INTERVIEW I

DATE: September 8, 1970

INTERVIEWEE: PAUL B. JOHNSON JR.

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

PLACE: Governor Johnson's home, Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Tape 1 of 2

B: This is an interview with Paul B. Johnson, Jr., the former governor of Mississippi.

Sir, a brief bit of your background. You are the son of former Governor Paul B. Johnson, Sr., also of Hattiesburg, and also governor of Mississippi. In 1940 you graduated from the University of Mississippi; [and you] served in the Marine Corps during World War II. In the years after the war you were assistant attorney general for the Southern District of Mississippi, headquartered here in Hattiesburg, I believe.

J: That's right.

B: Then from 1960-64 you were lieutenant governor of Mississippi, and from 1964 to 1968 governor of the state.

J: That's correct.

B: Now, sir, do you recall when you first had any knowledge of Lyndon Johnson, either became acquainted with him or knew of him?

J: Well, I knew of President Johnson when he first went to Congress, but that was more or less through newspapers, periodicals, and through some television.

B: Did your father have any contact with him or knowledge of him?

I know your father was in the Congress.

J: My father had knowledge of him. My father and Sam Rayburn went to Congress the same year. And he knew Lyndon Johnson. However, I don't think that he had any dealings with him at all.

B: Do you know if Congressman Johnson or Senator Johnson ever came to Mississippi in connection with Senator Eastland or Senator Stennis, who were acquaintances of his?

J: I don't know that. I'm not sure.

B: Did you form an opinion of Mr. Johnson in those days?

J: I did have an opinion of him. I knew that Lyndon Johnson was very close to President Roosevelt, and that he served President Roosevelt every way that he could in assisting him in getting through programs and trying to emulate him as much as he could. He thought an awful lot of President Roosevelt. So far as I know, I don't think that friendship ever ended.

B: Did you see any signs in those days of ambition for higher office in Mr. Johnson?

J: Yes. You could see that all the time. He was making statements that were beneficial to him politically constantly.

B: In those days, say as late as the 1950s, it was just, I guess, a common, accepted political idea that a southerner could not be president or could not really go very high.

J: Well, this was, of course, what they always talked. I never did believe that, because I knew that there was too much, actually, knowledge here in the South, and too many people lived in the

South that were real leaders in this country and who contributed a great deal to it. I could not at that time see any real hate for the South, or for the southern people, from some other parts of the country, as I know is prevalent in the present time.

B: Did you think of Lyndon Johnson in those days as a southerner or as a westerner?

J: We thought of Lyndon Johnson more or less as a westerner. He was not considered a southerner at all, only in the operation, say, of the Civil War, of Texas having been a part of it, and having been brought in [with] North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and all the other states.

B: As far as politics went, people like yourself active in real southern politics thought of him as being a westerner?

J: He was sort of a westerner.

B: Was there any dismay when he did things like get the 1957 Civil Rights Bill through the Senate?

J: Yes. There was tremendous dismay. A lot of people were disappointed. I was very disappointed with the manner in which it was handled. And I was really disappointed, because the man had always been on the opposite side of the coin. As a matter of fact, he had been a man who had kept the civil rights bill from being passed. He led the fight in the Senate to prohibit them passing this bill. And, of course, he was the one that did get in and take advantage, to some extent, of the bad times that they had in Selma, Alabama and in through there.

B: Of course that comes after the 1957 bill.

J: Yes. It was later on. I also have references to the later civil rights bill that he put through Congress.

B: Are you implying there that he was acting out of political expediency?

J: Yes, sir. I think he was.

B: Even as early as 1957?

J: Yes.

B: Did you or any other leading southerners or people in Mississippi get in touch with Senator Johnson at the time of the 1957 bill?

J: I'm sure that some did. I know that I did not.

B: What was your reaction, then, to the Democratic ticket in 1960?

J: Well, I was a bit surprised. I thought that Lyndon Johnson would either take the presidency or not take anything at all. I was surprised, really, that he took the way out that he did. Of course, Mississippi was against Johnson.

B: Were you at the convention, sir?

J: Worlds of our people, of course, were for him, and I was not fighting him myself. I would have liked to have seen him get the nomination. But of course, as I understood it, there was a tremendous fight on at the convention, and Governor Barnett at that time was very much opposed to Lyndon Johnson. He was leading the delegation there. Senator Eastland and Senator Stennis

were favorable toward Johnson, but they were also favorable toward Johnson to try to get him to take this vice presidency. They were actually doing a great deal of work for Kennedy. I think that the position that was taken then caused President Johnson to lose a great deal of not only support, but a great deal of confidence, and to say to himself or to others, which I know that he did, "Well, if I can't carry Mississippi,there's no need in me staying in this thing."

B: He meant carry Mississippi for the nomination?

J: Yes, sir. That was a tremendous hurt to him, losing the state of Mississippi, because there were contacts that Mississippi had with a lot of other states that they could have brought into the play, and they would have gone along with him.

B: Were you at the convention, sir?

J: No, I was not.

B: Do you know, in retrospect, why Governor Barnett did not favor Senator Johnson's nomination?

J: Yes. Governor Barnett was very much against Lyndon Johnson because Lyndon Johnson was the vice president when the Ole Miss incident came up.

B: Well, we're talking about the 1960 convention.

J: Well, at that time Governor Barnett had opposed Lyndon Johnson because of his civil rights activities, and because by then it had become known all over the country that Johnson had more or less jumped the traces and was helping get the civil rights bill

through.

B: Yes, that was the 1960 Civil Rights Bill that was pending in Congress?

J: That's correct.

B: Did that put you in kind of an awkward position when the campaign went on, then?

J: No, it didn't. Because I didn't take any part in the convention, nor did I take any part in the campaign to any extent.

B: Were you asked to by the Kennedy-Johnson people?

J: No, I was not, sure wasn't.

B: Did you see anything at all of Mr. Johnson while he was vice president?

J: No, I didn't see President Johnson at all while he was vice president.

B: He was head of various civil rights committees for President Kennedy. Did any of that activity affect what went on here in Mississippi?

J: Some of it affected what went on in Mississippi, but he did not lead any delegations or any committees into the state, or hold any hearings at that time.

B: In Mississippi during those years, the years of the Meredith thing and all the rest that happened, was there ever any thought of people like yourself or Governor Barnett or Senator Eastland or Stennis going to Lyndon Johnson and asking him to mediate with the Kennedys, or anything like that?

J: No. We didn't even consider it. I think mainly because, as far

as the people down here could see, President Johnson was to some extent relegated to the background. The Kennedys wanted either to do all of it or none of it in anything that was done while Robert Kennedy was there as attorney general and President Kennedy was serving as president.

B: Did you ever get the impression that the Kennedys just didn't like Lyndon Johnson and had just deliberately shoved him in the back seat?

J: No. I didn't actually think that. I knew that Robert Kennedy was not too cooperative with President Johnson, and I knew that President Johnson didn't feel too kindly toward Robert Kennedy. And then Robert Kennedy appeared to be a person who had never tried a lawsuit, but who always seemed to know more than anyone else as far as he was concerned. He projected himself into any argument that came up. He was a part of an issue any time an issue came before the public. He always managed to get in there somewhere, either pro or con.

B: Are you implying that there was some ambition there, too--that he had goals?

J: Yes. You could see that Robert Kennedy was quite ambitious, that he was too ambitious for his knowledge and for his years and for his experience.

B: What were some of the other people in the Justice Department in those days like? Burke Marshall, for example? Did you ever meet him or have any dealings with him?

J: Yes. I knew Burke Marshall, and I thought that he was a very

knowledgeable person. He was quite learned in the law. I found him to be a fairly stable force while he was there in the Justice Department. I could say that also of "Whizzer" White. He was a very knowledgeable person. He was always very calm and collected in his thoughts and his actions, and he seemed to see both sides of the coin. He had his own feelings and his own ideas about things, but he always listened to the other people's side. He never seemed to get out of sorts with people.

B. What about John Doar?

J: I had a great deal of dealings with John Doar. I found him to be not the opposite, but he did get very upset. He was a quite opinionated young fellow, and he did not seem to have control of a situation at any time that, really, he needed to have all of his marbles lined up. John Doar was a young man that had an awful lot of nerve. By that I mean he was to some extent quite courageous, and I think that he helped to save what could have been a bad situation there at Ole Miss. In the years that followed, when I served as governor, he was of course active down here. I always found him to be a very courageous type person and very conscientious about his work. I didn't see very much legal ability about him.

B: Did you have dealings with him as early as the voter registration suit here in Forrest County?

J: No. No, I didn't have any.

B: At Ole Miss, the Meredith enrollment was first?

J: That was more or less the first time that I dealt with him.

B: Sir, you were lieutenant governor when James Meredith enrolled in Ole Miss during the fall of 1962 and, as such, were pretty much on the scene as Governor Barnett's representative, were you not, most of the time?

J: Yes.

B: You told me before we turned this tape on that the Mississippi Department of Archives and History has a record of those events.

J: They have a record of those events. They have the pictures that were taken that night, and, really, a pictorial history of everything that did happen. There are some things that are not in that record that actually did take place. For instance, under the order of Robert Kennedy there were 155 mm. guns, cannons, that were set up and emplacements dug for them. They were set up at Abbeville, Mississippi, a very few miles from the University of Mississippi. They were emplaced there for the idea, actually, because it was not a threat. Because no one knew about them at the time until everything was over. But they were put there in order to shoot that place apart.

B: "That place" meaning the University of Mississippi?

J: The University of Mississippi.

B: Did you obtain at the same time some kind of proof of the emplacement of the howitzers?

J: Yes. We had several highway patrolmen that were sent up there that saw the emplacements.

B: After you found out about that, after it was all over I assume, did you ask the Attorney General what they had been there for?

J: Oh, no. I didn't talk to Robert Kennedy except one time during the fracas at Ole Miss. The only time I talked to him was on the Friday evening when they were going to send Meredith into the campus. Barnett had come up to help me and to see that Meredith did not come onto the campus. When we got up there, a tremendous number of people or students had crowded into the intersection there on the main street that leads from the Oxford campus. And I went up there to the intersection with them, with all the crowd, and we were trying to get the crowd away.

We sent loudspeakers up to ask all the children, the young people to go back to the campus and to stay away. At the time that I was going up there with this loudspeaker asking them to get away I saw a world of farmers, lots of farmers and people from out in the rural districts, and some from districts other than Lafayette County where Ole Miss is. [They] had come there [and] had rifles in their possession, had them loaded, had them in the car with them, and someone, we were afraid, was going to kill this boy Meredith or some of the marshals or anyone that happened to be around. It was a very tense situation.

So I told Governor Barnett that we ought to get back to the campus as quickly as we could and call Robert Kennedy and tell him that if he had contact with the plane that was then in the air with Meredith to stop them, or else there would be a terrible

killing that would take place. So we called Robert Kennedy at that time, and the Governor talked to him and told him exactly what the situation was and asked him not to let the boy try to come on the campus at that time. The Attorney General asked to speak to me, and I spoke to him on the telephone. I told him that there would be blood on his hands, because we were giving him prior knowledge that that was the situation that existed at the time. He turned the plane around. He got in touch with them, and they did not present themselves at that time.

B: Did he seem shocked or resentful at the information you gave him?

J: No, he didn't. He acted for a moment on the phone as though maybe he didn't believe me. And, of course, I told him at that time that if he had any doubts whatsoever that there were plenty of FBI people all over the town and all he had to do was get in touch with them, that they could verify everything that I had told him.

B: At the time, and since, there was a suggestion that someone in Jackson--it was usually phrased that way--was deliberately encouraging people like the men you described to come to Oxford. Did you have any knowledge of such?

J: Well, there were a great many people at that time, who were in the Citizens Council, that were encouraging these people to come. The Citizens Councils at that time were all in the South. There were a lot of women in Florida who were members of Citizens Council who called and wanted to come up. We tried to keep them

away, and did keep them away. A lot of people wanted to create a wall of flesh, so to speak, believing that the marshals would not run over the women, anything like that. Of course that did not happen, but I do know that there were people in Jackson and people in other parts of the state who were encouraging everyone to go to Oxford.

B: Who were Governor Barnett's main advisors at the time?

J: The Governor's advisors were George Godwin, of Godwin Advertising Company in Jackson; Bill Simmons, who was the head of the Citizens Council at that time; George Yarbrough, who was president pro-tem of the Senate; and John McClellan of Brandon, Mississippi. He was in the Senate at that time, and he was a good friend of Governor Barnett's. He was an advisor. There were two or three or four others that advised with him. And that was my objection, that there were too many advisors and too many people who had something to gain and very little to lose.

B: Well, you've anticipated my next question. At the time, it seemed to a great many that Governor Barnett might have been getting and acting upon conflicting advice.

J: Well, I think to some extent he was. I think that he was.

B: Would you classify yourself, then, as one of the Governor's principal advisors at the time?

J: No, I was not a principal advisor. I tried to tell him anything that I knew; but I was not considered a close advisor, so to speak.

B: Were there any voices of moderation close to the Governor?

J: Yes, there were. There were some voices of moderation that were involved in it, but they seemed to be in the minority.

B: Who were some of them, sir?

J: Well, Tom Hederman, who was editor of the Clarion-Ledger, a newspaper there in Jackson. He was one. It may surprise you some, but Judge Tom Brady was also a voice of moderation to some extent.

B: There are a lot of people who would be surprised that Tom Hederman was a voice of moderation, too, I think.

J: Yes. But Tom Watkins, a lawyer in Jackson, was also a voice of moderation.

B: Mr. Watkins was apparently a kind of conduit to the Justice Department, too.

J: Yes, that is true. That, of course, was arranged, as you know, through Senator Eastland.

B: Oh, I did not know Senator Eastland--I was under the impression that Mr. Watkins was a classmate of someone high in the Justice Department. But Senator Eastland arranged to have that chain of communication opened?

J: He evidently did, because he was close in his work with Robert Kennedy, and Senator Eastland was chairman of the Judiciary Committee there in the Senate that had the Justice Department and others come under that. Dan Shell is probably who you were thinking about. I got Dan Shell to go up to Washington while I was governor and take up matters with Katzenbach. He and

Katzenbach were fairly close friends, but I don't know that he went to school with him.

B: Is Mr. Shell an attorney here in Mississippi?

J: He's an attorney there in Jackson. He and I were in school together.

B: So would you classify yourself as a voice of moderation at the time of the Meredith crisis?

J: Well, it depends on what was moderation. Actually, I felt that Meredith should not be permitted to go to school. If he had been a white person he still would have been denied admittance to the school. As you know, the District Federal Judge had heard the matter three times and had decided on every count that the boy absolutely was not qualified to attend school at Ole Miss, at least to pass the requirements that were made of him. The Board of Trustees of Higher Learning, after a considerable time of interview, of going over his grades, determined that he was not qualified. If it had been any other Negro who was qualified I honestly believed that that Board of Trustees would have given him the okay. I was against him coming on the campus. The violence and bloodshed, the determination for fighting, I did not see that unless it was forced on me. So I don't know whether I was a voice of moderation or not.

B: It's hard to know what those words mean in that context. Was there ever any thought in the Mississippi state government of sort of taking the initiative in integration at Ole Miss rather

than waiting for just anyone, any black man to apply?

J: No, there was not. There was not. As you know, black people had attended Ole Miss before, before Meredith did. They had had two or three who were there, one of them in law school. But they were people who had more or less crossed the color line, so to speak, and no one had paid any particular attention to them. Being the governor of the state means that you are representing the thinking of your people. It may be political, and it may not, but you have to listen to the majority will of the people as it's expressed. At that time it was expressed against integration of any type.

B: You were on the campus that Sunday night?

J: Yes.

B: The Sunday night of the violence?

J: Yes, yes. I was sent up to the campus by Governor Barnett about seven o'clock at night, and I arrived there at about eight-thirty or nine o'clock.

B: Where were you physically most of that time, sir? That would have been right at the peak of the rioting, I believe.

J: Yes. I was all over the campus.

B: Trying to calm things down?

J: Yes. The main thing I was trying to do was to calm down the state highway patrol. They had been, to some extent, greatly mistreated. The soldiers there had more or less gone against their word of the people who were representing the federal government. And when

the tear gas was shot, the federal people actually shot the highway patrolmen in the back, because all the highway patrolmen had their backs to the marshals and were holding back the crowd of people who wanted to take the marshals. They felt that this was a pretty dirty way for them to do. No one seems to really know who gave the order. The word that I get is that it was McShane.

B: The chief of the marshals?

J: The chief of the marshals. He said at the time that it was not him, but most of them think that it was. No one seems to know where the order came from.

B: Well, they also said at the time that although the tear gas did hit the highway patrol, it wasn't aimed deliberately at them. They just happened to be in between. They were in between the marshals and the students.

J: Yes. Well, all they had to do was either shoot the ground or shoot right over their heads.

B: There was also some confusion at the time, and controversy since, about who ordered the highway patrol to move out. Because even before the tear gas set fire, some of the highway patrolmen had withdrawn.

J: The highway patrol did not have with them their gas masks, and most all of the patrolmen had left. They had left the scene of the tear gas because they couldn't stand it. They had gone on down to the gymnasium that was about two hundred and fifty yards from the Lyceum Building. They had more or less rendezvoused at

the gymnasium, and after that they went from there out to Highway 6 and had another rendezvous. Colonel Birdsong was talking to them about not going back on the campus and taking the marshals, which they easily could have done.

B: By taking the marshals, you mean the highway patrolmen were considering going back and removing the marshals?

J: Yes. Removing the marshals from the campus.

B: That is individual highway patrolmen, not the highway patrol as an official agency.

J: That's correct. But there was great feeling among the highway patrol that, "Well, if we're going to handle this thing as quietly as it's been handled and have these people come in there and violate their word with us and actually shoot one of our men," which they did--

B: You mean with the tear gas?

J: Yes, and they had taken him to the hospital in Jackson, as you know. He came close to dying. But they were only about twelve or fifteen feet from the marshals.

B: And you and Colonel Birdsong managed to quiet down the highway patrol?

J: Quiet them down, yes. We put them back on the outskirts. Colonel Birdsong and myself went to the Lyceum Building and talked with John Doar and Nicholas Katzenbach and another gentleman who was there with them, whose name escapes me right now.

B: Would it have been Ed Guthman, the publicity man?

J: Ed Guthman is who it was. We talked to them about the situation and told them that any way that we could help we wanted to help; that we didn't have the tear gas masks, that if they could let us have some the patrolmen would get in and help them there; but that we really believed that the best way to help them was for us to put highway patrolmen at every exit and every means of ingress and egress to the property.

B: This was for fear of the outsiders who were beginning to gather?

J: To keep the outsiders from coming in.

B: By outsiders, I mean non-students and non-residents of Oxford, the folks who were beginning to come around.

J: That's right. People from all over the state. A big bus load, say, from Pascagoula. They were heavily armed. They had tear gas and grenades and everything under the sun. There were deer hunters with rifles, all that sort of thing, and they wouldn't have had a prayer. There was no way to control the crowd because the crowd was scattered over, oh, probably a thousand acres. You could not make yourself heard nor your wishes known. The marshals had created real turmoil because they had actually shot into the girls' dormitories and had run the girls out of the dormitories.

B: By shot, you mean again with tear gas?

J: Tear gas, yes.

B: During all this, before it reached that crisis point, did the people of the Mississippi state government think that the federals

would not use troops?

J: Yes, we saw no reason for them having to use troops. As a matter of fact, you could have taken a battalion of soldiers and put the boy on the campus. Actually, it was not that much, but it would not have been as big a show. Robert Kennedy seemed determined that there would be a big show about the thing. Therefore, he ordered troops from all over the United States, not all over the United States, but from New Jersey and from Kentucky and out of Memphis and out of Fort Polk and places of that type. He actually had our National Guard in there. He had National Guards of other states in there, and he was asked not to send any colored troops in there for fear of causing a great upheaval.

B: Asked by Governor Barnett?

J: Yes. But he didn't pay any attention. As a matter of fact, from Kentucky he sent to Memphis and on down to Oxford colored troops, tremendous numbers of them. This was more or less a show, politically, also.

B: Is there anything else about that event that should be on a record of this kind that you think is not on the record somewhere, sir?

J: There's one thing that ought to be on the record that is not on the record. That is, while I was talking to Robert Kennedy I asked him why they couldn't have a holding spell, and both sides to back off for about a week to let people calm down, and then make their determination about the thing. He said, "No. We're going to put the nigger in Ole Miss." And he didn't say "the

colored man" or anybody else. He said, "We're going to put the nigger in Ole Miss." I said, "Well, why do you have to do this? There's nothing proved by putting him in, because this university's going to take Negroes a little later on." He said, "They're going to take them now, and I'll have you know that I didn't send the damn nigger down there." Those are the exact words. Of course, the man is dead and gone now, but that is actually what happened. That's the way the man felt about it, I knew. In public he's real kind, real thoughtful. He was overzealous about a Negro. But at a private party, or at his home, or at his compound at Hyannis Port he didn't have them and they didn't come in his presence. They weren't around him, and he didn't buddy-buddy with them.

B: This is out of the chronology, but it's related to this. One of the first things you did after you became governor in 1964, I believe, was go to New York to talk to the officials of the television networks about what could be done to improve Mississippi's image. Was that a profitable trip?

J: Yes, the trip is probably the best thing that I did while I was governor. I was received very cordially. They were very understanding. They heard everything I had to say.

B: Did you speak to the top people, the presidents of the networks?

J: Talked to all the top people.

B: And did you talk to the newscasters too?

J: Yes.

B: People like Cronkite and Huntley and Brinkley and all the rest?

J: Yes. Yes, and Frank McGee and all of the bunch. But I went in and told them that I was there to answer any questions that they had about Ole Miss or about the state of Mississippi. I guess for hours I talked with all these different people, the publisher of The Wall Street Journal, the publisher of Newsweek, the publisher of Time, Life, all these magazines. I spent three or four or five days there doing nothing in the world but going from one to the other.

B: Did you see results?

J: Yes. I sure did.

B: You think Mississippi got a fairer shake in the news?

J: It got a much fairer shake, and then, too, a lot of the things that I told these people about, they didn't take their local representatives' statements. They sent people from the headquarters to cover it themselves so that they could see. For instance, right here in Hattiesburg they came over to one of the schools in the western part of the city and took pictures of the closed doors of the school and said, "These doors are closed, see, to the Negro," and so on. They made a big to-do about it. Actually it was Sunday. There was no one around the school. Every other school door in the United States was closed that day, but it gave an impression to the people of this country that we just absolutely closed the doors to everyone.

B: To get back into the chronology, sir, what was your reaction to

the assassination of President Kennedy and the accession of Mr. Johnson to the presidency?

J: One other thing before we go further. Another thing that would be of great interest is, the reason I went to New York to have this interview with these people to try to correct this image was because a history professor at the University of Mississippi had written a book called The Closed Society. He stated many things in that history that were not true of Mississippi. When he first came to Mississippi I knew him as a student at Ole Miss, and he felt the same way as most anyone over the country. In the period that he was there at Ole Miss he was given every opportunity to do anything that he wanted to do. He was accepted in society of the school. There was in his opinion a closed society so far as the upper class of people and the lower class of people were concerned, and this is what he was trying to get over to the American people. But he overplayed his coverage, or his writing, on this thing.

B: That's Professor James Silver?

J: James Silver.

B: Did you actually have a class under him while you were at the University?

J: No, I did not. But I do know how he felt because I was around him a good bit, and he was a pretty good history professor. I had no quarrel with him anywhere.

B: Did you see him any after he made the speech and published the

book, The Closed Society?

J: No, I didn't. I sure didn't. He wrote also an autobiography of James Moore who left his diary from the Civil War. James Moore was a distant cousin of my wife's, and my wife's people made arrangements with him to write this book and to put it on the market with no compensation whatsoever. We had been good friends. As a matter of fact, I consider myself to be a good friend of his today, although I don't agree on just worlds of things that he has written.

B: You know, there was talk at the time in Mississippi of firing Professor Silver from the University which would have created all kinds of ruckus. Were you by any chance instrumental in preventing the actual firing?

J: No. No, I wasn't. I didn't take any part really in the thing. It was more or less infighting that took place on the board of trustees. They were encouraged to some extent by members of the legislature.

B: Then, sir, to get back into the chronology as I said a moment ago, what was your reaction when President Kennedy was assassinated and Mr. Johnson became president?

J: Well, like everyone else, I was stunned by the news. I had been elected governor and had not taken office really, and word came that this shooting had taken place but that the President was getting along fairly well. They thought he would recover. I went down to a meeting in the Heidelberg Hotel at that time. I

don't recall what the meeting was, but there was a tremendous crowd there. Of course, I asked all of them to have a silent prayer for the President and to pray for his recovery. I guess as soon as the prayer was finished the word came that President Kennedy had died. The way I first heard about it was Ed Newman came on the television, and his first statement was, "The right wing people of Texas have killed President Kennedy." These were his exact words.

B: Sir, I have to ask this because there was talk about it at the time. On that day when the word came that President Kennedy had been killed did you see any signs of people who did not mourn, or, in fact, rejoiced?

J: No, I didn't see any of this. There was some talk in the state that in some of the schools that some of the children had rejoiced. It's hard for me to believe that, unless they were encouraged to do so by some irresponsible person.

B: I believe you told me before the tape, before we started the interview here, that Mrs. Kennedy invited you to the funeral?

J: Yes.

B: Which I believe was a little unusual.

J: That was of Robert Kennedy.

B: Oh, that was of Robert Kennedy, not of John Kennedy. Oh, I see.

Sir, at that time, when Lyndon Johnson became president, was there any thought among people in positions like yours that perhaps things would ease up in civil rights now that a southerner was

president?

J: No, I don't recall that there was. People were probably a little more fearful. They were fearful because they knew that Lyndon Johnson was probably a hundred times smarter than Jack Kennedy was. Smarter from the standpoint of being able to manipulate and to handle the Congress and knowing the committeemen and having done favors for committeemen for many, many years. They knew that he was about as strong a man as there was in the country insofar as being able to get legislation through. They felt, those who were in office, to some extent that the President would not push this thing. By this thing I meant the ultraliberal attitude that seemed to be on the part of John Kennedy and on the part of some of the others. They thought that President Johnson would more or less kind of relax and let the thing die down to some extent. That was more or less the feeling of the people at that time.

B: But, of course, I guess almost immediately it became apparent that that wouldn't happen.

J: Yes. It surely did.

B: Did you have any direct contact with Mr. Johnson there in late 1963 or early 1964? Did he contact you as a brand new governor or in connection with the civil rights bill that was passed that spring?

J: Well, he contacted me a short while after he became president. He just called me on the telephone at my home and told me that he wanted to work with me, that he thought that he had a good program, and that he would appreciate very much my coming by to see him,

talking with him when I came to Washington. He [said he] did not know as much about the governors or the responsibilities that were on them, their experience that they had in the operation of state government [as he should]. He had not held that office, and for that reason he did not put as much emphasis on the governors of the country, or at least give as much credulity to the governors as he did to the senators and congressmen whom he knew andwhom he had been associated with and among whom he had worked. I think this was to some extent a great downfall of Lyndon Johnson, that he did not really understand the tremendous influence that a governor exerts in his state.

B: This call to you, sir, was it prompted by anything in particular, or did it just appear?

J: The call?

B: Yes, sir. The one you just described.

J: Yes, it was more or less out of the blue. But he did that quite often.

B: Yes. Many people have said that.

J: A lot of times he called to talk about the weather, to talk about the crops.

B: He called you at times to do that?

J: Yes, [to] talk about the crops in Mississippi and matters of the economy.

B: Just whether there was anything he wanted you to do or not? How about that? I was wondering if you had gotten any specific reaction from him to your inaugural address, which at the time

was praised pretty much throughout the country?

J: Yes, this was when I got the call from him, not too long after the inaugural address was made.

B: Then, sir, came that summer of 1964, which involved simultaneously the Mississippi Project of the Congress of Federated Organizations, the racial groups, and the Democratic Convention, and which ended up with the deaths of the three young men in Philadelphia near here.

J: That's correct.

B: (Interruption). We were talking about the summer of 1964. The tape had been off here for just a moment. Did you know who was behind the Mississippi Project, who originated the idea?

J: No, I didn't. I had a lot of people who suggested various ones, but we never did know actually who was behind it.

B: Do you think it was someone other than the people who were publicly associated with it, like Bob Moses and Aaron Henry?

J: Yes, yes. There was Moses. There were several people who were in here that we knew about, had dossiers on all of them. As a matter of fact, when we heard that they were going to set up the Freedom Houses, start the program, I sent some Negroes from Mississippi up to Oxford, Ohio. At that time they were working on the project. They were training a lot of people. I had these people to act as informers and to get the entire story, to go through the training and to return to Mississippi.

B: Excuse me, to make this clear. These were people who were working

for you or the highway patrol or someone.

J: They were working for me out of the Governor's Office.

B: And at the training camp in Ohio they did not know that they were agents of yours.

J: No, they did not know it. Because I had them to get this information, come down here, return to Mississippi and to work among these people. Through these people and some others who worked out of the Governor's Office we knew where every Freedom House was located. We had a person in every Freedom House to tell us what went on so that we could stay two or three jumps ahead of all these people and know when these things would be done and where they would be done and how they were to be accomplished. By doing it this way we were able to head off an awful lot of very explosive type operations that they were putting on.

B: Were your people ever detected?

J: No.

B: I was just getting ready to ask you what could have happened that summer that did not. I gather you managed to avoid a number of confrontations.

J: Just a many a confrontation.

B: Did you also have people working on the other side with the local folks and the white people to keep them calm?

J: Yes.

B: Then the murders in Neshoba County must have come as a considerable shock to you.

J: It was quite a shock to us that this happened. However, we were kind of expecting it to some extent.

B: You mean something of that sort?

J: Something of that sort.

B: Or specifically something in Neshoba County?

J: No. Not in Neshoba County. You see, this happened right after the Civil War, the same type of rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Basically it was a good project after the Civil War, and those who were in control of it seemed to lose control. In other words, as long as you had the better class of people in it they were able to do a lot of things that were a big help to the state of Mississippi. But the rabble-rousers and the troublemakers more or less took control, and Governor Stone was serving in Mississippi at that time, approximately a hundred years before I took office. I read a great deal of his papers, his messages, and studied a lot of the action that he took, and it was a great help to me. The same counties that Governor Stone had trouble with a hundred years before that are the same counties that I had trouble with in Mississippi. [These] had from one to four klaverns organized in them, counties like Jones and Grenada and Adams over at Natchez, Woodville, that's Wilkinson County, some parts of Amite and Pike and Clay.

B: Did you have infiltration in the Klan before the events in Philadelphia?

J: We had infiltration in the Klan in a lot of the klaverns. We were just getting started when this thing over at Neshoba happened. Had

it been three months later we would have had all the information on it. No one else had them infiltrated. Director Hoover came down and set up an office at Jackson, Mississippi. He gave me a list of eighty or ninety names that they had, and I furnished them with approximately eleven hundred names. We had not infiltrated them properly, nor had the FBI. Later on we were able to really concentrate on these things in order to head off situations just like happened in Neshoba County.

B: Did you hear anything from Lyndon Johnson at that time? For example, it's pretty well known that it was President Johnson who sent Director Hoover down to talk to you that July.

J: Yes.

B: Did you hear anything from Mr. Johnson directly?

J: No. The only thing that I heard from President Johnson was that he was going to send some troops; he was going to activate some troops to come in and to help search for the bodies. I told him at the time [what was] the best thing to do. It was in a tremendously wooded area. It was up in the headwaters of the Pearl River that came down through that county. [There were] boys in the National Guard who had been reared up in that area, had hunted and fished and done everything else through that area and really knew that area very well. I [told the President I] would make available those National Guardsmen if they would like to have them. If not, that I'd send the entire Guard up there. He thanked me for it, but he didn't say whether he would or would not call upon

it. I went ahead and sent them up there, and I was actually surprised that he activated the Naval forces that were there near Meridian to come over and to search for the bodies. Because they actually didn't know where they were, let alone anything about the country itself.

B: Did the state officials and the FBI cooperate pretty well in the search, in the hunt?

J: There was no hitch anywhere insofar as the work of the highway patrol and the FBI. They had orders from me to cooperate and to work to try to find these boys and try to determine who did it. Director Hoover had given the same instructions to the FBI. So they worked all right together.

B: Later on was there any pressure brought to bear on you to see if state charges could be filed against the people that were accused of [the killings]?

J: Yes. A great deal of pressure was brought by members of the FBI.

B: Including Mr. Hoover himself?

J: On, no. No. His representatives and some people out of Atlanta who had come in to help. A fellow named Sullivan, I believe. But they met with me at the mansion one night and tried to work this out. One reason that they came to me was because they had hit a stone wall, and they had wanted me to have the state arrest these people because they wanted to put pressure on these people to talk. I told them that we did not have a case that would stand up, that there was no sense in making the arrest unless the case would hold.

B: They wanted the state to charge them with murder?

J: Yes. And they had actually no proof whatsoever. None. I told them it would be laughed out of the country. Actually, what they were trying to do, they were trying to put pressure to get the klansmen to talk among each other as to who would be the next to be picked up. They thought it would force some of those klansmen to come to them and give them the information as to what happened. I was not going to be used as a pawn. I wanted the people convicted just as well as anyone else did.

B: Sir, this may not be a fair question or even an ethical one, but did you have any doubts yourself about the guilts within this group that was charged, or were you just thinking as an attorney that it was better not to go with a bad case?

J: I was saying this strictly as an attorney.

B: You didn't have any serious doubt that the FBI was on the right track?

J: No. I knew they were on the right track. Actually, one thing that is not known to the people anywhere in this country is that these klansmen--of course I knew them very well; most of them had supported me when I ran for governor, [and] I was very reluctant in feeling insofar as pressure--did not actually intend to kill these people. What happened was that they had been taken from the jail and brought to this particular spot. There were a good many people in the group besides the sheriff and deputy sheriff and that group. What they were going to do, they were going to hang these three persons up in a big cotton sack and leave them

hanging in the tree for about a day or a day and a half, then come out there at night and turn them loose. They thought that they'd more or less scare them off. While they were talking this Negro, the Negro boy from over at Meridian, he seemed to be the ringleader of the three--

B: That would be [James Chaney]?

J: Yes. He was acting kind of smart aleck and talking pretty big, and one of the klansmen walked up behind him and hit him over the head with a trace chain that you use, you know, plowing and that sort of thing. And the end of the trace chain, as you know, has a buck head on the end of it that is about that large.

B: Two or three inches long.

J: Yes. The chain came across his head and hit him just above the bridge of the nose and killed him as dead as a nit. After this boy had been killed, then is when they determined, "Well, we've got to dispose of the other two." So that's actually the . . .

B: I don't believe that story came out at the trial. Did you hear about this later or--

J: Very, very few people know.

B: --from the people at the time?

J: Well, yes, at the time.

B: Did you feel during that time that there was considerable pressure from the administration to find the people and convict them that had done this?

J: Yes. There was great pressure. But, of course, the pressure was unnecessary. The people locally wanted to do that anyway. You had lots of sympathizers, people who felt that perhaps they shouldn't be punished too much. But there was no need of any pressure anywhere, because we were determined that the law was going to be enforced.

B: One gets the impression that the Klan was pretty well broken up, or subdued, or something or other in the years after that. Is that the work of your governorship and the highway patrol?

J: Yes. You see, we had never had any trained highway patrolmen in Mississippi. And the Director of the FBI told me that he would take five men from the patrol every year, every six months really, and train them there in the Academy. We selected five and sent them to every school. So before long we had about thirty or forty well trained investigators, and we took these people and put them in plainclothes. I went before the legislature and asked for a big FBI academy here in Mississippi, or one modeled after it, to be set up to train the law enforcement officers of Mississippi, not just the patrol but all city policemen, constables and bailiffs, things of that sort. We were well under way. We beefed up the highway patrol. They gave us an additional two hundred men, and before I left office the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi was no more.

B: Back to that summer of 1964. The events that we've just been talking about were going on about the same time as the Democratic

Convention.

J: Yes.

B: Which involved the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

J: Yes.

B: Was there an awful lot of pressure there from Mr. Johnson to somehow or other compromise that issue?

J: There was to some extent. Of course, they couldn't put any pressure anywhere. The only pressure that was brought, and I think it was more or less to satisfy President Johnson, was John Connally called me. The President knew that John Connally and myself were good friends, and he knew that we were both conservatives in his book. We had taken part in one or two governors' conferences, or taken the lead on some things, and he had John Connally call me and try to get the thing worked out.

B: This was before or during the convention?

J: This was during the convention there in Atlantic City.

B: Was there ever any possibility that it could be worked out?

J: No. There was no possibility. I told him on the phone that I was being just as straight with him as I knew how to be, that there was no hope really of getting the thing straightened out. The delegation possibly would have gone along with me, but the truth of the matter is after the way that they had handled the hearing up there I didn't want the thing settled.

B: That was the credentials hearing?

J: Yes, the credentials hearing. Because they had played on this

murder terribly over at Neshoba, an attorney by the name of Rauh.

B: Joseph Rauh, yes sir.

J: Yes, who is more of a rabble-rouser than he is an attorney. He inflamed people to a great extent because he at that time called a woman by the name of Hamer before the Credentials Committee and just opened the floor. Or rather the man from Pennsylvania, I believe, was chairman of the committee; he more or less gave an open floor. She, of course, had been a convicted bootlegger and operator of a house for women up there in the Delta around Louisville, and she told from the floor so that the people all over America could hear it that, "White folks done killed my father."

Well, I investigated the incident after I heard this. And the truth of the matter [is], her father had been dead at that time for about nine years. He was killed over in Bolivar County, where he and another Negro were coon hunting. The dogs had treed a coon, and her father had put the gun up against the tree as he climbed the tree to make the coon get out. One of the dogs knocked the gun over and shot her father. They immediately took him to old man Bob Malone's place, who operated the plantation on which this man worked. They took him from there over to the hospital at Rosedale and tried every way they could to save him, and there was no way to save him. But this was really a malicious lie that was told by this woman who was given the floor at the Credentials Committe, and it was on television so the entire world

could hear that kind of stuff. How anybody could believe that is beyond me.

B: Mrs. Hamer had been active in civil rights work in Mississippi before then, too, I believe.

J: Yes. And she had been a bootlegger and had operated this house of ill repute for many, many years before she ever got into any kind of civil rights business.

B: Was there ever really any chance though, that spring and summer, that you would or could have supported the Johnson ticket?

J: No, there was not.

B: Because, as you said earlier, a governor is supposed to represent the majority of the people?

J: That's correct, and the thinking of the people in the state at the time.

B: I believe you publicly supported Senator Goldwater.

J: Yes.

B: Did you actively campaign for him?

J: I did not.

B: Did you receive any kind of word from Mr. Johnson about that?

J: No.

B: Then or later?

J: Then or later.

B: Do you think maybe he understood--

J: Yes, yes.

B: --your motives?

J: I think he did.

B: As I recall, Lyndon Johnson got something like 12 per cent of the votes in Mississippi in that election, I believe. Somewhere around there.

J: That's correct.

B: Sir, while we're talking about people, some of the other people that had been involved in Mississippi in this period; what was your opinion of Robert Kennedy's replacements, Nicholas Katzenbach and then Ramsey Clark?

J: Well, my opinion was that Katzenbach, regardless of what people said about him, had a great deal of intelligence. He was learned in the law. He may have violated his word with other people, but he, as far as I know, never did with me. If you know how a man feels, and he is openly truthful, you can't help but to a great extent nevertheless respect him. I didn't have much use for Nicholas Katzenbach, but it was mainly because of what he was representing and the side of the issues that he took.
It was not because of any fault that I found with him insofar as being a good lawyer and trying to do his job and being conscientious.

B: How about Ramsey Clark?

J: I had honestly very, very little respect for Ramsey Clark. And it was for this reason. All that he did would be to call you and to bother you and to argue over the telephone about anything that he wanted accomplished. He didn't have the real intellect, nor was

he smooth. He seemed to be kind of like I said about Robert Kennedy, too young, and his lack of knowledge about things in America seemed to be about the same form.

B: You didn't think that being a southerner himself he understood your problems better?

J: No, I didn't. Because I had known pretty well the activities of his father when he was there on the Court. He had always more or less taken the side of, not the solid majority, but the majority of the Court which was normally a five to four decision. He had always kind of been sort of a swing man on the Court. I always had the idea that someone was influencing him somewhere in his opinions or in his thoughts.

B: What about some of the folks in Mississippi like Medgar Evers and later Charles Evers and Aaron Henry? Did you find them people you could work with?

J: No. I didn't find that I could work with those people, nor did I try to. As a matter of fact, all Negro preachers had an open door to my office. Negro preachers had a preference regardless of who was outside. I talked to any Negro in the state of Mississippi who had a problem, but I never did allow Evers, Charles Evers, in my office because I did not want to make an important person out of him. I knew of him and knew that he was stirring the situation. He was playing people like Martin Luther King, Carmichael, all the rest of them, against the other crowd. By the other crowd, I meant the people in Mississippi who believed

in keeping things quiet, more or less under wraps, going ahead, doing things that were worthwhile but getting them worked out without a great deal of fanfare.

B: Who would be some of the leaders of that group, sir?

J: Well, that group is more or less 70 per cent of the people in Mississippi who felt that way and who wanted to work things out.

B: You mean 70 per cent of the Negroes or of the people generally?

J: Both, both. Because you see the one thing that King or Carmichael or any of the rest of them couldn't do, they could not organize the Negroes as such in Mississippi. They've never been able to get them to stick together, and Evers would play them against the state government. He would run to the highway patrol with information, you see, that was prejudicial to King, or what Carmichael said about somebody in the patrol, or how they were acting. He kept things in turmoil as much as he could, and I was not going to add to it by making him an important person so other people would listen to him. Actually, if John Bell Williams had taken that tact, it would have been a much clearer and better situation in Mississippi than it is now.

B: You're referring here now to Charles Evers, not his brother Medgar.

J: Charles, yes. Yes. I didn't know Medgar Evers, nor had I heard of him until he was killed that time.

B: How about Aaron Henry? What's your opinion of him as a leader?

J: I don't know too much about Aaron Henry, and he was not a leader among the colored people. His reputation was not good around

Clarksdale and his home. I never have met him, I never did see him, never heard of him or anything else. I mean he was just what you more or less call a local fellow.

B: Did you ever meet Martin Luther King?

J: Yes. I didn't meet him; I knew of his activities. I don't know of any time that I ever met him. Now I did ask the President, President Johnson, to stop seeing him in Washington, that all that he was doing was making a very, very important person out of Mr. King. What the President would do, he would leave [A. Philip] Randolph and Whitney Young and all the other Negroes in the anteroom and let Martin Luther King come in for a private discussion with him. King would come out and then issue these statements, and it made him a big Negro, so to speak, in the eyes of all the others. I told President Johnson this, and I asked him not to, that I could see what it was developing into. Whether he gave any credence to it or not, I don't know.

B: What was Mr. Johnson's immediate reaction to your suggestion?

J: He thought that it was well taken, that it was a thoughtful suggestion anyway, and that it was not done to hurt Martin Luther King or Randolph or any of the rest of them. But that it might be a smart thing to do, not to see him.

B: Did you see any visible results after that?

J: Well, you'll recall that King never did come back to his office.

B: About when was this conversation?

J: It was in the latter part of 1967, I believe.

B: Did you ever hear at the time of stories about a tape recording the FBI had of some of King's activities?

J: Yes.

B: Did you ever hear the tape recording itself?

J: No, I did not hear it. But through another party, I knew all the things that were on the tape recording. And I was not surprised.

B: How did the other party describe the tape to you, sir?

J: Well, describing the activities of the man and his indiscreet things that he had done. I was not surprised, because I did have definite knowledge that he had done the very same thing while he was here in Mississippi. While the others were marching on the highway, he was off preaching in Charleston or over at Cascilla at a little rural church, and passing the hat and taking up money and taking the sisters home.

B: Who was the other party, sir? Do you feel that you can say?

J: I don't feel disposed to tell who that was because I think, frankly, I would be more or less violating his confidence.

B: Sir, we've talked almost exclusively about civil rights here. Actually, in the other things in Lyndon Johnson's Administration, you generally supported his stand in the Vietnamese War, did you not?

J: I did. The one talk that I had with him in Washington was right

after the governors' conference, I believe, when the war was just getting under way good.

B: Would that have been about 1965 or so?

J: Yes, somewhere along there. I suggested to him that the way that people felt down here in this part of the country, they did not know why they were over there. They didn't know what was behind the war. They didn't know any of the strategy so far as the public was concerned. I couldn't speak for another state, but down here among our own people a lot of people were wondering, "Well, why in the world do we have to get involved in it? If we are involved in it, as it appears we are, why don't we take a course other than what we are taking?" He thanked me for the suggestion, and he had this boy who is now the head of the movie industry, a little short, stocky--

B: Jack, Jack Valenti.

J: Jack Valenti. He had Valenti and--who is it? Watson I believe--

B: Marvin Watson.

J: --Marvin Watson to send me more or less, an outline of the strategy of the thing. He asked that I make this known to the people. I called him, I believe--no, I wrote him and told him that I did not feel that it was my place to try to discuss this thing, because I felt actually as the people did. I couldn't see a great deal behind this when it first started, and I couldn't see the strategy of it. I couldn't see what was to be accomplished, and I had heard this other business before, "Let's keep this part of the

world free from communism and the people free in America," and that sort of thing. Those were worn-out cliches, more or less, and I just did not see it. I was for him in prosecuting a strong, vigorous war and getting it over with immediately. I felt, actually, that there was too much politics being played in the thing.

B: How do you mean, sir?

J: Politics from the standpoint of the strategy, interference. I had a great deal of confidence in the General who was there, Westmoreland, and I knew that with the assets and the resources that this country had that they could have gotten that war over in three or four weeks. All this delay and this interference, to some extent, in orders that probably went from the President to Westmoreland caused him to hold back rather than to stay on the offensive, to cease fire for a certain period of time, give the enemy time to rebuild its resources and its ability to move. All those things I always thought were a part of the military and were a prerogative of the General that was appointed as the head to prosecute the war, rather than the President or any members of his Cabinet or McNamara or any of the rest of them having anything in the world to say about it except from the civilian standpoint.

B: Did you ever make suggestions along these lines to Mr. Johnson?

J: No. I did not. I did not.

B: Did his withdrawal from the presidency, the race for renomination, surprise you?

J: To some extent it did not surprise me, because I could see a great deal of age that had come on the President since he had been in office. It seemed to me that he was a very tired man. I did tell him that he was putting too much confidence, too much dependency, on the crowd that he had left in the office, the various offices when he took over the presidency.

B: You mean the Kennedy appointees?

J: They may have been Kennedy appointees. They may not have. But there was an awful lot of backbiting, it seemed to me, by giving the wrong advice, the wrong strategy. I was surprised that the President would listen to the people who were actually not his friends, and I knew they were not his friends. I had talked with them in conferences and hotel rooms and places up there in Washington.

B: Who were some of these folks?

J: Well, they were more or less members of the Kennedy group. They were people who had connections with McNamara, who had connections with Sorensen, who had connections with the man that did a lot of the writing--

B: Schlesinger?

J: Schlesinger.

B: Arthur Schlesinger.

J: Yes, and people of that type.

B: Yes, sir. It sounds like you felt that you could talk to Lyndon Johnson as president just with absolute freedom.

J: I did feel that way, because I honestly tried to tell him the truth as I saw it any time. I never did violate any of his confidences that he placed in me. But I did feel to some extent--

Tape 2 of 2

J: --he always seemed a bit fractious if anyone told him something where he had a different opinion. Lots of his close friends were afraid to say things to him for fear of making him mad. I tried to just go ahead and talk to him whether he got mad or didn't get mad about it.

B: Did he ever get mad at you?

J: No. He never did. And he was very thoughtful. He was always real nice. As a member of the Executive Committee of the Governor's Conference, several of us went up and talked to him at his Ranch. There were only six of us, I think Bill Scranton of Pennsylvania, Connally of Texas and myself, the Governor at that time from Vermont, Harold Hughes from Iowa. There was just about a handful of us; Reed of Maine. They were afraid to express, really to express, a real strong opinion in front of him at the Ranch.

B: In other words, they all shared your view that he didn't want to hear things that disagreed with him.

J: That's right. They didn't speak out as I did. I may have done the right thing or the wrong thing, but I thought it was the proper thing to tell him what I thought.

B: You'd think a president above all would have to hear all sides, and would know it.

J: Yes. But I was not surprised that he did not run, because I could see to some extent that he was very, very disillusioned about a lot of people in whom he had perhaps put a lot of confidence, that they had not necessarily done him right.

B: You mean his Cabinet members, the same type people you were talking about before?

J: No. People that didn't hold Cabinet status, but people whom he listened to there around the White House.

B: His immediate staff?

J: People in important places in government.

B: Did you ever meet Mrs. Johnson?

J: Oh, yes. I met her when the President was running for Vice President. She came and spoke for him and brought Luci with her. They spoke down here on the Gulf Coast and made a very nice presentation for him. The Ku Klux had gotten together and were going to blow up the train. This was after I was governor.

B: This would have been the campaign train in 1964?

J: That's correct. They were going to blow up the bridge across Back Bay just outside of Biloxi. We put helicopters down there, and I put some of the plainclothesmen and also some highway patrolmen down there in boats to guard the bridge to be sure that she was not disturbed.

B: Did your infiltrators discover that information for you?

J: They advised me ahead of time that they were planning to blow the thing up.

B: Did you pass it on to the Secret Service or the FBI?

J: Yes. I worked with them, with both groups. The Secret Service came in and discussed the thing with me ahead of time. The FBI did not, but they advised me that the FBI had been told about it.

B: Actually, there were no incidents as the train passed through Mississippi.

J: No incidences at all.

B: Was there anything else that almost happened besides that one?

J: No. I don't know of anything else.

B: Sir, is there anything you think, in addition, that should be on a record of this sort. I've about run out of questions.

J: I don't know of anything except that I do think that the President was trying to make as good a job of it as he knew how. I honestly believe that to some extent that he took into his confidence the wrong people, and they gave him a lot of bad information. I think he felt that way, and I think that's one of the reasons that he did not run again.

B: Do you have any specific people in mind when you talk about people on his staff?

J: No, I don't. I sure don't. But I think some of the governors at that time were advising him, "Boy, you're doing well. Keep it up," and so on, when some of them actually didn't feel that way about it. When they got off to themselves they talked against

him. They were in high hopes that someone else would take his place.

B: This includes Democratic governors.

J: Yes, includes some Democratic governors.

B: Does anyone specifically come to mind?

J: No. Most of them were in northern states. The most loyal ones were Dempsey of Connecticut, Hughes of Iowa. He began to turn on the President before he left office. Governor Knowles, I believe, of Wisconsin, was pretty loyal to the President. Jack Burns of Hawaii was a very loyal type person to the President, thought he was doing a good job, and I think he was fair with him. The Governor of Vermont, I can't think of his name now, but he was a pacifist. He was very much against the Vietnam War, and he began to take the other side toward the end of the term.

B: And you think Mr. Johnson didn't realize this situation existed?

J: I don't think he did. I think that he was very heartsick about it because probably for the first time in his life he was fooled, and if there was anyone that knew people I thought that he did.

B: That's why I asked, because that's one of those common judgments that just about everybody makes, that Mr. Johnson understood and could judge people.

J: Certainly could.

B: But apparently he reached the point where he either couldn't or wouldn't.

J: [He was] always given the wrong information to judge him with.

B: Sir, is there anything else that you think ought to be said?

J: I don't know of anything.

B: It's been most informative. I sure thank you for your time.

J: Well, I'm delighted to tell you anything I know.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Paul B. Johnson, Jr.

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, Paul B. Johnson, Jr. of Hattiesburg, Mississippi do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on September 8, 1970 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Paul B Johnson
Donor

June 26, 1980
Date

Archivist of the United States

August 7, 1980
Date