INTERVIEW II

DATE: June 28, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: JAMES R. JONES

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE McSWEENEY

PLACE: Hay-Adams Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

M: You are presently practicing law in your home town in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and are just up here on a business trip in Washington, D.C. Am I correct?

J: That's correct.

M: In our last session, we had gone through your earliest part of contact with Mr. Johnson and the Johnson family. This was in 1964. You had told me about the campaign and advancing the Lady Bird tour. We had also of course gone through the contact and how you had happened to come into this position.

I'd like to pick up from that point forward and throw it back to you and ask if you would begin by describing for me what your role was in this period in which you were, I believe, assisting Marvin Watson as appointments secretary, which would really go from 1964 to the time in which you assumed the actual position in 1968. So you would have been assistant to Mr. Watson during that period. Could you tell me a little bit about what your responsibilities were along that line?

J: Basically, they were so varied, which is one of the reasons that the position was so enjoyable, both from the standpoint of working for Marvin Watson and the President.

It was February 1965 on George Washington's birthday that I joined the White House. And it was also the first day that I ever met Marvin Watson; it was the first time that we had ever interviewed or anything like that. Had I discussed the interview with Marvin beforehand?

M: No, I don't believe you had.

J: Well, after the Lady Bird Special and after the elections of 1964, I was in the army and had been at Fort Benning, Georgia, and Liz Carpenter, who was on Mrs. Johnson's staff, wrote a letter to Jack Valenti after the November elections saying that I was someone that they ought to have at the White House.

When I finished my tour at Fort Benning, I was coming back through Washington. This was in the middle of February 1965. And I called on Liz Carpenter and the people that I had known from the campaign. They put me in touch with Marvin Watson, a man whom I had never heard of before, and he called me. We visited for about fifteen minutes, and he said, "Are you ready to go to work?" It was hitting the ground running from then on. I had two hours to find an apartment and get settled.

My first duties with Marvin--I'll backtrack by saying Marvin's office initially consisted of Marvin Watson, Mary Jo Cook, who was his secretary, a girl named Ruby Moy who was the other secretary, and myself. So there were only four people in the office. My principal concentration was to take all the detail work, as many of the telephones, as much of the planning, all of the staff work off Marvin's shoulders. Because Marvin at that time was spending literally 50 per cent of his time with the President, in the mornings at the bedroom, in the evenings in the Mansion, and in the office so much. So Marvin, as far as running the office, didn't have the time to do the

detail work. That was basically my responsibilities for the first year and a half or so.

Those responsibilities encompassed being in charge of the advance operations. For example, if the President made a trip somewhere, you had to line up advance men. You had to go in advance to make the preliminary plans as to the schedule and the itinerary. You had to get certain briefing materials for the President's attention. That was one part of ft. Then the day-to-day scheduling: who saw the President, when they saw him, and what back-up information was necessary to be given to the President prior to an appointment on a daily appointment schedule.

Then we had the responsibility for the administrative operations of the White House. In the early days of 1965, the White House West Wing was being completely renovated. GSA was in charge of this operation, but they were contracting out certain portions of it. And everybody was vying for offices--the usual routine that goes on around any large organization: special assistants wanted certain size offices and so many assistants or secretaries. So that was the Marvin Watson office responsibility: the administrative deals of how the money was spent; how much money we would ask Congress for; the supplies, contracts, and things like that for physical improvements of the White House operations. A good bit of the detail work in that area was my responsibility.

We had some political liaison work with the governors primarily, and the [Democratic] National Committee, and the state chairmen of the various states. That was out of Marvin's office. There again I handled most of the follow-through work, the handling of the telephone calls. In those days, Marvin was the principal conduit for information to and from the President, and I was the principal conduit to and from

Marvin, so that it flowed that way. Eventually Marvin's staff built up, and the responsibilities seemed to increase, both just answering correspondence, telephone calls, and what have you.

Then I moved out, more or less, of the type of work I was doing initially into spelling Marvin off in working with the President. In other words I took responsibilities for going to the Ranch, for example. In those cases where the President would make a trip that Marvin didn't just have to make, I was the one that would go along and act in Marvin's capacity, which gave Marvin a respite.

M: This would have developed by about the end of 1966.

J: I believe December 1966 was the first time I started going down to the Ranch. Then that followed through until toward the latter part of 1966, I did additional work such as some speech writing and editing--not writing as much as editing--and speech coordination. For example, the State of the Union address of 1968, the President gave me that responsibility while we were at the Ranch in December of 1967. Harry McPherson had the initial responsibility to collect all the information.

I would say probably a combination of factors led the President to more or less put me as coordinator of it, the primary factor being that the President in December of 1967 had certain ideas of things he wanted in the 1968 State of the Union. I was at the Ranch, the material was coming down, the President would say, "I think I want such and such." So it became incumbent on me to put such and such into the speech. From that, he started calling me about things he wanted and didn't want. But some speech coordination work developed and various things like that until actually in late January or early February of 1968, I forget, Marvin moved to another office to concern himself

strictly with political activities.

And I took over Marvin's office. In fact, Marvin and I switched offices on the first floor of the West Wing. I took over his office and in fact, or de facto, operated as appointments secretary. Then when Marvin was appointed postmaster general, I was, in name, given the job.

M: I'd like to back up and go over some of the aspects that you've mentioned here. I think one of them that comes to mind and has sometimes been referred to as a part of Mr. Watson's work was the switchboard affair, as it is called, in which there were some sort of instructions to either record incoming and outgoing phone calls to the White House and to members of the staff. Could you tell me a little bit about how this developed?

J: Well, there were several aspects to that. The first comment I would make is that it has been traditional, as I understand it, for the appointments secretary or the person who occupies that particular position of being the coordinator and administrative officer of the White House to have his phone calls listed, because traditionally that particular job has been one that requires the man to be with the President so much that he's generally not there when a phone call comes in. It worked out, as I understand it, that it was easier for the White House operators just to keep a log, so when that appointments secretary could return the calls, he'd just say, "Give me all these such and such calls." And they would place them for him. So that was not anything different. I think the fact [was] that some columnists did not like Marvin Watson, and when they would call him, the operator sometimes wasn't as tactful as a secretary. When they'd have to give their name and where they're calling from and their phone number, they took offense at that. And that [was] coupled with the fact that they suspicioned Marvin Watson in a lot of areas. I think

they exaggerated it considerably.

But as far as the phone cover, as it was called, we had periods in the White House when the President would become personally involved in the amount of money that was being spent, the size of the staff and what have you. It seemed like this was sort of cyclic. We'd go several months building up the staff and building up services, and then we would see the bill, and he'd have to take another look, as it were. In this particular case there was reason to believe two things: one, that we were spending too much money on the phones that had been installed when the West Wing was renovated, and that this was an unnecessary expense from an efficiency standpoint, a cost analysis standpoint; and number two, from the efficiency standpoint, we had a lot of people on the staff who had a series of several lines on their telephone, and we knew in fact they didn't have that much business. This survey was run, so that [on] each incoming call that came to the White House, the operator would record it, who it was from, and what staff member it went to. From that we developed some startling information. For example, one staff assistant who was in the Executive Office Building--I'll be hazy on the facts, but it seems to me that he had something like four or five lines on his telephone and two or three or four telephone instruments, and he had an average of something like twelve calls a day. You contrast that to Marvin Watson's phone situation: it would be an average of around a hundred and fifty calls a day. And they had basically the same telephone extensions. From that we were able to cut down considerably on the amount of telephone equipment that came into the White House, and saved a good deal of money. I do not recall what the amount of money was, but it was a substantial amount of money in government funds that was being spent unnecessarily on telephones in the White House.

I think some columnists would have you believe that all the pressure they put on making Marvin Watson the fall guy of this thing resulted in the lifting of this telephone cover, when in fact that wasn't the case, as far as I know anyway. Once the results were tabulated and we ran an analysis of what was there, then the thing was lifted and only Marvin Watson's office had the telephone log continued.

M: Did this interest in the economic aspects of the White House emanate directly from the President?

J: A surprisingly large percentage emanated directly from the President. He was a remarkable fellow. I can recall one conversation that I was in with regard to the letting of a contract for I believe it was some landscaping and paving work on the South Lawn of the White House. He analyzed the contract almost as though that was the biggest thing in his life, because he just took a personal interest in little things like that. He wanted to make sure that we were not getting taken, that we drove a good bargain, and that the government money was being spent wisely. I think basically his years of experience on the Hill and the ability of congressional committees to investigate and see if you spent money wisely or unwisely had something to do with that. He was very serious about using economy and good sense in spending White House funds. He took a personal interest in a large percentage of that to make sure that we did it correctly.

And then a lot of that emanated from Marvin Watson also.

M: Another sort of example of this that had a lot of publicity of course was the period in which the President turned off all the lights in the White House. Did you have any activity relating to this?

J: He firmly believed that. Of course, this was down at the Ranch and at the White House

both. And this was not only when it got all the publicity in 1965 and 1966, but this carried on after the publicity died down. He explained it to me one time down at the Ranch. He said I'd find the same problem some day, and now that I have a house I'm being the same way. But he was brought up in the days when electric power was at a premium. First of all, they didn't have rural electric power, and money was so short that they couldn't afford to waste electricity. This is just the way he was brought up, and he still believed that way. I think the only difference was he probably confided to reporters that he did this in 1965-1966, and told them this, thinking that that would be a well-received piece of news. Instead they turned it on him and kind of derided him for it.

M: Another area that was some of your responsibility, although I don't know if you had any direct activity, is the liaison with the FBI, and the FBI reporting on people who have been hired or who are prospects for jobs in government. Did you work in this area at all?

J: Yes, I did. This was exclusively Marvin Watson's area of responsibility. What I did, at least when I first went to work as Marvin's assistant, was to read many of the FBI reports and summarize highlights of them and put a cover memo with Marvin's signature on it to send in for the President's night reading. Of course, these FBI full field examinations were primarily complete reports on people who were being considered for appointments to jobs. You had other FBI reports on national situations or possible subversive groups or what have you, but the vast bulk of them were either people who had been appointed or were holding presidential appointments or who were being considered for assignment. I remember Marvin Watson came on February 1, 1965, and I came February 22, 1965. For about four or five months Marvin and I both read these FBI reports till it seems to me like ten or eleven at night, after most of the work was done, because we were that far behind

and the President was continually keeping pressure on Marvin to get all of these FBI reports in.

[It was] because the President was very keen on not wanting any kind of a scandal in his administration with any appointments of office holders. He has never confided in me as to reasons why he would be so keen on that, and I would only speculate that the reputation he had of being a Texas wheeler-dealer is something he did not want history to confirm that that reputation ever existed while he was president. And I would imagine that he was personally hurt by things like Bobby Baker and Walter Jenkins. He just wanted to take every precaution that was humanly possible to make sure that he had honest and stable people in government, or at least in presidential appointments.

He was keeping pressure on Marvin, which meant pressure was on me. I used to marvel at the pace of those days when Marvin would literally, almost be shaking at the end of the day because there were so many things to do in such a short amount of time. Then at eight o'clock or so at night he'd have to start reading all those FBI reports and summarizing the same way I was. That's how far behind we were. You had to read through them, and these FBI full field examination were forty or fifty pages per person, so that takes a lot of time.

M: Do you recall any occasions where there was information in these reports that directly affected whether someone was hired or considered?

J: Oh, yes, I think there was. That would be the President's decision to make as to whether or not they would not be considered because of something in the report. But it was amazing what the FBI could turn up on people both as to their personal [and public] lives. The things of course that we looked for were personal quirks. Homosexuality was

always one that was difficult for someone in high public office. If there were strong indications that that existed, I'm sure that that colored the President's thinking. Any type of previous problems with the law were brought out in these reports, and that was always highlighted. Any kind of personal problems like a particular drinking problem was highlighted. And you had to use your good judgment. This was something that Marvin, and I to a lesser extent, had the responsibility [for]. If someone, for example, had a serious drinking problem but there was no evidence at all that he had had any drinking problem in eight years, for example, you had to balance it off that way. I suppose, if someone had not been as fair as Marvin, you could really ruin somebody by summarizing an FBI report that would go to the President saying, "This fellow was drunk every night for three years running," or something like this, and not point out that occurred thirteen years ago or something like that. But Marvin was very scrupulous about trying to balance the report and not to shade it any way, but just highlight the facts and let the President reach his conclusions.

M: I think perhaps one of the reasons that this has been brought up in some of the articles and publications on the presidency was that in uncovering associations or making a judgment on a personal problem, that you were basing it on sometimes just very faint indications, and that this was an unfair judgment on some people, and that this could be used against them to discriminate.

J: One observation that I made on FBI reports was this old guilt-by-association-type thing. They would present information, which I suppose was their duty to present in the report as an investigator, that would not even begin to hold up as anywhere near substantial evidence in a court of law. And there you had to make a basic judgment or point out, if

you were going to highlight it at all, what shred of evidence it would be, how substantial it would be. For example, somebody's report may be all good except a former neighbor might say that he was playing around with another woman or something like this, or that his wife was playing around, something that was nebulous like that. You had to be specific in cases like that when you summarized the report that there was no other indication that the man had any problem. Or many times you'd just put "Forty-one interviews contained no derogatory information. One person, a distant relative, said so-and-so." It was usually pretty clear; it couldn't be misunderstood. I don't think anybody's character was particularly damned by it. These things were very closely guarded, so it was not the type thing that was passed around the building.

M: Were you aware that this much investigation had gone on in former presidential appointees or considerations?

J: I don't believe they had. I'm virtually certain that this was an innovation with Lyndon Johnson. Is it being carried on under Nixon? I thought it was.

M: I really don't know. I haven't read anything that says it is.

J: I think it's good because--this is not relevant to the oral history, it's just a personal viewpoint--I do believe that public officials are held to a higher standard than anyone else. And I think the more you can learn in advance, the better it is for the whole public respect for government.

M: Another area that you've mentioned is the advance operations. I didn't clearly understand at that point if that included trips abroad?

J: Yes.

M: Could you go back to some of your first advance operations and describe those and what

they were?

J: I'll describe two or three of them and if I'm getting more than you need on this thing, just stop me.

M: We couldn't possibly get more than we need. I know you're limited [by time.]

J: The very first trip that I advanced was the President's first out-of-the-country trip to Mexico in April 1965. There had been some secret inquiries back and forth with the Mexican government to line this thing up. And on the Saturday before the President was to arrive on the following Thursday, as I recall Saturday night about nine o'clock, Marvin said, "Are you packed? Do you want to go to Mexico?" He gave me a series of CIA bulletins on the security situation in Mexico City, and said to go down. "This is basically what the President wants to do," and he outlined it, et cetera.

I went down with the Signal Corps, the Secret Service, and FBI representative. I believe that's it. Marty Underwood went down to work on the advance also. We got there Sunday, and immediately called upon their chief of protocol, the Mexican chief of protocol, and began outlining the plans for the trip and what was going to transpire.

One of our chief functions on that particular trip was to raise a crowd, because we felt it was important that Lyndon Johnson get as good a reception as John Kennedy did. We found out various ways in which the Kennedy assistants had raised a crowd. They worked it through many different [ways], hauling people in with various sources of funds. So we floundered around for two days with the embassy talking to our ambassador and to all of his people, trying to figure out how we were going to insure a good crowd. It was my first experience with international-type work. Everybody was [saying], "Yes, yes, everything's fine. We'll have that done tomorrow." The next day

occurred and nothing was done. I was really beginning to panic.

Then we discovered our CIA man attached to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City had the key to the whole country. He called up a man in the Mexican government, and immediately everything moved. It was amazing. I don't suppose all CIA men are this way, but this guy had the real key. He had more clout in Mexico than our ambassador did. We had about two million people lined up in the parade route all the way downtown. It was a very successful trip, I think, from that standpoint.

One of the areas where we fell down there is that we had the President coming in too late so that it did not make the news shows in the United States, so the coverage back here wasn't particularly good. But that was the first advance. We went down there primarily to raise a crowd and to watch out for the security area.

In that particular case, I know we had a real panic. The day before the President was to come, the President of Mexico told the Secretary of State, [Antonio] Carrillo Flores, who told our ambassador that they were to ride in an open car. We had planned to ship the President's bulletproof limousine to Mexico City. We held fast. Jack Valenti had talked to the President back in Washington, and the President wanted the closed car. The President of Mexico wanted the open car. Well, in the final analysis we had to go in the open car. That was one that we just. . . . The Secret Service was having fits over it, too.

So you have these problems in negotiating with a foreign government, where you're bound to respect them as a sovereign. But at the same time you have your own peculiar problems with the presidency that they don't understand, so it's a very ticklish and very much slower operation. When we'd go to Chicago, we'd tell Mayor Daley, "We

want this, this, and this," and it was there. Here you had to cajole. They had lots of protocol and all of that.

M: You spoke of finding out how the Kennedy people had done this. How did you manage that?

J: Through some people in our embassy who had been holdovers.

Another type trip is where you take more than just a one-shot country. An example that comes to mind was the Latin American summit, for example. There we went to Punta del Este, or the Central American trip. The Central American summit is probably a better example, where we had a summit meeting with the Central American presidents in El Salvador. Then we were going to make a stop in each of the other Central American countries and drop off the presidents. In that case we took a trip down to the Latin countries about a month or so before the trip, did it very much off the record. We took a view of the physical layout of where we wanted the President to go, and what alternatives there were for him to do in that particular country. In other words, instead of just laying a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier or something, could he see a poverty project or school educational TV project or something like that. We tried to find something that was new and unusual and related to that country.

We came back from that with that information, and we made a tentative schedule to present to the President that had a tentative itinerary as to the time he would leave, the time he would arrive, how long the speech would be, what the program would be, almost a minute-by-minute activity of the President from the time he left Washington until he returned. If he approved that or made some modifications in it, we would take whatever he decided on and use that as our working guide from then on.

Then we would bring in what we called advance men. These were men from government or private industry who had had some experience in advancing a presidential trip. We briefed them on what they were to do in their country. Their primary responsibilities were to raise a large crowd, to make sure that all the physical aspects of the trip were in place at the right time, at the right place, et cetera. Such things as from the physical standpoint, to make sure that the platform was there, that the podium was there, that the speaker systems would go out so that all of the crowd could hear him, and all that. Then the third aspect of the advance man's work was in the area of security. So he had to raise a crowd, make sure all the physical appurtenances were taken care of, and then make sure that the security aspect was followed.

After we briefed the advance men, we sent them out usually all at once on a plane, usually an air force plane, dropped them off at their country, or at their destination, and then they would go to work. And each night they would report to me as to what progress they made, what problems they got. In some instances, they would point out that "We can't have the President speaking at such and such a spot at such and such a time, because the people are still working. You can't raise a crowd." So we'd adjust the schedule, and kept refining his itinerary based on what the advance man would send back to us.

Then came time for the trip. We'd go down there, our advance man was already there, and he would more or less walk us through whatever the President was supposed to do.

M: How much direction or suggestion came from Mr. Johnson on any of these trips?

J: Generally, on all of these trips, he just made a broad outline. For example, he'd say, "I want to go to the Midwest, the midwestern part of the United States." Then it was up to

me to find out what might be going on in certain states that would be of presidential caliber, but at the same time would leave the President flexibility enough so that if he decided he didn't want to go, or for some reason couldn't go, he wouldn't have to cancel out. So we'd try to find an ongoing event so that we could go into a place. I'd find out when they were being held, and we just mapped it out from then on. After we got an idea of what would be good, we'd present it in a memo to the President. He'd say yes or no or change it a little bit here or there, "I don't want to go here," "I do want to go there." Then we'd go with it. But, generally, as far as where we went and what we wanted to do, he just gave a general broad outline and we took it from there. In fact, that was one of the few areas that he wasn't so specific. Usually he was very specific in what he wanted done.

M: How about some of the other trips throughout the administration: the Honolulu Conference, the SEATO meeting, the around-the-world trip? Were you involved in those?

J: Yes, I was involved in all of those.

M: Tell me about them.

J: I guess one of the trademarks of our trips is that they were very generally done on short notice, at least as far as the public part of it was concerned. I think the reason for that is there were so many demands on the presidency and on the President, and there was such a fluid international situation that he never knew when things were going to come up that required his attention. He wanted the flexibility not to have to go to something that he had committed to. He felt that if he had committed to an event, he had given his word and he was going to follow through with it. If he committed to something far in advance

and something came up that was not of a public nature--perhaps it could be a message from Kosygin or it could be a new policy strategy in Vietnam or anything like this that was not of a public nature, if something like that came up and he had committed an event somewhere else, he would be forced to cancel the event. And it was his feeling that once he cancelled something or modified something after it was made public, the press would then speculate as to why he modified it and would usually make a crisis where a crisis didn't exist. So for that reason he kept things very close to the vest as far as travel was concerned. We usually did things very clandestinely until the last minute when we moved.

The around-the-world trip was a good example of that. Prime Minister Holt was lost in the swimming accident in Australia. The President felt very close to Holt because Holt had been a strong personal ally in Vietnam, and he had been a good companion for the President at Camp David and other meetings they had had. So he felt personally very fond of him and decided about two days, I guess, before the funeral in Australia that the President would go. So we immediately dispatched advance men to Australia, [Canberra]. Then we kept advance men in reserve because he had mentioned to Marvin that he might want to see the Pope. So we went on to Australia and went through the funeral activities. Then we decided that we'd go back by way of--was that the trip where we went to Vietnam also, yes--Thailand, Pakistan, Vietnam and Rome.

One of the reasons there was so much of a clandestine operation in that regard was because all of our international intelligence information indicated that the Communist Party in Rome was very strong and were planning to demonstrate. The President felt that anything he could accomplish with the Pope with regard to putting

certain pressures on Vietnam with the ultimate hope of bringing peace would be diminished, if not completely wiped out, by any kind of a strong demonstration the communists were able to muster against the President's visit there. So that's why it was not publicly explained.

And we had very many clandestine operations on that particular trip after we got to Rome. I'll disregard most of the others. We can go back to it if you want. But I remember we scheduled hotel rooms, as I recall, it was about two hundred hotel rooms in Madrid to throw the communists off as to where we were going to spend the night on Saturday night.

M: I hadn't heard that one before.

J: We had helicopters that were being flown [in]. I really can't recall when the decision was made to fly the presidential helicopters from the United States to Rome, but it was done about the time we were in Vietnam on our way to Rome. There was that much of a close margin. The helicopters got to Spain, as I recall, and because of weather reasons they couldn't land. But anyway, the presidential helicopters never got to Rome. We were on our way there and a dispatch was put out when we couldn't get our helicopters there, to bring helicopters in from the nearest army base, which I believe was at Livorno, Italy. So they flew down. These were old helicopters--I don't remember the exact make or anything, but they were not anywhere near late model helicopters--and we had three of them. We landed in Rome on Saturday night, roughly seven or eight o'clock--anyway, it was dark--in a private part of the airport, and we got into these three helicopters. Well, the first one went off with the President after some delay; the second one that I was on, we couldn't get it started, and finally we got it started.

The first stop with this helicopter convoy was at the summer house of the President of Italy. The two Presidents were going to visit for a while, and then President Johnson was going to see Pope Paul. While they, the two Presidents, were inside, the helicopter pilots came to see me to find out what the schedule was and where they were supposed to land, because these fellows had never flown in Rome before. It was rather funny. They had a street map of Rome and a penny postcard with a picture of Rome and the Vatican on it, and this was what we used to identify where we were going to land these helicopters. We had three helicopters; one had press in it; the other one had back-up staff and staff; the third had the President and Marvin--no, Marvin didn't even go on this leg of the trip, I don't believe.

So anyway, we were going to be the first helicopter to come in, and we were going to land in the Vatican gardens, which are at the rear of the Vatican. We circled around St. Peter's--the Sistine Chapel, we figured we were going to knock in all of the windows, and we thought of all the damage that we could do there. But anyway we landed the helicopters. The press helicopter never did land; they couldn't get in. The meeting went off well enough. But the point of it is the close margin upon which we operated on many of these trips sometimes caught up with us, and it did particularly in that case when we had to innovate. These are things the President never knows, but we were just lucky again.

M: You mentioned some other operations that you had to go through. Would you like to go into them or do you think that they are a little too specific? On this trip?

J: With regard to Rome?

M: The whole round-the-world trip.

J: I would want to refresh myself on that before I get too specific.

M: Well, let me ask you: did you have any reaction from the President on how operations and procedures of the trip were going?

J: Generally, the only time you heard a reaction from the President was when things were obviously going wrong, and it was being brought to his attention as going wrong. The one thing in this job that I found was, all you were doing was buying time to get all the pieces in place. For example, on the incident I just related, the fact the two presidents were meeting in the summer house gave us enough time to try to get these helicopter pilots to find out where St. Peter's was. Actually we wouldn't have found it even at that, but we had an Italian helicopter leading the convoy as we went off over Rome.

But the President just expected all of his staff to perform in an excellent fashion, and I think with rare exception he didn't see the need to always compliment you on what was done right. He did remind you in no uncertain terms when things were done wrong, and I think that's the way it should be.

M: How about the SEATO conference in the Philippines?

J: The Manila Conference in 1966.

M: The Manila Conference.

J: On that one, Bill Moyers and I believe Harry McPherson and the Signal man and the Secret Service about a month in advance toured each of the countries that the President would visit plus the Manila Conference site itself. They came back with a general guideline recommendations as to what the President should do. The President agreed to do that, and then I took it over as my responsibility. So I don't know what Bill actually did on his pre-trip tour.

But once it became my responsibility, we gathered all of our best advance men and briefed them on their particular portion of the trip. We never gave an overall view to them, but strictly what we hoped to accomplish in that particular country. We sent anywhere from two men to a country to three or four or five men to a country. We had a meeting in-the Situation Room with Bess Abell and the Chief of Protocol, who was Lloyd Hand at the time--no, Lloyd ran for office, it might have been Symington--whoever was chief of protocol; Walt Rostow; Mac Bundy; and Moyers; Secret Service; the Signal Corps and myself and the advance captain in each country. And we discussed everything from Bess Abell and the Protocol Chief's point of view, their interest as to what kind of gift should be exchanged and such things. You find out that one of the presidents, I believe it was Marcos of the Philippines, or it might have been Park of Korea, was an avid golfer. So the ideal gift for President Johnson to give him was a monogrammed set of golf clubs, very good golf clubs, in addition to the regular gifts like a presidential seal cup or something like that. And we talked about what the dress was, what local customs were, things like this. We kicked around the whole trip, for example.

Then we sent our advance men out, and they established themselves in their particular spots. Then we had another Situation Room meeting with a series of telephone calls. We got the Signal Corps. We told all our advance men that we were going to talk to them at such and such a time. This was closer to the actual trip itself. So Moyers and myself and a smaller group met in the Situation Room, and we called each of the advance men in turn in their country in the order of the trip, [called] the advance captain. We'd ask them what their problems were. Can they meet this schedule that we've outlined?

Would they change it in any way? What should the President wear? A very detailed scenario. When-the President gets off ***Air Force One*** and he walks to the bottom of the ramp, who's in the receiving line? What does he call so-and-so? When they go to the platform, who speaks first? How long does he speak? Does the President troop the line? After the speech, does the President go to his right or to his left? Very detailed scenarios were worked out with these telephone conversations. Then we honed, revised, modified the scenarios a little bit further, and then prepared that for the President.

Then we made the trip. After each day's trip, I was on the phone to our advance men on the next day to make sure we don't have any problems, we have security, we've got crowds. Every little detail in the scenario, to make sure it matches so that we wouldn't have any mess-ups.

M: Another one that has come to mind, although this wouldn't exactly be a presidential trip in terms of advancing it, but that would be the Churchill funeral. There was a lot of discussion of who went on that and why. Did you have any activities on that?

J: I didn't have any at all. As a matter of fact, I believe that the Churchill funeral occurred just before I came to the White House. When was that?

M: It would be in late 1964, I think, wouldn't it? Yes, that's right, you hadn't [arrived].

It's rather interesting--in looking over the trips in the area that Mr. Johnson covered, of course it becomes rather apparent that he didn't on any occasion go East or go to Europe as a specific trip. Did you ever discuss this with him? The interests of going in that direction?

J: I never did discuss the reasons why or anything. I think by nature of the inheritance that he had as president, his main focus was on Southeast Asia. I never knew anybody who

wanted to peacefully conclude that any more than Lyndon Johnson. He felt very strongly about that, of trying to get peace there, and he grasped at every straw to open any door to get it. So I think that was the primary interest. And his secondary interest, I gather he has always had a fondness for Latin America. These two areas, [he was] particularly interested in.

In the last year of his Administration, he wanted very much, I think, to go to Europe, and particularly Russia. As a matter of fact, the night of the Czechoslovakian invasion in August of 1968, the Russian Ambassador asked to see the President at eight o'clock at night; did dome in. The President fully expected to work out the final arrangements for the trip to Russia. At least, I think he did. That was the impression he left with me. Instead, the next day we had Czechoslovakia. So in the President's mind everything was set for a Russian trip in 1968, and with the Russian trip would have been stops in Europe also. But he did go to the Adenauer funeral in Germany. He decided that on the way back from the Punta del Este conference in the plane.

M: Did you work on the advance activities on that?

J: Not on the German trip, no. On the advance activities, I did. That's the one trip I didn't go on in the four years.

M: Did you feel that there was any pressure that he attend this after the great debate over what had happened on the Churchill funeral?

J: No, I don't think so. As I recollect the facts, Adenauer died, it seems to me, on about the last day of the Punta del Este conference. In any event, Adenauer died just before we were coming back on ***Air Force One*** from some trip, and I'm virtually certain it was the Punta del Este conference. The President was in the presidential part of the cabin, I was

there, I believe Marvin was there, and Marie Fehmer was there, I recall for sure. The President said how he had admired Adenauer, and he thought he'd go to the funeral. He wanted to make sure that Marie was going to go--Marie is German--and he wanted her to have some time to visit any relatives or go to any places where her family might have come from. His decision to go was not based on any kind of pressures. I sometimes wonder how he made his decisions, but it was just instinct. He wanted to go, felt he should go. I don't think it had anything to do with his not going to the Churchill funeral.

M: To get back to domestic trips, do some of these stand out in your mind that you worked on?

J: That would be a very long answer. In 1966 we made a series of one, two, and three-day type trips on behalf of congressional candidates. This was in about August, as I recall, of 1966. The first foray I believe we made was into Ohio and Indiana, and I believe West Virginia was a stop on that trip. In those cases the President would be making approximately six, seven speeches for stops a day. The format was generally the same on those. We would either have an airport rally or we'd have an airport rally plus a trip downtown to another political rally. In that particular case we were going on as many non-political trips as possible because if the trip was branded as political, the Democratic National Committee had to pay the plane fare. Again, the figures escape me, but it seems to me like it was something like seven thousand dollars an hour while the planes were being utilized. And because of that, the President was also trying to pay off the debt of the national committee, so he was trying to help Democratic candidates for Congress without having to spend so much money at it, political money. That was the first trip.

The second trip was non-political. I guess we started it out--it was a New

England trip--in Buffalo and Syracuse, New York, wound up that evening in Ellenville, New York, on behalf of Joe Resnick who was a congressman from that Republican district, and he won the race for Congress. The next morning we started out at Rhode Island University.

A sample of what an advance man has to think about occurred at Rhode Island University. In that case it was just becoming popular for students or faculty who disagreed with the administration on Vietnam or anything else to walk out during the commencement speech. So two professors had let it be known that they planned to walk out if the President started speaking on Vietnam. These two professors were seated right across the aisle right next to the press section. So our advance man there, and I don't even remember who it was for sure, used some great ingenuity and got two girls, dressed them up in white nurses uniforms and as soon as these two professors got up to walk out, these two nurses went right alongside them, grabbed each of them by the arm, and helped them out. And none of the press caught it. They all thought these two men were sick, and these two nurses were just helping them out. As a result there was no play in the paper as to their great protest.

But that started the morning. We left Ellenville about seven-thirty, and that speech was about eight-thirty or nine in the morning. Then the rest of that day we had a stop in the capital city of New Hampshire [Concord] and Vermont for Governor [Philip H.] Hoff. Then we wound up that evening with two stops in Maine for Senator Muskie and Congressman Hathaway. And then we spent the night on our intelligence ship, the ***Northampton***.

The next day we went to Campobello where the President met with and had a

ceremony with Prime Minister Lester Pearson of Canada. Then we flew to Washington.

Then we took a trip to Idaho, Colorado, and Oklahoma. Then there was the Manila Conference and the Far Eastern trip.

Then the credibility gap began. Some others may have mentioned this to you, I don't know, but Marvin wanted me to plan for a possible political tour on behalf of the congressional candidates after we got back to the United States. I can't tell you whether the President did or did not know about it. All I know is that Marvin wanted some pre-planning just in case. So in carrying out those responsibilities I sent some advance men to various cities--Chicago; Portland, Oregon; I think Boston was the start. But anyway, it was across the country in several cities. They were just to be there to see what the possibilities were; to see if a crowd could be raised; to see if the President should go there; what have you. From that, while we were on the Far Eastern trip, I developed a scenario and an itinerary which I gave to Marvin, and which Marvin gave to the President I think. In any event, the President never did sign off on it, never did let us cut loose on it. Bill Moyers was press secretary. He was also told of the possibility, at least what we were planning. After the Manila Conference on the way to the rest of our trip, Moyers apparently had told some others in the press office. From the best we can gather one of the secretaries in the press office told members of the press that we were going to have this great nationwide tour, and a lot of publicity went out on it. It didn't come off, and the press played it up that Johnson--I don't remember exactly what they said, but anyway, such things that led more credence to the credibility gap.

The fact of the matter is President Johnson had complained of his throat problem. He had had it doctored fairly extensively during the Manila Conference. He had an

examination in Manila, and it was discovered he had a polyp on his throat. And the side that he had been operated on for gallstones the year before, the gall bladder operation the year before, had been giving problems. It had not properly healed. So the doctor--Dr. [George] Burkley, I believe it was, who is a very nice fellow, but an alarmist in many respects as doctors go--had advised the President that he probably shouldn't even make the rest of the Far Eastern tour; that he shouldn't speak any more with this throat problem he had; and he ought to get into the hospital quickly and get this taken care of.

Well, the President was determined he was going to carry out the commitments he had made. But in the President's own mind, he had no plans of making any political swing after this Far Eastern tour. In the meantime it was leaked to the press that he had this thing planned. He had given no authorization to have this leaked, and so he was tabbed with the credibility problem. He was taking the brunt of it, and in his own mind he had no plans to make the trip. I know one reporter, I think Dan Rather of CBS, to this day is convinced that the President hoodwinked the press. You can't even talk to him logically on this subject, and I admire and like Dan Rather very much. But he and I think a substantial number of others of the press feel that was one of the beginnings [of the credibility gap]. And it was the President's personality, that's the way the President operated, you know, changing his mind so fast and things like that. I'm not saying that the President didn't change his mind and didn't cause a lot of unnecessary problems with the press. But in that and similar instances I think the President got blamed for things that weren't at all his fault.

M: Did you have any discussion with the President directly on this trip when it leaked to the press?

J: Oh, sure, everybody did. "Who did it?" He didn't like it at all because, like I say, in his own mind he didn't plan to make one. I must admit at the time he did not confide in me at the time that he was going to have this operation. And at the time I suspicioned the same thing most of the press did, that it was leaked, and because it was leaked he decided not to have it. But I later pieced it all together and convinced myself that that wasn't the case.

M: Really at about this time and then later besides the charge of more credulence [?] led to the idea of there being a credibility gap with the President, it also became widely thought that Mr. Johnson had become a captive president. Of course this carried through in the next couple of years in that the President did land and carry most of his domestic trips to bases and posts, where it would be more secure. Did you have any directives along this line, that he felt he couldn't travel due to the national--?

J: Two comments I would make on that. First of all, I think he did feel he was a captive president, and I think that's one of the reasons he felt such great relief when he decided not to run again. I'll never forget an instance that occurred one Saturday night when I was working at Marvin's desk. The President was about as bone-tired as a man can be. It was a very long Saturday. It was about nine o'clock at night, and he came out of his office in Marvin's office--I was in there occupying his desk--and he asked if there was anything else he needed to see or do. I told him no, that everything was under control. And he said, "Well, I think I'll go on back to the Mansion and have dinner with Mrs. Johnson. I'll see you later." I said, "I hope you have a good weekend," or something like that, you know, just small talk. And he said, "Well, I don't know how I can. What I'd like to do is take a walk around Washington or go out and have a beer. I can't do it,

because I've got nine Secret Service men following me and as soon as I have a beer, I'll have newspapermen speculating that I'm drinking or that I'm not living up to the decorum of the presidency and all this and that." And he said, "I'll just be glad when I can act without all this folderol and people following me." I think he did feel captive in the White House from that standpoint.

Now as to the second part, he had a very strong sense--I think it was a political sense as well as an emotional sense--that the presidency was something that was not to be tarnished, no matter who was president, and particularly not as long as Lyndon Johnson actually was president. He was not about to give what he considered a small clack of very vocal irresponsible people a chance to embarrass the presidency. It wasn't really Lyndon Johnson, because he had been spat upon in Dallas, and he had been through that. He knows the politics of it. But he had a very keen sense of the presidency as an institution. I've heard him remark to me that he was not going to give anybody a chance to tarnish that. He felt that if he gave a lot of advance publicity to a trip--this was in the very later years, the last months--that didn't have security to it, that you were just inviting trouble and that you'd have a good portion of your crowd who would not be able to hear what he had to say because of the minority who would be too vocal and disruptive. And I think he felt he wasn't going to give a platform to those that he didn't feel were responsible. I think that's how this reputation of being secretive and scared and all this sort of thing developed. But I am convinced in my own mind it was a combination of reasons: one is the obvious political effect that something like that would have; and number two is his determination that the presidency itself would not be embarrassed.

M: Perhaps before we go off this bit on traveling that maybe I ought to ask you about any

special occasions at the Ranch, since you sort of became the Ranch personnel.

J: There were so many funny ones. I remember just prior to the Six Day War, the June war in the Middle East in 1967, that cables were coming from the Situation Room and Rostow to the Ranch quite frequently. And the President was trying to get away from these pressures and relax some. The way he relaxed was driving around his various ranches and looking at the cattle and everything else he has on a ranch. But he did have this radio communications. So one message came in that was quite important and quite significant as to what the Israelis and/or the Arabs were doing. I got on the radio and called "Volunteer" and told him that this message had come in from Rostow, and it was significant, and I felt he should see it immediately. So he said, "Well, I'm at such and such, four miles from such and such road. I'm at the old Lewis place." And he described it. Well, I didn't have the foggiest where he was. He said, "Bring it out to me right away." So I called the Secret Service man and asked him to drive me out there. We drove around some of the most barren land around Texas looking for the President, and I was getting more embarrassed all the time. Ever so often on the radio he'd come [on with], "Where are you?" Finally he said, "Goddamn it, the war will be over before you ever get here with that message."

But he was a totally different person at the Ranch. When he took the plane from Washington to Austin or San Antonio, that was the big 707 jet, he was still in Washington more or less. But as soon as we'd transfer to the Jetstar that took him from either San Antonio or Austin to the Ranch, he shucked his tie and got his ranch clothes on, which is a brown outfit, and you could just tell the freedom he felt. It was all the difference in the world, both as to attitude, the intensity of his personality, and

everything. And when he got to the Ranch, he literally did not like to be burdened with problems. So I answered just about all calls for him all day. I stayed in the office at the Ranch. He generally rode in the morning for a couple of hours and in the afternoon for two or three or four hours, sometimes going over this same terrain over and over again. We had cables coming down from the Situation Room, messages and what have you, and we had a pouch of mail that came in every day which was equivalent to the night reading. And it was a real battle to get him to do his desk work down there, because he really felt freedom and totally relaxed. He literally was refreshed when he came back to Washington from the Ranch. I didn't know the President in the forties and the fifties and the early sixties, so I didn't see that side of the personality that was supposedly the dark side of his personality where people said he berated staff and what have you; that he always had to get everything done right away; and that he was impossible and unreasonable and things like that. I found him to be a much mellowed man who was very conscious of and very interested in you and your problems or your life. So if in fact he was unreasonable in his earlier years, I didn't see it. I caught him at a time, four years of his life, when he was a very inspiring and a very warm human being.

M: Since we've kind of gotten on to him, I'd like to continue in that area as far as his relations with the staff--

(Interruption)

M: Mr. Jones, you started to tell me about staff people and relations with the President.

J: I was just saying that you must have a very interesting assignment because you're able to piece together all of the conversations. One of the things that I always get tickled at when I read one of these books by the staff or inside reports is basically I suppose if

you're in public life, you've got a certain bit of self-centered attitude. But so many staff people think they have the ear of the President for a particular decision, and they relate it very authoritatively as, "This is what happened and this is why he thought such-and-such. This is what I told him et cetera, he followed my advice on this or that." And the one thing that I found, particularly in dealing with President Johnson, is that very few if anybody on the staff or in the administration or outside had the complete ear of the President. He used people for public policy like probably no other man, in that he picked a man's brains and kept at it until they had nothing more to offer. I'm sure to that man he felt he had the sole ear of the President, and the President did such-and-such because of what he said or what he had observed. When in fact the case is that the President used many, many people.

I think the State of the Union speech that I alluded to earlier is probably a good example. From my standpoint from December in 1967 through the State of the Union, I was the coordinator of the speech. And I felt he did such and such because of what he told me and what he directed me and what he asked me to do. I imagine when you talk to Harry McPherson, you'll find out from Harry McPherson that "the President didn't believe in including these two or three items in the speech, but I prevailed upon him." If you talk to Clark Clifford, who also had a piece of the action, Clark Clifford will say, "I toned the President down on such and such," or, "He asked me what I thought on this particular piece on foreign affairs, and I told him this." Well, everybody is going to have their own viewpoint, and you get to piece it all together.

M: Just as an aside, it's very interesting to witness it, but I do not envy the historian who has to put this together. I am in the enjoyable position of getting it.

J: Do you find discrepancies?

M: Yes.

J: I figured you might.

M: Only that it does become very apparent that you are seeing things through a person's own view of how it happened. They can be even describing an event in which it's very much a truism that five people will see it five different ways.

J: That's right.

M: And you do get the same things as far as who influenced decisions or who had access.

J: I've had friends of mine and the family say that I ought to speak out more or I ought to write more because I did have, in many respects, a closer access to the President than, well certainly the majority of others on the staff. There were just a few that had similar or better access. But to me that man was so complex and was so comprehensive in his use of people that it would be embarrassing to write something because you know that that's only a piece of the action, that's not the whole action.

M: There are various aspects of the President that are so very interesting, and one of them that people talk about a lot is what they refer to as his "telephonitis," his constant use of the phone and calling people, anybody and anything on any subject almost.

J: He was amazing. He loved to be on the telephone. In the mornings when we would go to the bedroom about eight o'clock in the morning to go over the night reading and various other memoranda and take assignments for the day to follow through on those assignments, you would start to talk about something, and he'd be on the telephone. I assume he'd be on the telephone an average out of that three and a half period a good hour and a half or two hours or more, talking to anybody around the administration and

the staff.

He liked instant communications. Nothing frustrated him more than if somebody could not be found immediately. I got accustomed to it. Then last November I was married, and on our wedding trip the second day about seven o'clock in the morning, we were in Mexico, and the President called. Just wanted to know how we were doing, just a little bit of small talk, wanted to see if everything was all right, Then there was something he had remembered that had happened several weeks ago that he wanted to ask me about, He enjoyed visiting on the phone. I think he enjoyed gossip; he enjoyed picking somebody's brain. And he stored it all up and usually sputtered it out later.

M: Another personal aspect of the President, and I think that this will have some interest for people later on, is quite a bit of talk about his use of however you phrase it, but earthy language in his normal discourse, or in anger.

J: He was very colorful, and he painted a picture that you couldn't forget. You can doctor this up any way you want, but a personal experience that happened to me--as I say, I came on February 22. The President knew I was coming, but I wasn't interviewed by the President. I was interviewed by Marvin Watson. I always got the impression from Marvin that the President did not want a lot of excess people around him when he was going through his day's activities. So as a result, I always stayed in the background, and I never saw the President for about two weeks. I saw him from afar, but never personally conversed with him.

After about two weeks I fell into the routine and felt comfortable in it, putting the daily schedule together and giving it to the press office. George Reedy would put it out. On this particular occasion, it was very normal to have a congressional breakfast on

Tuesday. So I put that on the schedule and added a few other things that the President had approved, public announcements for the day. I gave it to George Reedy, and he announced it at his Monday afternoon press briefing. And it was printed in the newspaper. The next morning the President saw it in the newspaper, but in the meantime we had canceled it. The President did not want to have a congressional breakfast for some particular reason. I don't know why, but it had something to do with legislation that was pending on the Hill, and he did not want to have a congressional breakfast that day.

So during this two weeks time I had always kidded Jack Valenti and Marvin Watson, and said, "You ought to stand up to the President. Quit giving this 'Yes sir,' and all that. You ought to really stand up to him." I was kidding them about being yes-men. So it came out in the paper, and that Tuesday at the morning briefing the press asked George Reedy, "Why didn't you have the congressional leadership breakfast today? What's wrong?" Well, George didn't know what was wrong. The fact of the matter is Larry O'Brien, who had been told by the President to cancel the meeting, forgot to tell me, so I went ahead and published it. So as soon as that got to the President, the President called Marvin on the direct line and well, he just read the riot act to him apparently. Marvin had told him--he [the President] said, "Did you do that?" Marvin was trying to take the blame for the thing, but somehow the President found out I had done it. And as I say, I had had no direct conversation with the President up until this point. So Marvin called me into his office and said, "The President's on the phone and wants to talk to you." So I picked up the phone very nonchalantly, not knowing what it was all about. I said, "Hello." This blast came on the phone, and you could hear him yelling from the Oval Office which was the next office over--he didn't even need a

telephone--and he said, "What in the hell were you thinking of?" And Marvin was dying laughing, he was overhearing my side of the conversation. All he heard was, "Yes, sir. No, sir. Yes, sir. No, sir." The final summation of it all was the President said, "Well, it sounds to me like you were scratching your ass when you should have been scratching your head." And I said, "Yes, sir." So he did have some earthy language when he was talking to you personally, but it was never offensive I didn't think. It didn't come across as offensive to me. It was colorful and it was a product of the Southwest United States, but it was never offensive. It was never dirty for dirt's sake, or dirty jokes, or anything like that. But it certainly was colorful, and could be considered off-color, I suppose.

M: Another aspect of the President was his ability as a storyteller. There are many, many things written about that.

J: He was a marvelous storyteller. He remembered stories of the Crider boys that he grew up with in Johnson City, and he'd punctuate it with other heads of state. He would punctuate his point with stories from his early Texas boyhood. And the funny thing about them--I remember one time Luci was taking a course at the University of Texas. It was a public speaking course, and she was supposed to write a humorous speech or something like that. She called me from Austin and wanted me to remind her of some of the stories that her father told. She wanted to tell them. As I related them to her, they weren't particularly funny. As she related them to the class, they weren't particularly funny. But when Lyndon Johnson related them, he put so much gusto in them that they were hilarious. He was a great homespun storyteller. I'm just trying to think of some of his best ones.

M: Did he have favorites?

J: Oh, you'd hear some over and over and over again, but it was amazing. In relaxed moments, he would pull some out that you'd never heard before, and they were just marvelous.

M: Also along this line is the idea that the President privately was a very warm and a sincere person as you felt, and aggressive and very much in control of things, but his public image was in direct contrast with this. This was also a part that lent to what was called the credibility gap.

M: I think that's true. One of the things that's hard for a lot of [people], particularly reporters to understand is that in my judgment Lyndon Johnson was a very private individual, and that led to the credibility gap and this image of being secretive. For example, he would go to extremes not to give out where he was going to church, and he took offense if a lot of reporters found out about it. The reason was not so much that it mattered where he went to church, but he felt strongly that church was a private thing, and that the other people that were going to that church were not there to see a president or anything of this nature or be disturbed during church services. And he felt that photographers and reporters could not conduct themselves in a way that didn't create some sort of a disturbance. He felt very strong on that. It's not anything that he had expressed publicly, but he felt very strongly that that was a very private matter, and he did not want any reporting on it. He used to blow his top when reporters would give Luci a hard time as to who she dated, for example. He felt that was a family, private thing, and he didn't like that.

I know when George Reedy had his hammer toes operation the President contributed some money and good doctors, Mayo Clinic, and what have you. And some

of the things he did George never knew where they came from. The President swore Marvin and myself to secrecy that he was making this contribution to George Reedy. And it's the type of thing that would show a human side of the President if he had let the reporters know that he helped out, but he felt that was a private friend-to-friend operation. It was sort of one of the tragedies. The stories that Lyndon Johnson would give out to the press, the human interest type stories, were things that most journalists would know are not newsworthy, and they wouldn't care to write about. But the little things like family, what they were having for dinner on--not Thanksgiving, he gave that out finally over protest, I think, but where they were going to church, who Luci was dating, some of his friends who visited him at the Ranch, things like this, the press would have played that up to show him as a warm human being. But this was the very thing that he didn't want out, because he felt it was private. And he didn't want us giving it out. So we really felt--at least I felt that I was violating a confidence of his if I would leak something like that, so I didn't leak it. I feel if I had leaked some of his personal aspects, he'd be viewed in a much warmer light as a human being. But he was funny that way.

M: Mr. Johnson was also noted as being very concerned with what the media did report about him, as you've indicated, and he was interested in, as it also indicates, his three television sets in his office and the ticker tapes in his office, too. Did you see occasions where he really demonstrated his sensitivity to the press, to their criticism of their coverage of him?

J: I think he reacted less to criticisms of himself as he did to premature leaks of policy or appointments, and where a reporter obviously had his facts wrong. He reacted very violently against the latter two instances. Where they criticized him, he kind of shrugged

it off. Such things like, "Scotty Reston worked me over today," or something like that, where it was just an opinion-criticism-type column. But he took very strong offense when there was a leak out of the White House or elsewhere about something he was not ready to disclose yet.

I think he viewed this in a couple of respects: one, as a politician who is trying to orchestrate the real vastness of federal government into a policy that would be adopted. If it was a formation of a policy--I was trying to think of some specific examples as far as programs or policies are concerned. Well, I think the voting rights bill was somewhat of an example, where there was speculation and some of the speculation obviously were leaks because it would say, "An informed source reported," or, "Some unidentifiable administration spokesman." He felt in order to get this legislation passed he had to appeal to dissimilar interests from very many dissimilar groups, or interest groups. He wanted to get all the ducks in a row to set it up so that when he came out with it, he would have everything lined up, and it would pass. He felt premature leaks were going to destroy his program. I think as a politician, he objected to it, but secondly he objected to disloyalty.

Tape 2 of 2

M: We are continuing on with the President and his method of operation and reaction to things. Among some of your duties, you've indicated things like the night reading file. There hag been a lot written about that, what it is, and why it is. Did you participate in deciding what was to be put in the night reading file, and was this a Johnson way of operating?

J: Yes. President Johnson wanted, as I've mentioned earlier, as many divergent viewpoints on just about every subject as any man I've ever known. Because his time was limited, night reading thus became very important to anybody that had anything they wanted to get to his attention. So our night reading--at times we had single page memos stacking up about twelve inches or a foot high that he would read before he went to bed or the first thing when he got up in the morning.

Basically it was broken down as follows: memos that came to him which required a decision--they briefly outlined the subject matter and gave a "Yes," "No," or "See me" for the President to check at the bottom. This pertained to everything from Vietnam policy, to the changing of a piece of legislation, to whether or not Dale Malechek at the Ranch--the Ranch foreman--should order a certain amount of feed for the cattle. It ran the gamut from the most important to the least important. There was that. Then there was a second part which was reading material that did not require his decision. It would be such things as Secretary Fowler would send a three or four-page memo on gold flow or the balance-of-payments problem. Or Walt Rostow would send several memos on a situation report in "X" country or what have you. But these were all things of importance that the President should be aware of or should know about what's going on. Then the third area was just general type of papers, such as Willie Day Taylor-clipped columns and editorials from a vast variety and number of newspapers. She would just paste them onto a legal size paper, and he would see that plus other columns or news comments which would give him a flavor of what people were writing. And in addition to that you'd have a selected group of letters pro and con, for him and against him on policies or on his personality or anything else. I think this was a holdover from

his congressional days, and it certainly was the mark of him as a politician. He wanted to know what was being thought on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains, for example. And we didn't try to color it, just the good or the bad. We tried to give him a mixture.

It was our job, Marvin's and myself, to select what went in the night reading. The President was always asking us to cut down the night reading because he had too much. But as soon as we started being selective and really cutting it down to what we thought was the bare bone of what he needed to see, in one of his many telephone conversations he'd be talking to somebody and they would say, "Well, did you see my memo on such and such," and that would be something that we'd taken out of the night reading. Then that was another crisis. But what we basically tried to do most of the time was just to use common sense. And if a staff man, say, Ernie Goldstein felt Walt Rostow was encroaching on his duties in the balance-of-payments area, so Ernie would send a memo in to the President and say, "Who gets to do this? Does Walt Rostow or I get to do this?" Rather than send that in to the President and worry him with such things as that, you'd call Ernie Goldstein in and say, "Now, why don't we get Walt Rostow in here and let's discuss this and see if we can't do this without bothering the President?" And memos that were written that seemed very important at the time they were writing them, once you talked to the cabinet officer or the staff man and said, "Could we resolve this by getting so-and-so together," or, "Could you kind of do this on your own," nine times out of ten they'd realize that was kind if ridiculous to waste the President's time. So that's how we tried to approach what went into the President's night reading.

M: Did you have any explicit directives about the length of what went into the night reading?

J: Yes. The President was a bug on that. He always felt that anything that couldn't be said in one page or a speech that couldn't be delivered in twenty minutes wasn't worth delivering or wasn't worth reading any way. So there were obviously situation reports, other memoranda, that could not be summarized on one page. But he was pretty explicit in saying that, "Where you have a multi-page memorandum, summarize it on one page, or less and attach that to the front of it. Then I'll know what I need to read further on to get a fuller explanation." He read remarkably fast. It was amazing how he could get to the heart of a piece of paper faster than anyone else I've ever seen, for that matter. He would take a long document and be able to pick out the thrust of that document in remarkably fast time, in my judgment, faster than anybody on the staff including Walt Rostow who might have dealt with the particular document, or faster than I could when I sometimes wrote the memorandum. So that was the only directive I knew of as far as length of the memos were concerned.

He had another quirk there. When we would send memos in about appointments, for example, the Boy Scouts of America annually have to present something to the President. So they'd call me and say, "We'd like to do it. Can you give us a time?" I'd say, "Well, we'll have to see and call you back." So I'd prepare a memo to the President saying, "The Boy Scouts of America want to bring a delegation in to present their report et cetera. Would you like to see them on such and such a date?" I did that just two or three times, and he'd scratch through it and say, "I don't *want* to do anything. But I *will* do it."

M: Another area of your responsibility was the President's schedule which you had to prepare. Of course this was what would be the public announcement of his schedule, but

this was really only half of what the President's day would consist of, wasn't it?

J: Yes. The development of the presidential schedule really evolved, as I understand it, after the John Kennedy assassination. There was a lot of helter-skelter around the White House. I was not there then. I believe Jack Valenti handled the scheduling at that time. Jack had discretion as to when things were going to be scheduled and, as I understand it, Jack was continually being scolded by the President for scheduling something that the timing was not right. So finally the President in exasperation one day decided that before any schedules were printed and published and the people notified that they were going to come in, that he would personally approve it. So after the shakedown and everything got to relative normal, the way we operated, if somebody wanted to see the President, they usually wrote in or would call. We would send a memo in to the President and say, "Will you see him?" "Yes," "No," or, "Have him see somebody else." But then if the President said, yes, he would see them, then it came back to me.

I kept a master calendar, and I would schedule the man when I thought the timing was right. Then the day before, say, on a Monday prior to a Tuesday's schedule, I would prepare Tuesday's schedule hour by hour, both on the record and off the record. Usually around noon on Monday I would present Tuesday's schedule to him, and he would approve it or disapprove it, or say, "I don't want to see him then; I need to do such-and-such first, and I'll see him later after I've seen somebody else," or something like that. And we'd revise it accordance with his directions. Then we would give the public schedule to the press office, and they would publish that. Then my staff and myself would call everybody on the schedule and tell them when to be there, what time, and find out what they wanted to discuss as far as we could. Then we would call whatever cabinet

officer or staff man, or whoever might have some responsibility over the topics this particular person wanted to discuss, and ask them to prepare a briefing paper for the President on such and such items. Then we would send in to the night reading on Monday night, using the example again, the Tuesday schedule plus all the backup information, and he would look at that. Then he'd have a general idea of what he was going to be doing the next day as far as people he saw.

M: It must be rather difficult to keep him on schedule. I understand he quite often would expand one or something would come up and have to stop it in the middle and start it again. Was it your particular duty to try to keep the President on schedule?

J: That's right. You could never predict him, which was one of the interesting facets of the job. Senator Dirksen was coming in, and he'd say, "I just want to talk about one little item," and he'd say it. And you say, "Well, Senator, how long do you think that will take?" "Just take five minutes. I just want to hand him this piece of paper." So you'd allow thirty minutes for it. Say, he was coming in at twelve-thirty, and you had another appointment at one. When Senator Dirksen came in, he had a lot of legislation pending on the Hill, and the President would use that opportunity to receive that piece of paper maybe from Senator Dirksen, but he'd spend another hour and a half telling Dirksen, "Now I want this done, and that done, and that done." He'd outline the whole legislative program, or [talk to him about] somebody that he was trying to appoint to a job and trying to get the votes lined up so they could be confirmed. So you had all these other people stacked up. Many times we had people, cabinet officers, senators, what have you, stacked up, and it was rather embarrassing. At the end of that thirty minutes, I'd start taking notes in about every five minutes to try to jog the President loose. Sometimes he'd

get annoyed, but most of the time he wouldn't. He'd just say, "Five more minutes."

What was always so funny about some of those appointments, particularly those that went long, was that the President would take the offense and he would just talk and talk and get his point across. Then I'd hustle the person out of the office, and sometimes they never did get to express the reason why they'd come to see the President.

M: Perhaps we'd better cut here.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II]

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