

INTERVIEWEE: JUDGE HENRY HIRSHBERG (LBJ Best Man)

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

Thursday, October 17, 1968, 10:30 a.m., Room 597, Federal Office Building,
San Antonio, Texas (Judge Hirshberg's Office).

P: Judge Hirshberg, it's a beautiful day here today in San Antonio, and I'd like to begin asking you first to tell me your current position and how long you have held it.

H: I am the Referee in Bankruptcy for the San Antonio, Austin, Waco, and Del Rio Division of the U. S. District Court of the Western District of Texas and have been such since December 1954.

P: That has been continuous since 1954?

H: Since 1954. Prior to that time for a few years I was in private practice of law following a term as General Counsel for the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration, stationed partly in Puerto Rico but most of the time in Washington. That lasted about eight years. I started private practice here in San Antonio in 1908--sixty years ago.

P: That Puerto Rico Reconstruction--what years was that?

H: From 1937 to 1948.

P: Judge Hirshberg, when and how did you come to meet Lyndon Johnson?

H: Well, it's necessary, I think, for me to explain a little bit. I was one of the principal actors in a political reform movement for San Antonio, known as the Citizens League, which was the forerunner of the present-known Good Government League. And my outfit, I'm proud to say, I believe it began to produce decent, honorable, interested civic government here in San Antonio.

P: When was the Citizens League formed?

H: Oh, in the 1920's. Of the surviving principals, none of whom ever held public office or aspired thereto, there are three that come to my mind. Beside myself, Dan Quill the postmaster, Walter McAllister the mayor of the city of San Antonio and Joseph Sheldon. In any event that outfit, after a fairly successful job in its first attempt to put some reputable candidates in office in the county and city, became concerned over the forthcoming race for the Congressional post in the 14th Congressional District. San Antonio at that time was part of the 14th Congressional District which extended way down to and included Corpus Christi and the area thereabouts. But it was in reasonable certainty that San Antonio would become a separate Congressional district before very long. It's now the 20th Congressional District.

Maury Maverick, the elder that is, Maury Maverick who was also one of the most active members of the Citizens League, wanted very much to go to Congress. And he wanted to run for Congress in the 14th Congressional District. I told him, and several others, but Maury leaned on me a good deal, that he didn't have a chance in the world because the San Antonio machine was going to put up a candidate and he couldn't hope to get enough votes from Bexar County to overcome--rather he could not rely upon enough votes from the rest of the Congressional district to overcome the machine vote in San Antonio.

P: What group represented the machine?

H: Well, it wasn't a group. It was just the machine. It was well known as the machine, had been in power in the city and in the county for a great many years.

P: Were they particularly monied or conservative?

H: No. They were just after office and the powers that went with it. There was no big money involved. San Antonio didn't have any big money in those days.

In any event, Roy Miller who was at that time one of the leading--well, he was the representative of Texas Gulf Sulphur and a real power in the lobbies in Austin and a very close friend of the Kleberg family, called on me to say that the Kleberg family would like very much to have Richard go to Congress. Maybe they wanted to get him out of their hair, but anyway they wanted him to go to Congress. And we were anxious not to have a representative of the machine in Congress, figuring we could do pretty well in getting Maury in two years thereafter when we'd have the 20th district. So we had pow-wows with some of the Citizens League moguls, and they authorized me to pledge the support of the Citizens League for Richard Kleberg for Congress if I saw fit to do so.

P: This is the Kleberg of the King Ranch family, right?

H: That's right. He's now deceased. And he was the playboy member of the family, but one of the most delightful persons personally you'd ever want to meet, socially marvelous.

P: What year would this be, sir?

H: Well, it was about '32. It was bound to be '32, I guess.

P: Late '31 probably.

H: Late '31. In any event I became manager of Dick Kleberg's campaign for Congress so far as Bexar County and Comal County and other parts of the 14th Congressional District, aside from the southern part, were concerned. And we won. And thereupon Dick Kleberg wanted to know what he could do for me. I had no axe to grind at all. Well, he said, "I assume that I'm going to have something to say about who the next postmaster is." And I

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said, "Yes." He asked me, "Well, you name him." I said, "All right, Dan Quill." Dan Quill had been the manager for our precinct organization. So Dan Quill was duly nominated for postmaster.

In the meantime Roy Miller had told me that he was getting a young man named Lyndon Johnson to be secretary for Dick Kleberg, and he brought him in and introduced me to Lyndon Johnson. Well, then, Lyndon Johnson in Washington as secretary to Dick Kleberg was in frequent correspondence and telephone and what not contact with me before this confirmation of Dan Quill as postmaster in San Antonio. There was quite a fight on it from some of the old machine people who pulled various wires in Washington trying to obstruct the thing. But anyway that went over. And that was the real beginning of my acquaintance to any extent with Lyndon Johnson. He came down here thereafter from time to time, visited in our home, and we found him very, very socially acceptable, of course.

P: Was Kleberg acceptable to the machine politics here in San Antonio, too?

H: Oh, no.

P: He was not.

H: Oh, no.

P: So this was a victory of the Citizens League over--

H: This was a victory for the Citizens League over the machine. They had their own man and I have apologized to him since.

P: Do you recall who--

H: Yes, it was Carl Wright Johnson, a very, very good man, and one of the leading attorneys of San Antonio and who would have made a very, very good Congressman as Dick Kleberg did not because he was a playboy. He was not reelected--didn't even seek reelection as I recall.

P: What were your first impressions of Lyndon Johnson when you met him?

H: He was a nice, very good looking, tall, earnest young man in whom you could see some degree of personal ambition manifest to various things that he said as being his hope, but I don't recall that he ever definitely said, "I aspire to be this, that, or the other politically." But it was very apparent to me that he was interested in politics--apparent to me as an outsider that that must unquestionably be his forte, that alone.

Well, I didn't have any particular contact with Lyndon Johnson after that. This must have been '33--'32 or '33.

P: Can I ask you a question here? Did you know anything regarding Lyndon Johnson prior to having met him?

H: No.

P: And it was Roy Miller who brought him into Kleberg's--

H: Roy Miller brought him into the Kleberg entourage and introduced him to me as being Dick Kleberg's manager for this area.

P: And I believe it was in December of 1931 that Mr. Kleberg went to Washington and Lyndon Johnson went with him. Can we pick up from there--any events that--

H: I say, I don't believe that I had any outside of the necessary communications until Dan Quill was confirmed as postmaster. I don't believe that I had any contacts with Lyndon at all either direct or indirect until he announced for Congress from Austin and called on me and asked for such help as I might be able to give.

P: This would be not until 1935 then? Well, '34 when he announced. No, I'm sorry--

H: Lyndon was married in '34 and he wasn't in Congress yet at that time. Anyway, whenever it was.

P: Do you recall some of the events around the appointment of Dan Quill as postmaster?

- H: Dan, of course, and I have been neighbors for--
- P: Did it take very long to get the appointment after--?
- H: Yes, it did. It took several months.
- P: And there was quite a bit of in-fighting?
- H: Yes, some in-fighting there in Washington over this. It originated from people here who had their own pets that they would have liked to see get what they considered a considerable plum at that time. I started to say I don't believe I had any more contacts with Lyndon Johnson until he announced for Congress and asked for my help.
- P: Did you get involved in any way in his marriage to Mrs. Johnson?
- H: Definitely. That was after he was in Congress.
- P: No, he was married in '34 and he had--
- H: I am all mixed up in that. Wait a minute, when did he go to Congress?
- P: Not until 1935. He had returned here--
- H: That's right. I was very much involved in the marriage.
- P: He had returned here in '34--'33 as the State Director of the National Youth Association. Did you know anything regarding that appointment to the National Youth Association?
- H: I had no political axes, contacts, and what not.
- P: Did you know how Lyndon Johnson got along with Mr. Kleberg?
- H: I don't suppose there was any reason why he shouldn't get along with Mr. Kleberg, but I had the idea that Mrs. Kleberg didn't like Lyndon too much. Maybe she thought of him as a hired hand. She's dead, too, so she'd forgive me if I say that, but she was quite a lady, but some ladies of position are snobs and I think she thought, "Well, he's just a secretary and maybe I can use him." She never told me that, but you get those things.

The first thing I knew about the impending marriage was a message from Dan Quill who told me that my wife and I would be needed that evening, that he had received a telegram from Lyndon stating in substance, "Get Henry, a preacher, a license, and [I think it was] \$200, and a ring maybe." Anyway, I don't remember the exact details of the message, but I do remember that it specifically asked Dan to get Henry. So that evening, which was a Saturday, I do remember that because I remember we broke another engagement we had to go out to Shadowland which was then quite a nice place.

P: You went there before the marriage?

H: No, I said we broke an engagement to go out to Shadowland in order to appear at St. Mark's Episcopal Church sufficiently in advance of the time that Lyndon and his bride-to-be were expected. As I recall it, there was a comparatively small group: my then law partner Oscar Powell and his wife were there; Dan Quill; and Malcolm Bardwell, an old friend; and there weren't over, I don't believe, seven or eight, maybe at the most ten of us standing around waiting--awaiting the pleasure of Lyndon and the lady and also awaiting the pleasure of Mr. McKinstry, the rector, who was getting a little bit impatient. I do remember that he came out and shushed us down once. We were a little too noisy out there in the courtyard. In any event Lyndon and Lady Bird and her bridesmaid whose name I can't remember did arrive and we went into the church.

P: And this was in the evening time?

H: Yes, it was around about seven or seven-thirty on Saturday evening.

P: And had you ever met or heard of Mrs. Johnson, Claudia Taylor, I believe she was?

H: Oh, no. I'd never even heard of her; I met her for the first time that evening.

P: What did you think about Lyndon Johnson suddenly marrying like that?

H: Well, I thought it was high time. Having been an old married man myself by that time. Well, we went into the church and everything of course was exceedingly decorous. Everything was just as dignified and decorous as you would expect it to be. And Mr. McKinstry was of course an old friend of mine also, and so I did know how to behave myself. In any event, the service of course was brief; there were no attendants as such. I don't recall now whether it was Dan Quill who pushed me forward or Mr. McKinstry who pulled me forward to stand in place where the best man would normally be standing, but that's where I stood and we signed the register more or less that way. That was all except for what was to happen thereafter. Had any arrangements been made for these folks to eat or for dinner or anything of that sort? No. Nobody knew anything of the sort; nobody had planned anything of the sort and Dan Quill refused to become a party to anything after the conclusion of the ceremony because he had a date to go down to Uvalde to go hunting with Vice President Garner. And he lit out. Well, of course, my wife figured the thing to do was to see that the newly married couple did at least have dinner. And so we arranged with the necessary authorities over at the St. Anthony to do the best they could on a hurry-up occasion. I don't think--my wife tells that there were about twelve people present at the dinner. Neither she nor I can remember who those were in addition to the four principals, as it were, except Malcolm Bardwell and my young brother-in-law Harry Martin. The young brother-in-law, as soon as it became apparent that we were to have a dinner party, was hurriedly dispatched out to my house with the keys to the special locker which contained four or five bottles of sparkling burgundy, and he brought those back with him. Of course, I had enough entree' with the St.

Anthony for them to see that the stuff was properly dispensed despite the law. And that was the party. That was the dinner party. And when it was over, the Johnsons went their way and we went our way.

P: How had Lyndon Johnson happened to pick San Antonio to be married in? They were both in Austin, I believe, weren't they?

H: No. He had picked Lady Bird up way up in Karnack and was driving, and that's the reason for the uncertainty of the time of his arrival. Roads of course in those days were not what they are now, and I don't think they even hesitated in Austin. I'm not sure about that, but I don't think they did.

P: And did he come to San Antonio where he had friends here to help him with the service?

H: Well, I've indicated that he was relying upon Dan Quill and Henry Hirshberg. He had made no requests as to having any other people there present, so it was up to us hurriedly when we found out about what time he was expected to get Malcolm Bardwell and Oscar Powell and if there was anybody else there, I don't know. But I can't remember--I'm sure there were not over ten or twelve people altogether present at the service in the church.

P: How had St. Mark's Episcopal Church been chosen?

H: Well, I think, and now I'm relying somewhat on what my wife tells me that Lady Bird had told her, that of course Lady Bird had a stepmother with whom she was not too congenial and she didn't have any particular church affiliation there, certainly not in Karnack, and I don't believe had had any during the years she was in the University--I don't know. In any event, both she and Lyndon liked Mr. McKinstry and he had been alerted by Dan Quill as soon as Dan got this message, although I believe that the message didn't specify McKinstry--I think it simply said to get a preacher.

P: How did Mr. and Mrs. Johnson know Mr. McKinstry?

H: Well, everybody knew Mr. McKinstry. Mr. McKinstry was a liberal even in those days, and even in the Episcopal Church he was known as a liberal. He was very popular--he was very much beloved here in San Antonio. He became a Bishop shortly thereafter, and I believe he's still alive--I'm not sure of that.

P: I can check that.

H: So that was that. That was the wedding, and that's all we had to do with it. The Johnsons left, they naturally were in a hurry to get away; we didn't hear from them thereafter as to whether they'd enjoyed the dinner party or not, but I guess they had their minds on other things. I don't believe that the conventions meant an awful lot to them at that time.

P: Were you involved in getting the ring that they were married with?

H: No, that was Dan Quill. Dan was the general factotum.

P: When next did you hear from Lyndon Johnson?

H: I heard nothing more from him that I can recall until he announced for Congress. He visited San Antonio and I'd perhaps run into him here and there at times, and he did come to our house occasionally. But there was never any real intimacy there, never has been. But he did ask me for such help as I could give him in Austin. And this was at the time of the so-called court-packing controversy. And I had made some speeches on the subject defending the Roosevelt strategy. And Lyndon asked me to write a couple of speeches for him which I did--did two or three, principally I think in order to be able to meet the complaints that were being made about Roosevelt trying to pack the Supreme Court.

Well, as you know, Lyndon was elected after having a bout of appendicitis in the middle of the campaign. You also probably know--I think there were

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eleven candidates. And I had been told that it was not the speeches that I wrote that elected Lyndon, it was his appendicitis attack that elected him.

P: Were you just in San Antonio during this time, or did you go with him to campaign?

H: I went up to Austin several times to see friends of mine on behalf of Lyndon. One in particular that I remember was John Ross, a very dear friend who passed away seven or eight years ago--my memory's slipping, close friends though we were now at the moment I can't think of his last name.

P: You can add that into the transcript; that's no problem. Any other people that you had contacted?

H: None that I can recall. He was the director of the Austin National Bank and had been an intimate of Dan Moody's and had been active politically to that extent, only I mean active politically as I was active politically, never a candidate for nor a holder of any political office. But through him word was passed along on behalf of Lyndon, and I think he got considerable support out of all this because of this man's interest, and he would not have been interested if I hadn't called him and it hadn't been because of our friendship.

P: Was he a pretty strong Roosevelt man?

H: Yes, oh, yes.

P: How did you assess Lyndon Johnson's chances in this election before the election day?

H: Well, I couldn't imagine with eleven people running that he had very much of a chance, having been away from the district a good deal even though he was well known because of his activity in the National Youth Administration

and what not. But I didn't think he had any chance at all. I was very happy to see it develop otherwise. And of course when his appendicitis attack laid him out so he couldn't do any more campaigning, I thought, "Well, I know it's curtains."

P: Do you recall his principal opponent?

H: No.

P: Does the name Ray Lee sound familiar to you? I believe he was involved in the campaign.

H: Doesn't ring a bell. Too many years ago.

P: Do you think that Johnson's position on Roosevelt at this time could have defeated him? I believe his other opponents in the race--

H: Yes. I don't think that his position in defending the court-packing proposal was a great help to him, except among those people who said, "Well, by golly, we'd better get out and vote." People who might have otherwise stayed away from the polls probably voted because it was a popular--

P: Why had you agreed to help him in the campaign?

H: I agreed to help him in the campaign because I knew he was a pro-Roosevelt man, pro-New Deal man, and because I knew--at least I had heard--that he was defending as best he could Roosevelt's proposal to increase the size of the Supreme Court, which I believed in firmly in the light of the way the then members of the Court had been throwing practically all the best New Deal measures out the window. I was very, very much a New Dealer at heart and took it very seriously. And that wasn't entirely popular even here in San Antonio. I mean the business element was, as it is to this day, highly conservative.

P: I believe he came down with that appendicitis attack just a few days before his election.

H: Just a very few days.

P: Were you in Austin at that time?

H: No.

P: How had you heard that he had come down with appendicitis?

H: Well, it was the newspaper, telephoned by somebody--I don't know. Just don't remember.

P: I believe the seat that he had been running for had become vacant by the death of James Buchanan.

H: Buchanan, that's right.

P: And this is of course the 10th District at this time, right?

H: That's right.

P: Do you recall much regarding James Buchanan's political stand on issues?

H: No, I believe he was a stand-patter though was my impression. That's purely an impression. I don't think he cut much of a role one way or another. I don't think he was a power at all. At least, he hasn't gone down in history, I know that.

P: Did you help get any funds for this campaign?

H: A little up there in Austin through these friends of mine.

P: Did he have very much money to run his campaign?

H: No. As far as I know he had very little comparatively to what it would be in these days at least.

P: Did he make use of radio?

H: Yes, I think so. I think the speeches that I helped on were for radio.

P: Could you define his approach to campaigning?

H: No. You see, I wasn't there and I didn't hear him spellbind, but I imagine, knowing his manner in later years, I imagine it was probably not very different from what it eventually became.

- P: Would you say that since the support of Roosevelt was not that popular an issue that it may have been Lyndon Johnson's personality that won that election as opposed to the issues?
- H: That plus the appendicitis attack, yes.
- P: This appendicitis attack must have really kind of made him the sympathetic underdog.
- H: Well, he was the underdog unquestionably. I'm not sure, but I think he came into the campaign rather late. He came into the running a little late, I think, although of course, there wasn't an awful lot of time after Buchanan's death--why, the scramble began, but I don't think he was one of the first scramblers. I don't know.
- P: Did he have very much of an organization for the campaign? It sounds like it was pretty spontaneous, too.
- H: I don't think he had much of an organization, but I don't know this.
- P: Were you surprised on election day when you heard the results?
- H: I was certainly happy about it. I can't remember--. Since I said I hadn't expected him to win, of course I was surprised.
- P: Did you give Mr. Johnson any advice on going to Washington?
- H: Advice on how he should behave in Washington? No, indeed. Far be it from me.
- P: Towards any political areas or committees that he should aim for?
- H: None whatsoever.
- P: When did you next come in contact with Mr. Johnson after the 1937 election?
- H: I had practically no contacts at all except the most casual ones. Perhaps during the time that I was in Washington I may have called on him, called on his office, but there was never any intimacy.
- P: This was while you were on the Puerto Rican reconstruction--

H: Yes. I was stationed in Washington on that job for a number of years-- for eight years in fact--and I know that Mrs. Hirshberg did see Mrs. Johnson occasionally.

P: Did you meet any of his associates during that period in Washington?

H: I knew the Senator--Senator Connally.

P: Did you know Garner very well?

H: Very well, probably as well as I did Lyndon in that Mr. Garner was the kind of a man who didn't hesitate to open up. I remember very distinctly one time when I called on him in Washington, and there were some of the people here in San Antonio--this was before, of course, Mr. Garner withdrew fellowship as it were--you know that term, that's a good Baptist term-- prior to the time that Mr. Garner withdrew fellowship--

P: You mean by that, leaving the fold?

H: Leaving the fold, yes. He kept very much interested in the local people here in San Antonio and whether they were for the Administration or against it, he knew them intimately and so forth. And I remember very distinctly-- this hasn't got anything of course to do with Lyndon Johnson--but I remember very distinctly he asked me, "What's the matter with so-and-so?" and named a certain man. "What's the matter with so-and-so? He's turned sour." They were all beneficiaries of the Home Owners Loan Corporation and other New Deal things. And I remember that I said, "Well, of course, you know, Mr. Garner, people are notoriously ungrateful. Those people are ungrateful and have turned against the people that helped them." He said, "Yeah, by golly, that's right." Only he used a stronger cuss word than that. He said, "That's certainly right. And that's where I differ with the Chief," meaning Roosevelt. "He's inclined to tolerate a lot of these people, and I'm not. If they've once been in line and have departed

from the line, why, then, they're no longer in my good graces and I'm just perfectly willing to tell them that they can go so-and-so." And he was very frank about naming those particular individuals. Some of them were friends of mine.

P: Do you recall who they were?

H: Oh, yes, I remember very well.

P: Would you tell me?

H: They're dead.

P: Who were these gentlemen?

H: I said they're dead.

P: I know, but would you tell me what their names were?

H: Well, one of them was John Boyle who was a leading attorney here, and another one was Walter McAllister, the present mayor and my very devoted and close friend. Walter had bailed out his savings outfit--it was quite shaky, it was bailed out by the HOLC; but Walter has been, however, be it said for Walter he has been a Republican all his life. He never professed to be a Democrat. He was a good Citizens Leaguer, but he was never a Democrat.

P: Then this Citizens League embraced--

H: It was nonpartisan. I should have said that earlier. It was nonpartisan except it was against the machine. It was partisan to that extent.

P: Were there very many Republicans in San Antonio in those years?

H: In those days, no. The Republicans didn't really arrive on the scene until after Franklin Roosevelt made them mad.

P: Referring to Garner again, in 1939 there was a big issue about John L. Lewis calling Garner a poker-playing, whiskey-drinking, evil old man. Do you remember anything surrounding that?

H: I remember the newspaper, and I knew John L. Lewis; and I was perfectly willing to believe that he said it because it was so completely in character. And it was also completely in character for Mr. Garner to enjoy his poker-playing and enjoy his little drink, neither of which he did to excess. But this should be off the record.

P: No, this is during the time of Lyndon Johnson.

H: Doesn't have anything to do with Lyndon Johnson. He may know it, may recall it.

The degree of warmth of your reception when you went down to Uvalde to call upon John Garner was whether you brought a bottle of bourbon with you or not. If you didn't, your reception was a little cool.

P: Was this after Garner retired? Or you mean during his political years, too?

H: Both during and after.

P: How had he gotten the name "Cactus Jack?"

H: It was because, I presume, he was supposed to have a rough and ready way of life, thorny, but he didn't.

P: How had he moved out of the fold or fallen out of the fellowship?

H: I can't remember what that issue was now. He fell out, but I just don't-- I think he thought Roosevelt was too liberal. That's certain. Garner was an arch-conservative.

P: This, of course, is just prior to our entry into World War II and the beginning of the war in Europe. I believe Johnson very strongly supported Roosevelt in our aid to belligerent nations--in trying to aid what would become our ultimate allies.

H: I remember that very well.

P: Did Johnson seek any counsel from people back home regarding positions on--

H: If he did I didn't know about it. He never sought any from me. I seem to have accomplished my purpose in life when I helped him to get married.

P: Did you help out in any of the further elections?

H: I've got to qualify that statement. I didn't quite finish my purpose in life at that time because it was after that that he ran for Congress, and I did do my little ten cents worth there.

P: Were you in Washington during 1941 when he attempted to run for the Senate?

H: Oh yes.

P: You didn't participate in that campaign at all?

H: No. I was Hatch Act, you see. I was a government employee, so I had to-- just as I have been here for the last fourteen years. I have been disenfranchised almost.

P: Did you think that was a wise move at the time that Johnson announced for the--

H: Oh, I thought it was just fine.

P: --vacancy of Senator Morris Shepherd?

H: Yes. I didn't see why he shouldn't. He was well known by that time. He had a good record in Congress.

P: Had you been following his record in Congress?

H: Newspapers.

P: Of course, Johnson lost that election--

H: That's right.

P: --to Governor Pappy Lee O'Daniel--W. Lee O'Daniel. Did you have any opinions on that race?

H: No. Yes, it had the opinion I couldn't see why the people would go for Pappy. I remember a friend of mine down in Brownsville--I was down there and he told me that Pappy was going to be elected, and I couldn't believe

it. He said, "Oh, yes, those people who put the ten cents in the hat, they've got an interest. They're going to vote for him. They've got an investment. They've invested ten cents." You know, he was passing the hat.

P: Yes. He ran on a platform of bread and butter or something--

H: "Pass the biscuits, Pappy."

P: "Pass the biscuits." That's right.

H: But he was collecting. Millions were collected from the crowds in small amounts. Any amount at all was welcome. And as this wise friend of mine down in Brownsville said, that's one way to get people interested in supporting--to have a financial interest in it, even if it was as small as ten cents.

P: To go on a little further in the years, of course, Johnson did leave the Congress to serve in the Navy for about a year in the period and then he returned after--I think it was 1942.

H: I have no independent recollection at all of any contacts of mine with Lyndon Johnson after he went to Washington either to Congress or to the Senate.

P: You didn't get involved at all in the 1948 election where he became known as "Landslide Lyndon?"

H: No.

P: Were you maintaining your voting residence here in San Antonio?

H: Of course, I've always maintained my voting residence here.

P: Did you have any opinions on that 1948 Senatorial campaign with Coke Stevenson?

H: I was depending on the newspapers for my information. I was quite busy trying to make a living. I had come back to San Antonio to reopen a law

office after having been away a good many years, and it was a little tough sledding for awhile even though I concentrated on that.

P: How had you happened to be appointed to the Puerto Rican Reconstruction--

H: Secretary Ickes thought I was the man for it.

P: Did you know Secretary Ickes?

H: Yes.

P: How did you know him?

H: Funny thing is I had met him through Maury Maverick.

P: How did that come about?

H: Maury was a great fellow to take you around and introduce you, to show you off or show himself off thereby; and he introduced me to Secretary Ickes. I got a call a couple of days after that from the Secretary asking me to drop by, and he began asking me all kinds of questions.

P: He was here in San Antonio?

H: No, in Washington.

P: What did that entail? The Puerto Rican Reconstruction--

H: That entailed my going down to Puerto Rico, stayed there for the greater part of two years--

P: With your family?

H: I have only a wife--that's the sole family I have, yes. And the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration had practically all of the New Deal activities under one tent--rural rehabilitation, low-cost housing, everything else under one tent. So they had something like forty, forty-five, fifty lawyers on the staff, most of them Puerto Ricans. And it was quite a job winnowing them out to get a very sizeable number who were really good and competent because the majority of them were not. One of the boys that I thought had promise eventually became my assistant. I flew

back and forth the next seven or eight years from Washington to Puerto Rico about once a month and stayed a week at a time. And one of those boys who eventually became my assistant there is now on the Supreme Court in Puerto Rico. I knew he was--

P: What was his name, sir?

H: Ramirez, Mariano Ramirez, who is as much a Nordic as you are in appearance-- blond, blue-eyed, Castilian--he was a graduate of Cornell, both academic and law and I've forgotten what else it was for the moment.

P: A U. S. school?

H: Oh, yes. He went to primary school in the States, so he was completely bilingual. In fact, I think he thought in English more than he thought in Spanish which is unusual among the bilinguals. Bilingual Latins mostly think in Spanish.

P: That's their temperament.

H: Well, it's only natural--first tongue they learn from their mothers, at their mother's knee.

P: Do you remember any particular problems other than your staffing during this period that came up?

H: Oh, yes, we had all kinds of problems. We had problems in establishing a cement plant, a pilot plant, to show that they could really produce cement on the island. In other words, we were pioneers in trying to develop some small sort of industrial economy there, the economy being entirely agricultural. And then we developed a plant, we had a pilot plant which developed into a very sizeable plant for the making of butyl alcohol and acetone out of the waste molasses from our sugar plants. And that went-- that production was taken up in lend-lease by the British Board of Trade and to a small extent also by Russia under lend-lease.

P: How was it used?

H: It was used in munitions, a component in--how, I don't know. It's all a mystery to me just how it's done, but I know it was in great demand. One of the problems was to get the bacteria working right. The bacteria had to work right to make this doggone stuff and we had to get a professor down from the University of Wisconsin who finally succeeded in getting the bacteria to behave. It was really fun because we were doing something constructive all the time.

P: Was there talk at this time of Puerto Rico becoming an independent country?

H: Oh, yes. There was a small group who were hollering for independence, and a somewhat larger group who still thought in terms of culture, power culture, and that was something that must be preserved, must be contained, must be no infringement on it; and they were a little impatient with some of their group who had a tendency to lapse into English when they might very well have been speaking Spanish. But they got over it in due course.

P: Was this the more educated--

H: I'm talking about the more educated ones, yes, of course. The simple peasants were just delightful people, just as polite and wholesome, would offer you the little roof off their own heads if you were a visitor. And of, yes, this was one of our problems. This must not be a record because I think this is one of the things that I brought back, because it involves me telling a story. Can you turn this off a minute?

P: I will, but let me just say that you could edit this out of the transcript if you really would like it, but I sure would like to get it down on the tape.

H: Okay, I didn't know I was going to have the right to exercise--

And of course the overwhelming problem there then, as it still is,

is overpopulation. After I had been there two months, I had the answer. I had the cure. Cure for all the social and economic problems of Puerto Rico. It was, and I knew that to get anywhere with it you had to have a successful political party and for a political party to get anywhere, you had to have an attractive slogan. Just like "Bread, liberty," and so forth. So, characteristically I began at the back end to get--and also I knew for your slogan to be any good, it had to be represented by familiar initials like DDT or GOD or something like that. So I began at the back end characteristically, and I picked out my initials for the slogan of the political party that would solve all of the social and economic and what not problems of Puerto Rico. The letters were CRC, and those did not stand as you might think for calomel and rhubarb and calcium. No, they stood for compulsory retroactive contraception. That hasn't been followed to this day. Here was the Messiah giving them their--

P: And it wasn't accepted?

H: I say, unfortunately nobody accepted it. Unfortunately no.

P: Compulsory retroactive contraception.

H: That's right, with the emphasis on retroactive.

P: That's a very interesting tab of the times.

H: I had to have a laugh now and then or I couldn't have stood it down there.

P: It was in pretty bad shape, wasn't it?

H: Very. Poverty was horrible. Poverty and disease all about you in a beautiful country.

P: Have you returned there?

H: Oh, yes, I've been back to visit once or twice. And I still hear from one of my old friends once a month. This is after twenty years. I still get a letter from him. He's Puerto Rican.

P: Is he in the government now, too?

H: No, he was Commissioner of the Interior. He's the man that built the good roads that they eventually got.

P: Who is that, sir?

H: Guillermo Esteves. He looked like a big husky German and therefore I'm reasonably certain that there was way back German ancestry. We've got the family Steves here--they put an "E" in front of it. As a Spaniard would say, "Esteves." He wouldn't say "Steves"; he'd say "Esteves." Got it all figured out.

P: You're probably right. Let me go back to bring this up to date a little more, and we'll conclude it.

You said that you did not have very much further contact with Lyndon Johnson during these years when he was in the Senate which would be from '48 to '59.

H: Practically none thereafter at all to this date.

P: I was going to ask you have you heard from him or--

H: No.

P: --seen him in the last few years at all?

H: No. I saw him one time at a political mass meeting when he was Vice President and I went down there surreptitiously despite the Hatch Act just long enough to shake hands with him. I very scrupulously observed the provisions of the Hatch Act, always have. I've been a free man comparatively little in my professional life except during those early years when I was with the Citizens League when I was free to help pick their work and in a way help Lyndon Johnson.

P: You were in private practice when you were forming this Citizens League here in San Antonio way back?

H: Yes.

P: Since you did know Johnson in his very early years, can you see changes in the man--I mean, just from what you currently read now?

H: Well, changes from the time that he was a handsome young fellow with great probable prospects getting somewhere some day. Changes, not necessarily for the better. I would think that the impatience that was not then manifest was a later development probably.

P: Impatience?

H: Yes, impatience. Intolerance of differences of opinion, but that's pretty hard for a man sitting way away, not having been in contact with him, to do any prejudging on. When your mind necessarily is largely influenced by what you've read or what you've seen on TV, and the man that I've seen on TV, there's very little resemblance to the Lyndon Johnson that I knew. Very little resemblance either in the manner or in, let's say, charisma.

P: How does this charisma differ?

H: Well, I just don't think he's got it any more. I don't think he's got it. I think because of that intolerance of his and the air that is so manifest, I don't think that he has got the charisma that I thought as a young man he probably had. At least as a young fellow I thought, "Well, there's a likable chap." I haven't any right to say it probably, but if I were to have contacts with Lyndon Johnson today that I would say, "He's not a likable chap," but I'm just guessing that from what I have read and from the Lyndon Johnson I have seen on TV day-in and day-out that I don't believe that he has had for quite a few years the charm that he had as a young man. That's not necessarily a loss; it could well be offset by other more valuable things, but anyway I think the great difference between Lyndon Johnson and John Kennedy, for instance, is that it did not seem to

me that Lyndon Johnson was surrounded by people who generally loved him. Maybe I'm wrong in my belief that Kennedy was surrounded by people who genuinely beloved him--loved him, but he had a good press in that respect anyway.

P: I was going to ask you--do you think that this has led to his sort of position now as really being an unpopular President?

H: That Johnson has been an unpopular President?

P: No, that now he has become more or less an unpopular President.

H: Oh, unquestionably yes. That doesn't keep me from being a staunch Democrat. I still am that.

P: No, that's what the press says regarding Johnson, and he does have problems with his press. Do you have any opinions on why this might be so?

H: Well, I don't think he studied his proper approach to the press sufficiently. I think he got in a bad habit of being a little impatient, in a hurry. He was always in a hurry; even as a young man he was in a hurry. And probably brusque. And of course that made problems, made for problems in his relations with the press.

P: Were you surprised at his March 31st withdrawal?

H: Oh, yes. I didn't think it was in character at all.

P: Why do you think he did it?

H: I don't know. But it didn't seem to me that it was in character because I said right away, "Well, he's not doing that--. He must be in very bad health. Lyndon Johnson would never admit he was licked." The Lyndon Johnson, at least that I thought I knew, was a man who would fight to the very last moment, never give up. So I suspected that he was in bad health. Well, apparently, if he has been in bad health, it has been very, very much kept in the dark.

P: Do you think it is possible that he was trying to arrive at some solution and keep the country from really becoming more divided on the issues of the war?

H: I think it was too late. I think that if that had been in his mind it would have been well for him to have made that decision at least six months earlier. But who am I to sit here at this distance in a sort of ivory tower that I'm in and proclaim this, that, or the other thing?

P: I'm only asking your opinions of it and you have a source of comparison with the early Johnson, and I think this is important.

I was going to ask you what you thought about his career and how you think his Administration rates in United States history with other Presidents.

H: So far as Johnson is concerned, he has done a whale of a good job with his qualifications. It would have been a much better job if he had been better able to get along with Congress. He has had a miserable Congress; this last Congress has just been unspeakably bad. Now whether he might have developed better relations and there might have been a better Congress, I don't know. I doubt it. I think there has been just this general disaffection of John Q. Public with things as they are, and it has been latent for a long time and it has become manifest only during the last year or so.

P: And has been projected onto the Administration?

H: Oh, unquestionably. They looked for a whipping boy and he has been a convenient whipping boy. He has been blamed for thousands of things that he's not the least bit responsible for.

P: Then it is not a matter of his Administration aggravating the public so much as just a latent dissent.

H: I don't doubt but what anybody who had occupied the Presidency would

probably have met with the same degree of unwarranted opprobrium but for the fact that Johnson has never known how to sell himself personally. That's a horrible word, that word charisma, but I can't think of any other one to use, and he hasn't had it. If he ever had it, he lost it a good many years ago.

P: Of course, there is an area here where traditionally a Southerner has not been acceptable in that position, too.

H: Well, Texas is not necessarily an advantage because the cartooned Texan is certainly fixed in a lot of people's minds, and that fact that Lyndon has worn a big hat and has been a little flamboyant in personal ornamentation and the \$190,000 spent on his daughter's wedding at the time boys were dying overseas--some people thought was not in good taste, and I don't think added to his popularity. I'm trying to be as dispassionate as I know how to be.

P: No, I thank you very much. It is said that he likes to think in terms of his comparison with Franklin Roosevelt. How do you think they compare?

H: Well, there's one outstanding difference right at the start. Look at the charm that FDR had. He could charm a skunk, I believe.

P: Do you have any other comments on the Johnson years, political years?

H: No. I think I've exhausted you, and I know I've exhausted this very feeble memory of mine trying to dig things that have long since gone, long since buried.

P: You've done a very good job, and I want to thank you very much.

H: Not at all. Thank you for your patience.

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to the

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