ordinary support?

G: No. We can't. It has been a policy of the paper, actually, not to take an editorial stand in campaigns. We have recently modified this [policy] to some extent.

F: You have to live with the results, don't you?

G: Well, it's a little bit more than that. It's an evolving reason. Years ago, as you know, the District had no vote. The other reason was that the only morning paper in Washington had to live with the government. If you agreed with them, they thought they owned you; and if you disagreed with them, they thought you were sour-graping them. So that policy has stood, except for 1952 when we came out for Eisenhower. The paper and the publisher have remained inactive, but Phil behind the scenes was very active, and I guess I contributed to Kennedy.

F: Incidentally, you did support Eisenhower in '52. Did that, as far as you know, ever hurt relations between your husband and Senator Johnson?

G: No, I don't think--you see, that was back in '52.

F: And he just accepted that?

G: I don't think Phil knew him so well back then.

F: Yes, but I didn't know whether it was something he would bring up later.

G: No.

F: I was thinking about his inability to forget.

G: Oh, no. I don't think he would have minded that. As you know, he didn't much like Stevenson. He would talk about how much he disliked Stevenson and things like that, but I don't think he did dislike Eisenhower. He used to get along with Republicans he liked better than Democrats he didn't like.

F: Have you worked with Mr. Johnson on the home rule problem here?

G: Yes.

F: Do you think this is sincere, or do you think this is window-dressing on his part?

G: No. You know, if you asked me to bet my bottom dollar, I think he was sincere on it. I think that he really went all out to get it passed. We did all we could to help him, and I was surprised at what happened. I had always thought that if we got it out of the House Rules Committee that the House would pass it honestly.

I think that he felt very let down and very bitter about being beaten on it because I think he thought that he had expended more of his political capital than he had wanted to expend on this thing. I think he was sore when he turned out to get beaten on it. He then had Joe Califano, as his assistant for the District, go to work on the next-best thing we could get passed for the District--the government reorganization, and the appointment of one mayor instead of the three commissioners, and the reshaping or streamlining or whatever you could do without a Congressional action. I think that that, too, was an absolutely magnificent job for the District,

and I think that his total effect on the District government was terribly good and just the best.

F: Were you involved officially with any of this maneuvering, either for home rule or for reorganization?

G: Yes and no. There was a good deal of conversation between Joe Califano and our editors, because I think some of our editors know more about the District than almost anybody else. So I think he consulted them, and he talked to me.

F: There was a good deal of advice sought?

G: Yes, and given. I guess sometimes we give advice. I really fundamentally believe you should keep your advice to the editorial pages. What actually happens when you live in Washington is that you naturally get going on the telephone, and, you know, Joe's a great friend. It's just easy to talk to him and for him to talk to us.

There's a funny thing on the press though. This is an example of how difficult relations were. It's all right to fool around the way we did, for instance, in trying to help on home rule, but essentially, in my opinion and in the opinion of the editors now--and I suppose this differs with what Phil's practice was--I believe that your strength in being an independent newspaper was in keeping your opinions and your own actions in the newspaper column.

So, for instance, when it was all over town that Walter Washington was going to be appointed mayor, there was a lot of debate about whether we should run it or not because so often when you ran an appointment it didn't happen, and we really wanted Walter Washington to be mayor of the city because we thought he was the best man for the job. But, on the other hand, we just decided we had to print it because our policy is

not to hide things from our readers that we know. I just think it's wrong, and so do our editors. So we had a hot day on the telephone because they knew we were going to print it since we were checking people. And Joe was on the phone pleading with me not to print it because if we printed it, it wouldn't happen. We just had to think about what our job was, and our job wasn't to make Walter Washington mayor. It was to be a good newspaper. So we ran it, and indeed, it didn't happen for awhile. We thought it was hung up for good. It was withdrawn and there was some trouble, but in the end he got appointed anyway.

F: This brings up an issue really concerning President Johnson. That is a tendency not to want to share information, or even speculation, with the press. Undoubtedly you ran into that--a suspicion of the press.

G: Yes, and I think this is an interesting subject and a very, very complicated one. I worry about it because you always worry when the President of the United States is <u>that</u> angry with you. He fundamentally thinks that the press kept him from getting his opinions across to the people of the United States, and I fundamentally disagree with him. I think that his conception of a free press, unfortunately, is one that prints what he wants printed. I mean, he thinks that if he sees things from one point of view, that is what happened. Quite often, he honestly, I think, even has a view of what happened as what he wanted to have happen. So when he read something in the paper that wasn't what he conceived of as happening; or, in fact, wasn't what he wanted the public to know about what happened, he would get tremendously angry. He could get very angry, and I think that this is what happened between him and the press. Just multiply this. This happened about little things and it happened about big things.

F: Do you recall some specific instances?

G: Yes, several. There was one when Newsweek printed a story about the peace feeler that Bobby Kennedy was supposed to have brought back from Paris. As I remember it, we printed in both the Post and Newsweek the story that a hell of a row had taken place between Kennedy when he went to see Johnson [and] President Johnson. He walked out of that meeting, Kennedy did, with Katzenbach and two other people. So it then became--what was under discussion was whether--Kennedy described the row, and he described the language President Johnson used.

President Johnson claimed that nothing but sweetness and light had happened in this meeting. Since only he and Kennedy were in the meeting, I guess he thought we were taking Kennedy's word against his. But Kennedy was talking to Katzenbach and other people, you see, as they came down the hall.

Anyway, I got called up into Rostow's office and was told that there hadn't been an argument, that we got the story wrong, and naturally he wanted us to take the story back. Naturally you have to run what you think happened from as many accurate sources as we could and we just decided--and I think it has been borne out since--that there was a hell of a row in the office.

Now, there was another instance in which I think, on the whole in thinking it over, that we were wrong. Often you see it. It was the same thing--what happened in a meeting.

When he went around the world a couple of years ago, he went to see the Pope, as you remember, with Jack Valenti. We ran a story no bigger--longer--than about four inches in Newsweek saying that on the whole the Pope had resented the visit and that it had not been a successful visit.

Our sources were with the Newsweek stringer in Rome who had gotten it from people in the Vatican--that they claimed that the Pope was sort of peremptorily told that the President would arrive at nine at night, and I guess the Pope isn't used to meetings at nine at night. I imagine that there was some truth to his resenting not having much choice about when the meeting took place. I suppose that the Vatican said that they were being used for political purposes about Viet Nam. When you piece it together in your mind, I can't help but still think that there is some truth to the story that they did resent certain aspects of it. On the other hand, Jack called me up, and in fact, I was out with my children skiing. They were skiing in Sun Valley, and I got a call from Rusk out there saying that this story contained fourteen mistakes. Since there were only about eighteen lines in the story--

F: That's a pretty good percentage.

G: But on that one, I think there was a division within our own company and I think Chuck Roberts, the White House correspondent, thought that, on the whole, the meeting itself had gone well. You see the subtleties of these differences and you can see how mad he was to have Rusk call me up--Valenti called me up, and I told him to call up Osborn Elliott and argue it out with him. I was checking with Elliott on the phone and it went around. We must have spent two days on the phone, you know, with the stringer in Rome, checking on the story. Valenti saying, "But I was there, I know. The Secretary of State (of the Vatican) came up and said, "The Holy Father was so pleased because it was so wonderful."

F: Once he got used to the hours, everything was fine.

G: Well, you see, I think in a way we went too hard on that story, not knowing what had happened, and particularly with Chuck Roberts not quite

agreeing with the Vatican stringer. You see, once something like that happens, well, he would get out of that a message that Newsweek wanted to do him in the eye, not a message of what had in fact happened--which is that perfectly good--to us--trustworthy sources were telling us that these things happened.

F: Incidentally, do you keep your Newsweek policy completely independent of the Washington Post?

G: Yes, completely.

F: And there is no crossing of the staff?

G: None. There not only is no crossing, they are totally independent and, on the whole, competitive.

F: So they could even take opposite sides of a story?

G: Well, as you know--when you say "take opposite sides", that implies an editorial opinion and Newsweek doesn't run editorials.

F: No, well, I was thinking of some of the columnists might take a stance.

G: That's their own opinion, not Newsweek's. But as far as news is concerned, they both run their own news operations and they have nothing to do--

F: Of course, you do have policy on the way you feature things and how much time you give--

G: No.

F: But that makes policy.

G: It does, but that is determined by editors. And what you do is just get the very best editors you can get and the most trustworthy ones, and give them their head.

F: Did the President ever call you personally on something you didn't like?

G: He did in the beginning of his Administration. I think that he called every publisher in the country in the beginning of his Administration, either

to tell you he wished you would do something, to praise something you've done, or to say--I remember he said, I think on a civil rights vote in the beginning of his Administration--he complained that Congressmen weren't doing anything or were out of town. You know--why didn't we go see what they were doing! I mean, he would try to use you to line up his votes. If we thought it was valid, we would do it; and if we thought it was running his errands, we wouldn't.

I remember his calling me up one night about a meeting. De Gaulle went to South America and there was some question of meeting him on one of the islands, the French-held islands, and he didn't want to meet him. He called me up to explain why he didn't want to meet him. As I remember, I told the editor, and I guess we used it in a news story that he wasn't going to meet him and didn't want to meet him. I guess it influenced an editorial.

It wasn't only me. He would call up Russ Wiggins, who was then the editor, or Al Friendly was the managing editor, and he would arouse anybody out of bed at any time of the day or night. It was quite startling to have the President on the phone saying, "This was good," or, "That was good," or, "Why didn't you do something or other?"

F: He didn't keep other people's hours.

G: And then it stopped completely, and if he called at all--. First of all, he stopped speaking to me, literally, for awhile, and even if I saw him in a big group of some kind in the State Department, he literally would not speak to me. I mean, he wouldn't say, "Hello." It's extraordinary.

You see, I didn't think of it at first as a possibility, so I did get asked several times to the White House in the beginning of his Administration, and I suppose there was one time--I'll give you a

memorandum to cover--when I went down to the ranch for the weekend. Then it stopped suddenly, but I didn't think that it had stopped suddenly because you never feel that the President of the United States has to invite you over. You just think it's kind of exciting when he does, and when he doesn't, I guess you don't--at least, I don't think about it. I just thought he had gone on to other things.

Then I began little by little to get rumors that he was extremely angry at me personally. I didn't know what I could do about it, so I didn't do anything about it. Then finally I guess about a year and a half passed in which I didn't get asked even to tea for 2,000 at the White House, so I began to get the message.

Then Bill Moyers came over, followed by Bob Kintner at various intervals, and they both had the following extraordinary story to tell me--that he thought that I had "called in my editors and told them that he was trying to buy me with dinners and that they shouldn't pay any attention to this."

So I was absolutely baffled because I wouldn't "call in my editors." I mean, it isn't the way one operates, nor would I have thought anybody could buy anybody with dinners.

I wouldn't presume to [think] that the President would stoop to doing that. And so I was utterly mystified, and I just thought, "Well, I can't do anything about this," when Bill told me. I just let it lie. When Kintner came over about six weeks later--he had just arrived in town as assistant--and I think he thought he was going to straighten out his relations with the press, not knowing how complicated it was. So he told

me this story all over again, and at that point I really got disturbed. I wrote the President, and said I was appalled to learn this horrible story and I hoped he really didn't believe it. I was devoted to him and admired him very much, which I did --do and did--and thought he was doing a great job for his country.

I got back a frosty letter saying, "Mrs. Johnson and I have always been devoted to you as we were to Phil," signed, Sincerely, Lyndon B. Johnson." He was not very forgiving.

So I decided there wasn't anything more I could do, and after awhile he got over it. I was asked back two or three times, and then something happened. I guess it was the Pope thing. So for the last year or year and a half I didn't see him after that, with the exception of one or two rather polite perfunctory gestures. Nor did he communicate from the ranch for about a year and a half. Then--just before he returned to Washington for the first time, I heard from him him again in very much the old way.

He had been re-reading his correspondence with Phil and this must have evoked memories.

He called on his visit, came to a dinner at my house and a lunch at the Post of four and one-half hours duration. On both occasions he was warm and generous about Phil and Phil's role during those years...how Phil had contributed with friendship and support.

F: Do you think the appointment of Russ Wiggins as an ambassador was sort of a peace offering?

G: No, I really don't.

F: He was living out to his qualifications?

G: No, I think he really liked Russ, and I think he honestly thought he would make a great ambassador. He knew that Russ was retiring in December, and he offered him this in October. But I don't think it had anything to do with me or with us because--. Maybe it did, but I wouldn't interpret it that way.

F: Did you attend the convention in '64 in Atlantic City?

G: Yes, I did.

F: Did you see anything first-hand that's reportable?

G: No, I didn't.

F: You went down to the ranch afterwards then?

G: Well, that was--. Yes, I did. I spent a weekend at the ranch by a wild series of accidents.

F: This was immediately afterwards?

G: Immediately after. The convention was very hot and very humid, and all I had was a suitcase full of filthy dirty clothes.

F: Oh, you went directly from the convention?

G: Yes.

F: You didn't even get a change of laundry?

G: No. It was really made because we had a company plane and we were loading it. We were late getting off and we had reporters on it and cameramen on it and some of my children. It was just kind of like a slum, and the heat was about 150°. I was trying to get back down to my farm for the weekend, and I had some house guests. So I was just desperate--being fairly new at my job and thinking everything was out of control, and it was my fault, and what a mess! I couldn't wait to get down to the farm and relax. So just as we got the plane loaded, Air Force One drew up.

F: Just taxied over by you?

G: No. I guess they were on the field, but the helicopters landed with the President and the Vice Presidential nominee. So, of course, I knew the field was locked up and we couldn't do anything about it, and that made me more desperate. My daughter, who was then about 18, said, "Ma, let's just go--we can't leave, so let's just go over and watch them." So, with me was Mrs. Drew Pearson, who is a friend, and my daughter, Lally. So we went over in this crowd of people watching them take off--get out of the helicopter and into Air Force One. So we were standing there like gaping sightseers, and my hair was so filthy and kinky from the humidity that I had a bandana wrapped around it and no stockings on. So, he came shaking hands down the fence, which he used to do all the time. I was sort of surprised to see this happening, and so when he got to me, his

face was absolutely blank. He wasn't looking at the crowd, and I said, "Hi, Mr. President," or, "Hi, Lyndon," I was so stunned to see him, which I never called him, and I don't believe in.

And he looked at me and said, "Hello, Kay, what are you doing here?"

I said, "Waiting for you to take off."

He said, "Do you want a ride?"

I didn't quite know what he meant. I got absent minded that he was going to Texas, which I had read, but thought, "Oh, well, he's going back to Washington." So I said, "Sure, Lally and Luvie are with me, can they come too?"

He looked slightly surprised and said, "Yes, but you know we are going to Texas."

I said, "Texas. I can't go to Texas."

Luvie Pearson, being more present minded than I was, gave me a large kick in the shins and said, "Go!"

So I immediately said, "Of course, I'd love to go to Texas, Mr. President."

He said, "Where is your bag?"

I said, "Well, it's on my plane, but don't bother with it, because I don't want to hold you up."

Before I had gotten the words out of my mouth, two Secret Service men were on either side of me saying, "Where is your plane, Mrs. Graham?".

I pointed it out, and they went and got the luggage off the plane and threw it on the jet. He grabbed my elbow and I went up the stairs and had no idea what I was doing, or where I was going, or what he wanted. Then as I was riding down, Mrs. Johnson came to the front of the plane where I went and sat. They had a compartment in the back of Air Force One, and

she came up and said, "The man in the back wants to see you," so I had twenty minutes with him on the plane.

Then she came back and said, "Now, Kay, you are going to be in such-and-such bedroom."

I said, "Mrs. Johnson (Lady Bird, I guess I called her), you know, he really got carried away at the fence and please don't let me come to the ranch because I would feel that I am imposing on you and the President alone. You're exhausted, and I just can't. It's too awful, and I'm sure he didn't mean it."

She said, "No, no, we want you, and I'm going to rest and I won't pay any attention to you. You must come."

I died, because I kept thinking it was some awful accident, or that he hadn't meant it. Somebody--it's in the notes, I can't even remember who--but I think it was Bill Moyers, said, "Don't think he ever does something he doesn't mean to do, and if he asked you, he wants you." So I went along, and you can have my notes on that weekend.

F: Good. Did you work any with Mrs. Johnson on her beautification plans for Washington?

G: Yes, I did. I was on the District Beautification Committee with her, and I would like to say a word about this.

Liz Carpenter told me that she was thinking up something to replace Jackie's White House, and I think it was conceived by Liz as a program which she could do as the First Lady that would give her some significance. Now although it was thought up as perhaps an idea of Liz's that would be good for her, I think it meant a great deal to her in the end. I think that she and her committee, nationally and locally, did a fantastic job.

F: Probably grew beyond anybody's original comprehension.

G: It really did. She's tremendously able. If I could just go back a bit on her, I would like to.

I remember going to lunch there at the Thirtieth Street house for the new Congressional Democratic wives. I can only piece it together--that must have been after '56. The only non-Congressional wives at that lunch were Sally Reston, Scotty Reston's wife, and Helen Lippman, Walter Lippman's wife, and myself. She had just taken lessons in public speaking, and she was tremendously shy. I think it was very difficult for her. Every single Congressional wife at that lunch, she had get up after lunch and just say quite simply what they had been doing to help their husbands get elected during the summer and what their summers had been like. I was so shy at that point that when she got to me I just couldn't open my mouth, so I didn't do anything.

F: The two of you should have had an empathy there.

G: We do, and we both had to learn to become public women. She learned far better than I did because she can do it frightfully well, and it isn't easy for her, I know. She's tremendously able and extraordinarily tactful and has the most beautiful manners of any person I know.

The beautification program I worried about at first, because Washington has so many real problems that I felt we didn't really need bushes. I felt that people would even resent it and not give money to it because when we are all being asked for money for ghetto problems, education problems, school problems, health problems, you just felt embarrassed going to people and saying, "Will you give a garden." There was a peripheral truth to this that I think at moments it got silly.

But fundamentally I think it did something very real for the city, and it brought in an awful lot of outside money and outside resources that the city would not have had. Just to cite one or two, Lawrence Rockefeller

gave a $100,000 park and he did a $25,000 program of some kind in the schools that--I can't remember what it was, but it was very constructive. Brooke Astor had the really marvelously imaginative playground designers do a playground at Buchanan School, which I think must have cost $100,000 now. These things--. Incidentally, our company did two playgrounds--rather, one playground and I asked the Meyer Foundation, with whom I am really unconnected, to do another. We gave $25,000 as I remember for each, and this was matched up--No, we gave $25,000 and the Foundation gave $35,000, and these were matched by funds so that it was a $50-60,000 playground at one and a $75,000 one at the other, and these are playgrounds that can be used by the whole community.

One day, not many weeks ago, my mother wanted to see one of the playgrounds at the Bowen School, and I drove her down there. We were just looking at it when Lady Bird drove up, and she said--she wrote me a letter to this effect--that she often just rode around looking at things that she was doing and enjoying them. I think her heart got terribly involved in this program, both here and in the country. It's too bad that the word "beautification" makes people laugh and that there is something silly about it, because I think she really did just a terrific job and a very worthwhile one.

Just about Lady Bird's shyness, and her rather marvelous perception of her own problems. I remember a conversation. We were out on the boat in the lake on the weekend, or the ranch when I was down there, and we got talking about a friend of mine who is the wife of Douglas Dillon, then Secretary of the Treasury--Phyllis Dillon--who is a marvelous, gifted, sensitive girl with obviously a lot of money and a lot of taste. Her house is very beautiful and her clothes are very beautiful and her food is

delicious. Lady Bird said of her in the course of this conversation, "But she's nice," as if it was somehow despite this. Anyway, I got the idea that she didn't like this veneer, and so I said this. I said, "Lady Bird, I hope this kind of thing doesn't bother you. I want you to know about Phyllis that, with all of this, she is painfully shy and has the worst inferiority complex in the United States of America. Never thinks that anybody likes her, and that she's any good at anything. And I hope that the veneer of perfectness, perfect living, life style or whatever you want to call it, doesn't bother you."

And she said, "No, it doesn't bother me, it doesn't upset me. I simply feel that people like that have a key to a world I'll never know."

F: That's remarkable from a First Lady.

G: Yes. But I think that she, and I guess the President too, had a great inferiority about the Southern accent and the North's attitude toward the South. Because I remember when she did the film--that was extraordinary, she did it for ABC--of the District and the beautification program of the District, she talked for a whole hour which I couldn't do if my life depended on it, very articulate and beautifully and showed what they had done in the District. I called up Liz Carpenter to congratulate her on it and to say how beautiful I thought it was and what a lovely movie and how marvelous Mrs. Johnson had been. Liz said, "Oh, do you think so? I'm so glad! I don't think her Southern accent was noticeable at all, do you?" Somehow, that was the first thing that occurred to her. It didn't occur to me ever, but it seemed to worry them.

F: Is there any truth to the charge that one of the reasons that the President got at cross-purposes with the press was the fact that they did not understand his milieu, or he felt they didn't, when he talked about

cornbread and barbeque and the caliche roads, that they just dismissed this as horribly cornpone?

G: I don't think there was any--You can't give an answer to that because I think there is some truth to the fact that, maybe what he called the Eastern Establishment Press--and, boy, does he hate them--maybe they are snooty or intellectual snobs or social snobs. He seems to think they are. Somehow he thought that. He referred constantly to the Georgetown set or the Georgetown touch football set. There was always some association of the columnists that live in Georgetown, such as Joe Alsop, Joe Kraft, Rowley Evans, and then Ben Bradley, whom he dislikes very much, our managing editor. I think he dislikes him because he was a close friend of John Kennedy and myself. Then there were a whole other peripheral group that didn't live in Georgetown that he thought were friends of the Kennedys. Then there was the press corps, just all the working press.

My own view is that there is something to snobbery about Southern accents and Texas, but I don't honestly think that's what made the difference. I think what made the difference was--well, his manners were pretty awful about, and I don't mean just superficial manners. I mean that he was terribly rude about people to other people. He knocked people around him who had worked terribly hard and devotedly for him. He said to a group of reporters, "Mac Bundy was a nice young man, and I mean young," when Mac was being totally loyal and working fourteen hours a day. He gave an interview knocking Mac.

He did it to people much closer than Mac. As you know, he did it at the end to Califano and McPherson and said they were publicity seekers. He lied to the press constantly even about nonsense like when was he going

to the ranch. He would never let them know until twenty minutes ahead of time. Well, and he would bawl people out in front of other people and rake his staff over the coals and rake the press over the coals. Well, you know what starts something is a Texas--and I don't think it was his Texas accent, I think it was his personality.

F: He was, to say the least, progressive--liberal, if you prefer. But did you see evidence that he felt that the northern liberals were sort of a caste apart?

G: I think that the main point to me here is that he thought that he had done more for the liberal cause than any President, and he had gotten more liberal legislation through, and that he wasn't appreciated by Northerners for being a liberal because he had a Southern accent. Don't you think that there was something like that? I remember, just to go 'way back to a moment that I mentioned earlier, when my husband and I spent a weekend at the ranch with him in about '56 or '57. Did I mention that?

F: No.

G: Well, we went down there, and that was really my first long meeting with him. We spent three days there. He said to me he would rather--. It was our first intimate meeting, I guess, and he thought that I was a little bit more liberal than my husband, whom he knew and had a relationship with at that time. So he said, "Oh, you Northerners, you liberals," he kept saying to me. Finally, he said, "I suppose you don't even--." He said, "You know, you think that you fight for civil rights in the North, and I want to tell you how civil rights came to Johnson City." Then he told me about a road gang that had come making a road through the town and he said the head of the--that there was a Negro on the road gang,

and that at that time Negroes weren't allowed to stay at Johnson City after five o'clock. Has somebody else told you this story?

F: No.

G: So he said the town, the road contractor, after five, went into the barber shop and got shaved. The town bully came up to him and said, "Get them niggers out of town."

So he said the contractor got off the chair, took the towel off his back, put it aside, and they wrestled up and down Main Street. Finally, the contractor said he wasn't going to get his niggers out of town and he got the bully's head. He got on top and the man's head was underneath him, and he was knocking his head against the pavement. Every time he knocked it, he said, "Can I keep my niggers? Can I keep my niggers? Can I keep my niggers?"

He said, "And that's how civil rights came to Johnson City." It was rather a marvelous example. I mean, he thought we were Northern theoreticians and that we didn't know how practically things were solved.

F: He'd been through a firing line. He's a good story-teller.

G: Oh, fantastic. I just think he's the best story-teller in the world.

F: Well, thank you, Mrs. Graham.

F: You've been in Washington some time. How do you rate him as a President? You've lived now long enough to be fairly antiseptic in your view of the Presidents.

G: I think that we have to get further away from it than we are and nobody will know how he stands in history. But I would like to say that I think that with all his faults and all his virtues, that both are a very big scale, and that this is a brilliant, able, large-scale individual. I

think that his purposes are high, and I think that he's a flamboyant, extraordinary, and fascinating personality. I think it's terribly sad that his own personality got in his way so much. I think that with just very--. I've often thought--I had to sit here and hold on to my chair to keep from doing something I know in my head would have done no good. I kept thinking I could tell him how to get along with people because with just a very little, little difference he would have. His true abilities and virtues would have just really worked. I think somehow it got in his own way.

F: That period when you were out in the wilderness, and then were invited back in the circle, did he act contrite, or did he act as if it had never occurred?

G: No, he never explained. You never knew why you were in exile or why you were back. You just had to roll with the punches.

F: Do you see evidences--?

G: What really worried me about that personality and the fact that he could not tolerate anybody who disagreed with him was that in the end I believe that he cut himself off from all but about four people who agreed with him. By then I had become disillusioned with the war. I didn't think we could win it. About a year before that I had begun to think that we ought to de-escalate, although we supported him longer than almost any paper in the country. I was really worried that with just--You know, when he got rid of McNamara in that really terrible way, and then he left himself with Rusk and Rostow. Then he was inviting Clifford aboard, who had been known as a total hawk, and this really did concern me about the effect of his personality on history.

At that point Clifford came over to lunch, and I just put it as he was

leaving. I told him how worried I was that the President was seeing only about four people, all of whom agreed with his policy on the war. He then said to me at that time that I--he said, "Kay, I'm going to take a total look at this." Of course, he did and he decided that he had to get off the wicket.

During a conversation with Clifford later he said that although he never--I'm sure he will tell you this--he never got any encouragement or discouragement; that for parties, he would still be asked to the White House but that the subject of Viet Nam would never be mentioned.

Just to finish, my own opinion is that whether Viet Nam was right or wrong, that certainly history's appraisal of the President will very much depend on people's view of the war.

F: Yes. It's a tremendous body of domestic legislation and one foreign adventure.

G: Right. I agree.

F: That tip the scales. Thank you.

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By Mrs. Katherine Graham

to the

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