

INTERVIEWEE: EVERETT HUTCHINSON

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

F: This is an interview with Mr. Everett Hutchinson in his office in Washington, D. C. the evening of October 28, 1969. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz

Mr. Hutchinson, you and I have somewhat similar backgrounds in time and place. To begin, would you tell me a little bit about yourself?

H: I was born in Hempstead, Texas on January 2, 1915. I attended the University of Texas, where I received my Bachelor of Business Administration degree in 1939 and my Bachelor of Laws in 1940. As a young law student I became interested in politics and was in the University of Texas at the time that Lyndon Johnson first ran for office. Naturally I became aware of his career and interested in what he was doing. I helped some in that campaign, but no more than any number of other law students to whom the young candidate appealed.

F: Before we get into that, let's finish your brief account of your career.

H: I went home from the University to practice law in my hometown of Hempstead from 1940 until 1942. While there, I ran for the House of Representatives of the Texas legislature, and served until 1944. Meanwhile World War II had come on and I entered the U.S. Navy in 1942 as an apprentice seaman and continued on active duty through 1945, by which time I was a lieutenant. I am now a captain in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

In December 1944 I married the lovely Elizabeth Stafford, and we have two children, Stafford and Ann.

F: How did you become really involved in Texas politics?

H: I think the credit has to go to Governor Price Daniel, who was a young lawyer in Liberty, Texas during the 1930's and whose political star was beginning to rise. I supported him actively.

F: You knew Price Daniel then back in your young Democratic days?

H: Yes, I first met Price Daniel in about 1938, I think, and through the Young Democratic--

F: This was still while you were in the University of Texas?

H: Yes, I was still in the University and then in 1939, I was selected to be state organization director for the Young Democratic Clubs and the purpose of this activity was to organize and develop the active clubs of young Democrats in every county and in every city in Texas, primarily to generate interest in a campaign for the Presidency of Vice-President Garner.

This activity continued until some time, I think, in early 1940 when President Roosevelt decided that he would have another term and of course when decided this, our effort in behalf of Mr. Garner was more or less at an end.

F: Did you make any effort at all to continue Mr. Garner as the Vice-Presidential nominee, or did you just forget the whole thing?

H: I'm sure that we made some effort along this line, although as I've indicated, the thrust of the campaign to organize on a really state-wide basis was pretty much dissipated by the announcement of President Roosevelt.

F: When did you first become aware of Mr. Johnson?

H: I think it must have been when he was NYA director for Texas and at the time he announced for Congress in the special election in the 10th Congressional district.

F: Did you assist at all in that first campaign?

H: Yes, I did, as I indicated, along with many, many other students. Helped with some of the rallies and helped push cards at rallies and this sort of thing. The kind of thing you might expect--

F: Did you get outside the county or did you largely work right there in the Austin area?

H: Largely in the Austin area, mostly in Austin, but probably out in the adjoining counties but never-- I did not go over the district to any extent.

F: Did Mr. Johnson make any particular effort to contact University of Texas law students, or did the law students volunteer this?

H: I think it was more a matter of volunteering. I was in this category, although I may have been invited by some other students who were friends of mine who were--

F: But not by Mr. Johnson?

H: Not by Mr. Johnson.

F: Or any of his official staff?

H: It was strictly a volunteer operation as far as I know.

F: Why did you volunteer?

H: Well, I thought he had the sort of jib that was cut to suit the young people of the time and that he would be good for the district and the state and the nation.

F: Did you meet him at this time?

H: Yes, I met him during the campaign.

F: Did you keep up with him over the next several years?

H: Not in any intimate sort of way or on any personal basis.

F: Now, when you became a state legislator, you ran from Waller County?

H: Yes, Waller County was my home county. There were two counties in the district--Waller and Fort Bend. Richmond is the county seat of Fort Bend County and Hempstead, of course, is the county seat of Waller County. Those were the two counties that were in my district.

F: Was that in Mr. Johnson's district?

H: No, it was not.

F: When he ran then in 1941 against Mr. O'Daniel for Senate in the special election, did you assist there?

H: Yes, I did.

F: What did you do? You were in the legislature by then.

H: Yes, I was in the legislature then. Primarily with organization in my own counties and in other counties in Southeast Texas where I had friends and I knew people who I thought would be interested and who could be effective in the campaign.

F: Now you were working for a candidate who did not come from your district or whose district did not extend into your area.

How did you go about selling him to the electorate--making him know?

H: On the same basis that everyone else who worked for him went about the job. Actually he was really Congressman for Texas; in other words he not only represented his district, but he stood always ready to assist people outside of his district with any sort of problems they had. He had a very broad scope.

F: Did you work out of Hempstead or out of Austin?

H: Both, but primarily out of Austin.

F: Where were you the night of the election?

H: As I recall it, I was in Austin in the Austin Hotel.

F: What happened that night; can you reconstruct it?

H: Well, it has been a number of years ago, as we all know. The thing that stands out in my mind, I suppose, is the thing that stands out in the mind of everyone who had any recollection about that particular election--is that those of us who had become interested in the campaign and had worked in it felt rather confident that we had won. All the indicators showed this and it wasn't until Tuesday, I think it was, that we finally learned that the Congressman had not won the election.

F: Where were the votes that defeated you--do you remember?

Where did they come from? Why were they so late coming in?

H: I don't recall the details now. I think there were a number of counties that were late or precincts within counties-- I don't recall where the late votes came from at this point in time.

F: What had they done--just locked up their boxes and gone home for the weekend?

H: Perhaps. The procedures for counting votes, I suppose, vary a lot or did at that time from county to county. And I suppose that maybe your analysis of the situation would be pretty close to correct. I suppose the people who had held the election and had the responsibility for the counting of the votes-- perhaps they get tired too. I don't know, but anyway, it was not until Tuesday that the vote came in that really swung the election away from our candidate.

F: I've talked to some people who participated in the campaign that still maintain that Mr. Johnson won. Do you have any feelings on this?

H: Well, my feeling is that it would have been a wonderful thing if Tuesday had been as good as Saturday night.

F: Was there any thought of a contest of the returns?

H: I don't recall. I have no idea what was in Mr. Johnson's mind personally, but of course there was all kinds of talk; but how serious it was I don't know. I have an impression that it probably wasn't serious, because my guess is, and it's only a guess--I never discussed it with him personally, that Mr. Johnson felt that, you know, he would have another day in court, so to speak, and he probably felt that it wouldn't be in his interest or in the interest of the state to have a contest. And this is purely a guess, as I say. I've not discussed it with him personally.

F: Did you participate in any of his Congressional campaigns besides the first one?

H: Well, not really, no. After the war, I was a very busy young man with a young family and I was spending more time practicing law than anything else.

F: During that period you were practicing law in Austin. Were you with some firm?

H: No, I was not with a firm. I had my own office most of the time and for a part of the time, I was commerce counsel for the principal Texas railroads.

F: You worked mainly for the State Railroad Commission on that, or--?

H: No, before the Railroad Commission and the courts, when orders were tested in court, and also before the Interstate Commerce Commission.

F: Have you made a specialty of commerce and transportation law?

H: I've done quite a bit of work in this area and I do a lot of other work, but I--

F: You haven't confined yourself to that?

H: No, I do not limit my activities to transportation.

F: Did you have any association with Mr. Johnson beyond an occasional social gathering within this period before he ran again in 1948?

H: I don't recall that I did.

F: Did you see him any time while you were in uniform?

H: No, I don't think so because he was in uniform himself a good portion of the time. He was in Washington and I did not have

an opportunity or an occasion to get to Washington except maybe to pass through Washington until the early part of 1945, when I came to Washington for about a week or ten days or a month-- a couple of weeks, I guess it was, prior to going down to Solomon, Maryland to check in as legal officer for the Mine Warfare Test Station--Naval Mine Warfare Test Station, which was located at that point in Southern Maryland.

F: You didn't do any work with or for Mr. Johnson then in this period?

H: No, I was busy-- I was serving in the Navy and I served overseas for about twenty-two months, and so I really never had an opportunity during that time for very much politics and as I've indicated, didn't have an opportunity or occasion to be in Washington until some time early in 1945.

F: Did you participate in the campaign of 1948--that Senatorial campaign against Coke Stevenson?

H: No. As a matter of fact, I did not.

F: Where you concerned professionally at all with the results of the campaign? The contest or the-- ?

H: Well, only the concern of an interested citizen, not as a participant.

F: You became then an attorney general, or an assistant attorney general for the State of Texas?

H: Yes, in 1949.

F: Well, now then, you were active in that in establishing an election code for the State of Texas. Can you tell us what you tried to do and what happened?

H: Yes, the legislature adopted a new legislation code or a revision of the Texas election laws in 1951, I guess it was. And one of my duties as executive assistant attorney general was to handle legislation, that is, the drafting of legislation. And so in that capacity I had something to do with the revision of the Texas election laws and the development of the laws into the Texas election code.

F: What was the principal thrust of this revision?

H: As I recall it now, the main thrust was to simplify the election laws to eliminate contradictions and things that had given the election judges and others who were interested in election troubles over the years. It was a matter of recasting; it was not a matter of developing something new as such, but merely trying to correct the things that were wrong with the basic statutes and draw them together in a more workable format.

F: Mr. Johnson ran for the Senate for a second term in 1954 and of course he ran again in 1960--ran for two offices, as you know, in 1960. Was he subject to this revised Texas election code?

H: Yes, in this campaign for reelection for the Senate in 1954.

F: Did you advise him in this?

H: Yes, as a matter of fact, I did. He asked me to review among other things his expense reports. The legislature had put in a requirement that campaign expenditures be reported on a more thoroughgoing basis than had been the case prior to the adoption of the new election code.

F: What were the basic differences--just more detail or-- ?

H: More detail and more complete reporting of funds that were expended. And as I recall it, the legislature removed the limit that could be spent by a candidate, but required that it be fully reported, made public in reports that were required to be filed with the Secretary of State in Texas. Of course, the Senator was very anxious and very meticulous in his desire to follow both the letter and the spirit of the new election law, and so he asked me to-- I had at that time left the attorney general's office and was in private practice-- and he asked me to review his expense reports prior to filing with the Secretary of State, which of course I was glad to do and always found them to be in perfect order.

F: You never had to do any corrections on them?

H: No, I don't recall that I ever had a suggestion or a recommendation in regard to them. They were always in very good order.

F: Who kept his expense reports for him? I'm sure he was too busy to look after them himself.

H: I don't recall who kept the reports. He had someone on his staff who was active in the campaign for him who did it.

F: Then you became a commissioner for the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1955 under President Eisenhower?

H: Yes, I was appointed to the Interstate Commerce Commission by President Eisenhower.

F: You were the Democratic member?

H: Yes, to a Democratic place. You see these agencies, most of them like the ICC for instance, have provisions in the statute that-- in their basic law that provides that no more than a majority of the members can be members of the same political party. And in the case of the ICC, since there are eleven members of the commission, the statute provides that no more than six members of the commission may be members of the same political party. So the place that I was appointed to was, you might say, a Democratic place and it was to serve an unexpired term. A term at the commission is seven years by statute. This was an unexpired four-year term--four years to go on a seven-year term.

So I came in 1955 to serve until December 31, 1958.

F: Did Mr. Johnson endorse you for this position? Did he assist in any way?

H: Yes, he did.

F: Were you his candidate in a sense or how did that work?

H: I enjoyed his support and I also, of course, had the support of Senator Price Daniel, whose campaign I had managed for the Senate in 1952. I was state-wide campaign manager for Price Daniel.

F: So you had both Senators on your side?

H: Yes, I enjoyed the support of both my Senators.

F: Did you have any relationship with Senator Johnson after you went on the ICC?

H: I suppose it would be accurate to say more social than otherwise; however, sometimes these social contacts would develop

into questions by the Senator to the effect that "How are you getting along down there?" or something to this effect. He was always interested in a general way in what the commission was doing and you might say in its welfare generally. He had served on the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee in the House and on the same committee in the Senate, so this is an area of very deep interest to him. And he would usually ask about it in terms of "What can I do to help you?"

F: Beyond providing a budget and working with the rules under which the ICC operates, is there much that Congress can do for the ICC or vice versa?

H: Well, I'll put it this way. I think any agency does a lot better job if it has the support and goodwill of the Senate and the House, and particularly the members of the committees to which that particular agency might report. By that I mean the committees of the House and Senate that have jurisdiction over legislation which the particular agency might administer.

F: You became then chairman of the commission in 1961?

H: That's right.

F: Is that elected by the commission, or is that a Presidential appointment itself?

H: The Chairman of the ICC is elected by the members of the commission.

F: You had been, by this time, reappointed by Mr. Eisenhower?

H: Yes, I was reappointed by President Eisenhower, I think, in

July and in any event before the Congress went home in 1958 and was confirmed; and I began a new term January 2, I guess, whenever I took the oath-- January 1st or 2nd, 1959.

F: Ralph Yarborough had become Senator by then, hadn't he?

H: Yes.

F: And did you have any difficulty in that situation, or did you again receive endorsement?

H: Senator Yarborough has always been a wonderful friend. He supported me enthusiastically for confirmation to this office as a member of ICC; and then later in 1967, as Under Secretary of Transportation he came in 1967 to the meeting of the Senate Commerce Committee and gave me a very warm endorsement.

F: In an instance like that in the second round, you had a Republican Senator from Texas--Senator Tower. You don't require his endorsement in this case since he belongs to the opposing party, is that right?

H: I don't know about a requirement, but it certainly is good to have, and I was fortunate enough to have Senator Tower's okay.

F: So you've always had the Texas State delegation in your corner?

H: That's right. I had the support of every Senator that served since I've been on the scene here.

F: That's something to be proud of.

H: I think so.

F: You've had no difficulty in any confirmations?

H: None whatever.

F: To get back to the ICC, did Mr. Johnson's majority leadership have any impact on the ICC; was he noticeable at all in this

period as far as the commission was concerned--in legislation he proposed or in attitudes?

H: This may be a little difficult to measure. There was some legislation passed while he was Majority Leader and of course he had to handle it the same as he handled every other piece of legislation that passed the Senate while he was Majority Leader. So to that extent he certainly had some impact.

F: Do you remember any specific instances?

H: I wouldn't recall any specific instances, no. As I've indicated, he always was very keenly interested in the work of the commission and I'm sure in the work of all the other agencies. I'm not suggesting really that he would single out the ICC as an agency of particular interest. I'm sure he was always interested in all of them, but he did express to me a number of times a very keen interest in the work of the ICC.

F: This is possibly a negative question. Do you recall whether he ever made an oral advocacy or explanation for the commission?

H: I don't recall any specifically, although he may have taken the position on the record with regard to some particular matter that the commission had under consideration.

F: Do you recall his ever having been in the commission offices or your office during that period?

H: No, not in connection with any matter pending before the commission. I recall that he did come to my office on one occasion to watch a parade for Queen Elizabeth on her visit here in 1958, I believe it was 1958.

- F: Yes, were you active at all in the preconvention campaign of 1960 when Mr. Johnson was being groomed for the Presidency?
- H: No, I was not. I was at that time a member of the ICC and I did not take active part at that time in partisan politics.
- F: Were you surprised at Mr. Johnson's accepting the Vice-Presidency?
- H: No, not really. A lot of people were, I'm sure, and it has been expressed in various quarters, but I can't really say that I was surprised.
- F: Where were you at the time of the assassination of President Kennedy?
- H: I was on North Capitol Street just at the main Post Office Building.
- F: What did you do--hear it by radio or word of mouth?
- H: Well, I stopped for a traffic signal and someone drove up to my side. It was a rather blustery, windy day here. I had my window up and I could tell that he was trying to say something to me. So I put the window down and he said, "Do you have your radio on?" I said, "No." I very seldom play a car radio.
- And he said, "Well, turn it on, Kennedy has just been shot." And, of course, I did turn it on and got the bad news that everyone else had been getting probably for some time. I think this was probably within half an hour--certainly within an hour--after the President had been shot.
- F: Did you see the President at all during the next several weeks while he was getting his new Administration underway, or picking up the pieces of the old one?
- H: No, I don't recall that I did.
- F: You were not a candidate to succeed yourself on the Interstate

Commerce Commission at the end of your second term?

H: No, I left the commission April 1, prior to the expiration of my term to return to private endeavor.

F: This was not through any sort of disenchantment with the commission?

H: No, indeed, it was purely and simply a need to return to more productive employment. This was April 1, 1965.

F: Just what were your duties as president of the National Association of Motor Bus Owners?

H: Well, the association is the National Trade Association for the Inter-City Motor Bus Industry, and the scope of duties is very broad; in other words, you try to handle to successful conclusion or to obtain relief in connection with any problem they might have in Washington, and then of course in addition to that, the association is a research organization and has quite an important role to play in connection with all kinds of research in the safety field in areas such as tires--vehicle tires--and the whole run of safety considerations; that is, matters that pertain to safe operation of motor buses over the highways.

F: What persuaded you to go back into government service then in 1967?

H: The invitation that I had from the President to help establish the new department.

F: Were you active at all in the pre-establishment days of the department?

H: You mean in connection with the legislation?

F: In trying to get the public sentiment to-- ?

H: Yes.

F: Official sentiment-- ?

H: Yes, I was. Almost everyone who had any responsibility or any interest in transportation activities supported the President's recommendation to the Congress that a Department of Transportation be established. And I was one of those who supported it personally and as a representative of the Inter-City Motor Bus Industry.

F: Had your ICC experience given you any insights for the need of such a department?

H: Well, yes, I think it had. I think it helped me recognize that a need existed for an overall transportation policy-maker in the Executive Branch of the government, the same as exists for many other areas. The transportation industry accounts for about, in one way or another in all of its forms-- it accounts for about one-fifth of our total gross national product. And I think people generally who were and are concerned with transportation feel that this is too large a segment of our economy to be without effective guidance from the Executive Branch of the government, from the President to the Cabinet Officer.

F: How were the transportation problems handled prior to the establishment of this department?

H: Well, to a considerable extent it was by guess and by gosh. I mean, you had a number of agencies, many agencies, in the government with transportation responsibilities. And now most of these, with some notable exceptions, are centralized

in the Department of Transportation which is headed by a Cabinet Officer who reports to the President directly.

F: What are the notable exceptions?

H: Well, one noticeable exception would be the maritime industry. The maritime administration is still a part of the Commerce Department and many of us thought, and many still think, that it should be a part of the Department of Transportation, because it's very difficult to stop at the water's edge. And so I feel very keenly that this should come about and I also feel very keenly that it will eventually. I don't know what it will take to bring this about--

F: Commerce has opposed--?

H: No, as a matter of fact, the Commerce Department, I think, has been--or was and perhaps is still for the transfer. I think the opposition came mainly in the Congress and from certain interest groups.

F: Why would they have opposed it?

H: I'm not sure what the reasons might have been. It's pretty difficult to tell what's in people's minds, but--

F: What would be your justification for not putting it under Transportation?

H: I think the main argument was that the maritime industry had sagged to such a low level and we were carrying so little traffic in U.S. flag-bottoms, the problem was so grave that there should be an independent maritime administration headed by an officer who would, of course, be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate and report directly to the President. Anything less than this would be an undue

dilution of the problem. This is at least one argument.

There are others, I'm sure, but this is the one most frequently heard.

F: Were there other notable exceptions?

H: Well, there was one. Urban Mass Transit just a year earlier had been made the responsibility of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and I think the reason for not transferring it to the Department of Transportation at the time the department was created was mainly because of the fact that there was a feeling that this function, this responsibility had not been in HUD long enough for the dust to settle on it so to speak--to really get to very much of a focus as to where it should be located finally. So the act directed that the two Secretaries, that is, the Secretary of Transportation and Secretary of HUD make a study and report to the President as to where this responsibility should be placed, long-run.

This was done and that function is now a part of the Department of Transportation. It was transferred earlier this year through a reorganization plan which the President submitted to the Congress.

F: Did you play any role in that?

H: Yes, I had some responsibilities in connection with it as Under Secretary.

F: Was there a special task force that looked into this, or was this pretty well handled on a department to department basis?

H: There was, I would say, a special handling. I don't know that

there was anything designated a task force, but there was considerable study in regard to it and it was well staffed out by people in both departments. Well, the result, I think, speaks for itself. It was decided that it should be a part of the Department of Transportation.

F: Now, let's get back to the formation of the department for a moment. Did the department evolve as a result of general pressures for such a department or was there a special study made that convinced the President that you should have such a department; in other words, how did this get off the ground?

H: I think I wouldn't like to use the word "pressures," but there was certainly a growing sentiment, a growing feeling, that it was very much needed. And I think this is what sparked it. The support for a department was rather widespread, and the idea for a Department of Transportation certainly was not new, even going back to the time of Jefferson. His Secretary of the Treasury, who was Albert Gallatin, made a recommendation, made a suggestion at least, to President Jefferson that a Department of Transportation might be in the national interests. So you can see how many years it took to bring it about, something over 160 years from the time it was first suggested-- I think it was-- As far as I know, that was the first time it was suggested.

But Congress had considered proposals for the establishment of a Department of Transportation for many, many years--going back into the last century. As a matter of fact, there is a

body of thought to the effect that the establishment of a Department of Transportation was delayed by the establishment of the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1887. There are people who reckon that if the Congress hadn't established the ICC that it might have established a Department of Transportation much earlier than it did.

F: Are the lines fairly clearly drawn between the Department of Transportation and the ICC? Do they get in each other's way?

H: No, not at all. The lines are very well drawn. There's no overlapping and no conflict, no problems as far as I know. And this is generally true of the other transportation agencies also, such as CAB for air and the Maritime Commission for the economic regulation of the maritime industry.

The lines are very well drawn. The economic regulatory functions are left to the boards and commissions, and the line-type regulations such as safety, for example, are lodged in the Department of Transportation. Perhaps I should qualify that a bit. The National Transportation Safety Board has safety responsibility in connection with all modes of transportation. And it is a board, as I have indicated, and it is a part of the Department of Transportation for administrative purposes but is not subject to policy direction of the Secretary of Transportation.

F: Did you know Alan Boyd before you became Under Secretary?

H: Yes, I did. I've known Alan since about 1959, when he came to Washington from Florida as a member of the Civil Aeronautics Board.

F: Did the interest in creating a Department of Transportation more or less follow a straight line of conviction, or did it go through periods of being sort of viable subject, then receding interest, and coming back?

H: Well, this is really a historical point, and I think the answer is that interest did more or less ebb and flow, as I have indicated earlier. There have been proposals at different times before the Congress for many, many years--

F: I meant in just the immediate past.

H: In the immediate past I would say that the interest and support for the establishment of the Department of Transportation was constant. There were no peaks and valleys in a real sense.

F: Did the Teamsters take any stand on it?

H: I don't recall. I'm just not sure.

F: When did you first get an intimation that you would be the new Under Secretary?

H: Well, I got the suggestion when a phone call came.

F: That was the President?

H: Yes, the White House, saying the President wanted to see me. So I went to the White House to see the President.

F: How did he handle it? What did he say--do you remember?

H: Well, he indicated to me that he felt that this would provide an opportunity for me to render a real service and that if I was interested in it, that he'd like for me to serve as Under Secretary to the department. My response went something like this. "Mr. President, if you think I'm your man, I'm your man. I'll do it."

F: When you have a brand new department like this, do you have much of a problem yourself in staffing, or is that handled by a personnel officer down the line?

H: Well, there is a problem and it's handled by the Secretary and all those who work for him and with him in a very real sense. But of course in the case of the department, we had an Assistant Secretary for Administration, and he had the primary responsibility of reporting to the Secretary. But, of course, my job as Under Secretary was simply to perform such functions as the Secretary directed and to act for him as Secretary in his absence. And in those capacities I had quite a lot to do with the development of an adequate staff to carry on the work of the department. But again the decisions were made always by the Secretary and of course his chief assistant, as I've indicated, was an Assistant Secretary for Administration; and under the Assistant Secretary, there was a director of personnel and so forth.

F: What did your duties include as Under Secretary?

H: I've already summed them up in about the best fashion I can, I think. In other words, handling assigned duties plus acting for the Secretary when he was absent. And in this I really had a wide range of duties, almost everything that you could think of--I would have a piece of the action at some time or other.

F: What have been your priority problems in this new department?

H: I think the priority problem was budget actually. 1967, which

was fiscal 1968-- Fiscal 1967 and fiscal 1968 turned out not to be very good years to be born, if you were a new department. The budgetary limitations began to be felt rather early in our organizational effort, and this was some problem. But as is usually the case, you can and we did make do with the resources that we had. I don't mean to suggest that they were not considerable. But in some areas we did feel the budgetary bite rather heavily.

F: Aside from organizational and administrative problems, what policy priorities did you establish? What did you try to get done?

H: Well, of course, the first thing that we had to get done was to get the department established and organized as a going concern. And then from there, we took up the other policy matters as they came along. Of course, there was a wide range of these in relation to well, practically all phases of transportation. Air transportation for instance. Air congestion in the airways. And the location of highways, for example. There were many areas in which the policy-making influence of the Secretary and of the department was felt in the first year.

F: On an issue like the possible subway for the District of Columbia, does that come under the Department of Transportation jurisdiction?

H: Not directly.

F: Would you be consulted on this?

H: Yes, the Secretary was kept in on the activities in this area right along, from the time the department was established.

F: Do you have any function in this matter of these interstate highways?

H: Yes. The highway program is part of the Bureau of Public Roads, which is now a part of the Department of Transportation, having been transferred to the department from Commerce when the new department was established.

F: How did you approach this problem of mass transportation?

H: Well, actually the changeover from HUD to DOT did not occur until after I left the department. As I indicated earlier, this responsibility remained with HUD when the Department of Transportation was created. And the only part of the action in this area that I had was in connection with the study which was to determine where to place this responsibility in the Executive Branch of the government, so that I couldn't comment on the question you've just asked except in that indirect way because the department had not assumed this responsibility at the time I left.

F: Was there much competition between HUD and DOT over who received the responsibility for mass transportation?

H: No, I don't think so. I think each Secretary realized that he had a mandate to make this study and to be as objective as possible because it seems to me that it would be to the interest of each Secretary to do this. And this was done, and I wasn't aware that there was any competition at all. I think both Secretaries and the officials in the departments that worked with them and under them were motivated by a healthy desire to arrive at the right answer in the public interest. And so I wasn't aware of any competition between the two agencies.

F: What do you think are the chief transportation problems that are faced right now?

H: Well, we've just been talking about one--urban transportation certainly is one of the chief problems. And it's not going to be solved quickly. And as a matter of fact, other problems that exist in transportation are not going to be solved quickly and I don't think the success of the department can be measured accurately short-run. I think the department itself is going to have to have three to five years at least in order to make a real impact in terms of bringing about changes in the transportation system that are needed. Because after all, the changes really have to be made by the industry. The Department and the Secretary can provide the guidance and provide other stimulating influences, but after all, in our system the private sector is still in charge of transportation by and large. Of course, you have some municipal systems in the urban transportation area and it may well be felt here more quickly than in the private sector. But I think we need some time still in order to accurately measure the effort that the Department of Transportation is making in terms of coordinating our transportation system and assisting in its development.

F: Really directing a pretty haphazard, long-time situation?

H: Yes, you have the various modes that have operated sort of on an exclusive, mutually exclusive basis and we have not had a lot of thought input in terms of a system. And I think this is the long-range primary goal of the department to really

assist and provide the leadership for the establishment of our transportation as a system rather than as an arrangement of parts--several parts.

F: Do you think the private sector has crossed that first bridge of realizing it has a problem?

H: Yes, oh yes, I think so. We have, I would like to add at this point, in my judgment the finest--by far the finest transportation that has ever been seen in any nation at any time in history. It's good. But as the President said in his recommendation to the Congress, it's not good enough for a number of reasons. In other words, it's good but opportunity for improvement is everywhere, such as saving of lives on the highway. We're experiencing fifty-odd thousand casualties each year on the highway. Many people, and I hope they're right, think this is something that can be abated and the trend reversed. And I think it has been reversed in the sense that we're traveling more and more miles with more and more vehicles on more and more highways and while the death rate in numbers perhaps is still rising, when you consider the other factors it's my view that the upward trend has been arrested.

F: Do you think to a great extent this is an educational process?

H: Well, yes, it has to be that in part. I mean we have to improve our capability as drivers. In other words, the nation as a nation of drivers just has to drive better, for one thing. We have to have safer vehicles, which the department and the manufacturers are at work on. So an effort is being made in

many, many directions and I think we are beginning to see some fruits of the effort.

F: I'm going to shift this to a social note in closing. Anything else you want to get on the record regarding transportation before we leave this topic?

H: Transportation is extremely important to the nation and to every citizen of the nation; it's important to our forces in Southeast Asia. I don't know of any area of activity that provides anyone associated with it with greater satisfaction than does transportation. And I'm very glad to have had some small part in transportation over the years and my experience in this area goes back, I might add, to my first session in the legislature of Texas in 1941. I would have to say that my interest in transportation goes back over the years to 1941. One of the most important pieces of legislation, of course, was the load-limit law in Texas. At that time, Texas had a 7,000-pound load limit. At the session in 1941, the legislature increased that limit. That was a 7,000-pound net load limit and the legislature in 1941 increased the load to 38,000 gross, as I recall it. And this is legislation that was handled by the committee-- one of the committees of which I was a member. And that is the Committee on Highways and Motor Traffic.

F: Along another line, you must have become politically conscious. In coming from Hempstead, you had been aware of this-- Every legislator, it seems to me, in the early to middle 1930's ran on a farm-to-market road platform.

H: Yes, the highway department in Texas has really done an outstanding job over the years, going back to my boyhood. You just wouldn't recognize the county that I grew up in as the same community. And of course that's true over all of Texas, I think, and it's true generally speaking over the nation. I mean all the highway officials, people with highway building responsibility, have done a marvelous job and I think always pretty much in direct relationship to the amount of funds that they have available to them. It's often said that you give a highway engineer the money and he can build anything and I think if that's true of the highway engineer, it's probably true of other engineers too. But I think the highways that we've built in Texas and in the nation generally are just absolutely fantastic. I think they're beautiful. In fact, when I think back to earlier years when we didn't have anything like the eye system for instance, it's just very difficult for me to find fault with the highways that we have now in use and under development.

F: You have children about the age of the Johnson children, do you not?

H: Yes. Our son is a little younger than Lynda and a little older than Luci; and our daughter is, I suppose, a little younger than Luci.

F: Have you seen much of the Johnson children?

H: Yes, over the years quite a bit, I would say. The youngsters have been quite good friends.

F: Which one are they closer to?

H: Well, Luci probably.

F: They were active, were they not, in Luci's wedding plans or pre-wedding plans?

H: Well, yes. My son gave a party with two other friends of Luci and Pat. This was the surprise party.

F: Was that here in Washington?

H: Yes, here in Washington. This was two nights before the wedding. And they gave the party--my son Stafford and two of Pat and Luci's other friends--assisted by our daughter Ann, gave a cookout for Luci and Pat in our backyard--western style, complete with hay bales and farm implements and Walter Jetton ranch beans and all the rest. And I think all the youngsters had a wonderful time; they had some seventy friends of Luci and Pat present for this occasion.

As is usually the case when we have any sort of function at our home, it rained. But it's a funny thing; it didn't seem to dampen spirits one iota.

F: Was it really a surprise?

H: Yes, I think it was. It was a surprise to the guests. My recollection is that Pat and Luci knew about the party, but the guests did not know where the party would be, or anything of the sort.

F: They just came to a party?

H: Yes, I think that's right. They came from the White House on a bus we chartered, and of course a few in cars, and I think they had a wonderful time. We certainly enjoyed having this function for Pat and Luci in our home.

F: Were you surprised at the March 31 announcement?

H: Well, no, I wouldn't say surprised. I think the President's decision not to run again was correct.

F: Does it affect your future in any way?

H: No, I don't think so.

F: You're going to stay on in Washington?

H: Well, yes, that's my intention at the moment. I'm very happy in the arrangement that I have and am looking forward to what the future will bring in this area.

F: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Hutchinson.

H: My pleasure.

F: Back to transportation before we close, Mr. Hutchinson. There were two new departments established by Mr. Johnson, is that correct?

H: Yes, that is correct.

F: These then would be considered permanent achievements of his?

H: Well, yes, I think so, when you consider that he's the only President in history except George Washington, of course, who succeeded in establishing more than one department during his term of office as President. I think the establishment of the Department of Housing and Urban Development fairly early in the Johnson Administration and then just a year later the establishment of the Department of Transportation is a real tribute to the leadership and the effectiveness and the statesmanship of Lyndon Johnson.

F: You've watched Mr. Johnson now for a good thirty years. Have you noticed any changes or particular developments in his leadership qualities in that period?

H: Well, I think he certainly has gone from strength to strength. I think today in spite of apparent lack of popularity in some quarters, in some segments of our population-- I think he has the capacity for leadership that has not been equalled and certainly has not been topped by anyone in my memory.

F: This is a guessing game, pure and simple, but do you think that he is correct in his assessment that history is going to treat him more kindly than his contemporaries?

H: Oh, I think so, because he has given attention to the large issues, the sort of issues that the writers of history will be concerned with. And I think by and large he has handled them very well indeed, and so I think he's correct on this.

F: You have wrestled with one of the big problems of the time-- do you think to a certain extent that we are in the midst of a major change in our style of living, our way of living, and therefore there are problems that are going to be difficult for any President in the immediate future?

H: Well, perhaps. Of course, we are going through change; the change is constant in our society. It's just, in my view at least, a little more and perhaps quite a bit more pronounced right at the moment than it has been at any time in the past; but I think anyone who reads history would agree that most of the problems that we have today are born of the-- are by-products, so to speak, of the general overall-- well, for want of a better word, affluence, the affluent society that we

are in. People have more; they have everything including spare time, and I think if you go back through history you'll find that there's really more restlessness, more drive, more change in the times such as we're experiencing now than at other times in history. So I don't think there's any cause for real-- certainly no cause for alarm. I think there is cause for concern and responsible citizens in the government and out are concerned about some of the problems we have. And, of course, this is the way you get them solved. I think it is a fact that when we solve the problems we have, there will be other problems to challenge our imagination and our inventiveness and our patience. And so what we're experiencing now is the same thing that we've been experiencing over our history. It's simply that it is more pronounced now perhaps than it has been at times in the past.

F: Accelerated somewhat.

H: Accelerated, and it may be that we'll have some de-acceleration of the problems within a short time, maybe not. I don't know. They may go the other way. We may have still more insoluble problems heaped on us than we have now.

F: Highways always seem to be choked just as fast they're built. Do you think we can get out ahead of the traffic problem, do you think that this is too expensive, can we afford to build the sort of transportation systems we apparently need.

H: I'm not sure we can build the highways as fast as Detroit can build automobiles. It is certainly beginning to look like they're gaining on us a little. But it does seem to me that we can keep pace reasonably well by better use of the highways.

that we're building. For instance, we could make better use of our highways by allowing more bus traffic. The current generation of motor buses is a much more effective, more efficient way for moving people than the private automobile, which the figures show, I think, carries only about 1.6 people or something on that order. A motor bus on the other hand, even if you could fill the vehicle to its rated capacity, and load the private automobile up in the range of four or five people, the motor bus would still be something on the order of eight to ten times as efficient for moving people from one place to another. So this is just one way in which, I think, we could make better use of the highways we have. We undoubtedly need a better balance than we have now; we perhaps in some cities need rapid transit. This is very expensive, but if we need it badly enough we certainly will have it.

So to answer your question more specifically, I'm not sure that we can keep up with the increased use of the automobile, but I think we must because this is what the public demands. And the individual wants his automobile, and it will be very difficult indeed to ever get him out of it or get him away from it. He has lost his heart to the automobile and it's going to be very difficult to win him over or win him back for the common carrier type vehicle. But I think this could be done if we made the transportation and the other vehicles, the common carrier--mass, transit type vehicle, attractive enough. And how attractive that is, I don't know. It just has to be attractive enough to

cause the rider to want to use it.

F: Do you foresee that the expense of mass transportation might be such that it would have to become a federal government concern that is financed by the government somewhat on the order of the Post Office?

H: Well, of course, the urban mass transportation program now is a system of grants to urban transportation systems. I would anticipate that this program will be stepped up; it will be accelerated; it's a very minimal program as it exists today. But, of course, it's fairly new. It's just getting started, so I would expect to see some considerable increase in this area. There is a body of thought that suggests that what's needed is something more on the order of our electric and telephone utilities approach. In other words, if you own a home or, I suppose, if you rent a home or an apartment or wherever you as an individual might live, you would pay a fee monthly, quarterly, or on some other basis for the provision of transit service, whether it could be a rapid rail transit or a bus service or what have you. And this service would be available to you as a citizen the same as your telephone is available to you. If you install a phone, you pay a charge whether you ever pick the phone up or not. You pay for having it to use if you want to use it. And, of course, if you use it--if you don't go outside of your area--there's no limit to how much you can use it.

Well, a transit system might well work the same way. You would ride the bus or the rail rapid every day for the same price that you would ride it once a year. This may be an approach

that should be looked at more carefully than it has been--I don't know. But in our present structuring of finances for providing urban mass transit, it is very difficult indeed to provide a service at a price that the customer is willing or is able to pay.

F: Well, thank you, sir.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Everett Hutchinson

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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

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Signed

Everett L. Hutchins

Date

May 28, 1969

Accepted

Harold W. W. - L
Archivist of the United States

Date

October 4, 1974

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EVERETT HUTCHINSON
PARTNER

May 28, 1969

Dr. Joe B. Frantz, Director
Oral History Project
The University of Texas
2450 Virginia Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20037

Dear Joe:

Many thanks for your letter of April 30th
and the enclosures.

Since a number of clarifying changes in
my responses were considered desirable, I have
made a clean draft of the transcript of the
interview. It is enclosed. Also, the release
form, signed with minor revisions, is enclosed.
Please return the Xerox copy of the release
when it has been accepted and signed by the
Archivist.

I hope this handling of the matter is
satisfactory.

Sincerely,



EH/aa
Encls.