INTERVIEWEE: HUBERT HUMPHREY (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

August 17, 1971

F: This is an interview with Senator Hubert H. Humphrey in his office in the Federal Courts Building in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 17, 1971. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Senator, I suppose the place to start on this is when you first became aware of Lyndon Johnson.

H: It was in the 81st Congress when we both were elected.

F: You were Freshmen together.

H: Freshmen together. And, of course, Lyndon Johnson was a man that was well known. I was just another senator in a sense that came to Washington.

F: I would dispute that. That's a bad way to start. But you had first emerged as the mayor of Minneapolis.

H: Yes, but I wasn't known particularly on the national scene, and I'm thinking of my relationships with Lyndon Johnson. I remember that when I came to Washington, of course, that he was recognized among senators already. He had been in the House, and he had run for the Senate in Texas and had a close election, and had been defeated, as I recall, once. He was a close friend of Sam Rayburn's, and anybody that was a close friend of Sam Rayburn's was already important. I mean, even if Lyndon Johnson didn't have ability, or had no particular leadership qualities, he would have been important simply because he knew Sam Rayburn. And the Texas delegation was a powerful delegation in the Congress. There was a closeness, there seemed to be a kind of community among certain members of the Congress, particularly the Texas delegation, and the southerners.

F: They had seniority.

H: Yes. My first impression of the Senate was that the people who ran it were the southerners or their allies. And I remember so well how Bob Taft always had a working relationship with Dick Russell on certain issues. Lyndon Johnson had a kind of--I sensed that he had a different relationship, this was the one thing that intrigued me about him. He was a close friend of Dick Russell's; a close associate of Walter George, who was a powerful senator from Georgia; he was on good working relationships with every southerner, but he wasn't quite southern. He was a different cut. He worked with them on all the issues they were interested in, the depletion allowances, and in the early days on

civil rights.

F: Tidelands was coming of interest.

H: Yes, tidelands. But the relationship was never what I considered to be an emotional one, it was a pragmatic one which later on was fully demonstrated, that it was very pragmatic.

But I can recall Lyndon Johnson coming into the Senate. I remember him physically, you know, as a tall, big man, very active. He knew the senators. I didn't know anybody when I came to the Senate, and I remember Lyndon Johnson knowing most everybody. I also know how the press in a sense was watching Lyndon Johnson. They were also watching me, but for different reasons. I had been at the Democratic convention in 1948, and had caused some commotion there because of my stand on civil rights. Of course, that plagued me and followed me all the way into the Senate in the early years.

F: I was going to ask you, did that more or less set up a confrontation between you and the southern delegation?

H: Yes. It was, in all honesty, a political albatross, particularly at that time, because the southerners dominated the Congress; they dominated all the committees. The whole atmosphere of the Senate was of southern orientation. I used to say that Washington was more southern than the southern cities. The odor of magnolia was much stronger in Washington than it was in Montgomery, or Richmond--

F: That's always true of the borderlands.

H: It really is. The press corps, for example, seemed to be very southern oriented, too. I mean, they had convinced themselves that the movers and the shakers in the Congress were essentially the conservatives and the southerners, and I suppose, now that I look back at it, that was right. I used to wonder why they never gave the rest of us much of a break except to give us a rough time. But you were literally told by the press before you ever got into Congress that if you didn't behave, that the southerners would get you, so to speak; that the man that you had to pay your respects to was Dick Russell. And Dick Russell was a powerful man, a very competent man. I'm not trying to demean him in any way. But he was looked upon, he and Harry Byrd--Harry Byrd was the more conservative by far--but they were looked upon as the powers in the Democratic southern bloc. And then in the Republican side there was Eugene Milligan of Colorado, and there was Bob Taft of Ohio. In the Democratic side, there was Dick Russell, and Walter George, and Harry Byrd. These were three of the prominent, powerful figures. And Lyndon Johnson got along with all of these people. He never was close to Bob Taft. I think there was no real personal relationship there, but always a political relationship.

Johnson, as I recall him from the first days, was a political operator. Now I use the word "operator" not in a nefarious sense, but he understood the pieces; he understood the mechanism, and he always kept relationships that he could call on; his personal relationships with senators were such that he could call on them if he needed them.

Now I noted that early in the 81st Congress he started to show some interest in me. By that, I mean that he didn't ignore me, as some of the southerners did. He didn't treat me as if I were a pariah. And I remember that within one or two years (my time sequence here might not be accurate), but by 1951 Johnson was actually becoming a bridge for me with some of the more conservative members of the Senate. I believe he looked upon me as a more pragmatic fellow, too, even though I was an avowed so-called Democratic liberal. I think he felt that I too wanted to learn how to live with people, which I do, which has been a characteristic of my life.

The one thing that made me feel more unhappy than anything else when I came to the Senate was that I didn't have the kind of working relationships that I was accustomed to when I was mayor of the city of Minneapolis. I got along very well, as mayor, with the business element, the conservative element--they didn't vote for me, but we always liked each other. My social relationships were good. In the Senate, I sensed in the beginning that there weren't even any good social relationship with the conservatives. It's fair to say that Lyndon Johnson did more to bring me into those more friendly social relationships with the conservative members of the Democratic party than any other person in the Congress. That's my first recollection of him.

F: They were consistent in the fact that their social relationships and their political relationships were pretty much the same thing.

H: Yes.

F: And if you didn't belong politically, you didn't belong socially.

H: That's right. But Johnson never was a captive of the southern bloc. He was trying to be a captain of them, rather than a captive. You see, being a Roosevelt New Dealer and being a protege of Sam Rayburn, he obviously couldn't be a real conservative. He was what I call a pragmatic moderate. He didn't even want to be identified as a liberal, at that time. Privately, however, I mean in many of his votes, he was liberal. He had his relationships with certain elements of the labor movement. At the early days, in the Senate, it should be clear that the labor movement was not close to Johnson at all; on the contrary, with the exception of David Dubinsky,--

Johnson always broke into groups, wedged his way in, on a personal relationship. David Dubinsky, for example, and Lyndon Johnson were close friends. It went back to the times of Maury Maverick and the minimum wage battle when he was a member of the

House of Representatives. Lyndon Johnson was always proud of the fact that he was close to Roosevelt, that he was one of Roosevelt's young men, so to speak. This made him in a sense, in his contacts with many people like myself, as a sort of New Dealer.

But I think he always had a political finger up to the political temperature and the environment, and he knew that the 81st Congress was very conservative. He knew that while Truman had won a great victory, that there just weren't very many Truman Democrats elected to the 81st Congress. And he was, I think, biding his time, so to speak, and building his contacts. Not breaking with the South--but rather bending the southern attitude somewhat to his will staying close enough to the southern leadership so that they trusted him, and so that he could work with them.

F: Did you have a feeling at this time that he was already intent on being a national senator and not a regional one?

H: Yes, national, definitely. Early. It was perfectly obvious. There's no doubt that Rayburn and Wright Patman and people of that vintage who were Johnson's friends were national figures. Then he built a very close friendship with Walter George. Walter George was the powerful senator, and in many ways I think one of the great senators, regardless of our ideological differences.

F: He was much more than a Georgia senator.

H: Oh, yes. He was the powerful chairman of the Finance Committee, later on of the Foreign Relations Committee. And then Dick Russell was the brains, so to speak, behind the whole southern operation. And Lyndon Johnson had both of those contacts. The point I'm emphasizing, because it always intrigued me, and how he was able to have these intimate relationships, social, and even political, with Walter George and with Dick Russell and with, later on, of course, with Bob Kerr--Bob Kerr was much more of a liberal though, he was kind of a Populist--but even with Jim Eastland, and others of that kind, and still not be one of them! He was different. He was really different. As he used to say, he was a southwesterner, he wasn't a southerner.

F: As you know, Johnson can be a creature of moods, and is not really a "hail fellow, well met." Did he do this in these days in a sort of a quiet way, gradually pushing himself in?

H: That's the way I noticed. And I must say that I of course didn't concentrate my attention on Johnson when he first came in. I was in with Paul Douglas, for example, and Clinton Anderson and Estes Kefauver, and people of that group--our little group of twenty-five or so liberal senators were very suspicious of Johnson, in those early years, very suspicious of him! I was maybe the one man that looked upon him with more friendship, more acceptance. I always felt that he was a lot more liberal, from my point of view, than he ever acted. I really felt that early.

But in the beginning I noticed that he wasn't pushing. He was working his way into the apparatus. He came in with good credentials, you see, and he became a working partner with the southern conservatives, but always maintaining a slight aloofness. He worked in his office, he was a total senator. He had his parties at his home. Held have a drink with the boys in the office. He wasn't trying to get into national politics, he was a senator's senator. He was beginning to, in a sense, carve out a leadership role for himself in the Senate. He never wanted to be in the papers too much. From the very beginning I noticed he was suspicious of the press. He always had an antipathy toward them.

F: Let's talk about you just a second. You'd been, of course, a magnificent reform mayor of Minneapolis, which still leaves you in the state of Minnesota, but also you did help ram through that strong civil rights plank in '48.

H: Oh, yes.

F: And are generally credited with being the moving spirit there. The fact that Truman went on and won with that thing, did this give you any special pipeline to the White House?

H: I always had very good relationships with President Truman. I don't think I knew how to use those contacts as well as I should have. I felt somewhat ill at ease when I first went to Washington. I felt that the structure of the Senate, the tone, the atmosphere, the environment of the whole Congress was not sympathetic to my kind of politics. And I think it's a fair statement that it wasn't. They weren't even sympathetic or friendly to Harry Truman. Truman had won, but Truman couldn't put through any of his legislation through that Congress.

Truman was always kind to me, and the White House was always open to me. Whenever I wanted anything, I could go over there, and I would really be received with open arms. So that was to me the most gratifying experience.

But as I remember the first couple of years I was in the Senate I was very sad. I just couldn't believe--

F: The charge that it is a club is true--

H: Much more so then than now, much more so! I've been asked a number of times, "What's the difference between the Senate of 1971, Mr. Humphrey, and the Senate of 1949?" And I've said, "The difference is that it was a closed shop in 1949, and now it's wide open." There are little groups today, to be sure, in the Senate, but more individualistic, much less of a club, much more open. I'm not always sure that that always makes for a better working Senate, but your individual relationships are much different now than they were in 1949. In '49, you were either in or out. There was a little band of liberals over here, and they were looked down upon. When I think of what we went through--the press

hostility toward Truman carried over into the 81st Congress, the group that was elected, of the so-called liberals. The civil rights issue we had brought to the forefront and those of us that had been associated with it, we were an anathema. We were looked upon as wild men, as dangerous radicals.

F: The wrong people had gotten into the club.

H: Yes. I remember one senator once saying, I overheard him--this hurt me more than anything in my private or public life, anything--I remember I was walking down the corridor in the Cloak Room of the Senate, and I was standing right behind one of those big bulletin boards where they put the AP dispatches, and as I went by and as this one particular senator saw me, he said, "How in the hell could the people of Minnesota elect a guy like that to the Senate?" And, you know, I just felt sick, because I always worked on the basis that when the election was over, you didn't hate anybody, and you sort of shook hands and you went to work--

F: And coated over your wounds.

H: But you could really feel it. I really felt it at that time. And there is no doubt that there was that kind of attitude.

F: Would you want to say which senator that was?

H: No, I just wouldn't like to. But he was a very prominent man, and one that I grew to have affection for later on, and I think he liked me, too. But that was the feeling then.

Now, Johnson during this period was not conspicuous. He was just moving around. And as you know the majority leader then was Scott Lucas. And the majority whip was Ernest McFarland. Neither of these men were southerners, but they never could have been there without southerner support. It was perfectly obvious in the caucuses that the southerners ran it.

F: From a southern standpoint, these men were safe?

H: Definitely. And when the chips were down they were always with them. Scott Lucas, of course, always voted with us on civil rights, but there was no danger, because it wasn't going to pass anyway.

But what I'm saying is that anybody who was in a position of leadership did not necessarily have to be a southerner, but he was acceptable to them, and not only that, trustworthy--never double-crossed them, never crossed them up, so to speak, to put it in a better word.

Then after the election of '52--what year was it that?--

F: Johnson was made minority leader in '52. That's when Eisenhower--

H: After the election of '52--that's when Scott Lucas was defeated as a result of many things. But you remember the Kefauver hearings on crime got into Cook County, and that splashed over on Scott Lucas. Scott Lucas and others always felt that those hearings hurt Scott's chances for re-election. I think his chances for re-election were damaged more by the fact that he had spent all his time in Washington as majority leader.

F: Actually it was in '50 that he was defeated because it was in the bi-election year, and then Ernest McFarland became the majority leader and he lost then in '52 to Goldwater.

H: Is that when it was, or was it '54?

F: No. Goldwater was up for re-election in '65, so counting back that would be twelve years back, and it was '52 that Goldwater came in.

H: Yes, Goldwater came in in '52. So I'll have to check my sequence.

F: The curious thing here is that you had two Democratic leaders in a row--the leader--

H: Yes, lose.

F: So the job is a loser, it looks like.

H: Well, it could have been. It was at that time. But anyway, Scott Lucas was there from '49 to '51.

F: Yes. And in the '51 Senate then Ernest McFarland--

H: So Scott was defeated in November of '50, that's it. Right. Okay. And then there was Ernest McFarland for two years, and Lyndon Johnson then became majority whip.

F: Minority.

H: Majority whip from '50 to '52.

F: Yes, that's right. You' re right.

H: And then for a period of time after '52, minority--

F: Until you could overturn--

H: Minority leader.

F: Right.

H: And then there was a change, and very quickly--

F: That's when William Knowland went out.

H: Then Johnson became majority leader. I remember in '52, after the election of '52--first I remember in '52 that there were a number of people that didn't think that Johnson did enough work for Adlai Stevenson, amongst liberals. Johnson always defended himself by pointing out that he did plenty of work for him in the South, particularly in Texas. I've forgotten just whether Texas carried that year for--

F: No, Eisenhower won. The tidelands was a big issue because--

H: It was a big issue. And in 1952 after Eisenhower had been elected, Johnson called me and said that he wanted me to go on the Committee on Foreign Relations. Mike Mansfield had been elected, as I recall, out in Montana. And Johnson said, "We're going to have a new policy. We're going to give each new Democratic senator a major committee." When I came in, you got the dregs, you know, minor committees, unless you were in the club. And most of us liberals were put on over in the Labor and Public Welfare committees, and the only issue that was really before us at that time was the Taft-Hartley repeal. When I stop and think now that every major piece of legislation that people like comes out of that committee today, education and health and consumer protection, and all that.

F: But there wasn't much going on in those days.

H: There wasn't much going on there at that time, because you couldn't get any education legislation out, and you only had the battle over Taft-Hartley repeal and national health insurance. So Johnson asked me if I would go on the Foreign Relations Committee. I said of course I would. But he said, "You'll have to give up the Labor Committee, and you'll have to give up the Committee on Government Operations." I wasn't on agriculture yet. And I said, "Oh, boy, what else can I get on!" He said, "Well, we can get you on Agriculture."

So I had to give up my committee assignments, and I went over as a freshman senator--a new member on the Committee on Foreign Relations. He said the reason he wanted us over there--he was going to put Mansfield and myself--he said he wanted some new, young blood on the committee. Secondly, he said that he was worried about John Foster Dulles becoming Secretary of State, and he wanted to have some good scrappers, battlers, over on that committee. I was out in Minnesota when he called me on the

telephone, Johnson called me, and said, "We're going to arrange now the committee assignments."

Now about that time is when I became much more friendly with Johnson, not because of that assignment, but we started hitting it off. He was a good conversationalist. I was always fascinated by his knowledge of politics.

F: Beautiful talker.

H: And a marvelous conversationalist in private conversation, like right now. Told a lot of stories, a lot of human interest stuff. He had been close to Roosevelt, who was my political hero. And he knew the operations of the House, and he knew all the personalities. He was a great mimicker, too, you know. And he knew all the little things that people did. I used to say he had his own private FBI. If you ever knew anybody, if you'd been out on a date, or if you'd had a drink, or if you'd attended a meeting, or you danced with a gal at a night club, he knew it! It was just incredible! I don't know how he was able to get all that information, but he lived and breathed and walked and talked politics. That's all. He was just totally immersed in it. And I found him a fascinating individual right from the beginning.

F: The two of you never overlapped committees, did you?

H: No, we never did. He looked to me--he obviously used some flattery when I look back at it, and every man likes a little of it, but he didn't come at me head-on, it was a very slow process of calling me in and talking to me and saying, "Do you think you can help out now amongst your liberal friends on this?" I became his bridge to the liberals. He learned early that was a very difficult assignment, because the liberals are very independent. They are willing to vote in a bloc, but they don't want to do it under anybody's direction. They prefer to think it's ideology. And my kind of politics met with Johnson's in this sense--that while I was a man of liberal persuasion, I often knew that you couldn't get as much as you wanted, and therefore I was willing to settle for less. This of course was considered to be heresy amongst the true liberals. I used to say that some of my liberal friends were never so happy as when they were unhappy. If they really succeeded in their total measure, it made them unhappy. And they look upon us that would take a foot instead of a mile as unprincipled compromisers. That used to bother me, it doesn't bother me any more at all. I felt that it was important that we inch along, even if we couldn't gallop along, at least that we trot a little bit. And Johnson felt that way. And Johnson maybe convinced me more than anybody else that we could make steady progress if we just didn't bite off too much. Yet he also knew that sometimes you had to go the whole way. You know, on a vote, it was better sometimes to lose than to win, particularly on symbolic issues. If you couldn't win the big issue, don't compromise but rather go down fighting.

And I began to understand the problems of some of my border state friends and

some of my southern friends, and their problems with their constituencies. And I think that he did a great deal to bring me into a more tolerant and friendly attitude. Now many of my critics think that this meant that Johnson in a sense wore me down and rubbed off my sharpness, and in a sense made a compromiser out of me.

In some ways I suppose he was a kind of teacher. He always knew what my position was--I never fooled him. For example, when he became majority leader, in 1954, I believe it was, he asked Mansfield to become his majority whip. Now, the truth is that he had called me on the telephone at my home at 3216 Coquelin Terrace in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and asked me if I was interested in that position. And he said, "How are you going to vote on majority leader?" And I said, "I can't vote for you," because the tidelands fight had been on, and we'd had a couple of civil rights battles. And he said, "Well, I'm sorry." First of all he said, "You know, I'm going to win. You liberals don't have any votes." And I said, "I think that's maybe true." He said, "You haven't got even as many votes as you think you have." And I said, "Well, maybe so, maybe we ought to talk about that." He said, "We'll do that. But I was interested in you being majority whip."

Now whether he was just playing me off or not, I don't know. But I said, "Well, I can't vote for you." And he said, "Well, at least you're honest. But I want to tell you something. Some of the people that are telling you that they're going to vote against me are going to vote for me."

So I came to his office later on. And he said, "Well, who are you going to run, you liberals?" I said, "Well, we're going to run Jim Murray. Not that Jim's going to get elected, I know he's not going to get elected, but we thought we'd put up a good showing for Jim. It would be something that he deserves, he's an old-timer around here, and he symbolizes a lot of the liberal spirit that we have amongst the liberals in the Congress." He said, "Well, who do you think is going to vote for him," and I gave him the list that I had.

He went right down, and he said, "He isn't going to vote for him, he isn't going to vote for him, he isn't going to vote for him. These fellows are going to vote for me." "Oh," I said, "I can't believe that. They've already told Paul Douglas or Estes Kefauver or somebody else that they're going to vote for Murray." He said, "Well, you'll find out."

I'll never forget this. When we had our caucus, he was just as right as day. They voted for Johnson.

F: He was an incredible vote counter, wasn't he?

H: Yes. And I then moved to make the nomination unanimous, because I didn't want Jim Murray to be so humiliated, because it ended up where he had, gee, just nine or ten or twelve or thirteen--between nine and thirteen votes. And for an old gentleman that had

been there all those years, that didn't look good at all.

When we got all through with that, Johnson said, "Call me at the office. Come down and see me. I want to talk to you."

I went down to see him at his office. He said, "Now, listen, you be careful with whom you associate around here. I told you the other day that some of these senators were not going to vote for Murray, and you didn't believe me. Now you saw what happened." He said, "Now one of the reasons I want to talk with you is that I think you're a man of your word. You've proven it to me. I think you're a damned fool, the way you vote, but at least you keep your word." Now he said, "Two of these other fellows that you were associated with--"Three of us had come down to his office; one of them was Senator Hunt of Wyoming, and another one was, I can't recall for the moment, but we had come down after the vote, we were down to see him about who was going on the Policy Committee and who was going on the Steering Committee, and he wouldn't talk. Oh, this was before the vote, that's right--this was before the vote! Because we said, "Now if we can get some understanding about this, then we won't have to put up a fight in the caucus."

He said, "I don't need to worry about it. I've got the votes in the caucus, and I'm not going to talk to you. We're not going to sell seats on the Policy Committee for some votes here. We're not going to make any deals on the Steering Committee.

Well, after the vote was all over, he called me, and he said, "Now listen, I told you. You were down here with Senator Hunt, and you see he voted for me. I knew what he was going to do." And whoever the other one was, I've forgotten now, he said, "Same thing. You're mixed up with people that didn't keep their word. Now, I'm willing to talk with you. You've kept your word, and you told me what you were going to do. You're a damned fool for what you're doing, but at least I know where you stand."

He said, 'Now, who do you want on the Policy Committee? I'll deal with you." I said, "We want Jim Murray." He said, "Well, if you want Jim Murray, we'll put him on. I don't think he's the strongest man." I said, "Well, he's symbolic." He said, "Okay, we'll put old Jim on the Policy Committee."

And I said, "Well, we have some other things that we want to talk to you about. We want to talk to you about committee assignments. We wanted to get Herbert Lehman on Judiciary, and Paul Douglas over on Finance," and so on.

And every single request that I made he fulfilled. For a long period of time we were trying to get Senator Burdick--this was later on--on Judiciary, and he took care of that.

In other words, Johnson, I think, saw in me a man that would keep my word, and I saw in him the same thing. And I used to fight with all my liberals all the time about Johnson, because they always figured he was a conniving, southern conservative, and I always figured that he was a rather clever, adroit, astute pragmatist.

F: You had a dark star coming up in a neighbor over here in Joe McCarthy. I think you and he had been on Government Operations at the outset.

H: Right.

F: Now, I rather gather that Joe didn't show much at first, but just gradually moved over to his more extreme position.

H: Right.

F: Johnson has been both credited and criticized for his handling of the McCarthy issue through the years, because he didn't really show his hand. And yet I've wondered how much he did have in the way of a role of getting McCarthy into that position where he finally was disciplined.

H: Oh, I think the Johnson handling of that was maybe one of his greatest strategic victories, one of his most significant victories, and a master of strategy. Joe McCarthy didn't come in with a flash or a blaze. As a matter of fact, when he first came to the Senate in the 80th Congress, he was primarily associated with housing and veterans housing and so forth, and looked upon as a kind of a forward looking man.

F: I rather gather I might have voted for him if I'd been from Wisconsin.

H: Yes. You know, he'd been a Democratic mayor, as a matter of fact, of a town in Wisconsin. Then he got into this business on the Communists in the State Department, and that was in about 1950. It was all part of this fever and emotion that we were going through in the cold war period. Actually, even in the beginning, I don't think Joe understood that he had anything either. He just sort of let it go, you know, and it was picked up by the press. And I must say that I think that McCarthy was, in a sense, made by the journalists, because each time that he'd come up with another name he'd get such tremendous copy that it was just feeding on him.

I remember a story--not that Joe had done anything, but that he hadn't done anything. He hadn't left town. There was a big story that he did not leave town, leave Washington, that he didn't get on an airplane. I thought, my God, how hard up are you for copy when you could write that a fellow didn't leave!

But Johnson never seemed to show any friendship at all for McCarthy. Proper, as

a senator, I suppose a certain amount of pleasant talk, but from the very beginning I sensed that Johnson looked upon McCarthy, first of all, as a flash in the pan, and, secondly, as a kind of maneuverer and a sort of political serpent. I remember he used to say--he had a saying that "if you're going to strike a snake with a hoe, you want to be sure that you get him with the first blow." And I got to know Johnson quite well about that time with McCarthy, because he used to think that many of those of us that were on the liberal side were picking at him, only to feed his grist mills. He used to warn me, he'd say, "Now look, he just eats fellows like you. You're nourishment for him. You keep away from him." Time after time he'd say to me, "The only way we'll ever get Joe McCarthy is when he starts attacking some conservatives around here, and then we'll put an end to it."

I remember one day that I was walking in the Cloak Room with Johnson and he went on over to the bulletin board, and there was an AP story where McCarthy had attacked Bishop Oxnam, the Methodist bishop. He said, "He has made a fatal mistake. Bishop Oxnam is a personal friend of Harry Byrd's. He had made a fatal mistake. He has attacked George Marshall, and he's a personal hero of Willis Robertson. Hubert, people like you, when he attacks you and your kind and your ADA-ers and the labor leaders, and so on, that's just what he loves. And if you fellows feed into that, you're just giving him fuel for his engine. Stay away. Don't let him get at you, and don't start to take him on." Because some of us had from time to time. But he said, "He'll go too far." And when he saw that story, he said, "That's the beginning. He's in trouble, because you can't attack Harry Byrd in this Senate. You can't attack Harry Byrd's friends in this Senate, not in this Senate. Mark my words, Hubert, he's in trouble."

And it was at that point where things started to yell. And I have a feeling, from what little I recall, that Johnson was visiting a great deal with a number of the senators around there, what we were going to do about McCarthy. Very quietly. With the Walter Georges and with the Harry Byrds and with the Willis Robertsons and with the John Stennises.

And when the time came, Johnson knew that the one thing that would trip McCarthy was to violate the code of the Senate. I remember him telling me point blank, he said, "He can attack people all over this country, but one of these days he's going to violate the rules of this body, he's going to violate the code of the Senate, and that's when he'll get in trouble, when he picks on the conservative friends and violates the rules of the Senate." And that's what he did.

Then of course Johnson got that resolution through for the appointment of that special committee to examine into charges against Joe McCarthy. And a lot of people again, particularly many of my liberal friends, felt that his selection of those on that committee was too bad. I mean, these men were too conservative. When you have a Watkins from Utah, and a Stennis from Mississippi, it was just too conservative.

F: My feeling though was that Watkins was a masterpiece, because he was absolutely saintly.

H: Absolutely, absolutely. And Johnson always liked Stennis. He used to say, 'I'd leave my wife with John Stennis. I think that John Stennis would be good to her. You can trust John Stennis." And that's true John Stennis is a very honorable man.

Johnson was like a psychiatrist. Unbelievable man in terms of sizing up people, what they would do, how they would stand under pressure, what their temperament was. This was his genius. He used to tell me many times, "You've got to study every member of this body to know how they're really going to ultimately act. Everything about them, their family, their background, their attitudes, even watch their moods before you even ask them to vote." He was a master of human relations when it came to that Senate.

F: Now, you're on the Foreign Relations Committee--

(Interruption)

F: One brief note. This is our second telephone interruption. I don't know about the first one, but this one was a call from Washington.

H: On Foreign Relations, he more or less depended upon his lieutenants in there, his associates. Mike Mansfield and Hubert Humphrey, and then, later on, George Smathers. Also at that time in the early stages, when you had Walter George and Theodore Francis Green, they were very close to Johnson, very, very close to Johnson. But Johnson didn't play any particular role, a leader role, in the areas of foreign policy. He relied on his committee structure. He relied on the chairmanships--

F: That's what I wondered.

H: He knew where they would stand. Of course, Johnson took the measures that they brought out and put them through.

F: By sheer geography, you're going to have a difference of opinion with Johnson on certain matters.

(Interruption)

F: But tidelands of course would have been very special to Texans but not to you--

H: Tidelands separated us, yes.

F: And of course the same thing with civil rights, and the Federal Power Commission came in for a big fight during this period, with Johnson of course representing again the gas

interests in Texas.

H: Right.

F: And so on. But that never became personal?

H: No. I'll never forget when Proxmire came to the Senate. Johnson arranged to have money sent out to Proxmire for his campaign, I think something like thirty, thirty-five thousand dollars--the figure may be inaccurate. I recommended this very strongly to Johnson because I was very close to Wisconsin in the early '50's; in fact, they used to call me their third senator. There was Wiley and McCarthy over there. And when McCarthy died, then Proxmire ran for the Senate. And Proxmire had denounced Johnson several times out there during that time, amongst other Democrats, but that didn't bother Johnson particularly. He wanted to get a Democratic senator. And when Proxmire was elected, Johnson and myself were out, along with some other senators, at the airport in Washington to greet him and bring him on in and give him a party. Proxmire hadn't been in the Senate a month before he started Johnson's gas and oil interests, and denouncing him very personally.

I remember Johnson saying to me, "Well, by God, you bring me the damndest people I've ever seen. I go around, scrounge up money, and a good deal of it was oil money, and send it on out there to Wisconsin to get this fellow elected. And the first damned thing he does when he comes into Washington is to personally denounce me! Denounce me personally!" This was somewhat in jest, but it had a little barb to it.

But that little episode will indicate some of the regional differences and some of the differences we had.

Now on this civil rights thing, Johnson never--you see, he never signed the Southern Manifesto, you remember?

F: I know that.

H: And he took great pride in the '50's, in the '57 Civil Rights Act, I think it was--and then again in '60, that the first civil rights legislation since the war between the states, or since the 1870's, was passed under his direction.

Now, the big argument in the '50's and the '60's was over jury trial. And the ADA, AF of L-CIO liberal Democratic position was that you could not really rely on southern juries to be fair. And, therefore, we wanted to have trials without jury. I had mixed emotions really. This was a terribly difficult issue for me because my Populist background always had emphasized the importance of jury trial. My father talked to me about things like that. But it was perfectly obvious that a number of the juries in the South were just

rigged. They just wouldn't give them a fair shake.

Johnson was promoting a civil rights bill in which the central issue was whether or not there'd be jury trials, or whether there would be judge trials, and whether or not contempt of court would be civil or criminal. We took the hard line, the liberals, namely the criminal contempt for violations and no jury trial.

It was here where Jack Kennedy made his breakthrough with the South. And Johnson helped arrange that. Johnson talked to Kennedy and convinced Kennedy that he ought to vote for the jury trial. I've often looked back on that, because that never seemed to hurt Jack Kennedy's liberal credentials. But some of us were always being put on the rack for a greater degree of purification, and we had to have higher test credentials.

But Johnson wanted to get some civil rights legislation through. He also led the fight to amend Rule 22. He was opposed to a simple majority, or a constitutional majority, and even for a long period of time to the three-fifths. Three-fifths of the senators present and voting being able to close off debate. But he did work it out that the two-thirds of those present and voting, because it used to be two-thirds of the entire senate, and of course for all practical purposes it's the same. But it was a symbolic victory. Held always point to those achievements as indicative of his more moderate attitude on civil rights.

I remember Johnson told me a good deal about his background in our little pleasant visits that we used to have up in his office or over at his home, about the Mexican-Americans. He always got the vote of those Mexican-Americans. He felt very close to those Mexican-Americans. He was quite sentimental about that, and about the blacks. It was perfectly obvious that he wasn't afraid of the black vote, or the minority vote, like many of the southerners were.

And as he went along in the '50's, he was building strength for what you might call for some civil rights action, for some legislation action in the field of civil rights. And in the '50's of course he began with the Eisenhower Administration.

You may recall he gave his own State of the Union Address before the Democratic caucus, the kind of a program that he wanted. He came up with this emergency public works program, the emergency unemployment compensation program; he jammed those things through. Of course, they were vetoed. But he was sharpening the differences between himself and the administration. He was a magnificent majority leader, just a skilled tactician!

I remember that on the tax bill, when we were going to increase the exemptions and a couple of other things, we almost overrode the Finance Committee, and Johnson was in the midst of that effort. So he began to show a good deal of what I would call the

New Deal politics in the mid-50's, and the late '50's.

I recall one time that a number of measures had passed the House on the Court, to limit the powers of the Court. Now the Court was moving this was after the--

F: Black Friday.

H: Yes. This was after the Supreme Court decision on school desegregation. A number of court decisions relating to civil liberties, what we called the Warren Court Decisions.

Now, the Committee on the Judiciary in the House had passed very restrictive legislation on the Court. Those bills had come on over to the Senate, and John McClellan and Jim Eastland handled those bills, and Ev Dirksen. They were all on Judiciary or on Government Operations. And about four or five bills had been reported out of committee on the Senate calendar. We had a meeting. I was involved in the meeting about what we were going to do about these things.

And this was the time when Estes Kefauver and John Carroll of Colorado, particularly, and a few like that who were on the Judiciary Committee were going to take up the battle and fight these bills.

Johnson said, "What we need to do is to put them all in one package, an omnibus bill."

On this, they just said, "No." I remember very well some of the discussions that took place, because we had a meeting of about fifteen or sixteen liberal senators. Paul Douglas was there, Herbert Lehman was there, Estes Kefauver was there, Clint Anderson was there, Burdick was there, and Johnny Carroll, and others; Frank Church, a number of them.

I came to them after Johnson had talked to me and said, "Now, look, what the leader wants to do is to put these four or five bills all into one bill; in other words, he will take a bill, and each of the other bills will be an amendment to it, and put it all in one package. He thinks that way we've got a better chance of defeating it, because each bill, while it has friends, it also has enemies."

Well, our group was just beside themselves on that. They said, "This will mean that Johnson will ram this whole damned thing through, Hubert. You're being taken! This fellow is not against these bills. And even if he is, if you pile them all together, it's going to get such momentum that we can't stop them."

So I reported this back to him. He said, "Well, you guys go ahead and screw around now, and see what happens!"

One night I remember that we were in session, and he left. He had told me that, "You make damned sure that there's no votes tonight, because if you get votes tonight, you're going to get beat."

Well, so help me, we had a late session, he was gone. He was at some place, I've forgotten where it was. And the opposition rode the bill through, got the votes. Our people had disappeared, which was always a problem. And they just wore us down, and by the time there were no speakers, nobody to do it, and they called third reading of the bill, and, bango, the bill was passed. But I was able to prevent reconsideration and tabling. Because we got a quorum called, and we finally got our people back, and we got Johnson back. I remember he was so mad, he said, "Well, there you are. I told you what would happen. That bunch that you're associated with just won't take any orders, they will not march together, they will not listen to a program of action. They just want to go their own way. And now you see what happened!" But we were able to stop the bill--the motion to reconsider and table it means that you're fastened, you can't do anything.

F: Right.

H: So I went back to the group and told them that I'd had another meeting with Johnson, and I said, "Now, listen, we've got to follow his advice." And they finally agreed. And so the bill that was passed, plus others we put all on one bill, and then Johnson took control of it. I'll never forget that, because this was a major civil liberties fight. And Johnson defeated, by maneuver and tactics--I forget the different kinds of efforts that were made--but he was able to defeat all of those bills at one fell swoop, which was to me a masterful display of strategy, and tactics to fulfill strategy.

I used that example a number of times. I remember in 1960 I was on a program with a gentleman who's now with CBS--Mike Wallace.

F: A political person?

H: I was on an interview with him up in New York. And I related this story when this interviewer was indicating, and I said, "No, Johnson is a civil libertarian. I've seen him take stands that really tested him." And I related what I've just said here about the McClellan Bill. Here was John McClellan, whom Johnson had worked with a great deal and had to depend on many times, and they were compatriots, particularly when it came to oil and gas, but Johnson took his stand and he used his old system. He said, "Whenever you're going to kill a snake with a hoe, you'd better knock it in the head, not on the tail, and get it in one fell swoop, in one blow," which he did.

Johnson heard about it. He was very appreciative of that, because he always was very unhappy with the ADA and the other liberal groups that were attacking him all the time. And for me to be a friend of his was rather dangerous for that group, too, and I

think it always aroused their early suspicions about me, which have matured, may I say, and have come into their full blossom in recent years.

But I always felt that Johnson was a pragmatic liberal.

F: Did you ever go to the Board of Education meetings?

H: No, I never was in on that sort of thing. It's interesting. I was up in his office a lot of times. Johnson would bring me on in with a number of the other senators. I really believe that Lyndon Johnson looked upon me--I've tried to think about this even after the Vice Presidency and all--I think it's fair to say that he liked me as an individual, as a human being. I never had known him earlier in life and because I was more of a northern liberal. I suppose he never felt totally comfortable with me as a social companion, social partner, during that period of time of the Senate.

Then it's possible that it was my fault, more so, because I didn't take too much time for that sort of thing. I was always running around to meetings and speaking, and really I think that's more so than anything, because Johnson did take me to his home. Mrs. Humphrey and I were out to their place a number of times, and he was out to our home--not often, two or three times. And he always showed a great deal of friendship towards me--a warmth. I'm always mindful of that. I've always liked him and I just love Mrs. Johnson. I think she's a remarkable woman. But I really liked the President, and I liked Johnson from early days, even though I knew at times he was even using me, you know. He's the cleverest fellow--unbelievable. And as majority leader, he was beyond question the best that I've ever known. Tough! He'd connive in order to get his way. But the one thing he understood more than anything else in the Senate was timing. He was masterful at timing. He never wasted his shots. He reminded me of an army that had a limited amount of ammunition and had to meet a massive attack. And he saved his ammunition. Lots of people in politics keep shooting all the time, and first of all they run out of ammunition; secondly, they become such bad shots they don't hit anything because they've never learned how to conserve their ammunition.

Now when I became majority whip--I was majority whip because Johnson made me majority whip, there's no use my pretending to the contrary. It was after the '60 election. Kennedy is elected. Johnson is Vice President. I want to be sure to talk to you about that period of time, too. I got a call. I was up at Bill Benton's apartment in New York having lunch with Adlai Stevenson and Bill Benton. In fact, I was giving Adlai Stevenson a good talking to, because apparently Kennedy had asked Adlai to go to the United Nations as his ambassador--this is before Kennedy is President, this is President-elect. Adlai wanted to be Secretary of State. Adlai wasn't going to take this job as U.N. ambassador. This is one of the more important political observations I can give you. And I said, "Adlai, you have an obligation to take it." And he said, "Why?" "Well," I said, "didn't you campaign for this fellow? This was a very close election. Your

campaigning alone might have been responsible for his election. Now, he has asked you to take on a job up here in the United Nations where you're highly regarded because you're an international figure." "But," he said, "that isn't the job that I want." And I said, "It doesn't make a damned bit of difference. You can't turn him down. You have an obligation. You went around telling everybody to vote for him. You told the people what he was going to do. Now he had asked you to get on the team, and I think you've got to get on the team. Frankly, I wouldn't think much of you if you didn't."

Well, I hadn't more than gotten this little talk out of my mind, and the phone rang, and there's Lyndon Johnson on the phone. And he says: "Hubert, what would you think about being majority whip?" so to speak. I said, "Lyndon, that would be wonderful, but what makes you think I can do it?" He said, "Well, I think we can arrange it. I really think that we can do that."

And I said, "Well, let me think about it. You know, I've got lots of seniority now in the Senate, and I like what I'm doing, and I want to think about it."

He said, "Well, don't think too damned long. We're going to make some decisions around here. The President-elect wants you, and I want you. That ought to be about enough, hadn't it!"

And I said, "Well, it ought to be. But I'm just having lunch here with a couple of my friends, and I want to just think about it, and I'll call you back."

F: Right after the speech you'd given Stevenson--

H: Yes. So I told the boys, I told Benton and Stevenson what the phone conversation was about. And both of them were opposed to me being majority whip. Stevenson said, "You ought to be an independent. If you're majority whip, you're locked in."

Benton says, "Absolutely. You shouldn't take on that job."

I said, "Well, now, look it, Adlai. I just told you that you ought to take on the job, and I'm going to tell myself the same thing, because, frankly, I think Kennedy's going to be a good President, and I think to be majority whip would be a great honor and I can help the President, besides I think I'm capable of doing the job."

So I called back and told Johnson, "If it can be arranged, I would like to do it."

He said, "You be down here tomorrow, and we're going to do some talking. I've got to talk to some of my southern friends. Don't say anything here now. Just kind of keep things in shape, and I think we can handle it."

Well, needless to say, I was nominated at the caucus and went through without it being contested--there was no contest.

Now at that particular time, Johnson still had the illusions that he could be in a sense, as Vice President, the majority leader, and that he could at least be the head of the caucus. I remember him talking to me about it. And he's not an easy man to tell that you can't do something. And we had a meeting, some of us, over in the Statler Hotel at a luncheon. Bob Kerr was there, and Lyndon was there, and Bobby Baker was there, and I was there, and George Smathers was there, Mike Mansfield I think was there, and a couple of others. Johnson was then thinking about how he as Vice President, could be chairman of the Democratic caucus. It was perfectly obvious this wasn't going to work. He went on over, and my memory is [a] little foggy in this, but I think he was elected, temporarily, as chairman of the caucus because he had the power, but it was perfectly obvious after a couple of weeks that this was no good, and no good for him. And I was one of those who told him that it was not good for him. It was just hurting him, rather than helping him, and that it was building up animosities rather than friendships. But it was too much for him to leave that center of power. And, of course, Mansfield was bound to feel somewhat irritated about this, and obviously became very much irritated by Johnson's presence around the Senate, in the sense that he was trying to exert influence in the Senate. And I have a feeling that Mansfield spoke to Kennedy about it, and that Kennedy must have spoken to Johnson about it. I had expressed my views to Lyndon Johnson, that I didn't think it was healthy, that I didn't think it was working.

F: How did he take it?

H: As I recall, not angrily or anything, but only that he was doing his job. That, after all, it was important that he was able to do this job. He just was very reluctant in giving up those reins, but it didn't take long before he did. And it didn't take long before he found out that the Vice President doesn't have the same relationship to the Senate that the leader has, or the majority leader.

F: Among other things, you always have that separation of powers, that the Senate is justifiably jealous of--

H: Right. Now, back at the convention in Los Angeles, speaking now of our relationships with Johnson. There's no doubt but what Johnson's people helped me in West Virginia, and they were trying to stop Kennedy. And I got help from the Johnson people, not directly from Johnson but from some of his friends. Actually, the Johnson people encouraged me to go into West Virginia. I don't think I'd ever told anybody I was going to go anywhere. I'd already paid my filing fee over there, and so I was going in.

Johnson was always denying that he was a candidate, but I had a feeling that he was. I remember Bobby Baker told me that "He is going to be a candidate. Now, you

just keep your options open, don't you get tugged in." Well, I never felt at that time that he really could make it, I guess maybe because Kennedy had beaten me in a couple of primaries and I knew that Kennedy had this tremendous forward movement and publicity, that it was inevitable he was going to be the nominee.

But Johnson started in the early summer of 1960 to pick up these southern delegations and others. But Johnson thought he could do it through the Senate. To him the Senate was it. The Senate to Johnson was power. Now the fact is that senators don't have much power, politically, back in their states. And I think that Johnson got a real awakening in American politics, a shock, that with all of these powerful senators down there that are big shots in Washington, they don't amount to much when they get back home, except they get elected. They don't run the state political apparatus. It's governors and national committeemen and chairmen. Johnson was working with McFarland out there in Arizona, and he was working with big Ed Johnson of Colorado. He was working with Bob Kerr of Oklahoma, and Dick Russell. And he had of course lined up the southern delegations and he'd gotten some of these other ones around the border states and so forth. They were really hoping that I would be able to do something for them, but I told them I couldn't because Minnesota wasn't going to do that. They wouldn't go for Johnson. Secondly, I was no longer an active candidate, even though when I went to Los Angeles I had two or three hundred votes locked up that I released out there. My own delegation never did change. It just stayed with me all the way through.

But I remember the Johnson move and his being defeated in the contest for the nomination for President.

And then the word came that he was going to be the Vice Presidential nominee. Well, I'm here to tell you that all hell broke loose! You remember Joe Rauh and Soapy Williams denouncing him--Governor Williams of Michigan.

F: FDR, Jr.

H: FDR, Jr. Oh, they were just up in arms! Gene McCarthy and myself went over to see--Gene McCarthy had nominated Adlai Stevenson--Gene McCarthy and I went over to see Lyndon Johnson. And we were both very pleased that he'd been picked. I sat down and visited with him a good long time, and then went to work amongst as many of the liberals as I could on his behalf. But I remember, I guess Gene and I were about the only two at the time that were considered, in the liberal bloc, that were willing to stick our necks out for Lyndon Johnson.

I think that left a very good impression on Johnson for both of us at the time.

F: Going back a minute, any insight on why he hurried up Theodore Green's retirement and put in Fulbright as a replacement?

H: Only that he felt that the old gentleman was becoming too old and was incapable of fulfilling all those responsibilities. But the way he did that was masterful, again. You know, the old gentleman loved Lyndon Johnson. There was an editorial that appeared in the Providence Journal to the effect that Green ought to retire. And Johnson, of course, protested he shouldn't. It was an unbelievable operation. On the one hand, Theodore had made up his mind he was going to. I think that that had come about because of his sense of pride and this attack in the Providence Journal. And Johnson just told him, "You just can't do that, you know."

But then also it was understood by some of us who were on the Foreign Relations Committee that Theodore would step aside. Now we passed a resolution commending him and asking him to stay on, but he had made up his mind.

How Johnson did it, I'll never quite know. He made an impassioned plea for Theodore to stay on and eulogized him, you know, to the high heavens. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee asked Theodore Francis Green to stay on and passed a resolution honoring him. But everything was sort of like, "You're going to do it anyway, Theodore, and we know it, so here are the nice things that we're going to say." Of course, he was a dear man, a wonderful man. And Johnson liked him because Theodore was a real honest-to-God liberal who stood with Johnson on every maneuver, without question. He voted differently on issues, but on tactics and on strategy in the Senate and on election for majority leader, majority whip, Theodore Green was always right there. And generally Lyndon Johnson had Theodore nominate him. He never had a southerner nominate him. Theodore Francis Green would nominate him. It's incredible.

I always had a feeling that Johnson just knew that Theodore's time had come, and he in a nice way was able to tell the old gentleman, "You're a dear friend, and you're a wonderful man, and you've done a great job, and you ought to stay, but all the time there was the implication, "I know how you feel, Theodore, about the Providence Journal article, it hurts you, and I suppose you've already made up your mind. I respect your decision," and so on. So it was kind of two sides.

End of interview.

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to the

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