

INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: JACK HIGHT

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Hight's office, West Palm Beach, Florida

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G: Let's start with the circumstances under which you went to work for Lyndon Johnson.

H: All right. I was in graduate school at George Washington University and working for Senator [Tom] Connally. Since Connally and Johnson were Democrats, the two senatorial offices worked together, as closely as reasonably could be expected. As a result, I met Walter Jenkins, Warren Woodward and quite a few of the people in the Johnson office. In late 1951, when Connally announced that he was not going to run for re-election--I was going to be out of school; I'd finish up my work the following spring--Walter and Woody talked to me about coming to work for Johnson, because Woody wanted to leave and go back to Texas.

I talked to Arthur Perry (Connally's administrative assistant) about it, even though I had no desire for a career in government, particularly up there as a Senate staffer all my life. I loved it, but I mean that just wasn't my idea of a long-term career. Arthur told me quite a bit of the background he had had with Johnson over the years, their close personal association when Johnson first came to Washington as secretary to Congressman Kleberg. He said, "After all, I think you'll find that Lyndon is going to be a comer in the Democratic Party.

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It won't hurt your record to work for him a year or two no matter what happens." Well, that certainly proved to be the truth.

It's funny how you remember little things. I went down to Johnson's office to meet him for the first time. We shook hands, moved closer just almost nose to nose, and straightened himself up. He wanted to be sure he was about a half inch taller than I was. (Laughter) I don't know why that still sticks in my mind. I was trying to stand up to just be as tall as he was. We were about the same, I guess.

So the next thing I knew they made me an offer and I went to work there. It turned out to be probably one of the two or three best decisions I ever made in my life. From my point of view, I was able to see government in operation in a way that very few people have seen it: to be associated with a man who was going from whip--I didn't even know what a whip was--through [minority] leader to majority leader, and see that whole process unfold. Fortunately with Mr. Rayburn, the two of them were in the two top legislative offices, and of course, not that I was privy to a lot of their conversations, but just because of the nature of the work I was doing, I could observe it from a cubbyhole and at least draw my own conclusions as to what they were doing and talking about and the strategies they would discuss, along with certainly Senator [Richard] Russell, Senator [George] Smathers, and Senator [Hubert] Humphrey later on.

G: Did he have a reputation at the time you were considering going to work for him as a senator who worked his staff pretty hard or had them keep long hours?

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H: Yes. Of course Arthur Perry made that point very clear. However, I think until you actually worked around him you could never fully appreciate what that really meant. People can tell you that Barton Springs is cold, but until you jump into it you don't know how cold it is. (Laughter) It was never made clear to me that he worked his staff *that* hard. On the other hand, since he worked as hard or harder than the staff, there were very few people that complained about it. I think people complain when they see the boss go play golf and say, "Now get out that work." Certainly there was no evidence of that.

The interesting thing, and I'm sure many, many people have always told you, [was] that until he just gave you hell and really chewed you out, you weren't one of "his men," so to speak. That's something you had to learn. It was a rather traumatic experience to go through. The first time he laid into you, you'd just assume, well, your life was over. Sure enough, that was his way to say, "You're not too bad a guy after all."

G: Do you recall the first time he used that on you?

H: Well, I don't know whether [it was] the first time or not, there were just so many times, but I think one of the first times, if not the first time, probably had to do with some appointments to the military academy. Again, it was the first year that I had worked there, during 1952, when he and certain other of the staff had gone down to Austin during the time Congress was in recess. We always did attempt to coordinate the appointments to West Point, Annapolis, and so forth, with the other members of the Texas delegation to be sure we weren't both appointing the same guy. Of course, the most particular and sensitive area was the

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Tenth District of Texas. Fortunately, Homer Thornberry, being very close and, again, our offices working closely together, we didn't have a problem, except--and I'm sorry I don't recall exactly the details. But anyway Homer was in the office. They were discussing some old friend who wanted an appointment for his son. Whatever it was, Johnson didn't like [it]. I don't know whether we had not appointed the right guy or written the right letter, or we'd done something that made an impact. As I say, I should remember. I think I was so shell shocked I don't remember. But I later found out it was for Homer's benefit that he was giving me this going over because I had done what LBJ really wanted done.

G: Oh, really. How did you find that out?

H: Well, I got a couple of new shirts. He never would say he was sorry, but that's when you would get a very warm--I've got a number of pictures at home, "To Jack," or "To Jack and Nell, with my warmest. . . ." There would be those. He could never say "I'm sorry." But you knew when, in a day or two, on your desk would be this picture, or as I say, that time I had a couple of shirts, that type of thing.

G: Were these losses of temper, do you think, usually necessary? Were they justifiable? Was there some legitimate reason for them or do you think he was just letting off steam, as a rule?

H: I think that was my interpretation later on, I felt like I got to know the man a little better, that he was just letting off steam. [It's] that old adage, a lot of top people don't get ulcers because they give them to somebody else. I really feel it was that way. I know very few people who worked for him who were not in awe of him. I've met a lot of

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so-called big men; I worked directly with Tom Watson for three years at IBM and Watson is an outstanding person, but there's nobody who holds a candle, in my opinion, to Johnson. Maybe he just got to me when I was so impressionable, I don't know. But he seemed to always be a step ahead of everybody else in his thinking process, even some of the small things, like in those academy appointments with Homer. Probably when I said I did the right thing, I think the mechanics of doing the right thing were maybe not done the way he would have liked them done. Mechanics being I should have written Homer a note over his signature, for example. There was something that just frustrated him at the moment and he wanted Homer [to know it]. But it was momentary frustration that he wanted to get out, because later on, as I say, in addition to getting the two shirts, I got a good word from Walter. Because I thought I might as well quit because I was finished. Walter said no, that's what you should have done. Johnson never told me that, but I sensed it.

G: I gather that Walter could read Johnson as well as anyone, in terms of what he really wanted and what ought to be done.

H: It really is unfortunate for Johnson, and I think, for the country that Walter's problems, whatever they may be--if he does have them and I guess he does--surfaced, because someone like that [was needed] to read Johnson and interpret his true interests, desires, directives for the rest of the government, and especially for the immediate White House staff. That was a great loss in my opinion.

G: I gather the rest of the staff really depended on Jenkins quite a bit.

H: Well, I think we did. I think it was also part of--you know, Walter wanted it that way, too. I could tell later on, at least I felt--again,

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this may be a certain amount of egotism or whatever showing, also--after I had been there a few years, I had worked to learn what the business was about. Even though I didn't want it as a career, you could see Johnson moving up. Even right before the heart attack there were the movements for him to announce for president. In that kind of ball game, certainly it was worth staying around. I began to feel that Walter was trying to keep me and maybe others--I thought I saw it in others, too, but particularly me--down. You know, cut the ground [out from under me]. In other words, I don't think he wanted a challenger. But as I say, that's a purely personal and subjective judgment.

G: That's the sort of game that aides are credited with having played later, but I didn't know that Jenkins [ever did it].

Let's talk about the 1952 election and his selection as minority leader.

H: My recollection is that the morning after the presidential election, after the election of 1952--almost everyone had forecast prior to the election that the Democrats would lose the House, but no one expected that they would lose the Senate. There were a couple of surprises, the obvious one being the defeat of [Ernest W.] McFarland of Arizona, who was majority leader.

I was in the office. The other key people, Jenkins, Woodward and others, were down in Texas. The phone rang and Senator Russell was on the phone. He wanted to know where Senator Johnson was, what the phone number was. He didn't have it for the Ranch, if that's where he was. I said, "Yes." Russell's reading already was that there was getting to be a real fight brewing among the Democrats. He made a comment to the

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effect that Johnson was the one person who could probably work with the, quote, "two groups," meaning the liberal and conservative groups. So he wanted to get hold of him and explore that with him.

G: The liberals were upset with the conservatives for having jumped ship in [the election]?

H: Either jumped ship or gone fishing, so to speak, just not supported Adlai Stevenson. Probably within the hour Senator [Earle] Clements of Kentucky called and [he had] almost identical comments. So I referred him down to Austin also. Sometime later, an hour or two, we got a call from Senator Johnson asking me to call over at the Capitol and have Bobby Baker get in touch with him. I didn't even know who Bobby Baker was. I think I had heard of him but I really wasn't sure. He was, again, my recollection, the head of the pages at the time, but he had a reputation then as being an excellent vote counter, nose counter, whatever you want to call it. And that's what Johnson wanted him to do, just check with the Democrats to see who would support him, Johnson, for leader and who would not.

Bobby reported back, as I recall, that there were six senators who would not support Johnson for leader. They were Hubert Humphrey, Matthew Neely, Herbert Lehman, Paul Douglas; I'd probably have to go back and review, but you can probably figure out who the other two were. From that point on, I really wasn't that privy to direct conversations. I had been there less than a year. I would hear things. Walter would call periodically and want some information about the leadership, or they'd want me to ask the Library of Congress to do something. Walter came up and did a little research on the leadership, so that everything

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was moving forward to the caucus when Congress convened in January. And LBJ was elected, of course.

His first reaction when he heard that six senators would not support him was, "Well, I don't want it. I won't take it." Of course, there was also some pressure on him from some of his supporters in Texas not to accept the position. They felt his interests would have to be more national in scope and less focused on Texas. The two previous leaders, Scott Lucas and McFarland had not been re-elected. I remember Mr. Johnson saying something like, "Well, the trouble with those guys is that when they got to be leader, they took on a national posture and forgot that they had to be elected from their own state." So he was starting to tell us, "Well, if I take this thing, we're going to run it from Texas. I've got to be elected in Texas first or I won't be anything. So we will coordinate everything out of the Texas office," which he did.

G: Yes. That must have been hard to do both, too.

H: Well, this is where Walter became an overall coordinator or chief of staff. I was coordinating things through the Texas office, per se. However, there was the Policy Committee to consider; there was the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee, and other groups as well. It was Walter's job to be sure that the other guys--I say other guys, the other people who were key people on those committees--that anything that they thought should be of concern to the people in Texas, that it was funneled back through our office before the letters were signed or responses made. Of course, I would do the same thing up through Walter.
(Interruption)

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H: It was his comments, those that I overheard, that Senator [Robert] Taft was very good to work with. He was a pro in the sense that when certain agreements were struck, for scheduling or anything having to do with the legislative process that the two parties would be involved in, that you could take Taft's word for it, you know, that kind of handshake idea. Now at first he felt that [William] Knowland was just the opposite, that he was trying to play games, push Mr. Johnson around. Why I overheard these remarks is that Johnson was [saying] in so many words, "I'm going to teach him how the game is played." Of course, as you know, Johnson would use a little more earthy terms than that. Then later on I heard that he and Knowland worked quite effectively. But he was going to show Knowland that, by George, when certain things were agreed to, they better be agreed to.

G: There was one bill I think that year, the Small Business Administration bill with temporary controls, in which he outmaneuvered Knowland. I think he felt Knowland had not stayed with the deal that they had made. Do you remember that, the specifics of it?

H: I don't remember any specifics, particularly at that point. Up through 1955, 1956, the early 1956 period, I was more of a pure administrator, in the sense that large volumes of mail came in, had to be read, assigned to the proper staffer, and it had to be coordinated with the policy side if it involved legislation or policy issues. More and more of this routine stuff was going on and that was part of my frustration. I didn't want to sit there [like], God love him, I think he's just a marvelous human being and friend, Glynn Stegall. Glynn was content, as

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was Arthur Perry, essentially just to handle mail and daily routine matters. That was not my idea of a career.

So I wanted to move into other things. Maybe I wasn't qualified or whatever, I don't know, but that's when Walter and I began to have some disagreements, I guess you might say. The point is, I really couldn't comment much other than when I would overhear things. You'd probably, for accuracy's sake, have to verify that those were accurate.
(Interruption)

G: While we're thinking about it, why don't you repeat that incident about Mr. Johnson and Ronnie Dugger that sort of epitomizes, I guess, his philosophy of his role as senator.

H: That was one afternoon, exactly which year [I can't remember]; it was one of the years I went down to Texas with the staff that was involved in office work in Austin during the time Congress was adjourned. Periodically I would go out to the Ranch, or one of us would, to take mail or go over some things with Mr. Johnson. One day I was out there and as I was leaving, he asked me to "Get that fellow in here," and after a moment or two and a couple of other words I realized he was referring to Ronnie Dugger.

[I] came back to Austin to try to get Ronnie to come out to the Ranch, to meet with Mr. Johnson. At first Dugger did not want to go, because he had his weekly paper to publish; it was due out the next day but Dugger was finally persuaded to go. When we arrived, even though there were a number of old friends of Johnson's out there, as well as several newspapermen like, as I remember one, Rhea Howard, Johnson almost ignored them, to go with Ronnie, sit by the pool, and discuss

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various matters. But [they discussed] a couple of issues that, as I recall, Dugger had been writing about; public housing was one that Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois and some other liberals sponsored but had failed to pass in the Senate. Dugger had written some unkind articles about that and accused Johnson of not being for the needy and being a captive of special interests.

Anyway, later in the evening, around the table--and this I think is a significant point--Dugger spoke about Douglas and Lehman and other more liberal senators who had great vision and were more to Ronnie's liking than Mr. Johnson. Johnson cut him off and said, "Well, just don't forget that when those men were reading Homer and Plato, I was reading the rules of the Senate. When there is a bill to be passed, they come to me. I don't go to them." That pretty much summed it up, I think.

G: It seems like he made a sustained attempt to try to win Dugger's support.

H: There were people Mr. Johnson wanted to "turn around." I think Johnson basically--and now I'm being a psychoanalyst--but of course I believe his, quote, "heart was pure," and that he really had a vision of the country and things he would like to do for everyone including the "the common man." He just couldn't understand why someone couldn't believe that he really was interested in the best things for this country. So these people like Ronnie--really, that paper had limited circulation--there was some tremendous drive in him to try to convince them that he really was different than he appeared to be.

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G: Do you think he was more sensitive to attacks from liberals than to attacks from conservatives?

H: I believe so. During the period of time that I observed him, yes, very definitely that way.

G: Can you think of any other examples here?

H: It had been so long I have difficulty remember specifics, but he resented the fact that the national press, the national party considered him too conservative and Texas thought he was too liberal. There were two basic disagreements he had with the Democratic National Committee or the party itself. One was that he felt that the people there were very liberal-oriented and did not understand the true mood of the country. Secondly, he thought most of the staff were sycophants or hangers on, that they didn't deserve the salaries, perks, et cetera. He felt more of the money should go to appropriate campaigns. But on several occasions that I remember, he did make some attempt to make peace with Paul Butler and other party officials with whom he had little in common and little rapport. But he would react more to articles written by liberals criticizing him than from conservatives. I'm searching, unsuccessfully obviously, for some specific examples, but [that's] my impression.

G: Do you think he had a very realistic attitude toward the press? Do you think he saw it more in terms of public relations than in terms of reporting, or even an adversary relationship. He seemed, even in the Senate years to me, to have been too intent on wooing the press.

H: Yes, I think that he certainly understood, because he made some comments in later years when I went out on some advance trips with him. [He]

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certainly recognized the impact of the media, and I think he looked at it as a means to persuade people to his point of view and to create a more favorable image. So he looked at it knowing the potential impact. Unfortunately, he too often talked down to the press or bored them with long monologues that had the opposite effect. Because the calibre and experience of the Washington press, most of them do not want to be considered a spokesman for anyone. They are going to report what they see and hear. I think Mr. Johnson misread this as being adversarial. Most reporters have some axe to grind and there are always a few who are completely biased, but on the whole, I think Mr. Johnson tried too hard to sell his point of view and many felt they were being "conned" and therefore resented it.

G: Let me ask you about the tidelands issue. Do you have any particular recollections here of his [stand on that]?

H: Whether he was for giving the tidelands to the states or what?

G: Say, vis-a-vis Stevenson in the 1952 campaign or working with any constituents or any other senators in this respect?

H: I don't remember. From my vantage point at that time, it was a hot issue. As certain issues [do], it had become terribly oversimplified. You were kind of for or against motherhood if you were for or against tidelands, if you were from Texas. The true issues and the constitutional issues were seldom discussed. I never heard it discussed much even in the committees. I'm sure they were, had I been to all the hearings. If you were from Texas or from an oil-producing state, there just wasn't any question, that was it. If you were one of the consuming

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states, you were against it. So I don't remember anything other than it was a hot political issue.

G: What about his association with Sam Rayburn? Did you get much insight there as to their friendship?

H: It seemed to be always very close, very genuine. It did not appear to be the father-son role; it was a man-to-man, peer-to-peer.

G: Did you see them together much?

H: No, I would hear them talking on the phone quite a bit. Just the tone, you know, when Johnson would talk to him, when I say it wasn't with great reverence, I meant it wasn't like a son talking to a father or with deference maybe, although I think he certainly did, from what I could see, respect and honor Mr. Rayburn. But I mean it was like he was talking to Russell or anybody that he knew, who had great insight, great clout, and [was] a great man you wanted to work with. But being around when they were together, I was not, except on fairly rare occasions. I'm sorry. I would have liked to have been.

G: Of the other senators, who was he closest to?

H: During that period of time the ones that [I recall were] Dick Russell, by far. [Stuart] Symington he seemed to be fairly close to, Senator George Smathers.

G: He and Symington seemed to have grown apart a bit during this period. What do you think happened there?

H: I don't know. I don't have any idea. When I left in 1956 there seemed to be a close relationship. It was only when I came back into Washington--I never worked for him again, but just hearing the

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scuttlebutt from the staff and others, [I learned] that they were not close any longer. I don't know what happened.

G: Can you elaborate on his friendship with Dick Russell? Do you recall any instances in which they were together?

H: Well, I just remember that it seemed like [they met] almost every night--and I'm sure that's a great exaggeration--during the early years when Johnson was still officing in the Senate Office Building a great deal. It was before he moved to his office in the Capitol and stayed over there more and more that I remember seeing Russell almost every night.

(Interruption)

G: You're saying that Styles Bridges was also very close to him?

H: Oh, yes. I didn't know why they were close. Sam Houston [Johnson] has got a story to tell you apparently about why they're close, that Johnson saved Styles some very embarrassing moments at some time in the past. But the one thing that I do remember--I don't know whether you've interviewed Charlie Herring or not.

G: He's on my list.

H: Charlie was U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas when Eisenhower was elected. It is customary when a new administration comes in for all U.S. marshals and U.S. attorneys to submit their resignations. I had been told by Mr. Johnson to get word to Charlie not to submit his. You can appreciate the sensitivity of that; [there were] not any cover-up implications. But Johnson, again, in his wisdom of looking forward, could see that if an "unfriendly" U.S. attorney were in office, many charges, allegations, et cetera, from

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the 1948 campaign could be brought up at the last minute; it would hit the headlines before a chance for rebuttal could be made and it could be extremely damaging politically. So he was very sensitive to having anyone new in that job until after the 1954 election. I bring this up to illustrate the good relationship Mr. Johnson had with Senator Bridges.

Charlie called several times during the next few months after Eisenhower's inauguration of 1953 saying, "I'm getting more and more pressure to resign. I've got to send in my resignation." Mr. Johnson asked Senator Bridges to help and Bridges arranged a meeting with Styles Bridges and Bill Rogers, who was then deputy attorney general, in Johnson's office. The purpose was to discuss Charlie Herring's remaining as U.S. attorney, [with] Johnson just flat saying, "I don't want Charlie removed until after the election of Senate next year." Styles turned to Mr. Rogers and said, "Did you hear that?" He said, "Yes." And that was the last that I ever heard the subject mentioned.

G: Is that right?

H: Sure enough, a couple of days after Johnson was re-elected, Charlie resigned. When you talk to Charlie, you can see what his side of it was.

But our offices worked together. I used to know the staff in Bridges' office as well or better than many of the staff on the Democratic senators' side. Bridges visited the Ranch quite a few times, things like that. I never did know Senator Bridges, of course, that well; again it was really at a distance. But they were

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cut out of much the same mold, very pragmatic, sharp. But Russell, Bridges--of the ones that I saw--Smathers, Symington, those were the main ones I remember, if you really want to call them. Well, obviously, Mr. Johnson should have been reasonably close to Clements. Then over a period of years, just about the time I was leaving, he and Senator Humphrey were beginning to be quite friendly.

G: Did you travel with him any in 1953 when he made that trip around the state in preparation for next year's campaign? I've got an itinerary there on the outline, the last couple of pages, I guess.

H: I did not. Let me see. Now this one right here, I don't know whether you've heard this story, and again you can verify this perhaps from the people who were there, the Midcontinental Oil and Gas Association meeting in Houston. I don't know whether you've heard the story about many of the oil men trying to raise money for somebody to run against Johnson, and he threw his speech away in front of the group and said, "Now I want to tell you. . . ." It's a little bit like the Ronnie Dugger story.

G: No, I haven't heard this one.

H: Again, I was not there, but I understand that Mr. Claude Wild, Sr. arranged for Mr. Johnson to be invited to speak before the association's convention. But anyway, Johnson knew to whom he was speaking, so the story was told to me, by Mr. Wild as a matter of fact. Claude Jr. and I were very good friends and my wife and I would see Mr. and Mrs. Wild [Sr.] periodically when we were in Austin. Mr. Wild said Mr. Johnson had wanted to speak to this group. Of course, the rumors were stronger and stronger that the independent oil men were trying

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to raise money to oppose Mr. Johnson. Shortly after Mr. Johnson began his prepared speech, he paused and threw it aside and said, "You know, the way the Senate is organized from the Democratic Party point of view is that I am chairman of the Policy Committee; I am chairman of the Steering Committee, as well as being the Democratic leader. Now, as chairman of the Steering Committee, I am the one who's going to be principally involved in making the committee assignments. Now would you rather have Russell Long and Bob Kerr on the Finance Committee or would you rather have this Paul Douglas. . . ."

He just went down the list like this. "Now go ahead, raise all the money you want. You can defeat me, but I'll guarantee you that's what's going to happen, because here are the people who will be assigned to committees that will affect you." It was a basic civics lesson and Mr. Johnson cut it short. There weren't any questions. You could have heard a pin drop. So whether that cut [Allan] Shivers off or whoever was thinking of running, the only one they got, as you remember, was Dudley Dougherty.

(Laughter)

G: He really wasn't a serious threat, was he?

H: No, no, that's right. Oh, gosh, no. Dudley [said], "I might as well run against Johnson."

G: But Dudley Dougherty did have the backing of Coke Stevenson and Dan Moody.

H: Oh, yes. They were all friends, as I recall.

Let's see, what else in 1954? When the Democrats regained control of the Senate after the election in 1954, Gerry Seigel, who

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had been counsel to the Democratic Policy Committee, and George Reedy and I and others were talking with Mr. Johnson. He was saying that now as majority leader he had his "cabinet," which were the committee chairmen, and that he wanted to have Democrat programs to put forth. Gerry said this would require our building staff. At the time, and I didn't want to be accused of nepotism or anything, but Harry [- McPherson] was getting out of law school and had indicated an interest. I said, "Harry, you don't want any part. Go on back to Tyler and practice law and you'll be happy. You don't want to get in this rat race. I'm going to get out one of these days before long myself."

Harry said he really wanted to at least try it. So I talked to Gerry about Harry, because obviously we wanted somebody, and if at all possible we would rather have a lawyer from Texas. So I arranged a meeting with Gerry and Harry. They hit it off beautifully. Then when Harry met Johnson, why, that was fine. To Johnson at that point he was just another lawyer, but they became very close in later years. So I can't say I really hired Harry, because he did it himself by making a good impression, [but] probably had he and I not had that conversation [and] I'd known his interests, I never would have mentioned it to Gerry.

G: How about George Reedy? How did he fit into the picture? He was with the Policy Committee, I guess.

H: George, when I arrived, was actually with the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee. Johnson had put him there because, again, Mr. Johnson felt that nobody read most committee reports. It was all a

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bunch of [mumbo] jumbo, you know, government language, and he wanted them to be put into some sort of readable language. George had been with UP, covered the Hill, so Mr. Johnson hired George to do that. As George did a better job, [he] began to move--and of course George [is] a very bright guy--about the time I came on board he was still on the staff of the Preparedness Subcommittee, but he was more and more spending time with the Texas office. And he became a speech writer. He and Booth Mooney were to be the speech writers. Of course we had those old newsletters to put out.

Johnson, you mentioned as we were coming back--and this is certainly true--as being gadget-minded. Well, he was the first one to put in robotypers, automatic typewriters and things like that, in the Senate. In fact, for a while there it seemed like I spent half my time just demonstrating them for people. I don't mean personally, but we would receive a call [that] somebody wanted to see the robotypers in operation. We had all that stuff downstairs. So I would have to take some of the Senator's staff or have someone show them where we were running the equipment.

But George was largely involved in speech writing, and then would contribute to, oh, a little bit of everything [?]. I think Johnson kept looking for someone to really play the role that Buzz [Horace Busby] played, which was pundit, confidante, speech writer, everything rolled into one. Johnson never could find anybody that really did it all, the way Buzz did.

G: Did you get much insight into the Bobby Baker-Lyndon Johnson friendship? I heard that Baker could count votes like no one else.

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H: He could count votes. I'll tell you one thing, and by the way, this I think is significant about Johnson. IBM asked me to come back to Washington to head up or start their first effort at a, quote, "government relations job." Even though they had seventy-five hundred people in Washington, they were all involved in marketing, manufacturing cards or systems support, and there was no vehicle or channel back up to the corporate structure as to what's going on legislatively or rule making in Washington. The thing that brought the need to a head was the investment tax credit bill. As originally proposed and reported out of Ways and Means Committee was for the investment tax credit of 15 per cent for the purchase of new equipment. It had nothing in it about leasing or rental. At the time most of IBM's equipment was on rent. Anyway, IBM management said, "Okay, we've gotten big enough. We better have somebody down there." So I was asked to set up a government relations office.

Well, when I arrived, and this was in January of 1962, the Bobby Baker that I had called ten years earlier as head of the pages was the biggest thing in Washington, if you read the papers. Bobby this, Bobby that; you'd think he was running the Senate. So, I thought, heck, I want to go by and renew old relationships with Bobby. But getting settled in, buying a house, getting organized in a new job, getting my own staff put together, it was into March before I was ready to make a real effort to see Bobby. I had called Bobby's office once to set up an appointment to go by and see him, but something happened and I didn't go by.

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Anyway, Walter Jenkins' birthday is sometime in early March. The staff, with the Vice President, was having a surprise party for Walter over at the Jenkins' house. I think Claude and Nadine Wild and Nell and I were the only non-staff people that were invited. As we got over there and had just gotten kind of settled down, in walked the Vice President, Mrs. Johnson, Senator Russell, Bobby and Dottie Baker. I went over to see the Vice President to say hello, because I had not seen him since I had been back. After the typical pleasant-ries, I said it was also great that Bobby was there because I had been wanting to get to renew old acquaintances with him. Mr. Johnson said, "Stay away from him." I said, "What?" He said, "You don't want any part of him, Jack. Dick and I had had him out at the race track today. We've begun to hear some things that we don't like. We're trying to find out." Thank goodness I never went close to Bobby after that. I say that because of all the problems Bobby had, and IBM being the kind of company it was, if they thought I had been friendly with Bobby, they would probably have fired me. They may not have fired me, but I sure would have been wiped out of that job pretty quickly.

But that was a little insight as to the relationship. Now Bobby's relationship with Mr. Johnson was obviously one that was close when Johnson was majority leader. I mean, it had to be because Bobby was good at counting where the votes were. You know, again, that old saw Johnson used to kick around, "My judgment is no better than the information I have." Well, he needed to know what the votes were, and Bobby was damn good.

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G: He evidently had some inroads, I gather, that even Johnson didn't have, some rapport with particular senators.

H: I think that's probably true. I think Bobby, from what I saw or heard, was very good at, I won't call him neutral, obviously, but at least being a sounding board. People knew Bobby had access--not only to Mr. Johnson but other Senate "whales" as well. A lot of times I may just want to get a message to you, but I don't particularly like you or your position on an issue. But I'm willing to talk to a third party, and I know that message will get to you, that type of thing. So Bobby was privy to information at times that was not available to Mr. Johnson because of fear, animosity, et cetera.

(Interruption)

H: When [Joseph] McCarthy was re-elected to the Senate it must have been in this time frame. Well, first of all, let me go back, he [Johnson] and Russell had had a number of strategy sessions [on] what to do about the McCarthy issue. I'm sure the others did, too. There were a lot of people saying, "Why don't you take the guy on?" The Democratic leadership (Johnson/Russell) strategy was very interesting. They felt that the press and everybody had built up McCarthy as being such an anti-communist, that even though McCarthy and what he was doing as a senator was wrong and should be challenged, the way a direct confrontation would likely come out in the press and in the public mind, was that the Democrats would be perceived as soft on communism.

It was a very sensitive issue in those days. My wife, Nell, who had graduated from the University of Texas and had many old

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friends in Austin, was ostracized by them--some wouldn't even speak to her, because we were working for Johnson. We were Democrats, we were therefore pro-communist. I remember wearing a white dinner jacket to a party in Dallas and people said, "Oh, I thought you Democrats wore pink." You'd just have to go back in those times to see how bitter it was. It was very personal. There are some people today that want to be friends and I just won't, because I remember a couple of times that they just. . . . I'll never forgive them for doing what they did. It was just totally irrational.

The basic strategy, therefore, was not to meet McCarthy head on but to give him enough rope to do himself in. They believed that he was so out of control that he would eventually hang himself. But we're not as Democrats going to get right in the middle right now and will until we're ready to pull the noose around his neck. It was interesting to see their strategy of piecing out the rope and watching it work successfully.

On the subject of McCarthy, another story may be of interest. As I recall, it must have been 1953, yes. McCarthy had been re-elected in 1952 with Eisenhower. I remember Walter and others telling it. Again, I wasn't privy; I wasn't there. But Drew Pearson and McCarthy hated each other so much that when McCarthy returned to be sworn in for his next term in the Senate, as they normally do, Drew Pearson went to Johnson and said, "I want you to object to McCarthy's being seated." Johnson said, "Look, the people of Wisconsin elected him. We don't have any reason not to seat him in the Senate based on the Constitution." Pearson said, "If you don't,"

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and he handed him a bunch of inaccurate anti-Johnson articles, drafts, not a bunch but some, "you're going to see these in print." Johnson said, "Well, that's. . . ." Anyway, that's why it was such a discussion around the office for a little bit. Pearson started writing them, and if you'll go back and look, there was a period when Pearson was wiped out of every paper in the state of Texas. That was the reason.

G: They must have had an unusual relationship, Drew Pearson and Lyndon Johnson. It was hot and cold.

H: (Laughter) That's right. It was a real sine wave.

G: What did he think about Pearson?

H: I don't know. At that point he wasn't thinking very highly of him.

G: I gather he was a pretty good source for Pearson, though, that he would give him some good information on occasion and placate him with that.

H: Right.

G: Before we leave 1954, do you recall anything about that Dudley Dougherty election? Do you think he was overly concerned about Dougherty as an opponent?

H: No, no, especially after Dudley didn't show up a couple of times.

G: He had that telethon in Houston.

H: I think he didn't show up there, or at least was late, and a similar one over in San Antonio. Those kinds of things, plus he just had no stature. There wasn't any [threat]. Again, I'm sure Mr. Johnson couldn't, and none of us could act like we were taking it for

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granted, because you never can, but I don't think there was any great concern.

Let's see, I'm trying to think of the guy's name. There were two of them that were in the office quite a bit. One was a Mr. Willeford [?], that worked for [H. L.] Hunt. I don't know whether he's still alive or not. Some of these men I'm sure. . . . Then there was a guy who worked for Murchison, the old man Murchison. He still works for Clint, Jr., now. Bob. . . . At any rate, the thing here: "McCarthy receives support and encouragement from several wealthy Texans," and so forth. If you're in Dallas sometime you might check on those. I'll try to get you the name. But Willeford, if he's still alive. They would have been the ones who would have been in any kind of intermediary [position]. Bob Novak, I guess, have you interviewed his wife?

G: No, but I hope to. How about Bill Brammer? He was on the staff then, wasn't he?

H: Yes. Bill and Nadine.

G: Did you know Brammer was doing a novel at the time?

H: No.

G: You may have already left by the time he came on.

H: No, he and Nadine were there, I guess, the last year I was there. If he were doing a novel, I didn't know about it.

By the way, is Grace Tully still alive?

G: I think so, but her health is bad.

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H: I don't think she'd have much. Of course, she could go back to the Roosevelt years. But as far as what was happening in those days, I don't know. Jim Rowe, I guess--

G: I talked to him.

H: I was trying to think of people who really could have been exposed to Mr. Johnson from a policy or strategy point of view. Really, from about 1955 and 1956, he began to stay over in his offices at the Capitol. He seldom came over to the Senate Office Building. In fact, Walter and I began using his office quite a bit.

G: I see, you'd take his office.

H: Because there just wasn't any enough office space.

G: Did you see much of Charlie Marsh during this period?

H: Charlie Marsh. No. I don't even know who Charles Marsh is.

G: A publisher. He owned a string of newspapers down in Texas, the Marsh-Fentress chain.

H: No. Now Houston Harte, we used to see a lot of him. Of course, he was the reason I ever got a job in Washington in the first place. Young Housty and his older brother Ed went to high school in San Angelo.

(Interruption)

G: What do you remember about [George W.] Malone?

H: Malone being one that Johnson felt that he could persuade, arm twist, whatever you want to call it. But Malone was on the opposite side of the aisle. Johnson always looked for people like this, that he had some rapport with or whatever that he could persuade them to his point of view in critical times. Malone was probably the one he used

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the most, how or why I'm really not sure. But I think if you go back, and a lot of key things where there are just one or two votes, and you had to have a Republican or two, you could always find Malone in there.

G: Philosophically, the two men didn't agree at all.

H: Not at all. Not at all. But a lot of this, I think, stems from a relationship going back, in my opinion, to Bridges and some of the key people. Mr. Johnson's relationship with [Everett] Dirksen later developed, as everybody knows, of having a great working relationship with Dirksen, apparently a mutual admiration society, even though they might in public say a few words about each other. Then [they would] go back in the cloakroom, put their arm around each other and say, "I got you there, didn't I, pal?" That sort of thing.

Let me see who some of these people were.

(Interruption)

G: What was Senator Johnson's reaction when you told him you were going to leave?

H: Well, the first time that I told him was just a few weeks--I don't mean it to sound the way it may come out--before his heart attack in 1955. As he began to recover, I saw him and he said that he wished I'd stay on at least another year till he could fully recover and that I was needed. I knew it was not true, but he was very persuasive in talking me out of it.

G: So you stayed until--

H: I stayed for another year.

G: Do you remember what month you left?

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H: I left, in fact, the day after Congress adjourned in 1956, which was around July 31, August 1 of 1956. The second time I just wrote him a letter, my resignation. Part of it, as I said, was my building frustration. I felt as long as Walter was there he was going to be the number-one guy, and I just didn't care about being number-two. I guess I didn't visualize exactly what I would do but I. . . . Jim Rowe had come on board. I could see that they were building up some old pros, and I wanted to get in and work with them and learn something, because I felt like I had done all this detail work long enough. The real challenges and opportunities were not in answering mail--maybe it's that I wasn't doing the work or they didn't think I was capable or what. I don't believe that to be true. But anyway, for whatever reasons, I was not--and I talked to Walter quite a bit about it. In fact, Jim Wright, current [House] majority leader, had talked to me about working for him. He had just been elected along about that time, 1954 or 1955, somewhere along there. [He asked me] to come over and head up his staff. Johnson didn't want any part of that, so he told Walter. Of course all he had to do was just mention that to Jim Wright, and Jim wasn't going to challenge it. There wasn't any big hassle over it or anything.

G: Did you see a Johnson-for-President movement building?

H: Well, there had been [a story prepared] shortly before his [heart attack]. In fact, as I recall, one of the Miami papers was ready; I think it was already in print but hadn't been released when he had that heart attack. I have a picture of him taken in the Capitol that I believe was in *Holiday* magazine or some magazine like that, that

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was part of the build-up, a spread, that came out, suggesting that one should think about this guy from Texas, the Majority Leader, [as a presidential candidate].

You're asking me about resigning and so forth. It does trigger, again, one amusing story to me, about right at the end. The last thing of any consequence was the Fulbright-Harris gas bill. It had been passed by the House and was due to come up on the Senate floor the following week. Of course, Senator [William] Fulbright was to be the floor manager of the bill. Anyway, this was on a Saturday. We were in the office working and I got a call from Juanita Roberts, saying that the Senator wanted to talk to me. He just started giving me fits about the quality of letters we were writing in response to the constituency. He said, "I want you to get everybody over here, and I want you to bring a letter that everybody's written in the last few weeks." So everybody meant George Reedy, Bill Moyers--no, Bill wasn't there at that time--Gerry Siegel, Booth, Arthur Perry, Walter, myself. We got over there and he just started going down the list. What a dumb bunch of so-and-so's we were. I remember specifically he gave Walter the worst going over: "Damn it. You're so dumb. I call you to tell you to come to the house, I have to tell you which road to take, which pair of pants to put on, which leg," you know, just going down the line just giving us fits. How in the hell he had ever gotten where he was, carrying this heavy load with this kind of staff, just unmerciful.

About that time his buzzer rang, and it was Juanita saying that Senator Fulbright was outside. So he finished up chewing for about

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another three minutes, opens the door, "Come on in, Bill. I want you to meet the greatest staff in the world. I would never be where I am if it weren't for this group right here." (Laughter) I mean it wasn't thirty seconds from the time he had just given us a fit.

But the most interesting thing to me was, not that little story about the staff, but the fact that here was Johnson, sitting by this great big desk, and this Rhodes scholar and former university president sitting at the corner of the desk with a pad. Johnson [was] saying, "Well now, so-and-so wants to speak for three minutes. You'll recognize him. But now when so-and-so wants to be recognized, don't do that." Fulbright was writing the whole scenario, what to do, like a student in class.

G: Is that right? And you sat through it while he was doing it?

H: Yes. We all did, yes.

G: There was a good deal of lobbying at the time of the natural gas bill. Did you get any insight here as to the pressures that were brought to bear? I mean I realize that it was one of the interests of his state, that he was looking after.

H: No, of course he had supported such a bill in the past. It had been vetoed once before. Eisenhower would have signed that bill if it hadn't been for the so-called Elmer Patman situation. But prior to that time I don't think there was any more, quote, "pressures" or lobbying, from my vantage point, which was certainly not very great. We would see the normal number of oil and gas people coming in to talk to me or Walter or leave messages for the Senator. But that was typical of people coming through the office.

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G: Did you see much of Senator Johnson after his heart attack?

H: I did there for a while. When he had that heart attack, and then after he came home and we went to Texas, it was that summer I saw him a fair amount.

G: You were in the Austin office then, I trust?

H: Yes.

G: Did the heart attack change him much?

H: Not from a point of view of working for him, it didn't seem to change him at all. He looked better. He seemed to be more active, if that were even possible.

G: Do you recall the Whitney speech that fall up in Whitney, Texas? I wondered if you were there.

H: I wasn't there. I've forgotten why I wasn't.

G: That was really his first speech, I think, after his heart attack.

H: I believe that's correct. I think I helped George. George Reedy was in Austin quite a bit because of the speeches and other requirements that would come along during those periods. I think I remember helping George in a very minor way, I don't even remember what. Well, like in a lot of things, a speech writer would write, "Well, what do you think about this?" You'd give him your opinion, that sort of thing, or "Hey, maybe you'll add that." I remember working on that speech with George, editing it. But I don't remember. Was there anything specific you were referring to?

G: No. I was just wondering if you had gone up there.

H: The Whitney thing, that strikes a bell, but I can't [recall].

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G: Could you see the heart attack coming? Was it something that was building up?

H: No. I certainly didn't and I don't think anybody else did. Maybe they've said differently, but at the time I think all of us were quite surprised. Walter certainly seemed to [be], and he probably saw him more than anybody on the staff.

G: Now you did some advance work for him, didn't you, later on?

H: Actually, I had a better relationship with him after he became president. I didn't want to go back to work for him at the White House, because I had started this company and I just couldn't back out on the people who had resigned from good jobs to join me. He seemed to respect me a lot more after that. We had a better relationship. It was almost, I won't say peer to peer, obviously, but I mean he accepted me more as a businessman or independent person rather than just a former hired hand. I had a very enjoyable time with him and Mrs. Johnson when I went back to Washington with IBM and then had my own company.

G: Can you recall any of the advance work that you did for him?

H: Yes. I'll tell you one very poignant story, at least to me. I've thought about it often. In October of 1963, I was advancing a trip which started in New York, where he spoke at the 175th anniversary, I believe it was, of the Georgetown University. He also spoke [to] Dave Dubinsky and the Ladies Garment Workers who were dedicating the fiftieth anniversary of opening the first medical facility for their members. Then we went on into Vermont, raising money for Phil Hoff, who was then governor, running for re-election. He spent over

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fourteen straight hours with Hoff going through Vermont. He went to Connecticut the following day to a breakfast meeting in Hartford at a fund raiser for Tom Dodd, went to other receptions, et cetera, for Dodd and ended up that night in Bristol, Connecticut for a black-tie testimonial dinner for Tom Dodd. Anyway, during that previous day through Vermont, we'd made thirteen stops, including a dinner that night for Hoff. Then we'd started out all through the day at Hartford and then gone on down to this one and that and ending up in Bristol.

What I'm getting to is, he was tired. He wanted to take a nap before going on that evening to the dinner. So this was, say, four-thirty, five o'clock. He crawled in bed, and when he got up he wanted to see the papers. There must have been at least three or four stories in the paper of how the Kennedys, in particular Bobby Kennedy, were out to dump him next year. Then on the second page, in a paragraph about two inches long, "Johnson Campaigns and Raises Money." He raised more money for the Democratic Party in Vermont than had ever been raised in the history of the party, and yet only one small column about his effort. So I'll never forget his being tired and hurt, throwing the paper aside and asking, "Where is all this coming from? I have a good relationship with the President. He says he wants me and he wants me to run again. I really don't understand this." He just seemed to be very down and [it was] one of the few times I've ever seen him where he was almost like a child. In less than a month he was president of the United States.

G: What was he like on the campaign trail?

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H: You mean in the presidency time or vice presidency?

G: Well, let's say 1964 or here in 1963 when he was speaking to groups.
Did he seem to have a rapport with the audience?

H: I am trying to think. Once you're president, to me it's difficult.
I don't think he's ever really had a rapport with a big audience,
that I've seen, when he's making prepared speeches. This goes back
to the Senate days and I think I saw it even during the presidential
days, that if he would speak extemporaneously he had great rapport.
But you give him a prepared speech, he seemed to go into a mechanical
mode or something. He did not project the warmth and the personality
and charm that he really had. I can't say that he bombed or was a
total flop in speaking to an audience. But maybe [there were] the
fifteen or twenty times that I saw him speak before groups with a
prepared speech, as opposed to when he was on the campaign trail, and
he was driving along and stopped to stand up in the car and waved or
said a few words or shook hands. He was good at that because he
liked to touch and feel, go out among the crowd. Now that was good.
But campaigning at lunches and dinners, where he was addressing an
audience and knew that he was really addressing a television or a
very large audience, I think he played to the camera rather than to
that audience, whereas if he just let loose he would [be much
better]. I think when he lost his eye contact with the audience--
this is just, again, a guess, but if he could look you in the eye and
see he had you, why, he was great. If you took that away from him. .
. .

G: Did you do some advance work for him in Florida in 1964?

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H: No. We were in Washington.

G: You worked with the [Democratic National] Committee, I guess?

H: No--yes. When Cliff Carter was at the committee he asked me to advance several trips. Both in vice president times and when Mr. Johnson was president, there were certain advance trips he would go on when they were authorized or so-called non-political, there wasn't any problem. But when he was actually campaigning, he had to have non-government personnel to go out and advance. It was those kinds of trips that I'd be on. Part of the time I was working for IBM and I'd take off a few days and really took my vacation to do it, because it was a lot of fun.

G: Was it really?

H: Oh, yes. Of course it was work, really. You worked hard, but it was a different kind of work. It's something you can talk about.

G: He was a real taskmaster on having everything set up just right and making sure.

H: Well, the real problem with that, I found, is, again, it goes back to it's too bad Walter wasn't around more. Valenti and some of the others would try to coordinate an advance trip when there were people out in the field who didn't know Johnson and know some of his idiosyncrasies and what he liked and disliked. Then there were some of us who at least felt we did. If someone other than Valenti was coordinating a trip, those doing the advance work could get fouled up, as you say. Mr. Johnson wanted things done a certain way, and those who knew him knew that was the way he wanted it done, and he would get upset when it wasn't done. Of course none of the White

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House staff would admit that they had told people to do something a given way if it dissatisfied Mr. Johnson. I never got caught in that trap, I don't think, but I saw it. All I'm saying is this is the reputation, and Johnson would get blamed for chewing people out and raising hell when it could have been prevented by having better direction from the top. Valenti per se may not have been at fault because the President probably had many other things for him to do, but those to whom he delegated did not seem to know the President's personal likes and dislikes well.

G: He seemed to want the podium to be a certain height.

H: Oh, yes, exactly. Again, when I talk about idiosyncrasies there were certain things.

G: What other things did you have to look for?

H: Well, I was just trying to think. I can't remember everything now. But don't ever let anyone take pictures from his left side. You had to set up with the photographers on his right side as I recall. The podium had to be a certain height. I never advanced a trip where Mayor [Abraham] Beame was present but I would hate to have had to advance that trip. When there was something like that, we had a stool or box handy to shove in front of anyone who was going to introduce him. Oh, be sure the crowds were out in full force. Don't ever put him in a room that wasn't full.

G: Use a smaller room and fill it up.

H: That's right. But you know, everybody is that way. At one point, working with Cliff, we wrote up some very detailed instructions about what to have in Mr. Johnson's hotel room. He wanted Cutty Sark and

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soda, for example. There were a lot of little things like that. If at all possible, do not have any motorcycle escorts.

G: Why not?

H: I don't know. He had a fetish about that, just drove him crazy. Now certain state troopers said they were going to escort him and you couldn't stop it. But if at all possible you talked against it and then you made sure the word got back, "It's the only way we can go," or something like that. But if at all possible, [we were] not to do that. I don't know whether he saw someone run over one time, I don't know what happened. But I'm just trying to think of some of the little things.

G: I gather that oftentimes the little trivial things needled him and got under his skin, where the major crises he handled in stride.

H: Exactly.

G: Can you give any examples here.

H: Were you thinking about a political advancing environment or something else?

G: Well, just everything included.

H: Let me just think a minute.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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