INTERVIEW IX

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INTERVIEWEE: WALTER JENKINS

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Jenkins' office, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 2

G: There's one question that I didn't ask last time that I should have asked. You talked about the aftermath of the 1948 election, but let me just ask you to sketch Lyndon Johnson's relationship with George Parr over the years--

J: He didn't have one.

G: --and anything you know about their relationship.

J: I don't think he knew him until 1948.

G: Did he know him later? Did they--?

J: In 1948 I saw them meet, and if they knew each other before that they put on a good show of meeting.

G: Really?

J: At the Democratic [state] convention in Fort Worth. That was after all of this--George Parr supported Johnson because he was mad at Coke Stevenson. He'd wanted a district attorney or something, district judge--I've forgotten what it was--and Stevenson appointed somebody besides who he was recommending. Whoever was Coke Stevenson's appointment would have inherited that support. I don't think Mr. Johnson knew him. Of course he knew who he was, but--and he knew his attorney, what was his name?

G: Oh, Luther Jones?

J: No.

G: Ed Lloyd.

J: That's it. He knew Ed Lloyd. Ed Lloyd had supported us in some campaign, maybe 1941, I don't remember.

G: What do you recall about that meeting in 1948 at the convention? Is

there anything significant that took place?

J: I remember that Mr. Johnson introduced him on the convention platform and said, "Here I now want you to meet the man that casts more Democratic votes than anybody else in the state." (Laughter)

G: Well now, let's go on to 1949. The correspondence that year, early in the year--of course, John Connally's gone back up there with him.

J: Right.

G: The correspondence seems to indicate that there was a tremendous workload.

J: There was.

G: Let me ask you to just describe that and explain why you think it was and the mechanics of moving into the Senate.

J: Well, I think it was because there were a lot of issues that people were interested in, for one thing, and second thing, [Morris] Sheppard and [Tom] Connally had never been people to solicit mail. Johnson was a man to solicit mail. He just told everybody everywhere he went to write him. "If you have any problems, write me. If you have any suggestions, write me," in every speech. And they did.

G: Why did John Connally go up?

J: I think Mr. Johnson felt that certainly at first he needed a more broad-gauged guy than me.

G: Was John Connally to do basically the same thing that you had been doing? In addition to, is that right?

J: Right. I continued to do it, too, but there was just so much more of it to do.

G: Did he have to persuade Connally to go?

J: I don't know that. I don't think so. I think John wanted to.

G: Do you know if it was understood that it would be for a limited time?

J: Yes. I know that it did, because I know John did not want to agree to come for a long time but I think he wanted to be in on the early part of the Senate situation.

G: Do you remember anything about the move itself, just physically moving

the office from the House side to the Senate side and getting the office and that sort of thing? Did he have his pick of offices? Did he have to put in a bid?

J: Oh, you had to put in a bid. They're given out on a formula--although we got a pretty good one--of seniority. Mr. Johnson for some reason had a little seniority over the rest of the freshmen. Why? Maybe it's because of having come out of the House. I think that the ones that had been in the House had seniority over the ones that were elected directly off the street, and the ones that had been governor were a little bit above those that hadn't been anything. Ones in the House had [seniority] over governor and governor over. . . .

G: Was there anything in particular that he wanted in a Senate office, like location or size of the office or what floor it was on or anything like that?

J: I don't remember. Size I know because he always believed in a big staff. Probably for the first time he wasn't paying some of the staff out of his pocket.

G: Did the proximity to particular other senators have any significance? For example, did he want to have an office next to someone like Senator [Richard] Russell or someone that had either stature or--?

J: Well, he didn't get one. We weren't anywhere near Senator Russell. I don't know. I don't remember that it entered into it at all. Getting to the Capitol I think was important, and that part was good. We were just down the hall from the little train.

G: Did he go through and at all clean out the files and, say, eliminate some of the material that he had from the House or did he keep all of it?

J: No. He was a keeper.

G: Why do you think that?

J: Names. He was great on having names, mailing lists. I think he always felt that the Tenth District was sort of the nucleus of his support, that if he could keep 98 per cent of the votes in the Tenth District he could get by with 45 in a lot of the other districts. He always was partial to

the Tenth District even after he was senator.

G: Yes. What did a new senator have to do to really become acclimated, get started?

J: Well, he had to get some decent committee assignments. Mr. Johnson did.

G: Did he have help on those?

J: Yes, I'm sure he did. I can't tell you just what, but he didn't go on Post Office and Civil Service. He went on Armed Services and Interstate and Foreign Commerce, which are both major committees. I'm sure that Senator Russell, Senator [Walter] George and some of those people who knew him already. . . .

G: Was there another committee that he would have preferred to be on if he could have been?

J: I think he kind of always nourished the hope of someday being on Foreign Relations, but he felt a very lack of preparedness for it. He always felt that he was less well prepared to be on Foreign Relations than any field.

G: Did he?

J: Yes.

G: Why is this?

J: Because he hadn't ever done much in that field.

G: In the House?

J: In the House.

G: Do you think the fact that he did get two good committee assignments influenced his action later, when he was leader, in assigning freshmen senators to good committees?

J: Yes, I do. I think that was one of his decisions when he became leader, that he was going to see that everybody got at least one major committee. Earlier they used to get two minor committees.

G: The quotation that we've often heard, paraphrased badly, was something to the effect that "while the liberals were reading Plato or Shakespeare I was reading the rules of the Senate." Did he read the rules of the Senate? I mean, did he master the parliamentary--?

J: Somewhat. He was not ever a parliamentarian, I mean an expert parliamentarian, but he always had some parliamentarians around him. He liked Senator [John] Stennis because Senator Stennis was the world's greatest parliamentarian. He could just call him up and say, "What would be a ruling on such and such?" and Stennis always knew.

G: Well, did he have a period when he first came to the Senate when he sat down and read the rules of the Senate or talked with people about the--had some sort of briefing about the mechanics?

J: I'm sure. He spent a lot of time with the Senate Parliamentarian. What was his name? They got to be close friends. I can't remember his name. Carl. [Charles Watkins?]

G: Carl, did you say?

J: I'm not sure. I said that but I'm not sure it's right. If you'd say it I'd know it.

(Interruption)

I mean, a little older than me. I'm not a young man, but in those days I was.

G: Anything else on getting started in the Senate?

J: I think he saw himself, and I think later events proved him right, as sort of a man down the middle, the only person that might be able to weld together the [William] Fulbrights and the Russells, because they were both friendly to him, and they weren't both friendly to anybody else. Well, maybe friendly, but. . . .

G: Well, why do you think the liberals were friendly to him at this point?

J: Because he had a pretty good voting record from their standpoint, and personality. He never had a voting record that appealed to the conservatives. He came from a state that appealed to them and they liked him and he courted them and he went out with them and spent more time with them than he did with the liberals. He spent an awful lot of time with Senator--

G: Did he have to defend his voting record to, say, someone like Russell or Stennis?

J: I don't know.

G: Surely there would be at least banter to the effect--

J: I imagine there was. I was never around when he was bantering with other senators. I'm sure there was. I was around some with Russell and they kidded a lot. But--

G: Do you think that Russell was more conservative or less conservative than his public image?

J: I think less.

G: Do you? On any issues in particular?

J: Civil rights.

G: I hope we can talk about that when we get to 1957.

J: Sure.

G: But let me ask you about your statement of Johnson being in the middle. Did he ever express that to you? Did he ever analyze his position as such, being someone that could weld together--?

J: I don't know that he analyzed it, but he expressed it, yes, by nature.

G: Was this early on?

J: That's where he was--yes, early.

G: How did he put it, do you remember?

J: I don't know exactly how he put it, but I know he felt from the beginning that he was just about the only person that had some appeal to all Democrats and some Republicans. I don't think he felt like he'd ever be president though.

G: Do you think the fact that he was representing an entire state constituency instead of a relatively liberal district, or relatively liberal in comparison with the rest of the state, do you think that this made him take a more conservative outlook than he had in the House?

J: Well, I know he felt, because I heard him say so, that any member had two responsibilities: one was his conscience and one was his electorate, and that he had to temper one with the other. If he didn't, he wouldn't come back. Although he was very careful in selecting issues that he got way out in front [on], like repeal of Taft-Hartley, [natural] gas bill, the

confirmation of [Leland] Olds. There weren't many positions he took that were super-conservative.

G: Did he seem more conservative to you in the Senate that first year or two than he had been in the House in terms of his votes?

J: Perhaps a little bit more because those issues came up right at that time. I'd always considered him liberal on--well, we'll talk about civil rights. He never took an anti-civil rights vote that I know of.

G: Well, this maiden speech in the Senate had to do with the cloture [vote]. Of course, there was a civil rights question behind it.

J: But if you'll go back and read the speeches, which I'm sure you have, he said it didn't have anything to do with civil rights. He did it because of the right of a minority to be heard, and to express itself loud and long.

G: He does seem to have taken the position that civil rights legislation was best left up to the states.

J: He did on poll tax and on anti-lynch. I don't know of any other one that he did.

G: Did he do anything to encourage legislation on the state level?

J: Yes.

G: I know that they did pass an anti-lynching bill in the state legislature, and the poll tax was--

J: Say the next day after he voted against federal removal of the poll tax, he came to Texas and spoke all over the state recommending that Texas remove the poll tax. I'm sure he did it just on purpose to carry out what he said in his speeches, that Texas had imposed it and Texas ought to remove it.

G: Did he have any impact on the legislature's voting on that constitutional amendment to abolish the poll tax?

J: I think so.

G: If you were trying to trace his influence, how would--I mean other than what you just said, his speaking around the state, anybody in the legislature he might have called, anyone that he might have worked

through. [Is there] any way you can trace his influence?

J: No, but some of the members of the legislature were sort of in his orbit.

G: Yes. Okay. Now what about anti-lynching legislation? They also passed an anti-lynching bill. Why did the legislature do that, I wonder?

J: I don't know. I was never down here very much, but I always felt that it was sort of the same, that he made it so clear that he felt that we should have anti-lynching legislation but that it should be a prerogative of the state and not of the federal government.

G: He had gotten the support of a lot of blacks in that 1948 election, didn't he?

J: As far as I know he had them all. If Stevenson had any, I'd like to find them.

G: I know from reading the correspondence that a number of them were upset with that maiden speech, and not the speech itself but the fact that it did--

J: [How it] was interpreted.

G: Yes. Carter Wesley, the publisher, and some of the other black leaders in Houston. Do you recall any of this and what he did to convince them that he was not against civil rights?

J: I think it may be part of his efforts to get these steps taken on the state level.

G: Do you remember any of them coming up to his office and lobbying?

J: Carter Wesley came several times. I don't remember just the issues involved. They were friendly. So was the local guy. What was his name? There's a park here named for him.

G: Here?

J: Yes.

G: Everett Givens?

J: Yes. Dr. Givens was in touch with him every day nearly, sort of his. . . .

G: What about some of the more militant blacks, the NAACP people for example? Did they confront him after the vote?

J: I don't remember. If they did, it was not on a militant, mean basis.

G: Okay. Now on the other hand we had the Felix Longoria case. Let me ask you to just recall as much of that as you can.

(Interruption)

J: Mr. Johnson--I've forgotten just who talked, I don't know whether I did or Mary [Rather] did. Somebody did. I think maybe I did, when we called up there and complained about it. I didn't see the possibilities in it at all; Mr. Johnson immediately did. He came back from the floor, somewhere. We told him about the call, and he immediately jumped right into it, called and got the authority to get him [Longoria] buried in Arlington Cemetery. He saw it right away as an opportunity to do something that showed how he felt about the Latins.

(Interruption)

Where were we?

G: Felix Longoria.

J: Yes.

G: You said he immediately saw the possibilities.

J: Well, I kind of hate to put it that way. That's kind of crass, but I think it's--

G: Well, tell me what he said.

J: He just grabbed up the phone and called somebody, wanted to be sure--or had me do it, I don't remember--that he could be buried in Arlington Cemetery. Then called Hector Garcia and told him that that's what he was going to do if he didn't have any thoughts to the contrary.

G: Was he indignant about that?

J: Yes, he was. Oh, yes. He was very indignant about it.

G: Some of the critics have said that this was really just a publicity stunt, that the city of Three Rivers was going to make some sort of restitution or something and his moving in like that prevented them from doing that.

J: There's something there in a way, but he didn't know they were going to make any restitution. The family called him, asking him to do it. He

didn't force his way into anything. The family called him and told him they weren't going to allow him to be buried. That was the situation.

G: Was it the family's idea that he be buried in Arlington?

J: No, no. That was his. The family's idea was to be forced to [have him] be buried in Three Rivers.

G: I see. Well, did he immediately come up with the Arlington solution?

J: Yes.

G: How did this episode affect his relations with at least Latin Americans in Texas?

J: I think it helped him immeasurably. I think they felt like they had a friend maybe for the first time that would champion at least a small cause, not small individually but maybe small in the over-all.

G: Did it have any impact in Three Rivers at all that you're aware of?

J: Yes, I think it had a lot of impact in Three Rivers. I think Mr. Johnson was very unpopular in Three Rivers; the mail would indicate that he was, certainly with the Anglo community in Three Rivers. I think they felt that he took advantage of a situation. And in a sense I guess he did. But it was there, and something had to be done about it, and he grabbed it up and did something about it.

G: I notice in reading back through the clippings that Drew Pearson and Walter Winchell really bore down on that community that had slighted the Mexican-American war hero. Do you remember anything about how they were alerted to the problem?

J: I don't remember, but I would imagine Mr. Johnson told Drew Pearson. I don't think he had the contacts to tell Walter Winchell, but he knew Drew Pearson pretty well.

G: Mr. Johnson did go to the funeral as well, didn't he?

J: Yes.

G: Do you remember that? Did you go?

J: No, I didn't, but he and Mrs. Johnson went. And Harry Vaughan went?

G: Right, yes. Did he get Harry Vaughan to go, do you know?

J: Well, he got somebody representing the President to go, notified them and

that's who they sent. He may have hoped President Truman would come by, but I don't think very seriously.

G: Let's shift gears for a moment. Another thing he was doing, early in the year he was negotiating with the WAA Board to get that Austin Magnesium Plant for the University [of Texas].

J: *I* was. (Laughter)

G: Okay. Well, that was evidently a very significant thing for the University. I guess they call it Balcones Research--

J: Balcones Research Center.

G: Okay. Tell me how that happened.

J: Neils Thompson came to Washington twenty times, at a time when Mr. Johnson was very busy, the first year and so on. I inherited him. I made more appointments for him, talked to more people about that. I think I was maybe as surprised as anybody when they decided to do it.

G: Did Thompson originate the idea?

J: Yes. Yes.

G: What was the issue here? Was it a matter of getting it declared surplus?

J: First getting it declared surplus and second getting it--well, the law then as I remember it was after it was declared surplus, all government agencies had a priority to claim it ahead of any state group--getting them to pass it by. As a matter of fact they just didn't give them the opportunity to claim it, they just bypassed them.

G: Well, how did that happen? Who did you have to persuade to--?

J: Well, I think Mr. Johnson got into the picture late. I wouldn't have had the power to do that. And I think Neils Thompson did an effective job, too, of convincing them that the University was going to make something out of it and would make something that would contribute to the national good.

G: Was there any adversary? Was there someone, say, who wanted it to go to either another state agency or a federal agency?

J: There was no particular adversary of that type. There were some adversaries that felt it should follow its normal procedure. I don't

think anybody was out trying to get it. I don't think anybody but the University saw the potential in it right at that time. It's still a major thing out here.

G: Well, Bryan was pushing for the Air Force Academy at the same time.

J: It was never seriously considered. Mr. Johnson didn't seriously consider it. Travis Bryan wanted it. Mr. Johnson wanted it for Randolph Field and made an effort but failed.

G: There was a lot of controversy that winter and spring about Wright Morrow--

J: There certainly was.

G: --the question of whether or not he should be cashiered because he had supported the states rights group, I guess the Strom Thurmond group initially.

J: Dixiecrat group.

G: Yes. Let me ask you to recall what you can about that and LBJ's position there.

J: Well, I don't think he took a strong position either way. He liked Wright Morrow. Wright Morrow was a distinguished fellow who had done a lot for Democratic candidates and raised a lot of money for the Democrats. And was a friend. I don't think Mr. Johnson ever carried any banner saying let's get rid of Morrow. On the other hand, I don't think he carried any banner, let's save him. I would guess that sort of underneath it all he helped him.

G: Any indication of what he might have done to help him?

J: Well, I don't know whether he helped him with anybody in Washington. I think he helped him with advice. He talked to him a lot, maybe told him he thought he ought to get active in the Democratic Party and take the leadership. You know, Morrow came back and did something, a bunch of things.

G: He did. He gave some money to the Truman ticket I think ultimately, didn't he?

J: I'm sure he did.

G: Do you think Mr. Johnson was helpful in getting him to do that?

J: Well, Mr. Johnson was not prominent in the thing, because Byron Skelton was a close friend, too, and probably from the point of view of support, a more active, stronger friend. He wouldn't have wanted to do something to Wright flying in the face of Byron Skelton. But he was sort of a peacemaker, trying to keep the Democratic Party from splitting apart over it.

G: You've talked about cloture, but let me just ask you about that speech itself and if you remember the preparation of it, who wrote it, if he had any hesitancy at all about giving that as his maiden speech, if you heard it, if you remember the circumstances of the speech itself?

J: I somewhat remember it. I'd have to go back and read the speech to refresh myself, but I don't think you'll find it's based on civil rights in any way. I think it's based on the position that any minority that wants to be heard, and feels like it has a right to be heard, shouldn't be shouted down. That [if it] can produce enough support to keep a filibuster going, whatever subject it's on, it ought to have a right to do it. The rights of a minority. I think you'll find that it's a very constitutional-like speech, not emotional at all.

G: Do you know who wrote the speech?

J: No, I don't remember. I wouldn't be surprised if George Reedy did, but I don't know.

G: Well, Reedy didn't start working for him until 1951.

J: Oh, well, I guess I'm wrong then.

G: And [Horace] Busby was--

J: Busby didn't come until that fall. I don't know whether Busby was there or not.

G: Yes, he was there I think, if he was still there. I assume he was still there.

J: That's when he came.

G: He was in the 1948 campaign, so he was already--

J: Yes. I guess he came at the beginning of the 1948 campaign.

G: Yes. Did he have any hesitancy at all about giving that speech?

J: I don't think so.

G: Was it well received? Did you actually see him deliver it? Were you on the floor?

J: Yes. I was in the gallery. I had the right of the floor, but I didn't abuse it ever like some of the assistants did. Yes, I did hear it delivered, and I think it was well received.

G: Any particular reaction that you remember?

J: Of course the reaction was better from the Russells than it was from the [Herbert] Lehmans. But I don't remember that he caught a lot of flak over it.

G: But did he receive much favorable--?

J: Yes. Although I don't know that it was a big issue in Texas. It wasn't a matter, a speech that evoked a lot of mail.

G: I wonder what governed the decision to give his major speech when he did and to make that the subject, and if you recall whether that was a consciously, a heavily-weighed decision, and if he felt like that he had been there long enough to go ahead and make a speech.

J: I don't recall, but it's what came up, the opportunity I imagine more than anything else. You've got to be germane.

G: Do you think it was a question of another senator asking him to speak on the subject or suggesting that he take the floor on that?

J: Well, I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't want to take an anti-civil rights position. He didn't want to follow the southern senators on civil rights. But I think he really felt deep in his own conscience that the rights of the minority was a matter that should be preserved. It had nothing to do with civil rights. I haven't read the speech in a long time but I'm sure you'll find that that's--

(Interruption)

G: LBJ and Carl Vinson and Stuart Symington and Hoyt Vandenberg went to Georgia to tour one of the air force bases, Warner Air Force Base. Do you know anything about that?

J: Warner Robins. I remember it. I certainly didn't go. I always felt like it was sort of a means of getting close to what's his name from Georgia, Carl Vinson. Of course, he'd served on his committee in the House, but nobody was very close to Carl Vinson. Mr. Johnson got closer to him than anybody ever had. He was just not a fellow that let anybody warm up to him much. He let Mr. Johnson warm up to him. They got to be friends.

G: Why do you think that was?

J: Just because Mr. Johnson worked on it.

G: Really? But surely others must have worked on it.

J: Mr. Johnson had a way of working on it better than others had of working on it. (Laughter)

G: Symington came under a lot of criticism during those B-36 hearings that spring, whether or not there was some conflict of interest. Do you remember that?

J: I remember it. I never knew how much merit, if any, there was in it. They finally I think ended and exonerated him.

G: And there were some judgeships, Ben Connally and [James V.] Allred--

J: Yes.

G: Let me ask you to recall what happened in that appointment, how it was--?

J: Senator Connally didn't--you know, Johnson and Connally split the judgeships. Connally was a Johnson appointment and Allred was a Connally appointment. I'm sure it was a trade out.

G: Well, wouldn't the senior senator normally get those appointments?

J: Not if they're both Democrats.

G: Really? They do split them?

J: The junior senator would get them if he was the Democrat and the senior senator was a Republican. Every state is a rule unto itself. If the senior senator is a good loyal Democrat and the junior senator is an occasionally loyal Democrat, he wouldn't get them. The administrations kind of did what they wanted to with them. But Connally and Johnson took time about. Johnson recommended Connally, and Connally recommended

Allred, although Connally was never a great friend of Mr. Johnson's. I don't think it was ever spelled out exactly, I just think that Connally knew that Mr. Johnson wanted Allred, and Mr. Johnson knew Connally would love to have his son. They just did it by recommending each other's candidate.

G: That would save Connally the embarrassment of not having to recommend his brother, was that who [it was]?

J: His son.

G: Son. Okay. What about Allred? Allred had been on the bench before and had resigned to run for Senate in 1942, I guess. Hadn't he been on earlier? Roosevelt put him on--

J: What seat did he run for in 1942?

G: Well, he ran against [W. Lee] O'Daniel.

J: For the Senate?

G: Yes.

J: Yes. I guess you're right. Johnson ran in 1941, Allred in 1942. Well, I guess you're right. I had forgotten that.

G: Do you know anything about the circumstances of Allred wanting to get back on the bench? Did Mr. Johnson consider anyone else, say Senator [Alvin J.] Wirtz?

J: I don't think Senator Wirtz wanted to be a judge. No, I think he considered Allred his prime choice. Allred was a very close friend, a fellow he thought had been the best governor Texas had ever had.

G: There were also marshals, U.S. marshals appointed. Cliff Carter was appointed or recommended.

J: And appointed.

G: Yes. What was the significance of an appointment like that, U.S. marshal?

J: Well, it's one of the few--there wasn't much senatorial patronage, judgeships, U.S. attorneys and marshals, that's all. Cliff couldn't apply for anything else, couldn't qualify for anything else.

G: Why was Carter recommended?

J: Because he was sort of our state coordinator.

G: Okay.

J: And Mr. Johnson liked him. Because he was kind of the marshal type.

G: Now during this period there was the start of the investigation of the Hollywood performers and blacklisting. I just wonder if you ever heard Mr. Johnson talk about this or if he ever expressed his feeling on this?

J: I didn't. He never took any part in it and as far as I know had not a very great interest in it. When he got to know the guy from here, what's his name?

G: John Henry Faulk?

J: But that was much later. He didn't know John Henry Faulk then. He had some interest in it, but it was after the fact.

G: Rayburn offered his compromise on the tidelands issue that spring or I guess in June.

J: Yes.

G: Let me ask you to recall all you can about that and what happened to it, Mr. Johnson's decision on the tidelands.

J: Mr. Johnson supported the state officials who were supporting Texas' state position on the tidelands. Publicly he took that position all along. I think he thought it would be good to seek something that would be part of the cake for both sides. He made some speeches on tidelands, but they were all from the point of view of the state.

G: Why wasn't the compromise adopted, do you know?

J: No, I don't. I don't remember. I guess because Truman wouldn't go for it. Might have been tied up with the gas bill, but I don't think so.

G: Okay. [Allan] Shivers, who was then lieutenant governor, came to Washington that spring and met with Mr. Johnson. Do you recall anything of that visit?

J: I remember seeing him. No. I wasn't in it.

G: Do you think he regarded Shivers as an ally or potential opponent at that point?

J: Well, I think he and Shivers were always considered to be arch enemies,

but they weren't. They were always pretty good friends.

G: Now why do you say that? Just the manner in which they acted together?

J: Well, Shivers always came to see him when he was in Washington. Mr. Johnson always called him when he had anything that involved all the state of Texas. I think they were considered to be enemies because he took control of the state politics away from Shivers in--1948?

G: 1956.

J: Oh, that wasn't until 1956, yes. 1956. Yes.

G: Did Shivers help Johnson before that? We've talked about this period up until then.

J: I don't know whether Shivers ever supported Johnson or not. I doubt it. They were not political allies, but they were personal friends. They never had any knock-down, drag-out arguments or fights that I ever heard of. They had a sort of mutual respect for each other.

G: Yes. Let me ask you about the [Robert] Kerr-[Elmer] Thomas natural gas bill that came up that year. This was I guess in response to the Supreme Court's--first the FPC's ruling on regulation of natural gas.

J: Yes, at the wellhead.

G: Let me ask you to explain Mr. Johnson's position on that and what he did to help the gas bill get through the Senate, what he did to support it.

J: He supported it with everything he had.

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G: Okay.

J: He felt that they're taking Texas gas and selling it in New York, that the fellow who took it out of the ground ought to be able to sell it for whatever he could get for it. And the wisdom of his position is now coming to the fore, now where it's not regulated, the old regulated gas, which is still regulated, is selling in New York for two and a half, and it's selling in Texas for ten dollars. That's all our gas. Because they deregulated new gas, but left the older gas regulated.

G: Do you think he saw this as a regional issue?

J: No, I think he saw it as a national issue, although it certainly involved

Texas very vitally, more than probably anybody else.

G: You know the old populist idea that the South and Southwest were really colonies of the Northeast and resources were not--

J: Were being exploited.

G: Yes. Right.

J: Well, that was somewhat in the background, too.

G: Did he feel that the FPC had exceeded its authority in--?

J: Yes. Nobody ever gave them the authority, they just assumed it. They were never granted legal authority to control the price of gas. They just one morning assumed that authority.

G: Of course, the gas bill sort of dovetails into the Leland Olds appointment, or reappointment to the--

J: Federal Power Commission.

G: Yes. Let me ask you to recall in as much detail as you can that issue and Mr. Johnson's [role]. He headed the subcommittee and conducted the hearings on the Olds nomination.

J: Led the position in the full committee and on the floor.

G: Yes. Let me ask you to recall all you can about Olds. Did he know Olds well at all before?

J: Not real well. He knew him. He never respected him too much.

G: Let me ask you to just describe--first of all, how did he become chairman of the subcommittee? Did he ask for it?

J: Oh, I don't think he asked for it, but I think he was chairman of the natural gas subcommittee of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, and that's the subcommittee the nomination was referred to. But I think he was glad to get it. He and Kerr were very close, and he listened to Kerr a lot. Kerr was a very able, convincing man. I think Kerr convinced him Olds was not the kind of fellow that we wanted to head up, certainly a matter that involved our state and its schools. We did an awful lot of research on Olds. I don't remember all of the things, but I think there was some grave doubt that Olds was--certainly not an old-time patriotic American in the old day sense.

G: Well, did Mr. Johnson ever talk to Olds to try to get him to not exercise as much power on the commission, or at least not--?

J: Well, he talked to Olds. I can't tell you what took place. But every time he talked to Olds he was more committed and more determined to keep him from being confirmed.

G: Really?

J: He was not impressed. Olds was an abrasive sort of a guy. Instead of commanding respect and admiration and a desire to assist him, he commanded just the opposite.

G: Well, Olds had evidently had a somewhat radical past in the thirties.

J: That's right.

G: And had written some stuff for I guess ***New Masses*** or the ***Daily Worker*** or something like that. In reading over the debates and the hearings I really have two different images of LBJ in that. One is someone that really didn't care, that had expressed the attitude that anybody worth his salt in the thirties was a radical and that didn't count, it was how he felt today.

J: I think he felt that Olds still felt that way.

G: Did he try to get Olds to recant some of his radical stuff?

J: Well, he tried. He certainly had the opportunity of doing so. He never did.

G: Of course, the critics have charged that Lyndon Johnson really was sort of using the red scare tactics and witch-hunting tactics to stop someone whose policy on regulation he disagreed with.

J: Well, I sat through the hearings, and they were far different than, say, the [Martin] Dies Committee. He never used that kind of tactics. It might have had the same effect, in a way, but he tried hard to keep it on a judicial level.

G: There was also a suggestion on the other extreme that he conducted the hearings in such a way that kept [Homer] Capehart and others more concerned with this line of questioning, the anti-communist line, from really making as much out of it as they would have liked.

J: I don't remember, but I wouldn't be surprised. I really don't think he felt like that was the issue. I think he felt like it was the capacity for the job that he's been appointed to, that he wasn't really capable. He'd had it for I guess what, two terms or one term?

G: At least.

J: I think two terms, [if] I'm not wrong, and felt like he had not performed it properly. He tried to keep that the issue, whether he was a proper Federal Power commissioner or whether he wasn't. I wouldn't be surprised if that's true. I don't think he wanted to have a witch hunt or anything like that.

G: Well, he did make quite a bit of--

J: Oh, well, he used it a little bit on the floor himself.

G: He did make a lot of use of those articles. And John Lyle did even more I guess.

J: Yes. And he might have fed these other people some of that stuff.

G: Do you think Mr. Johnson might have fed Lyle?

J: Possible.

G: Now Mr. Johnson made a speech during this phase and he described some very high pressure lobbying in favor of Olds and made it sound like the northern utilities were backing Olds.

J: I think they were.

G: He said in a speech that a lawyer, a very prominent lawyer in Washington who was once high in the government, had come to him trying to persuade him to back off of Olds. Do you know who that was?

J: No. I don't think it was Tom Corcoran.

G: Sounded like it could have been.

J: Although Tom Corcoran represented that kind of folks as a lobbyist.

G: Yes. Are you aware of any other, any lobbying by either the utilities or the law firms representing the utilities to support Olds?

J: No, but I know that the utilities were in favor of interstate controls, regulation, and that was all tied in together. The gas bill and Olds, Olds was an outspoken opponent of the gas bill. It was at the same time

or about the same time, I don't know. It almost got to be the same fight.

G: Now, the utilities did take the position that this was a consumer issue and not an issue of the southern or southwestern gas interests versus the northern utilities interests.

J: Well, they took the position that the consumer was going to have lower prices if there were controls. Mr. Johnson took the position that over the long haul they wouldn't, and I think he's proved right. It's a competitive--they're now paying substantially more than they might have paid had these competitive activities gone on their own.

G: Did Mr. Johnson ever have any problems with Senator Kerr leading the fight for the gas bill, and he himself was--?

J: I never heard him express it. There were others that did, but Kerr was so clear. He never made any bones about it. He said he was a gas man and he knew a lot about gas and as a result he was qualified to speak on this subject better than any other subject. He never dodged the fact that there might have been a--what's the word--[conflict of interest].

G: I'm told he didn't even take off his Kerr-McGee Oil pin.

J: I don't remember, but I'm sure he didn't.

G: Now on Olds, weren't there other appointments to the FPC, other reasonably liberal people whose nomination or terms expired about the same time? Do you recall any of the others that were voted on?

J: Cain, but Cain took Olds' place, didn't he?

G: Well, let's see. How about [Mon] Wallgren? I guess he was off by then, wasn't he?

J: Wallgren was one. Harry Cain was one. I don't remember. They weren't controversial at any rate. One of them took Cain's place as the next commissioner.

G: Do you think that Johnson's stance on Leland Olds hurt him with the liberals in later years?

J: Probably.

G: Did it help him at all with the oil and gas interests here in Texas?

J: I don't know. They never supported him. They wanted to own you, and they knew they never owned him.

G: Who did he rely on to help prepare his speech and arguments and position on that whole Olds thing? Do you recall any expertise that he leaned on?

J: I don't know. I don't remember anybody. Maybe--I don't remember. I don't think it was Booth Mooney either.

G: One of the arguments I think he raised had to do with the fact that the rural co-operatives didn't seem to be that supportive of Olds. Do you remember that? And all of the people that came forward to testify.

J: There weren't any co-op people.

G: Yes.

J: No, I don't remember, but I'm sure that he would have used that, because that would have given him some out.

G: Did he get any flak from the co-op people that you recall?

J: I don't remember any.

G: Anything else on Olds that you recall?

J: I guess not.

G: What about the White House? Did Truman at all try to persuade him to--?

J: I'm sure he did. I remember hearing Mr. Rayburn, not on Olds but on the gas bill, saying he went down to the White House and told Mr. Truman, "You told me that you would sign this bill and I told some other people. Now that you're not going to sign it, I couldn't tell them you lied, so I just told them I lied."

G: Amazing. Well, I think that--

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview IX]

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of

WALTER JENKINS

BROMBERG b6

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Beth Jenkins, of ~~Austin~~ DALLAS, Texas, Executrix b6 of the Estate of Walter Jenkins, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted with my father, Walter Jenkins, on August 14, 1970, August 24, 1971, September 23, 1976, May 13, August 12 and September 16, 1982, January 18, July 22, September 22 and October 6, 1983, and on April 18, April 25, July 12, July 19, and August 30, 1984, in Austin, Texas, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of Walter Jenkins

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