INTERVIEW I

DATE: DECEMBER 5, 1974

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM H. JORDAN, JR.

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: U. S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: This is an interview with Mr. William H. Jordan, Jr. in the Conference Room of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Mr. Jordan worked for Senator Richard Russell for many years and is going to focus on those years. You are welcome to state any restrictions now on the tape.

J: Yes, Mike. It was during the time that Senator Johnson and Senator Russell were dealing with each other on so many important problems. I was Senator Russell's executive secretary. I am now on the professional staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee where you have come today. I would like at the outset of the interview to say that I'm glad to have an opportunity to contribute to this most worthwhile project. I would, however, like to begin with the understanding that we have come to that after this tape has been transcribed, that I will have an opportunity to look it over, see the context in which I have made the remarks, and be sure that an interview of this type reflects to others what I would like for it to reflect and that it is not subject to being taken out of context.

You asked me about Senator Russell and his qualifications to be President. Both President Johnson and before him President Truman, two men very eminently qualified to pass on Senator Russell's qualifications, have both stated that he did

have certain qualifications that would have enabled him to make a good President. I would rather rest on their assessment of his qualifications. Obviously I think Senator Russell had a basic understanding of the American government and the personal qualities of high moral character, capacity for hard work, and a very keen intellect--three items which I regard as being absolutely essential for any public servant. Basic ability, integrity, and a capacity for hard work, and those are three qualities, incidentally, which I believe President Johnson also possessed in great abundance.

(Pause in recording)

G: I wanted to change one of the mike channels, because one of them brings in more volume than the other.

J: Do you want me to speak louder?

G: No, that's fine. It's just that I want to make sure that you were coming in on the loud one, and you weren't. It's still audible, but we want to get the best we can.

J: We have found out some times that these recording devices aren't failsafe. They are having enough problems with them down at the District Court, anyway.

G: Did Senator Russell want to be President?

J: I don't think I've ever had that question asked to me in exactly that way. Senator Russell started out when he was 33 years old as governor of the state of Georgia. He had been in the Georgia House of Representatives for eight years prior to that time--the last four of which he was Speaker.

A man who has enjoyed executive power and come to the Congress of the United States and experienced--I'm hesitant to say it, but it's necessary--the inevitable frustration that flows out of any type of congressional or collective power--it's obliged to be most frustrating. A man that has developed an executive capability and come into a legislative environment and experienced the frustration of that type of situation, I would think he inevitably reflects back thinking what he could do when he was a chief executive. So I think that anyone who has served as a governor of a state and then moved into the legislative arena, as so many of our Members of Congress and senators have, experiences a secret yearning for being able to again have executive power. So, I expect, that he had a desire to be President. There are very few men that serve in the Senate that don't. I think, though, that Senator Russell would have experienced some problems if he had been President, because I think he had very definite ideas of how things should be. I don't know, by the time that I came to know Senator Russell, which was 1954, that the Senator was as flexible as is perhaps necessary to be to be President of the United States. President of, then, 200-plus millions of people and all of the different ethnic, religious and nationality groups that represent the United States, all the conflicting power groups that are represented across our land. Senator Russell had a very fixed idea of how things should be, and he could always stand for those things in the Senate. If he had been President I think he would have faced

the changes that might have been necessary in his own position--that he would have had to compromise, not with principle necessarily, but he would have to compromise with his thoughts about the way things should be.

A similar situation would have existed if he had become Majority Leader. I think that it's a matter of record that on more than one occasion, perhaps three or four, Senator Russell could have been the Majority Leader of the Senate. On those occasions he decided that he could best serve as a senator. That is where he wanted to serve, and not in a position of Majority Leader. I think he would have faced a similar type of situation in the presidency.

G: Did you see a trace of populism in him? Was he in any sense a Southern populist?

J: To the extent that I understand what Southern populism is. Bill Moyers, I think, has popularized that term on his TV program. At least that is the first time I've heard the term used several times in the course of a half-hour program. To the extent that I understand it, I believe that he did. I think Senator Russell's father was a traditional Southern populist. I think that populism was in the roots of many Deep South politicians of Senator Russell's day .

G: Senator Russell, I am told, had served as a mentor for many younger senators and other politicians. One of them was Lyndon Johnson. Where did Senator Russell himself acquire the knowledge of the Senate and how to rise to the leadership in the Senate as far as being respected and being in a position

of influence?

J: In the same way that Senator--no, President Johnson did. All of us here in the Senate even now, today, go to refer to President Johnson, and those of us that knew him as Senator Johnson have a tendency--even now to call him Senator Johnson. I think that Senator Russell mastered the mysteries of the Senate just as President Johnson did, and that was by just being indefatigable. By hard work at great sacrifice of their personal lives. I can best illustrate this by the fact that during the time that I worked for Senator Russell, there was no one that worked as long, as many hours in the course of a week, in the United States Senate as Senator Russell unless it was Lyndon Johnson. And by this I'm not talking about people that work a 42-hour week and think they work a 50-hour week and say they work a 60-hour week. These two men would get to the Capitol in the morning in the 7:30 to 8:30 range, and they left here in the 9:30 to 10:30 range at night. They were here, Senator Russell and I believe Senator Johnson, every Saturday and most Sundays. There has been a change in the Senate. Now we find most offices here closed on Saturday. We've almost gotten to work bankers' hours here. But certainly when I came here in the middle Fifties, everyone in these two particular offices worked nights and Saturdays. You pass here now at seven o'clock and look at the windows in the Senate Office Building and see how many lights are on. It's a changed way of life. In many ways for a family man, it's a much improved way of life.

G: Were they pretty much exceptions at the time?

J: There was no one that was even running close until Senator Robert Byrd came along. In the Fifties Senator Russell had an office at the corner of First and Constitution, close by one of the main entrances and exits to what is now the Russell Office Building but was then the only Senate Office Building. Senator Johnson had an office just on the other side of that exit. I say he had an office. Then-Senator Johnson had many offices. There have been those that have tried to acquire as many offices since he departed, but no one has come close to having as many different offices as Majority Leader Johnson had. A number impossible to count because no one could find them all. Anyway, he had an office on the other side of the corridor, and anyone working in either the Russell or Johnson offices could have gauged the comings and goings of others. My dentist now used to work as a policeman while he was going through dental school. He worked at that exit, and he had the night shift. Even now we talk about the late hours of Senators Russell and Johnson. No one was close to them in numbers of hours worked. In more recent years, Senator Robert Byrd, I would think, has assumed the position of perhaps working more hours than any other senator of whom I am aware, and maybe about that time he would have run a close third. But I don't think there was anyone that was too close or particularly desired to close in on the number of hours worked by Senator Russell and Senator Johnson.

G: Do you recall the first time you met Lyndon Johnson?

J: I don't want to give this interview indicating that I was on a close working basis with Senator Johnson. I was not. I was more a distant observer. I came here just a few months before Senator Johnson had his heart attack, and he was already at the pinnacle of his Senate career, so my thoughts and observations about him are something more of a distant observer than based on any close, firsthand working relationship with him. I don't know the first time that I met Senator Johnson. He was in Senator Russell's office on many occasions, and I am confident that I first met him within a period of weeks or at the most several months after I had been here. The first time I remember being with him for any length of time was the night that Senator Thurmond established what I believe is still the record for one man holding the floor of the Senate. It was, what was it, 28 hours or something more than that, and it was in connection with perhaps the Civil Rights bill of, I'm hesitant to say, some time in late '58. The first Civil Rights bill is a date that we could obtain, but it was when Thurmond established then what I believe to be still the record for a continuous talkathon in the Senate. President, then Majority Leader, Johnson had a supper. We call the last meal in the day a supper in Georgia, and I think Senator Johnson would have called it a supper. Anyway, it was a meal at about eight or nine o'clock at night. The people were all thronged about in the galleries and Senator Thurmond was engaged in this effort. There were lots of strong opinions that many people had about this effort. It certainly complicated the situation on the Senate floor. Senator Johnson had some friends in for

supper, and one of Senator Russell's nephews, a good friend of mine, was in town. He [Senator Johnson] said, "Well Dick, why don't you bring Bobby along." Bobby said, "Well, Bill Jordan and I have already made plans to go to supper." He said, "Well, bring Bill along, too." So that was my first opportunity to sup with President Johnson, and that's the first time I remember ever being in his presence or being able to enter into a conversation with him.

G: What was he like on that occasion, do you remember?

J: Very lofty.

G: Really? Do you think it was because he was around someone that he wasn't used to talking with on an informal basis?

J: No. I saw President Johnson on a number of occasions after he was senator. Viewing him from the distant vantage point that I have already outlined, you ask me what was he like. It was a pretty lofty position. There was certainly a distance between us. And I think Senator Johnson was a lofty person. He was not the type of person that you could ever--even as an employee of the Senate and he being the Majority Leader of the Senate, or even connected with his campaigns and he being a President, all those positions that indicate a certain distance not on a man-to-man basis. Although, several times I did have some exchanges with him where we got down to brass tacks. But certainly the first time I met him, there was a distance. I was an observer; I was a listener; I was not an active participant in the conversation. He was in a very lofty position. The steaks were very good, though.

I think it came from a friend of his in Texas. We've disowned prime beef now, but I remember the beef was very prime.

G: Do you recall his talking about the Thurmond filibuster that evening, discussing the general situation with Senator Russell?

J: Yes, I do, but I wouldn't want to go into it. That was a private conversation between two other people, and even at this late date I don't feel inclined to comment on it.

G: As long as we're here on civil rights, perhaps we can get your input here on Senator Russell and that '57 Civil Rights bill.

J: Was '57 the date of the first Civil Rights bill?

G: Yes.

J: That is probably the time of the Thurmond filibuster that I was trying to recall a few minutes ago.

G: Other people have indicated that Senator Russell realized that the Democratic Party, in order to be successful and get ahead, was going to have to have some sort of record on this, and that he was the chief architect of outlining a bill that was acceptable to the South, and that in many senses that '57 bill reflected his, more than anyone else's, perspective.

J: Well, you are not the first historian that I have talked with that has made this type of statement. Now there may be those that can verify it, but I can't and I am inclined to doubt it. I have heard President Johnson on many occasions outline the order of his priorities as to who he was. He served his God;

he served his country; he served his party; and he identified with these things in this specific order. Certainly I don't question Senator Russell's dedication to his God or to his country, but there were other parts of this series to which President Johnson outlined his order of allegiance that I don't think Senator Russell necessarily shared. Senator Russell was a Democrat; he was throughout his entire political career, but he never assigned an order of his allegiance as President Johnson did. But I would speculate that Senator Russell, if he had ever done that, would have expressed an allegiance to the people of Georgia as their elected representative that would have transcended any allegiance that Senator Russell had to the Democratic Party. Your question infers a sense of concern about the Democratic Party and its then current position concerning civil rights that I just don't believe Senator Russell necessarily shared. Overwhelming opinion in the state of Georgia was in opposition to civil rights legislation at that time, and Senator Russell was their representative and a good one. Your question implies that with a concern about the Democratic Party, he was seeking to perfect a bill that was, at that time, almost wholly objectionable to the people that had elected him to office on some four separate occasions. At that time they had elected him to the Senate on some four separate occasions.

G: Do you recall the extent to which he was involved in the changes that were made, the changes being Richard Russell

changes such as, I think, the jury trial and this sort of thing?

J: I don't remember Senator Russell being so active in perfecting civil rights legislation. President Johnson established his record without question.

G: I know that several parts of that bill were changed and debated. One was that Southern people, and particularly Senator Johnson himself, insisted on a jury trial. There was one nebulous portion I think gave pretty vast powers to the Justice Department, and that was something else that was unacceptable to them.

J: It's very difficult for anyone in December of 1974 to go back without doing any research. The so-called civil rights effort occupied 100 years, but in the context we talk it occupied certainly the period from about 1946 or 1947 to date, but the major part of it came up from the early Fifties through the middle to late Sixties. Let's take a time frame of '46 to 1970. It's difficult to remember which sections were in which bills that came up at a particular time. It certainly is for me. I recall Senator Russell's speech to the Senate on that first bill. As I can recall now, I thought it was pretty resolute in opposition to the entire bill. I can't recall Senator Russell as a participant in amendments designed to perfect and extend the bill. Certainly it was debated and it was enacted. I don't think I can be helpful to you on the specifics.

G: Well, that has been helpful, because perhaps this is just a myth that has been generated by others: that Senator Russell was sort of in the middle on this thing.

With regard to the other senators of the South, you had a good deal, I suppose, of diversity in beliefs and commitments and thins of this nature. Where did Senator Russell and Senator Johnson fit in this hierarchy of prominent Southern senators?

J: At what particular time? Because you know Senator Johnson came here as a Southern senator, but then all of a sudden he began to claim he was a Western senator. Texas was no longer a "Southern" state, it was a "Western" state. As time moved on and Senator Johnson's career developed, he became a "Westerner." So where did Senator Johnson fit in with the Southern coalition at what particular time?

G: I'm thinking in terms of '57, '58, and '59.

J: Oh, Senator Johnson was a Western senator by that time, self-described, I think.

G: Were his policies or the things that he would now foster other than civil rights different, or was civil rights primarily the basic change here? I mean, I assume that there was more than a description of himself as a Westerner rather than a Southerner.

J: I think as Senator Johnson's career developed his outlook, his views--and I don't question the motives behind them. I think that they were real in his mind--but certainly I think that they changed. I think he was a younger man; I think he

evolved. He found himself in different situations. I think that Senator Johnson was much more able to accept rather radical change, perhaps because of his nature, but more particularly, I believe, because of his age. It is easier for a younger person to accept change than for older people. I'm more resistant to change today than I was a year or five years ago. I think that was a basic difference. But I do think without question Senator Johnson moved, changed his position on civil rights, and on many other items of national concern. I think Senator Russell continued on a more fixed path. In fact, during my time with Senator Russell--some fifteen years--the only legitimate criticism that I ever heard made against him was that Senator Russell didn't change. I never did believe that that was such a very harsh criticism. I suggested to those who levied that charge that it might be advantageous for the Senate to have one man in it that felt so deeply about some things that he didn't change, didn't turn with every new gust of wind. For then if we had one point that stayed constant, we could determine how far everyone else had strayed. So I think Senator Johnson did change for the reasons that I have described, and I think Senator Russell did not change. I might add that I admire them both for their positions.

G: During this period that you were working with Senator Russell did you look upon him as, in a sense, a mentor of Lyndon Johnson or had Johnson already. . . .

J: No, I think that came before my time. Senator Russell, if I

recall, met then-Representative Johnson fairly early after he came here. Both of them were products of the New Deal, although there was some age difference, and Senator Russell was in the Senate many years before Senator Johnson came. But he first met Johnson when he was a representative, perhaps with Mr. Rayburn or with someone else. So when he came over to the Senate, Senator Russell was a powerful factor in the Democratic lineup of senators.

I think that almost immediately upon Johnson arriving at the Senate, he sought counsel from Senator Russell, and that relationship developed. Johnson came in when?

G: He came in '48.

J: Nineteen forty-eight?

G: Elected in '48, so he would come in in '49.

J: Nineteen forty-nine. So the mentor relationship, I would think,--and I encourage you to talk with Bill Darden about this. Bill was here several years before I was, was in the '49 to '52 or '53 period prior to the time that Senator Johnson became the Majority Leader. At the time I came, Senator Johnson was already Majority Leader, and it was not a mentor-type relationship. It was a parallel relationship, a brotherly relationship of sharing back and forth and mutual support and understanding.

G: Do you recall, for example, occasions when one would influence the other on important matters?

J: Oh, I've been here too long to try to determine when one man influences another. Things that people say, things that

people read, things that people learned at their mother's knee influence people. I don't really think there is much influencing people as between men when they get to the age or the position of being a United States senator. I think that there was a sharing of basic support, one man of the other. I think during the early years that Senator Johnson derived more support from Senator Russell than he was able to give to Senator Russell. I don't think there is any question about that. As Senator Johnson obtained more and more power, and certainly during his later years here in the Congress he perhaps held power equivalent to Speaker Rayburn, but he was in his own right a power if not the power in the Congress during the Eisenhower years. So he moved away from Senator Russell as he acquired power of his own. Let me say in that connection that I understand, and I think it is in several articles, that when Russell encouraged Johnson to seek the Leadership and Johnson was later elected Majority Leader, Johnson said, "Dick, I'll do it if you will switch your seat down the aisle and sit behind me." That is perhaps an illustration. I think it was flattering to Senator Russell, but I think it was perhaps more illustrative of a need of his that then existed. But Senator Russell did switch from a desirable seat that he had to a seat down in a more congested area of the Senate, and he retained the seat directly behind the Majority Leader until his death.

G: I might say in this connection that if you have read Harry McPherson's book on . . .

J: Would you excuse me just a minute?

(Pause in recording)

J: Excuse me. You were telling me about Harry McPherson's book?

G: Yes. There were two points in the book about Senator Russell that struck me, one, that Senator Russell had a towering intellect superior to virtually all the other senators, and two, that he and Lyndon Johnson exercised so much more influence and power in the Senate than the average senator. What about these two characteristics? Would you care to talk about them?

J: You are talking about two people and you are talking about a characteristic. You say that Harry said Senator Russell had a towering intellect, and yes, I think that he did. I think the extent of his gift is not generally recognized. I think it's very difficult for a Southerner who has an extraordinary intellect to be recognized. There is an illusion in this country that unless a man has an Eastern education that he can't have an intellect of anything but very modest quality. I think that Senator Russell had an exceptional and finely honed mind. He had a tremendous gift. His papers and his own writings will, in time, be recognized as being the eloquent documents that they are. I've just finished reading the latest book on Thomas Jefferson and his ability with language and with words, which was just outstanding. Very few of us have that gift. I think that Senator Russell had it. I think his papers, his ability to express himself, his use of language was exceptional. He had a great intellect

and a keen one. I don't mean that Senator Johnson did not. I think that Senator Johnson had other gifts that were perhaps just as great.

G: Would you specify these other characteristics that you identify with Lyndon Johnson?

J: His ability to knock heads together, to get two men that basically didn't share the same views--who just fundamentally disagreed with each other and perhaps didn't like each other personally. He would be standing there in a position, in a physical position that is reflected in so many pictures of Senator Johnson, kind of a semi-defiant--no, it wasn't semi, it was a defiant--attitude, with two members of the Senate or two people that just couldn't get together, just insisting that they come to some type of an accomodation with each other. Not tomorrow, not next week, but right then, right there. I've always been interested in, and there has recently been several books about, people's posture, people's handshake, people's attitude, one toward the other. Senator Johnson had a towering physical presence, and he was the dominant person in any get together. Regardless of intellect or lack of intellect or size or position of any of the other participants he, Lyndon Johnson, was always the dominant figure. You get three people together, and I don't care who they were; he was the dominant person. I can't think of any threesome that you could have gotten together during the time that I knew him, President or Chief Justice or whatever. . . . If he had stayed and retired as a schoolteacher

in Texas, I would think that if you had gotten together three people there, regardless of position or regardless of power or regardless of money, that Lyndon Johnson would have been the dominant person in that threesome. I don't associate it with the Presidency or the Senate or the Majority Leadership. It is a personal characteristic. It was his dominant personal characteristic as I see it.

G: Can you recall him applying this Johnson treatment in persuasion?

J: Constantly! Constantly! He started it at seven o'clock in the morning and he ended it at eleven o'clock at night!

G: I've heard that he could pick up the telephone and argue--

J: He didn't pick up the telephone; he grabbed the telephone! I never saw him pick up a telephone. He grabbed the telephone! Several people here now comment about how it was almost a rude gesture, that he would just grab a telephone. He had a life-long attraction for the telephone, as everyone knows. But he grabbed a telephone! Senator Johnson was not a considerate man. I never heard the word considerate used to describe him. He wasn't. He was a brusque man. He was a vital man. He was tremendously concerned with doing what he wanted to do, so he grabbed a telephone. There are people here, secretaries, that say that he just grabbed the phone away from them while they were talking on the telephone, cut off the conversation, and dialed his number! They were just in tears. Maybe the boyfriend was on the line, I don't know. I didn't mean to interrupt, but I never saw President Johnson pick up a

telephone; he grabbed a telephone, and he used it powerfully.

G: I have heard that he would be talking on the phone to someone, passionately in favor of his point of view and arguing with all his might. Then, he would make another call and talk to somebody with the same enthusiasm about something entirely different.

J: I think it was the thing that almost did him in, trying to look at three television stations at once and trying to talk over two or three telephones at the same time. Yes, that doesn't surprise me.

G: I have also heard that he used to set the alarm for the middle of the night and then call other senators or somebody in the middle of the night and indicate that he was concerned about a particular piece of legislation.

J: Well, that didn't originate with Senator Johnson. That's an old Southern politician's trick, to visit someone late in the night. It extends your time, and it gives a man a feeling of importance if you don't get shot by him or bit by his dog. Once you wake him up and he gets to the front door in his nightshirt and you tell him you've got to have <u>his</u> support, when he gets up the next day and goes to the barber shop, he tells everybody. "Do you know Lyndon Johnson came to my house last night at 12:30 and woke me up and scared my wife? I thought it was a burglar. And he said, 'I just can't get elected without you.' " Senator Russell used that strategy in Georgia. He didn't have any television time or radio time.

It wasn't wrong to do it. They were people that were working hard for election. So they used it effectively on the stump and at home, and they continued to use it. Maybe there are those from New York or Illinois who haven't heard of it and felt like it was something new that had come to the Washington scene. But it is an old trick.

G: That's fascinating. In his personal encounters with people, which you say are very numerous, can you recall one specific one that influenced a particular piece of legislation?

J: I said they were constant. It influenced everything. It influenced the way the Senate acted. I really mean constant. People almost did the things he wanted or came to an agreement when he wanted one rather than have his arm twisted or a head knocking by Lyndon Johnson. He just wouldn't take no for an answer. He was insistent, he was demanding. I wish I knew a stronger word.

G: I have heard that he also placed a good deal of emphasis on the committee staffs and would have breakfasts for the committee staffs and try to get their input on certain things he wanted done. Is this true?

J: You'll have to ask some of his committee staffs about that. I never heard of it and I am a little bit inclined to doubt it. If he had a breakfast for them, it was to hold out either a carrot or a stick and persuade them to work harder toward his point of view. I find it difficult to imagine Senator Johnson looking for new input and new ideas from his staff. Maybe he did. I didn't ever serve on his staff,

but I find it very difficult to imagine.

G: What about legislative techniques, counting votes and this sort of thing? In addition to his powers of personal persuasion, what did he and Senator Russell have in addition to hard work?

J: It was intuitive, intuitive. They didn't need to go around with a pad and checklist. I think that once you have been in the Senate a while and if you have that capability. You know a man's basic philosophy and you can perhaps tell what way a given senator--after he has been here a couple of years,--you know where he is from--you know his basic philosophy, and you can predict how he is going to vote. There are a few senators but they are probably less than ten, whose votes are very difficult to project on most broad public policy areas.

G: What about Senator Kerr? How did he fit into the Senate "club," the Senate establishment?

J: Powerfully. They all liked Senator Kerr, because Senator Kerr was a visceral man, a gutsy man. Senator Kerr had lots of guts. He was a self-made man. He was a very rich man. He was very sure of himself and very confident of himself. He was also a very physical man. When he came down the hall, he intended for people to reckon with him, and he didn't seek to avoid confrontations. It was no Marquis of Queensberry with Bob Kerr. Bob Kerr was solid. I don't know how you used to hire a combatant in the olden days in a war. Senator Kerr was certainly not for hire, but if you identified with him and he identified with you, you couldn't have a finer or a

tougher ally. A senator couldn't have a tougher or more viceral adversary on the Senate floor than was Senator Kerr. So he was a man much to be desired as an ally and a man much to be feared if he was opposed to your point of view.

G: Was he generally advancing the same point of view as Senator Russell, for example, or Senator Johnson?

J: I think they all, on many occasions, found a great commonality of interests, at least during Senator Johnson's early days. I think in the latter days that perhaps Senator Kerr would have considered himself, in his political philosophy, closer to Senator Russell than to Senator Johnson, but he was somewhere between the two.

G: Let's talk about the political aspects. Were you involved in the 1960 campaign at all?

J: Yes.

G: Would you like to discuss your role here?

J: Yes. I had been here and worked in the Senate then seven or eight years. I had an admiration for Senator Johnson. I was surprised that he was the vice-presidential candidate, as many people were. We people here think that the world revolves around the United States Congress, and particularly the United States Senate and of course it doesn't. But once the man has achieved the power that this man had achieved--and it was probably a greater power as Majority Leader than any man before or since--it was difficult for us to see him stepping down to become Vice President. So it was an interesting time. It was a time in my life in which I wanted

to identify with the great issues of the day. I've always liked to be at the center of things. I haven't ever shunned controversy, and political campaigns are the last hard ball game left in America. A presidential campaign is the pinnacle of all political campaigns. I didn't square with Senator Johnson's views on everything. I certainly didn't with President Kennedy's, but I felt myself in a position to support the Democratic ticket and I felt very strongly about it. I sought an opportunity to become involved and did offer my services in any way that I could be utilized to Senator Johnson. I worked primarily in what has now come to be called an advance man. I think it was in the 1960 campaign this term was created, and now everybody, even senators, even representatives, have advance people. But we didn't exactly know what advance people were supposed to do. Somebody coined the word, I guess. I had a very exciting and very challenging time advancing. They were just senators then. You didn't have the Secret Service and you didn't have White House communications office. You had to just put it together.

G: Which trips did you advance?

J: I did the same thing in 1964. I volunteered in 1960. I was not unwilling to participate in 1964, but President Johnson apparently asked Senator Russell if I could participate in '64, which was flattering to me, that he would recall that I had even participated in 1960. I have some difficulty in separating the places out, but Richmond, Virginia I recall

as being the first. I also did the Southern area train we had that year. Yes. I went ahead of the train and set up a stop in Atlanta for the first LBJ train. I also did Macon, Georgia also on that train whistlestop. The ones that I recall best were, of course, the presidential stops in '64, but there must have been half a dozen or more in the 1960 campaign. Yes, I went out into Missouri that campaign and ended up the week before the election doing a stop in Wichita Falls, Texas.

G: Typically, how would you work as an advance man in these areas? What would be the process?

J: Well, there are different types of people. You got to be an advance man primarily because you were available free without somebody paying. That was really the basic qualification of an advance man. Either you've got financial resources of your own, or you are in a professional job where you control your own time. Or you are in a political job with some member, and you are young enough to get around and not have to sleep in too expensive a place. These were really the basic qualifications for being an advance man or for that matter any other type of political action man: your availability at little or no cost; your ability to subsist on the land as you go along. They have manuals about it now, I understand. Then you did everything from trying to get the balloons up where you could make a big scene to trying to get some kid to paint a poster or be sure it was not professional if it was not a kid's poster. And get the kid to hold it up

and be sure the nails were not sticking out in the stick that he held with. And make sure that the loudspeaker worked (laughing).

G: Are you thinking of a time when it didn't work?

J: Yes. I remember the first speech I advanced. Its interesting the way Senator Johnson worked. Senator Johnson was a consensus man. We didn't have any manuals and his people didn't know much about the people he could get who were available at little or no cost. I remember there were four of us that ended up in Richmond. It was a difficult place for a Southerner to campaign for Vice President in those days. It was difficult to stage a seated political rally. So we all ended up at the same hotel on the same date. There were four of us. Myself, I had an identification with Senator Russell. There was another guy who was "Happy" Chandler's director of state police, so I suppose you could identify him with "Happy" Chandler's politics. There was a young Jewish man who was a lawyer here in Washington, and after I got to know him better I determined that his politics were obviously somewhat more liberal than mine or perhaps the gentleman from Kentucky. And then to keep the thing in perfect focus, there was a lady that showed up who was the wife of one of Senator Johnson's friends here in town. We all showed up with identical credentials, all believing that we had authority to set up the meeting for Johnson--all of us chiefs in a manner of speaking. This was a Johnson way of working. He liked to have people checking

each other, for instance, two people writing a speech so he could decide which one he wanted to give. In this instance he had four advance people; presumably in order that they would all keep each other straight, because they would all be jockeying for position and so none of them would get too far out of line. Not a bad strategy, particularly if you aren't sure of your people. We heard that his well-known wrath had been vented on several advance people in earlier stops because we didn't have White House Communications, and you had to get a loudspeaker that worked. When it went out in the middle of his speech, he didn't take kindly to it. He was a man of some violence, a very violent temper, and no person, even though he was volunteering his services, wanted to have that temper vented on him. He had very royally chewed out these other advance teams and we heard about it. So in the assignment of functions between all of us chief advance people then in Richmond, I decided that I would bite the bullet and I would be responsible for getting somebody to volunteer a loudspeaker system. Like any young guy overly enthusiastic I said, "Hell, I'll fix him. I'll just get so many systems that I'll have one that will work." So he was to have a few remarks at the airport, and I had the airport system wired to the podium, and I had a speaker truck that I had gotten somebody to donate for fifteen dollars. I had it there, and I had it wired to the podium. Then I had a portable system also wired in with two

speakers, so I knew without a shadow of a doubt that Senator Johnson would be able to address the great throng that we were going to amass there.

He came up and he got out of the plane. I remember he was flying in an Electra. He was always kind of skittish about airplanes, I think, and I never did know why he was flying in an Electra. At that time they had recently experienced several tragic crashes--I guess maybe somebody donated the Electra to the campaign. But he got off, and the crowd applauded as we had instructed them to applaud, and the signs went up at the right time. I gave the signal, the guy switched on the truck system, and it was not wired properly. I threw it to the third system. He had already started into his "I'm so glad to be here." He was about half-way through the first sentence, and something happened to the third system. All three systems failed! So yes, I do recall a situation at Richmond, our first advance stop. I never quite got over all three systems failing but that's just what bad luck you can have some time. He finished his speech with a portable bullhorn and was I embarrassed!
One other interesting point that I guess is in the records of the Library: It's a small thing, but it's the type of thing that makes people interesting. In the 1960 campaign, one of the things that we heard was that the podium was never right for Senator Johnson, and when it was not he raised hell. He wanted it so many inches, and I used to know for many years how many inches it was supposed to be above the ground. It

was some way related to the belly button. It was so many inches above his belly button. That's the way it was finally described to us. Anyway, it was never right. There must have been fifty stops, and it was never right. This fact always subjected the first advance person at hand to much abuse: "Why in the hell can't you boys get me the right size? You know what size it is. I have specifically told you!" Out in Wichita Falls the week before the election, Claude Desautels was there for Senator Kennedy. It was a joint appearance, and he was working out of the Kennedy headquarters. So I asked Claude when we got there, "Senator Kennedy is obviously the presidential candidate. What are your requirements for the height of the podium?" Claude laughed, and he said, "We don't have any requirements. Senator Kennedy can speak from any podium that he has on the platform." I said, "Well good, because I've got some specific requirements for the podium," and I pulled them out. I then had it written down. Senator Johnson had gotten on me a couple of stops. It was always wrong. He had gotten on everybody. I said, "One time we are going to have it right."

So I went down to the Episcopal church. Somebody volunteered a podium from the Episcopal church, and it turned out to be the pulpit. And it was wrong. It was the wrong size, and it couldn't be adjusted. So I got a carpenter there at the airport, and we sawed off the pulpit so that it would be the right distance from the belly button. I guess the back of the podium was supposed to hit the belly button,

maybe that is the way it was. But we sawed it off several inches out of the base of the pulpit. Beautiful pulpit. Then it was all do or die for the Party. It was the exact right size. But what I hadn't counted on was the fact that the man giving the invocation was going to be the minister from that particular church. He got up to give the invocation that he had worked on for weeks, raised his hands, looked down and saw his pulpit had been cut almost in half, and almost forgot his opening prayer. I later got a contribution to rectify the damage from the Democratic National Committee. We sent them $65. I hope it covered it. But Senator Johnson said afterward that it was the most perfect podium that he had had in the entire campaign, so I was overjoyed at my success.

G: I guess later when he was President he had his own design that was adjustable.

J: Well I doubt that those were bought for $65, but I think he did.

G: They call it "Mother," I think, in Austin. We still have it at the Library.

J: I can imagine.

G: That's fascinating. Let me ask you a few questions about his accepting the vice-presidential nomination. Do you remember what Senator Russell's reaction to this was? Did he want him to go on the ticket as VP?

J: I remember what everybody's reaction was. I remember what Mr. Rayburn's reaction was. I remember what John Connally's

feelings were. I heard; I didn't talk to all these people. But everyone here, where he had assembled so much power, had some idea about the lack of power in the Vice President's office and were amazed, were dumbfounded, couldn't believe it, thought he had gone off his rocker. In my own mind, I don't know that I have ever read it, but I expect that the demands on his time, these endless days, the toll that the type of work schedule he adhered to would have extracted from a man with heart problems led me to believe that Mrs. Johnson was a strong influence when this opportunity--I use the word "opportunity" I suppose advisedly--was offered to him. I have always thought that she must have been the deciding factor, that she wanted to see him with a reduced workload.

G. That's an interesting point. I have never heard that point made, but it's something that I ought to check on. I have heard in the course of other interviews that she, like most everyone else, was opposed to it. But that is something to check.

Did Lyndon Johnson seek Senator Russell's advice on whether or not to take it, do you know, ahead of time? I know he checked with Sam Rayburn.

J: I really don't know. Senator Russell wasn't at the convention. I have a vague recollection, but I don't know that I'd like to even put it on record it's so vague. I have a vague recollection that Senator Russell was in Winder, Georgia, that I was there with him, and that Senator Johnson did call him there, but I am very uncertain about it. I just don't

remember.

G: You indicated earlier--I think before we started the tape or maybe at the beginning of the tape--that later on, you and Lyndon Johnson, I think as you put it "came to brass tacks"?

J: There weren't that many occasions. I started off back when I first got here in about '54, and I guess most of my face-to-face encounters with him were in connection with the work in the '60 and '64 campaigns. He used to agonize about why everybody overscheduled him: "Jack Kennedy's people don't do this to him. Why do they make these schedules? Nobody's thought about them; my people just don't know how to do anything. Why?" I particularly remember Richmond, Virginia, the first stop. I was pretty naive. I am still about many things. Marvin Watson got in the back seat with him. We had to borrow a limousine then; we didn't have any presidential limousine. An advance man had to find somebody that had a big black car and that would let you have it with somebody to drive it. We had acquired such a car, and it had a big air conditioning system in it. Now everybody's got air conditioning. But such a system was noteworthy. Senator Johnson had really gotten wound up. He was going to bind the wounds of the South and the North and put them together, and hitch them all to the same wagon. He really gave a stemwinder that night. He just gave it to them with the bark off, put it together and pulled it apart and put it together again. He just enjoyed himself immensely. George Reedy was there. I remember the two of us were standing at the back, and we were excited that he was facing his first Southern city and

obtaining such enthusiasm. He had a good audience.

(Recording ends abruptly. End of Interview I.)

Interviewer's note: Interview II, recorded January 29, 1976, reconstructs the defective portion of Interview I, as well as additional recollections.

INTERVIEW II

Interviewer's note: The last portion of the recording of interview I was defective. Interview II reconstructs that portion as well as additional recollections.

DATE: January 29, 1976

INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM JORDAN

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mr. Jordan's office in Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: Would you like for me to restate the conditions now that we're on tape, or shall I just say that this is a continuation of the interview that we conducted on December 5, 1974. We stipulated then that you would do the interview provided that you had an opportunity to review the transcript and make any changes that you wanted, and "be sure that an interview of this type reflects to others what I would like for it to reflect and that it is not subject to being taken out of context."

J: That's correct. That condition continues in connection with this extension of the first interview.

G: That's right. This will then be a continuation.

We'll pick up where we left off on a Richmond story, and we'll begin the transcription of that where you leave off so that it won't overlap.

[LBJ] was in this car with a powerful air conditioner, a limousine, and he was talking about how he was going to bind

the nation together. You and George Reedy were in the back seat, I think.

J: Marvin Watson. George Reedy and I had been standing at the back of the hall, and we were pleased that he had made such a good speech. It was almost like one of the old time religious revivals. He had really pulled out all the stops. It was a stem-winding speech, the audience was enthusiastic, and he had continued probably twenty to thirty minutes beyond the time that he expected to speak. I would guess he spoke probably for an hour, and it had been extremely well received. When he got through, he tried to shake every hand in the house, and we finally had to literally pull him out of there. This was in October; the weather was cool, but Senator Johnson had been sweating and was absolutely wringing wet, and we were afraid he was going to catch cold. He got into this big black limousine that we had rounded up for him. He didn't have a change of shirts. Later when he got to be President, there were several valets and people running around with changes of clothes, but he didn't have that kind of support then. He was musing to himself and fussing as to why he had to be so overscheduled like this. He had had to go to a dinner. He had had to stop at several industrial complexes and several shopping centers. Really, all this hadn't been necessary, but he himself generated about half of it. Another fourth of it were the stops that that people had put on the schedule because they knew that he expected it. Or if he had not been scheduled for this type blanket coverage he would want

to know why not. But this particular night he spoke in a very accusing tone suggesting: why do I have to be over scheduled like this, that Jack Kennedy's people were smart. They didn't overschedule him, and he had time to rest. "Can you imagine Jack Kennedy being there in a shirt that's just as wet as this is? I'm just perspiring." Marvin was in the back seat, and it was easy for me to kind of stay out of it, because I was on the front seat. But he was laying it on to Marvin, and Marvin was making kind of feeble excuses. The short of it was that Senator Johnson got a lot out of people by comparing them unfavorably with other people, particularly his staff. Even in the Senate, he would allege that his staff didn't stay quite as long or work quite as hard as someone else's staff.

(Pause in recording)

That's the way he worked. It was his way and it worked pretty good. I remember one young man who I think had been president of the student body at the University of Texas. He had come to some local prominence, and Senator Johnson had asked him up to join his staff. I remember one day . . . Senator Russell's and Senator Johnson's offices were adjacent to each other, and I saw this particular individual standing in the hall, his head kind of bowed. I asked him, "What's wrong? What's happening?" He said, "Oh, I don't have long left here on the Hill." I said, "How's that?" He said, "We had a staff meeting. I've been invited to all the staff meetings in the two months I've been here; we have the five

senior staff members of Senator Johnson's eighteen-man Senate office force. Today, the invited all five of them except me. Obviously I've done something to make him mad. I really just don't know what it is, but it must have been something awful." I laughed and I told him, "Well, don't worry about it. Senator Johnson's been doing that for years. Every couple or three weeks, he'll pick somebody. It doesn't take any reason. He just picks them to kind of keep them off their equilibrium; he'll just arbitrarily leave them out. Don't worry, you'll be there next week, you just watch and see." Lo and behold, he was there the next week, and he never had any reason as to why he was left out. But that was one of the little devices--and Senator Johnson had many of them--that he used to kind of keep everybody on their toes.

G: Well now, you were back with Marvin Watson in the [limousine].

J: Well, I was back with Marvin Watson.

G: Did you finish that?

J: That's from our earlier interview, and I have kind of forgotten the point of what we were telling except that [LBJ] wanted to run us down compared to the Kennedy staff.

G: I think what you had said in the earlier interview was that you turned around and said something to him, or made a suggestion or something. Do you recall that?

J: Well, yes. As I said, I was naive; this was my first stop. So I just turned around and I said, "Well, why don't you just say how you want to schedule it, and have it scheduled that way." He just

looked at me in absolute utter amazement as if I had been some prophet out of the Old Testament and come up with the ultimate solution. He said, "Marvin, I'm going to do that. That would be the way Jack Kennedy would do it, and I'm just going to start telling you very precisely where I want to stop and how, and then you won't get me into these all-day, all-night stands at each of these stops."

G: Did he ever do that?

J: Oh no, it was back to the same thing. If they had cut back on it, he would have expanded it. He wasn't the type man to cut back his load . . . he was the type that would always be overscheduled, because he would always really bite off a little bit more than he could chew. There's nothing really wrong with that. A great many people do; most politicians do.

G: There were several other things that we were talking about last time. First, as long as we're on the campaign: the question that I brought up before we turned on the tape regarding the effect of the Adolphus Hotel incident in the 1960 campaign on Senator Russell's willingness to jump in and support the ticket publicly, campaign for the ticket.

J: Yes, there was a great fear in the last weeks of the campaign that the South was slipping out from under what they thought would be the Kennedy banner. That accusation was leveled at Senator Johnson very pointedly by some of the Kennedy staff. They had said that one of the reasons that Johnson was on the

ticket was to hold the South and particularly to insure Texas to the Party. In fact, he was slipping so badly there that they wanted to send Jack Kennedy in to improve their chances of taking Texas. So they had scheduled some three appearances. I had been up in Springfield, Missouri, and they had pulled me out just before the appearance there and sent me to Texas to cover one of these spots, Wichita Falls. He was to come to Wichita Falls on Wednesday or Thursday before the election on a Tuesday. We had a very fine rally at the airport there in Wichita Falls. Then, to my recollection, Senator Johnson had gone on to Dallas and the incident that has been so widely reported had occurred with Congressman Alger that night.

I don't remember the day, but I have an impression it was as early as Saturday, only two or three days after the appearance at which I had been present in Wichita Falls. Senator Russell showed up in Texas with President Johnson. Senator Russell was in Winder, his home town in Georgia, and my guess is that Senator Johnson, in trying to get Senator Russell to Texas, had used the Alger incident and used it with some force, because Senator Russell was a gentleman in every sense of the word and this type of behavior would have tended to have infuriated him. If he had been reluctant to get involved in the campaign, this would have been the type of thing that Senator Johnson could have used to entreat him to come to Texas. I expect he did, and I expect that's one of the prime reasons that Senator Russell participated in the campaign, although

briefly, in Texas.

G: Do you recall Senator Russell's saying anything about that incident, or how it shocked him or annoyed him?

J: No, I didn't discuss the campaign with Senator Russell very much. I had wanted to get involved in the campaign, and Senator Russell had been somewhat reluctant about my willingness to get involved. He was not going to be a participant himself. He was possibly less enthusiastic than most might have thought he would have been or should have been. And also I think he had a basic feeling that perhaps if his staff got involved, they might get involved in other things and that his own situation might not be the same after the campaign. That was not the case, but I think he felt he had some reason to question his long-range interests as to his staff members' getting involved in the campaigns of others.

G: I think that it was probably in the '64 campaign that you described the contact lens problem?

J: Yes, and that's a wonderful story. By that time, in two campaigns I had probably set up or had advanced fifteen or twenty different stops. Every time, beginning back with the incident in Richmond--wherein I think I told you that he had sent four different people there from four different branches of the Party: one was Happy Chandler's state director of Public Safety, a Jewish lawyer from here in the Washington area, and a lady from someplace. I never did exactly know where. All of us were there, with me ostensibly representing somewhat of a conservative element. He was well

covered for any segment of the party that he wanted to try to get to participate in his audience in Richmond. Begining then in 1960 I had come through another fifteen or twenty stops. I thought I had gotten to be a pretty good crowd raiser and was able to figure out who was to sit by whom and how many were to sit on the platform and how high the speaking rostrum was to be. I had become a professional advance man.

We came to Memphis, and I was then in a position to tell them how I wanted to do it, or I thought I was. So I told them that I would go to Memphis if they let me do it exactly like I wanted to do it, and I would show them really how to set up a speaking. They agreed. I said, "Well, the only thing I want to ask you one thing: don't send anybody with me except one man, and I will select him." It was a lawyer here in town; a native of Memphis and a close friend of mine. They agreed to send no one but Bill Jordan and Steve Potts to Memphis.

We went down there, and we wanted to have it on the banks of the Mississippi there in downtown Memphis. It was a wonderful location for a speech. It had none of the amenities of a big stadium or an interior coliseum or anything of that type. But it was a wonderful backdrop for a presidential candidate to make a speech there on the banks of the Mississippi. Our own counter, the governor of the state, who was a good friend of President Johnson's, gave us credit for having half a million there that day. But I don't think we had half a million; we might well

have had 100,000 to 125,000. Anyway, it was great crowd and I was proud of it. By then it was President Johnson and not Senator Johnson. It was a lot easier to staff because you didn't have to worry about the loudspeaker system and you didn't have to worry about security and people crowding the candidate or stepping on his feet and all of those things that we had had to worry about in the 1960 campaign. It was a lot easier to get support. You could call on someone for something, and they were glad to provide it for the President of the United States. In setting up a speaker's platform down on the lower side of the bank of the Mississippi, which is rather steep in downtown Memphis, we realized that we needed some little place there that the President could freshen up before he came out to speak. So we asked for a house trailer, and it was produced immediately.

Here we were with a crowd--some said half a million; it was a big crowd. We heard on the radio that the President had arrived; we heard the sirens, and we saw the motorcycle escort. The President pulled up just behind the speaking platform and just in front of the little house trailer. (I should note here that during this interim, the President had not wanted to appear that he was reading as much of his speech as he was, so he had a very, very elaborate system worked out whereas that speech was projected out in front of him. Neither did he want to appear to be wearing glasses, and therefore he was using contact lenses. This then was the situation that we had there behind the speaking platform.)

The caravan of vehicles pulled up, and the President indicated to Rufus Youngblood he wanted to step inside the little house trailer to put on his contact lenses. I was standing just outside the door. Something happened. Having worn contact lenses once myself, I'll tell you they are easy to drop. Even the President of the United States can drop them, and indeed, in fumbling with them to get them on, he did drop one of them. You would think that they would have an alternate pair or a backup pair. If they did, they couldn't find them. There was a little delay, and I looked into the house trailer to find out where the President was. There he was, in a stance in a straight chair, with as mean a look on his face as I had ever seen on a man, one arm down on his knee, glaring at this other man who was down on all fours. He happened to have been a rear admiral in the Navy, with all of that gold on his sleeve and on his cap. He was perspiring, he was on the floor, the Secret Service was on the floor. There must have been four or five people on the floor of that little trailer. It was all I could do to keep from just busting out laughing at the scene but I didn't; I was able to keep from laughing out loud, but it was a comical scene to see all those high-level people, particularly that Navy admiral, down on the floor crawling around, looking for the contact lens. They found it eventually, and he got out on the platform mad and about five minutes late. He made a great speech, and we had a great rally. But the thought that even a President can lose his contact lenses has stuck with

with me, and I have had fun telling it over the years.

G: Another story that you told me after the taping session last time involved his invitation to Harry Byrd to come over and see the White House after the President had moved in.

J: I did mention that, and I did hear it, and I have the impression that I heard it on good authority. But it's such an outlandish story that I really don't know whether I believe it. But it is one of the stories that have gone around about Senator Johnson here, and perhaps it might be worth telling at least as I heard it. And that was: within a month or so after President Johnson had assumed the presidency, he was in his limousine, and he passed Senator Harry Byrd. Senator Byrd was a reserved gentleman, a rather quiet man, rather short of stature. He looked almost like somebody's picture of Santa Claus, a delightful gentleman, but quiet and reserved and very gentlemanly. The President is supposed to have said, "Harry, come on. I want you to go down with me. I want to show you the White House." Sen. Byrd said, "Mr. President, I've seen the White House. I have some business." LBJ said, "No, no, Harry. I want to show it to you. I want to show you what Lady Bird's done down there. It's not the same place. I'm having such a good time. Won't you come down there? Just come on with me." Practically insisting, he got Senator Byrd into the car with him, and Senator Byrd went to the White House. They showed him through several of the more important rooms. [LBJ] was supposed to have been very fond of the swimming pool there in the lower part

of the White House, and the story goes that he then insisted that Senator Byrd come down to the swimming pool with him. He wanted to show him the swimming pool. Senator Byrd went to the swimming pool, and then the President proceeded to disrobe and to do what we call in the country a "bellybust" out in the middle of the swimming pool in his altogether. The story even goes that he urged Senator Byrd to come in with him. Senator Byrd wasn't going to go in swimming in that manner down at the White House. But the President is supposed to have gone in swimming and finally taken Senator Byrd home. As I say, I don't know whether I believe the story or not. It sounds like one that could have happened, but I seriously doubt that it happened that way.

G: Of the relationship between President Johnson and Senator Russell, can you recall the circumstances of the President asking Senator Russell to serve on the Warren Commission?

J: Well, it was a time in which Senator Russell had suffered a very severe siege of sickness with his emphysema, which had just been diagnosed. He almost died at Walter Reed the first time he was hospitalized and was there for some two or three months. It was not long after that that President Kennedy was assassinated. It was also at a time that the Civil Rights bill of 1963 was up, and Senator Russell was heavily involved in that. Senator Russell was very, very reluctant. In fact, not once but several times he told the President that he just wasn't in a position to accept that arduous a job at that particular time, that he

was honored by having been asked, but it was just not something that he could agree to do. I rather expect, and this is my supposition, that the fact that Chief Justice Warren had then been selected to head the Commission didn't encourage Senator Russell. It didn't make it any more likely that he would want to serve, because he and the Chief Justice had some differences with reference to some important, specific issues, and generally their political philosophy was pretty far removed, one from the other. I think the Chief Justice has indicated his reluctance to have served on that commission, but to the credit of President Johnson, he did, in the final analysis, by some means or other, obtain a group of people on the Commission that I think kept the country together with the idea that the ultimate truth or as much of the truth as could ever be known would be revealed about that tragic event. I think that anyone would have been hard put to have selected a more diverse yet universally acceptable group of men than the group that President Johnson put together and persauded, by one means or another, to serve on the Commission. For the record, Senator Russell was a very reluctant member, and I think understanding his physical situation and his workload at the time, that was understandable. I don't want to put out of proportion Senator Russell's disagreements with the Chief Justice, but they were there, they were very real and were undoubtedly an important part in his reluctance to serve.

G: Did he ever indicate verbally that this was part of his reluctance?

J: No. No, he never did. And for whatever it's worth, I would like to add here that in the final analysis, it was Senator Russell--

and I know this for a certainty--who kept the Commission from coming out and indicating that it conclusively had found that it was one man acting alone that assassinated President Kennedy. Senator Russell believed that it was one man and one man acting alone, but there were far too many unresolved questions for him to accept that as an incontrovertable fact and state it positively and without equivocation in the final report to the country as a historical fact. He threatened--I don't know that he threatened--he said that he would refuse to sign the report or he would make a minority statement or personal statement at the end of it attesting to his own views if in fact they couldn't agree. They went back to work on the final statement, and they were able to come out with a unanimous view that while it indicated that they had exhaustively searched the record and endeavored to ascertain the facts that they could not make any final and absolute judgment simply because the facts were not there to support that judgment.

G: One of the general areas that we talked about last time on the deleted portion was the increasing strain between President Johnson and Senator Russell toward the latter years of the Johnson Administration. You brought up several points. One was, I think, the speech that Senator Russell made on South Vietnam. Do you recall the circumstances of that?

J: Yes. It was Senator Russell's first live TV appearance after his first hospitalization, and there were quite a number of newsmen that were seeking his views on what was then a highly irritating

and smoldering war but one that was not yet at the point of dividing the country but was still a very very live issue. He agreed to go on one of the press programs that were then in vogue--I forget which one. He appeared, and he was asked a question: if there were an election in South Vietnam, what do you think the results would be? Senator Russell answered honestly and very positively that in his opinion, from all the information he had, he thought that if there were a referendum held, an open one and a free one, that the majority of the people of South Vietnam would probably vote to not support the incumbent regime but vote for some type of an affiliation with the North Vietnamese. At least they would vote against the incumbent regime, and he stated so very forthrightly and very positively. He was hardly away from the studio when there were very loud and very vigorous protests from the Executive branch over him having expressed this view. They had hoped, I think, that Senator Russell, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and accepted and known as what was then described as a "hawk," would be very supportive of the effort that was then being made in South Vietnam by the United States government. At the time and I think throughout the whole period of the Vietnamese involvement, while Senator Russell "supported the flag," as he described it, he never had the feeling that the situation there was as workable or as pliable as many in the Executive branch thought that it was. That was one of the first indications, though, that I recall that there was a strain on the relationship. There were others. There was one in connection

with the appointment of a judge in Georgia. Senator Russell recommended a man of extraordinary legal ability that happened to have been a long-time associate of his. But the nomination as recommended by Senator Russell, was not forthcoming. It was held up for a considerable period of time, ostensibly at the behest of the Attorney General, Mr. Ramsey Clark. But the fact that Senator Russell, who had enjoyed a close personal friendship with the President for many years and had been then in the Senate for some thirty years, had difficulty in obtaining the appointment of a Federal District judge in his state was embarrassing. It was a slight that under the circumstances was more noticeable than it might have been with a new senator. But still it would have been unusual for even a first-term senator in the area of nomination of judicial officers and certain court officers in the state not to have been accepted. In this case the slight was pronounced because of Senator Russell's seniority, because of his position, because of his former friendship with President Johnson.

G: Do you think that the fact that Senator Russell had publicly announced his support of his nomination beforehand gave him more of a vested interest in supporting that? Maybe it was a more critical issue as far as he was concerned.

J: I don't know that there's anything unusual about a senator's stating who he has recommended. It seems to be the rule rather than the exception. I remember here within the past several weeks seeing a relatively junior senator here announce who he

was recommending. I had forgotten that Senator Russell had announced who he had recommended, but I see nothing unusual about the fact that he might have. I don't think that it ever occurred to Senator Russell that in nominating a man of the recognized ability and high integrity of the man that he nominated, anyone would hold up or have any serious question about that nomination.

G: I gather that the administration saw this problem with Alexander Lawrence's--the Federal judge's nomination as tied to the Fortas nomination and confirmation. I think that an administration position at the time was that they expected Senator Russell to support the Fortas nomination and then later felt that his opposition stemmed from a failure on the other one.

J: Well, I would say that was hardly a quid pro quo. I would say that the Bible says that the Lord knows about every sparrow and when he falls to the ground. But as important as the Federal judge is in the southern district of Georgia, I don't know that it was such a momentous event that the administration had to structure its position regarding the nomination of a chief justice of the Supreme Court around it.

G: Did Senator Russell oppose the Fortas nomination initially when it was first put forth? Do you recall his attitude toward it?

J: Well you know, Senator Russell had the advantage or disadvantage of coming here in the early Thirties. It was before President Johnson really got here, and there were a lot of people around town. I remember President Kennedy's father was here; he was

chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. Justice [William O.] Douglas was working downtown, and from what I have read, Mr. Fortas was down here, too. I imagine he had an opportunity to see some of these people, watch them develop, watch their views at the time and see how they came along. A lot of them came into great prominence, and Mr. Fortas might have been one of these. Quite frankly, I don't remember Senator Russell's position on the Fortas nomination or when he made it known. But I would be surprised if I went back and researched the matter I found that Senator Russell was an enthusiastic supporter of Justice Fortas to be Chief Justice.

G: Do you recall the exchange of correspondence that took place between the two men late in the Fortas nomination?

J: Yes, I remember a good bit of correspondence. I remember some correspondence that took place in connection with the Lawrence nomination, but we'll leave that to the two libraries and when they'll make that correspondence known. I don't think it's in the interest of either man for me to start getting into trying to recall what is a matter of record in the Russell and in the Johnson libraries.

G: The reason I bring that up is that several of the Johnson aides have indicated that one of the letters--I think it was a letter from Senator Russell to President Johnson--was returned. No copies were made, and if so, we don't have a copy of it.

J: Which one of them were returned?

G: One that Senator Russell had written to President Johnson.

J: And who returned it?

G: The President did, maybe through an aide; I don't know.

J: Did he open it or did he not open it? Was it returned unopened or opened?

G: I think it was opened.

J: Well, if that were the case it must have been the type letter that President Johnson didn't want as one of his keepsakes. It would be kind of presumptuous for me to comment on a letter that you or some of the Johnson aides say existed and the President elected specifically not to keep.

G: What I am trying to to do is just find out if you remember those circumstances, if this was in fact the case, and if you can recall what happened at this end of Pennsylvania Avenue in that instance.

J: I think that once two men have been friends for twenty years or more and they have strong differences between them, that either of them was poorly advised to put those feelings in written form.

G: Is there anything else about the latter years in the relationship that you recall?

J: Not specifically, but it was a situation that . . . those of us that had an opportunity to see it as it moved into its latter stages, which was certainly not as warm and mutually profitable as it was in the early stages. . . . You can speculate about whether or not that was because of the position of one man in the presidency and having so little time to call his own, or

whether or not it was such things as we have made reference to, these personal abrasions. I tend to think that there were differences. As I indicated in the earlier interview, Senator Johnson shifted. He moved with the times. He had great aspirations and he sought to achieve them. Senator Russell found himself very secure in his own beliefs and his position and his ability to stick by the things that he believed and not change here in the Senate. Whereas the President had obviously changed his position over the years and had assumed the awesome responsibilities of the presidency. I tend to think that we might exaggerate these little tempests, these little differences. I am confident that had Senator Russell lived and President Johnson lived for a period of time afterward, and they had both enjoyed good health after the President had left the White House, and that if he and Senator Russell could have gotten together the friendship would have been easily rekindled for they had so much in common--their basic personalities were a lot alike. I think it would have been renewed and would have flourished in spite of these instances that we come up with and try to make matters of some great importance. At the time, they obviously were sharp differences. Neither Senator Russell nor President Johnson was a timid or a shrinking man. Both of them were robust in their views, and when they fought together, they fought well and they fought gallantly. When they disagreed, they disagreed as heartily. Both of them had a way . . . not of undermining the other, but the little asides that they would throw

off in connection with the disagreement, the questions that they would raise about the other one seemed . . .

G: Can you recall any?

J: I don't know. I'm trying to think if I can recall one.

G: Maybe referring to the number of air bases in Georgia or military installations in Texas.

J: In where?

G: The number of air bases in Texas.

J: Yes, in Texas? Or how he got that astronaut center down there. They took it from Langley, Virginia or somewhere like that? Well, that might have been, but they were always of a more personal nature than that, not harsh or vulgar but a little kind of a kidding relationship, kind of an under-the-breath statement or an aside in a telephone conversation. It was interesting. I really can't think of any specific one, but it was in the manner of both men and a part of the nature of both men that they would have done it. Or after they hung up the telephone, they would have come out with a real sharp, cutting remark, not mean or little but just something that would be very clever to joust or cut at the other. I have seen the President do this as well as the Senator but I don't know that I can recall any specific instances.

(Pause in recording)

G: We're back on again. The last time you concluded, again, the defective portion by sizing up the course of the nation as

you saw its strengths and weaknesses. Do you recall the thrust of that?

J: No, Mike, I don't know how I got into it before. I remember saying something that was very much on my mind a year ago, and I don't think that the state of the nation has improved. I tend to be somewhat of a pessimist about our national state of affairs. It's very difficult for me to see how we can extricate ourselves from the situation that we are in. I think that the country will undoubtedly survive, but I think as I look ten to fifteen years down the lane of years I see our national life in a drastically altered form from what it is today. Because our economy is clearly out of control, when our contingent liabilities--such as the Social Security system are added to the National Debt it becomes two to three to, some even estimate as much as four trillion dollars. The time that we had to work constructively with this and to deal with it effectively is virtually past. We sit here today in January of 1976 in the Committee Room of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Having worked here for the last eight or nine years, I must say that it's very discouraging to me, because I don't see any light anywhere. I don't view the situation confronting the Federal government as any different from the situation that has just exploded in New York where the City of New York admitted it was bankrupt. Our capacity to manipulate the National Debt and to print money is the only reason that we haven't had to face bankruptcy on a national scale. Here we have this year--and I

wouldn't have known this last year this time--but we fact a 76 billion dollar deficit. Why, we can't even visualize that much money; no one has any concept of it. From the date of the birth of Christ to 1902 there were only a billion minutes, and we are talking about a deficit of 76 billion dollars this Fiscal Year 1976. The first budget that President Johnson ever put together, he kept just under 100 billion dollars. And here we are with a budget of 395 billion dollars only some ten, twelve years later. It's inconceivable. We're seven months into the fiscal year, and I haven't even seen a resolution by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States deploring this record shattering deficit. We have become immune to the consequences of deficit financing, when we get caught up talking about constant dollars, or the relationship of the debt to the Gross National Product. We have gotten so involved with the idea that we can manipulate the economy--and I simply don't believe we can and have it remain free. I think that you ultimately have to pay the price of fiscal irresponsibility. But there are not many here that share that concern. The President continues to send up budgets with record deficits and the Congress tends to continue programs that make the situation vastly worse than it need be. I am also very depressed about the manner in which we have managed and utilized the very rich resources which we have been given as a country, both people resources and natural resources. I am just one of those--and there are not many of us left and maybe there shouldn't be--but I just don't believe that

government, by its very nature, can produce wealth and manage like private enterprise. There are some things required of government by the Constitution such as: establishing an army and a navy, and levy import taxes. There are other things that government has to do; I understand that. But we are engaged in so much . . . I use the words 'social engineering'; I don't know of a better term . . . and we don't know how to back away from those ideas that don't work. The Great Society was a great idea, but it did accept as a fact that government could reduce or eliminate these persistent problems that we were dealing with in the Sixties. I didn't think it could then, I don't think it can now. I think most of those programs have not been very successful. I hope with the ingenuity of our people we will be able to come to grips with the problems of energy, the problems of pollution of the environment, but more importantly, the problem of the apparent declining of the morality of the American people. You know, it was said in England that so long as the English yeoman maintained his standard, his desire to work for the bread on his table by the sweat of his brow, that England would fare well and you need not concern yourself with the happenings in the Parliament or the pronouncements of the king or queen. We have that situation here today in which we have had a decline in the home life of our people whether in Texas or Washington State or Maine or Georgia or wherever, the decline in the lives of our people and the standards by which they live. They have more material things, but certainly less spiritual and moral values.

You shouldn't have given me an opening to have stated this, because it's depressing in a way; it's depressing to me. I just hope and pray to God that it's not as serious and not as deep-seated as I am inclined to believe it is.

G: Thank you very much.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of William H. Jordan, Jr.

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, William H. Jordan, Jr., of Washington, D. C., do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the transcripts of personal interviews conducted on December 5, 1974 and January 29, 1976, at Washington, D. C., and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) All copies of the tape recordings of the interviews shall be returned to the interviewee.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all literary property rights I may have in the interview transcripts.

(4) Copies of the transcripts may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

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

W. H. Jordan
Donor

Dec. 26, 1977
Date

James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

February 15, 1978
Date