INTERVIEW II

DATE: October 6, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: BROOKS HAYS

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Congressman Hays' home, 314 2nd Street, S.E. in Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

F: We were talking yesterday about your being a special assistant at the White House. Did you come on right after the Bay of Pigs?

H: No, I was in the State Department before that time. I can't quite pinpoint it. That was in November, wasn't it?

F: Did that have anything to do with your moving over?

H: No, not at all, but I was transferred December 1.

F: Did you get any opportunity at all to observe Vice President Johnson when either the Bay of Pigs or the missile crisis was on?

H: I seldom saw him in that nine months period in which I served as assistant secretary for congressional relations. That's strange, isn't it? That I would have that particular assignment and yet not be with him occasionally.

This is something that belongs in another recital, another category of historical judgment. But the whole problem of coordinating the departmental liaison work with the White House liaison work hasn't been fully explored. I don't think you had the best procedural standards worked out. It used to give me a good deal of concern, while I don't have any real categorical judgments to throw

into it. But I'm pointing out that there was a little weakness here because I should have had more contact with the most influential person on the Hill, namely Lyndon Johnson.

F: Experts work on it all the time, but still it's a cumbersome process.

H: Oh, yes.

F: Where were you at the time of the assassination?

H: I was in Lakeland, Florida. I had just concluded a speech at the noon meeting of the Kiwanis Club of Lakeland, and strangely enough I was talking about national unity. I had returned to my room in a motel adjoining the campus of the Florida Southern College there, a Methodist institution, where I was to speak that night. As I walked into the motel room, I heard Walter Cronkite's voice saying the President had just been shot, probably seriously, possibly fatally.

F: You hadn't felt any misgivings about his going to Texas, had you?

H: Yes, I had. I had spoken at Southern Methodist University just about a week before that--I say a week before, it may have been longer than that. At any rate I came close to passing word over to the White House that I thought that the President should reconsider his plans because at that time there were certain evidences there of a strong feeling. I don't mean that Dallas had any appreciable number of people that would have assassination in their heart--but any strong personal animus and pathological feeling about a president, or opposition to a president of that kind can feed the sickness of an individual like Oswald. It wasn't that I felt that Dallas was filled

up with assassins, but I did have grave fears about his going. I don't have any feeling now about it, that is, that I failed to do something I should have done because I later learned, as we all did, that there had been some consideration of changing plans. It wasn't that they were just unaware of the strange atmosphere there in Dallas, and the President resolved those considerations. It was a judgment that someone had to reach and he was the one to reach it.

I felt for Lyndon Johnson at the time. I remember hearing so many of the Texas people saying, and saying it with great feeling, that while the tragedy was not made any greater by reason of it being there, the tragedy was of the greatest degree wherever it occurred, but for a Texan you can see how they would have that added feeling of poignant grief, that their own state had to be embarrassed about it.

So this is something that those of us in the Kennedy and the Johnson official family would like to seal off.

F: What did you do then? Did you come right on back to Washington?

H: I had an engagement to speak the next day at Greenville, Mississippi, and I immediately cancelled and they drove me and my wife hurriedly over to Orlando. We caught a plane and we were in Washington, I believe, ahead of the family.

F: You didn't get out to Andrews though?

H: I did not go, no.

F: Did you report in to the White House?

H: I reported at once. I think I went down that evening. I don't

recall whether it was that evening or the next morning, but my office was in the East Wing, right across the hall from Arthur Schlesinger, and it's one of the few times in my life when I've been unable to fight back the tears. And of course seeing Arthur, who was so close to the President, and who was my very closest associate-- I had not known him before I went to the White House, but we had come to be very congenial and friendly during the time I was there, so being with him accentuated it. This was really a traumatic experience, but it was for all of us.

F: What was the atmosphere like? I know it was sad, but did everybody try to keep on? Did you have enough of a routine workload?

H: Yes. I was really relieved over that aspect of it, and a bit surprised that the stride wasn't broken. People carried their grief, and I think a great deal has been said, and truthfully said, about the efficiency with which the funeral plans were carried out. Of course all of us, who carried the title of special assistant or who were among what we would call the top level attaches of the White House, were made honorary pallbearers. It required some scurrying around for me to acquire the attire, the clothing that I was supposed to wear. I was rather surprised at that, that they wanted it to be with complete formality.

F: Most of the people would not have been equipped for that. What did they do? Get a rental agency?

H: One of the members of our church had the formal cutaway coat and striped trousers, so it was no problem for me. But it was a borrowed

suit. I've never had one. As a matter of fact, I think the only three times that I ever wore a frock coat was when I represented our government at the inauguration of Figueres [Jose Figueres Ferrer] as president of Costa Rica, and when I attended the fiftieth wedding anniversary party of the pastor of our church at his wedding celebration, and this, the funeral. Those were the only three times that I ever wore a frock coat.

F: And two of them have been church-connected?

H: Yes.

F: It was under Kennedy that you went to the Figueres [inauguration]?

H: No, it was while I was still in Congress.

F: I wasn't sure when he'd gone in.

H: It was along about 1953 or 1954, somewhere along in there.

F: Did you have a feeling that the Johnson staff was muscling in, or was there a tendency to make it easy for the people who were held over from the Kennedy days?

H: I think that the Kennedy people generally gave full credit to Mr. Johnson and his staff for every consideration. I think that they exhibited the utmost concern for the feelings of--

F: There was a good bit of understanding between the two staffs.

H: There's no question about that. Whatever tension might have developed later, I don't think that at that stage there was any evidence of it. You hear some slight incriminations one way or another on that, but I don't credit that.

F: I wonder how much of that is a later rationalizing.

H: I think perhaps that belongs to the later developments. There may have been some basis for it later. After all, you had a very unusual situation. Political governments, structured as they are, of course make that a very easily developed situation, so it may have been that you had some feelings about it. But I never encountered it. As a matter of fact, I have never encountered it at any stage. But of course being the first of the old Kennedy team to leave the White House, on an active basis, my observations would not be worth as much as those of some of the other members. You see, I left the White House in February of 1964.

But in line with your questions about attitudes and relationships, I can confirm the feelings that possibly have been conveyed to you, that at that stage everything was cordial. There was complete cordiality. Now there may have been some things that happened that could be misinterpreted later, but I don't think anyone felt that President Johnson was anything less than completely sensitive to the feelings of the family and those of us who would be carried over into his administration. He indicated, as you know--it's probably already in the recordings of others--that he immediately let all of us know that any resignations would be pro forma; that he was not asking--I don't know that he gave any wholesale invitations to stay, but he felt kindly toward all of Mr. Kennedy's friends there. Naturally he wanted his own group. He would bring in his own staff. But there was no problem there because there was plenty of room for

all of us. I know this, that when we went out to the funeral--I forget just what day, that's immaterial, but on the day--

F: That was on Monday.

H: --when we stood in the rotunda and there was a pause as we were waiting for the formal service, we were standing there waiting for Mrs. Kennedy to come in, and there were some quiet whispered conversations. I said to Arthur Schlesinger, who was standing by me, "How do you feel about complying with the President's request? Are you going to stay?" He said, "I don't know whether he wants me to or not." Ted Sorensen, who was standing right in front of us, heard that and he looked over his shoulder and he said, "He does want you to stay, Arthur. He told me so." That fitted in of course with what we heard later on. He didn't talk to me specifically, but Bill Moyers did. I said to Bill within a few days, "Bill, I'll just await instructions. I don't know what I ought to do." And he said, "Well, why don't you just rock along and let's see what develops." I said, "Should I turn in a resignation?" "No," he said, "I don't think so." Then he quickly added, "Yes, I guess you should. I guess maybe the President expects all of that as a formal matter, just to give him . . ."

F: Have it on file.

H: Have it on file. So I wrote it out, but with that understanding that it wasn't done with any representation to the President that I meant it unless <u>he</u> wanted it. But it made it easier for him to say, "Well,

Brooks, I do have some other plans." That I think was understood by everybody.

F: But the feeling was that there would be a continuity of effort there?

H: Yes. And when I left, I left not because I felt that I was persona non grata with him, it was because of this renewing by Rutgers University of the invitation to be the Arthur Vanderbilt Professor.

F: You had had the invitation earlier?

H: I had had it years before, right after my defeat. The Eagleton Institute of Politics had invited me to take that place. That was in the spring of 1959. I had turned it down, so they renewed it in the spring of 1964. Five years they had remembered that I had, in their judgment, qualified for that job, so they came down and renewed it. I had the same feeling that appeared later, that most of the Kennedy staff did. It was a terrific letdown, but when it happened I remember President Johnson said to me when I told him that I wanted to do it--

F: Did you talk to him personally?

H: Yes. I said, "I hope you feel all right about my going. What do you say? How do you feel about it?" He smiled. I guess Bill Moyers had already told him; I'm sure my first conversation was with Bill. Bill Moyers was my bridge to the Johnson family. While I met him long after I had become acquainted with Mr. Johnson, my relationship with Bill had been of a little more intimate character because I was Bill's mentor, to use his interpretation.

It's worth a moment perhaps to refer to that friendship because when Bill was a senior in the theological seminary at Fort Worth I was president of the Baptist Convention, and I gave the commencement talk in the spring of 1958, as I remember it. He walked up to me after the services--I didn't know him, he just introduced himself--and said, "Could I drive you to the airport?" Of course, I told him he certainly could.

My wife remembered the conversation very well. She reminded me of it not long ago, just the content. He said, "I want your advice." He gave me a little of his background. He said, "Mr. Johnson has asked me to come up and serve on his staff, and the thing I'd like your advice on, since you have had an exposure to both worlds--you've been interested in ecclesiastical service and in political service--do you think that I would be betraying the commitment that I've made [of] a pretty genuine part of myself to serve the church? Do you feel that I would be betraying that to go into this service there in Washington?" I said, "This is a question that no one else can give a categorical answer to, but if it would help you any, and you're the one to decide it, of course, I had the same pressures on me to choose between the ministry and public service--politics on one hand or the church on the other--and I felt that in going the way of political life that I was not filling a lower level from the standpoint of Christian service. I was simply going in a different way. So I don't think that you should have any--"

F: Were you ordained?

H: No. I've never been ordained. Of course the thing that you and I know about the Baptists is that it's very easy to fill the role of a minister and never be ordained. You have access to the pulpit, and the democratic practices of the church make it easy.

F: I tell you what I've thought about the Baptists, even with occasional narrowness in some areas et cetera, is that when they [have] finally communized this world and completely made a corporation out of it, there'll always be some Baptist congregation out there going its own free way and following its own individual rules. It seems to me that they represent the ultimate in democracy in some ways.

H: Yes, there's no question about that. You know about the kind of conversation that took place when Bill and I talked about this. I tied it up by encouraging him to do it. I said, "I think you'll find an outlet for your interest"--he told me about his journalistic interest--"You don't have to stay forever, you can give it a trial. But I wouldn't have any reluctance whatever from the standpoint of the pressures on you to stay with your commitment because this is a part of that commitment. You can live it out in political service because this country needs dedicated young men."

F: You could see that strong dedicated streak in him.

H: Yes. Well, we developed out of that a strong friendship. And even later when Sargent Shriver asked him to go over to the Peace Corps and he was troubled about that, he came down to the State Department to ask me about that. So I have shared in many of Bill's major

decisions. He told the President that one day. He said, "You know, you and Brooks"--he tied me in with this--"I'm the protege of both of you," and the President appreciated that because I suspect that if the President hadn't had any interest in me, he would have had it indirectly because of Bill. I know that Oren Harris worried just a little; Oren being a good friend of mine, said to Larry O'Brien once--Oren related this to me--"Larry, is there any danger of Brooks' being eased out of the White House?" And Larry said, "Not while Bill Moyers is there." Which of course was a simple reply, because the President always, I'm sure, thought of me as Bill's man. The White House tie sort of put me in that echelon, in spite of the fact that the chart would show that I was on the same level. He always, I'm sure, thought of me as being Bill's adviser and being subject to Bill's direction. When I did tell the President that I would like to accept the Rutgers offer, he smiled and he said, "Yes, I'll let you go if you'll leave me twenty stories."

F: Did you make good?

H: No, I'm afraid I didn't get that many to him. I fed him some that he used, I know. I think the one that he appreciated more than any, and he literally wore it out, he told me later that he'd had wonderful mileage on it and I thought of that in connection with the President's gift for humor. Now his use of humor was a little different from the other men in public life that are rather distinguished by it. His use had a sort of professionalism. It was not, with him,

spontaneous. He had the intelligence of course to know where to use it. And if it lacked a certain artlessness, it certainly displayed that degree of artfulness that made it acceptable.

I'll illustrate. It was in March of the year that I gave him this story, and that means that it was just before the tax-paying period in April, the income tax. I told him about the Internal Revenue agent calling the pastor of the Baptist church and saying, "Henry Jones indicates on his return that he gave your church five hundred dollars last year. Did he?" This pastor said, "I don't have the records here and can't tell you right now. But I'll say this: if he didn't, he will." I gather from your expression that you remember the story, because once I said it to the President and he used it, it was then in the public domain. But he used it as long as he could. And the point is that he used it in a way that indicated that--

F: He used it somewhere fairly recently. I've heard it in the last two months, again.

H: Really!

F: Yes, someplace that was appropriate.

H: But we on the staff might have maybe been a little indelicate at times in regaling audiences with humor, because, you see, any audience loves to hear someone speak of their official relationships with the high command. I remember when I was asked to introduce Adlai Stevenson, just a month before he died, incidentally; it was in June of 1965. My son was secretary of the Arkansas Bar convention and he asked me to get Adlai to come down to be the speaker at their convention

in June. Mr. Stevenson said, "Yes, I'll go," so we went together to Hot Springs to the convention. In introducing him, among other things, I said, "I would be very happy"--now at that time I had the title of consultant, I had left the job as special assistant to the President on a full-time basis and became a consultant on a per diem basis--you know the old expression "when actually employed," the WAE, and at the same time I was known was a presidential consultant and was so presented--"to bring you the greetings of the President of the United States, except, to tell you the truth he doesn't know where I am." I'd used it before and I used it even when I was on a full-time basis.

Stevenson handled it beautifully. He started out, after he had taken care of me pretty well, he said: "Brooks will go to heaven for his charity if he doesn't go somewhere else for his exaggerations." And then he said, "Now, I bring you the greetings of the President of the United States. He knows where I am. He knows I'm in the Security Council in New York City."

But I don't know whether Mr. Johnson ever heard the story that I got the biggest mileage out of, involving Texas, but this is a little addendum that belongs in the books and I'll insert it here though for the purpose of avoiding too much verbiage in transcripts, maybe it should be eliminated, but for your own delectation, I'll say, the Outer Mongolia incident.

F: I don't know this.

H: When I was appointed as a delegate to the UN in 1955, the question of

Outer Mongolia's admission to the General Assembly was one of the hot issues. With tongue in cheek one day after we had been mulling over this thing, I just said, "Well, I have a solution. I think we ought to go ahead and let Outer Mongolia in, and then to cancel out her vote, let's admit Texas." I said, "We can do it on the theory that Texas is just as autonomous and independent, maybe a little more so, than Outer Mongolia, and, generally speaking, would be as loyal to the United States as Outer Mongolia to the USSR. But," I said, "when we do, we'll change the name of Texas to Outer Arkansas."

Of course those were good lines for Arkansas. But I didn't tell it in Texas until about a year later when I was speaking in Fort Worth, and it got a thunderous response. I told the audience, "Well, I told it with some timidity, some reluctance, but you have convinced me with this pleasant response that you not only can dish it out but you can take it."

F: Did the President ever come to you for stories when he had a speech coming up?

H: Yes. You see, the handicap was, though, I was down here only on weekends. That was the understanding. And they had an office for me.

F: You continued to keep your residence here.

H: Oh, yes.

F: Incidentally, is this the house where your wife was assaulted by--?

H: Yes, it was in this very place, right upstairs. It was on these stairs that she threw the money down. She had talked this young man almost out of the door there.

F: She had first encountered him upstairs?

H: Upstairs.

F: And she'd talked him down?

H: She talked him down by her very skillful and calm handling of the thing.

F: Kind of the way she talks you out of things.

H: Exactly. She was sitting there and it was about this time of day, late in the evening. She looked up and just all of a sudden, just the figure of this man--about eighteen years old, I think it developed later, because they did apprehend him and he was sentenced on a plea of guilty for this and other house-breaking violations--just showed up in the door. She said, "What do you want?" He said, "Well, the lady downstairs said you'd give me some money." She knew there was no lady downstairs, so she said, "Well, let's just go down and talk to the lady downstairs." He was sort of backed into this. They just walked down here and they got to the door here and he grabbed her by the arm and said, "Now, look here!" He realized, you know, that she was getting the best of it. He said, "I want some money and if I don't get it, I'll kill you." And of course you're familiar with the story. This was the house.

F: To get back to President Johnson, did your duties change any during the period you were there as a special assistant, or did you pretty much keep on doing what you had been doing under Kennedy? And what had you been doing?

H: It did change to come extent. While under Mr. Kennedy on a full-time

basis, I was given a lot of speaking assignments, primarily state-federal relations, liaison with the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, and dealings with the mayors and the county officials. Not so much the governors because Mr. Kennedy had a little different way of handling that, and so did Mr. Johnson. But the job that I did mostly on these weekend assignments was with Bill Moyers, working largely on church-state relations. Now Mr. Johnson used me to write a few messages for him, even an article or two for him, that kind of thing. There's an amazing amount of detailed work, sending presidential messages to church conventions and writing little comments on questions submitted by church leaders, and letters in response to questions that needed answering--a letter from a cardinal or the president of a national church convention that called for a presidential signature. I was kept busy on these weekends with that and related details. Sometimes Bill would use me as a fill-in for the President, if it weren't convenient for him. But it was strictly a weekend thing until I guess when my work ended at Rutgers after a couple of years. Then I had a little more time here, still on a day-to-day basis. I mean, I didn't take another oath of office as special assistant or change this.

F: You just worked harder.

H: I was just here more often. I think I wound up my work at Rutgers in the spring of 1966 and had a good deal of time.

I'll tell you this because it is responsive to your question. The President had Bill call me one day and I think I was maybe on a

speaking assignment for him, I was away from Washington. He said, "The President would like to know, would you be willing to serve as associate director of the Community Relations Service in the Department of Justice." That was of course the old agency that LeRoy Collins had headed under Mr. Kennedy, and I had had a part in setting it up. I had helped Ramsey Clark, or Ramsey and I had collaborated. Warren Cikins, who was my top assistant all through my White House and State Department work, and Ramsey Clark and Mr. Burke Marshall and I worked on the Community Relations set-up. We got that thing set up.

F: Is this when you were White House special assistant?

H: Yes. That was during Mr. Kennedy's administration. Warren believes that the idea was originally mine. Now whether that's true or not, I'd make no point of that. If someone thinks that it originated in the mind of someone else, I wouldn't press the claim to authorship. But I was regarded at least as one of the initiators of the Community Relations Service.

F: You're not one of the four hundred and twenty-three people that suddenly claims to have originated the Great Society!

H: (Laughter) Well, there was plenty of glory in it for all of them. Of course I said, "Yes, I will." Now remember that the question might have been advanced just a bit timidly, I don't know that it was. But it was not just that Roger Wilkins, whom he had selected to be the director, was black and I am white. Roger Wilkins was a northerner and I'm a southerner. Roger Wilkins is a very young

man without the congressional and political experience that I had had and I was his senior in years, by a good many years. So there may have been some feeling, "Now is it fair to ask a man of Brooks' years and experience to be the understudy for a man of his years." But it didn't bother me a bit in the world, and of course we've rapidly passed out of the place in which any sensible white man with conscience and with breadth of feelings--and I hope I have that much breadth of feeling--would be reluctant to accept a subordinate position. My sensibilities were not shocked at all. I just quickly told Bill that I would be very happy to serve.

So that was my final contribution to Mr. Johnson, and he was very grateful apparently because I went to the swearing-in ceremony for Roger. I didn't have to take the oath of office because I was already, you see, in an official position. But for the formal ceremonies when Mr. Wilkins was sworn in, the President took notice of my presence in the room and he thanked me and said, as I remember his language, "I have given you, Roger, one of the best men I could find to be your assistant." I appreciated it. Then later in a civil rights meeting he referred to me and others, everyone thought, when he looked at me on the front row, and said, "I see in front of me men who have paid considerable sacrifice for what they believed to be right in the field of equality and non-discrimination."

F: Did Bill Moyers rise to the top like cream in a separator? Was this just sheer force of personality--because he is youthful? He was and

still is.

H: It's an amazing thing, but don't forget that William Pitt was prime minister of all England when he was twenty-three. Bill had the brains and the dedication to back it up, a very solid character.

F: Did other people work with him well?

H: I think so. I had no reason ever to question his personal relationships.

F: He wasn't treated as an upstart.

H: No, that's a strange thing. You'd never feel that about Bill. That was a great advantage to him, to have that quality, the ability to move among people without appearing to pull [throw] his weight. The President apparently had the same appraisal of his--

F: This is subjective, but do you get the feeling he was sort of a substitute son to the President?

H: I hadn't thought of that, and I'm not sure, Joe, that I've heard anybody else say that. No, I didn't have that feeling. I guess the President did have a certain pride in him, pride of discovery, because it was Mr. Johnson who discovered him. I didn't discover him, in spite of the fact that I had this part in sort of pushing him in.

F: You urged him to sort of let himself be discovered.

H: Right.

F: Did you ever get any insight at all into the President's relation with Bobby Kennedy?

H: I don't believe I can throw any light on that. Everything that I

might say about that would be entirely secondhand, and I'm sure you would have it from other sources. No, I don't believe--let me be sure, let me reflect upon that a minute. You see, my relationship was with Jack rather than Bob. I talked to Bob a few times on the phone, but there was no occasion for my coming into that orbit. There were with other men like Burke Marshall and Ramsey Clark. What was the name of this--I regarded him as a brilliant Texan, ran for Congress in Texas? Barefoot?

F: Barefoot Sanders.

H: Yes. He was in the Justice Department. I'm sure that Mr. Kennedy knew something of my movement and even Buzzer White, I was with Mr. White a time or two. Mr. Johnson was not involved. But my relations with the Justice Department were very casual.

F: Are we thinking about the White that went on the Supreme Court?

H: Yes, Byron White.

F: You visited the Pope in the summer of 1964. It was your second visit, I believe. Did Mr. Johnson sort of urge this, or did you talk to him about it, or were you strictly on your own here?

H: No, I talked to him about it. He wanted me to go. He regarded it as an official visit--a semi is a better way to put it. He regarded it as a good gesture, and he authorized me to convey his personal greetings to Pope Paul.

F: Did the Pope seem to have any feeling for Mr. Johnson one way or another?

H: Not much was said. What he did say of course was satisfactory. He asked me to convey to the President his personal appreciation of this notice and this gesture of friendliness. It was satisfactory.

Pope Paul incidentally said something that was significant from the standpoint not of political but of ecclesiastical relationships. He said, "I understand, Mr. Hays, that you're speaking to the Protestant men of the Armed Services at Berchtesgaden." I said, "Yes, your Holiness, that's my mission. I'll go from here there to Berchtesgaden for those lectures. I will be speaking to the Protestant men of the chapel." He said, "I wish you would please give them my warmest greetings and say to them that I shall pray for the success of their meeting."

These are things that wouldn't have been said in other centuries. It was a period before there came, largely out of Pope John's--his predecessor--work, a new relationship.

F: Did you get the feeling that Mr. Johnson was able to do things with regard to the Catholic Church that President Kennedy as a Catholic could not? I'm thinking particularly of parochial aid of various sorts.

H: Again, I doubt that there's much I can add to that. I think that Mr. Johnson was capable of building on the foundations that had been laid, and I think, and this is certainly to his great credit, that he saw that the time had come to cement the relationships, and he was in a good position to make a contribution here. Now whether that contribution would have been as impressive without the administration of

a Catholic preceding him, I doubt that he would have been prevented from making this very significant contribution if it had been other than a Catholic. I don't think that's too significant. I think it is something to be measured by various indices. But at any rate Mr. Johnson did provide some cement, and we needed it. I think that history will be kind to him in this regard. I view what he did in the field of civil rights as much more profound than anything he was able to do on the religious front because, as a matter of fact, the great tensions in America, the great strain on our unity was on the racial front and not on the religious front. That victory had been made firm earlier. But it's worth mentioning in this inventory of events of significance.

F: Did he talk to you about civil rights problems, because he <u>was</u> active?

H: Oh, yes. Well, not much. I think that he probably had been exposed to my philosophy, maybe through Bill Moyers. There were some indications that he knew where I stood.

F: Did you personally get much flak from home because of your association with this pro-civil rights man?

H: Yes, I did, and it probably cost me. To some extent it was a factor in my defeat for the governorship in 1966. When I ran for governor, I was constantly assailed in every speech that the man who became the Democratic nominee that year made. I was always referred to as "the old quisling"--this one really hurts, you know--and "Lyndon's boy." Those were the two things: "Lyndon's boy" and "the old quisling."

F: You sold out.

Did Johnson take any personal interest in your gubernatorial campaign, more than just casual?

H: No, he didn't.

F: There wasn't much he could do, was there?

H: No.

F: Was he on a pretty good working relationship with Wilbur Mills?

H: Yes, I think probably he was, I gather that he was. That may have been strengthened by the Larry O'Brien ties too. That was maybe a carry-over from the days in which O'Brien had been a very potent political force. Of course he continued to be during Mr. Johnson's administration. But that is understandable.

F: Some of the Kennedy people stayed on, as you know: Walt Rostow, Larry O'Brien in various functions, John Gronouski, et cetera, et cetera. Those who stayed on were the complete professionals in this sense, I gather.

H: Oh, yes. My name would not show up in a list of that kind because--

F: What I was thinking, though, there was never any looking back to the Kennedy glory. They were now with this administration.

H: Oh, yes, that's right.

F: And dedicated to making it work.

H: That's right.

F: The schism that came between him and Senator Fulbright, was that strictly, so far as you know, a matter of the war, or does it go into more personal [areas]?

H: I rather think it was largely the war. I rather think that you'll find that that's the answer. We could all speculate on that a bit. There may be some explanation in terms of temperamental quality. You had differences there, personality difference. But I think, Joe, that you'll find the answer in terms of war policy.

F: When you began to put SCOPE [Southern Committee on Political Ethics] together, did the President show any interest in it?

H: Let me see.

F: This was in 1967.

H: I don't recall. I'm trying hard to remember. That must have been early in 1968, wasn't it?

F: You began in November 1967, and then of course it got rolling in 1968.

H: Right. I'm glad you have that date because without that help I would have said it was early in the spring of 1968. But we did start in November of 1967, and it had the support of course of men who were thinking largely in terms of the domestic front, quite aside from any differences over the war. But in the fall of 1967 every man who participated in the organization in this Southern Committee on Political Ethics, SCOPE, was of the same type of mind. We were all friendly to the domestic policies of the administration.

F: On the domestic side, do you think that Johnson sort of irritated the situation, roiled it unnecessarily, or do you think that he gave enough advance that some of these tensions that developed in a sense were a result of opening up new vistas?

H: I'm not sure I understand the question. Do you mean, was he going

too rapidly for the people on the domestic front?

F: Yes.

H: No, I don't think so. I think that you probably had there a display of great perceptiveness in terms of political acumen, of political leadership, striking when the time was right. And the time had come for some of the bolder strokes that he took in the field of education and civil rights. Of course that's one of the tragedies of modern times, from the standpoint of personal suffering, because I'm sure he did suffer over the adversities of the war that tended to obscure these other things. But this is something that we'll have to leave to the arbitrament of history.

F: Right. Did President Johnson ever suggest that you take on another role?

H: No.

F: While you were with him as a special assistant and as a consultant--of course you've got a long political history yourself and he would have appreciated that side of you as much as any president I know--did he ever try to utilize your obvious talents and contacts?

H: I don't recall that he did. Let me go back to your question of another role. I do remember that Bill called me one day to ask if I would accept membership on some commission. He said, "Will you consider membership?" He may have called the name of some commission; it would be a long-term appointment, maybe the Trade Commission, the Communications Commission, Tariff Commission, some of the regulatory commissions. And I think I was a bit negative on it. I said, "Well,

Bill, I would never turn down a presidential request if it were a summons to duty. I'd want to know exactly about it." He said, "You're not saying no." And I said, "No, I don't say no. Just go ahead and play with it." He said, "I may have something to talk to you about." Now that's the only thing that ever indicated an interest. That might be responsive to your question.

F: In the campaign of 1964, were you useful?

H: In 1964, yes.

F: Trying to get all fifty states, if he can.

H: Of course no one worried about that one. We were all just looking around for something to do. I made a few little talks. I was active in fund-raising speeches. I made some speeches in New Jersey, helped them up there, raised some money and campaigned for the ticket, and then went over into Pennsylvania. I don't recall much other activity.

F: With most of his special assistants the President wanted them to be anonymous, if at all possible; in other words, if anybody's name was going to appear in the paper, it was going to be his and not theirs. On the other hand, you've got certain special qualitifications. Did he encourage your speaking to brotherhood groups, church groups, and so forth, in which you've got a special proclivity?

H: I don't think that that problem would arise in my case.

F: You had a freehand to go wherever you wanted.

H: Yes. In earlier years it might have, but neither under Mr. Kennedy nor Mr. Johnson would that likely have occurred, because, you see--

F: Brooks Hays made his own schedule.

H: Yes. And then, you see, I had more or less lost my Arkansas base. I was trying to recover it in the 1966 campaign. I would like to revert to your question about the President's attitude toward my running for governor, I think naturally he wanted me to win, but I would like to know more about the whole administration, maybe the frustrations that we encountered in that political situation, because of course some of the lingering Faubus strength was still there and they had access to some of the sources of power. I knew that. Just speaking for one side of that equation, you naturally would give me credit for wanting to spare him any embarrassment. But undoubtedly the Faubus people were able to reach some of his subordinates, but I'm sure the President himself--he told me when I announced that he wished me well. He said, "Of course I know you won't involve me." The other side was involving him. That was rather unfortunate, too, because it was too bad that he couldn't hear some of those speeches because he's the kind of battler that would have said, "So what! We'll just chew him up. We'll tear him apart." But I had to accept that handicap. I did go over and have my picture made with him the day that I resigned. Marvin Watson took me upstairs into his private quarters at the White House to get that done.

I have several pictures up here. I remember presenting to him this book, Hotbed of Tranquility, and he probably found some stories he could use in that. I have a picture of him looking at the book and smiling.

F: Is there anything else that you ought to tell us before we close down?

H: Well, I do have one other thing to say that I might have said the other day when we were talking about the Little Rock episode. And I do this largely as a matter of personal pride. It belongs in the recital of things that make up the final chapters of my political life. You know, you asked about what was called the Southern Manifesto, and I tried to confront that one honestly and frankly. I told you in this recording something that I don't think is on any other tape, and that had to do with the conversation that Governor Faubus had with Oren Harris and Jim Trimble and myself. I have many times recalled that and it's always with a feeling of regret that the situation seemed to call for that action on my part as a responsible act of political leadership. And now, and soon thereafter, I could see that that was not true.

F: You were a little in the position akin to what Hugo Black had to do, you know, back there to get elected and stay elected. A grave error, but if you wanted to serve in Alabama--

H: Yes, those things are often explained in terms of local political pressure, but yet let me say this. Just admitting that it was a mistake, conceding that while it isn't the kind of mistake that should have caused you any great sense of self-abasement--I don't mean that I should have any feeling of humiliation about it. Let me put it like this: that when I gave up my congressional seat in 1958, it was after a studied and careful examination of what the moral

issues were and what I was required in good conscience to do. And what I did led to my defeat. In other words, I sacrificed, it's fair to say, a political career. Now I know that what I'm about to say may sound dramatic, but it's very much a part of me since I do have strong feelings about the requirements of justice and of decency in the field of human rights. If my defeat atones for this previous act, I'm one of the happiest politicians that was ever defeated for political office. And that's my personal testimony because I think that the 1958 defeat does signify that in one situation I dug in to say that winning an election is entirely secondary. I know that there are a lot of men who feel as I do about it, and I would like for the public to be strengthened in their confidence in the democratic system, in that now and then men do make decisions of that kind and on that occasion, I did.

F: Yes, brought around a second time, you did not equivocate.

H: I did not. And of course I was very grateful for what a black bishop, Bishop Lafayette Harris, a Methodist bishop in Little Rock said to me once. He was the leader of the black people. He said, "Mr. Hays I know that when you signed it, you didn't do it to save your political scalp." And that was true. So I have these mixed feelings about it, but I've added this little addendum about being happy that at least in the closing phases of my life, the black people can never have the feeling that I've let them down. Now, that's personal pride maybe, but after all you have your pride in your record. I thought you'd be interested in that.

F: I am. Thank you, Mr. Hays.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

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