

INTERVIEW X

DATE: March 31, 1978
INTERVIEWEE: SAM HOUSTON JOHNSON
INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette
PLACE: The Alamo Hotel, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Well, let's start with the Charlie Herring story.

J: All right. Charlie was an attorney for the Looney, Clark [and Moorhead] firm. He was assigned in 1948 to work in our campaign for the Senate. He and John worked up here; they had an office up here on the third floor of that old house we had. But then I never will forget, in 1951 when John Connally quit to come back and practice law with [Alvin] Wirtz, and I had to give up my lucrative practice of being a good-time boy down in Mexico and coming to work for Lyndon, one of the first things that [happened], here come the papers through for Charlie Herring to be federal district attorney. Not that this had any bearing, it just came through, and Lyndon said--I forget who the chairman was of the Judiciary Committee. Anyhow, I carried the papers over to the clerk of the committee. I said, "Expedite this, quickly." So Charlie was confirmed the next day, without any hearings.

So Charlie, he and I were never real close, because I had--well, we were good friends, still are. In 1952--you see, it fits in like this, because this is funny. I think I told you, didn't I, about getting Barry Bishop the job in Mexico as secretary to Ambassador [William] O'Dwyer?

Johnson -- X -- 2

G: You may have, but I'm not sure.

J: Well, let me tell this, because it kind of fits in. Barry Bishop used to work for the Dallas Morning News in Mexico--that's a Republican paper, you know--and I met him when I lived there in Mexico. All right. Now, they transferred Barry Bishop to Washington, the Dallas Morning News did, in 1951. And that's when I got out of my palace down there with the servants, you know, and I went up when John quit. So Barry was up there. He came by the office one day, he and [his wife] Josephine. So I just said, "Let's go over to the Senate. Lyndon's going to make a speech and I want to hear it." I went over there and Barry was with me. Lyndon got up and spoke about twenty minutes about oil or something. Tom Connally was senator at that time and he spoke about two minutes, just to get his name associated in.

Lyndon sent that stuff down, Barry writes the story, giving the facts, you know. Well, then the Dallas Morning News attributed Lyndon's remarks to Connally. And Barry came to me, said, "Look here, here's where I filed. Here's the paper. I'm going to quit." I said, "Oh, hell, Barry, we don't care." "You know that's not it," he said. "I don't want to work for a paper that will do that." I said, "By God, how long have you been with them?" "Twenty-five years." I said, "By God, you're just now finding out? Are you that dumb you don't know how crooked the sons of bitches are? It took you twenty-five years?" "Well, they never have done this to me before." I said, "Well, they've done it, by God, to everybody else in the country. But don't quit on account of--if you quit the Dallas Morning News, I won't

Johnson -- X -- 3

even have any fun up here. I'm selfish in that. And as far as them attributing that to Connally, the hell with it. Don't quit on account of that." Anyhow, he said, well, he was going to.

So then O'Dwyer had been named ambassador just a few months before that, and there were a lot of headlines about O'Dwyer. So I said, "Well, how would you like to go to Mexico as his press associate, first secretary of the embassy?" "Yes." I picked up the phone, called Ralph Hill [?] in the State Department, and I got him a job, just like that. That was under Truman, you see, 1951.

So then Barry came up to me. Here's a letter that he wrote Ted Dealey that owned the Dallas Morning News. "Dear Ted: Please accept this letter notifying you that I am resigning as of this date. Josephine and I will be in Dallas to collect the money on the stock." You see, he owned stock. Of course, when he quit he had to sell it back or something like that. But just two sentences, you know. I said, "Barry, don't do that. Don't you know that in the first place, you're going to be in a sensitive position with the State Department? You're press secretary to the ambassador, and I'm going to get you to be the secretary of the embassy, too. And the first person they're going to is the Dallas Morning News, because that's the only job you've ever had. Twenty-five years, [you] spent twenty-five years."

That's what he had on there [?]. "Recommendations, references: Sam Houston Johnson, Lyndon Johnson, Tom Connally." [I said], "All right, Barry. I'll have to rewrite your application for you, because this won't qualify you. I'll say you were public relations director for

Johnson -- X -- 4

the Dallas Morning News. And I won't be lying, because I know you are, because Stanley Marcus--I've been to your parties. When Stanley Marcus would come down, you had to show him all around. Then someone from Houston, say Neiman-Marcus, you'd have to entertain them. Hell, I know, because you invited me! And you spent your own money!" He did, because he was wealthy, his wife was, you see. "So you were public relations director for the Dallas Morning News, as well as being a reporter. Because everybody that even traded with Neiman-Marcus, going to Mexico, they'd look up Barry Bishop. And those damn cheap bastards, they never gave you any expense account on it." So I added that to the application. I did, I inflated it. Well, I don't like that word anymore, and anyone else, that's dirty now. So I'll just say I improved his application somewhat. (Laughter)

But the point of it is, I said, "Now, Barry, you've got my name down as a reference. That's the worst goddamn thing that you could have. Lyndon is second worst. And Tom Connally is third worst. Because, Barry, there's going to be a Republican president. So here you work for a Republican paper. Now you pick out three or four of the biggest Republican friends that you have in Dallas and put them down. Because we're"--see, I didn't know if it was going to be [Robert] Taft or Eisenhower or who--"and put them down as a reference. You've got us; you got me because I got you the job. And if a Democratic president comes in--Truman's not running--so you're not going to do [?], but you've got to watch out and be prepared. If a

Johnson -- X -- 5

Republican comes in, you've got to be a Republican." That is [with] the references, you know. So I changed it up.

Well, he got a letter back from--oh, this is the letter I wrote to Ted Dealey. "Dear Ted: I've been writing script for the Dallas Morning News for twenty-five years. This is the hardest letter I've ever had to write. You know how Josephine and I love Mexico, and we want to return, and I've been offered it with the State Department as press secretary. But it was so hard"--goddamn, he just cried all over that damn paper for having to write this letter, you know. So then he got a letter back from Ted, just the identical bullshit. Bull. (Laughter) Anyhow, he wrote back that it was the hardest thing for him to do to let him leave, but he knew he loved Mexico [?]. Hell, Barry got that damn thing framed.

So he came in--oh, Sarah Wade was working for us then, and so then she came to me and said, "Get Roy"--that was her husband--"get him a job." Well, I got him a job in Bolivia. Same way. But he had Lyndon Johnson all over his application. He was a newspaperman. Hell, I didn't check, I just called up the same man at the State Department and told him to get--if he had another job open. He said, "Yes, press secretary." All right. Here comes 1953. The United States informational service was the one that was controlling these things, you see. The first person that was fired was Roy Wade. (Laughter) He'd worked for us, you see. I can't think of the head of the USIA at that time, but I'll call him Workheart or Swineheart or something like that [Theodore Streibert]. So Roy was fired, just outright, because this

Johnson -- X -- 6

fellow was a Republican and this and that. And they kept calling me to do it in 1953, you know, when Lyndon became Democratic leader. I tried to save Roy's job but couldn't. I sent wires over to Lyndon, "Wait till Congress convenes so I can talk to you," but [inaudible]. Well, there was a fellow named Gerry Siegel. Have you ever talked to him?

G: Yes.

J: All right. Where is he now, Washington Post?

G: No, he's with a law firm there.

J: Oh, well, he was an attorney for the Washington Post or Newsweek magazine last I heard of him.

But Gerry Siegel was working on the Preparedness [Sub]committee at the time. So he told me he'd take him. Gerry said, "Sam, do you mind if I take this up with Senator [Styles] Bridges about Roy Wade?" I said yes, I did. I said, "No one talks to Senator Bridges but Lyndon Johnson." Bridges was on the Preparedness Committee and he had [as] his administrative assistant, Scotty McLeod. Scotty McLeod had been named security officer for the State Department, you see. He said, "Do you mind if I take it up with Scotty McLeod?" I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "But on a personal basis. Maybe he can help Roy." Understand, I was anxious to help Roy, because Sarah devoted her life, you know. She died of cancer later, and so forth and so on. I said, "Yes, if you talk to Scotty McLeod, just over a drink or something, see if he has something there for that. But leave Lyndon Johnson's name out of it." Okay. So he did.

Johnson -- X -- 7

So Congress convened on this thing, and then Roy Wade came in to see me and said, "Sam, when you dropped the ball, Gerry picked it up." Well, what happened, Gerry Siegel called up in New Hampshire to talk to Scotty McLeod or talk to Senator Bridges. And Senator Bridges said, "Well, what do you want?" And he said he wanted [to talk] about Roy Wade. Then Senator Bridges came to Washington, and then Gerry Siegel went and met him, and then Senator Bridges called Scotty McLeod and gave Roy Wade a job as assistant security officer. Well, when Roy said I dropped the ball, and what happened, whew, boy! I didn't get mad--well, I did get mad. But I didn't--you know, it had been done, so there you are.

G: The Charlie Herring thing was--

J: And I'm leading up to it. You got the Bridges thing on Roy Wade. All right now. You'll have to remember, at that time Styles Bridges, of course, was majority leader. Then he quit as that, Taft took over as that. Styles Bridges was chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Styles Bridges was on the Preparedness Investigating Committee that Lyndon was chairman of, you see. Of course, they didn't have it when the Republicans came in, they had a different chairman. Well, there was no Preparedness Committee to speak of, so whoever was chairman of the Armed Services Committee--I think Dick Russell was.

But anyhow, the point of it is, now, the office here in the Federal Building, Charlie Herring was federal district attorney. Jack Porter was [Republican] national committeeman and he wanted to get Russell Wine, I think [was] his name, over here at San Antonio, a

Johnson -- X -- 8

lawyer, to get him named federal district attorney. Well, Charlie would see me, show me a clipping where Jack Porter was conferring with [Herbert] Brownell about this federal job. He says, "You know what's going to happen?" I said, "Yes, Charlie. It can happen any day." Old Sarah McClendon wrote an article about Russell Wine was going to take Charlie Herring's job, you know. And to be very frank with you, you serve at the pleasure of the president. All federal district attorneys are patronage jobs. The attorney general takes the recommendation of the senators, you see. We'll say in Texas now, for instance, you've got a Republican, [John] Tower, and you've got [Lloyd] Bentsen. All patronage goes to Bentsen, as far as federal district attorneys. Or federal judges, except the federal judges are named for life and the district attorney is a four-year term. That's different.

So Charlie said, "Well, I'm going to get it, you know." I said, "Yes, you're going to get it. And there's not a goddamn thing I know to do about it. But something will come up." So sure enough, there was a post office cafe over there across from the Federal Building and his secretary, Maurine Ray--I don't know whether you know her or not; she used to be secretary to Charlie and then secretary to Governor Connally and something like that. But anyhow, the point of it is, she came over across there where we were having coffee and said, "Mr. Herring, they're calling you from Washington," the personnel director for the Justice Department, I forget his name, whoever it was. It wasn't Brownell himself. Charlie remembers it as Deputy [Attorney General William] Rogers.

Johnson -- X -- 9

So we walked over, and Charlie said, "What am I going to tell them?" "Just tell them that you are going to have to take it up with Lyndon Johnson. They're going to ask you very nicely and quietly to submit your resignation, I mean, before they fire you, you see. But you just say, 'Well, I don't know what to do. I'll have to take it up with Lyndon Johnson.'" He was at that time Democratic leader, you see what I mean. And you have to take into consideration that at time there were forty-eight Democrats and forty-eight Republicans.

G: Now, who told him that he would have to take it up with Lyndon Johnson, to tell him that?

J: Charlie Herring told--

G: Yes, but who told Charlie Herring to say that, to tell him that?

J: I did! Hell! Who would debate it. I told him, I said, "Just tell him you'll take it up with Lyndon Johnson; you can't do anything without taking it up with the Senator." He was taking it all down, you know, of course. And he came back saying, "Well, you understand, Mr. Herring, how these things work." "I don't know. The only thing I know is that Lyndon Johnson named me, and before I'll submit my resignation I'm just going to have to tell him. Y'all are just going to have to wait." And he came back and said, "I know, I know, but you can understand me. Lyndon Johnson, I worked for him. When he was a congressman I worked in his office, and in the navy, and in his campaign. And before I give you my resignation, I want to talk to him about it." (Laughter) So they said all right.

Johnson -- X -- 10

So I said, "Well, Charlie"--Brownell came down here to the University of Texas and he made a talk and [he said] those that have served well in the Justice Department, he will keep them. I've heard that same old crap, you know. But I got a copy of that speech. Well, Charlie's district at that time, I think it still is, was from Waco to El Paso. Judge [Ben, Jr.] Rice was--they've divided it up [with] different judges now; you've got Adrian Spears in San Antonio, you've got Ewing Thomason, or did have, at El Paso. But anyhow, I won't go into that. At that time they just had Rice over here from Marlin, and Charlie Herring had this big territory; from Waco to El Paso, that's pretty big. Now, that covers the border. Well, you know, these immigration cases, it's just a formality, but you do have to go through the district attorney's office. They deport ten thousand maybe in one year. That makes your record look good. Of course Charlie had a good record on income tax evasion and so forth, he had that. But we had the best record of anybody that ever worked in the attorney general's office on account of these damn Mexicans, you see, [inaudible].

Now, the point of it is, Lyndon Johnson, I was going to have to sell him on it. He believed in keeping the rules, you see, and I know he did. He'd have said, "Charlie, resign." [Inaudible] your name, four years. "If the Democrats had won, you'd have stayed, but the Republican won. They deserve that patronage." I knew what Lyndon would do; he'd follow according to the rules. And he would, believe

Johnson -- X -- 11

it or not, he would. Unless he could be convinced that they violated the rules.

Well, he'd take my word, pretty much. He knew that--everybody said I had power with him, and I did have a little bit; I don't think he ever turned me down. But I had to have a damn solid case or he would turn me down, and I never took anything up that wasn't solid, you see. I knew better. But anyhow, the point is, my case wasn't solid. Who in the hell--it was fictitious, because I put in all those Mexicans there. But what was solid was Brownell's saying that he wouldn't fire anybody that had done their job. So then I jerked it around, Charlie would gladly resign, but it would mean in his law practice that he didn't do a good job; that's the reason he was being fired, because of Brownell's speech, you see. That's the point to get Lyndon mad. That was the point, and he was.

Well, I had the number of cases and territory all worked up. Lyndon called me from Washington and said, "Sam Houston, George Brown's plane is going to come up on the first, so it'll pick you up. They'll call you first, and then you call Homer Thornberry, or he will call you. But you'll leave around the first of January." Well, they gave a cocktail party for Everett Looney's son-in-law, Tom whatever his name is [Thomas James] out there, and I never will forget this. I was sitting in there drinking coffee, and they were asking Homer, "When are you going back to Washington?" And Homer said, "Well, pretty cold weather. I don't think I'll run into snow, maybe [in] North Carolina and Virginia. The old Plymouth, you know." Goddamn,

Johnson -- X -- 12

I'd get so disgusted with this crap. But anyhow, he said he and Eloise and David and little Molly were all going to travel in that little Plymouth through that snow, big crowd out there in the yard, you know. And I heard Homer. It's funny, he came in where I was drinking coffee, I said, "Are you going up in the plane with me tomorrow, if they call?" "Oh yes, oh yes." I just think it was kind of funny.

Well, it was the best thing that ever happened. We got on the plane together. And Homer was a good friend of Lyndon's. He was Lyndon's neighbor, errand boy, and I think that he'd even be honored to be called that. He should be. But anyhow, that shows how much affection my brother [has] by saying that, [inaudible] errand boy.

But anyhow, the point of it is, we went up there. I had Charlie's file with me in a briefcase, so I began to talk to Homer about Charlie. "You mean they've asked Charlie to resign?" "Yes." See, Homer hadn't been up there enough really to get onto the--you know. I said, "But Homer, here's the thing about it. Brownell made this speech." I pulled it out, showed him the clipping in the paper. "All those that have done good, [they] will stay on." And I said, "Now, Homer, according to the president, and according to law, you're supposed to serve at the pleasure of the president. These are political appointments. But now, in this case, it shows Brownell stating he is going to keep them on. It looks like he is being fired because he didn't do a good job, and that ruins Charlie's reputation as a lawyer, doesn't it?" "Uh, huh. Yes, you got something there." Well, I won't go into [it].

Johnson -- X -- 13

Anyhow, Lyndon met us and we had a big dinner, nothing but goddamn hamburgers, that kind of a thing. He took us all to his house, of course. And they had two or three drinks. Then I brought up Charlie Herring to Lyndon and sort of explained it to him. And he said, "Homer, do you think that they're giving Charlie a bad deal, Brownell?" "Damn right I do. Yes." Lyndon said, "Well, that's all I need," backing from Homer, you see. The reason I brought it up, I'd convinced him on the plane, then I brought it up that night.

All right. Then the next night or the second night after that, Richard Nixon gave a party for the leaders of Congress, Taft and Lyndon, or Styles Bridges and Lyndon. I think Styles Bridges was leader before he quit and Taft came, and then Lyndon as Democratic leader--that kind of a deal, you see what I mean? And as they were coming through, Brownell was coming through the line, shaking hands, Lyndon shook hands with him [and] said, "Hey, stop a minute, Herbert. I want to tell you something now. Don't you ever send up anybody's name for confirmation before the Senate as long as I'm leader. Because they won't be confirmed. You can't fire my district attorney down there, first come down there and say, 'You've got to do a good job,' and then come and fire him. So I just want to warn you now." So Dick Nixon came up, "Lyndon, can I help out?"

Well, we waited. Then Lyndon told me that we [inaudible] the file and got an appointment at three o'clock one afternoon with Styles Bridges, who was chairman of the Appropriations Committee. And he was going down to Brownell's to tell him that he wouldn't give him toilet

Johnson -- X -- 14

paper, the Appropriations Committee, unless Charlie Herring stayed on. So I took the file in, Lyndon got me and took the file in, and Gerry Siegel was there. Lyndon said, "Well, I've got to go over to see Styles Bridges, take that file." Gerry said, "Oh, Senator, thank him for what he did for Roy Wade." "What did he do for Roy Wade?" "Oh, he got him appointed assistant head of security under Scotty McLeod." "What? Who gave you the goddamn authority to talk to Styles Bridges about Roy Wade?" "Sam Houston." Dorothy Jackson Nichols, she was there when Gerry Siegel first talked to me, you know, a month or two before, and she was acting as my secretary in that front office.

Anyhow, Lyndon buzzed--goddamn, boy, he could buzz that so quick he damn near tore up that front room--walked in there, and he said, "Sam Houston! Gerry says you gave him authority, told him to see Styles Bridges about Roy Wade. I know you know better than that. Did you or didn't you?" I said, "I did." I didn't say another word, I just walked out. I can't--he said, "I know you know better than that!" When he said that I knew he knew better, but I didn't want him firing Gerry Siegel over it, you know. And I didn't give him the grounds, because if I had said no, he'd have said, "Gerry, you are fired." He would have done that so quick, you don't know Lyndon Johnson. So I knew that he knew I was lying, but I got him off the back. . . . Gerry Siegel came out and said, "Sam, I might have got mixed up a little bit in my statistics." I said, "Well, forget it." And that's all.

Johnson -- X -- 15

Now that's to explain, of course, [why] Charlie Herring stayed on the entire term, and then when he wanted to resign, Brownell and them asked him not to quit. So when this fellow up here at Pennsylvania was being fired--you know, Charlie is the only man in the history, a Democrat district attorney, who stayed on in the Republican administration, and it was Charlie Herring. And Barry Bishop was the only Democrat that stayed on in the USIA, because I heard this fellow testify that every son-of-a-bitch Democrat had been fired, and Barry Bishop was in my room in Washington. He went on to serve in the United Nations, went to Spain, and so forth. Then he went back to Mexico. But those two things, Barry Bishop [and Charlie Herring]. So that's the story of Charlie Herring. When this fellow was fired, I said, "You ought to give a story out about how you stayed on. It would make a good story." And he had letters from J. Edgar Hoover, everybody, wanting him to stay on, you know.

G: Did your brother have some leverage on Styles Bridges to--?

J: No.

G: Nothing?

J: If he had of, he wouldn't have used it. You'd say, "Well, that's different from what I've heard." But no. You know, you pick up--and I know you've interviewed people [about] other things, and you think that Lyndon used leverage. Don't accept that. He wasn't that type. I'll tell you what, here's what made Lyndon Johnson senator was not exercising people [?], you see. Lyndon Johnson, as chairman of the Preparedness Committee, every report was unanimous. Lyndon Johnson

Johnson -- X -- 16

conducted that committee with all fairness. Like I think I told you about when I thought Lyndon was able to be president [was] when I saw that man testify, the president of the Atlas Construction Company, and how Lyndon never took advantage. Now, you hear stories, and I've heard them, like he told Frank Church one time. Frank Church was quoting [Walter] Lippmann. He said, "Go to Lippmann when you want that dam up in Idaho." (Laughter) That made Lyndon mad, those kinds of things, but he's going to give Senator Church the dam anyhow. He might have said that kind of a--he wasn't above a little threatening, you know, in things like that.

But that's the Bishop story, because--well, we had this "Meet the Press" [interview], and this fellow, the head of USIA, [was asked], "Are you sure you have got rid of every Democrat on the payroll?" "I am positive." And there Barry Bishop was sitting in my apartment in Washington at that time while we were there.

Now, what else you got?

G: Well, I want you to talk some more about his experience as a lieutenant commander in the navy. You were talking about him calling you and telling you to put on some weight, and how he said he was going to see Roosevelt and request active duty overseas.

J: All right. Well, I was out in Denver. He called me from Los Angeles or Seattle. He and John Connally--John was an ensign and he traveled with Lyndon kind of as his secretary, too, you know, until later they separated. And Bill Deason, too. But anyhow, he called me to go put on some weight; he had something for me to do. And I went to the

Johnson -- X -- 17

doctor and told him, "I don't know what my brother is up to, but he wants me to put on some weight." I ate yeast tablets, and my wife just fed the hell out of me, and I couldn't gain but five pounds, and I was fifty pounds underweight, real skinny, about a hundred and twenty pounds. There wasn't anything wrong with me. So that was it. And later I was turned down by the army as 4-F, but then I went over as a civilian, as head of psychological warfare. You know about that, anyhow, we won't go into that.

Now, the thing of it is, he went to Roosevelt--he told me, "You would love this kind of stuff." (Laughter) This playboy stuff, you know. I'm not near the playboy that--well, I'm not what I used to be, anyhow, but the point of it is, not near as much as what I've been accused of being. Just mention me, I am the bastard, I am the playboy, I am that. I never took a drink in the White House in my life, and you can ask the chief usher up there right now. They did last year, when I took the people up there. But anyhow, we won't go into that. I said it in my book [My Brother Lyndon] that I did, but I didn't. So we'll just leave that out.

But anyhow, the point of it is, he said, "You would love this, making a lot of--" Well, of course, then he said, "I'm going to either tell Roosevelt I want active duty or I'm going to put up my uniform, throw it away, go back to Congress. [Inaudible] I can help Roosevelt more in Congress than I can out here with these this damn movie stars." See, that's the part about Lyndon Johnson that people don't know. But anyhow, Roosevelt sent him over there as his personal

Johnson -- X -- 18

representative, period, and with a letter to Churchill, with a letter to Stalin, and with a letter to [Douglas] MacArthur. Then he called me right before he left. He'd taken some shots and he was sick, and he called me from Los Angeles or San Diego, "Well, Sam Houston, be sure and look after Mama," you know, like that.

Well, the next thing, one day I went out to lunch and I saw a picture of him where where he'd been in the Fiji Islands, or something like that. It was in the Denver Post. And the next thing was when he was shot down in Australia. So the story was this counterpart--he represented Roosevelt and then they had a Frenchman and an Englishman; there were two or three of those people of equal rank, or maybe generals that travelled with Lyndon on these tours. So then when he went in to MacArthur and told him where he was going, MacArthur said, "No, that's too dangerous, Congressman." "I want to prove it." That was Lyndon. Well, when they went out to get in that plane, the parachute that they had [was too small]. Lyndon's friend was aboard this [plane], his counterpart, French general or colonel whatever it was, Englishman. Englishman. The takeoff was in twenty seconds. So they had to go back and get a bigger parachute for Lyndon. So the people that he was travelling with, their plane was shot down, and Lyndon's limped back in, got back in to somewhere.

The next day, though, MacArthur, as you know--I don't know whether you know; as I say "as you know," I thought maybe you might have picked it up, but if you didn't, all right--he was [an] actor, very dramatic. That "old soldiers never die, they just fade away" [speech],

Johnson -- X -- 19

that's the truest thing that he did. The man that faded him away was Lyndon Johnson, too. I was there. Anyhow, he had three chairs. Lyndon walked in. He said, "You see, Commander, those chairs that are vacant? That's on account of you, making these seats [empty]," in other words, more or less saying, "You killed those people." And Lyndon took it. Then MacArthur awarded him the Silver Cross, Silver Star, whatever it is. Lyndon wouldn't accept it; he got mad and walked out. And of course, later makes a different story. He did [accept it] later. But at that time he was damned mad.

G: I'd never heard that.

J: I know you haven't. There's a hell of a lot that Lady Bird never heard, or Lyndon never--and I'm not making it up, because I used to sit for hours with Lyndon, talking about it. But it's a fact. You can go check when he finally received his Silver Cross [Star]. MacArthur awarded it to him but [it was later] when he accepted it. You can check the naval record, I don't care. But he turned it down because he came back here and--well, anyhow, let's go on.

Then of course, he got back to Hawaii. Roosevelt called all members of Congress in uniform back. And those members of Congress in uniform over there [were] coming back [because of] Lyndon Johnson--
(Interruption)

What was it?

G: He called all the members of Congress back.

J: He called all the members of Congress back, and then he [Lyndon] was out in Honolulu with Admiral [Chester] Nimitz and he had the fever.

Johnson -- X -- 20

He had just come flying back in there, and he pulled [inaudible] to get on out of the hospital, you know, to get Lyndon out [?]. Nimitz said, "That don't work with me."

G: Is that right?

J: Nimitz said, "You're not able to fly back. [Inaudible] and he said, "I won't let you." Lyndon wanted to fly back at such-and-such an hour to get back to the States. He was sick, he had malaria, things like that. I don't know whether you knew that or not.

G: Yes, I knew that.

J: But anyhow, Nimitz did. And the plane crashed that he would have been on.

G: I didn't know that.

J: Lyndon said, "I never will forget, I was mad at Nimitz, and the next thing I know, the plane didn't make it back." That was in the papers. It didn't say in the papers that Lyndon was scheduled on it, but anyhow, those things can--

G: Let me ask you some more questions along this line. Do you recall him making an investigation in the Northwest, say, in Oregon or Seattle or that area, with regard to problems between different branches of the service, say, the navy and the army, over who would be in command there and one thing and another? Did he ever talk to you about that?

J: Did you pick that up from Maggie [Warren Magnuson]?

G: I've got it somewhere.

J: Seems like something like that would come from Magnuson. It would appear like Lyndon did it as a courtesy.

Johnson -- X -- 21

G: You don't remember any stories about that?

J: Repeat it again, let me see.

G: I get the impression that he went up there to sort of investigate--

J: Yes, he was in Seattle, I know that. He was up there several times while he was in the navy.

G: Right. To resolve a difference of opinion, of disagreement, between the navy and the army with regard to having command in a certain area.

J: Yes. I'm sure that's true. That sounds [right]. He was in Seattle quite a bit; I know I talked to him [?].

G: Another thing. I get the impression from reading some of the newspaper clippings at the time that there was a movement afoot in the late thirties or early forties to make him secretary of the navy.

J: Oh, hell, of course. (Laughter)

G: Is that right?

J: Oh, God, of course!

G: What's the story on that?

J: He was offered it.

G: I didn't know that. Really?

J: I guess you would wonder, most people would wonder, when you serve in the navy, you're just a congressman, and if Roosevelt would ask you to be secretary of the navy, which meant in his cabinet, at that time. That was before the armed services were unified. And Roosevelt had served [in] World War I not as secretary, but [as] under secretary under--what was the fellow's name up there?

G: Daniels, Josephus Daniels.

Johnson -- X -- 22

J: Yes. You'd think that Lyndon would want that, wouldn't you? I mean [inaudible].

(Interruption)

Anyhow, Lyndon came out to Mama's house to see me. I didn't know which job to take, and I had enough leave coming to me to where I didn't have to make a decision for thirty to sixty days. Then Lyndon comes out to Mama's and says, "Sam Houston, I don't want you to take either one of them. I'm getting ready at San Marcos tomorrow night, I'm going to blast the OPA. Next thing is, I don't want you working for an oil company lobbyist. I want you to succeed me in Congress. You go to work--Jesse Kellam is [NYA] director down here." I had my paycheck [as] assistant to Aubrey Williams; I'd been Jesse Kellam's boss when I was in Memphis as head man. [I was] over him. And he said, "Now, you get stationed here, then you visit around over these different counties. Then you can go to Congress, because I'm going to be secretary of the navy."

I did, I talked to--Jesse called me out to his house. I never will forget, though, his saying, "Well, Sam Houston, I know how you feel. We all have to make sacrifices. I don't know where you'll fit in with me." See, I'd been his boss. He said, "I might put you in charge of the warehouse," kind of a routine [job], whatever it was. I listened. My wife was along. When we got home, she busted down in tears, the emotion, you know. So Jesse was up at Buchanan Dam with Lyndon later on. I went down to report for work, and John Manning was his deputy. And I knew John from Corpus Christi-Robstown days and

Johnson -- X -- 23

he knew me. He put me in the desk between he and Jesse. Then [when] Jesse got back, he couldn't move me. (Laughter) But anyhow, that was all.

But before I did that, though, let me tell you. I called up Russell Brown, general counsel, to [ask him to] keep the job open for three or four months, with the independent petroleum [producers]. Well, Lyndon, he wasn't appointed. And I didn't get out and campaign. I do think he was partly serious.

G: Why didn't he take that appointment?

J: Let me answer that one. How many secretaries of the navy ever become president? How many secretaries of the army? How many members of the cabinet ever become president of the United States? You serve four years and you're out, you're forgotten. But if you serve in Congress, you're there. Hell, it's so damned obvious, he had his eye on the White House. That ain't one thing that fooled me. I stayed on for three months and the hell with it. I said, "Hell, he's not going to resign, he's too smart to resign. Hell, he's up there with Rayburn's picture, you know, and all that stuff. That's a steppingstone, you don't cover--Jesse Jones, hell, he'd love to be--he held every god-damn thing but he never got off the ground." I'm just telling you how it happened.

I don't know, I haven't checked the record, I'm just laughing. I'm not up on history, but I don't know of a--if you're going to run for president and you set your eyes back on it, you're going to do it from Congress or the Senate or from something else, a general or

Johnson -- X -- 24

something, right before their eyes. But when you serve as secretary of the navy for four years, then you're back down here at KTBC. You're holding a cabinet meeting with [Dale] Malechek. (Laughter)

But that's the reason. Stay on in Congress, then run for the Senate. But when you--see, he rejected--you got Taft [?] up there, I'm sure you have, he's shown it to every goddamn person in the country before he even went for the Senate. He was offered the head of the REA, you know. I remember that. He started this Pedernales [Electric] Co-op up there, he pulled that crap, you know, and Roosevelt just mentioned one time that he'd like to have him head of the REA. So Lyndon got Tommy Corcoran, or somebody there, to write him a letter offering it to him, you know, and then Lyndon wrote him back that he had a contract with his district to remain on in Congress, and Roosevelt wrote him back that "you're a great man to stay in your district." (Laughter) That was REA. That would have been a bigger steppingstone than secretary of the navy, at that time, from getting the farmers, you see what I mean? There, does that answer your question?

G: Yes.

J: Now a few people--I didn't believe him when he said he was going to--I know Roosevelt offered it to him; I don't question that a bit in the world. Roosevelt gave him the build-up by having breakfast with him, to get the full report. Oh, yes, there's no question about that. But he'd have been a damn fool to have done it, because at that time, people--I don't care what Booth Mooney says, I just thought even that Lyndon was more powerful than Roosevelt all my life, you know. I

Johnson -- X -- 25

didn't like him to be second man to anybody. But, by God, he told Rayburn what to do, it wasn't the other way around. Bill White, you know him, I was talking to him one day. He said, "Sam, did you ever notice any jealousy on Rayburn's part toward Lyndon?" I said, "Hell, yes. I knew it all the time." See, Rayburn owed his job to Lyndon; Lyndon didn't owe him a damn thing. That's one of the reasons I wrote my book. You see, Rayburn went for Garner for president. See, Roy Miller, the lobbyist for Andrew Mellon, the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company and all that, he used to work for the King Ranch. You've heard of him, the most powerful man in Texas. He was John Garner's campaign manager back there in 1932, and then he was there when John Garner kept the outfit but he--Corpus Christi, and he officed where I officed, with Mr. Kleberg. I've run his errands for him.

G: He was up there a lot, wasn't he?

J: Oh, he officed--I mean, Dick Kleberg was never in the office. He discussed everything with me, and he made all the appointments. Garner was national committeeman for Texas and Roy Miller was executive director for everything in Texas. So Roy Miller--

G: This is a point that you covered in that--

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview X

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