

INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 13, 1976
INTERVIEWEE: SAM HOUSTON JOHNSON
INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette
PLACE: Mr. Johnson's residence, Johnson City, Texas

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J: Now, let's see. Lyndon said on March 31, 1968 that he would not seek or accept the nomination of his party as long as he was president. Well, that night I was in Baltimore with the ex-Governor of Maryland, a Democrat, Governor [John] Tawes, and the Democratic Speaker of the [Maryland] House [of Delegates], Marvin Mandel, who is now governor of Maryland, and the [Baltimore] Democratic County Chairman, who was in Florida but he flew up for this meeting. Then we had in the Senate Senator [Joseph] Tydings, who was going to support Bobby Kennedy, and [Thomas] D'Alesandro, the mayor of Baltimore, that was going to support Bobby Kennedy.

All my actions were taken absolutely on my own; none of them were suggested by the President, my brother. I operate independent from him. I hadn't discussed the meeting with him or anything else.

But I had the [Maryland] Attorney General who was heading up our campaign in Maryland; King I think was his name. The purpose of having the Baltimore County Democratic Chairman--he was in Florida vacationing but we had him flown in to talk with me.

We had a big dinner in a restaurant there. Then we went to a fellow's penthouse and there Lyndon came on [television]. When he

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said that, why, they turned around to me and said, "Is it true? Did you know about it?" I said, "No, I didn't know about it. If I did I wouldn't be up here taking up your time or my time. However, way back there several months ago, I wrote a memorandum recommending that he not run and I got no reaction from him at that time."

So anyhow I left and I went into Lyndon's bedroom the morning of April 1, and he was playing there with his grandson. I handed him a letter, which was in my book, which I had my secretary type up early in the morning. You see, what would happen with me was I've been getting up at five o'clock since I was born, nearly. Since I was able to build a fire, I wake up every day since then [at five o'clock]. That's when I think more and take notes down and things like that. I would send a White House car to bring a secretary up there and we would have breakfast upstairs. So I just said, "Last night was the happiest night, to know that you've made that decision." Later I went on and I said, "Those that sought to destroy you will destroy themselves." I said that in the letter. I took it down there and gave it to him. He said, "Thank you, sweetheart," or something like that. Then in a few minutes, why, George Christian and I think Marvin Watson and them came in.

After he took himself out, Lyndon decided that same morning, April 1, that he would accept a speaking engagement at the National Broadcasters' meeting in Chicago. He checked the time element [?]. The Secret Service wasn't prepared; the press hadn't been informed, and he didn't know he was going to do it till just that morning. So

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things began to move kind of quickly. I didn't even have time to go get my hat upstairs; that was on the third floor. He said, "Come on, let's go, the helicopter's here."

We took [the helicopter] to Andrews [Air Force Base] and from there the plane to Chicago. He asked me what he should say. He said, "I don't have a prepared speech, Sam Houston." I said, "Well, I'll tell you, Lyndon, what I believe I'd do if I were you. I think I would just start out and say, 'You know, last night I made a speech stating that I would not seek or accept the nomination of my party as long as I am your president. This is April Fools', I didn't mean a damn word of it!'" We laughed on the plane. He got there and said that at first. He said, "My brother suggested that. But no, really, I'm serious, I'm not going to run." And he gave the reasons and all that.

The press didn't have time enough to charter their own plane to follow us and they rode with us, along with some extra Secret Service men. So then he made his speech. He came back with Mayor [Richard] Daley and Colonel [Jacob] Arvey of Chicago, a political boss there from way back there. He was talking to them and he said, "I wish that damn press bus would get over here so I can get on back to Washington." Finally they got on, and he opened that door. I don't know whether you have ever been on Air Force One or not. It can open up big or it can be shut off in an office, so he could just open it up and invite the press in. I have this in my book. But anyhow, he said, "You know, you fellows have deliberately created this credibility gap about

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me and now you've got someone else. Most of you have been very kind, and I know it's your duty to report the news as you see it. But I don't think that it's your duty just because someone says this and that [to say] that there's a credibility gap. I think you ought to do more research, particularly you, Dan"--Dan Rather. "You know, you caused a lot of this without checking." Tears rolled down Dan's cheeks. I was sitting there at the time.

Then we came back and landed at Andrews Air Force Base. In the helicopter flying back, he was telling George Christian to tell this one this and that one that. "I've got to tell Bobby Kennedy that I won't give him an appointment or anybody an appointment that releases it to the press beforehand that he sought an appointment with me this morning and released it to the people. If they will let me know first before they release it, I will see them, but not anybody's going to try to put me in a trap like that." He was going on and on, giving orders. I was sitting back there. I felt sorry for him. I had an idea that he didn't know that he was a lame duck. The minute he said he wasn't going to run, that tipped it, you see. He didn't have the power that he had the night before he said that, two nights before.

I came back to my suite there at the White House. I began to really feel very sympathetic about it all. Dr. [Bill] Voss, the White House doctor, came in and said, "Well, Sam, I noticed you didn't feel very good when you got off the plane." I said, "Doctor, I don't think that Lyndon has realized exactly what he's done. I don't think that he knew himself that he wasn't going to run until he began to talk

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about the horrors of the war and then suddenly decided that he couldn't have a long, drawn-out fight there. When he said he would stop the bombing of North Vietnam in order to prove to the country as well as to his adversaries and others that he meant business, he would take himself out of the race. He gave up politics for peace." And I said, "I have a plan. Now I'm going to put it forth. I want millions of people to know that they love him and respect him. [Dr. Voss said], "Well, what are you going to do?" I said, "Well, I am going to call the state chairman of the Democratic committee from Minnesota."

Hubert Humphrey at that time was in Mexico City, so I called Warren Spannaus [Chairman, Democratic State Committee, Minnesota]. I said, "Warren, when Hubert gets back, and I think he's coming back tomorrow, I'd like for you to talk to him and have Hubert to start a demand movement for Lyndon. I don't mean a draft, but a demand movement." He said, "Is that the way the President wants it?" I said, "No, the President doesn't even know I'm talking to you, but I can see no harm in Hubert doing that. Not that it will change Lyndon's mind, but it will show Lyndon and the others how much the people love him and respect him. Now of course there will be Bobby Kennedy and there will be [Eugene] McCarthy and others, but it will endear the people who control the party, which were Johnson people, to Humphrey. All the Johnson delegates are released; when he said he wasn't going to run, that's all. But if Hubert would take that move, he would unquestionably get the nomination." He said, "Fine, I'll take it up there."

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Then I went on and I called George Reedy. He was working for Lyndon at the time. I said, "Who would be the closest man to Hubert that you know that could get this idea to him when he gets off the plane in the morning at noon when he is supposed to arrive?" So he named a man, which I won't repeat. He called him, and he said, "He just told me that he thought it would be a good idea, too, and would pass it on to Hubert." That's already in my book.

Now, this, of course, I'm putting it down now but it's not for release. What happened a few months before--there was no question but what we were running for president. I wouldn't have been down there at the committee if it weren't [so]. I attended everything. To start in as to how I got up to Washington, I was up here at the Ranch visiting. I knew when Lyndon called me up to the Ranch--I was staying at the Lewis Ranch, part of the LBJ Ranch--what was coming on, that my days to get back in the campaign were now coming. I had figured it out. He wouldn't have let me be up there with so-and-so doing so-and-so unless he wanted me to go back. Anyhow, I flew back with him.

The thing of it is, I flew back with him, and then he went back to Texas. Then I was going to Baltimore and I was in a car wreck with some people. I was laid up in the hospital for about six weeks with a broken leg. This leg has been broken I don't know how many times.

Then when Lynda Bird got married, I was in the hospital. I got an invitation to the wedding, so I called Colonel Scoles [?], the head man of the hospital. I said, "Can I stay here a little while longer? I don't care to go to that wedding. I don't care to get messed up in

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anything just yet." He said, "You can stay here as long as you want to." I said, "Now, remember this, Colonel, Lyndon Johnson is your commander in chief and he is over you." He said, "But he doesn't know I'm going to retire soon, too, so I can buck him if I want to. He can't do anything to me; I'm going to retire." Oh, boy. Then I sent my R.S.V.P. that on account of the leg still hurting me and all that, that I regretted tearfully--I didn't say cheerfully, but tearfully--that I could not attend the wedding. I never will forget, I wrote it on a yellow piece of paper. In order to get it in the mail at the time they picked it up at the Kimbrough Hospital, you had to get it down there before one o'clock. I didn't have an orderly there that could take me down in a wheelchair in order to get it in the mail, so for the first time I just got up and walked with crutches and got it in the box. I came back and was relieved about that; at least I didn't have to go the next week to the wedding.

Well, the Sunday before the wedding on a Saturday, it came out in the papers the list of people that were invited and that could not come on account of illness. One was Mrs. Robb's sister or aunt; she had something wrong with her hip or something. It didn't say that the President's brother couldn't come on account of a broken leg. So then I said, "Uh, oh, the thing that is going to happen is when Lyndon goes down that list and he doesn't see that I was invited and couldn't come, then he is going to make me come, because the person that was handling that didn't put that in. Oh, my. I know him so well; he'll go over everything about Lynda Bird's wedding, who accepted, who

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rejected, everything. That's one thing he is going to read, and I know him that well. So when Liz Carpenter left my name off, he is going to see to it that I know it." I'm not saying she did it or who did, but someone did.

So Sunday night Lady Bird called me and said, "Sam Houston, Lyndon and I want you to come and be here and stay with us." I said, "Oh, Bird, that's awful thoughtful and I appreciate it, but the doctor won't release me." She said, "Well, Dr. Voss"--he's the White House doctor that came to visit me off and on--"says there's no reason in the world why you couldn't come and take what therapy you need right here at the White House. When can we pick you up?" I knew they'd do that to me, because Dr. Voss would come over once a week, trying to read my mind and reporting back. It's kind of amusing when you can read what they're doing. So anyhow, I put it at Wednesday to have Marshall Ramsey [?] [pick me up]. He was the main chauffeur for me when I was there. We came on in, and then of course they had the wedding.

So the next thing that happened, a day or two after that, Lyndon asked me, "Well, what did you do today?" I told him that I went back to the hospital over there to visit some of my friends, the doctor and others. He said, "Well, I want you to go down to the Democratic [National] Committee tomorrow and start looking around and seeing what's going on." I said, "Well, Lyndon, you make the appointment for me. I don't want to go down and say, 'I want to see what's going on here.' You make the appointment." He said, "All right."

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Of course [John] Bailey was chairman, but this boy from Oklahoma, John Criswell, was the general manager of it all. He called me at the White House and said, "We are having a dinner for the Democratic state chairmen tonight, so it would be more convenient, I think, for you and for all concerned for you to come to look around after they leave." "Fine." I knew what was going to happen.

That night I went down for dinner, and Lyndon said, "What went on today?" I said, "Well, Mr. Criswell called me and said that they're having a dinner tonight for the state chairmen and for me to come after they had left town." He was mad. He said some things I won't repeat. Anyhow, he picked up the phone and called Marvin at the dinner table. He said, "What the hell do you think I got him up here for in the first place? He's been in every campaign I've ever been in. Why in the hell--I wanted him there at the dinner with those people. I want him there in the morning!" Just like that.

So Criswell called me back and said he would send a car for me, and that it would be down at the Watergate. So when I walked in, they were having a meeting. John Criswell introduced me, "I want to introduce you to the President's brother, who has been in every campaign that the President has ever had. He will be helping us." That was about all.

What I am leading up to--and I don't want this to come out, but I might as well tell you because I'm putting this in my book that I'm working on--there was going to be a delegation of about fifteen or twenty state chairmen there. I dictated a statement. You see, after

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the state chairmen meet and go over their problems and all that, then at five o'clock they come to the East Room of the White House. Then the President comes in and talks to them. So I had written that [statement for Lyndon] on the fact that "I'm going to have to spend most of my time on the Vietnam War, so I'm leaving it up to you state chairmen to carry on." It was everything but saying, "I hereby am out." If Lyndon had delivered that statement, then there wouldn't be any ifs, ands, or buts about it, and I figured he would or I wouldn't have gone to the trouble of writing it.

Well, Cecil Burney, a young attorney from Corpus Christi who was an aide to Jim Rowe, who was chairman of the Johnson-Humphrey committee--that's on the seventh floor of the Watergate--came by my office most every morning. I showed him this [statement]; I showed it to John Criswell. He said, "Well, I don't know what he's going to do to you." I said, "I think I know." So I said to Cecil Burney, "Take it up and see what Jim Rowe thinks about it." Just like that. So he did.

Cecil didn't call me back or anything, so I called him. I said, "Well, Cecil, what did Jim think about this?" He said, "He immediately got hold of Marvin Watson and said he wanted to be heard on this before the President made the statement." I said, "Well, that's fine. Let him be heard. Where is he?" "He immediately took a train to New York." "Cecil, had he planned that before?" "I don't know, Sam. I did hear him call Marvin and say that he wanted to be heard, and he did tell me he was going to New York." [I said], "That's a

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hell of a way to want to be heard. That's a damn hell of a way to want to be heard on it. Something is going on that I don't like." Cecil said, "Well. . . ." I said, "This is the most important statement that Lyndon will ever make. Jim Rowe wants to be heard on it, and it's supposed to come off at five o'clock this afternoon before the delegations of twenty state chairmen, and he suddenly goes to New York." So I left it at that, but I filed it away in my memory box up here, because I have three or four cells that I keep open for memory and never close them.

Preceding that, one day Lyndon had a personal memorandum from Jim Rowe that I won't go into. It was delivered to the White House and handed to Lyndon. He showed the memo to Lady Bird, who was in the room that morning. She handed it to me, and I read it paragraph by paragraph right then. So then I left my room, and I thought, "Well, if I wanted to be trapped this is exactly the way I would do it." It was a suggestion of an appeasement with Senator [James] Eastland and another deal, but with Bobby Kennedy.

So then I sat down. I think I worked on the history of the Kennedys, how they sucked him in from the very beginning. I wrote it out in longhand and gave it to the secretary to type up. I said, "Lyndon, I remember that when he [John Kennedy] was first elected to the United States Senate when he defeated [Henry Cabot] Lodge, and you were running for the Democratic leader, he came and pledged his support." I [remember] because I took him in there to meet him. He came in our office, oh, around the last of December or the first of January.

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Congress didn't convene until January 30. The secretary there in the reception room didn't recognize him, but I did. he had a sweater on. I looked up, and I said, "Senator, yes, he's here. Come right on in." Now, whether Lyndon had ever met Jack Kennedy before that, I don't know. I don't think he had. You see, Jack Kennedy was just a member of the House before, and he hadn't gained any stature in the House to talk about. As a matter of fact, there is not a goddamned one of them now that's ever got any legislation passed, Jack, Teddy or Bobby, in their whole senatorial careers, not a goddamned one of them, if you want to know the facts. Check it.

So to go on, of course, Lyndon didn't have any opposition, Hubert did. He plain told [Rowland] Evans and [Robert] Novak that he didn't, but he held out to the last. Well, I can go into some more details on it, but I will skip that and later we can discuss it, and I will go on and get to my point.

Jack Kennedy would come up to Lyndon--and I think you will see this in my book, but I just want to reveal it to you--and say, "Mr. Leader." He didn't call him Lyndon; he always called him Mr. Leader at that time. He said, "Now, if you need my vote on this legislation, I'll vote for it even if it will be against the interests of my state." I would get in the car--you know, I lived with Lyndon--and ride home with him, and he would say, "You know, that Jack Kennedy's a fine boy. He even told me that he would vote for this if it became necessary even if it would be against the interests of his own state." And I said, "And you told him to go ahead and vote for the interests

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of his own state, didn't you?" "Yes." I said, "He knew you would say that. Lyndon, don't fall for that goddamned crap. He knew exactly what you would say." Well, don't think I didn't watch him all the time.

Take the deal in the 1956 campaign. We went on to get the delegation away from the Governor, Allan Shivers. We won 85 per cent of the delegates against Shivers. I would like to go into that just a little bit, if your time isn't limited.

I was out in Phoenix, Arizona when I read in the paper that Lyndon Johnson was going to challenge the Governor for the leadership and be the favorite son at the convention. So I called Lyndon, and he said, "Get on down there and help John [Connally] out." So I drove all the way down from Phoenix. We campaigned against Allan. What had happened is that [Sam] Rayburn had put Lyndon's name in kind of against his own--without telling him too much about it. So Lyndon was put in the position there of running not as [just] the favorite son but for the head of the delegation, too, or backing out on Rayburn. Lyndon didn't really want to get tangled up in that, but then he couldn't do much about it.

So he came down to Austin. I was staying at Mother's. He had me and John Connally and one or two others out there and said that he really wanted to be head of the delegation, kind of like that. So I spoke up and said, "Lyndon, you can't back out on it." And he said that he never had really wanted to do this, but on account of Rayburn [he had to]. I said, "You know what? I don't blame you, but do you

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know what Allan Shivers said about you the other night on TV?" "No."
"He said you were vain, that you were conceited, that you were dictatorial." "Did that s.o.b. say that?" I said, "You're damn right." Well, he stayed down there then. I made a little of that up, but he stayed down there then. And then he spoke [publicly]. He didn't have anybody writing his speeches, and in about ten days he spoke on TV and around. Shivers came out supporting him for favorite son but not to head the delegation. Of course, we went through the fight and won it--85 per cent of the delegates--and went to the convention in Chicago.

I was staying at the Palmer House and Lyndon was staying over at the Steven [?]. Lyndon called me one morning before the convention opened and said, "Sam, call Governor Coleman"--Jim Coleman, because I knew Jim back when he was secretary to Congressman [Aaron Lane] Ford back there when I was in Washington. I knew him better than Lyndon [did], was closer to him than Lyndon is because I knew him way back there. So I called him up and I said, "Governor, I just talked to Lyndon, and he said for you to go ahead and cast your vote for [Adlai] Stevenson, that he had it without a doubt. He appreciates your wanting to support him, but the only thing he wants is just the delegation from Texas. That's all he wants." He said, "Well, Sam, old Jim is going to vote for Jim. You know, if I cast my delegation for Adlai Stevenson, I couldn't get back in Mississippi. So Lyndon's going to get them whether he wants them or not." And so as it turned out

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we got Texas and Mississippi and one-half of a delegate from Alabama-- I don't know who that one is, I'm sure Lyndon could tell you that.

But that's not the point. Now the thing of it is, Lyndon's first vote in the delegation was for [Albert] Gore, I believe, and of course he was eliminated. So it became a run-off between [Estes] Kefauver and Jack Kennedy. Lyndon took the floor. Understand, Lyndon's box was next to Jack Kennedy's box; I was sitting next to Jackie. Anyhow, when Gore dropped out and some of the others that were running for vice president were dropping out--you see, Stevenson threw it open, he didn't select [the candidate]. He had it open; that was the first time that it had happened as far back as I can remember. Anyhow, Lyndon was standing there at the delegation from North Carolina, which he had and which was going to switch. Jack Kennedy came within an ace of beating him [Kefauver] on the first ballot. But Sam Rayburn sat back there and wouldn't recognize North Carolina. He recognized Oklahoma, which was, I would say, more Baptist than Catholic. You see what I mean? And their votes went to Kefauver. Then the bandwagon went on and that's it. Now that's the importance of that.

The next thing that came out was in 1958. You've got to take into consideration that Jack Kennedy defeated Lodge in 1952, Senator Lodge of Massachusetts. The reason he did [is that] Lodge was out managing Eisenhower's campaign and didn't think he had any serious opposition. It surprised everybody, but money can talk. Now, I don't know, I'm going to buy up a bunch of these two dollar bills because I'm getting

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disgusted with these hundred dollar bills that are buying up everything. I don't know what these two dollar bills will do but. . . .

Well, anyhow, it's beside the point. The thing of it is they bought up that election against Lodge. Here comes 1958. I'd like to say this; it can't be backed up because Lyndon is not here to verify it, and I don't know whether I put it in my book or not, but old man Joe Kennedy called him and said, "I appreciate what you did for my son. You're the man to get the nomination in 1960 if you'll put my son on the ticket as vice president." That's the way it was. Now comes 1958. Jack Kennedy ran for re-election, and I don't know who they paid to run against him, but he carried Massachusetts by over 90 per cent. It was all blown up about that. From then on, why, it showed all how popular he was and all that stuff.

I broke my leg and I lay in a body cast for a year in my apartment. I think I did more work then than even before. So I was sitting listening to Chairman [John] McClellan of the Investigative Subcommittee, which Jack Kennedy was on. Let me just tell you how those things work. You know [Walter] Reuther, of course, in the AF of L. There is bound to be--well, I don't say there is bound to be, there is crookedness in every labor campaign and may be, in office as well as others, some crookedness or some pressure or something like that. But that committee didn't take on Walter Reuther or the AF of L. They shot down [Dave] Beck and sent him to the penitentiary. Then the target was [Jimmy] Hoffa. I could see on TV Jack Kennedy passing to the General Counsel, Bobby Kennedy, questions to ask Hoffa. Lyndon dropped by my

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apartment that evening. They were having a replay of that on Huntley-Brinkley [news]. I said, "Lyndon, there are your men right there, Jack and Bobby. They're running for president right now." I forget what he said, I have it in my book.

What they did was they would go into, we'll say, Pennsylvania. Governor [David] Lawrence is an old pro, you know. So when they went in there and asked Lawrence's support, he was a Lyndon Johnson man, so he told them so. They said that Jack Kennedy said--and he had said it during the campaign--that he thought he was equally as qualified as anybody that would run except Lyndon Johnson, but Lyndon Johnson couldn't be elected because he was from the South. Those statements are all a matter of record. But then he told Lawrence, "I'm for Lyndon Johnson, too." There was [Stuart] Symington running, Humphrey running, Stevenson running, and all in 1960. But he said, "If you'll give me your votes on the first ballot, then I'll show my support. And incidentally, Governor, how much are you in debt, the Pennsylvania Democratic Party?" This is supposition, but it's backed up with pretty good evidence. Anyhow, I'm charging that there is no question but what he didn't buy the election. I'll show you. When you are head of an investigating committee which is investigating labor racketeering, and there you go on a vicious cross-examination by Bobby Kennedy against Hoffa. . . . You see, the Teamsters Union has always been Republican to my knowledge. "If you, Mr. Reuther, don't go along with my brother Jack, you're going to get the same type of treatment

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I'm giving Hoffa." So labor switched from Stevenson over to Jack [Kennedy], and that's how he got the nomination.

Now, people wonder why it was that Lyndon Johnson--already we had created and passed the LBJ law in Texas in 1960, which gave him the right to run for re-election to the Senate as well as for president or vice president. Well, in May--they moved the [primary election] date up, you know--we had no Democratic opposition at all. No one had ever heard of [John] Tower at that time. The point of it was this. They came and asked Lyndon to be vice president, to be on the ticket. They said they needed him in order to get elected--he was a southerner--because the South had never gone for a Catholic before. Like Al Smith, you know, back there. If Lyndon had turned the party down at that time, how would they feel towards him in 1964, if he refused to be vice president with Kennedy and now he could have elected Jack Kennedy?

It was very narrow. I think Lyndon was surprised when he won. He did go through the motions and did a hell of a job campaigning. But this is something I think you historians, you think about this. I never mentioned it to Lyndon--I was retired, you see--but when Lyndon Johnson was elected, he defeated Tower by close to 400,000 votes for the Senate. He carried Texas for Kennedy-Johnson by 45,000. If they hadn't spat upon Lyndon and Lady Bird there at Dallas, they never would have been [elected]. That changed the people's votes, you see. They wanted Lyndon to stay on in the Senate like he was throughout the thing. That one thing caused the election to go to Kennedy and Johnson, because it was very narrow. So much [for that].

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Lyndon Johnson was elected senator [and vice president]. To get sworn in, what should he do? Get sworn in as senator and then decline the vice presidency? At that time, next in line for president would have been the speaker in the absence of a vice president. That's what would have happened if Lyndon had been sworn in as a senator and not as vice president. Who would be next in line was Rayburn. I thought it up. I said, "Aw, what the hell?" If Lyndon had done that it probably would have ruined him maybe for trying to hog it. Because Rayburn was speaker, Lyndon [was] majority leader, the vice presidency was empty, and if Kennedy should die, why, it would be Rayburn, very well qualified, better qualified than Lyndon was. Don't think I didn't have it in my mind.

G: Did your brother have it in his mind? Did you ever tell your brother about it?

J: Oh, God, no. I stayed out of it. I was retired and all that.

(Interruption)

G: Let me ask you one thing here. How were you and your brother different? You mentioned earlier the Holmes Alexander article about you.

J: You mean different politically?

G: No, just as individuals.

J: Well, other people that have observed us can answer that better.

Getting back to Holmes Alexander now. I don't know whether I told you about getting him to write that article that saved Lyndon's life, his political [life], where he was just beginning. So after Lyndon had said that he wasn't going to run, I decided that if there

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was one person that would help Lyndon, even though he be a Republican in the McNaught Syndicate, it was Holmes, because I would feed him stuff. My opinion was give it to a reporter that you could depend on, [even] if he was a Republican, and it would be more valuable than anything else. Another man that I would talk to is Bryson Rash, that I would give notes on what I thought. Another one was Sam Shaffer of Newsweek. Those were my three contacts.

I met Holmes at the Metropolitan Club to tell him goodbye. He said, "What are you going to do, Sam?" I said, "I'm flying this afternoon to Acapulco." Holmes said, "What are you going to do?" "I'm just going to sit down there and rest and write my memoirs for the [LBJ] Library." "Why don't you write a book?" I said, "Oh, hell, I don't want to write a book. I'm just going down there and take it easy for a while. I haven't decided what it will be, but what I'm going to do is write my memoirs for the Library."

Well, Holmes wrote the article back there: "I had a hale and farewell meeting with Sam Houston Johnson, who is closer to Lyndon than hands and feet, has been in every campaign that Johnson has ever had and has been chief strategist behind the scenes. He would give me stuff about what was coming up provided that I never put his name in print." He always kept his word. "Now he told me at the Metropolitan Club where we met that he was tired of being shy, of being"--this and that--"that he was going to write a book. I can say this, that when he does, the reason other books about Lyndon Johnson don't sell is they don't have the love in it. As Somerset Maugham says, 'Love is

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quite [?] appealing.'" I told him I wasn't, but Holmes said I was! Then he ended up by saying, "Whereas the younger Johnson has no ego and the other one has ego like Texas has oil."

G: Did you agree with that assessment?

J: Hell, no, we both had too damn much ego. What the hell are you talking about? I never saw a Johnson yet that didn't have it or display it.

But he put that in there, deliberately said that I was going to write a book in order to get Lyndon and me crossed up like that so, by God, I would write a book. Then I began to get calls from the White House about it. I said, "Hell, I'm not going to write a book." I called Holmes and he said, "Well, you ought to. I think this will get you started."

Well, I didn't intend to, and from there in Acapulco I went to Nassau. Booth Mooney called me there and said, "Sam Houston, this is the best piece of propaganda." You see, I was trained in psychological warfare in World War II, propaganda and underground work. I was personnel director in the Mediterranean Theater, Africa. He said, "This is the best piece of propaganda I have ever read." I said, "Well, what the hell is it?" "It says that the President sent three emissaries to New York to get a copy of your manuscript. It's on the front page of the Washington Post [and it's] by Maxine Cheshire. And it says one publisher said he couldn't print it, but he would pay five thousand dollars to read it." I said, "I haven't even got a manuscript. I have no intention of writing a book." He said, "Well,

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you'd be hard [put] to convince me on it, because when that publisher said he'd pay five thousand dollars to read it, that sounded just like you telling him to do it." So then I thought, "Well, you know, I might write a book to kind of get things off my mind."

So I went out from Nassau and flew into New York, and I met this woman who was a friend of my sister, Gilda Dahlberg. She was a very wealthy woman; she had money. She produced Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. She went down to Bennett Cerf, the head of Random House, and talked to him about publishing the book. He said he was publishing one, The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson by Eric Goldman, at that time. But he said, "What you should do is get hold of Hank Lopez."

Hank--you can read the acknowledgement [in my book] about him. I was in the hospital, as a matter of fact, for my leg, taking therapy, and he came by and we talked. So then he said, "Who is your agent, Mr. Johnson?" I said, "Hell, I thought you were the agent." He said, "No, I'm a writer." And I said, "Well, find my own goddamn agent." So he did. The next day--the Josephson [?] Company was one of his agents--I had a meeting--I had to go in a wheelchair--with the chairman of the board of the Cowles Publications and Look magazine. I talked to them about thirty or forty minutes and they said, "We'll buy it." Then Hank Lopez spoke up and said, "We have another appointment with Time-Life [Publications] tomorrow." So the chairman of the board said, "Give us the first refusal on it."

So I went down the next day and met with them [Time-Life]. They wanted a copy of the manuscript, wanted me to submit it. There were

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about five or six in the meeting, but the man that I talked to was Bob Luce--no kin to the Luces, I don't think. But anyhow, he said they'd give me an answer. They own a book company up in Massachusetts and they were going to do it for Time-Life. I asked of course for two covers; Look promised me two covers, thirty thousand dollars per cover article.

I came back from there thinking it over. I said, "Well, Chairman Buckley [?] was there, he and the chairman of Look magazine. They were all there. They didn't want a manuscript. They said, 'We'll give you, right there on the spot, what you want,' a hundred thousand dollar advance on it just like that, and of course thirty thousand dollars for each cover of the book [magazine]." I had no qualms about that. They didn't say, "We want a copy of your manuscript." I had talked to them.

So the next day was Washington's Birthday. I called the main office of Time[-Life] to try to get [Bob] Luce's home telephone number; I didn't figure he would be at work on a holiday. So I told the operator who I was. She said, "Well, he came up today. He's here. Do you want to talk to him?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Mr. Johnson, we decided to meet today about that." I said, "Well, I think I'll sign up with Cowles." He said, "We know what they offered you. We'll do better." I said, "No, they didn't have to wait twenty-four hours. they gave me an offer within thirty minutes. I appreciate it, but I think I can work with them better." He said, "All right." Then I immediately called Chairman Buckley and I said, "All right. We'll

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work up a contract." And so then we worked it up. That was the start.

Well, this stuff that filtered out, "What are you going to do about writing a book?" The purpose of my book was, first, I was damn tired of hearing Lyndon Johnson saying that Rayburn had made him when he had made Sam Rayburn. Oh, I liked the Speaker, but he was a storier. In 1939 I happened to have been working for [Richard] Kleberg. Lyndon's office was next to me. Well, here's Roy Miller. He came over. Mr. Kleberg wasn't ever there, so he used his office. He came in with a petition to get Lyndon to sign endorsing [John Nance] Garner for president, and I happened to have been there. Lyndon said, "Mr. Miller, I can't sign this because I want to wait to see what the President does." "Oh, well, Lyndon, we know we don't have a chance if Roosevelt decides to run, but he's not going to run." Lyndon said, "Well, I don't think you know any more than I do, and I think he is." So Roy Miller said, "You're the only member of the delegation that hasn't signed it."

He [Lyndon] said, "All right," turns around--you know, this is all "unquote"--"You know, I don't know what those sons of bitches do for me anyhow. I'm going to start something down there." I was there. He picked up the phone, called the Mayor of Austin, Tom Miller. He said, "Tom, I want you to hold a big rally in Austin, Texas at the park there. Call all of our friends"--that meant patronage people, you see--"and have a rally there for Roosevelt for third term." He said, "Now I'm going to call Maury Maverick," the mayor of

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San Antonio. He called Maury. "Now, I want you to join in with Tom Miller in Austin and come out for a third-term movement for Roosevelt. Maury, you and Tom quit your damn fighting." Every time they would get together in a meeting, you know, they would scabble. They were both liberal and both wanting to show off. "For one time, by God, you all coordinate yourselves and get it done." I heard it.

I would say in about ten days or a week, it hit the headlines of the paper: "Third-Term Movement in Texas for President Roosevelt." [The article said] it was held in Wooldridge Park and described four or five thousand there.

The next thing that happened, big, powerful Jesse Jones and big, powerful Sam Rayburn went down and saw President Roosevelt. This can be verified by the paper, you know; it's not my word alone. They said, "Mr. President, Lyndon Johnson is doing more harm than good by starting that movement." Roosevelt said, "You know, Lyndon Johnson is my friend, and I don't think he would do anything that would hurt me." Then Roosevelt gave authority to release the conversation to the press, go ahead and release it. Well, of course I heard that, so I knew right then and there what was going to happen; of course Roosevelt was going to run for a third term.

So what did I head for? I headed for the Garner for President headquarters. Understand, I was pretty young then; I had a lot of fun. I walked right into Roy Miller's office. He was talking to Jim Farley. They had lined up Garner for president and Farley for vice president. It was kind of funny, you know, Jim Farley, who had always

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been for Roosevelt, to suddenly not approve of a third term. He got, oh, awful conscientious about a third-term movement, but he wanted to be the vice president with Garner. So Roy Miller said, "Jim, now what else could Roosevelt say but what Lyndon Johnson was his friend? He couldn't say he was his enemy. Don't get excited, Jim. Don't get excited, Jim." I was sitting over in a chair and I began laughing. Mr. Miller came over and said, "Sam, what do you think?" I said, "Mr. Miller, you had better just fold up shop on Garner. Hell, you know as well as I know, Roosevelt wouldn't have said that if that wasn't a tip-off right there that he was running for a third term. There you are." So of course, he did. There went Garner's chances to be on the ticket. Then, of course, as you know, Roosevelt selected Henry Wallace, and then they ran against Wendell Willkie.

In the meantime, between the election and the first of the year, Speaker [William] Bankhead had died. But according to not a set rule, but according to previous years, all of them, the majority leader advanced to the speakership. Well, John J. O'Connor was chairman of the Rules Committee, which is the most important committee in the Congress. His brother was Basil O'Connor, a former law partner of Roosevelt's. So John J. O'Connor began to start a movement to be speaker. Well and good. Roosevelt didn't owe Rayburn a damn thing at all. So then my brother goes down there and tells him, "Mr. President, if you don't go according to [precedent]"--most of the committees, on account of seniority, are headed by southerners--"it will bust up everything." And he begged him to put Rayburn on and not O'Connor,

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because it would have thrown With O'Connor on there and Roosevelt trying to control the Congress, setting a new precedent by putting in O'Connor, it would have been hell for Roosevelt. He told Lyndon to tell Rayburn to come see him. So then he told them that Lyndon had heard this, and that he [Roosevelt] was going to drop out of it, take no sides in it, let it go. So it died on the vine. Rayburn was elected speaker. But he [Roosevelt] told Lyndon, "I want you to watch him." [Inaudible]

Anyhow, if it hadn't been for Lyndon Johnson, Rayburn would have never been speaker, period. You see, that's a strategy. If you tell a person, "You made me what I am," and all that, then they feel like a big brother to you. That's a good political strategy.

I used it this way one time. In that 1940 campaign, Lyndon was named chairman of the congressional election committee. There was a fellow from Virginia used to be [in it], but then they put Lyndon as chairman of the congressional [election committee]. Well, we were supposed to lose forty Democratic seats until Lyndon headed that campaign. We gained forty. Drew Pearson wrote up a column after that. You know, he used to pass out these [brass] rings [like on a] merry-go-round. He gave one, describing how Roosevelt and this young congressman had been named head, how Lyndon had put things in motion. You've got all that stuff up in the Library.

The point is that to further carry this thing out, why, in 1953 Joe McCarthy was raising hell up there and all, and Drew Pearson wanted Lyndon, the Democratic leader in the Senate, to get on

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McCarthy. But Lyndon wouldn't do it. Then Drew Pearson created this thing "Lying-Down Lyndon." I don't know whether you remember reading those things or not, how he didn't take an active part, all that stuff. But Lyndon one day--I forget what year it was--was talking about, "By the way, I have a meeting now with that s.o.b. Drew Pearson. I wonder what in the hell I can tell him." I said, "I know what you can do. Back in 1940 he gave you the brass ring and predicted that you would be president; 'If Lyndon Johnson ever says he's going to be president, don't bet against him.' Lyndon, I remember reading that." I called over to the congressional library, I got it, and I had it photostated. Then when Drew Pearson came in, he said, "Drew, you were the first person who predicted I would be president. Here you are. The first one. And now, by God, you're doing everything you can." Drew had forgotten it. He turned around and he reprinted that article several times while Lyndon was president.

G: He and Drew Pearson had an unusual friendship, didn't they? At times they were allies, at times they were not.

J: Both men had some of the same type deals. If Lyndon Johnson got pretty mad, he got pretty mad and he had a fairly good memory, you know. If you double-crossed him once or did anything like that, he carried a little something, a crow in his nest, against people [who did that]. So would Drew Pearson, because Lyndon didn't take orders. You know that Pearson and Jack Anderson, when they tell you something and you don't do it, they think that you're against them. Now when Drew Pearson told Lyndon that he ought to take after McCarthy and then

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Lyndon wouldn't do it, well, then he began to call Lyndon "Lying-Down Lyndon" for viciousness.

G: I gather back in the Roosevelt era there was a falling-out, too, over George Brown and your brother's helping George Brown out of an income tax thing, and Pearson writing a story on that. Do you remember that?

J: I don't remember that. That wouldn't cause altogether a falling-out. It was probably something else that they fell out about, and then he used that as the reason.

G: I think that Robert Allen wrote that article on the 1940 congressional campaigns. Perhaps it was your brother being closer to Allen than Pearson in those days.

J: That is not it. Pearson was Pearson; Allen was just along with him. Now the reason why I'm telling you about this is because in the 1948 campaign, when we ran for the Senate, we were supposed to call Drew Pearson and Walter Winchell and give them about one sentence, not over two or three, about how we were doing in the campaign down here. They could only splice it in, one, one week and Walter Winchell, the next week. It had national coverage, you see. We'd just call them and tell them, "This is what we want out today." Sunday. Drew Pearson came on Sunday afternoon and Winchell Sunday night.

I don't know about that. When Allen went off. . . . As far as I know, Drew Pearson was all right up until 1952. He might have had a few little cracks in there, but he never turned on us until 1952.

G: Till the McCarthy thing?

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J: And Allen wasn't there; Jack Anderson was there. Then of course Allen set up himself as a columnist, and I know Lyndon helped him quite a bit, like he helped Marianne Means and others. Lyndon didn't usually deal with the second man. It was Pearson and Allen; it wasn't Allen and Pearson. But he would deal with anybody if he could get the job done, so that's about it.

G: Let me get some more of your insights on the man himself. Excluding family and obviously Mrs. Johnson, who do you feel was his closest friend throughout his life?

J: There was a tremendous amount of jealousy between Rayburn and Johnson, by the way. It never came to light, but Bill White was asking me about that one day. He said, "What caused that jealousy?" I said, "It's because of the fact that Roosevelt told Rayburn that he was having Lyndon Johnson to check him on anything he got as speaker, and Rayburn felt that he owed him, you know, a little bit there, and this and that."

Now as far as who was Lyndon's [closest friend], that's a hard one to answer. I can tell you his closest friends as far as the press is concerned was William S. White, not only for what he put in the paper or his columns, but in the way of advising Lyndon as to the thinking of the press. [He was] the one he trusted the most as a friend as well as a newspaperman. There is no question about that.

Now as far as one that would come to his rescue--I say rescue, if he needed to be rescued, I don't remember when he did have to do that very much--I can't. . . .

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- G: I'm just wondering if it's possible to isolate one person and say, "Well, he either liked to spend more time with him or"--
- J: I can't answer that. The only one as far as the press--and I'm not too close to Bill, I know him and all that--Bill White. He was congressional correspondent for the New York Times, Bill was, you know. Then he was head of the AP when Lyndon was secretary to the Congressman [Richard Kleberg], the AP for Texas and a few other states. I was with him when Lyndon offered Bill White the job to be deputy NYA director. Bill turned it down; he stayed with the Associated Press. But over the years, as far as the press corps goes, any connection, it's not what Bill wrote about Lyndon that was--which I'm sure what I've read has always been pretty good, maybe sometimes not so good. Bill's a good newspaperman.
- J: Their friendship was more of a personal--?
- G: It was a personal [thing]. As far as newspaper people go, columnists and all go, there is no question but what he was the closest man to Lyndon. He knew his weaknesses toward the President. Bill would go and smooth things over that might develop with members of Congress, Russell or someone. He would go in there, and maybe Dick Russell would be mad, and he would make up something, Bill would. "Oh, Lyndon was telling me the other day what a great man you are." He did a lot of that. We laughed about that.
- G: He and Russell were rather close, weren't they?
- J: Yes. You mean Lyndon and Russell?
- G: Yes.

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J: Yes, yes and no. Have I gone into telling you how Lyndon became Democratic leader? Russell wanted it, you know.

G: No, I didn't know that he wanted it.

J: Oh. Well, it's funny. I put it in my book, anyhow, because I got tired of him saying, "Russell made me," and all that. That's another reason I did it, because I knew Dick Russell. He had a suite across from mine at the Hamilton Hotel when I was secretary to Dick Kleberg. He didn't mind coming in my room and drinking my whiskey, but he wouldn't go downstairs in the Rainbow Room and take a drink. He didn't mind my getting him a date with some secretary to some PWA or WPA official in my suite, but he wouldn't take her downstairs. He was full of egotism. No woman was good enough for him, because his father, way back in Georgia days, they had always been it.

See, Lyndon first went to the Senate in 1949. Then in 1951 he was elected assistant leader after only two years in the Senate. Bob Kerr was the cause of that.

G: How so?

J: Bob Kerr was governor of Oklahoma, had been chairman of the [Democratic] National Committee. He had been a big Democrat. He took a liking to Lyndon, and he maneuvered it around. When [Ernest] McFarland became the majority leader, he slipped Lyndon in, Kerr did, as assistant leader. Because putting McFarland in as majority leader actually put Lyndon in as leader, because Lyndon was the leader. McFarland just went through the motions. So anyhow, in 1952 McFarland was defeated. [Barry] Goldwater defeated McFarland. Now, what happened in 1952?

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All right. I say this, because I was up there, that almost any Republican could have won.

G: Excuse me, I've got to [change tapes].

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J: A lot of things I'm going to say now I don't want being released, like you said.

But let me tell you the history of 1952, the presidential campaign. You had [Estes] Kefauver. He carried New Hampshire over President Truman, although Truman didn't run. He was head of the Crime Committee, holding hearings on these gangsters, and he gained a lot of publicity. We had the Korean War, and Lyndon was named chairman of the Preparedness Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, of which Russell was the chairman. Kefauver was also on that Preparedness Subcommittee. He was a member of the Armed Services Committee on that. He was just one of the Democrats, and he had his own special investigative committee. Well, there was a jealousy there between Kefauver and Lyndon Johnson, the only reason of it being that both wanted to be president, that's all there is to that. So in 1952, I was in the Armed Services Committee [room] when Dick Russell announced for president. So Texas and all saw where we would go and our pleasure would be Dick Russell. But of course, he didn't get very far. Then President Truman, of course, more or less gave the word that he was for Adlai Stevenson.

Now, all of this is off the record, but some of it has been published. Some of it's in my book. Probably I'll release it, but after reading it over I want to be sure. I don't want to cause

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anything. But this is what happened. Kefauver was running. Stevenson said he'd rather be shot, I think, than not be president, something like that. Anyhow, he got the nomination, but he promised Rayburn and Russell [that] rather than to give it to Kefauver, that he would name Lyndon Johnson as his running mate in 1952. That is a fact. Instead of that he named--do you know who he selected as his running mate, Adlai Stevenson in 1952?

G: Yes.

J: John Sparkman.

G: Of Alabama.

J: Yes. Why did he do that? It's funny. Lyndon was assistant leader in the Senate, chairman of the Preparedness Subcommittee. I don't think Adlai Stevenson had any idea that he could defeat Eisenhower in 1952, but he might in 1956. So if he had a man of Lyndon's caliber as his running mate--he was the assistant leader, you see--then it would be putting Lyndon Johnson ahead of him in 1956. You see what I mean? That's pretty thorough thinking.

Well, here are the facts anyhow. He came out with the statement that he was supporting Adlai Stevenson, and then he came back to Texas. I was in Washington talking to him, and I congratulated him on taking a good, forthright stand. He said, "If you think it's such a damn good stand, come down here and answer some of these damned insulting letters I've been getting." I came down. I stopped at the Federal Building. I went in there and dictated a memorandum in which we said we were going to form, as well as I recall, a caravan to go all out

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for Adlai Stevenson. We would go into Floresville, and there would be a band there. We would get a bunch of cars and put Lyndon in a trailer, with Zephyr [Wright] washing his shirts out and Lady Bird cooking lunch. Putting on something. I had to write it up so it would make it sound good to Lyndon. You know, if you write something up, Lyndon can always improve on it and make it bigger. Not that I didn't just purposely leave something open all the time. I'd give the best of my knowledge, but he always improved on it with anybody. So I got George Reedy to sign it first, you know. I don't know whether they knew what they were signing or not; it didn't make a damn bit of difference, but anyhow, I asked Walter [Jenkins] and all of them.

So I took it up to the Ranch and Lyndon read it and passed it on to Lady Bird. She said, "Oh, I didn't think George had that sense of humor." Lyndon said, "Oh, hell, Bird, Sam Houston did that. He was supposed to have been here two hours ago." And I kind of laughed. But we got serious after that. He said, "Now let me tell you, Sam Houston, what happened." He really told me. He said that Stevenson had promised Rayburn and Russell that he [Lyndon] would get the nomination as vice president. Then Stevenson went back on his word. And he said then that Shivers goes up there and traps the dumb bastard into something about the tidelands oil deal. He said, "Hell, I can't stand to take an active part in his campaign. He turned me down. Not that I wanted it; not that I would accept it." Well, I never heard of a man yet that ran for vice president--but anyhow, [that] he wouldn't accept it. I'm not critical of my brother but. . . . He said, "That's

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not it, Sam. Here's the thing. Amon Carter, who has been a supporter of mine for many years, has written an editorial that he is going to publish the minute that I take an active part. It's all right for me to come and say I'm for that, but to do nothing else." I said, "How do you know that, Lyndon?" "He sent it down to me by John Connally."

Who's John Connally? Let's get on him right here and now while we're at it. John was Lyndon's aide, administrative assistant. He resigned in 1951 to become associated with Powell, Wirtz, and Rauhut. [Alvin] Wirtz died at a football game. John had many offers to go to work for Brown and Root, anything he wanted, but Sid Richardson was the man that hired him.

Who is Sid Richardson? He used to be Sergeant Richardson in World War I under Captain Eisenhower. Who put up the money for Eisenhower to get started? Who went to Paris when President Truman named Eisenhower as the chief of NATO? Who took a vote with some others there and underwrote Eisenhower for half a million dollars to get him started? Sid Richardson. Eisenhower said, "Well, I don't want to run on the Democratic ticket because I don't think any Democrat could be elected." Sid said, "Well, I prefer you to run on the Democratic ticket, but I don't give a damn what ticket you run on, because we want you."

All right. Who was managing Eisenhower's campaign in Texas? I would think that Mr. Connally did, because he was working for Sid Richardson. You see, if you go to putting things in line, in focus, you have to come to that conclusion, that John Connally wouldn't be

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working for Adlai Stevenson against his boss' captain, Eisenhower. Where was this pressure coming from? Part is Houston Harte, who owns twelve or thirteen newspapers--I've lost count of them. He called up Lyndon and said, "If you take an active part, I won't support you in 1954." Well, who was behind it? Who knew to punch the button that would hit the sensitive nerve of Lyndon Johnson by getting the newspaper people, Houston Harte and other leaders, to call Lyndon and say, "If you take an active part, we won't support you in 1954"? Who would do that? John Connally. I never told Lyndon that. I didn't tell him some other things, because Lyndon loved John very much. But he was it.

So what happened? Here it was: Eisenhower carried Texas two to one. Well, anyhow, we were sitting on that front porch up there, and Lyndon told me about these things, this pressure. Everybody's thinking they would go for Shivers against Lyndon in 1954. It takes a man pretty much with guts to come out and make speeches for Adlai Stevenson, knowing damn good and well Eisenhower was born in Texas, Eisenhower was for the Texas tidelands, and all that, and to support a man that had double-crossed him over that.

But here is why it was. I said, "Lyndon, if you let the press know that you're scared of them, Amon Carter, Houston Harte, that they can threaten you and keep you from coming out actively, then they won't trust you anymore. They will think they can destroy you and you'll never--they'll laugh up their sleeves how they controlled you. Well, goddamn, it would be much better just to tell them, 'By God, you

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can't control me.' Every one of these people has been riding on your coattail and telling you what you have to do or they're going to support someone else. Tell them to go to hell." "What about 1954?" "We'll let 1954 take care of itself." "All right," he said, "get George Reedy out here." He called George and gave him as much radio time on that little old network--it was before TV, you know. Oh, we had a little of it but [not much].

So we prepared a strong speech. I don't know but Rayburn and [Wright] Patman and Johnson were the only three congressmen that I know that really stuck their necks out. A lot of them had other business, and then a lot of the other senators did. But, you see, that one decision in 1952 to take an active part, knowing that his own state is going two to one--I really don't know how it went, but it was a landslide--and against all the pressure from the newspapers and all that, "If you take an active part, we'll get you"--I argued [for it for] three days. All right, he did it.

Now we're getting down to what you call fate. I don't know. Of course, we had been tied up with the South before. Now these northern senators hadn't given Lyndon much attention except to say that he was nothing but a Russell follower, because he hadn't been in the Senate but four years then. So then when McFarland was defeated, that left a vacancy as majority leader. Lady Bird came by Mother's house and said Lyndon wanted to see me up there in Washington. I think I rode up there in George Brown's plane or something like that and went to the Mayflower Hotel. Dick Russell was at the Mayflower Hotel, too, because

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Lady Bird had closed her home up--4921 30th Place--and that's why we were at the Mayflower Hotel. Lyndon flew up and urged Dick Russell to take the leadership. It's funny to sit back; I can see Lyndon urging Dick [and Dick replying], "Oh, Lyndon, you ought to have it."

Then Bobby Baker and I got together. He got [Senator] Burnet Maybank, an old southerner. He stayed drunk all the time. In other words, these pages, instead of bringing him water when he was speaking, brought him gin. I've seen that; that's all right, though. So he called up Dick Russell, and he said, "Dick, you ought to take it, the leadership. You're the only one." "No, Burnet, I thank you, but I don't want it." "Well, then, it'll have to be Johnson then." "Yes." He couldn't say no. We got him. And that son of a bitch from Florida, Spessard Holland, we got Holland to call up Dick and urge him. [Allen] Ellender and Eastland, they were not Johnson men.

G: You got them to call Russell, is that right?

J: [Call] Russell and urge him to take it. And then when he would say, "Well, no." "Then it'll be Lyndon Johnson."

G: Russell would say it would be Lyndon Johnson? Or Holland or Ellender would say it?

J: It would be like this. "Hey, Dick, this is Burnet." "Yes, Burnet." "I want to tell you right now, by God, you've got to take over that majority leadership." [It was the] minority leadership at that time, the Democratic leadership. "No, I don't want it. I'm satisfied where I am." "Well, then, it will go to Lyndon if you don't." "Well, all right." But Dick never figured that Lyndon would do it because of

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this reason--well, anyhow, I'll go ahead. I'd rather tell it so we won't get. . . . And Lyndon didn't know himself what was going on, hardly.

Do you know Walter Hornaday of the Dallas Morning News?

G: Yes.

J: He used to be a Texan there. I don't know whether he's still living or not. He came in my office, sat down and said, "Well, Sam, what's going on?" I said, "Well, Walter, I can't tell you what I know." That indicated to him, of course, that I knew something, you see. "But I can't tell you what I know" meant I know something but I couldn't tell it. I kept him waiting thirty minutes. When I ran out of telephone calls, I would pick up the phone myself and dial somebody and start blabbermouthing about something important, and there would be nobody on the line. I was just keeping him waiting. Finally Walter got tired and he said, "Let's go where we can talk."

The cafeteria was right next to the office, 231 in the Old Senate Office Building. We went in there and got coffee. I'm the only man in history that Walter Hornaday ever bought a cup of coffee for, or anything else. He was a friend of mine but the press don't buy people things, you know. We went over there and sat down. He said, "What's Lyndon going to do?" I said, "Walter, you've been up here a long time. You know politics better than anyone else. Now let me show you why Lyndon isn't going to take it and can't take it. First, you know he played hell when he supported Adlai Stevenson against Eisenhower in Texas." "Yes, he sure did. That was fatal." I said, "All right.

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But that's Lyndon; he's loyal to the Democratic Party. Now talking to him the other night he said, 'Sam Houston, we can't take it, because look at it. There's McFarland that had the leadership and was defeated for re-election. There's Scott Lucas that had the leadership, and he was defeated because he had to spend more time in being leader and neglected his state.' Now, if Lyndon should be Democratic minority leader, he can't turn around, because his thinking is more in line with Eisenhower's thinking than it is with the other thinking. Oil depletion, he's for that; Eisenhower's for it. The way Lyndon voted on this bill and this and that is the way Eisenhower stands. So you know that when you become Democrat leader of the opposite party from the president, you've got to fight him, and Lyndon can't do it because his policies are more in line with what Eisenhower thinks. So that's the reason he can't take it." "Well, who's going to get it?" I had to think quick. Who in the hell did Texas hate more than Lyndon Johnson at that time? I came up with Hubert Humphrey. "It'll go to Hubert Humphrey." "Oh, hell, it can't go to that son of a bitch."

All right. The front page of the Dallas Morning News: "Lyndon Johnson can't accept it because his thinking is more with Eisenhower than it is with others." Goddamn. I was there the next day. Lyndon didn't know I had done that. Anyhow, the first son of a bitch that called was old Jesse Jones, by God, down there at Houston, urging Lyndon to do it. Then everybody else that said they weren't going to support him called up [inaudible]. Then he called. Oh. Lyndon said,

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"No, I'm afraid Allan isn't going to--" "I'll call Allan personally and have him call you that he's not going to run." All right.

Humphrey read where he was likely [to be leader]; he'd read the story, too. So he really thought he had a chance. He came down there January 2, 1953. He was in there, and I was at my desk. He came in with Senator Lester Hunt of Wyoming. He said that he would support Lyndon if Lyndon would let him take over one of the chairmanships, of the Policy Committee, the caucus, or the Steering Committee. Now under the rules of the Democratic Party in the Senate, the Democratic leader is the chairman of the caucus, chairman of the Steering Committee, which puts other people on committees, and [of] the Majority Policy Committee. He had all those; Humphrey wanted one of them or he was going to oppose him. Lyndon has been noted for being a great compromiser. I sweated an hour or two. I didn't think he was going to compromise on any of that.

Finally, the next morning I got up there early, about eight o'clock, and went in to Lyndon. I said, "Well, what's going to happen?" [He said], "That son of a bitch kept me two hours last night begging me, by God, to let him have one of the chairmanships, of the Steering Committee or something. I just told him that if you are going to be a leader, you have got to control the committees in order to become an effective leader. I don't know what he's [inaudible] a few minutes." I can tell you exactly when it was, about twenty minutes to nine. This caucus was supposed to be meeting at nine o'clock,

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The call came in from Hubert threatening to run. Whenever you see Lyndon Johnson light up a cigarette--he was smoking then--talking on the phone, then [he'd] stand up and get mad. He didn't get mad sitting down. He stands up. "Now listen, Hubert. Goddamn you, I told you yesterday, I wasted two goddamn hours with you. Now if you want to be humiliated, you haven't got but nine goddamn fucking votes; that's all you've got. Now take them on over there, because the committee is going to meet in just about ten minutes. I have a group of senators out here waiting to escort me over there. So go on, take them on over there and be humiliated, because I know what votes I have and I know what you can get. If you want to be humiliated, go on over there. Goodbye!" I said, "Lyndon, you'll get it unanimously now. The thing about it was you should have told him that yesterday. Then you wouldn't have had to worry." He went over there, of course, and got it unanimously.

That's fine. But now to come to 1954, I was sure when Shivers called him and said he wasn't going to run. . . . But he'd told him in 1952 he wouldn't run against him in 1954. That means 1952, 1953, and he may could change his mind in 1954. Plenty of them have. You hear the old story: "The party left me; I didn't leave the party," and "I was, but then Lyndon Johnson played hell. Now I've got to run against him." You know all that stuff.

But here is the assassination of Shivers. After Lyndon was sworn in and all that, I said, "Well, Lyndon, I've been to ten parties up here honoring Jesse Jones, Sam Rayburn, John Garner, but none for

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you. I'm going to get something going. You might not know." So I called Johnnie Lyle. I couldn't think whether it would be the Texas State Society, or whether to have the congressional delegation, so we decided that we would have the congressional delegation from Texas to prepare a plaque. I don't know whether you've seen that plaque up there or not in the Library. When you do get back there, there is a big silver plaque there with everybody's signature on it.

I called Congressman Lloyd Bentsen; he's probably the closest man to Shivers at this time, because he lived in that part of the country, you know. Shivers' wife is from down there, McAllen. I said, "Lloyd, a lot of people have been calling here wanting to know when the Governor is coming up. Do you have any idea or any information about that?" "Yes, Sam. He's coming up about the second week in"--February, I believe it was. Yes, around there.

Then here's what you do. First you prepare a plaque, and then you get the signatures of all the congressmen, and you have it [the presentation] on a Wednesday. The Texas delegation meets in the Speaker's Dining Room every Wednesday. Now the rule is that it's a closed hearing. They just meet and go over different things. It's kind of an executive meeting, bull and everything else. Each one is invited to bring one guest.

Now Rayburn got hold of it that we were going to invite Shivers to be there, so he said, "If you invite that son of a bitch. . . ." Paul Kilday was chairman of the delegation; that rotates, you know. It was up to the chairman of the Texas delegation to do the inviting.

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So Sam Rayburn told Paul, "I won't be in the same goddamn room with that son of a bitch Shivers." Then we've got to have the cat out of the bag. I got Congressman John Lyle to go to Wright Patman and tell him what the purpose was: to get Shivers in there. So then he went and told Rayburn, "We're going to get him committed to Lyndon right then and there." Oh, this is funny. So instead of inviting you as my guest--I'm a congressman--I invite a newspaperman as my guest. I guess we had about six; they invited Sam Shaffer of Newsweek, and others. After they all got seated, then the Associated Press photographer came and stayed outside. Weldon Hart, who was press secretary and executive assistant to Shivers, didn't know what the hell was going on. He wasn't invited; he couldn't get in, and he saw all these different press people going in and that photographer.

Well, they all heard Mr. Speaker, Sam Rayburn. Kilday called on him. Rayburn went through all this stuff I've heard a thousand times which never happened. He said, "I can remember when Lyndon and his daddy sat on the [Texas State] Capitol steps when I served with his father." That same stuff. Then the chairman turned to Allan Shivers. Rayburn was to the right, Shivers was to the left. [The chairman] called on him. He came out and said Lyndon Johnson was the best senator that had ever served from Texas. He tried to outdo Rayburn. That's the only meeting that I've ever gone to with him. I sat next to Johnnie Lyle. Johnnie got up and said, "This being such an auspicious occasion [inaudible], I make a move that we allow the press to report it." Of course, there was no objection. "Oh, incidentally,

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Mr. Chairman, could we have a picture made of this occasion? Is anybody opposed to that?" No. "Well, So-and-so, see if the Associated Press"--whoever the photographer was that they had. He came in. There was one [picture] with Rayburn's arm around Lyndon and Shivers' arm around him like that, holding that plaque up. There went Allan Shivers. We had it there. He said, "You're not only my political friend [but] my personal friend." He didn't recognize any of those reporters as being the press.

Well, as we walked out, Lyndon handed me the plaque and said, "This is yours. Hell, I'm too busy." I went over and had some mats made of it, and then I wrote a release to all the newspapers enclosing that mat, quoting what Shivers said. That night I got a call--because it was in time to hit the afternoon paper--from [Texas] Senator Rogers Kelly, who was my close friend. He said, "Sam, I'll tell you what. Goddamn, it couldn't have been anybody but you; you've pulled a good one. I was at the Austin Club having a few drinks with John Van Cronkhite," who was Shivers' hatchet man. He said, "When he saw that, he said, 'That dumb son of a bitch Allan. Why did he go up there and get trapped? Coke Stevenson got trapped like that, and it looked like Allan would have known better. Now that takes him out of the race for Senate.'" Just like that. So that was his [Shivers'] political death right there.

Now I was there at the White House in 1968. I went in Ralph Yarbrorough's office, the first time I had been up there. He said, "Oh, Sam, come with me to the Texas delegation luncheon." I said,

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"No, I just wanted to say hello to you, Ralph. I've got something else to do." "Oh, no, you've got to come." Well, of course I couldn't run like Ralph did, but my driver drove me up there and I went in and sat there. The chairman of the Texas delegation at that time was [Graham] Purcell from Wichita Falls. He asked Ralph Yarborough to introduce me. Ralph got up and said that he wouldn't be in the Senate if it hadn't been for me, that I had worked [for him], which I did, I helped him a whole lot. I got up and I said, "The last time I was in this dining room was on February 13, 1953. Two men that were there at that time are no longer here; both have passed on and died. Sam Rayburn died a natural death; Allan Shivers died a political death. Mr. Patman, do you remember on that occasion when Shivers got up and said that Lyndon Johnson was his closest friend? Mr. [W. R.] Poage, I believe you were here. Mr. [George] Mahon, I think you were here. Jake [Pickle], you weren't here." He was for Shivers way back there when [Shivers] ran for governor. I went on down that line. Now, so much for that.

We didn't have any opposition, of course, in 1954 except Dudley Dougherty.

G: You didn't consider Dougherty a serious threat?

J: No. The only man that even came to Texas, what I did. . . . I can tell you what happened. Dudley had millions of dollars. His father, Jim Dougherty, was a hell of a fine friend, and his uncle, Dudley Tarlton, was a good friend of Lyndon's. So I flew down with John

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Connally to Houston. Dudley Dougherty was going to go on this talkathon deal--twenty-four hours on that, you know.

G: In Houston, I think it was.

J: Yes. I stayed in the plane and was picked up by Ed Linkenhoger, my friend, at the airplane. When he got off, Dudley had a couple of men ask John Connally where Sam Houston was. He said, "I don't know where he is." I went to the Shamrock Hotel. I sent for Dub Wakefield. He used to be with the Democratic committee and I had used him in campaigns. He is kind of what you would call a pretty good hatchet man. So he came into the Shamrock. Jake Pickle had been traveling. He was on the KTBC payroll--well, I don't know whose payroll he was on, but he was with the advertising firm of Syers, Pickle and Winn. He had been traveling around over Texas just feeling out the public. He was down there, and I called him. I said, "You got anybody to take this down on what Dudley's going to say tonight?" He said, "We've got three secretaries." I said, "All right." Then I picked up the phone and called a recording company and got it recorded, like you're doing.

Then I planted five questions, "Have you quit beating your wife yet?" I had him crossed up with labor. He said Truman wasn't anything but a nigger-lover. I said, "These questions have got to be asked when Dudley gets tired." There were five questions there. I got five different men to ask them during [the talkathon], not one, two, three, four, five, but just everything. Not one after the other, because he would know it would be a trap, but about one every hour. And I had it on tape. "What do you think about the Negro?" He

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wouldn't support it. I had him cussing out big business, I got him cussing out the niggers, and what was going on, but all on tape. I came back to Austin, and Willie Day Taylor took the machine and played it back and had it all typed up.

I never will forget this. A Negro there at the CIO called up. "Mr. Johnson, I would like to meet you and have dinner with you at the Statler Hotel. I'm going to Texas and I have to talk to you about how your brother's campaign is." I told him that I didn't want to go. I wasn't going to have my picture made with anybody--I don't care--at that time. I said, "No, I have an engagement. But I tell you what I'll do. I can come to your office at two-thirty."

So I was down there at his office. He said, "You know, we haven't decided yet. Mr. Dougherty is pretty much a liberal. I'm going to speak in Dallas." I said, "Well, whether Mr. Dougherty is a liberal or not, the question of it is what has he done for the Negro." He said, "Well, I don't know." I said, "Let me show you. Here's what he said," and I showed him that transcript. "Truman is nothing but a damn nigger-lover." That was what he said. I had him crossed up on all of them, and I read it to him. I said, "Now you can go down there and say what you want to. If you want to, you can go ahead and support him." "Well, he's not going to get any campaign money for me to make a speech, because it's already done. When he came out and said that on TV, all the Negroes in Texas know about it, but I appreciate your wanting to help." I never will forget that.

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Dudley Dougherty got Coke Stevenson's support. He had Coke's support; he had Dan Moody's support, and everybody. But he promised Coke he would take him to the Stork Club in New York. You know this Cholly Knickerbocker that writes for the Hearst papers? He's a society man. His name is Igor Cassini; that's actually what his real name is. Society. He came in and he said, "This fighting young Dougherty man came into the Stork Club. He is putting on a terrific campaign against Lyndon Johnson. He was with the ex-Governor of Texas who had served longer than anyone at that time," and all that stuff, just the social stuff. Lyndon called their attorney--I don't know, Tony Buford, I think that's it, the attorney for the Hearst papers--and told them. They called Cholly Knickerbocker on the phone, getting ready to let him go. Then he [Knickerbocker] gets Perle Mesta to call.

Well, these kinds of calls I take, particularly if you are out in the reception room. The reception room is where our office was until I broke my leg. That was the control room. So the secretary said that the Senator couldn't come, but she could talk to his brother. So she said, "It's reported that Lyndon has called the Hearst people about Cholly Knickerbocker. I told them that Lyndon was too big a man to do that." I said, "Oh, I don't think so, Perle. But listen, here's something you ought to be aware of, just what this fellow said about your former boss. Here's what he said about Truman now: 'Harry Truman is nothing but a damn nigger-lover.' Now that's the man that appointed you ambassador to Luxembourg." "Well, forget I ever called you." In

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call. I said, "Judge, this is what's happened now. I want to read it to you." I read the whole thing to him on the phone. I said, "Now I haven't released this to anybody, but I want to tell you that I do know that Dudley Dougherty is coming out with a scandalous paper against my brother just the week before the election. It's being published up in Minnesota, and Hubert Humphrey is watching everything that goes on there. You've already got a copy of it, I know that. If that thing starts through the mail, then I'm going to expose this. I'm leaving it up to you as to what you think should be done. Thank you." He went over there and told his sister, Dudley's mother. They sent a lawyer up to Minnesota and that stopped that just like that. Lyndon knows about it; I talked to him about it, and he said, "Thank you." He knew about it.

Of course, Lyndon cussed me out one day. He said, "Sam Houston, I told you not to spend a damn cent, you hear? It shows here the bill is up to eighty dollars for having that thing recorded, and now I have to report it." I said, "Well, Lyndon, it's the best eighty dollars I ever spent. I want Dudley Dougherty to know that we're recording his speeches so he will be more careful."

G: Who was the black CIO official who came to Texas?

J: I don't know.

G: You don't remember his name?

J: I don't remember his name. Let's cut that off for a minute.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I

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Sam Houston Johnson

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