INTERVIEW V

DATE: March 29, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: JAKE JACOBSEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

G: I was going to ask you about Bill Fulbright and his relationship with the President after the Dominican intervention and during the Vietnam escalation in 1965.

J: As a background, the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate was always the depositing ground for dissenters and unpopular senators. That was not a good appointment. Foreign Relations back in the old days, or back when Johnson was in majority leadership, was really not an important committee. They didn't do much. Consequently, a lot of people got on there just because they were not popular or for some other reason and, of course, some Senators wanted it.

But anyway, Fulbright became the Foreign Relations Committee, in effect. He was never very popular with Johnson. That's how he got on Foreign Relations, because he just wasn't a member of the team--he was aloof and scholarly, more so than probably he deserved to be. During the presidency, he was always jabbing at the President. He had his own little game he played, and he was kind of a thorn in Johnson's side. Johnson tolerated him. He understood Fulbright pretty well. Fulbright was a man who had great sympathy for the Russians, for example. He understood pretty well that they had their

side and could understand why they mistrusted us just as we mistrusted them. Johnson understood him pretty well but never got along with him. He always felt that Fulbright was trying to establish his own little ball game and run his own foreign policy.

I think that Bill White probably recognized it. And I can understand why Fulbright would think that Bill White was just Johnson's man and anything he wrote, they would say, "Well, Johnson told him what to write." That wasn't true. I never found that to be true. No, Bill was pretty much on his own. He liked Johnson and wrote good things about him, as witness his book [*The Professional: Lyndon B. Johnson*]. But Johnson didn't tell him what to write. I can understand why Fulbright would say that. I don't know that he phoned Johnson and said that. It wasn't easy to get to Johnson if he didn't want you to get to him. You couldn't pick up the phone, even a senator couldn't just pick up the phone and say, "I want to talk to the President." He had to go through somebody. And if Johnson didn't want to talk, they'd never know that he got the message. But I would doubt seriously that he called, although he may have, and accused Johnson of having Bill White write this, because he was not in agreement with Johnson on many aspects of foreign policy. And I can see why he would get the idea that Johnson was trying to put pressure on him to come around.

G: Did Johnson try to win him over?

J: No, I think it was long since past that. I think that their relationship was such that you couldn't do that anymore. Yes, he tried to win him over with a presentation of his side of it, not win him over by being friendly or anything like that; he tried to present the administration's position on a particular foreign issue. I'm sure he agreed with Johnson on many things, but he disagreed with him enough to where it was always a problem.

G: Did Johnson feel that Fulbright's opposition on Vietnam was based on racial prejudice, that the Vietnamese as a race were not worth fighting for?

J: That rings a bell. Where'd you get that? Just off the top of your head?

G: No, I guess it's something that--

J: That rings a bell, that Fulbright was very, very sympathetic to minorities. He gave them more credit than they gave us, by a long shot. I believe that's right. My recollection is that Johnson thought that this was another one of Fulbright's sympathetic positions toward some minority, one of the foreign minorities, not black or white.

G: The notion was, I think, that Fulbright had signed the Southern Manifesto and felt that there was less justification to help Orientals than, let's say, if they were Caucasians. This is the way the argument runs, but did you sense that on Fulbright's part or did Johnson think this?

J: I'm obviously remembering something but I'm not remembering it very well. As a matter of fact, I'm going to just turn around completely. That is right. It comes to mind. Johnson, I've heard him say, "That damn Fulbright, he's going to run down some other minority." That is right. He did have the feeling that Fulbright was not very helpful to the minorities. I'm sorry. I recollected that entirely wrong. They just never got along. Fulbright didn't agree to much that Johnson did in the foreign area, and they just didn't get along.

G: In September 1965 the Head Start program was announced as a permanent War on Poverty initiative. Do you recall LBJ's attitude toward Head Start?

J: Oh, he thought it was a great program.

G: What did he say about it?

J: I remember one expression, and you can apply it to Head Start, and he applied it to many similar programs, the economic programs for minorities and disadvantaged. He always said, "You can make a taxpayer out of a tax-eater." You've heard that expression before. But Head Start was particular appealing to him because it involved the disadvantaged youngsters, I mean young youngsters, preschool people. I've heard him tell others that this was a program where you could really see the good that came when these youngsters went to school; how far along they were as compared to where they would have been, where they probably couldn't speak the language and were still speaking Spanish, for example, at home. He really felt very strong about Head Start, that and some of the other programs as well, but particularly Head Start, because it applied to such a young group and more appealing group. They weren't bums that you put down here at Camp Gary [San Marcos] and taught them how to be chefs and waiters. These were youngsters. They hadn't done anything wrong; they were too young. They hadn't really gotten started yet. They hadn't gotten to be the Camp Gary type.

That was another good program, by the way, that Johnson had a great feel for, that Job Corps. He always felt that if he could take one of those people and turn him away from a life of crime and nothingness and turn him into a responsible citizen, it made the program successful, even though the cost, if you consider how many people got to be anything, was pretty high.

G: Did he see it as sort of an updated version of the NYA [National Youth Administration], which he had directed in Texas?

J: I don't think there's any question about that. I think that's what was in his mind, although he'd never said that. I think that the NYA and teaching down in South Texas and all that

background made those programs so appealing to him, because he'd seen how bad it was and what could be done about it. Head Start was just one that he was particularly enamored with.

G: Anything on Mrs. Johnson's role in Head Start?

J: Isn't that strange? I was just thinking that she took a great interest in Head Start, and they discussed it frequently in the bedroom, about what good would come of a program of that nature. She always participated in the discussion on Head Start and had a lively activity in it. I was just thinking of that as I finished talking about the President's interest.

G: Yesterday, when we talked about LBJ's financial interests, you indicated that during the times that you were around him you seldom saw her disagree with him on financial matters. Did she assert her opinion on substantive policy matters?

J: Let me back off a little bit and start at a different place and arrive where you are. First of all, I think from observation and from what I saw, that President Johnson had a high regard for Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt. He thought that she was a great first lady and really wanted Mrs. Johnson to be more like Eleanor Roosevelt than some of the other first ladies, like Mrs. Eisenhower and Mrs. Truman, who just kind [of] were in back. He always was pressing Mrs. Johnson to get into some thing that she would enjoy and take leadership in. Of course, she did select several fields, which has become apparent. He always brought to her attention certain things that he wanted her to discuss with him. I didn't see her inject herself into anything that he didn't kind of urge her to get into, with respect to discussions of substantial issues. On Vietnam, he talked to her a good bit about it. I'd notice in the bedroom he'd say, "Well, Lady Bird, we're going to do so-and-so," and

kind of get her feeling on it. The relationship was one of great affection and respect. He valued her opinions and rightly so. She is a very intelligent and understanding person.

G: Would she have an opinion in that area?

J; Yes. Yes, she did. But ordinarily she would try to agree with him and make it easy on him to do the things he wanted to do. The relationship was more like a husband and wife, like you and I would discuss with our wives certain things, rather than a president and a first lady. I don't know if I'm making myself clear. She was not an assertive type of person, is not today I don't think, unless she's changed a lot. She would not assert herself, but she was there and available. And if she thought that it was really something she ought to tell him about, she would do it, but she would try to do it as privately as possible. She didn't want to appear to be a person who tried to run her husband or run the presidency. She was particularly good at talking with him and soothing him. It was that type of relationship. It wasn't one that I guess some people thought about, where the first lady gets up and says, "Well, I think we ought to do so-and-so," and he said, "Well, I think we ought to." It wasn't that type of relationship at all. It was just a husband and wife discussing a mutual problem, and she would make her contribution.

She is a bright, bright, bright lady and has a good feel for public relations. She never got a bad story as long as she was in the White House. Nobody said anything bad about Mrs. Johnson. She was just good at public relations. It was that type of relationship where she was as helpful as she could be and just played the part of a good wife as well as a good first lady. She ended up with several good programs that--I think this highway beautification thing. He spent a lot of time on it although it was her thing.

G: How did he spend his time on it?

J: Oh, lobbying. We lobbied. I've got some pictures of [Hubert] Humphrey, Johnson and me in the Cabinet Room going over names and trying to figure how to get that bill through and signed, the Highway Beautification Bill. He spent a lot of time lobbying on that, and was proud of Mrs. Johnson for having picked that as one of her issues.

G: What did he say about her selection of beautification?

J: When he wasn't kidding about it. . . . (Laughter)

G: What did he say when he was kidding?

J: Oh, he'd kid Mrs. Johnson about all these beautification programs and the type of people she was associating with to get the programs under way.

G: Give me an example.

J: I wish I could. Well, let me see if I can recollect the way he'd do it. He'd say, "Now, Lady Bird had got this program going"--you know, kind of joke about it. But he was proud of her. He was extremely proud that she had picked that as one of her issues.

An aside: he kidded most everybody he liked. Sometimes it would jab you a little bit before he got through, but he would kid people he liked and never kid anybody he didn't like, because why in the hell would you want to do that? And he kidded her a lot and kidded most of us who were him a lot. We'd become the brunt of his humor. He kidded Mrs. Johnson a good bit about a lot of the things she did, about what she wore although she dressed just beautifully. She had that lady up in New York that. . . .

G: Mollie Parnis?

J: Mollie Parnis. She designed things for her, and Mrs. Johnson wore beautiful clothes. But he'd kid about it, how much she spent and how she had to get so dressed up. But he was proud of her in that regard, too. Johnson loved clothes. As you know, Stanley Marcus

would open the store early around Christmas time, and they'd go up there and he'd go around and pick things for Mrs. Johnson and for Vicki and Marie and other people. He liked to have women around him who dressed nicely. That was a thing he liked and he appreciated, good clothes.

(Interruption)

G: You were talking about Mrs. Johnson's role as an informal advisor to the President.

J: I thought--this is my impression--that it was as nice a relationship; it was one that I would have loved to have had with my own wife, where she could understand what I was doing, let me talk to her about it, offer suggestions and at least act as a sounding board, which I'd never had. And I don't know too many couples that have that type of relationship. In most marriages the wife knows little about the husband's business, and he doesn't really care about telling her too much, as long as he provides for her and provides enough to take care of the house. But theirs was the kind of relationship I've always thought that I would like to have. And that was so good, that she understood everything about what he was doing, and was there and let him talk to her about what he wanted to talk to her about and get her opinion and her sympathy if need be, if it was a bad thing. It was a fine relationship, I thought, irrespective of what might have taken place in the past.

If what I've read is true--I don't know about what his affairs were or anything else--if that were true, she was a long-suffering person who put up with a lot and never backed off an inch; loved him, stayed with him. Well, I remember one of the things she did frequently when things were real bad--particularly I remember the Vietnam thing, but there were other things that went wrong too; that wasn't the only thing that was a

problem--she would always hug him and say, "Lyndon, you know you're loved," when people were just beating him and talking bad about him.

G: How did he react?

J: Always nicely. Just hugged her back and that was the end of it.

G: He is known for having a stormy temper. Did she play the role of someone who would mend his fences for him after he'd get mad at someone, or try to calm him down?

J: I never saw her do that, really. She calmed him down, yes. She would always do that. She was a very calming influence, but I never saw anybody go behind him to mend his fences, except maybe some of us on the staff if we felt like it was pretty bad. But he did it himself pretty well. (Laughter) He had a way of--when he'd give you a hard time, he never would say he was sorry, of course. He just didn't have that in him, I don't think, but he'd do something nice for you. And, of course, that was intended to overcome--he'd give you something or say something, do something that would take away a lot of the sting from his temper.

I think of one story that has nothing to do with probably anything you want to hear about. We were going to go to Texas, one of our trips to Texas. And he had invited a number of people, including Jake Pickle. As was usually the case, the day we were going to leave was always full of problems. There was something going on in Congress that day, and we kept waiting and waiting and waiting for this thing to happen. We put off the trip for an hour and then we put it off for this. And all day long I was in touch with Pickle. I said, "Now, Jake, don't you get anywhere where I can't reach you. I need to have you on the phone immediately because the minute he says go, he's going to head for that helicopter." Well, the helicopters were parked down on the Ellipse. There was

something going on at the White House. But I said, "The minute he says we're going to go, he's going to jump in that limousine, and we're going to head for those helicopters. I need for you to be where a White House driver can pick you up and get you there immediately." Of course, this went on all day, and Pickle kept calling in and checking in.

Finally in the evening--it was getting late, it was around dinner time--Pickle said, "Jake, I'm going to go get something to eat." I said, "Pickle, the minute you do that he's going to want to leave, and I'm going to be in trouble." And he said, "Well, I just can't help it, Jake. I just can't help it. I'm tired of sitting around waiting, and I'm going to get something to eat." So Pickle went and got something to eat. Sure enough, just about the time he had gone to get something to eat the President said, "Well, Jake, let's go." And here we got into the limousine with the two dogs both in there with--he and I and the two damn dogs in the back of this limousine, and we'd started to drive over to the Ellipse and he said, "Where in the hell is Pickle?" I said, "Mr. President, I've been on that son of a bitch all day. I've been following him, and I've been bugging him, and I've been talking--and just a little while ago he said he was going out to get something to eat, and I just have lost him." And he proceeded to chew my ass just really bad. He just gave it--and the two dogs were climbing on me, and here I was with the dogs and getting chewed out. We got out of the car at the helicopters and Pickle hadn't shown up yet. Pickle was going to come on after he got a bite. And he stood there and chewed on me until Pickle showed up. He threatened to leave Pickle, but, of course, he wasn't about to do that. He threatened to leave me. He was going to do anything. Finally Pickle showed up, and we got on the helicopter. Of course, I couldn't dodge him much on the helicopter. That's not much space. But the minute we got on *Air Force One*, man, I got as far away from him as I

could get. But he said something nice to me afterwards. It wasn't all that bad. It's more humorous than anything else. I'm telling it as a humorous story. It was humorous.

G: Did anyone laugh at the time?

J: Oh, nobody laughed. It was just the two of us. It was just him chewing on me. There wasn't anybody around. Jake laughed. Jake thought it was funny as hell that he got me in all that trouble.

G: You had known LBJ years before he was president. Was he mellower as president than he had been in the Senate years? Was his temper more in control?

J: I was never the object of any of his spells in the Senate, because I worked for another man. He didn't have any control over me. From what I'm told, he was more in control. I was around him in Austin, in Washington, at the Ranch; I never noticed a heck of a lot of difference in him. He was the same basic person all the time. He was very biting in his criticism. You know, apropos of that, that's a matter of the recipient more than it is the giver. He was tough and mean when he got upset, and he couldn't tolerate ignorance, and he couldn't tolerate a person who said, "I can't do something." There's nothing you can't do. But those who were the subjects of his ridicule--it never really bothered me too much. I thought it was kind of funny. It didn't make me go limp. And, of course, I wasn't the subject of it too much. I didn't do much wrong. But some of the people around him, when he'd really get on them, they just went to pieces, and it became such a terrible--they were the ones who would make statements to the press about how mean he was and how bad he was. It really wasn't that bad. It's just a man with the urge to get something done and didn't have much time to get it done, and didn't want somebody standing around hemming and hawing and wondering whether they could do it or couldn't

do it. If you couldn't do it, just leave. You don't need to stand there and step on one foot and another foot. He didn't have the time to do that.

If you did something wrong and it upset him, he had a quick temper, and he would blast out at you. You knew you did something wrong. It wasn't all that bad. He knew it wasn't going to last but two or three minutes, and then it was all over. Of course, he had a bad temper, and it was kind of rough on you if you made a mistake, or if you weren't able to deliver like you should have. But it wasn't really--I never felt that it deserved the kind of attention it got, and I do know--and I'll repeat this--that most of the people who were the ones that said that he was so bad and just so tough and mean and ugly were the ones who couldn't stand it. They just went to pieces when he'd criticize them.

G: Any in particular that--?

J: [George] Reedy was one. Reedy just thought the world was going to end when Johnson would get on him, because Reedy was an uncertain person, didn't feel sure of himself. I remember him very well. Most of the guys were that way. [Harry] McPherson would get uptight. When Johnson would start chewing on him, he'd get real uptight. And others--

G: How about [Jack] Valenti?

J: No, Valenti saw it about the way I did, that there was a lot of humor in it. And Valenti would act chagrined, like we should [act], and act like we were terribly sorry for whatever it was we did, and then go on about your business. It was forgotten.

G: Was he harder on those who had worked for him in the Senate than--?

J: No, I don't think that was the criteria. I think the criteria was he was harder on those that weren't able to take it. You know, the guys that just really could not stand it, he would really put it on them good. And the incompetents, the ones who--and they weren't

incompetent; nobody around him was incompetent--but the ones who would say, "I don't know about that . . . . I'm just not sure." You don't have time to be unsure. You either do it or don't do it, or say you can't, or something. But those were the kinds of people who were the object of his scorn and ridicule.

G: You were talking about Mrs. Johnson and beautification. Tell me what her role was in getting that legislation passed, the Highway Beautification Act.

J: She did some lobbying herself, but mainly her role was in getting other groups. As I remember, she made speeches and talks and had people in the White House, influential people who, in turn, would bring pressure, or whatever you call it, to bear on the individual members of the Congress, to at least point out to them the value of the legislation and what it might do to the country.

G: Was the billboard lobby organized against the measure?

J: Yes, yes. They were organized against it, and I suppose in that area Johnson did more of it than anybody else. He was kind of the prod to the billboard people to back off their strong--they just didn't want anything. They weren't going to give an inch, but I think he was more or less responsible for them backing off, along with some other people he got to help him. Mrs. Johnson, of course, played a part in all of it. She discussed it with him and he discussed it with her.

G: Others have suggested that he was so interested in getting this measure passed that he really used all of the powers of the executive, in terms of all the cabinet department secretaries, and got the White House staff involved. Is this overstating it?

J: No, not really. And I'm not sure how many of those cabinet people resented that it wasn't a matter of such substance, that they would demean themselves to get into it, but he darn

sure got everybody in it. He wanted to get it passed. Of course, he obviously felt it was a good thing, but he also felt that Mrs. Johnson should have a role in society. She should have some projects that were hers and that he was helping her on. As I say, it's kind of like Eleanor Roosevelt. I don't know why he had such a high regard--I shouldn't say that. He did have a high regard for Eleanor Roosevelt. He thought she was a great first lady, that she did things. She just didn't sit back and let President Roosevelt do it all on his own. I know he wanted Mrs. Johnson to model herself after Eleanor Roosevelt. I don't know if you've ever heard that from anybody else. That doesn't matter.

G: Did he seek the opinions of his daughters, or did they offer their opinions on things?

J: I suppose to a degree. Luci was pretty good about volunteering stuff. She was also very sweet, kind of like Mrs. Johnson. She would hug him when he was down. Luci was a sweet little girl. Lynda, I don't recall Lynda ever being around much. She had her own thing. Well, she was at school at the University of Texas for a good while. She was away, so she really wasn't around to do much of anything.

G: One of the things I wanted to ask you about today was night reading and what it represented in terms of his work day--memos, correspondence that he needed to read.

J: Now I have one difficulty in that, in that I was not around the Oval Office when he was there, but he really spent a relatively few hours in the Oval Office. He'd get there--you've seen the diaries--about noon unless he had an early appointment. Well, five or six o'clock he'd usually go over and have a drink, or have a drink there and stay around the Oval Office. But his work day in the Oval Office usually was from ten to twelve on to four or five, and then he'd see some people later. But he'd sign--like that picture you just looked at--he signed a lot of things in the Oval Office, but they were mostly bills and

proclamations, official things that he had to put his signature on. They were always stacked up on that table behind the desk in the Oval Office, and Marie or Juanita or somebody put them in order to where it would be easy for him to sign and put some kind of marker where the name was supposed to go and things like that.

The matters of vital importance, like Vietnam, or things that were happening that required prompt action would be brought to his attention during the day. If somebody had a decision that had to be made, they'd get the matter to him, and they were not a part of night reading generally because they required more immediate action. The matters in night reading were things that were not quite so urgent; some were urgent. So I would say that night reading took care of, or involved, the day-to-day mechanical workings of the White House, the decisions that had to made on matters that didn't involve a world crisis, the things that should have been brought to his attention involving more mundane decisions such as a grant, for example, or a matter at the Department of Agriculture, or things that needed his attention and required a presidential decision, more or less, but weren't urgent enough that he had to do it right then.

The way it was done, of course, was by memos. And sometimes you'd get a memo from a department where the decision was going to be made, and you would attach one of your own to it and try to summarize it, try to get the issues down to where he could make a decision. But if he wanted to, he could read the backup, which was the thing you might have gotten from the department or the agency. Then I remember I used to write night-reading memos on decisions at the Ranch and things, rather than bother him with it during the day, although he really liked to be bothered with things like that. Those were diversions to him. But generally I'd write a memo for night reading and put it in there and

he'd tell me what it was about. But he always had drafts of proclamations and Rose Garden things and short speeches he was supposed to give, or something he would put on tape for television; they were always in night reading. There'd be a draft for him to read. His major speeches, of course, came up in a different way. They were always--

G: And how many items would there normally be in night reading, would you say?

J: I would say fifty to a hundred, could be that many.

G: Did he usually get through all of this bulk of material?

J: Always by the next morning. What he didn't finish that night he would finish when we got there in the morning. He'd go through the rest of them and get it all done. It was never undone because that was a sure way to get something to his attention, because you knew he was going to look at it. He never failed to look at all the night reading. I think at times he had the feeling that some of it was unnecessary, overdone. He never criticized anybody for that, because I know that the fear was that they wouldn't do it next time and it might have been something he really wanted to know about. I never had any trouble bringing something to his attention, and nobody else did. The biggest mistake I ever made was failing to bring something to his attention that he really wanted to know. A story--

G: What was that?

J: In the Library in one of those cases there's something about Giddings and a Judge [John S.] Simmang. It's on the ground floor on the right-hand side. Anyway, Judge Simmang was the county judge of Lee County and a big fat man, German-type, and had risen in politics, he'd come up--he wasn't a bright man at all, [but he was a] pleasant man and a big Johnson supporter. I mean, Johnson could do no wrong back in the old days--and the

new days, anything. I have a brother-in-law who lives in Lee County and who was a state representative from Lee County, so Johnson always associated me with Judge Simmang. That became part of our group, or our--anyway, a couple of times I just have gotten some information that I just felt I didn't need to bother him with, and it turned out that I should have bothered him with it. It was something that he wanted to know. (Laughter) His confrontation was, "Well, Jake, just who in the hell did you tell that to? Judge Simmang? Did you call Giddings and tell Judge Simmang about that important issue? I'm the man you"--and oh, he would just needle me and needle me. And then he'd say, "Well, did you call the maid down there at the guest house and tell her about it?"

G: What was the information, do you remember?

J: I can't remember. I remember it happening twice, at the Ranch, of course. That's when I was really the conduit and I had to use some limitation. I believe it was something important. Hell, I can't remember, but it was really important. He should have known about it.

G: You were normally the aide that came with him to Texas.

J: Always.

G: Why was that, rather than Valenti?

J: Because he liked me, enjoyed having me around.

G: I assume that he liked Valenti, too?

J: Yes he did. Valenti was feisty and sometimes would bother him, push things off on him, but that did not lessen Johnson's affection. On the other hand, I was always calm and easy. If I had to do something, I did it nicely. I gather that; I don't know. He also knew I

lived in Austin and that it was nice for me to get home. It certainly was nice for my wife. He never came to Texas without bringing her along. He got her on that plane some way.

G: Tell me about his mornings before he would go to the Oval Office; what did he do? You mentioned finishing night reading, but after he did that--

J: And when he awakened in the morning--he was a morning-type person--he was always full of ideas. He would lay up in that bed and punch those buttons and wake people up, just giving instructions and getting information, passing along things. Sometimes he'd have people come to the bedroom. [Dean] Rusk used to show up there, and [Robert] McNamara, and Connally, when he was in town. When some of his friends were in town, he'd usually have them by for coffee in the morning in the bedroom. But he spent a good deal of time getting his ideas out. He would think up things to tell so-and-so, and that's what we would do. I would make notes of who to tell what. There'd just be pages of notes. That's what I'd do; while he was in the Oval Office I'd be calling people--and Marvin, the same thing with Marvin--and telling them what he had told me to tell them. It was a busy time. He read the paper, read the *New York Times*, and the [*Washington Post*], and one other paper. But he always read the *Times* and the *Post*.

G: The *Baltimore Sun*?

J: Yes, the *Baltimore Sun*. It was around. There were several others around, but he wouldn't read them all the time.

G: How about the [*Washington*] *Evening Star*, did he read that?

J: Yes, it was always on his bed in the evening. He would glance through it and read it, yes. That took some time, reading it.

And then he drank tea, that awful tea he drank. Tea with milk, it was just almost a--I don't know what it was, but it was tea.

G: In the afternoons, you mean?

J: No.

G: In the mornings?

J: It was in the mornings. He never had coffee.

G: What about Sanka?

J: No, never had it. He just had that old tea, and he'd put tons of milk in it and lots of sweetener, that kind of liquid that had the worst taste. And he took some medicine--

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

G: You mean that the doctor came by every morning and took his blood pressure?

J: Yes, and it was usually the main doctor.

G: [George] Burkley?

J: Yes, just the nicest man.

G: Admiral Burkley?

J: I shouldn't ever not remember his name. He was so nice to me and everybody else. But the Admiral would come by and take his blood pressure and anything else, and inquire about his health and see if he had any complaints. But he always took a jigger--it had some pills in it. I don't know what they were, but he would take all those. And then he would take a laxative--no, he took that at night. It was kind of a bran-looking stuff. And then he drank this pink kind of liquid that was for his kidney stones, kept them from forming. I tried it once. It looked so good in the mornings that one time there was a little bit left and I tried it. It was the worst-tasting stuff, and he took it just like it was great.

And then he would stay on the telephone a lot, and read the papers, and Mrs. Johnson a lot of times would stay in bed with him for a while after we first got there. And they would talk a little bit and visit, or both read papers, and then we would stay until he kicked us out. Sometimes he would call the speech writers over. If he was on a major speech, he might call them and just tell them what a terrible draft it was and tell them where and how he wanted it changed, you know, generally. If it were a minor speech he would tell us what to tell them. He didn't contact a lot of people directly. Now that's bad for me to say. That makes it sound like I was some kind of big shot. The fact is that most of the guys around the White House never saw him. He knew who they were, probably--might not have, but in all probability he knew about who they were. They would submit whatever they had, either through night reading or some way or another, and he would pass the information back to them. It was a busy time. It never was unbusy.

Sometimes the podiatrist [Dr. Charles Turchin] would show up. Once a month he'd come and trim his toenails and do that kind of thing. Sometimes that doctor from the Mayo Clinic, that little fellow from Austin who went to Mayo--

G: Jim Cain?

J: Jim Cain, yes. He used to come--I say little fellow, isn't he short?

G: I've never--

J: He would fly in and visit. The President obviously had a good bit of confidence in his ability as a doctor.

Of course all this would take place in the bedroom. If he was going to get some suits made, well, the tailor would show up, and we'd meet in the bedroom. All that took

place in these morning hours. In the evening when he finally got to the bedroom it was pretty quiet. He'd get a rubdown and. . . .

G: Would he go from the Oval Office to the living quarters or the family dining room and have dinner? What was his normal custom?

J: Normally, yes, about eight or nine o'clock. He was a late eater. He would wander over to the dining room. Sometimes he'd come earlier and sit in that sitting area out there at the west--I don't know what you call it.

G: You'd mentioned that often he would only stay in the Oval Office from twelve noon to five o'clock. What would he normally do from five until eight or nine when he had dinner?

J: Well, let me get it straight. If he left at five, he had to do something. It was a matter of going to the boat or having a meeting, or going up to the Mansion itself and having some kind of meeting. If he didn't have anything like that, he would usually stay in the office later than five; sometimes, you know, he'd stay late. It didn't mean he was working all the time he was there. He might have a drink, or he might visit with Vicki or me or somebody. And then he would go from the Oval Office to the Mansion, to the dining room. Mrs. Johnson pretty well had her own schedule, and she didn't wait dinner for him or things like that. He would go up there and usually he would take somebody with him to have company. And we'd eat, and he would go into the bedroom, and the chief would be there.

G: Who was the chief?

J: The corpsman, the medical corpsman who did the rubdown.

G: Who was that? Was it Tom Mills?

J: Tom Mills, yes. Usually Tom had an assistant or another guy who sometimes did that. And they would generally be--they wouldn't be in the room. They'd be waiting at that desk outside the bedroom. Are you familiar with how it was set up?

G: No.

J: The Mansion--of course, they lived on the second floor, and at the west end was this room where you saw Eisenhower and that group. And then off of that room was Mrs. Johnson's bedroom and the dining room, and as you went down the hall, Luci's room and Lynda's room. The President's room was right across from the elevator. As you got off the elevator his bedroom was straight across. The valet sat at a table--the elevator came off here--and they sat at a table which faced the area where you came off the elevator. It was an alcove. But they were right there and they had buzzers in to the President. There was a valet there all the time in case he needed something. The corpsman used to sit out there with the valet. I don't think you called them "valets."

G: Paul Glynn and Ken Gaddis.

J: Paul and--what's his name--Ken. Paul and Ken, whatever they were. And the corpsmen would sit out there with them until he [LBJ] wanted them, and then he would buzz out and they'd let the corpsman come in.

G: So he'd go in and have a rub. . . .

J: Yes.

G: Then would he make some more phone calls, or would he--?

J: It was entirely dependent upon how he felt. Sometimes if he was tired or had had a little bit to drink, he'd just fall asleep on the rubbing table.

G: How much did he drink during the time you were there? Did he drink a lot?

J: He was not a heavy drinker. He would take a drink. He liked that Scotch. Some nights when we were having fun he'd have a few drinks and just get in the swing of it, just like I do when I'm around people I like. I might have a drink or two, and I might have one or two more than I ought to have, but I'm not falling-down drunk. I'm just enjoying myself. But he wasn't really a heavy drinker. He liked to take a drink, just enjoyed having a drink. And I think, of course, since then, the doctors have discovered it does you pretty good. It helps your blood pressure and stuff.

G: But he was always under control, is what you're saying?

J: Always. I've seen him get to the point where he was having fun and mellow enough to where he'd write an inscription like you read in that book in there, but he never was--and I never saw him take a drink when he wasn't around people. He wasn't that type drinker at all. It was purely social and he could hold his whiskey well. It wasn't any--

G: Were there periods when he did not drink at all?

J: Oh, yes. Sure. It just seemed like he just wouldn't think of it. He'd be busy and doing something else. When things slacked off a little and you were sitting around, he would have the Filipino bring him a drink from the little mess that he had right off the Oval Office.

G: How often did he stay his entire day in the White House complex?

J: Almost always.

G: Really? He wouldn't drive around or go to the *Sequoia* or--?

J: No, unfortunately. If he could have driven the car himself, I know he'd have gone out a lot, but there really wasn't any incentive to get out. You had Secret Service to worry with

and the limousine, and all you did was sit in the back of that limousine. It was like being in the Oval Office. You were back there and somebody was driving you.

G: To private parties?

J: He would go, yes. Oh sure, he'd do that. He would go if--and would love to sneak off if he could, but there wasn't really--that was purely in his mind, because how could you let him? I never did. I don't know how anybody else felt about it. I wouldn't dare let him try to sneak off without the Secret Service, although the Secret Service agents always were spying. They would try to get word about this and that, but they really didn't have to worry about that with me because I was going to tell them.

G: Did he feel like they were intrusive?

J: He thought they were terrible, just awful. Intrusive, awful people, but loved them. He just complained about them all the time. They were just meddling in his business and wouldn't let him do anything.

G: What did he call them?

J: I don't know. He called them by their first names. He liked them all.

G: Was he more mobile in Texas at the Ranch? Did he--

J: Oh, absolutely. Just much more so. And he liked--he had a Secret Service man who stayed at the Ranch, German-sounding name.

G: Clarence Knetsch.

J: Clarence. And Clarence just knew everything about the Ranch. He loved to have him follow him because he opened gates and did all the menial stuff. We didn't have to jump out and open gates. But he was much more mobile. He could drive his own car there, you see, and never could do that anywhere else; that was just out of the question. He was

just hemmed in, terribly hemmed in; didn't like it much, but understood that there was just no alternative to it. And he spent most of his days right in that White House. That's why he just loved to get away to go to the Ranch, to get out of the White House and get out from under the pressures of having just people there all the time.

There were relatively few of us at the Ranch. On staff, well, Jim Cross was always there, and one of the doctors was always there, and the corpsmen and me. We stayed at that little guest house down the way, and then anybody else--Oki [Yoichi Okamoto] was always there, always had the photographer. We had our own little deal down there. I didn't eat there often, but they had a pretty good deal. Somebody from Bergstrom would come out and be the cook. They had good food, ate steak every night, I think, there. But I didn't get to do that. I got to eat those bell peppers that he liked so good, that gave me such terrible indigestion. (Laughter)

G: How often did he go out on the *Sequoia*?

J: Infrequently, but enough. He really liked the *Sequoia*, and my experience on the *Sequoia* has not been just exciting. I don't like boats much, and I don't like to be that crowded. But he just loved to get--he'd get more people on that *Sequoia* than you ought to get on a battleship. And he'd sleep on the--if he stayed. He'd stay all night.

G: Would he really?

J: Yes, and they had bunks, of course. He had a nice cabin. He and Mrs. Johnson had a nice place, but everybody else would sleep on the floor or on something. I would always try, if I could, to work out some kind of system whereby I could come in for the night and sleep somewhere, and come out the next morning, but I wasn't always successful in doing that. I stayed on the *Sequoia* more than I wanted to. I really didn't like the *Sequoia*. I

didn't like the--what the hell does that have to do with anything, whether I liked it or not? It was a crowd and a lot of people, and they always had about the same thing to eat, that stuff over rice, the shrimp and seafood. I forget what you call it. I haven't eaten it since then, and I try not to. They serve it in restaurants, though. It's shrimp creole. You'd sit there and you'd eat, and have a drink or two. He just enjoyed himself. He liked to get lots of people around him, people he liked. Marianne Means, she was big on the *Sequoia*, and John Chancellor, I remember him; he used to come out a lot. He has a son--I'm sure he still has him, but he's grown now--just a bright young kid, just delightful looking, dressed well. He used to bring him sometimes. Of course, then he'd been entertaining for business purposes. He had congressmen and stuff. He went to the *Sequoia* a lot, I must say. I just didn't like it, and I just didn't want to go, but he went a lot, and he liked it.

He loved to be on the water. The minute we'd hit the Ranch, they'd get one of those boats out, and he'd get somebody behind that boat, towing him. It was usually Vicki because she was as game as she could be. She'd get out there and let him tow her for hours.

G: You mean waterskiing?

J: Waterskiing, yes. And he'd sit up in front, usually with Judge Moursund--they'd be talking about something--and he would want to do the pulling. And one day there wasn't anybody there at all to be pulled, and he said, "Jake, why don't you get out there?" I had never waterskied in my life. "Why don't you get out there and do it?" I thought to myself, "I sure don't want to do this," but I said, "Yes, sir. I'm going." And I got out there. I had seen enough people skiing to know how you got started, with the skis up and squatting down in the water. And I'd get a hold of the rope, and he'd be busy talking and

instead of giving it a little power, he would jam the thing forward. And, of course, I just flew off those skis. He seemed to be enjoying himself. I sure wasn't. I guess I must have spent an hour falling off those skis until somebody came along who knew how to ski. But that would be the first thing he'd do, is get on one of those boats. He had a rather large one.

And then he had Mary Margaret [Valenti]'s place, which was another house up there. He called it Mary Margaret's place. I guess he gave it to her, I don't know.

G: This was on Lake LBJ?

J: Yes. And he would go around and end up at--we'd get out of the boat at Mary Margaret's place and maybe have a drink or a Coke. He drank a lot of Diet Coke.

G: Fresca?

J: He was big on those diet drinks. He drank more of that than he did Scotch, I'll tell you. We would stop at that one, and then we would just go around the lake, and the Secret Service had their boat that would go around with us. One of the boats had a pretty good galley on it. I used to stay in that galley and eat a lot. They always had pretty good food.

G: Was he a good boat navigator?

J: Yes, he was good. Of course, you didn't do much navigating on Lake LBJ, but he knew how to run the boat and did well with it, and generally would run it himself.

G: I guess for some reason he had acquired the reputation as someone who drove the boats faster than the average person might.

J: Yes, he did. That's what happened to me on those skis. He wasn't slow about it.

One other story that I--it's almost too late. Are you familiar with the vehicle he had that was land-and-sea?

G: Amphicar?

J: Amphicar. Are you familiar with that vehicle?

G: Tell me about it.

J: Well, he just loved that car. Of course, all of us knew what it did, but whenever he'd get a stranger up there, and he'd get them in that thing and just drive around on the land for a little bit and then just head for the water--particularly a woman; he just loved to do it. And he'd just keep on going and going and going and right into the water. And they'd be screaming and in shock. They didn't know what was going to happen to them. Oh, he just had the greatest time doing that and he not only enjoyed shocking the women, but anybody who didn't know about what was going to happen. You could just know he was going to, if he got a stranger up there. They kept that at the Scharnhorst; I think that was the name of the ranch where they kept that thing. And he would get somebody--I remember Bill Gaston, used to own Glastron here, his wife--one time he got her on that thing and she was all dressed up, thought she was going to get dunked in the water.

G: Would he pretend that the brakes had failed or something like that?

J: He just kept on driving and talking. (Laughter) Just went on. Got a big kick out of that.

Johnson, I think you'll find or have found, enjoyed repetitiousness. He'd tell the same story a lot and do that same little joke a lot, had his own things that he liked to do. And he did them frequently. It was fine.

End of Tape 1 and Interview V

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