

INTERVIEW III

DATE: March 25, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: JAKE JACOBSEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Jacobsen's residence, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

G: I wanted to ask you about Luci Johnson's conversion to Catholicism and the impact that that had on the President's family and the White House.

J: Insofar as religion was concerned, Johnson was very, very liberal. He had an affinity for the Catholic church, really, although he wasn't a Catholic. He enjoyed the mass. It wasn't a big shock to him and didn't seem to be to Mrs. Johnson either, the fact that Luci wanted to convert to Catholicism.

I was kind of the in-house Catholic, although I wasn't much Catholic, but I bore the brunt of that; most of the kidding about that came to me. I heard a lot of discussion, but really it didn't amount to much. They discussed it a little bit. Luci was a pretty headstrong girl anyway, probably still is. They didn't really raise any objections to the fact that she wanted to convert to Catholicism. They discussed it some, and it just kind of worked right into the daily routine. I would say there was nothing tumultuous about it or nothing shocking about it. It just went on, and Johnson kidded everybody a lot about it.

G: How so? How would he--?

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J: Well, he'd say, "Well, the Pope's going to have another convert. He's got [Jack] Valenti in here, and he's got Jacobsen in here, and now he's going to have my daughter. He's going to be telling her what to do." You know, kidding like that, but really not--there was no serious objection, at all.

G: How would you describe his own religious faith, LBJ's?

J: He was a deeply religious man. He wasn't outgoing about it, but he had a lot of faith. He was not much on organized religion at all, I don't believe, until he became president. Maybe I'm wrong about this, but it seemed to me that as president, he wanted to be seen in some church on Sunday; that just seemed to be the thing to do. As a leader of the country, he should be in some church. They went just about every Sunday, no matter where they were. But insofar as being a strong practitioner of any one religion, he didn't seem to be. If you'll remember that lady that lived down at the Ranch--his aunt, was it, or his cousin, Cousin what's her [name]?

G: Cousin Oreole [Bailey].

J: Cousin Oreole. Well, she had that church of hers, that Christadelphians or some deal like that. They used to meet down at the Ranch once a year. He let them have the Ranch for all these Christadelphians to come in and have a big meeting.

He had gone to a church in Johnson City, as I remember, one of the Church of Christ, or one of those. I know he felt that he should show up at some church on Sunday, be seen, have his picture taken and show that as the leader of the country he ought to be going to church because this is a religious country.

At the same time, on several occasions I remember, he'd ask Luci to get the priest--her friend in Washington--to pray for the boys in Vietnam particularly. This

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would bother him. When he'd be waiting for the results of the bombings and things that we were doing, it was middle of the night, our time, when they'd come back from bombing, and it seemed to me he was always kind of prayerful about things until he heard that they were back.

I would consider him a deeply religious man, who was not a part of any organized group. [He] liked the Catholic church, liked the ritual, which a lot of people do. I think the Catholic church made a terrible mistake to do away with it, but that's their problem. A lot of people like that ritual because you do a certain thing at a certain time, like the Episcopalians. I think he enjoyed that. But he was a deeply religious man and felt that a Supreme Being had a lot to do with what was going to happen to him, as well as to the country and the world. He gave me that impression.

G: He often attended George Davis' Christian church [National City Christian Church] in Washington.

J: Yes, that's right. He was a Christian; that was his main church down here on 15th Street. Yes, that's right; you've brought it to mind, sure.

G: Any recollections of going--?

J: I don't believe I ever went with him to George Davis' church. I remember George Davis. He was a nice man. I've seen him, I think, at the White House or somewhere, but no, I don't. I think one Sunday we came into Austin and went to that Christian church down at 15th Street. I believe that's right.

(Interruption)

Jim Eastland was a power to be reckoned with. If you didn't go along with Jim Eastland on something, he would slaughter you. He's a tough man, and he would just kill

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you in the Senate. Johnson had been having trouble with him, not personally, but on issues, for many years because Johnson was much more liberal than Jim Eastland. When Johnson was majority leader, that was a thorn he had to have in his side all the time. He would have to bargain with Jim Eastland, as everybody did in the Senate, because Jim Eastland was so strong.

When it came to this appointment, [James] Coleman was more or less a compromise. Eastland was going to get an appointment. But if it had really been up to him, and he could have just named him without anybody giving him any back talk, he'd have named somebody who was a real strong segregationist, you know, the whole bit. But the compromise was this man Coleman, who was not an ultrasegregationist and not ultraconservative and not an ultra-anything. He had assured Johnson and whoever else was involved that when he got on the court [U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit], any views he might have had in the past about segregation in his background were no longer going to be applicable at all. He knew the difference between what you did as a private citizen and what you did as a judge. That's how that all came about. It was a compromise, on Coleman, because he was not as strong a southerner as some. In addition to that, he made a firm commitment that he would not do anything that would indicate segregation at all.

G: Was civil rights used by Johnson as a real litmus test for judges?

J: No question about it. That was an absolute litmus test, and particularly with ones who he might have some problem about. But even those that you would assume there was no problem about, he made it just absolutely sure that when they got on the court--he never made them promise that they would lean over to help the minorities, but he darn sure

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made certain that they would not hurt the minorities in any way and would call them like they saw them. That was one of the main things he considered in judges.

G: What else did he--?

J: Well, the bar recommendation and their ability, he always considered that. There are so many compromises in appointing judges. The president really isn't all-powerful in that area, although he does have the final appointment. You've got the confirmation process, and then you've got the senators from the states where you're going to appoint the judges. The process evolves as a great compromise, but Johnson would never compromise on the segregation issue. He might compromise a little bit on the education, what the man's background was, or something like that, but never on the segregation issue. He understood full well that the end of segregation and the decisions with respect to segregation were all going to come from the courts. He wasn't about to get anybody on a court who was going to just be a segregationist and try to uphold some principle that's long outmoded and overruled.

(Interruption)

G: Okay. I was asking you about Bill Moyers' replacement of George Reedy as presidential press secretary.

J: When I came on board and was around a while, it was perfectly obvious to me and from what the President said--so many things upset him--that Reedy was not doing a good job as press secretary. He was stumbling a lot. He wasn't firm. He was apprehensive about telling the press certain things and it became so apparent--he just wasn't doing well. The President knew that he had to do something about Reedy because that's such an important place; your whole image is made right there. So he started preparing George for the fact

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that he was not going to be press secretary too long. George pretty well knew he was going to be replaced.

G: How did he prepare George?

J: Well, he kept telling him that he could do something else and there were so many other areas where he could be more valuable. [He] started giving him assignments, it seems to me, in certain labor areas. He was moving George into labor areas. George had some kind of background in labor relations, or his father was something--I don't remember how it came about. But George was kind of an expert on labor matters. He kept moving George into those other areas. He made it apparent to George that he was not going to be around too much longer.

When the time came and he did bring Moyers in, George was shocked, in spite of the fact that he knew he was gone. He didn't want to step down from a position of such prominence, you know, he's out front all the time. The President gave him a car as I remember, or sold him a car for almost nothing, one of those Lincolns, and took pretty good care of George--financially tried to help George all he could.

G: George Reedy's subsequent book, *The Twilight of the Presidency*--

J: I didn't read it, unfortunately.

G: Well, it describes a process whereby the president becomes insulated by a set of advisers, among other things, and is not really privy to good, candid, divergent opinions.

J: I've heard George express that on television.

G: Was this valid, do you think?

J: No, I don't think it was valid. I think Reedy felt he was the victim of that. He was not one of the advisers, you know. Those of us who were around all the time--I wasn't a big

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adviser, but I was there all the time and he was not. He felt left out. The President--this was true up until [George] Christian, really--was really afraid to have that press secretary around too much, because he'd learn something and might say it, whether he knew he should or shouldn't. Johnson tried to spoon-feed the press secretary.

To get back to George's contention, that may be true with some presidents. I don't question that for a moment, that they may become so isolated that they really don't know what's going on. But that wasn't true of Johnson. He gave so many people access to him--the cabinet; there were so many people who could pick up the phone and call him--that he didn't really become that isolated. A president, you know, he doesn't talk to people on the street and things like that. But in the area where he had to know, or should know, or should be in touch with, he was always in touch. He read that wire service constantly, which is a great source of information. He could tell who was doing what, at least insofar as it became newsworthy. I really think--and this was the impression I got when I first heard Reedy talking about this--that that was sour grapes on his part. I think he kept saying that because he was not a part of the group he was condemning. I don't think that was a valid criticism.

G: Was Moyers more successful as press secretary?

J: Yes, Moyers was much more successful. Moyers is an articulate man, whereas George would stumble. Boy, when Moyers says something, it just sounds like that's the way it is. And Moyers is a bright, bright young man. He used the right language. When he got into an area, he was bright enough to know a good bit about the area he was in. He was a much better press secretary. Moyers' fault as press secretary, I believe--and Johnson believed this, too--was that he might sell out for something good about himself. He

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would favor this reporter if that reporter in turn--I don't think he said this to the reporter, "If I give you this, will you write this?" He didn't do it that way, but he would favor a reporter who, in turn, would say something nice about him in the paper. I think that's a valid criticism of Bill. He didn't have the President's interests at heart as much as he might ought to. I'm not the judge of that, but that is a valid criticism of Bill. Other than that, I think he was a good press secretary. The press liked him and believed him and, as a matter of fact, he, in the inner workings of the White House, would generally take the press position. He would--

G: Is that right?

J: Yes. If somebody would say, "Well, a bunch of damn reporters" or so and so, he would speak up. If somebody was getting ready to try to release some information that was not quite the way the information really was, deception or what, Bill would speak up and say, "No, you just shouldn't do that. That would be a terrible mistake," and won most of the time.

There is no way to put Bill down. I don't have a great affection for Bill personally. He's too pushy. I might have said this in our last interview. Lots about Bill I just never did like. He tried to run the White House. He tried to have everybody obligated to him in some way. But you can't let that override your judgment, and my judgment is that Bill was a good press secretary and was good at anything he did. He was a capable man.

G: The point about Moyers opposing the release of misinformation--what does this say about the credibility gap? Would you then say that Moyers was not responsible for the credibility gap, if in fact there was a credibility gap that the press wrote about?

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J: I would say that there probably was a credibility gap. It's just talked about too much. But if there was one, Bill's part in it was the fact that he had a loyalty to the administration and, even over his own objection, would permit things to be said that weren't quite--but I thought--well, I'm being a Pollyanna. I didn't think there was much credibility gap. I just didn't think it amounted to a damn thing. I thought the press was making up a credibility gap because they found one or two things that in all honesty there was a difference. You can't run a law practice and not make misstatements now and then. You can't run a machine shop and have somebody that comes in for their car--anybody makes misstatements. You just do it, not intentionally, and you don't consider them misstatements. But with the press now, they, of course, will check on you, and if they find out something isn't quite the way it was, they accuse whoever's in power of deliberately doing it, and that's how the credibility gap gets started.

G: How would you contrast George Christian's performance with Moyers, or compare it?

J: Let's see. I think George was more down to earth and the reporters liked him, and he had more information than Moyers. The President liked George, and he would let him sit around and talk. As a matter of fact, he encouraged George to attend any kind of meeting he wanted to, because he knew George would be discreet about what he said. He wasn't that trustworthy of Bill.

George was privy to much more information than Bill, and George was a pretty astute press man. Now, he really had been a reporter for many years. George had been with UPI [United Press International] when we hired him in the [Price] Daniel administration, so he was very familiar with the workings of the press. Of course, it was a different group. These people at the White House are more astute, I suppose, but they're

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about the same. So George got along with them very well and he was so low-key.

George was just an old shoe, and he just went on and talked and didn't make speeches.

Bill would make a speech any time he got a chance. George would just deliver the news and tell it. I thought George was a good press secretary. I think the press liked him pretty good, and I think he was helpful to the administration when he was the press secretary.

G: Would Moyers and Reedy have been more effective if they had more access to the meetings and discussions?

J: Maybe. Let's take Reedy first. I don't think the President thought Reedy had sense enough to know how to sift it out. I think he was afraid Reedy would just tell it. So I don't know if he'd have been more effective or not. Bill, if he'd had more information, I don't know if he'd [have] been more effective or not. I don't think it would have made much difference, because he was pretty effective as it was.

(Interruption)

G: I was asking you about Thurgood Marshall and the appointment of Marshall as solicitor general.

J: The President thought that Thurgood Marshall was a brilliant lawyer and a fine civil rights advocate and a reasonable civil rights advocate, not wild, but certainly not what the common expression is, the Uncle Tom type at all. He was in every major civil rights action from the time it started, really. He just did everything, was in every case. [He] travelled over the country and tried cases in the South where he was so unwelcome, and therefore, among the black leaders, legally first of all, he was in the forefront. He was *the* lawyer. And secondly, he was so reasonable and so able that I think Johnson always

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thought that if he were going to appoint a black to the Supreme Court, this would be a good one.

G: Was naming Marshall solicitor general a prelude to appointing him to the Supreme Court? He was already on the federal bench in circuit court.

J: Yes, I think it was. You know the solicitor general in many instances moves to the Court; that's been a history. I think this was a move in that direction.

G: What did Johnson say about Marshall, do you recall, in this appointment or later when he put him on the Court?

J: Oh, he said that he was such a bright man and so reasonable and was really the way to get that group in, with somebody reasonable enough to where it wouldn't just go against everybody's thinking. Marshall just fit, and he'd had such a great background. Johnson recognized all these things about Marshall that made him the outstanding candidate. There wasn't anybody that held a candle to him.

G: Were there any other blacks considered, like Bill Hastie?

J: Yes, I'm sure Bill Hastie had to be considered. He was a judge at the time, I think, in New York. But really not. There wasn't anybody in the running at all.

G: In July 1965, Adlai Stevenson collapsed and died in London. His subsequent replacement was Arthur Goldberg. What are your recollections of Goldberg stepping down from the Court and taking that UN ambassadorship?

J: As I recall, President Johnson's thinking was that Arthur Goldberg was probably the greatest negotiator in our time from his experience in the labor movement. He could negotiate contracts that were just out of this world. He had done it. His background was as a labor negotiator, and he just could negotiate with anybody. Johnson's feeling was

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that at the United Nations, if you didn't have a negotiator you were dead, because these are the most difficult people to negotiate with in the whole world. The Russians, they're experts, that's all they get trained to do. That's true of many nations. They're negotiators; that's how they get into the United Nations. He felt that Arthur Goldberg would probably get more for the United States in all these negotiations that take place in the United Nations than any other man he could think of. That included all the other possibilities, the ones who had been mentioned. None of them were negotiators. They were senators or something else.

G: Were there any particular negotiations that he wanted Goldberg to be involved in?

J: No, not specifics, not that I recall. He may have but I don't recall there were any. He just knew that the only way you get along with the United Nations is by agreements and by the give-and-take of a legislative body.

G: I just wonder if he saw Goldberg as a possible assistant in resolving Vietnam through negotiation?

J: Yes, might have. No, I shouldn't say. What I say is this, Goldberg was Jewish, which didn't hurt him any, and he was a great negotiator. That's what Johnson felt he could do with Goldberg in the United Nations. Insofar as helping on Vietnam, I don't think that anyone felt negotiations could be more advanced than they had already been. Johnson was dealing with other presidents and with the Pope, although Goldberg may have helped on that. I don't know.

G: How did it turn out that Goldberg was available for this assignment?

J: He wasn't available. He wasn't available at all. Johnson got him over to the White House and just really put it on him good, not hard, but he was convincing. He convinced the

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man that he was the only person who could really handle this job and who would do a good job, and the only person Johnson wanted. Goldberg had a lot of reservations about it, had to. He just took a long time. He had to talk to his wife, and he just took a long time deciding--it seemed like a long time. But he finally, after a lot of persuading--Johnson courted him pretty good, had him over for dinner.

G: Had Goldberg been happy on the Court, do you think?

J: Yes, I think he just really wasn't wanting to leave the Court at all. I think it was just a matter of patriotism and the fact that Johnson convinced him that his country needed him in this particular position. By the way, he promised Goldberg that he would be a member of the cabinet as UN ambassador, that he would sit in on all cabinet meetings. He just made it a heck of a deal.

G: You don't think that he wanted Goldberg off the Court just so that he could appoint a justice of his own?

J: No, I don't think so. If that was in his mind, it was purely incidental. I think he really thought Goldberg would be the greatest thing that could happen to this country in the United Nations.

G: The successor on the Court was, of course, Abe Fortas.

J: Yes.

G: Why did he appoint Abe Fortas?

J: Oh, his obligation, and his love for Abe Fortas was just immense. Abe had helped him so many times in so many capacities and had done so many things. They were involved in so many political things together, and statesmanlike things together, and governmental things, that his obligation to Abe was extremely great. He had a high, high regard for

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Abe Fortas. One of the things that I did was handle Johnson's personal affairs. You know, a president doesn't have time to worry about a will and the things that all of us have to think about. I never did anything in the way of legal matters that Abe and Carol Fortas weren't right in the middle of. I was constantly in communication with them for advice on so many different things: income, the Ranch, just anything that I got into that Johnson--although I guess everything was in a trust, but you still take an interest in what you own; you don't just turn it loose.

G: Well, Walter Jenkins was generally recognized as the person who handled that--

J: Correct.

G: --before he left.

J: Before he left, that's right.

G: Then you had an interim from October 1964 until your arrival. Who handled it in that--?

J: I don't think it was handled. I think that was one of the things that was really bothering--

G: Wrong administration.

J: Wrong administration. That's one of the things that was really disturbing Johnson, and that's one of the reasons he was putting so much pressure on me, I realize now, was the fact that there was nobody who was an intermediary with his own people, like Mr. [Jesse] Kellam and A. W. Moursund, and there were a number of them. That's the reason he made me pay fifty thousand dollars in taxes to get the privilege to come to the White House.

G: I wonder if the appointment of Fortas to the bench, however, was in some respects a detriment for both men, in that it deprived Fortas of what must have been a fabulous

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income as a private attorney, and it deprived Johnson of the role that Fortas had played that had been so valuable to him.

J: Number one, I think--now this is just purely a thought on my part--Abe was in such shape finance-wise that he wasn't hurting at all. He had accumulated so much.

G: He wasn't reluctant to take that appointment because of his financial affairs?

J: I never sensed that. He may have been in their private conversations. You know, Johnson thought so much of Fortas, he didn't need anybody around when he talked to Abe. If you were around, that would be fine, of those he trusted, but he didn't have to have anybody in the room. They were just so close. He might have talked to him about a lot of things that I am not familiar with. I don't think Abe Fortas was hurting financially at all, and I don't think Johnson felt--now this is just my thinking--that he was losing Abe as an adviser.

G: Was this because Fortas continued to advise him?

J: No question about it. And Carol, of course, stayed in the law firm, and when it came to any tax matters or things like that, she was the one who gave the. . . .

(Interruption)

G: To what extent did Fortas continue to advise Johnson after he went on the Court?

J: About the way it was before, except he wouldn't talk about anything that involved Court matters, but [on] personal matters he just went on advising him.

G: How about political decisions?

J: I think Johnson consulted him on just about every political decision he made.

G: Did he and [Clark] Clifford advise Johnson together?

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- J: No. Primarily Fortas. Clifford was an adviser, but he didn't even play in the same ballpark as Fortas, insofar as Johnson was concerned.
- G: Did you yourself get any sense of a problem with separation of powers here that Fortas was--?
- J: No, none whatsoever. I think both men understood the situation with respect to the Constitution and the constitutional prerogatives. No, I don't believe there was any--never was as a matter of fact, there was no issue that was before the Court while Fortas was there; he wasn't there very long. And I don't remember an issue where the Court was at odds with the President. I don't remember one, but there may have been. You may know. No, there wouldn't have been any problem anyway. Both men were well schooled and knowledgeable and understood where the lines had to be drawn, and you couldn't--
- G: You don't think Fortas gave Johnson a sense of how the Court might view a certain piece of legislation?
- J: No, I wouldn't think so at all.
- G: Or a proposal?
- J: No.
- G: Like Safe Streets or something like that?
- J: No, I wouldn't think so at all. He was sensible enough to where Johnson wouldn't ask him, and Fortas wouldn't tell him. It just wouldn't come up.
- G: I wanted to ask you about John Gardner replacing Anthony Celebrezze as HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] secretary.
- J: He didn't know John Gardner. My recollection is that Joe Califano was the person who proposed John Gardner. That's my recollection. Johnson didn't know him and started

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reading some of his stuff, some of his material, and visiting with him. He really got sold on John Gardner. He thought he would be very helpful, that he had a tremendous ability, that he could run that department well and could bring a lot of new ideas to the department that Celebrezze could never get across. He was really high on John Gardner after he got to know him and got to studying his writings and what he had done. Of course, he ended up appointing him. Celebrezze was--I think he was a holdover, is my recollection.

G: Yes.

J: Former governor is my recollection. He wasn't a great secretary of HEW. HEW was an organization that was close to Johnson's heart, that health, education, and welfare, that fit in with all the civil rights and all the good you can do for poor people. HEW, he thought, ought to be in the forefront of that. He was looking for someone who could really take hold of that department and make it what he thought it ought to be, and that is a department which would help people who needed help.

G: I wanted to ask you about the enforcement of the compliance title with regard to school desegregation and federal funds, particularly in the case of Chicago. Do you think that HEW, in Johnson's mind, was sufficiently sensitive to the political concerns of Mayor [Richard] Daley and--

J: No, I think that he didn't think they were sensitive enough to the problems that Mayor Daley had. That, again, was another issue where your sympathies were one way or your sympathies were another way, and you had to compromise some, because there was no way to put Daley in a position where you killed him. That would have been terrible. He was too good a friend, and he had problems. You had to recognize the fact that he had

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problems and couldn't accept something that was just totally contrary to what his constituency felt. No, I thought he felt that HEW was not sympathetic enough with Mayor Daley. I don't really know the outcome of the thing. I think it eventually--I really don't know how--

G: Anything on LBJ's reaction when he got word that Mayor Daley was upset about the cutoff of federal funds?

J: No, I don't remember. I know that--no, I don't remember anything specific.

G: You were saying that Daley and LBJ were--

J: Daley was a practical politician, and so was the President. Daley understood very well, just like Johnson understood, that each of them had their own problems because they each had a different constituency, and that they had to compromise with each other. Well, as a matter of fact, in the final analysis there was no hard feelings. Daley supported Johnson all the time.

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J: In the meantime, he also understood that that was an issue that was kind of a red flag [to] the southern senators and representatives. Consequently, he was in the middle.

G: Talking about home rule.

J: Yes, home rule. That became a kind of flag issue, something that the southerners just thought was terrible, to have home rule in the District, because black people would take over. But he had to take a position on it and did. He lobbied hard to get it out and did finally get it out, as I understand; they have home rule.

G: Anything on his signing the Voting Rights Act in early August?

J: Is that the one where they didn't invite everybody?

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G: I think you're right. Some of the civil rights leaders didn't get--

J: I don't know. I think I read it in here. Anyway, that was a big--let me see if I can find that. Yes, that's right.

Any time you were dealing with the civil rights leadership, there was no way to come out ahead. There were so many of them and so many diversities, and some of them you didn't like. Some of them were just not your friends. Johnson always had the feeling that when he had something at the White House--this was pretty fundamental with him--that he didn't have to invite anybody. It was his White House, his home. He could invite whoever he pleased and wasn't under any obligation to invite people he didn't want there. I think that's probably the way this--well, in addition to that, of course you had so many inviters. You had staff who did the inviting and made the lists and all that kind of stuff. They could leave somebody off or put somebody on, and nobody would ever be responsible. With the civil rights people I'm sure that's what happened in this case, that either Johnson didn't want them there or somebody who prepared the list just left them off.

G: Shortly after, a matter of days after the Voting Rights Act was passed and signed, the Watts riots erupted in Los Angeles. What was LBJ's reaction?

J: Oh, just appalled. He just felt terrible about the Los Angeles situation, which I believe was the first of the big domestic problems. He was apprehensive of what finally did happen, that they would spread and that the black people would be so discontented that he'd have trouble all over the United States. That bothered him, really bothered him. He felt that was a serious fundamental problem that could result in the undermining of our system.

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G: How so?

J: Well, the rioting, the ill will between the whites and the blacks, and the positions that the other minorities would take. It was something that really caused him great pain, and of course, Vietnam was always in the thing. He was afraid the country was going to become so divided that there would be no way to govern. Of course, one of the big problems, or one of the big divisive things, was the race issue, the fact that the black people felt that they weren't getting their rights. But physical rioting, that's just unacceptable and appalling. It was to him. If you can't do it within the system, you can't--

G: What did he see as the causes of the Watts rioting?

J: I think basically he felt that there was some agitation; I think he felt that. Secondly, I think he felt that the long-standing discrimination had to have an outlet of some kind and that as much as you tried to correct it, you couldn't keep up with it. It had been going on so long you couldn't all at once eliminate all the causes for this dissension. I think he felt that the people had all they could take, and it broke out in the form of riots, which was a terrible thing. I think, if he could have, he would have done something to eliminate the causes of the problem, but I think it was just too late.

G: How did he deal with the riots?

J: Well, he tried in every way he could to let the local people first of all solve the problem themselves, and secondly, to try to appeal to the sensibilities of the rioters, as well as you could, in the hope that you wouldn't have to use force and wouldn't have to do anything. But I think he was ready to put them down. I don't think he was going to let it destroy this country. I think he was going to take whatever measures were necessary to stop the rioting and the looting.

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An incident: during the Vietnam thing, when we'd go to the Ranch, we had a roadblock up on all the roads, so they couldn't get very close to the Ranch. One weekend, one trip, a group of protesters camped out at one of the roadblocks. You could see them. The newspaper people were interviewing the protesters continuously because there wasn't anything happening, and they didn't have anything else to do. The press were staying in Johnson City at that particular time. They were writing stories all the time about these maybe ten people--wasn't very many. He was reading the paper and just got so furious, and he said, "Jake, get those sons of bitches out of there. Get them out. Just get them out. Do what you have to do to get them out." So I called the sheriff at Fredericksburg. Of course the sheriff said, "Sure, we'll get rid of them." Well, they picked them all up and put them in jail in Fredericksburg, didn't physically put them in jail, but they restrained them. They didn't have room in the jail to put those ten people in. It turned out one of them was pregnant, [a] big fat woman. You couldn't tell if she was pregnant or not because she was so fat, but she turned out to be pregnant. That was the next story we read--was about picking up a pregnant woman. And Johnson said, "Jake, why the hell did you do that?" (Laughter) I said, "Mr. President, I sure made a terrible mistake. That was an awful thing for me to do." And the next thing I called the sheriff and said, "Let those people go. We're inviting them out to have coffee. When you let them go, drive them out here, and we're going to have coffee and cookies." Here they came, this straggly bunch of bastards. We had coffee and this old fat, pregnant woman was right in the middle of it. She was just sitting there. He tried to pacify them as well as he could.

G: He met with them?

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J: Oh, hell, yes. I got them in there, and I started serving them cookies and had the maid bake some fresh cookies for them. He came in and talked to them a long time. The end result was they weren't satisfied.

G: Were they argumentative or was the discourse--?

J: Not very much. They were overawed. They were awed with the whole situation and scared because they were afraid they were going to have to go to jail. But the point of my story--it does have a point--is he was prepared to do what was necessary to preserve the country, like not running again. He was willing to do what it took to preserve our democracy. The rioting, that was just a terrible thing that he had to put up with. I think in the final analysis, if he had to do something, he'd have done it. If the California authorities hadn't been able to handle--

G: Did he have any problems with Sam Yorty, then-mayor of Los Angeles?

J: I don't know. I remember Yorty. I don't know. I don't think he did, but I'm not sure. I remember Yorty though.

If you've ever read the FBI report on Martin Luther King, it's a terrible thing. Martin Luther King doesn't command the type of respect he's getting, basically. But he got in a position of leadership and you couldn't put him down; he was there. Johnson was not a big Martin Luther King fan.

G: Is that right?

J: Yes.

G: Why? Because of the FBI report?

J: No, just basically his morals and he just really--Martin Luther King just happened to be at the right place at the right time, made the right speech and became famous. But he really

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didn't have any of the qualities of these real fine civil rights leaders--that [A. Philip] Randolph, Mr. Randolph, the Pullman porter, and all of them, they were just fine people. King was not of their caliber at all. They were nice to deal with and they understood. They didn't back off an inch, but they were not mean, and they didn't meddle in things that were not really part of the civil rights movement. King was just an opportunist. He just grabbed on to an issue and he--of course he's a revered person now, and I'm just running him down. But really, he is not as fine a man as he has been painted to be now. And of course, that's over now; he's dead and--

G: Do you think that LBJ felt that King had gotten credit for, let's say, the Voting Rights Act, that he, LBJ, should have received credit for it?

J: No, that King had gotten a lot of the credit these other civil rights leaders should have gotten credit for. Johnson, I don't believe he really ever cared about the credit he was going to get for these civil rights things that he did. That's a minority of the vote, really, and you alienate more people than you win on issues like that. Illinois, for example, where you'd think it would just be great, they'd kill you over a civil rights bill. But I think what disturbed him about Martin Luther King was the fact that he was getting a lot of credit that these other civil rights leaders who had been in the fight for all these years, Thurgood Marshall and--I can't remember all their names; [I] have some pictures of them--but they should have gotten credit for the things they've done over the years in promoting this. But here was this fellow who came along late and was able to have a large following and he just overshadowed all the real fine, outstanding civil rights leaders.

G: Did his opposition to Vietnam cause a problem for LBJ, do you think?

J: I think anybody's opposition to Vietnam caused a problem to LBJ.

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Another story: we used to have clothes made by a clothier named Louis Roth. I don't know if you've ever heard of those suits. They are very expensive suits. Now they cost about six hundred dollars, seven hundred dollars. Back then, they were two or three hundred, back in the days when you could buy a suit for fifty or seventy-five. And I made the first liaison with Mr. Roth because the President wanted to get some suits made. Roth was very agreeable, and made suits for him and me and Marvin Watson, but he sold them to us at cost. The President, he didn't sell at all, but those of us who were on staff could buy them at cost. Mr. Roth came to the White House, met the President, and they got along very well.

An aside: the President just loved to shock people. That was the greatest thrill of his life, if he could say something to you and just shock you. The tailor was there measuring Johnson, and he was measuring in the crotch, you know, for the length of the pants. Johnson said, "Well, there's one goddamn thing I want to tell you." He said, "Most of y'all make suits and the pants feel like I'm sitting on some barbed wire." The tailor just jumped back, and Roth jumped.

Anyway, we got along very well with Roth, and Roth made him a lot of clothes. My idea was to make them to where he wouldn't have that big protruding stomach--look better. We got along very well, and damn if Roth didn't become a big anti-Vietnam man, made a substantial contribution to some organization about Vietnam. I was off the staff then. I was getting my hair cut over here on Medical Parkway one morning and I got a call from Johnson. He said, "What in the hell did your man Roth do?" Of course, I hadn't read it yet. I said, "What did he do?" And then he told me. Of course, if I had known that Roth's leanings were that way I would have talked to him in advance and gotten it

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smoothed over. The point of that story is that anybody who was opposed to Vietnam created a problem with him. That was an issue that he knew was just killing him.

Everybody who was a spokesman and who was opposed to it was a problem to him.

G: Well, getting back to Johnson and King, was there anything in the reports that Johnson got that disturbed him about King?

J: Yes, there were many. I never read the FBI report on King. I never read it because we weren't allowed to; we didn't have access to FBI reports. I did hear a lot about it. There was enough in there of a subversive nature that really upset Johnson and J. Edgar Hoover, and even those in the FBI who were less witch-hunting than Hoover. They worried about King. King was not a person--he was extremely controversial.

G: But there was a lot of evidence that Hoover was trying to undermine King's reputation.

J: Yes.

G: Did Johnson suspect that this was the case?

J: No, I don't think so. I don't think he thought that Hoover was. . . .

G: What about King's personal life?

J: Terrible, just terrible.

G: Was it any worse than prevailing white politicians, let's say?

J: Yes, I think it was. I think it was a shocking kind of--

G: Really? Did this bother Johnson?

J: Yes. Of course, you know, how do you make a security risk? Well, a security risk who has a sexual problem, deviant or undeviant, becomes a security risk. If you can't keep away from a woman, somebody can plant a woman just like that story I told you at lunch. They are security risks. King was a big problem. I don't want to be putting myself in a

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position where a person that has become as revered as he is, doesn't join in all the reverence, but I don't think he's as deserving of what he's got as it would appear today.

G: Did you ever see him and Johnson together?

J: I saw them, but there wasn't any kind of conflict.

G: But I mean, how they got along in each other's presence?

J: I think Johnson was polite, you know. No, I didn't notice anything about--he treated him just as good as he did the other civil rights leaders, and he treated them darn good.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III

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