INTERVIEWEE: W. W. HEATH (Tape #1 Side 1)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

May 20, 1970

F: This is an interview with former Ambassador W. W. Heath in his office in Austin, Texas in the Perry-Brooks Building on May 20, 1970; the interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Mr. Heath, let's get just a little bit of background here to begin with. You came out of East Texas. Right?

H: Yes. Leon County and Grimes.

F: You went to the University for your law work?

H: Yes.

F: And then went back to Grimes County and at one time was a judge there?

H: Yes, I was county attorney and later county judge.

F: How did you happen to come to Austin?

H: Mrs. Ferguson appointed me as Secretary of State in her last administration.

F: Where had you known her?

H: In that particular campaign and as a matter of fact, I had never supported the Fergusons in their previous campaigns, but she and her husband came to Anderson, the county seat of Grimes County, in the run-off. As a matter of fact, I didn't vote for her in the first primary. I supported Tom Hunter, but I supported her against Governor [Ross] Sterling in the run-off. They came there to make a speech, and I met them for the first time there. In fact, I introduced them.

F: Incidentally, and you may have heard this, but this was one of

President Johnson's ways of sort of teasing some of his staff at the White House sometimes--When they were getting a little high and mighty, he'd say, "Why, he doesn't even know who Jim Ferguson is." Or, "He never supported Jim Ferguson."

Where did you first meet Lyndon Johnson?

H: During his first campaign for Congress.

F: You didn't know him when he was NYA director?

H: No. I knew who he was, but I had never personally met him.

F: How did you happen to meet him during the first campaign--that was in 1937?

H: I became interested in him by virtue of a remark which he made in some of his speeches. He said that, I believe it was, his grandfather or his great-grandfather was Dr. George W. Baines, who was the second president of Baylor University. Since I was very distantly related to Dr. Baines myself, that naturally directed my attention. So I liked his campaigning and liked what he stood for and supported him in that race.

F: Did you do any active campaigning for him, or were just one of the people--?

H: No, I was just active as a voter.

F: I suppose we should establish one thing. After Mrs. Ferguson went out of office, you remained in Austin.

H: Yes.

F: In the Attorney General's office, and then in private practice?

H: Yes.

F: And so Austin has been your home now since the middle 1930's?

H: Yes.

F: When did you first get to know President Johnson?

H: During his first campaign.

F: You actually met him?

H: I met him, but it depends on what you mean by know him. I became acquainted with him--let's put it that way, in that campaign.

F: Did you ever work actively in his campaigns while he was in Congress?

H: No. I suppose it would depend on what you mean by actively.

F: You didn't have any staff functions or anything?

H: I didn't have any staff functions. I was for him and where I had an opportunity, I'd say so and would get word with my friends. I was reasonably active without being any way officially connected with the campaign.

F: Did you do any legal work for him during this period?

H: No.

F: So you all just remained sort of casual friends for that period?

H: Yes, during that period we were just casual friends.

F: Then moving to the Senatorial days, were you actually involved in any of the campaigning at that time?

H: Yes, but not a much greater scale. As time went on I became a little more active and became a little more enthusiastic about the man. And as time went on I became engaged with his mother in some work she was doing which brought me in contact with him at that time, more perhaps than I otherwise would. There were two things. Of course, she was a Baines, and she found out that I had some distant Baines ancestors. She was writing a family history at that time, and every little information on the latter people in my branch of the--My mother's grandmother was a Baines, and I think the President's and my great, great, great grandfathers and grandmothers

were perhaps the same people--too distant. Fortunately--this is disgressing a second--the unfriendly portions of the press in Sweden never did find out that I was a very distant [relative]. I didn't say it--I didn't discuss that.

F: They might have scented a closer kinship than actually existed.

H: Oh, they would have made it sound much closer than it was. It was just very distant. But his mother did not have much information on my branch of the family, and thought perhaps that I could provide it, and I undertook to try to help her getiit. I have a cousin--a lade who lives out at Plainview, Texas, who is a former president of the Texas Federated--you know, one of these women's groups--

F: Federation of Women's Clubs.

H: She is a member of our family and sort of keeps up with the family tree. She had all of this information, and so I furnished it to Mrs. Johnson. Also, I mentioned to her once that Dr. Baines, who was pastor of the First Baptist Church--the only Baptist church in Anderson, Texas, in the days of the Republic--at the time in the church building, which is still standing there--at the time the first general convention of the Baptist church was held in Texas; that I had a pastor of that church when I lived over there [who] had a copy of the minutes of that convention in Dr. Baines' handwriting. He was selected as the secretary of the convention, and he had given it to me and that I had it. Well, she was very anxious to see that; and I recall I spent all one day searching through my files and finally found it and gave it to her.

F: Is this part of the venture that came out as <u>The Family Album</u>, that little book, or do you know?

H: The instrument itself seems to have been lost. I dealt with Mrs. Bobbitt, her daughter--Johnson's sister, and she told Dell Mayton (?) she searched everywhere for that instrument among her mother's papers; and the last time I discussed it with her she never had located it.

What I was really leading up to was that part of my early acquaintance with him was through his mother. The last year or two before she died, she and I worked together--I won't say we worked together, I tried to help her get whatever information that I could.

F: Now her son was a Senator and no ordinary Senator at that. Was she pretty realistic about his strengths and weaknesses, or was she like most mothers--just completely sentimental about him and her boy could do no wrong? Did you all ever discuss his career?

H: No, not really. She was very proud of him, of course; and it was very obvious that he was a very devoted son. I recall one occasion which will illustrate on the personal side his relationship to his mother and to his children. That was back when his children were small. My wife and I were invited out to the ranch on some occasion--this was while he was Senator--along with maybe ten-twelve other people who were there. And during the course of the day I had an opportunity to be alone with the President for a few moments, and he was sort of upset, it seemed. He remarked to me, "Bill, you know, there are some awfully smart and intelligent people who have very little judgment at times." "I don't know what you're referring to."

"Well," he says, "You know my mother, my children, and my wife are all here. You know, some of these people--I walk in the room. Very smart and intelligent people will practically knock my mother

down and my children getting over to talk to me. You know, people that intelligent ought to realize that there's nothing that a man values more than people being polite and kind and nice to his family. I'm just a little resentful of a few things I've seen happen here today. They're guests in my house--don't say anything about it." But he was devoted to his mother and to his family, and she was to him. But I never really had any conversation with her about [him]. I never felt--It was presumptuous of me to try to--I wasn't that close to her on a personal basis.

F: What was she like as you worked with her--for her, or whatever the case was?

H: She was one of the greatest ladies I ever had the pleasure of knowing. She was a wonderful woman. I never had the pleasure of really knowing his father. I knew him casually when he was in the Texas legislature, but I was a very young fellow.

F: Did she have that same drive that he has always displayed?

H: Yes. She was a very forceful woman. I think that perhaps he would be the first to say--at least I felt, and I think most of his friends felt who knew his parents, that perhaps she was the great influence in his life. She taught school; she did a great many things. And where Mr. Johnson, her husband, was sort of--well, he was a good man, he was more the rough-and-ready type where as she was the essence of what you'd expect in a delightful woman.

F: She also had a taste for excellence.

H: Yes. And while she was forceful and dynamic, she was always very much the lady; the type of person, if you were thinking of a true lady, she was it.

F: Did you get mixed up in the '40's and '50's in any of these Texas

Regular-Texas Loyalist fights. That went on every four years?

H: Not to any great extent. I've always been a Democrat. I've always voted the Democratic ticket, and did in those days. I always supported the Democratic ticket as against the Texas Regulars. I had some good friends. Back in those days, one of my top clients was Glen McCarthy from Houston, and Glen was a great Texas Regular--we had some interesting discussions about it. It didn't impair our friendship, but I have always been reasonably active in the Democratic party.

F: Were you at the State convention in 1956 when it sort of boiled down to a contest between Johnson and Rayburn on the one hand, and Allan Shivers on the other, as to who would control the delegates?

H: No, I wasn't.

F: As far as you could tell, did Senator Johnson always manage to keep his lines open to both elements in the Democratic party, because they didn't keep their lines open with each other always?

H: Yes, he seemed to be able to do that. Of course, any man who has been in politics as long as he had--had people who disliked him intensely. But as far as the elements in the party, he, I think, did a pretty good job of trying to hold the situation together.

F: You were always quite close to the state political scene, in the center of state politics. Did Senator Johnson show any undue amount of interest in the state political scene? I'm thinking during the gubernatorial administrations of Allan Shivers and Price Daniel particularly. For instance, would Senator Johnson have shown any interest in Price Daniel deciding to give up the Senatorship and come home to be governor?

H: If he did, he didn't discuss it with me. I have thought that perhaps as close as he and I have been on a personal basis, particularly in the last eight-ten-twelve years, that he would have discussed that sort of thing; but as a matter of fact from the beginning up to this day he has never suggested to me that he would like to see me support anybody in any race--up to this moment.

F: When did you begin to get some idea that he might be available for the Presidency in 1960? Let's put it this way--when did you begin to look on him yourself as sort of a Presidential possibility?

H: Well, when you speak of availability, nearly anybody in politics is available. They may deny it, but there are very few people who are not available. But as for the word possibility, I would think that from the time he became the leader of the Democratic party in the Senate, they regarded him as a possibility. He was leader of the party during the Eisenhower years for eight years, I suppose, since we, the democrats, were not in power in the executive branch of the government, as the democratic leader and the Majority Leader practically all that time, I believe--six of the eight years, if I recall it. And with the friendship he enjoyed with Speaker Rayburn on the House side with the difference between his and Mr. Rayburn's age, we would say, it is obvious to any knowledgeable person, brought up in politics that he was perhaps the outstanding Democratic leader at that time. And there existed the possibility, and had he not been from this geographic section of the country, a strong probability, that he would be a strong contender for the Presidency. as a matter of fact, I think he would have been nominated at Lo s Angeles if he'd been from some other section of the country.

F: Prior to the Los Angeles convention, did he ever reveal any ambitions along that line to you?

H: No. As a matter of fact, I believe it was in 1956--didn't he nominate Kennedy for the Vice Presidency?

F: For Vice President. He was the one who swung the convention away from Kefauver over to Mr. Kennedy.

H: At that time, some time between '56 and '60, I would think that he began to--In fact, of course, what a man might have in the back of his mind when he's a child is whether he ultimately might want to be. But I think that seriously the Presidency must have come into his mind between '56 and '60. Certainly it was the first time I had any impressions that--You know, he wasn't the type of man to phone you and say, "I want to talk to you about my ambitions." to do anything. The conversation would usually work around to where you would suggest that when elected--and whether that was on purpose on his part, whether he brought the conversation around to that point or whether--well, practically all the conversation--I can't recall any conversation I ever had with him where he expressed any personal ambition to me. He was rather, when I would suggest it, sort of deprecating about it, and questioning whether perhaps first he could achieve enough; and second, whether he had the proper abilities if he was selected.

F: Do you think that he definitely felt that his being from Texas was sort of a bit of a yoke around the neck?

H: I know he did. When he talked about segregation or integration back in 1964 before the convention. He used the term that he didn't believe in--that he was opposed to--I forget how he phrased it, but

he used the phrase "because of race, color, religion, or geographic origin." He used that phrase repeatedly and it was quite obvious what he was talking about--he was talking about himself without quite saying so. "I don't think you ought to discriminate against me because of my geographic origin any more than you should discriminate against a Negro because he's black, or a Jew because he's Jewish."

F: You went to Los Angeles to the convention as a delegate-at-large.

H: Yes.

F: Was there any sort of a caucus before the group went out there?

H: Well, there are caucuses and caucuses. Normally, it's just like a committee. There are a few people usually who--

F: Draw up the agenda, don't they?

H: They draw up the agenda. There are leaders and followers. I think at that time I was in the position of a follower. Yes, I attended a great many caucuses. There were others which I heard about I didn't attend; there was no point in my being there.

F: But the delegation was pretty well set to support Johnson.

H: Oh, yes, they were, as far as I know. They were very strong for him.

F: Were you reasonably optimistic or fearful, or just what was the mood of the Texas group?

H: When we thought of it realistically, we thought we were fighting a losing cause, but we wouldn't allow ourselves--We tried to make up our minds that we'll make it; we might have an outside chance. We knew that he's not the front-runner, but if we could get enough of these dark horses to sort of keep Kennedy from getting the majority for a few ballots, maybe the situation might go in our favor.

F: Second and third round pledges?

H: Yes, we might begin to pick up some support. But I don't think that realistically we had too much of a--

F: What did you specifically do at the convention?

H: I was doing the usual things that a delegate does, and nothing that I think that would be of any great interest. We would attend caucuses from time to time. We tried to meet other delegates who--I recall one day we were having great difficulty getting tickets to get our family into the convention. I remember Governor Daniel, he was chairman, I believe--I forget whether he or Rayburn, they were the two leaders of the delegation--went up to the then-chairman of the Democratic National Committee--I forget his name--but anyway, to try to get some tickets for the delegates' wives for the final day. He kept Daniel cooling his heels out in his outer office--he was a great Kennedy supporter--for, I don't know, an hour or more. People would keep coming in and going in, you know that--he'd been sitting here for ages, just keep sending people in who obviously didn't have any appointment, or would come in and say, "I wonder if I could see the chairman," and, "Yes, go right in." Anyway, he got in there, and got just a handful of tickets.

F: This wasn't John Bailey?

H: I believe it was Bailey. Hes, it was. I believe he was chairman. Anyhow, French Robertson out at Abilene and our wives the morning when the nominations thing had come to a head. Incidentally, we had been put in a flea-bag hotel; they called it the New Clark--the only thing new about it was the door. Anyway, we were standing out on the sidewalk in front of this hotel with our wives--neither of us had the tickets to get our wives into the gallery--discussing it;

and a Negro man who was standing overheard us, walked up and said, "Gentlemen, I'm sorry but I couldn't help overhearing you. You have some problem about tickets for your wives?" I said, "Yes." And he reached in his pocket, and he pulled out a roll of them about this big and says, "How many do you need?" We said, "We need two, one for each of our wives." "Well, I'll be gald to supply them." "Well, we certainly appreciate it."

Meantime, we had them come over with a taxi, and he said, "By the way, do you have a way to get out to the convention?" And we said, "Yes." And he says, "Well, could I ride with you?" "Certainly." "Get in." On the way out there, we asked him, "How did you manage to get so many tickets?" "Well," he said, "I'm the editor of the Negro paper in Jacksonville, Florida. I just went in up there at the chairman's office and told them who I was, and he gave me these tickets." He had all that roll, and we couldn't even get our wives in, and he was out handing them out on the street.

F: Did President Johnson meet with the Texas delegation--or Senator Johnson--to talk at all about his being tendered the Vice Presidency?

H: Not the whole delegation. As a matter of fact, I think it would have been impossible there because most of us, after Kennedy's nomination--we were let-down, disgusted. Half of us went home immediately.

F: The convention was over as far as they were concerned.

H: As far as we were concerned, the convention was over. I know that [French] Robertson, our wives and I--he had his daughter, and she wanted to go out to Disneyland. We were out there when we heard about it, but we weren't in town where we could have been reached.

F: What did you do--just hear it over a newscast?

H: We heard it over the radio, and so we rushed back to the convention hall. I am sure he talked with those of his friends on the delegation that he could reach and were immediately available, but it happened at an hour, where the time in which a decision had to be made was so short--

F: Were you back for the nomination?

H: Yes, I was there.

F: Did there seem to be a real chance for a floor fight by the opposition to Johnson? Or was this just a little bubbling over?

H: I think that under the circumstances there wasn't any real opportunity because Kennedy had made his decision, and at that juncture the people who were Johnson's friends--many of them really didn't like it, but if that was his decision they'd go along with it. The Kennedy crowd--they weren't willing to break with him that fast. Their man had just been nominated for the Presidency. There might have been a great many of them that quietly opposed it, but there weren't many of them that had the nerve to challenge.

F: They weren't going to take on the top--?

H: So I don't think there was any real difficulty about it. I think if they could have taken a secret ballot, there might have been a lot of the Texas delegation who would have opposed Johnson accepting the Vice Presidency, and there would have been a lot of the Kennedy supporters. I don't know what the results would have been.

F: You came on home from the convention then?

H: Yes. We had driven out. We stopped, as I recall, for a night in Las Vegas, where we ran into and had breakfast with John Connally in Las Vegas. He was sort of upset over the turn things had taken.

F: Did you do any sort of obvious campaigning during 1960, or did you pretty well work behind the scenes?

H: I worked behind the scenes. I did do a little good for the ticket on account of Johnson.

F: What did you do?

H: I did two things. I sat in a number of strategy conferences where decision were being made as to what ought to be done here and there.

F: Did he come to a good many of those, or was he represented by some assistant?

H: He came to a few of them. Usually it was John Connally or somebody like that. He'd have people who were knowledgeable, maybe during the conference would call him--he was very busy with the campaign. But if we had any difficulties, we could get him on the telephone and talk with him. I tried to help some with fund-raising in the campaign.

F: As far as you could tell, were relations between the Vice Presidential nominee and the Presidential nominee reasonably harmonious during this period? The campaign went off fairly smoothly?

H: Yes. I think that Johnson had a strong feeling, [despite] what his personal feelings may or may not have been, once he had agreed to become a part of the team, he'd be a part of the team. And he had to give his undivided effort and understand every situation. Only he can say what he was thinking.

F: He had a double problem in that he wanted to continue as Senator in case Kennedy did not win, and so that brought up that November Senatorial race. Did he ever talk with you or in your presence about the problems of being re-elected Senator, or did he pretty much leave that up to the staff to run?

H: He didn't discuss that with me directly. I discussed it with him. Again, as I said awhile ago, he sort of had a facility for things he knew, that he was interested in, of letting you raise the subject.

F: That must have been a little like walking on a tightrope because if you got too active in the Senatorial campaign, you sort of showed a lack of confidence in the ability of the ticket to carry.

H: I don't think that he felt that his problem was getting re-elected. I think his problem was the timing of the elections. The Democratic primary--I think that was about the time--wasn't that when they changed the law to move the primary?

F: Right. That was back in May.

H: Yes. I think that was the real problem--of not getting up too big a fight in the legislature--

F: Did you work on that change?

H: Yes, I did.

F: What did you do--just buttonhole Texas legislators?

H: I just tried to persuade my friends in the legislature of the wisdom of backing it, putting it primarily on the basis that I felt it was in Texas' interest to retain, be sure we retained his services in one capacity or another; that I thought he was a leader in the Senate, and probably would continue to be if the Kennedy-Johnson ticket was defeated, and that I didn't think that it was in Texas' interest to lose the Majority Leader of the Senate.

F: In a sense you had a capital investment there which you wanted to continue to collect interest.

H: I thought it was in the national interest, for obviously if we couldn't elect a President, we would have least balanced the ticket

some way to have a Vice President; and on the other hand, we had no assurance of his election.

F: Did you encounter much opposition?

H: Oh, not too much, because I never have been much of a fellow to talk to people when I knew I was going to get the wrong answer.

F: At least, you think they could be persuaded.

H: Even someone who I thought perhaps was going to vote that way anyway and I wanted to make sure, if you tried to extract a promise that he would, if you could; or someone who I thought could be persuaded; but someone I knew as a bitter anti-Johnson person, no logic of any kind is going to influence [him]. I felt like it was a waste of time.

F: I'm sure Senator Johnson must have had a keen interest in this proposed change in the primary dates.

H: I think it's quite obvious that he did, but again, I say, he's not the type of person that you would know that from what he had to say. You would know it without his saying it.

F: He sort of asked questions around the subject instead of coming right to it.

H: Well, it was perfectly obvious that the first place, if he didn't want that done, he would put a stop to it. He'd just say, "Now, fellows, don't do that, I don't want to do that." He could have issued a public statement disclaiming it. "I'm not having anything to do with this; I'm not interested in it." But he didn't do that. He smiling assented without saying, "Well, I want you to do this," or "I want you to do that." I don't know what he said to somebody else; he never did ask me to do anything about it. He knew I was

doing all I could about it, and never did tell me not to.

F: Now then, you saw him, I know, fairly often during the period of his Vice Presidency. There are reports that he was unhappy in the job, that it limited him and so forth--did you ever get any clear impressions on this, or is this newspapermen talking?

H: I'll say this. He, like other people--like nearly everyone else--had his moments when he felt exhilarated. I never held a position in my life that there weren't times when I enjoyed it greatly and felt I was accomplishing something; then there would be moments, days when I was depressed and wondered why I ever got into this in the first place. I have talked to him when he was in both moods. And so there were times when he felt a little depressed about the situation, and there were times he seemed to feel quite all right.

F: Did you ever get any feeling from him that he thought Kennedy might be going to drop him in '64, or did his relations with Kennedy seem to be quite smooth?

H: I got the feeling that at times he was considering whether or not he would be a candidate in the next election for Vice President. He gave me no particular indication. He never did say, mind you, but based on things he did say I deduced that perhaps he was giving consideration as to whether he felt that Kennedy might--Well, let me back up--As to whether he thought or had some information that Kennedy would or might dump him, or was considering a fair possibility that that might happen, and thinking about what he might do in the case of that possibility; or whether he was simple considering either that he did not want to run again, or that he might not want to run again--I'm not sure. He didn't say anything that would give me much--

He did say things that caused me to feel that perhaps he might be giving some consideration to whether or not he would be a candidate without giving me much clue as to what.

F: Where were you on that November day when Kennedy was shot?

H: I was in a conference--business conference--in a hotel suite in Cincinnati, Ohio.

F: So that this was really the farthest thing from your mind at that time?

H: Yes, sir. A bell boy came up. We had called down to send up some ice or something; and anyhow the bell goy--he said he'd heard it when he came in. And we immediately adjourned the meeting and turned on the television, and that was the end of our meeting.

F: That wrecked lots of meetings. When did you first get in touch then with now President Johnson?

H: My immediate impulse was to try to call him in Dallas or perhaps to try to go down there to Washington; and then it occurred to me that in the first place, that he had too much on his mind and too many people around him already. Instead of being able to render him any service, it would probably be a disservice to try to bother him at that particular time. I wrote him a letter first, a day or two later, type of letter. And I did not see him until the first day when he was back at the ranch, and he called me to invite me out there. That was the first time I saw him, the first time he was back at the ranch from Washington.

F: Wat this for any particular type of meeting or just invited you out as a friend?

H: Just as a friend--just a social meeting. As I recall it, he invited

my wife and me and a few other couples out for dinner or something.

F: Do you recall whether he made any particular remarks about the difficulties of the transition?

H: Someone, I don't know who it was, in the conversation asked him about the problems of the Presidency. And he made this remark, he said: "You know, I haven't been in long enough perhaps, haven't been President long enough to encounter the major problems of the Presidency, but I've already discovered that perhaps the worst feature from a personal standpoint is the small pleasures of life that you have to give up when you become President; such as if I decide I want to go buy a shirt or a tie, I can't do that like an ordinary human being. Perhaps it would put 50 people in motion to do that. If I were to go over--suddenly decided on Saturday evening that I'd like to go over and visit some old friends in the Senate or something, take my wife over, it's too much problem to get it organized and set up. It's just not worth it."

Then he said--I guess maybe I probably should classify some of these remarks he made, but it's interesting--He says, "You know, for instance as a small boy I grew up in Johnson City; and I learned a habit from my father. At night the last thing he would do before he'd go to bed, we'd go out on the front porch. The moon and stars were shining; he would urinate off the front porch and would--"

F: That's what front porches were for.

H: "And would commune with nature. And so I developed that habit when I was at the ranch. Of course, in Washington that was something else."

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INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

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F: He was talking about his father and how he ouwld urinate off the front porch.

H: He said thatiit was a pleasant feeling to be out in the countryside with nobody anywhere near. He would be able to do that rather than in the bathroom, look at the moon and the stars--that he had developed that habit and said that when he'd get back to the ranch that he would do that. But he says, and this was the first time he'd been home--he was talking about the problems of the President. He hadn't had much experience with main, but with these small problems, giving up personal comforts. He said the first night--he said, night before last or whatever day it was, he said, "I got through and it got about the time I decided to go to bed, and I kept thinking about the Secret Service men--you can't enjoy a thing like that with a couple of those standing there watching you." And he says, "I sort of waited till I thought I could give them the slip, and I eased out on the front porch; and I started and right in the middle of this, this big flood light hit me. And you know when you're startled in the middle of this; you get it over with quickly." And he says, "I turned to see these Secret Service fellows, and I remonstrated with them, and they said, 'Mr. President, we cannot permit you to come out here in the dark alone; there might be somebody lurking out here and would shoot you. You just simply can't do this.'" He said, "I knew they were right, so I didn't say any more to them.

"But the next night, I really gave them the slip this time. I told one of them to go do something and the other to do something, and I thought I had time to rush out on the porch again. And, damn, if they didn't do it again! Threw that light on me, so I just decided to give it up."

F: The deprivation of being President.

H: Yes, he said the small pleasures of life you have to give up.

F: That's a great story and I think a very revealing one. Did you ever have any doubt he was going to run for President in '64?

H: No, sir, not really.

F: What did you do during the campaign of '64? You were at the convention in Atlantic City?

H: Yes, I tried to work in my precinct convention and state convention.

F: There really wasn't much to it, was there, except--

H: Not too much.

F: That is, you ride with a winner all the way.

H: That's right.

F: Wat there much mystery as to who was going to be the vice presidential running mate as far as you could tell, or was it pretty foregone that it was Humphrey?

H: I think it was. One of the things that he has been accused of is being too secretive. At least he didn't tell me. Of course over the last twenty-four hours, you know, he had to tell it; but I'm not sure just when he made up his own mind. I didn't have any advance--I didn't seek any advance knowledge. I never have been a person to ask a lot of questions. I feel like if he has got something he wants to tell me, he will tell me. Otherwise, I would try to make myself

useful--I was supporting him as I could; but I figured if he had anything he wanted to tell me, he'd get the word to me.

Actually in that campaign, I knew some of the people who were working in the Democratic National Committee and I worked some with them; I worked some with Walter Jenkins in the campaign; I tried to do some fund-raising; and just generally tried to do whatever I could.

F: Was Walter Jenkins' misfortune much of a problem there, or was it pretty well understood by the electotate?

H: I didn't find anyone who to me criticized the President about it; the attitude of the public towards Walter personally ranged from people who sympathized with him and with his family to those who were critical of the situation about the President and about Walter. I'd rather not go into it. Walter gave me personally precisely what happened. I think the public generally, except those who wouldn't approve anything anyway--

F: It probably varied according to their enthusiasm for the President.

H: I knew Walter quite well--he was and is an able man. And I don't think any of Walter's friends suspected anything of that sort.

F: I rather gather as a staff man he was virtually unbeatable.

H: Oh, he was terrific. As a matter of fact when Kennedy was elected and Johnson was elected Vice President, I think the President only had, aside from his wife, maybe about half-a-dozen seats on the Presidential platform during the swearing-in ceremonies--I was fortunate enough to--he gave me a couple of them for my wife and me; and he gave Walter and his wife one. As a matter of fact, I sat right next to him. So it would indicate his thinking about Walter.

The fact that he only had six, or not more than eight, tickets--three or four couples that he could give a seat to to hear the Inaugural ceremonies on the platform itself, that he gave Walter who was a staff man--you normally don't do that with your employees; you find somebody. And of course I felt quite flattered that I was able to be there.

F: When did you begin to get an idea that you were going to be named Ambassador to Sweden?

H: I suppose truthfully when I first thought about it I was in Washington once--the President invited a group of us, I've forgotten the occasion--I remember the postmaster here was along.

F: Is that Oliver Bruck?

H: Yes, Bruck was along. And some other people from Austin--I forget the occasion, but he invited us on a trip down the Potomac on that Sequoia, which is a Navy ship--And Johnson who was then President had five or six of us, sitting around as he would. And he suddenly addressed--he was talking to me really and saying how he appreciated my loyal support through all the eyars; and that I had a considerable amount of ability, and he sometimes wondered if I realized that he perhaps might use me in public service somewhere, like I had the capability.

F: Had you ever talked of it before?

H: No. And he did that in the presence of half-a-dozen men. And all I said--I just laughed about it and said, "Thank you, Mr. President, I'll be seeing you one of these days." And he laughed and that was the end of that. That night I began to think, "Well, now he's going to get around to saying something further to me, and I'd better sort

of prepare myself just to what I want to say to him about what I might like to do or what I'd be. If I don't, he'll select something for me and I probably won't be able to tell him no, and end up doing something that I don't want to do."

F: The job you'd least like to have.

H: The job I'd least like to have. So from that I talked with my wife, and we agreed that perhaps we--

F: You were still on the Board of Regents at that time, which was in itself was a full-time job as far as you were concerned.

H: Yes. At that time I was still chairman of the Board of Regents. This was back perhaps a year before I really ever did anything about it.

So I thought, "Well, I've had some governmental experience at the local level when I was county judge and county attorney; I've had some considerable experience at the State and chairman of the State Board of Hospitals and Special Schools and Mental Health and Retardation, then later with the University of Texas Board of Regents." But I'd never had any experience with the national or international level, and I might sort of like to end my public career, so to speak, with--I didn't want to live in Washington if I could avoid it; I never have liked to stay any longer than I had to. But I did think I might enjoy the experience and the opportunity to try to be of some service to our country at the international level; so I prepared myself to discuss an Ambassadorship with him.

Finally, he was at the ranch and asked me if I had given any consideration to the possibility of being of service. And I told him yes, the remarks he had made on the Sequoia that day, I thought,

were rather obviously intended to put me thinking about it. I had given it some thought and had talked to Mavis about it, and "We think we'd like to go somewhere as Ambassador."

And he asked me where I thought I would want to go, and I said, "Well, I'd want to go to some place where hopefully I could be of some service; I'd like to go somewhere where the living conditions would be reasonably pleasant." I was selfish enough to want to do that, and preferably somewhere in Europe. And I would either want to go to a Spanish-speaking country or to some country where English was spoken. My wife speaks nothing except English, and I am not proficient in Spanish--I studied it, and as a matter of fact I taught it in high school forty years ago, but I've never used it.

F: But you could oil up and--

H: I have a small vocalulary. And I think I could. And so that night we discussed various places; and he was kind of in the mood to give me my choice of several places that I suggested I might like to go. I'm not sure whether I made the right choice or not, but at least I did have a choice between--

F: Since you can't be two places at once, you don't know what the other one would be like.

H: That's right, and I had had no experience in the field.

F: And did you all decide pretty much on Sweden at that time?

H: Well, actually I started out talking about Spain. He indicated that he felt that might be arranged. And to the extent that my wife went out and began auditing a course in Spanish, which she apparently might use. Says I, I'm too far away from this--

F: She got educated for nothing, didn't she?

H: She didn't do very well. But I went over to the State Department;

he arranged for me to talk to the proper people over there. I was told there, which I already knew from having visited in Spain, that except around the hotel everyone speaks Spanish; and they expect you to speak Spanish to them unless you're around a tourist place. They have great pride in their language. And I learned that the household servants in the Embassy residence--there wasn't a single one of them that could speak a word of English; in fact, the then-Ambassador was--later went to Denmark--Angier Biddle Duke--he was quite proficient, his first wife was a Spanish lady; his two children were sort of brought up in Spain; both he and his present wife spoke Spanish just like a native, and I decided he'd be a little hard to follow under those circumstances. He is a very wealthy man.

So the President never did definitely say, "Well, you could [have it], but that's not the way you do those things." He said enough to me that he could have got out of it if he wanted to; but in my view in my own mind, if I wanted to go there, he was going to try to work it out. But we talked about Denmark; we talked about Sweden; we talked about a number of countries.

I remember suggesting to him--one of the other places, I said something about India. He made an interesting remark; he said, "Why Bill, I wouldn't want to treat a friend like that." He said, "My Lord, you don't want to go to India, of all places in the world!" I mentioned Canada to him. And he made an interesting remark--I don't know how much of this I might ought to censor later, so to speak; but he said, "Well, Bill, I think that could probably be worked out--I'd have to look into it and see the status of the man

who's there and how long he has been there and that sort of thing. But why would you want to go to Canada? It's a wonderful country and a great friend of ours, but I think if you and Mavis just want to go somewhere partially for the experience, why not go to Buffalo, New York?" I got to thinking about it and I thought, maybe if I'm going to take off a couple of years out of my life and go somewhere, maybe I ought to get a little further away than Canada.

So anyway, we finally decided on Sweden--finally I think because in Sweden practically everyone speaks English; there's no difficulty at all--it's a required language in the schools. There are a few older people who still don't speak it, but there just isn't any language problem there. I suppose that may have had as much influence as anything else.

F: How do you handle your confirmation in that case? Did you call on your Senator personally, or was there any contact with--?

H: Yes.

F: You've got a split delegation at your disposal.

H: Yes, it was an interesting experience. I went before the Foreign Relations Committee for confirmation; I had Senator Tower sitting on one side of me and Senator Yarborough on the other side of me; and further down sitting two aisles from me, Mrs. Filbright was sitting there--the chairman of the committee's wife. I had an interesting experience with the--

F: Where had you known her?

H: I'm on the board of directors of two different Arkansas sizeable companies.

F: Dillards' and what else?

H: Dillards' and the National Old Line Insurance Company--that's the largest insurance company.

F: That's not Raymond Rebsamen.

H: Oh, Raymond is interested with both of them. Raymond's a very close friend of mine.

F: I've known him fairly well.

H: I have many friends or close friends up there--medium friends. During all these years, I've got to know a great many people in Arkansas. And I had met Senator Fulbright--I didn't know him intimately, but in my visits to Little Rock I had met him on numerous occasions, and I knew him quite well.

But the next norning after I went before the Senate committee--

F: Were the questions fairly routine?

H: Yes. The only question at all personal--Senator Aitken asked me something to the effect if President Johnson was a personal friend of mine, and I said yes. He said, "Don't you own a ranch near his ranch?" And I said, "Yes." He says, "How large is your ranch?" Senator Fulbright spoke up and says, "It's about the size of Vermont," and everybody laughed and that was the end of it. But that was the nearest I had--There wasn't anything unpleasant about that. It gave everybody a big laugh.

Both Senator Yarborough and Senator Tower made a little speech to the committee, and said some very complimentary things about me--all of which I appreciated very much. And the truth is at that time in a primary I never voted for either one of them in my life. I voted for Yarborough in the general election--I voted for him in this last election. And he asked me--he says, when he found out I

was going to do this, says, "Why do you do that?" I said, "Well, I have a very simple code of ethics. I pay my debts--be they financial, business, or political. I always pay my debts. I don't incur them if I don't intend to repay them." I shouldn't have let Senator Yarborough--I shouldn't have asked him, which I had no right to do, because he knew I never supported him, as a Daniel appointee, as a Connally appointee. He well knew that I hadn't supported him--I was a great supporter of Shivers against him; he knew all of that. But I asked him if he would do it, and he did it. I'm going to pay my debt--I don't mean that I'm going to be obligated to him forever. He did that for me; I'm going to do that for him. And I'm going to do the same thing for Senator Tower. When he runs, I'm going to vote for him and it will be the first Republican vote I ever cast; but I'm going to vote for Tower. I may not ever vote for him but once, but I'm going to vote for him because I'm going to pay up my debts.

But the next morning I got a phone call about 8 o'clock, and the President--Meantime, I came home that night.

F: Back to Austin?

H: To Austin. He thought I was still in Washington and I guess he told the operator to get me at the hotel, but they ran me down here. He got on the phone, and he said, "Bill, how about coming over and having breakfast with me?" I said, "Well, that's impossible--I'm in Austin." "Why," he says, "you haven't been confirmed yet, why did you leave?" "Well, Mr. President, I don't know what I can do about it; there was no need of me staying up there. I appeared before the committee."

"Well," he says, "you know, somebody told me that they saw you

yesterday, that you had lunch in the Senate dining room with Senator Fulbright." "Yes," I said. "After the hearing he was kind enough to invite me to lunch. Introduced me to every Senator who came in the room--I appreciated that." I said, "Incidentally, Mrs. Fulbright was there also; and a friend of mine from Arkansas." "Well," he says, "what did Fulbright have to say?" I said, "Well, Mr. President, I regret to have to tell you this, but your name wasn't even mentioned in the conversation. You're the last man in the world I want to talk about with Fulbright." I said, "I'm trying to get confirmed; I'll talk with him about you later."

F: What did he say to that?

H: Oh, he just laughed.

F: Then the confirmation came through on time?

H: Oh, yes, no problems whatever.

F: Let's step back to another facet of your career when you were on the Board of Regents and of course chairman of the Board of Regents. You hit at a particularly sort of delicate time in the University's history, and I wonder if you can recount particularly about this problem of integrating the University.

H: Well, yes. When I first came on the Board of Regents in early 1959, which is about eleven years ago--a little more than eleven years ago--

F: Price Daniel named you.

H: Yes, he named me. We'd been friends a long time. I resigned as chairman of the old Hospital Board to come on the Board of Regents--I was then its chairman. I say I resigned; I didn't. The term I was serving expired and Price gave me my choice of either being reappointed

there or coming over to the Board, and I elected to take the University appointment.

But of course integration--there wasn't much integration. I would say segregation was in the order of the day. And to be perfectly frank about it, I was brought up in East Texas and I--

F: I've been to Grimes and Leon counties.

H: In Grimes County when I ran for county attorney and when I served there as county attorney and county judge, they had what they called "the White Man's Union." They didn't even permit Negroes to vote; they had a separate primary for white men. The last Negro that had voted at the time I was serving over there--the last Negro that voted was killed as he walked away from the polls--they let him vote and then killed him. So I was brought up in an atmosphere and climate of that type. And I will have to frankly admit when I first came on the Board of Regents, although my prejudices were not as rampant as some of my fellows who were then on the Board--I could name them, but there's no need to.

F: I could probably name them for you.

H: I tried to even then to sort of act as a moderating influence between--But I guess what to me then seemed very moderate wouldn't seem very moderate now.

F: There has been a considerable revolution in the past dozen years.

H: So anyway as time went on, my ideas began to gradually change. I remember when I first came on the Board I received numerous, very vicious, very violent letters unsigned--anonymous letters, calling me segregationist S.O.B., and all that sort of thing.

F: Those were some of the nicer terms.

H: Yes, some of the nicer. Vague threats contained in them. I had the remarkable experience I think of receiving those kind of letters from both sides. When I first came on the Board, I got them from that side; and ifnally when we did get integration before I left the Board, I was receiving them from the other side--the same, just as vicious, just as violent, just as [extreme], as those from the opposite side, accusing me of being a Negro-loving S.O.B.

F: That must be a tribute to objectivity.

H: Well, I don't know. Perhaps.

And I think the President had some influence in it, although he never discussed it with me--never said, "Bill, I think you ought to do this," or, "You ought to do that," or, "the other."

F: He never suggested at any time that the University ought to do certain things just because of the way--

H: No, but he would do this. I think that he felt that that was a little out of his province, and not really a national function. Whenever he thought we had taken a step in the right direction, when I would see him, he would speak very approvingly. He let me know without saying, "I think you ought to do this, or do that, or something else," he let me know his sentiments--I knew what his sentiments were. And he let me know that he was keeping up with the progress of the University, because when something would happen--But he would try to find things he could approve rather than things that he could jump on me about, so to speak. I do think that his influence, as far as I'm concerned at least, was more by example. And I began to feel, "Now, how can I support as enthusiastically in this state the things Johnson stands for if I'm going to take a diametrically

opposed position? Either I'm going to have to change my position, or I'm going to have to find me somebody else to support." So I moved somewhat in that direction as time went on, not because he asked me to do it but through his example; and the attitude I had that he--

F: And certainly no personal pressure.

H: No. No personal pressure of any kind. Well, he never has put any personal pressure on me to do anything in my life. He has not put any personal pressure on me to do one single thing of any kind. Most of what I may have done with his approval was because I knew that that's what, without his telling me so, that that's what he'd like to see done. For instance, in the early days my discussion with him about the Johnson Library and the School of Public Affairs--

F: I want to talk about that.

H: I originated those discussions with him, not him with me. But I think on the integration thing, actually it was a gradual process, rather slow to begin with. We took the position in the early days that the Brown case was the supreme law of the land where the Supreme Court had said, "You shall integrate with all deliberate speed." Our interpretation in those days of what "all deliberate speed" meant, as against later, varied considerably. He would say of some of the Regents, although I don't think he'd say that about me, it meant "Never!" Well, my position was that "all deliberate speed" would be in the circumstances of the case.

When I left the Board of Regents, I was asked what I was proudest of during the time that I was on the Board of Regents; and my quick reply was that we were able to achieve integration during my tenure,

principally the four years that I was chairman; that we did it without federal troops and without marshals and without bloodshed. I thought we did it with all deliberate speed because I thought that was what all deliberate speed was--to try to do it short of creating a revolution, or to do it as fast as you could; otherwise, why did the court say with all deliberate speed. Theoretically it's the same today as it is tomorrow, and it's the same day-after-tomorrow as it is today; and so it is obviously intended to give time to accomplish those purposes. How much time you should take would be gauged with how fast you could educate the public acceptance. But we had to give it a lead in that direction while we others wanted to push in the opposite direction.

F: I thought it was done with a great deal of dignity and skill really. That was one place in which I was quite proud of the University. When you see what some of the others let themselves into one way or another.

H: I think so. And I advocated it very strongly--we had the first Negro faculty member in a State-supported university in the South--Dr. Spear, the Negro--we made him assistant professor at that time. Personally I never did advertise it, and I don't want to now, but I personally awarded a graduate scholarship to a Negro girl out there while I was chairman of the Board. She couldn't have stayed in Graduate School without some financial help; and there wasn't any reason I couldn't have given it to a white person just as well, and I didn't do it--There was no publicity about it. But we, I think, did go through some troublesome times. I know when I got to Sweden, they had some demonstrations; I told them there wasn't anything new about that to me, that I had seen a good deal of that in my days at the

University of Texas.

F: How did the Johnson Library and School of Public Service come to Austin?

H: In my judgement I think the President was thinking in terms perhaps of San Marcos as a place for it, because that was his own school.

F: There never was as far as you know any really serious consideration to put it at Johnson City? I think his mother wanted it there.

H: Let me put it this way. I think serious consideration, no. I think he may have talked about it, wished perhaps that circumstances would permit it. Of course Mrs. Johnson was a very strong ally, an ally in the sense that she didn't broach it--I would give her more credit for persuading the President to put his papers here than anyone else. I know that I made an appointment with him, went to Washington; and out of a clear sky, I proposed this after having talked to the Regents. I wanted to be sure that we weren't going to get up some argument about it among ourselves. I felt that it might embarrass the President if it was a divided vote on the situation. I learned that all of the members of the Board--Dr. Ramsom--they were all enthusiastic.

F: There never was any case of educating the Board or the administration in this case?

H: No. There were one or two members on the Board who were not enthusiastic Johnson people. But nevertheless they recognized the value to the University and to the State. Otherwise, they were very enthusiastic about the possibility of getting the papers. I wouldn't have gone and approached the subject with him without I thought I knew what I was doing as far as being able to get the Board and the administration--

the top administrative officials--to back me up on it. And I never had any doubt about the faculty because to me, it seemed, whether any member of the faculty--irrespective of what he thought about Johnson personally, he would see the value of having the Library here on the campus at the University of Texas rather than at some other point.

In my presentation to the President along these lines, I told him frankly that I understood that he was considering San Marcos and possibly other places, but Austin was sort of a second home to him and he had spent a great deal of time here; and further, that I thought that San Marcos was a sort of out of the way place, so to speak--didn't have airline service and transportation access facilities that Austin had, and that I thought a large university campus was an idea place to put the papers. I thought that for generations to come for people doing research on the historical events of the Johnson days, whether they were interested in government or they were interested in law and the makings of law, and how these things came about--that they couldn't complete their research without going to this library; that it would provide our faculty at the University of Texas very immediate access where they could do whatever research they might want to do; thatit would bring scholars from all over the world to Austin, Texas, to the University of Texas campus for ages to come; that it would provide our graduate students writing doctoral dissertations and masters' theses access without having to go somewhere. It would bring students here to the campus and perhaps help us to attract a higher grade of graduate students--graduate students who wanted to do their doctoral work in the same area which would encompass

to a great extent research into those materials that we might get some terrific scholars here; that I thought the advantages to the University were outstanding and tremendously worthwhile. On the other hand, as far as he was concerned, I knew he would want to have it in Texas; he would like to have it in his own Congressional district, and I just thought Austin was the only sensible place to put it. And he bought that argument.

I had the same type of conversation with Mrs. Johnson. She was very enthusiastic for it from the beginning. And so the school [of Public Service] came along later. In fact, that was an outgrowth really of some trips which I made with Mrs. Johnson to visit Presidential libraries to get some conception of what we were doing, and schools as well. We went to Boston; we went to the Truman Library; we went to the Eisenhower Library. And in this process we began to bump into the question. I became impressed, especially with the Truman and Eisenhower libraries, with how little use those papers were [getting], which confirmed my opinion that it ought to be on a university campus. They sit out there in Abilene, Kansas, or Independence; and you walk in there and it's like being in a mausoleum--there's just not anybody in there hardly. You just see long rows of these papers that are in boxes.

F: Kind of like the gold at Fort Knox, isn't it?

H: Yes. And so we needed to devise some method whereby a greater use--they should be made more accessible, and we needed a school. I became impressed about the school with the thought that we had wonderful department of history; of government. If a man wants to be a lawyer, he has got a place he can go and study. If he wants

to be a journalist, if he wants to be a doctor or a dentist--but the largest area of importance there is, is government service. And where do you go to school except to try to get a law education, an economic education, education in history; and it's a big problem.

F: Kind of like coming in through one of the side doors rather than the main entrance.

H: That's right. So it's sort of an outgrowth of these visits Mrs. Johnson and I--I began to talk with her about the need. If perhaps we could establish it sort of in conjunction with the Library with a positive [program], that perhaps we could get it off of the ground faster and get it--. The ones I went to, for instance--well, we went to the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Administration at Princeton. I asked them--I said, "Well, who are some of your graduates? What have they done in public affairs?" And they told me some fellow, an administrative assistant to a Congressman. Maybe they got him educated pretty well, but there are very few of them that have made any signal impact upon the political horizon as such. They may be doing a valuable work nevertheless.

F: Mrs. Johnson in a sense was your sort of activist in this.

H: Oh, yes. I'll say this. He was unusually generous with his stand and wherever we would ask him to meet with us, he'd try to outline his thoughts so that he would know what we had in mind--his thoughts on it. Invariably he met with us, gave us everything we needed; but of course we realized that as President his time was so limited--that we thought, in the first place--we knew how much confidence and how much he was relying on Mrs. Johnson in the first place, she had his ear at any time, and she could find some time to discuss these things

with him, in odd times perhaps. In fact we felt like she could sell him on whatever joint idea she and the rest of us came up with better than we could.

F: Who picked Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill for the architect?

H: It was a long process of elimination. We wanted to get some distinguished architect, whose abilities particularly in the field of design were quite outstanding and internationally received. Incidentally, digressing, I was recently in Buenos Aires--no, no, Rio de Janeiro. There's a very, very large, tremendous thing right in the middle of town, and I was surprised to see their names as architects.

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of WILLIAM W. HEATH

By Mrs. D. Harold Byrd

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Mrs. D. Harold Byrd, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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Signed X Mavis Heath Byrd

Date June 24, 1974

Accepted Harry J. Middleton
Director, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library for Archivist of the United States

Date June 25, 1974