

INTERVIEW I

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Dorothy Jacobson

INTERVIEWER: T. H. Baker

March 5, 1969

Tape 1 of 1

B: This is the interview with Mrs. Dorothy Jacobson. Mrs. Jacobson, if I may summarize a long and active career here, you were born in Minnesota, and you have a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Minnesota. You've been a public school teacher and are married to Mr. George W. Jacobson. In 1934 and on to 1941 you were with the Minnesota Department of Education except for a time out in '36 and '37 with the National League of Women Voters here in Washington.

J: That is correct.

B: And from 1945 to '55 you were an assistant professor of political science at Macalester College.

J: That's right.

B: Incidentally, were you there when Mr. Humphrey was there?

J: He had been there earlier as a part-time teacher.

B: And of course he's back there now.

J: And he's back there now.

B: Then in 1955 you became an assistant to the Governor of Minnesota, Governor [Orville] Freeman.

J: Yes.

B: And during that period, too, from '49 to '56 you were chairman of the Democratic Farmer-Labor party in Minnesota.

J: I was what they normally call a vice-chairman. They have a man always for chairman, not a woman.

- B: Then in 1961 you became a special assistant to Mr. Freeman when he became Secretary of Agriculture.
- J: That's right.
- B: And in 1964 you were named Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for International Affairs.
- J: Yes.
- B: Have I left out anything?
- J: No, I think that's a big enough summary.
- B: Okay. To kind of start back at the beginning, do you recall when you first met Mr. Johnson? Did you have any acquaintance with him before 1960?
- J: No. I had no acquaintance with him before '60. I met him at the convention.
- B: May I ask, by 1960, and the events leading up to the nomination of that year, had you as an active Minnesota politician formed an opinion of Mr. Johnson?
- J: Yes, I had an opinion with the reserve that I always have when I don't know a man too well and don't know how he works personally. I was of the opinion that he was a very effective leader in Congress; that he was substantially more liberal than at least the average Minnesotan thinks a Southern leader is; that he was a supporter of the New Deal and so on. I had enough of this type of opinion to have been one of the spearheads in the Minnesota delegation at the convention of 1960 to not only get acceptance of his choice as Vice President, but to work very hard for his acceptance by others, as we did on the Michigan delegation which was very unhappy with this choice.
- B: I was going to ask you about that. But before that, I assume you were close to Mr. Humphrey?

- J: Yes.
- B: And Mr. Humphrey, in turn, was close to Mr. Johnson in the Senate.
- J: Yes.
- B: Did this relationship affect your opinion of Mr. Johnson?
- J: Yes, because in discussions again and again with Humphrey about his work, his problems, etc., he was complimentary of Senator Lyndon Johnson.
- B: Did it in any way adversely affect Mr. Humphrey in Minnesota, that he was so close to Mr. Johnson?
- J: No.
- B: Were those in Minnesota who objected?
- J: No.
- B: They seem to have made a very effective team in those Senate years.
- J: Yes.
- B: Before the convention, I understand that the Kennedy people were very active in Minnesota, were they not?
- J: Yes. They were the most active, although all of the potential candidates courted the Minnesota delegation. For a small state, I think it was rather unusual that they should. We were holding all the time to the support of Hubert Humphrey as a favorite son in order to prevent a real split; because the Minnesota delegation, as was the party in the state, was split several ways as to which candidate they would favor.
- B: Were there many people who were actively for Johnson for the presidential nomination?
- J: No. I would say that there were a few for Stevenson; that Freeman led the group, and I was in on the decision-making process there when the decision went to go for Kennedy on the part of Freeman and that group within the delegation.

B: How did that go? How and why did they decide?

J: Primarily we decided, and for me it was clinched at the time I sat in Governor Freeman's office, and for the last time he called Adlai Stevenson --this was some time in the early part of the year--and asked him if he would run, and he couldn't answer. He couldn't make up his mind. Freeman said, "Well, there is no time to wait. The time is past long since, and I just feel very strongly that if you are not prepared to run again--if you are prepared as of now, I will support you. If you are not prepared, then we will have to start to make a decision and start to work for some other candidate."

B: And even then Mr. Stevenson would not give a definite answer?

J: Could not decide. Shortly thereafter, Senator Kennedy, accompanied by two other people--I am not sure, I know that Ted Sorensen was there and I think Sarge Shriver was there--came to Minnesota for a very quiet meeting with a few of the political leaders of the State. If you want this much additional politics here, I'll give it.

B: Please.

J: Probably there were a dozen of us at this meeting. The Kennedy party stayed an hour, an hour-and-a-quarter, an hour-and-a-half, had a general discussion. I think that by this time Governor Freeman was fairly well leaning toward the support of Kennedy. I think this discussion helped. I remember very clearly that at the end of the discussion after the people from Washington had left, Eugene McCarthy stood up and made quite a point of explaining vigorously his opposition to Ted [sic] Kennedy.

B: You mean John Kennedy.

J: To John Kennedy, yes.

B: What were his grounds?

J: They weren't very effective.

B: You mean his reasoning was not very effective?

J: His reasoning was not very effective. He said that Kennedy had made no record as a liberal leader in the Senate; neither had Eugene McCarthy at that time.

Eugene McCarthy had voted right on one issue that Jack Kennedy had voted wrong on, and that was the farm issue. That was an issue of importance to Minnesota. I remember once we had scheduled Kennedy for the Jefferson-Jackson Day speech, and he voted wrong on the farm bill and I had to make some arrangements so that he wouldn't come. The Governor didn't want to do that, so it was thrown upon me to do, which I did by finding a very good reason why we couldn't hold the dinner at all that time.

B: And of course cancel out the whole--

J: We could schedule it later at some time when Kennedy couldn't come. But politically that vote on the farm bill, together with Humphrey's comment that he had tried to tell him that he ought to vote differently--I'm not saying that was a test of liberalism, but it was a test of the way the political reaction--

B: Practical Minnesota politics.

J: Yes. So when the delegation went to Los Angeles, Kennedy had been there. Lyndon Johnson had sent India Edwards to speak for him when we had a big meeting of the party and the representative of each of the potential candidates.

B: I've heard it said that Mr. Johnson just really didn't try hard enough out in the States there before the convention of '60.

J: He made no real serious attempt in Minnesota.

B: There are those who say that he was perhaps indecisive, too, as to whether or not he really wanted to make a committed effort.

J: I have always felt that it was his judgment that starting from scratch at that point, possibly, it was still--everything was stacked against a "Southerner"--using the word "Southerner" in quotes. And therefore, I don't know what effort he made in some other states.

Symington made a greater effort, although he personally didn't come there either. He sent a man named Brown, who was able to perform as I've never seen anyone else perform in that we had sat there listening to the representatives of various candidates--and some of the candidates themselves--for well over two hours after a big dinner. Nobody thought Symington had much of a chance, and so when they introduced Brown to speak for Symington, people were leaving the hall. Brown hadn't been talking more than three minutes when they started coming back. He was just a remarkable speaker. I don't know if he converted many people to be for Symington, but we enjoyed him after these two hours.

B: During this period before the convention, did the Minnesota party seriously approach the idea of whether or not Humphrey could be the nominee?

J: No. Humphrey was being regarded there as one way to hold the delegation together.

B: I knew that, but had you earlier thought about whether or not this was the time for Mr. Humphrey to make a bid for the nomination for real?

J: I think there was always the thought that something might happen in the convention. There was the very strong conviction among most of us that Humphrey was perhaps better qualified than many, if not all, of the other candidates. For that reason, there was always a hope that something

would happen. But as realistic observers, we didn't think that apart from deadlocks or other eventualities he would have much chance.

B: Of course, at that time Mr. Humphrey had a general national reputation as an extreme liberal that might have worked adversely against--

J: That had toned down quite a bit by 1960. At least he had arrived at a sufficient position of leadership. His first few years were, after all, many years past. There was always I think a feeling that he might be the vice presidential candidate.

B: That was my next question--if you had in the preconvention period considered vice presidential possibilities, Humphrey, or Governor Freeman himself?

J: Both were in the mill--both Humphrey and Freeman were considered as potential.

B: Do you know if anything about this had been said when Mr. Kennedy was talking to Governor Freeman before the convention?

J: I'm quite certain that Mr. Kennedy never said anything to Freeman about the potential for the vice presidency. He talked with him many times, particularly about Freeman making the nominating speech, because on every occasion it was, "If Adlai won't do it, will you do it?" I was in on this because I was going to have to write the speech, which I finally did. But each day Senator Kennedy would call Freeman and say, "Well, Adlai can't make up his mind, so will you be prepared?"

The Minnesota delegation finally had to break its unified backing of Humphrey. We've never had the unit rule in Minnesota. And when it appeared that the Minnesota vote would not be cast for Kennedy en toto but would be a split vote, and that the best we could hold on the first ballot was a unit vote for Humphrey--McCarthy had sort of defected by

this time--Freeman wondered whether Kennedy would want to be nominated by a governor whose full delegation wasn't supporting him.

[Telephone interruption]

- B: You were saying that Kennedy told Governor Freeman that it didn't make any difference that the full delegation wasn't supporting him, but that he was still waiting for Adlai.
- J: As I recall it, it was at 10 o'clock on the morning of the nomination that he called Freeman and said, "Adlai still hasn't made up his mind, so will you make the speech?"
- B: They waited that late.
- J: Yes, giving him a chance up to the last minute.
- B: How did the Minnesota delegation vote?
- J: Of course, what we did, we cast the vote for Humphrey; and before the roll call was over when we saw the count, switched so that Kennedy did get the vote.
- B: Then comes the issue of the vice presidential nomination. Did there begin immediately among the political leaders a shifting around to see who was going to be the vice presidential nominee?
- J: Everyone was wondering who would get the favored choice. There was some thought that it might be Freeman; there was quite a bit of talk about Jackson in our circles. Now in other states--
- B: That's Scoop Jackson?
- J: Yes, Scoop Jackson. Soapy Williams would have liked it. And the Michigan delegation was somewhat unhappy with--we had worked for several conventions rather closely with the Michigan delegation. The political leaders in Michigan had a background more nearly like the people in Minnesota than any other state. And during the convention, Minnesota had been caucusing

every night. We had had reporters trying to listen in. We tried to keep it quiet. We tried to hold the line. Michigan was quite happy; they had parties instead of caucuses. They were in the same hotel we were. But the night after Kennedy chose Johnson, the Michigan delegation was caucusing. They were pretty disappointed. And the Minnesota delegation was holding a party. This was our first real party, and we were really trying to unite the party and our people there behind the ticket. It wasn't so hard, but we had some that were pretty worried about Kennedy.

B: About Kennedy, not so much about Johnson?

J: About Johnson, they didn't seem to be as determined. It wasn't as hard to convince the delegates there to go for Johnson. I think partly this was Humphrey's influence. Anyone who had known him and who had worked with him and talked [with him] knew that he had a very high regard for Johnson so that he was accepted.

B: What was the stumbling block against Senator Kennedy? Was it his Catholicism or his youth?

J: It was both. Interestingly enough, one of the very able men in the Minnesota delegation who was plugging for Symington was a Catholic himself, who had had such a hard struggle getting elected to the state legislature from the Protestant area in northwestern Minnesota that he wouldn't openly come out for Kennedy for fear it would hurt him; and he feared that his district would be reflected in the whole state, and that we'd lose. In other words, he wasn't prepared to support Kennedy until he was nominated because Kennedy was a Catholic--not because he didn't like the religion or he feared a Catholic President, but because he feared the political effect. And there were others of that kind.

B: But you did manage to convert--?

- J: We did. Minnesota was disappointed in the Johnson choice, primarily I think because the Minnesota people had hoped that they might get a Minnesotan on that ticket.
- B: Did Mr. Freeman show any obvious personal disappointment at not being the candidate himself?
- J: I don't know how obvious it was. To those who knew him well, he was clearly disappointed. However, he's a good sport and a good politician, and he was leading in the party--I'm speaking now of the social event--and in the later attempt to get some of the Michigan people to come to our party and sing a song for Lyndon Johnson, as well as for Kennedy.
- B: You said earlier that your delegation tried to help calm down Mr. Williams and the Michigan delegation.
- J: Yes.
- B: How effective was that? What sort of arguments did you use? Did you just explain the hard-headed politics of balancing the ticket with a Southwesterner?
- J: We tried to do that. We tried to argue that this was politically a wise choice; that without it, probably Kennedy couldn't be elected; and that possibly these "better" candidates from the Midwest, whether it was Humphrey, Freeman, Soapy Williams himself, whoever else they might have wanted for Vice President, couldn't have brought the political addition that was needed that Lyndon Johnson brought to the ticket. Then Humphrey's assessment of Lyndon Johnson as a man and as a liberal and as a political leader was helpful.
- B: Were you in touch with any members of the Johnson staff in this process?
- J: No, not that I know of. I don't know of any Minnesotan that was. We were very much surprised. Freeman was very much surprised.

- B: By the selection of Mr. Johnson, you mean?
- J: Kennedy called in everybody--everyone whose name had been circulated-- and informed them before he made the public announcement, and Freeman was one of those. So probably we heard the public announcement a few minutes before it became generally public. Freeman was very much surprised, not that he wasn't chosen as much as the choice was Lyndon Johnson.
- B: And there were also some that were surprised that Johnson would accept.
- J: I think this was the most surprising to me. My own personal evaluation of the decision was that Johnson would bring great strength to the ticket, but I must admit it had never occurred to me that he would accept.
- B: Did you hear any stories that hectic day to the effect that there was some dissension over the choice of Johnson within the Kennedy camp itself?
- J: We heard that.
- B: Could you ever figure out whether there was any justification to it?
- J: I have never known.
- B: It's one of the things that is so clouded that future scholars are going to have to straighten it out.
- J: It's going to be hard to straighten out. I have always had a personal feeling that Bobby Kennedy probably didn't like this. I can't justify this. I have no knowledge. I've read some of what has been published about it, but that's that.
- B: But this feeling was general that day? There were many who thought that?
- J: I don't think it was general. My impression would be this: I don't believe it was general because I don't think many people were thinking at that stage of the convention in those terms. They were thinking, "Why did he pick Johnson?" I think there were more people who were thinking,

"Why did Johnson accept?" I think most of them thought that Johnson's position of influence was so great, as many thought about Humphrey's in a similar situation, that why didn't he stay there. Now, I'm sure that among some people the idea occurred, and we had the general wonder of what went on in the Kennedy camp to arrive at this decision. Who was for whom. But I just don't think we worried too much about it--most of us.

B: Then the attempted floor revolt against Mr. Johnson's nomination really never got off the ground?

J: No. This was why we were working with Michigan.

B: Getting back to you, you apparently did something good there.

J: If we couldn't convince any of them about the man or the choice, we at least thought it was important to convince them not to make a mess of the rest of that convention. And apparently times have changed. But this convinced some people who still had the feeling, "Well, after all, the Vice President." We have this now, but--

B: I'm sorry, that's not clear. You mean you could say that the Vice President isn't that important?

J: Yes. "We have this ticket now, and a floor revolt can't change it." I think any experienced convention-goer recognized that the floor revolt could hurt the campaign, but it couldn't really change the ticket.

B: The ticket would stay the same, and all that would happen would be the legacy of bitterness within the party.

J: Yes. So under those circumstances, I think there was a willingness to accept. I remember thereafter Johnson called Freeman at one point, not too far afterwards, about the campaign--Freeman was running for reelection as governor, and of course then we were working for the national ticket--and I remember he told Freeman, he said, "I will do anything for you

during this campaign; if it will help your reelection for me to come there and speak, I will do that. If it will help your reelection for me to stay out of Minnesota, I will do that." And I think he was very sincere in this.

B: What was the choice? Did Mr. Johnson--?

J: He did not come into Minnesota.

B: Was that Mr. Freeman's--?

J: I don't think it was--I think we had the feeling that it wouldn't help, that it wouldn't hurt, but that we had so many things that we hoped would help--we were so busy that we could concentrate on something more positive. In Minnesota I think our assessment was right. The election--the vote was on Kennedy, and nothing else. The vote against Freeman--Freeman lost the governorship--was in part because of Freeman's support of Kennedy.

B: Oh, really? I knew the campaign issues revolved around his record as governor. As he admits, he had been a spending governor which had built up--

J: Of course, when you lose by a fairly small margin, you lose for several reasons, and any one of these is contributing. He was a spending governor. This was one reason. He had been governor for three terms, which is as much as anyone has ever been governor, and only one previous governor was three terms. But there was a real religious issue in Minnesota. This is one thing I still have some files on. All the letters, all the problems that came up with regard to the Catholic issue were thrown at me for an attempt to handle.

B: How did you go about doing that?

J: I wouldn't even try to answer some of them. Some of them you can't answer.

B: Did you just get the irrational bigot type things?

J: Got both. One of the Lutheran Church branches sent out a prepared document which all the preachers were supposed to read in their pulpits on the Sunday previous to the Sunday just before election. A Lutheran minister in Duluth who received such a one called me on Saturday to alert me to what was going to happen in all these churches in Sunday. He was a good party member, and he was a supporter of the ticket, but he was a Lutheran minister. I remember asking him what he was going to do, and he told me, which is what he did. He read the thing from the pulpit, and then he stepped out from the pulpit and made his own speech to his congregation. But most of them just read it, you see. And I persuaded Freeman to write a major speech on religion and politics, which I think was a very good one and which had some effect.

But interestingly enough, what happened--and this has been checked by an analysis of the votes in various precincts where we know the normal vote--the anti-Catholic, bigoted campaign conducted by a few groups caused an almost complete swing of Republican Catholics to Kennedy. I think this is very easily understood. I probably would have done it. They normally wouldn't have voted for Kennedy because they were conservative Republicans, but this attack was so serious that they switched. Now, they wouldn't switch for Freeman. But they almost unanimously went for Kennedy. I don't think they would have done this if it hadn't been for the bigotry of the campaign. They wouldn't do it now.

Then I have any number of letters written to Freeman, particularly from Protestant, normal Democrats, who said they simply couldn't vote Republican; they couldn't vote for Ezra Taft Benson. And after all, "Kennedy can't help that he's a Catholic." They felt they shouldn't vote

for a Catholic, but "He can't help it, he was born one. But you, a Lutheran, a deacon, and a Mason, you forced upon us, you nominated this man--you are forcing us to violate our conscience by voting for a Catholic, so we won't vote for you!"

B: An odd situation. Then the Catholic issue affected Freeman more than it affected Kennedy.

J: I think it did. You can't tell how many, but this did affect him. It did affect him in the reaction of those people who felt he shouldn't have done this. He shouldn't have pushed. There were plenty of other good candidates. So it was a combination of all of these.

B: Was Kennedy's talk before the Houston Ministerial Alliance on this issue effective in Minnesota?

J: Yes. I think it was effective among those who were thinking. I think, for example--I'm speaking not of bigots, this didn't affect the bigots--but there were a group of people who were concerned not because of bigotry, but because of their fear of anything that would draw Church and State closer; of their quite genuine belief that on certain issues that were public issues like support of schools, like possibly birth control, like other things that the Catholic President would have to take the orders of his Church. In other words, it wasn't because they care personally what his belief was. I think that the Houston speech convinced them that he was as dedicated a supporter of separation of Church and State as they were.

B: I might insert here for the records, since we've been discussing religion, you're a Unitarian, are you not?

J: Yes.

B: Future scholars might want to know.

J: Yes.

B: Then after the election, were you in on Mr. Freeman's selection for Secretary of Agriculture?

J: I guess so.

B: How did that come about?

J: You'll have to piece together several reports on this. He had said first that he didn't want to be Secretary of Agriculture for good and sufficient reasons. Having been Governor of a farm state, having worked hard to criticize the then-Secretary of Agriculture, having had a special committee on agricultural problems, having tried to lead the Midwest Democratic Governors into a policy position on agriculture, he knew how tough it was. He wanted a Cabinet position, but he had said and meant that he didn't want the Agriculture position.

The days and the weeks passed, and he wasn't being asked to take any other Cabinet position. He did talk, I think with President-Elect Kennedy, I know with Sarge Shriver, about some other possible top federal appointments. He'll probably have in more detail what some of these were. Those were discussed informally. He began, I think, to reconsider the agricultural possibility, I think because it looked as if this might be offered to him. There were two or three other names suggested, more than that, I suppose, but two or three that we heard of.

B: Well, there was this man from Missouri--what's his name! Hinkle. He was a farm leader, of competence as a farm leader, but I gathered the President-Elect didn't think he was quite Cabinet material. George McGovern was talked about at some length in Minnesota, because we were pretty close to McGovern--knew him well, and liked him. Some of us were concerned that he probably wouldn't make a good Secretary of Agriculture just in

terms of what we thought a Secretary would have to be. I think the Farmers Union, Grain Terminal Association, had quite some influence at that time on selections, especially its then and long-time and only up-to-then head, M. W. Thatcher. He announced a few days before the announcement was made that he knew who was going to be Secretary of Agriculture. He didn't.

Hubert Humphrey was supporting someone else for Secretary of Agriculture at that time.

B: Someone other Mr. Freeman?

J: Someone other than Mr. Freeman because he had decided to do this at the time when Freeman had said that he didn't want it. So Humphrey being an adviser in the agricultural field was likely to be asked. This caused an undercurrent later of concern as to whether there was a rift, but as is historically accurate--I'm sure all of the groups will bear this out--at the time that Humphrey did give support to any other candidate he was doing it in the light of Freeman's statement that he didn't want this job.

There got to be several people who were talking in Washington to the Kennedy talent group about Freeman.

B: Do you know if Mr. Johnson had any influence here, as a man of a farm background himself?

J: I'm not aware of any influence. I think that's an interesting question. I never thought of it before, and I think it would be interesting to check with others. And if I checked with others, I'd check--now, some of these people are gone.

The moving force--I think the original single man that started the Freeman boom, you might say, sort of late in his selection, was Murray Lincoln, who was then president of Nationwide and has since died, but who

sent two men to Minnesota to talk to Freeman after he had sent them to Washington to talk with the Kennedy staff. He was rather close to some people on the Kennedy staff, if not to Kennedy himself. He was well known in some of the Southern states, but I don't know if there was any Johnson tie-in at that time.

B: At any rate, the offer finally came.

J: The offer came.

B: And I gather Mr. Freeman had no hesitation about accepting it.

J: No, not by that time.

B: Incidentally, was it a foregone conclusion that you would go with him?

J: What actually happened this night that the two men came out to talk to Freeman about this job--this was being done very quietly, a talent scout operation--they were to meet at our home which was on the outskirts outside of the twin cities. Freeman and his wife were going to come out there. I was to meet these men at the airport and take them to our home. As a matter of fact, they stayed overnight at our home and we took them to the airport. No, they talked to a few Minnesotans the next day. It seems that Hubert Humphrey and Max Kampelman came on that plane. I saw them first when they got off the plane. And I think they were thinking in terms of someone else for Secretary of Agriculture at the time. Of course the Freeman move was very quiet. I was sort of smiling to myself at this, that they should be on the same plane and that Max Kampelman should spot me and ask me, "Who are you waiting for?" at this point.

They came out there and they discussed whether or not Freeman ought to consider the Secretaryship of Agriculture. I argued against it. I argued against it because it was my judgment that anybody who hoped to go further in politics had better stay away from this one job; that this

would kill him. My husband argued for it. He didn't dispute what I said on the political impact, but my husband argued that if anybody could do a decent job in this terribly difficult position, it would be Freeman, so Freeman ought to take it.

Well, Freeman and Mrs. Freeman stayed until probably 1:30 or 2:00 in the morning; and when they left, I remember George and I standing at the door and Freeman said, "Well, if I take it, Dorothy, you'll have to come to Washington with me."

And I said, "I suppose I'd be willing to do this for a few months." When I came here I expected to just break over and help a little bit at a period when--because I wasn't an agriculturalist either. And my husband couldn't object because he, when Freeman said that, he said, "Oh, she will," you know. So that's what happened.

B: Incidentally, who was Mr. Humphrey supporting?

J: He was supporting--I think he was supporting Fred Hinkel of Missouri. It was generally thought that his former aide, Herb Waters, was the man that he'd like to see as Undersecretary. Herb Waters was originally a Californian. He had been tied to Humphrey so long that they kind of thought of him as a Minnesotan. Obviously you couldn't have a Secretary and an Undersecretary from the same state. Obviously, too, with the relationship that had existed--the political relationship--between Freeman and Waters, you couldn't have had Waters as Undersecretary under Freeman. But I'm not sure of this. I'm quite sure that Humphrey was at the time hoping that the Secretary of Agriculture would be one that would have Herb Waters as Undersecretary.

B: So then, you came to Washington with Mr. Freeman.

J: Yes.

B: As you've said, to work a couple of months.

J: Yes.

B: In the Agriculture department. It turned out to be eight years.

J: What were your duties at first? Your title was special assistant.

J: I did several things. The first week I was here I got thrown into meetings over at the White House on matters of organization of the Food Aid Program, together with the overall AID Program. A high-level group had worked long before the inauguration on how foreign aid ought to be organized, and they had to change the name of the agency, and they changed it to AID. George Ball had done a lot of the work on this, and Dave Bell had done some of the work on it, but Ball figured more in these presentations. There were several others. And of course the people who had studied this area felt that food aid was a part of overall assistance, and that the PL-480 program handled in substantial part by Agriculture ought to be under the AID agency, or whatever they were going to call it. So, obviously Agriculture was involved.

Freeman didn't know the personnel. He didn't know the political philosophy or the administrative principles that anyone in the department had, so he asked me to go over there. I, of course, tried to get someone, tried to weigh the top people in the Foreign Agriculture Service and be accompanied by someone who knew something about it, because I knew very little. I knew some of the politics involved; I knew that it would be politically absurd to try to absorb this part of what the farm groups regarded as surplus disposal and turn it over to the Department of State. I knew certain things. So I got involved in that set of meetings that came right away.

B: From the beginning was the Department of Agriculture resisting the idea of

letting the PL-480 administration go under another department?

J: Oh, sure, that is resisting its going completely out of Agriculture's hands.

B: And you won.

J: Oh yes, we won because of politics involved.

B: I was going to ask this later, but this may be an appropriate time. During Freeman's years, the PL-480 program, what came to be called the Food for Peace Program, did become less of a surplus disposal mechanism and more of a conscious foreign aid mechanism. Was this thought out from the beginning?

J: Yes. I worked rather hard on that. I felt that there were times when the assistance motive had been overshadowed and perhaps even denied by the surplus disposal motive.

B: And of course you were aided in that by the fact that surpluses declined eventually under the new policies?

J: They declined, yes. That was a help. In fact without it, politically you wouldn't have gotten the changes that we got finally in the bill.

Another thing Freeman asked me to do right off the bat was see what we could do about food distribution. And I called together--this is interesting for me to recall now--I called together all the people I could find in about two or three departments to meet on why we couldn't have a food stamp program. I listened to all the arguments as to why the old attempts had failed. The professional welfare people were against the stamp system, and I was trying to find out why. Many of the people in the Department of Agriculture were against the stamp system, and I was likewise trying to find out why. I don't know how accurate my assessment was, but I concluded that the reason that the welfare people were against a food stamp system is because it is a part of their professional code

that they are for figuring out the total welfare needs, and if it's \$50 a month, seeing that they get \$50 a month; and that the welfare worker or whoever it is ought to supervise; and maybe they needed it for food, maybe not, you know--that this was a professional point against earmarked funds. I also concluded that there were certain defects in the way the old attempt had been managed that could be corrected. I recommended that Freeman pursue and start a new stamp plan. I didn't have much to do with it after it got going, but that was one of my first--

B: You originated the idea?

J: I sort of revived it.

B: Revived it within the new administration.

J: Yes. I was instrumental in that.

B: Was Mr. Freeman easily convinced that this should be done?

J: Oh, yes. He wanted somebody that he had confidence in to try to weight and present to him what the reasons were, what the points were involved.

B: You mentioned that there was resistance within the Agriculture department. What were the grounds there?

J: I think it was a headache that they didn't want to assume--the old experience with it; they'd learned a lot of lessons; those lessons had been tough; it was hard to administer.

B: It also tends to create political problems on the Hill.

J: It creates political problems. The donation program--the donation of surplus foods was better as a surplus food disposal. They argued it was cheaper to administer, and that nobody made a profit off it. Now, through the food stamps, the retailer makes his normal profit.

There were countless cases of abuses, and this was I think the real reason for the headache of administering it. Therefore when the new plan

was created, it was done very cautiously with the problems involved. What had happened under the old idea--the food stamps were supposed to be used, one, for food; two, for domestic food; and three preferably for the foods in surplus. But suppose the welfare recipient wanted to buy some tobacco--they even had worse stories in those days, perhaps they wanted to buy liquor. It didn't matter to the dealer, if he got the stamps, and he didn't follow strictly the rules. It could go for purposes for which it wasn't intended, and it was generally regarded as a difficult thing to handle. I think this was the main reason.

B: And in fact it continued to be difficult. You said you didn't have anything directly to do with it, but it seems like during the next eight years periodically someone would discover hunger and turn on Secretary Freeman to want to know what was being done about it.

J: Yes, although the discovery of hunger, I think, was apart from this. The administering of the stamp plan we started rather gradually. We started with people who believed in it, but who were aware of the mistakes of the past; who were rather determined to spend what it took to make it work; who were willing to do the checking necessary, and on a few occasions to punish the dealers. So now I'm amazed. This is one of the things that Freeman started. I'm amazed at the degree of acceptability as they've gone so far as to say now that you would never carry it far enough. There has been a real shift in eight years in the public attitude.

B: Did you have any other particular assignments during those John Kennedy years?

J: Insofar as his staff of assistants specialized, I got into specializing in the foreign agriculture field so that I was probably within--well, right from the beginning, Freeman wanted me to concentrate on this area

rather than, let us say, the commodity support programs. I got into the support programs during the time of the [Billie Sol] Estes case. I mean I got really called in to try to find out what I could and then follow what I could at that time.

It was at that time that Freeman began what later came to be his staff meetings. It started with a meeting early in the morning of those who were involved in the Estes case and the hearings. I attended all the hearings, and I advised to the best of my ability those who were involved in the hearings. I wasn't involved directly.

I was out one Sunday, I remember, at a meeting that was held at Bobby Kennedy's home. He, being the Attorney General, was concerned about this. For awhile it looked very serious. And he had three or four of his staff out there. Freeman was there, and I was there. I remember at that point they were discussing what kind of testimony Charlie Murphy ought to give, as if what they discussed could affect what Charlie Murphy would say. I knew better than that. I knew Charlie better than that. Charlie was going to be very forthright and state directly what he thought. This involved Texas, as you know, and this was a very interesting episode.

B: Did Mr. Johnson get involved in it in any way within the department or the administration?

J: Not directly. But there was always the feeling, was Billie Sol Estes given any special consideration because he was from Texas, because he was a friend of the Vice President's, and the question was never answered yes, but just the location, just the geography caused it to be raised.

B: Did Mr. Johnson ever get in touch with Mr. Freeman or anyone else in the Agriculture department to ask them to keep him out of it?

J: No, I don't think so. Not that I know of.

B: Actually, the Estes affair created some difficulties within the department, too, didn't it?

J: Oh, yes, we lost an assistant secretary, who was also supposed to have received a pair of shoes or something at Neiman-Marcus. Jim Ralph had been appointed assistant secretary by advice of the White House. Freeman had never heard of him before, didn't know who he was.

I was interested in Freeman's selection of those he appointed. He selected and decided upon Charlie Murphy as undersecretary, which was a very wise choice. I remember when he told me he had decided he'd like to get Charlie, if he could get Charlie, because Charlie knew Washington; he knew a lot of things that would be helpful. Freeman liked him, had confidence in him. But he wasn't a farmer either, and Freeman wasn't a farmer. And so there was a political problem. I remember that when Freeman decided on this, he told Charlie, "We are like this, but we're going to have to build up political support. You work at this, I'll work at this, and we'll do this."

Then having this top right-hand man picked, there were these assistant secretary jobs, and obviously, Freeman recognized these had to be spread geographically and otherwise to be more representative. And something had to go to the West Coast. I couldn't tell you whose recommendation Jim Ralph was. I don't think he was particularly a friend of Johnson's; I don't really know--a young fellow, very indiscreet in many ways, and certainly indiscreet in his performance. He came down to Washington and started the high living. At any rate, he did have some ideas that he was trying to sell. I recall the fact that they existed. I don't think they were too seriously considered, but then when he got

involved in the Estes case Freeman asked him to resign.

B: And you also had the weird case of the man within the department who objected to the way the Secretary was handling the case, and then that man's secretary objected. It must have been a real circus.

J: Yes, we did. And we had his secretary, who was really emotionally ill--mentally ill--a real problem.

B: I brought it up because I wondered if you as a lady were asked to handle the other lady.

J: No, to tell the truth, I never saw the other lady. I talked to the department doctor who had been involved, but this was clearly a poor, unfortunate case where somebody wanted to make use of the poor gal. And the man--what's his name?

B: Is Hales correct?

J: Battle Hales. I guess he's still in the department.

B: I believe so. I think he is sort of shunted off to one side.

J: I think he was shunted out of town. I believe that he's in Missouri or some place.

B: I believe so.

J: But there were people that wanted to make a political issue of this. So this I got involved in.

But to go back to your question, generally speaking, I had turned over to me the area of PL-480, what little technical assistance in Agriculture our staff was providing at the time to developing countries. And so I suppose that almost from the beginning, I was involved.

One of the first things Freeman asked me to do was to write an outline of the role of U.S. agriculture and the role of the Department of Agriculture potentially in the assistance program of the United States,

assisting in development throughout the world--what it ought to be, what it ought to be directed toward, and how it ought to be handled. As usual, Freeman wanted this by yesterday. As I recall, I wrote this one night.

Now, I should have known better. I stayed up all night writing this and pounding it out on my little Hermes; and by 7 or 7:30 in the morning, I wasn't in condition to edit it. I was just too tired. I thought, "Well, tomorrow night I'll get at this and perfect it."

Well, that morning Freeman asked what I had accomplished, and I said, "I have a very rough draft, and I expect to edit it and give it to you tomorrow."

"Well," he said, "Let me see it now and see if it goes in the direction that I want, and I'll send it back to you."

I thought that was a good idea, might as well have his ideas before I go over it again. He took it over to the White House with him and showed it to the President in this struck-over, awful shape. I'm not a typist, but I can type when I have to. I learned to type so that I could type a thesis because I couldn't afford to hire it, once long ago. As a result, this thing hardly ever did get edited, and it was sent around. I'm amazed now, and Freeman is amazed, because the last six months or so-- he sent this in formally as a memo to the President after it was cleaned up grammatically and typographically, but no substantive change. And at the end of about six months ago or more, he dug this copy up and reviewed it. Some of the things have been effectuated; some of them have not; but he would still support them. He's quite surprised that we were able to come as close to what he still thinks is a good idea that early in the game with that little knowledge about anything.

B: Before we go into the details of the foreign program, did the assassination

and transition cause any serious traumas within the Agriculture department; that is, beyond the personal tragedy involved on the death of President Kennedy?

J: I don't think so.

B: Was there any thought that perhaps Secretary Freeman might change, or that the Secretaryship might change?

J: I don't think there was any serious thought of this. One always accepts the form that the new President should pick his people. Johnson made it rather clear early in the game that he didn't want to make changes for the purpose of changes, that he wanted to go on with and get the program enacted.

I think that one of the surprising things--I believe it was the Saturday after the assassination because I know it was either a Saturday or Sunday morning when the offices weren't open--a meeting in Freeman's office. Walter Heller was there. Walter Heller had had his first session with President Johnson. Somebody's interviewing Walter Heller, I know.

B: Yes.

J: I was amazed at Walter because I've known him for years and years back in Minnesota. He was then chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. He was going to leave for personal reasons--his wife's health or something. This had been long planned. No matter who was President Walter would have gone back to Minnesota. But he was not inclined to look with optimism at Lyndon Johnson. I don't think he'd ever opposed him, I don't think he'd ever thought much one way or another. But he was amazed after this interview. He must have spent an hour or more with the new President, and I'll never forget his genuine amazement. He sat next to me, and he

had copied immediately a quote from Johnson that had so impressed him. He says, "Dorothy, this is true. You may not believe it. I couldn't believe it, but this man is going to really launch a war on poverty. This man is going to do these things." He said, "I was never so surprised in my life, but we discussed these things and he asked the kind of questions that would indicate that he's very serious about this. After I left, he called me back again. He had gotten some other ideas," and I'll never forget how impressed Walter Heller was with the fact that this man was really going to do something about what Kennedy had talked about.

B: Did you personally need that kind of reassurance; that is, was there any faint dismay in your mind--?

J: I think not. By this time I had met Johnson on a few more occasions. I had been here a few years [while he was] Vice President. He never remembered me, I'm sure, but I was further favorably impressed. I had always accepted him as a great congressional leader. I must say I didn't understand how he could be Vice President and sit quietly with his feet on the desk or whatever Vice Presidents do--a standing joke.

B: Did he do anything in connection with the Agriculture department in working with Congress or general advisory work--?

J: Once in awhile.

B: As Vice President?

J: Yes, once in awhile he'd help. He was concerned with civil rights, and we were concerned. Under the administrative assistant secretary we had an attempt to try to progress as far as we could toward a far, more equal rights treatment. We had segregated extension services in the South and other kinds of things that we were trying to remedy. And these people met with the Vice President when Johnson was Vice President. He was

active in that field. When things were needed, every now and then we'd call on him as Vice President, and it would always work out.

B: By "things were needed," you means as in help with Congress?

J: In help with Congress or in help with Texas or something, you know. He'd do this. No, I think that the personal shock was the greatest. I wasn't aware of, and I personally didn't have any concern that the government was going to fall apart, or that we had lost anything program-wise.

But of course it's a shocking thing. I think that we all realized that there was a personal appeal that Kennedy had that Johnson didn't have, whatever you choose to call it. It's an absurd thing, but it was there.

But I think there was a surprise on the part of people like Walter Heller at the conviction and the determination that Johnson expressed, not about principles as such, but about putting them into effect, which hadn't been apparent. By this time we had recognized that Kennedy was not going to push upon Congress a lot of the things that he'd talked about. Some of us, at least, had become concerned that he wasn't trying to get enacted the things that we believed in and that he believed in.

B: You mean in administration policy generally, beyond just specific Agriculture policy?

J: No, in the whole general field. No, I wasn't thinking of Agriculture particularly there. Kennedy never knew much about Agriculture. He preferred to leave that to somebody else.

B: Was there any thought in the Agriculture department after Mr. Johnson became President that things will be better for the department now that a man with an agricultural background was President?

J: I believe there was, yes. There was a feeling, "Now we have a President who knows what agriculture is, who knows what REA is, who knows what a cooperative is--a farm cooperative--who has worked with farmers, who will understand." So I think there was this feeling.

B: How did President Johnson and Secretary Freeman get along?

J: As far as I know, very well. Johnson was a hard-boiled taskmaster that reminded me a great deal of Freeman. I remember one very small staff meeting. Freeman was describing the President. He said, "He announces this, and he expects us to have it done by tomorrow. He doesn't know how tough it is. He doesn't consider what's involved, and so forth. I want you to know you've got to perform, you've got to do this. I have to do this, I'm really under the gun."

And I implied, well, I'd been used to this. This is the way he handled us all these years, which is true. He looked at me with great concern. But, no, I felt that in many respects they were alike. And I think perhaps they got along pretty well.

B: That's really why I asked. Because you kind of wonder if two men who are that much alike get together, sometimes--

J: You have a real point. I wondered when I first came down here with Freeman how he would work as a Cabinet member where he was definitely under a boss, because in his political career he'd never been that. He leaped right into the governorship where what he said was it. And I was amazed at how well he adapted in the Kennedy period. I think this was probably a good transition, because Kennedy didn't know as much about or care as much about agriculture as Johnson did. So I think that Freeman learned something about it and Freeman basically, perhaps because of his experience as governor, knew enough about the problems of administration

to know that the chief administrator has to have certain authority. I think he knew this by personal experience and recognized it, so that he conceded that to someone else over him as he had demanded it of people under him. And I think they got along very well. I'm sure there were always some occasions, and they seemed to leak every now and then, when the President said some pretty blunt things to the Secretary of Agriculture, as I guess he did to everybody else.

B: Then shortly after that in '64, you were formally designated to, I guess, the position you had been informally in already.

J: I had been working in this field, and I had recommended my predecessor, Dr. Roland Rennie, who was the assistant secretary before I. Then I had been asked to recommend a successor when he resigned, which I did. I would never have recommended myself, and I think rightly so. And I recommended this person to Freeman, and he recommended this to Johnson. Much later I heard this--I didn't know about this except that Freeman told me that Johnson hadn't acted. So we went on with the vacancy. I later learned that Johnson had told Freeman, "No, I don't want him; come up with someone else. Can't you find a woman?" I only learned this much later.

Well, the weeks passed, and we got along without an Assistant Secretary for International Affairs. Then Freeman said, "We've got to get somebody in this field. The President's ready to get somebody. Go over it again and see what the situation is." I checked the best I could and came up with a recommendation which happened to be the same person.

B: Did Mr. Freeman mention getting a woman to you?

J: Oh, no. I didn't know anything about that. I had no idea. I didn't

want it. Then I knew that this man, and I talked with him--he was also building up other political support for his appointment; and Freeman went up again. The President didn't say anything, didn't do anything. But I knew that something was going to be done fairly soon.

And one day Freeman called me in in a hurry, and he said--I had been working on some suggestions for a speech--"All of these Cabinet members are going to testify on the Hill on East-West trade." And because Freeman was going to testify, Rusk paid him the compliment of sending him his [Rusk's] draft for suggestions. But it was this usual type of thing that I learned to become more accustomed to. It was already mimeographed, so he sent it to Freeman for suggestions. But since I had been assigned it, I made four criticisms and put them in a letter for Freeman to send to Rusk. I thought they were serious enough to note, although they had nothing to do with foreign policy, the East-West trade. The State Department knew more about that than I. But they were going to testify before a committee of Congress.

[Telephone interruption]

This speech had been prepared introducing our policy--"The United States government policy on East-West trade is founded on the following: one, two, three, four, five," all of which was true except that they had failed to include the laws passed by Congress as something on which policy is based.

B: Oh, boy.

J: This is so typical--to testify before a committee without paying it the compliment of giving that first, so this was my first suggestion. The rest is immaterial, I think. But this was the kind of thing I had written in this letter, which Freeman signed. But he called me in, and he said, "I think I've got to see you right away." I told him I was trying to finish this letter. He said, "The President may call you, and I thought

I'd better inform you that he is about to ask whether you will be Assistant Secretary for International Affairs." Well, this was the first I had heard of it--totally. And had I heard of it in advance, I think I would have presented enough arguments and talked everybody out of it. I didn't want it really. I've enjoyed it.

B: What sort of arguments would you have presented, Mrs. Jacobson?

J: I don't know really. But I would never have picked myself. It seems that, again, the President had said, "Can't you find a woman." I don't know about this. I was sort of flattered; I was inclined to say no, because when I learned this afterwards I thought, "Well, it has been months since the President first suggested this. What lack of confidence is there that Freeman has toward me!" Obviously I was a woman he'd worked with, and I had worked in this field, when I stopped to think of it. Of course, what he told me was that he had wanted me to continue on his staff, and presumably that's right. I enjoyed being on the staff. I enjoyed the job as assistant secretary too. It was different in many ways.

B: Did Freeman finally recommend you, or did Mr. Johnson come to this selection independently?

J: Freeman had finally recommended me, from what I heard later. He said that after Johnson said that, he said well, the only woman he knew who could do the job was on his staff. And apparently the President had insisted on going into this further. But the interesting thing to me is that from the accounts that have been told on two separate occasions, he did ask specifically, "Couldn't you find a woman who could do this?" I have always felt that the President really meant this because he believed that perhaps a great deal of talent was being wasted by refusal to look for women in jobs.

He had started this campaign. He wanted fifty women appointed--at least fifty--to high places. He wasn't content to just make this as a statement. Of course many people thought, well, he's out for the women's votes. I've never believed that, while obviously he was happy to get women votes--that he basically believed in this. I have always had the feeling that one of the reasons he really believed that women have some ability was because of the ability of his wife, which he knows at first hand; and that he recognizes that there must be some other women with some competence in these fields.

B: I don't mean this to be a condescending kind of question--it may sound like it--but is it difficult to be a woman in a high administrative position? Does being a woman make additional difficulties?

J: Some, I think, although I have never paid too much concern to this. I think the main difficulties are not direct. There are certain kinds of rumors and scuttlebutt you don't hear as readily if you're a woman.

B: I'd never thought of it, but that makes sense.

J: You don't hear the stories going around in the men's room.

B: Of course men don't either.

J: But I also have enlightened my administrative assistant secretary by the fact that he doesn't hear all that goes around in the women's room either.

B: I was just going to say that.

J: There are occasions. There still is a feeling that, I think, a woman in a position like this has a tougher time proving that she wasn't a political appointee, a hack done to get votes. I think they're more likely to take this for granted if it's a man.

B: Does being a woman make any significant difference in dealing with representatives of other countries?

J: I've been rather interested in this in my capacity as U.S. delegate to the FAO. I've been now for four years the chief U.S. delegate. And there one deals with more than Western Europeans. I've been the only woman, by the way, who was delegate to most of these meetings. Barbara Castle headed the UK delegation for two days or so at one FAO conference, but she was there to make a speech and get on an interview, she wasn't really there to head the delegation. One woman very ably represented Finland on many occasions. You deal with representatives of some of the Moslem countries who at home would have a slightly different attitude toward women. Again, I think there is perhaps some reserve at first, but I think that after you're known that there probably is no significant--

B: Of course, you had a lot of contact with India which had at the time a lady Prime Minister.

J: Yes. It's interesting to me that obviously the average Indian woman isn't anywhere near what the average American woman is, but they have a higher proportion, I'd say, in their Parliament than we do, and of course the Prime Minister, who, I think, perhaps has been criticized differently than if she would have been a man.

B: Possible.

J: Her weaknesses are attributed to her sex. There are plenty of men who would have had as many weaknesses too. I've never spent much time on the question of women in men's places. When I was an undergraduate, I was the first woman assistant in political science that they'd ever had--a girl at the University of Minnesota. They'd had them in economics and in history, but not in political science. They'd never had a woman on the staff of the governor of Minnesota until I was there. And I guess once you get over the first story--when we started staff meetings and I first attended staff meetings, I was told that in the Department of Agriculture that I cramped

their style--they couldn't tell all the jokes they would normally tell.

I think they got over that.

B: Probably to their moral betterment.

J: I think the jokes got--not sure. But I think in general it isn't too bad.

B: On the occasion of your appointment, did you have a personal meeting with Mr. Johnson?

J: Yes.

B: Did he discuss with you what he wanted your agency division to do?

J: No, not too much. He asked me what I thought. He talked some politics.

B: Was this before the election of '64?

J: This would have been in March or April of '64. I remember as we were saying goodbye, shaking hands with him, he pulled back a little bit, "One other thing." He says, "Remember, you're no longer under the Hatch Act."

B: Meaning, "Get out and campaign!"

J: That was the closest to approaching the political. I went over there; Freeman was along. At that point he asked me if I would be interested. He went over what he already obviously knew. I learned later that before Freeman had done this, he had checked with the chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee to see whether Senator Ellender would have any objection to recommending the confirmation of a woman. This was all before he had ever talked to me about it, which I didn't appreciate at the time.

B: It's amazing that it could have been kept from you that long. You get the impression that Washington is not that secretive a town.

J: But some things are kept. There's one thing that President Johnson got across very early, that he didn't like leaks. And I tell you, this was really impressed on everybody. And when a leak occurred, boy, everybody was concerned about where it had happened. And the White House would call,

and they would--"I have discovered leaks." I have spent hours talking to these correspondents, you know, that have heard thus and thus, hedging like mad. I'm not much good at--I can do it better over the phone than face to face--at being poker-faced and assuming I know nothing about any of this. And they get to know that you really know something, but won't tell. And I'd spend all these hours, you know, and talk to this correspondent. You know he doesn't believe that you don't know anything about it. Then you go and see it in the New York Times. After you've gone through all this agony somebody else has leaked it.

B: We're just about at the end here.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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