INTERVIEW IV

DATE: March 28, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: JAKE JACOBSEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

G: Let me ask you about the incident in which Representative Gerald Ford released a letter from Mike Mansfield to the President with regard to Mansfield's Vietnam opposition. Do you recall this issue?

J: Yes, I do. I remember that, and I remember a number of occasions where the President referred to President Ford. On the Mansfield thing, aside from his personal feelings about Gerald Ford, which were not good--

G: What were they?

J: He just didn't think Ford was much of a statesman at all; that's putting it nicely.

G: How did he phrase it?

J: He said Gerald Ford played football too long without wearing a helmet, and that that was what was wrong with him. Now that's of course pretty tough on the other side, but he didn't like him, thought he was entirely too partisan in certain areas. Of course, he was entitled to be partisan. And that was the situation with respect to the Mansfield letter. That's totally a partisan thing, trying to stir up controversy within the Democratic hierarchy on an issue that really should have been kept private. If Mansfield didn't agree

with President Johnson on certain aspects of Vietnam, that's fine, but for it to be made public--Mansfield didn't make it public and obviously didn't want it made public. But Ford was a totally partisan character. Personally I've seen him so drunk he couldn't hit the floor with his hat. In an elevator several times at the Madison Hotel, he was staggering around, but that's his business; people can drink if they want to. But I don't think Johnson thought he was much of a person in politics.

G: Did he react specifically to Ford releasing this letter?

J: Oh, yes. He just said that was another thing to stir up controversy and to do what he [Ford] shouldn't be doing. He really didn't like Gerald Ford, just didn't like to be around him and didn't think he was good for the country--

G: Would he retaliate against Ford in a situation like this?

J: I don't think so.

G: Maybe not approving a project in Ford's district or--?

J: I don't remember anything like that. Perhaps he didn't have the opportunity to. I don't remember anything specific. I think Ford would have enough sense not to ever get himself in a position where he was dependent upon Johnson for something he wanted. I think he tried to avoid that if he could, because he--

G: This was during the period where there was that massive build-up of troops in Vietnam, beginning in the summer and going through the fall. Any recollections of Mansfield's letter and its impact on the President?

J: Only vague. I'm trying to think if I were around at that specific time or heard him say anything that was with. . . . My reaction is to say he was terribly upset that Mansfield would take the position he took. At the same time, he could understand Mansfield was a

rather passive sort of man. He was a peace-loving type of person who could see, not quite as much as Fulbright, but could see the position of the other side pretty readily, like Russia and the other people who were in the basic conflict in this world. So I don't think he'd be totally surprised that Mansfield would oppose certain facets of Vietnam, but I don't remember specifically.

I know this, that all of those things regarding Vietnam, where his colleagues and his friends--some, quote, "friends"--were taking positions which were in opposition to what the executive branch had taken, him or whoever it was, were very distressing to him. Mainly because it's so easy for a person who really doesn't have any responsibility with respect to a particular facet of government to criticize and to say, "Well, I think that's pretty good, but . . ." or, "I have certain reservations." All that does is put them in the position where if something happens that isn't good about it, they can then come out, "Well, I told you I had reservations about it," which really doesn't mean anything. Those things were extremely upsetting to him. Of course he knew as well as anybody knew that it was a terrible problem. The fact that somebody would say, "Well, it's all right but I've got certain reservations about some things"--he knew that pretty well. He knew that there were problems. Anybody does. I'm sure that was true of the Mansfield situation.

G: What were the President's expectations on Vietnam during these months?

J: This is the way I see it.

G: I'm talking about 1965 really, from the summer, when the troop build-up began, through the end of the year. They had the bombing pause in December, and it resumed again in January.

J: As I see it--and I'm not speaking from my thinking; I'm speaking from what I saw and what he said--he could not visualize a situation where you didn't get into something to win it. In his mind, there was no way to have a stalemate. People were getting killed and it was not a situation where a stalemate did anybody any good.

His idea was that if you're going to be in there at all, you ought to win. His advisers were telling him that if you did certain things, that we could win. [William] Westmoreland and [Robert] McNamara and [Walt] Rostow and everybody that advised him on Vietnam were telling him that if you did certain military things, you could force them into a position of negotiating. And that was a victory.

To his way of thinking, that would have been a victory, if you could force them to the bargaining table and have a cease-fire. So he did what he thought--after getting all the advice he got, he made the decision. I don't want to indicate that anybody made the decision other than him, but he did pay attention to the advisers he had regard for. They indicated to him that if he had enough going for us in Vietnam, we could win, in effect; force them to quit fighting and force them to suffer some of the adversity that didn't seem to be bothering them. So his idea was to put enough in there to make them talk and to make them back off of their position of just wanting to win the war.

G: Were you present on occasions when he would receive this advice from--?

J: Oh, sure I was. And I read the memos. Hell, he got lots of advice indicating to him that he could win the war.

G: In these discussions, was the tone one of optimism; did they feel that it would be a relatively quick and assured victory?

J: That was my impression, that there was enough optimism to cause me to think, listening and reading, that this wasn't going to be too bad. There was going to be a loss of life, but that it just wouldn't be all that bad. We had the power to destroy them, of course, but to make them understand that, you had to do a little more than just sit back and have a kind of a stalemate war.

G: Were some people advising him to do more than he was willing to do?

J: Yes, yes. I'm trying to think of who. The whos don't come easy. He had other advisers than I've named; outside the government, he would talk to people. He talked to [Dwight] Eisenhower several times.

G: Anything on Eisenhower's advice?

J: No, I don't remember.

G: Do you think that he was influenced by the Dominican Republic intervention, where the troops went in and resolved the situation in a relatively short period of time and then got out?

J: He might have been. I'm not sure of the timing. You would know.

G: April, I think, is when they went, 1965.

J: It was during that--1965?

G: Yes.

J: Yes, that might have--

G: But he didn't bring up the comparison?

J: No, no.

G: And the aides didn't, the people who were advising him did not--?

J: I don't remember anybody making those comparable at all. I think--well, I don't know what they were thinking, but certainly, they didn't bring it up. And if I had to guess, they understood perfectly well that there was no comparability between Vietnam and the Dominican Republic.

G: Did he consider calling up the reserves?

J: Yes, he thought about it.

G: Why didn't he do it?

J: I would suppose--I don't remember why he didn't do it. I don't think he ever said why he didn't do it. I think he just didn't do it, from our standpoint. I didn't hear what his reasons were for not doing it. So I don't really know why he didn't call up the reserves. I think he felt that he didn't have to take that kind of action and disturb the lives of so many people who were established and doing what they were doing. And I don't think he felt there was any need to do it. I think he felt we had enough. We weren't using what we had, really, to--we were holding back this and holding back that.

G: But with the draft--

J: Yes, that was a problem. I don't know why. The answer is I don't know why he didn't call up the reserves and not have the draft just be such a burden on him.

G: Let me ask you about the bombing. There was a bombing pause in December, and then it was resumed in January; apparently the feeling was that the pause had not produced the kind of results he'd hoped for. Do you remember that?

J: Yes, I do. And it didn't. If I'm wrong--I don't want to be wrong, but my recollection is that there were some negotiations going on at that particular time. Maybe the Pope--we did a lot with the Pope--or with someone else, some other government was trying to

intervene to talk to Ho Chi Minh and his government. The bombing pause, of course, was to give credence to those negotiations, to let them know that something--

G: Who was the primary middle person in dealing with the Pope, or the aide in dealing with the Pope?

J: I did it a couple of times. I went out to the papal embassy in Washington and delivered messages to the--I believe he was the bishop who was in charge. [Jack] Valenti did it some. I believe that's it. I don't know of anybody else. I don't think Rostow ever did that.

(Interruption)

G: You were going to say, one time on an airplane--

J: One time on an airplane, we were flying from--we might have been going to meet those two leaders of South Vietnam.

G: [Nguyen Van] Thieu and [Nguyen Cao] Ky.

J: Yes, we might have been going to Hawaii to meet them, or somewhere. And McNamara showed us a secret film from Red China, I think, showing them exploding an atomic bomb. I believe that's right; I think it was Red China. The one thing about the film--of course, there were a bunch of Chinese just running around with boots on. They all had boots on because, obviously, when you shoot off a rocket or something, there's a lot of water involved. And I remember in one particular part of the movie one of these Chinamen took off his boots and just poured sweat out of them, just full of sweat. It must have been terribly hot. Anyway, I don't know where that film came from, but I assumed that McNamara must have feelers just everywhere. But obviously, he didn't have as many as we needed up in North Vietnam.

G: You felt that he was optimistic, that McNamara was one of the more optimistic--?

J: And more of--what was it, the dove? And what was the other bird?

G: The hawk.

J: He was a pretty big hawk.

G: Was he?

J: Yes.

G: Who were the doves in 1965 and 1966?

J: I don't think anybody among his close advisers was a dove. I can't really remember. I don't remember the doves.

G: How about George Ball?

J: Yes, I hadn't thought of him. George Ball was pretty dovish. George Ball could have been influential, but he's so stilted and so New England-ish that he just didn't get his points across. He could speak well, of course, articulate very well. But he did it in such a manner that really you either resented what he said, or you just wouldn't pay attention to it, or you didn't want to pay attention to it.

Unfortunately, he just couldn't make a good contribution because of his attitude. And really, there is nothing wrong with being the way he is. That's probably the backbone of this country, that type of person. But within our area he just didn't come across, in a way. Yes, I guess George Ball was one. [Arthur] Goldberg was very dovish.

G: Was he?

J: Oh, yes. Consequently, nobody asked him.

G: Is that right?

J: He'd volunteer pretty readily. Goldberg was a great volunteer fellow. Also Goldberg was one of those people who would always have a reservation. He had little reservations hung in somewhere to where if it didn't go quite right, he could always say, "Uh-oh, I had a reservation about that." (Laughter) Nice man; delightful man. Arthur Goldberg is a fine gentleman. I liked him very much. He started getting on Johnson's nerves pretty bad. He imposed himself a lot. I guess you've heard this. He was pretty pushy.

G: Give me an example.

J: Well, he'd call about something that was totally out of his field and just insist that he had to talk to the President--call from New York. It would be something that wasn't within the United Nations at all, and he would just push his opinion off on Johnson. He felt like he had a lot to say, and it needed to be heard.

G: What about White House staff members? Were any of those dissenters on the war, at least advocating a posture more based on negotiations?

J: I don't recall anybody, when I was around, who expressed that feeling.

G: How about [Bill] Moyers?

J: Moyers was a great reservation man. He didn't really say you ought not to do anything, but he had a lot of reservations about everything you did.

I don't want to do a man an injustice, but I keep thinking of [Harry] McPherson. My feeling is McPherson was rather dovish and had a fairly good background knowledge of what was going on. [Jack] Valenti, I just don't believe he was--I think he was pretty strong in favor of the position that the administration took.

G: Tell me about the Immigration Bill of 1965, designed to end the national origins quota system.

J: My recollection is that Johnson took a very, very personal interest in that legislation and did a lot of the lobbying himself. He'd call people and, sometimes to my amazement, since I had no idea he felt so strong about it. I didn't know he had those strong feelings. And he had the legislative division with Larry [O'Brien] and his people, including me, really working hard on that. We called everybody and went up to Capitol Hill and talked to people. I know he was very, very strong in his feelings about getting that legislation passed.

G: Did he see it as a civil rights type measure?

J: I would gather so, that it fit into a civil rights sort of pattern. Or if he felt that the heads of government in some of the countries that were badly affected by the quota system might have better feelings toward this country and it might result in better feeling toward our country. I don't know. I never heard him express his reasons for being so strong for the legislation--I assumed that it might go back to the time he was in the Congress, in the Senate when that issue was debated. But he did work awfully hard on that bill, as well as others, but I do remember that one. He got some good votes. He picked up some votes that we couldn't have gotten.

G: Any in particular that you recall?

J: No, I can't remember. They all merge together. He was a darn good lobbyist. Man, he could pick up votes on a bill. We did a little bit. We'd call and visit and try to set up a system of doing favors for the people in the states where we were lobbying, to where when we had to call on them, they would realize they were a little obligated to us. I thought it was a--it was all originated with Johnson; it didn't originate with O'Brien.

G: It had not been in place already, the system?

J: No, maybe some of the things, but we instituted a lot of things to try to get our legislative position such that we could call on people and they would pay some attention to us. We had a little thing going. I don't know if--I'm sure Johnson approved this; I don't know if he thought it up. The Democratic National Committee, Carter--

G: Cliff Carter?

J: Cliff Carter was over at the Democratic National Committee, and we would have a morning meeting maybe once a week. We'd have a freshman congressman in, and represented there would be a member, a political-type member, from each of the major grant-giving organizations in the government. I remember Milt Semer was, for HUD [Housing and Urban Development]; I remember that, before he came to the White House. Cliff would always try to have some staff member from the White House there. I was the logical one because I felt sorry for the difficulties he had trying to get people together, and I'd go as often as I could. He would try to encourage these freshmen congressmen to state what their problems were, from a grant standpoint, and from what they needed for their districts. They would, and it was surprising what you could get done that way. Sewer grants and different grants--there are so many of them. In that way you ingratiated the person to your thinking, and if you ever needed something, you could pretty well call on him. But lobbying is a complicated process; it's not a--

G: Well, likewise, if a member of Congress was not supporting you, or you needed his vote and the vote was very uncertain, and he had a project that he was interested in, would you hold up action on that until you got his vote on a certain bill?

J: Not quite that callous, but he would have difficulty getting things done [if] there was no *quid pro quo*. But he would realize that the next time he might fare a little better if he. . .

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G: Where was this coordinated?

J: I would guess Cliff was probably the coordinator, but everybody did a little of it. Really, in each of the grant-giving areas there was usually a political-type person, and you really didn't have to call him very much. He pretty well kept up with the politics, and he pretty well knew who your friends were and who your enemies were, and he would kind of look after the thing pretty good without any intervention from the White House. I just keep thinking of Milt, but there were others; I just can't think of their names. Milt was darn good. He knew who all the players were, and he would call you on the phone and say, "Old so-and-so isn't doing right." We didn't have to do a thing.

G: Were there other things that you would use, like trips on the *Sequoia* or trips on *Air Force One*?

J: Yes, that was a part of the game. "Game" is a poor word; it was part of the process. When the *Sequoia* was going out and Johnson was making up the list, that was a consideration. And certainly *Air Force One*, nobody got on there just for the heck of it.

G: Really?

J: There was some reason for it. I remember one time he took [Wayne] Morse somewhere, which surprised the heck out of me, but he had Morse on *Air Force One*. I can't remember the situation. I know I was surprised that he was there.

G: How about appointments?

J: Appointments were a tool always. Aside from those appointments that Johnson really wanted to make--I noticed Willard Deason in here; that's what made me think of it. Aside from appointments like that, the appointment was always used as a vehicle whereby you made a friend out of whoever wanted that particular person, and whoever you would consult in advance to find out if they had any preference. There are just a lot of things--White House dinners--just so many things that a president does, where he has total option as to who he has or what he doesn't have, and where it's so desirable to be present. Secondly, of course, you've got to consider the fact that he has so many areas of consideration. For instance, fund raising was a serious consideration on the part of the President. And other things besides legislation and besides--

G: Do you mean raising funds for members of Congress?

J: No--well, he did a little of that, too. I remember he had--I forget who he had. I remember Warren Magnuson was one. We had several. I think we did it in the morning. They'd come over and visit a while, and he'd drop a pretty good envelope on them.

G: Really?

J: I wish I could remember. That would be interesting if I could remember who they were, but I remember there were a number. I think we had several hundred thousand dollars that [Arthur] Krim had raised.

G: President's Club money or--?

J: I don't know. Cash, I know it was cash. And he would get together an envelope, and we'd call the guy over. He'd come in and visit a while and talk a while. Before he left, he would get that envelope. No *quid pro quo*, nothing discussed about what we wanted. It was totally a matter of getting him elected.

G: Is that right?

J: Oh, yes. Always that. It was all done subtly. It went on for some time.

G: Was Krim the principal fund raiser?

J: Krim was the principal fund raiser, yes. Arthur was in some way connected with all the money that we raised. He was always there, and whether he did it or not, he knew about it. Or the money went to him or something. Krim was probably the principal fund raiser we had in our--of course he had people he worked with who also knew the President.

G: Did Krim raise and have this money disbursed with individual members of Congress and senators in mind? Or was it simply, say, to help Democrats in general and then let the White House decide who should receive it?

J: That's exactly it.

G: Is that right?

J: It was monies that were raised to assist the President in running the party or the government or whatever. It was really pretty much open; discretion was totally open. He could have done with it anything he wanted. We didn't do that again. I think we just did it that one time.

G: You mean one time for one senator or one time for one election?

J: No, one time for a group, and I don't think we did--

G: Would that have been 1966, when--?

J: Had to be, because I was just there from 1965 to 1967. I don't think that became a popular thing.

G: How many members--were they House members as well as senators who were--?

J: Yes. He picked several who were having tough races and who had a chance of being defeated, and several whom he liked and who were good to him, and that's the way he made the selection. It wasn't a massive thing, but it was--

G: How many would you say received [inaudible]?

J: I would say, just guessing, twenty or thirty, not a whole bunch.

G: Have any idea what size amounts they received?

J: If I had to guess, the senators got about ten thousand and the House members got less, maybe five or seven. Enough to impress it on their memory. See, in politics you can do little things and nobody remembers those. If you do anything, you've got to do it properly. If you're going to give money, you just can't put some piddling little amount in there; they can do that on their own. So you've got to give them enough to where it will impress them a little bit.

G: Was this a consideration that LBJ was aware of, do you think, that there had to be a significant amount before--?

J: He knew that better than any man I know. I've learned it from him.

G: Is that right?

J: No, I didn't learn it from him. I knew it from years ago, that if you were going to do something, you either had to do it or not do it, not just go halfway. Any good politician understands that pretty good.

G: Did LBJ ever put his own money into these kinds of races?

J: It's--my hesitancy is caused by the fact that it's difficult for me to determine what was his money and what was other money; it's difficult. I'm sure he did. He took a great interest

in local races, for example. He was always helping somebody and I'm sure that was his money that he used to do that.

G: You handled a lot of his finances while he was President, in the time you were there, I guess, succeeding Walter Jenkins.

J: Yes, I handled some.

G: How would you describe his financial situation in 1965 and 1966?

J: Insofar as what kind of shape he was in?

G: Yes.

J: Oh, he was in great shape. He had no concern about money at all. He had land that was worth millions of dollars, and that TV station and radio station; they were moneymakers. He was not hurting for cash at all, but if he were, he had ranches he could sell in a minute and raise all kinds of money. He was in good shape financially.

G: Of course, I guess the station was in Mrs. Johnson's name.

J: Yes.

G: Did he have his own separate sources of funds that were not tied in with the lands and stations? Did he have stocks or bonds or things, for example, his own portfolio?

J: I don't know. I never found out if they really owned any stocks or not. I don't think they did. I don't think that was their type of investment.

G: How about tax-free municipals or bearer bonds or anything like that?

J: Yes, I think they did a good bit with governments. They felt like that was the thing to do with cash. But I don't recall--for instance, I don't remember them ever having a stockbroker with whom they did business.

G: Really?

J: I think if they owned stock it was--they owned stock of course; the radio stations and the--I don't know if the Ranch was incorporated or not. I don't believe it was. But I know they owned stock in several of my banks. He bought stock in those. But I don't believe they played the stock market. I think he would have thought it was a conflict to begin with, because he could have had so much influence on the fluctuation of the market just by announcing something. I don't believe they did any of that, and I don't believe he had any source of revenue other than what they owned jointly, he and Mrs. Johnson.

G: But he must have spent a lot of money, because he was buying presents for people constantly. You described how he would give presents to any number of people at any--

J: Well, most of those came from the State Department.

G: I see.

J: The State Department has a large fund to buy gifts, theoretically for foreign dignitaries, but I think some of that money came from the State Department. For instance, in the publication of books, you know, you could get those from any department. I don't want to make a startling statement, and I don't think it is startling, but any president, and I will exclude none, utilizes the funds of various departments and agencies to do things that he wants to get done without revealing why he's doing it. If he wants to get something copied, some agency will do it.

G: What about, for example, the publication of some of the books of his speeches or statements, things like *My Hope for America*? How would that be handled?

J: I can't remember who published that. I can't remember who did the publishing, but the way it would be handled was that somebody, Krim or somebody like that, would talk to the publisher and they would say, "You ought to do this for President Johnson."

Maybe I'm pontificating too much. I'm making broad statements, and that's not why you want me to talk, but I will just say this: This country is amazing--it was to me; it might not be to you. If a president really wants to get something, I mean a book published or a present or just most anything, all it really takes is a phone call. And most of the manufacturers and the business people in this country were just delighted to be able to do something for the chief executive. It might have cost them some money, but it didn't hurt them that bad, and they were just pleased to do it. Therefore, the point of my story is that, first of all, it's a remarkable thing. I didn't realize that people in this country were so willing to do things for the chief executive, and secondly, I didn't realize that they were so flattered by the fact that they were being asked. But the point is that really there is never any difficulty about--the president can be very generous and really, he's not spending any of his own money. It's just a matter of getting people to help him.

G: In your capacity of handling a lot of his personal business, did you have dealings with Jesse Kellam at the station?

J: Yes, talked to him very frequently. Mr. Kellam and I were at one time very good friends, although Jesse was a man--it was very difficult to be friendly with Jesse, because his total loyalty was to the Johnsons. Now, if he were friendly with you, it was because he thought you were the person that Johnson wanted him to be friendly with. I don't think Mr. Kellam had--we used to call him Mr. Kellam, by the way. Very few people called him Jesse.

G: Really?

J: I don't know why. He just didn't act like he wanted you to, or something. But his loyalty was total. I don't believe he had a friend who wasn't somebody that he thought was

Johnson's friend. I don't think he had any friends on his own. Yes, I dealt with him frequently.

G: How about Don Thomas?

J: Yes, I dealt with Don Thomas frequently. I never liked Don Thomas; he never liked me. But I did deal with him whenever I had to, and we got along just real well because our interests were mutual. He knew when I called him that I wasn't talking for myself. I didn't have any personal interest in anything I called him about. He was a very trusted adviser and still is.

G: Were those two the principal people you worked with, with regard to the station?

J: Yes, those are the only two.

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G: [Did] Jesse Kellam tend to make most of the decisions with regard to the station?

J: Yes. He made all the decisions with regard to the station, but very rarely without either feeling or specifically knowing that it was approved.

G: Approved by?

J: By the Johnsons.

G: Was this Mrs. Johnson or the President?

J: Either, both.

G: What would happen if they disagreed? Did they ever disagree with each other?

J: No. I was never present, and I was there a whole lot, when there was any real disagreement between the President and Mrs. Johnson. Generally--I want to say, she would never really voice any difference. I don't believe that there were any situations where his opinion didn't dominate the situation; that's in their personal business.

G: In the personal business his opinion dominated?

J: Yes.

G: Likewise, did Thomas play an active decision-making role in the station as well, or was it primarily Jesse Kellam?

J: No, no. Don and Jesse got along extremely well. And if Mr. Kellam ran into a problem, he'd call on Don, and they would discuss it, and Don would help. He might make the decision along with Jesse. Don was very influential. He's done well for the Johnsons in the past. They had a lot of respect for Don.

G: Outside of the station matters, who would you work with?

J: Well, you always had A. W. Moursund and Dale Malechek.

G: What was Moursund's role?

J: Well, anything that happened around Johnson City, you know, the Ranch and stuff, you kind of checked with A. W. to be sure you weren't--

G: What was his relationship with LBJ like?

J: It was a difficult one to describe. I thought it was close. Whenever Johnson--he'd be on that telephone on the plane long before we got in sight of Bergstrom, calling A. W., getting him to meet him somewhere. I just always felt like it was a very close, personal relationship. As the years went on, I got the feeling that it wasn't as close as I had originally thought it was; that it was more business and more a matter of respect. The President had a lot of respect for A. W. and had a lot of respect for his knowledge. A. W. is a darn good rancher. He knows all about ranches and ranch land and things like that. Of course, eventually they just had a parting of the ways. But they were both too much alike.

G: Really?

J: Oh, yes, A. W. was expansion minded and so was Johnson. They just wanted--if *this* was next to *that* and they owned *this*, they wanted *that*, too. They were both alike. And I think that's what kept them together for so long a time, that they were both alike, and that Moursund understood the President and the President understood Moursund. But A. W. was a very influential man and a man to be reckoned with when there was a problem about something involving the Ranch or any of the other ranches, the land.

G: Did his advice remain limited to personal business or did he have suggestions for running the country or the economy or anything like that?

J: No, never that I know of. They might when--they were together a lot when I wasn't--

G: Did they have investments abroad together as well as here in the United States?

J: No. I think A. W. might have been fooling with something in South America or Central America, but it wasn't anything that Johnson was--

G: Mexico, a ranch down there?

J: Something. And of course A. W. had a tremendous club he carried around with him. Everybody knew he was close to the President, and A. W. wouldn't be above telling it, either. A. W. was cruel; man, he's tough.

G: Give me an example.

J: Well, he's just tough as hell. He'd tell somebody, "You ought to make a good deal with me. You know I'm so close to the President."

G: Did the President resent this kind of--?

J: Of course he resented it, but he acted like he didn't know it. On the other side of the coin, I don't want to paint A. W. with a big black brush. The President had no objection to his

friends doing well as a result of knowing him. He was awfully nice to me. He let me do a lot of things that--he didn't say, "Go do this, Jake" but he'd suggest I meet with so-and-so. He was extremely nice to me in that area.

G: This is after you left or while--?

J: Yes, and while I was there. If he had somebody who was very influential in Texas at the White House, he would always call me over and say, "You know ol' Jake, and he's so and so and so." He was a thoughtful--an extremely thoughtful man. He just helped more people, you know, in little ways, not a program where you help a class of people. For instance, if he had somebody at the White House who he knew could help me in Texas, he never failed to have me come over. He'd have lunch with them or sit with them for a while and have a cup of coffee, just so that person would know me if I had to call on them or if I needed something.

G: I guess one of the biggest questions in my mind about LBJ is, how could a president who was this immersed in the entire legislative process, for all of these bills, for all of these different things ranging from Medicare, Social Security, civil rights, health, poverty, consumer legislation, the war in Vietnam, the whole executive branch of the federal government, how could he at the same time know what was going on in his personal finances?

J: (Laughter) It's easy, really. I know Johnson, and I know me, and I know the ordinary Texas entrepreneur, and it's just easy to know what's going on in your own business while you're doing a whole lot of other things. You just know. You're going to find out. It doesn't take much time. You have people you trust, and you just ask them. And the only recreation you get, aside from maybe if you have a drink now and then--if you drink a

little too much, you might enjoy that, or you might have a woman, I don't know--but the only real recreation, mentally, that you get is worrying about some little thing like, "Jake ought to meet this man because he could help Jake." Well, that's just the--it makes you feel good to do something like that. You know people appreciate it, and particularly he liked to help people who would express their appreciation. He loved to have you thank him, although he'd act like it wasn't anything. But he just loved to have you write him a note or come in, or do something to express appreciation for something that he did that he didn't tell you he was doing, for that reason. That's why he liked Vicki [McCammon] so much and Marie [Fehmer]. He never did anything for them that they didn't hug him, kiss him, write him a note, put a little note on his breakfast, just something to express appreciation for something he did. And there he'd do a thousand more things as a result of that.

But my feeling is that, number one, a man in his position or people similarly situated--George Brown, everybody like that--knows about their personal business. They just know it. They're going to know it no matter if it's all in a trust, no matter where it is, they are going to find out what's happening to their business. And number two, the bigger the person in standing, the more likely they are to do little things and enjoy them, totally enjoy them, get a tremendous enjoyment out of doing things to help others, aside from big issues like the poverty program. Of course he liked to do that, too. Did I ever tell you about that painting over there?

G: No.

J: This ugly thing. This is another story that has a point. On our round-the-world trip when we went to Vietnam, *et cetera*, before we went into a country, the State Department had

told the ambassador to that country to gather up the paintings of the best artists in that particular country and have them on exhibit somewhere, either at the embassy or at the hotel where we were staying or something. And they did, and I've got several. But Johnson would be the first one through the line, of course, which is logical, and he'd pick. He picked a few in every country, and he bought them. He paid for them unless they wouldn't accept his money, of course. In some instances that was true. Then we would go through the line, and anything we could afford, we could buy. I've got two other ones, I think.

But that one was on the wall, I believe, of the hotel where we were staying, or the palace, in the Philippines. And Johnson went through and picked out what he wanted, and then we started through. When I ran upon this picture, I thought it was great. Most people don't. Most people think it's a wasted canvas, but I think it's well done, and it was done by a fine artist in the Philippines, one of the best in the Philippines. And I admired it and asked how much it was. Well, it was much too much for me. It wasn't a whole lot of money, but I just couldn't afford it, and I said so. And that was the end of that.

About three months later, Mrs. [Imelda] Marcos' brother [Eduardo Romualdez], who was the ambassador to the United States, was at the gate at the White House and called and asked if he could come up to see me. That wasn't my sphere of operation at all--Valenti, maybe, but not Jacobsen; he didn't fool around with those diplomats. I, of course, had him come up. He walked in, and he had a brown paper under his arm. We talked a while, and he opened it up, and it was that painting. President Marcos had overheard me saying I liked it, and he had arranged for me to get it.

Now I'm not comparing Marcos--Marcos at that time was a powerful man and was doing well. What he did later, I'm not going to condemn him or condone him. But he was a big man, and big people like to do things for people. That just gives them a great source of enjoyment because they're in a position to do it. And Johnson was typical. He just did more things for his help and for people who worked at the station. I know, because I was usually the go-between. I would get it done or I would deliver the--whatever it was supposed to be. He was just a very, very thoughtful person.

G: Were they nominal gifts like electric toothbrushes and--?

J: In some instances.

G: Or were they expensive?

J: Sometimes very expensive. He'd pick things up at Neiman-Marcus for people. That wasn't at all a problem. And sometimes they were more favors than gifts.

G: How often would you say he talked with Moursund when he was in Washington?

J: Depending upon what was happening, if there was something going on at the Ranch or the ranches where there was some decision to be made, selling something or buying something, he would talk to him every day and sometimes more. But if there was really nothing of that nature going on, never less than once a week, I'd say, he talked to A. W.

G: Did he normally do this in the evenings or while he was in the office?

J: No, no. I'd say rarely did he do much in the office that involved either his personal business or his friends'. He reserved that time for seeing the officials. But in the mornings from the bedroom and in the evenings even from the office, when he was through working and he retired to that little room behind the Oval Office where he liked to sit. It had a womb chair in it, I remember.

G: Someone has suggested that he even had a direct line to Moursund.

J: Well, we all had direct lines, you know, if we went through the Ranch. Most of us had a telephone that came off the Ranch switchboard, including A. W., and all you had to do was pick up the phone at the White House and say, "Give me the Ranch." And the Ranch operator would answer, and I'd say, "Ring my wife," and I had her. That was it. I'm sure A. W. had one of those phones. It was a White House phone, but they were all connected to the Ranch switchboard.

G: I see. So instead of calling him directly in Round Mountain or wherever he was--

J: Oh, you never called anybody direct.

G: You would call the Ranch switchboard?

J: Anybody who was connected to the Ranch, such as A. W.

G: Your wife or your home phone here in Austin was--

J: Yes, I had a phone right next to that one that was a White House phone. I remember doing that once in Thailand, just picking up the phone and saying, "Give me the Ranch." Of course, it had to go from there to the White House, and then from the White House to the Ranch. And they said, "LBJ Ranch," and I said, "Would you ring my wife?" Of course, all the operators knew me. And damn if I wasn't talking to her. That's a good story to tell people who can't imagine the vastness of the presidency, that an assistant could be that well connected. The White House operators were--have you ever talked to any of them or heard [about them]?

G: No.

J: They were the darnedest bunch of ladies. They were all elderly. There were very few young White House operators. They'd been there for years and they were just as friendly

and nice, and they got to know you, got to know all of us, as well as our friends. If you were nice to them, if you started recognizing them--Johnson started bringing some of them to the Ranch when he was down there, because he thought it terrible to have these sergeants answer the phone. So he'd bring a couple of White House operators, and of course, they were absolutely delighted. They got to fly in *Air Force One*; got to come to Texas. Most of them were from Boston or something. And he'd bring them down here, and they'd spend two or three days answering the phone, and they'd stay in Johnson City or somewhere like that, or even Austin.

I got to know a lot of them personally. They were just sweet ladies, and, boy, they'd connect you with anybody anywhere. They had a terrific ability for finding people. They took great pride in the fact that if you--particularly the President, if he wanted to get hold of anybody, that they would find him. They'd call somebody, and they'd keep calling until they found that person and do it in record time. And, of course, Johnson was real nice to them. I would guess from the way they reacted that no president had treated them that well, had them over for tea or coffee or something like that. No president had ever been that nice to them, I gather. That may not be true.

G: Were there any instances, when you were around him, where he wanted a phone call to be so confidential that he dialed it himself, that he didn't go through the White House switchboard, or he would just get an outside line and then dial it?

J: I don't remember any instance where he did that. I don't remember, but, of course, he could have very easily when he was in his office--and this probably happened--asked Juanita or Vicki or Marie to get somebody that way. That's possible. Any instance--you know, he had a pretty good feeling for history. Witness what you're doing, what you look

at. He was pretty much responsible for most of the things that happened--Juanita probably even more so than him, but he had a feeling for history, and I don't believe there were very many things that he would want to do to where he wouldn't want some record of it. Of course, he had some things.

G: One of the things that he made a record of, of course, was a lot of the phone conversations that he had. He had a dictaphone belt or something.

J: Oh, it was the worst system you've ever seen. (Laughter) It was a total disaster.

G; Tell me about it.

J: Well, there were a series of dictaphone machines with those belts on them, and he had a little thing he could push to turn it on. And half the time it wouldn't turn on and half the time it wouldn't go from one belt to another belt if the conversation took too long. And another half the time--I've got three halves so far--you'd have to call the Signal Corps man to come up and tell you how to turn it on. It was the biggest mess I've ever seen. If that was the way you monitored phone calls, you weren't. Of course, he did, obviously. You've seen transcripts of some calls, and it did work, but it was a total mess. You weren't ever sure if it was going to work, and you just tried it, and hopefully, it would record the conversation. He had a little button he could push to turn it on.

G: Where did he have this; how many different places did he have this?

J: He had it at the Ranch; he had it in the [White House] bedroom, and I'm sure he had it in the Oval Office, too. Three places that I know of; now, where else, I just don't know. Probably at Camp David, I don't know.

G: Was there also something for him to record person-to-person meetings?

J: I want to say no, and I don't think so. There may have been, but I was never in a situation where I watched him turn any kind of a button on to record a face-to-face--

G: Anything in the Cabinet Room?

J: I don't recall.

G: Did he have his aides also recording phone conversations?

J: Yes, we had the capability. We had a smaller outfit that they stuck under--and I used it once, and I thought that, well, that's the worst mess I've ever seen in my life. I never used it again. Several of us had them. I don't think everybody did, but. . . .

G: Who put them in?

J: Signal Corps, WHCA.

G: White House Communication Agency?

J: Yes.

G: Why did he do this? Did he ever give you a reason for why he wanted to preserve the conversations?

J: No, [not] with regard to any one particular conversation. I remember whenever Mrs. Kennedy, Jackie Kennedy, would call, that button was pushed. I think he was always apprehensive that she would misinterpret something or that she would not understand what he was saying. I never saw that fail.

G: You think he did it to assist his own memory at times?

J: Yes. Well, yes, to be certain that if he were ever quoted, it would be a true quote.

G: Did he ever want to listen to one of the belts or read a transcript of [one]?

J: Yes, I've seen transcripts.

G: Can you give me an example of where he would ask for something?

J: The one I remember is Mrs. Kennedy's.

G: He wanted a transcript or--?

J: Yes, wanted to look at the transcript.

G: And who typed them up?

J: I don't remember. I'm sure one of the ladies over there in the outside office there, Juanita's crowd, some one of them must have typed them up. He didn't have any other typists he would use besides them; [he] had a bunch of typists around, but not anybody he'd trust. Everybody had a secretary or two or three, as many as you could get on somebody else's payroll. But they didn't do anything that really amounted to anything.

G: But there was no pattern to the recording in terms of who he would have do it--?

J: No, absolutely not. It was just him. If he decided that was something that he was concerned about and wanted a tape on, he'd just press that button.

G: Was he frustrated by the fact that the system was not always working?

J: Always, always frustrated with it.

G: Really?

J: Everybody was. (Laughter) Nobody thought the system was good at all. It was frustrating because you were never sure that you were getting anything. You were never sure it was going to come out. You might have wanted it. It always seemed to me that in view of all the abilities that WHCA had--gosh, they could do anything--that they could darn sure build a better system than that. But evidently, at the time, they couldn't.

G: It doesn't sound like one of their more sophisticated--

J: Oh, it wasn't sophisticated at all. It was a bunch of dictaphones. It wasn't sound-operated like so many of them are. It just wasn't any good. It was just a makeshift-type thing.

G: Was it physically inside his desk or under the table?

J: I'm trying to remember. I put tapes on it. I put belts on it at one time or another, I know that, but I can't remember where it was, particularly in the bedroom I can't remember where it was. It was in an enclosed space. They built it into something. I don't remember.

G: Did you have a system of knowing what was on each tape or belt and cataloging the [collection]?

J: I think somebody took them off and marked them when they got through with the conversation. I believe that's right.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview IV

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