INTERVIEW III

DATE: June 29, 1982

INTERVIEWEE: ARTHUR KRIM

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Krim's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 1

G: Shall we start with that October weekend at the Ranch?

K: Yes. I guess a day or two after the President returned to the Ranch following his operation, he called the house and spoke to my wife and asked if we'd come down for that weekend. As you will recall, my wife had not accompanied me on the Labor Day visit to the Ranch and so this was her first opportunity to visit the Ranch and she very much looked forward to it. The President said he would send a Jetstar up to New York to pick us up, and that's what happened I think on October 24, [1965]. We were the only ones in the Jetstar except for the courier, who I think used to go down there, if not every day, several times a week. So the only alteration in the travel plan that was made to pick us up was Washington to New York, and then we went directly down to the Ranch.

Mrs. Johnson met us at the ramp and took us in to the old bedroom at the Ranch. The President was in bed and looked tired and said he was tired, but he said he was about to get up and make it to church. He invited us to go to the church, and as I told you in one of my last two interviews, I took my wife aside and said, "I don't think we should go, because that just gets our names in the paper and I think the President's preference is that we not be mentioned too often." She agreed. I told the President I felt it would be preferable if we didn't go to church. He didn't argue, and so as I said before, I feel he

probably had wanted it that way.

He came back a couple of hours later and the very active routine began, and it was active. There was hardly a moment of rest. Relaxation, yes, but hardly a pause between activities.

Once again, he had a newspaperman there, and once again, I was surprised at the fact that he exposed himself so completely to somebody of the press. This time it was a representative of one of the big wire services, Sid Davis, who had brought his family, too. Unlike his relationship with somebody like Bill White, which was close and intimate and confidential and so forth, I gathered Sid was just another important member of the press who ordinarily was a part of the press corps that would follow him to Texas. I wondered at the impact of his selecting one such member on the others, and I never did understand fully how that kind of thing worked out.

G: Do you think he used those sorts of invitations as rewards for writing stories that he approved of?

K: Well, he used them to improve the relationship with the press, and it may or may not be as you say, but generally the reporters that I met in that context were favorably disposed to him. But to say it was a reward for specific action goes beyond anything that I would be privy to.

But when I speak about activities, let me just mention them again, because for my wife this was a new experience and for me it was a repetition of the whirlwind that had taken place on Labor Day. It involved boating and involved helicopter rides to four or five ranches. It involved seeing the Secret Service manage to get Broncos--Fords--into all of those ranches in time for us to take rides around the ranches. It involved his driving

the Lincolns and punishing them. You know, that was when we first heard that the one thing you don't do in Austin is buy a secondhand Lincoln, because it may be one that he had driven as if it were a jeep, which he used to do. He'd run those Lincolns over the fields as if they were four-wheel-drive jeeps, and used to love it. He, of course, would express his great pride in the country and the scenery and all of the things that he was accomplishing, including the irrigation on the Ranch, and the cattle. We began a practice that went on on most of these trips of being deer watchers. Everybody would be saying, "There's a deer at eleven o'clock" or at twelve-thirty or whatnot, and everybody would be on the lookout for the deer. All through it all everything was laid on for comfort. There would always be a Secret Service car behind us with drinks for the asking. It couldn't have been more pleasant. We met a number of his friends. He and Lady Bird were absolutely perfect hosts. It was just a wonderful weekend.

The only thing of substance, apart from describing the activities that I recall, took place at the end of that visit. That is, he asked if we could have a private talk together. I remember he was in pajamas and I think with a blanket and sitting in the chair in the living room, obviously tired. It was toward the end of the day. He, for the first time that I recall, started telling me his worries about the Democratic National Committee. He felt they were mishandling money. He felt that they were disorganized. He felt that he personally had an obligation to see that all those debts were paid, that he didn't want to ever leave office with any of that still in place. He expressed a lack of confidence in the men who were handling it at that time, and he asked me if I would move in and take a good look at the whole situation and see if I could help straighten it out.

I told him that it was, in my opinion, important to build up the National

Committee, that I had had some contacts, considerable contacts actually during the Kennedy years, and I felt that it was important for him as the president to lend himself to strengthening the Democratic National Committee throughout the country. That was the first time when he told me that he didn't give a damn about the committee, he just wanted those debts paid. And I said, "Well, you're going to need them in 1968," and he said he had no intention of running in 1968, which I took as the result of his not feeling particularly well. I was absolutely certain it had no reality to it, that he would run in 1968.

I said of course he would be needed even for the task of raising the funds to pay off these debts. He'd have to agree to appearances and so forth. And on that front he was totally cooperative with me. He said, "You lay it out. You tell me what I should do. If that's what's needed to clear that debt"--it was about five or six million dollars at that time--he stood prepared to do it.

G: Do you think he was exaggerating the mismanagement of the committee?

K: No, he wasn't, as I found out later. But he was exaggerating--not exaggerating, but he did have an undercurrent of suspicion of dishonesty in certain quarters and I never found evidence of that. Sloppiness, yes.

G: To what extent do you think it was a question of him feeling that he didn't have control of the committee?

K: Well, a large extent. First of all, he didn't trust Dick Maguire, whom I had worked with very closely in the Kennedy Administration, and I did trust Dick and I liked him. But Johnson had the same feeling there that he had had during the 1964 campaign about Kenny O'Donnell and Mike [Myer] Feldman, and that is that they were just living out the

days but not really loyal to him. He had that feeling about Dick Maguire.

But his main worry was about Cliff Carter. Cliff had been with LBJ for many years and I had only just met Cliff. To me Cliff was a lovely man. I got to know his wife, too. I think everybody who knew Cliff liked him as a person. A very decent man, but accident-prone in politics. Johnson was just so afraid of scandal. I mean, he felt people thought of him as the kind of president who would misuse the office of the presidency and would sell it, and that the press would be watching with magnifying glasses to exaggerate even the smallest kind of evidence of selling the presidency. He was afraid that Cliff would put him in that kind of position. I heard that many times after this meeting, and he wanted to leave the presidency with the image of integrity in financial matters.

So he gave me that mandate that night and I did move in on the committee. I spent a lot of time in an unofficial capacity with all of them, starting with that period. I had not really been involved with the committee since the assassination of President Kennedy two years before this. But I moved back in and had an office again there and all that kind of thing.

G: How did your authority come?

K: I was known as the President's representative. He made no mystery about that; I was his representative at the committee, and in that sense they knew anything that they said or did would get back to him. So I had as much power to get information as I would need. At that time he was just beginning to know about a young man who had been made treasurer, John Criswell, and he wanted me to find out more about John and work with John. Later John became a suitor for Marie Fehmer.

G: I didn't know which came first, whether it was the--

K: No. John in the committee came first. In the time I'm talking about there was no courting of Marie Fehmer. That came a year or so later.

So that was a moment of substance in an otherwise social weekend. When my wife and I left, it was very clear that he expected us to be frequent guests. I mean we were part of the family as of that time and felt it always after that.

G: Had you bought your ranch by this time?

K: No, no. It wasn't--

G: Did the sales pitch continue?

K: It did in the meeting at the Ranch after this. But at this time we got to know all the ranchers, we got to know all the methods of transportation, of which there were many. We got to know the whole ambience of the Ranch, which didn't change much over the years. I look back on it with considerable nostalgia because those were wonderful days of excitement.

G: How much of his discussion during those days that you were with him revolved around politics?

K: Well, the substantive part I told you about. The conversation constantly included matters of world events and his participation and his decisions. That's what I meant by saying I was surprised that he had somebody in the press that close, because he was often talking about matters of great importance, including the Vietnam situation. He would have the polls on how the public was reacting. He talked frequently of a number of problems. It's hard for me to reconstruct it now other than to say that there was constant conversations of events that were occurring at the time, and a lot of it would be brought out by the fact

that no matter where we were, in an automobile or in a jeep or in a chopper, on the hour he'd listen to the news. I guess the jeep is a bit of an exaggeration, because I don't remember radios in the jeeps. I know in the chopper and in the Lincoln he would listen to the news, and then he would generally manage to get back to the Ranch in time to have those three TV sets on, which he would manipulate. Because if he was at a console [he would watch] first one channel, then the other, and then the third. Of course that would lead to conversation. More often than not we saw him on these programs, and there would be comments about that.

G: Now, he had just really gotten out of the hospital after this operation.

K: He was tired that week, as I said, both at the beginning when we saw him in bed, and I remember that last meeting before we left when we talked about politics. But in between he was just as active as could be.

G: Didn't seem to be in great discomfort then?

K: No, he was running the boat and riding the Lincolns. The only person he would let drive a car was Judge [A. W.] Moursund. If Moursund would come in the car, he might drive it, although even then the President would do a lot of driving, but nobody else. He always had the Secret Service following him.

There were all kinds of amusing things. That first weekend that we were there with my wife, he had a very colorful get-up. He had a red tam-o'-shanter hat on and considering the fact that he was a convalescent, he was very, very gay. On the water he would love to let that speedboat out at full throttle and the Secret Service would follow in two Domzies. The President told me that first night--also my wife--that he had fixed this boat up so that it was faster than the Domzies. Then the Secret Service told us that they

were humoring him, that they couldn't permit that to happen. If anything happened, the Domzies were much faster and they could catch him, but he wasn't to know that that was [true]. I mean, it was that kind of banter. Who knows who was giving us the accurate facts on that?

G: Did they ever worry that he might have a boat accident?

K: Oh, sure. You know, the Secret Service are always alert to the possibility of accidents, and the way he rode that boat, if he ever hit shallow water at full throttle, we, all of us, would have been thrown out. But he never did. As far as I can recall, we never had accidents. There always used to be a certain group on what we called the big boat, which wasn't all that big--it must have been about thirty feet--and the speedboat, and we kind of moved back and forth from one to the other. It was very pleasant.

G: Now he had just signed the Highway Beautification Act. Did he talk about his efforts to get that passed at all?

K: Well, I'm sure he did. He had talked about that on several occasions. He was very proud of Lady Bird's involvement in that. He talked about all of those things. He talked about civil rights, he talked about health, he talked about education. He knew where Mathilde and I stood on these things. Part of the reason we felt so simpatico with him was that his desires and instincts were very much along the lines of ours, and very different from a lot of the people we met with him.

G: You mean the local people or the other people, say, from New York?

K: No, I meant the local people, people like Wesley West and some of the others who felt he was coddling the deprived. Of course, my wife and I came out of the school of feeling the government has to do everything to help those who can't help themselves, to

oversimplify it.

Now, unless you have something else on that, the next occasion in your list is the dinner to Princess Margaret.

G: Let me just ask you about a few things on the October thing that you mentioned. One, the appointment of Francis Morrissey, which was a Kennedy appointment.

K: We did talk about that. I can't put my finger on the whole sequence, but I remember that he felt that the Kennedys had pressed too hard and that they had stubbed their toes by pressing too hard. And by the time Morrissey--he withdrew, didn't he?--by the time he withdrew, it couldn't be put on LBJ's shoulders because he had actually allowed them to play it out their way. Now, he did talk to me a good deal, semi-needling, about how close I was to the Kennedys. That used to come up all the time. But he recognized early on that there wasn't a thing he would say to me that would get back to anybody, and nothing ever did. So he felt free to do his needling.

G: I think Arthur Schlesinger has charged that LBJ sort of continued to keep that nomination alive, the Morrissey nomination, in order to embarrass the Kennedys.

K: Well, you see, that's just what I was trying to recall. He had the opposite feeling, that they had pushed it beyond the proper limits. Whose ox is being gored? There's a little bit of *Rashomon* in this, too. Arthur Schlesinger, seeing this from his viewpoint, could very well have that conclusion. Without knowing what you were just about to say, I had indicated his perspective as relayed to me was not that he had dragged it out, but that they had dragged it out. They could have withdrawn it at any time, as I remember it. And it had some repercussions I think in Massachusetts that I can't recall.

G: Now, also McGeorge Bundy was preparing to leave as national security adviser.

K: Yes. Yes. McGeorge Bundy left just about this time and that's when the President felt a certain measure of satisfaction that he was leaving. I didn't get a feeling of regret, and I do know that he felt that in choosing Walt Rostow he was getting somebody who would be more helpful to him than Bundy had been. But I cannot give you much more on that. I just remember there was no feeling of big loss, and I think within a week or two he had Rostow down to the Ranch, and we spent a couple of days together. The President was full of praise for Walt and what he. . . .

G: Did the President consider others for that position, like Bob Komer or U. Alexis Johnson?

K: If he did, I don't remember that. I don't think they were offered the job, were they?

G: Not that I'm aware of.

K: You know, Walt was picked so quickly, I never heard of anybody else. I didn't know Walt at the time.

G: The press also indicated that the President was placing an increased reliance on Robert McNamara. Was this evident to you?

K: Yes. He was unstinting in his praise of Bob McNamara. During this period--I didn't see any record you had of it, and I just can't put my finger on dates. But during this period he had my wife and I on occasion, and me on more occasions, go to briefings that McNamara was giving on guerrilla warfare and what was going to happen in Vietnam. I remember going to several briefings in that late period of 1965 in Washington. This was a period where he was talking more in praise of McNamara than of anybody else in the cabinet. In later years that switched to Dean Rusk.

G: Now, with regard to Vietnam, Curtis LeMay was advocating a wider bombing range of North Vietnam, and Clark Clifford was going to Vietnam. It was a period of a good deal

of public discussion on Vietnam. Do you recall anything that he said that weekend about Vietnam?

K: Oh, we talked about Vietnam a lot. This was a time when there was pressure for a bombing halt, which I think took place a few weeks after this.

G: [William] Fulbright had advocated that.

K: Yes. Fulbright was beginning to get to Johnson at this period. This was a period when the country was not particularly divided on the issue. This is a period when both Bobby and Teddy were speaking out in support of the President. Certainly Teddy. I think Bobby was still speaking out in support. You know of course that Bobby had offered to go to Vietnam to be his ambassador there before he decided to run for the Senate in New York.

G: Why didn't LBJ appoint him? Did he consider it, do you know?

K: No. Oh, he considered it. I don't want to speculate on that. I know we talked about it.

G: What did he say about that?

K: Well, as I say, I can't remember other than the fact that I think the thought to him of Bobby Kennedy representing him anyplace was not viable. It didn't present a viable suggestion.

But to get back to Vietnam, there was a meeting of all his top people, a National Security Council meeting, that took place somewhere along the line here. I think it was just before he decided on the bombing halt. He invited Abe Fortas and Clark Clifford to attend that meeting. Neither of them were members, of course, of the National Security Council. I remember his saying--and I think it was not at this meeting at the Ranch but at the next meeting at the Ranch in November--describing the meeting at which these two

were there, and how of all these people, the strongest advocates of not having a bombing halt were Clark and Abe. He said, "All the others were vacillating. These two fellows really stood up. They said, 'You have a bombing halt, you're going to get no place. The North Vietnamese will just take advantage of it.'"

Of course, I was on the other side of that. The President always knew where I stood but really until 1968 didn't ask me to get into that with anybody. But in 1968 he did, during the early part of 1968. Because he knew that I was, number one, opposed to the bombing and, number two, would have liked to see the bombing halt continued. I used to ask him, and I remember I would constantly say, "Any breakthrough?" And he would show his frustration that there was no breakthrough, no contact. I'm talking 1965 now.

Actually I remember one particular conversation which was one of the many we had when he was in bed in the morning--I think it must have been in January--when he was going to declare that the bombing was on again. And he got a long cable from Harold Wilson. He read the cable to me and commented on how Wilson was like so many that had attended that meeting other than Clifford and Fortas. That he didn't understand that we'd get nowhere by showing weakness at that particular time. He had a very negative opinion about Wilson's strength of leadership. That, of course, played a part later on, as you know, when Wilson tried to be an intermediary in something that I remember was very fouled up. I think it was something while Kosygin was in the Far East. That comes later in the story. But there was a whole business where Wilson got his signals wrong or messed things up, and Johnson never had a very happy feeling about his involvement in the Vietnamese situation.

Incidentally, I should tell you, in connection with seeing that Wilson wire, you know I had been given top level clearance by the FBI. He had had an FBI check way back in July before my first visit to the Ranch, and I mentioned that because he felt comfortable showing me secret documents. This was in that category.

G: Dean Rusk was also at the Ranch during this weekend.

K: After I left.

G: I see, okay.

Let me show you a memo, particularly the bottom of the second page there, where the President seems to be upset with the--

K: New York establishment.

G: Newspapers. Yes.

K: I don't remember this. Let me try to--oh, Sid Davis I said is interviewing him. I see, yes. A Bernie [Barnard] Collier piece. I don't remember that.

G: The press also reported--

K: What was this?

G: It must have been on [an article on] speech writing with [Will] Sparks and Bob Hardesty.

K: Oh, that they would--[LBJ writes], "Tell Doug [Kiker] I said New York had no mortgage on irresponsibility. Washington is well fixed. Did you see the Wise story on Sparks?" I see, yes. But I don't know what this Bernie--

G: The column--yes.

K: Who was he calling irresponsible in New York?

G: I guess it was Collier, don't you think? Or [Douglas] Kiker?

K: This is the kind of thing he would go into his office and check off, if we had come in

from a ride or something. I would see a lot of these. I don't remember this one.

G: The press also reported during this period that the President had asked the FBI to help the CIA with intelligence gathering in Latin America. That he was disappointed with the CIA's performance I guess particularly in the Dominican Republic. Do you recall the White House reaction to these news reports that the FBI was taking an active role there?

K: Well, I do remember that he felt the CIA had let him down in the Dominican Republic, but I don't remember this particular matter of the FBI being asked to go into Latin America.

G: Was he disappointed in the CIA for either misrepresenting the situation as it was or for not giving him sufficient warning of what was happening?

K: I think the latter. When was it that [Richard] Helms became head? Because I was there that day and he was very complimentary about Helms. We all met upstairs in the living quarters and then went downstairs for the Helms swearing in. I would say that was in 1966 sometime, wasn't it?

G: I'll check. [June 30, 1966]

K: But he was very pleased about moving him in. Who was there at this time? Was it [John] McCone at the time of the Dominican [Crisis]?

G: I think so, yes.

K: Yes.

G: Now in addition, New York politics came up. Abe Beame supporters wanted the President to issue an endorsement or something really strong and received only a greeting. Surely he must have talked to you about that.

K: He did. He talked not only to me but to Ed Weisl, who was closer to that than I was. Ed

was very close to Abe Beame. He had talked to us back in September at the White House. I don't know what the reason was, but he was reluctant to get into New York politics. I think he was a little annoyed that Bob Wagner had withdrawn. We had all spent time with Bob Wagner--meaning the President, Bob Wagner and myself--in May. At that time Wagner didn't say a word about not running, and I think the President was under the impression that he was going to continue and that he'd have a friend in New York. Wagner had always been very supportive of LBJ. In later years an appointment that I was intermediary on, at Bob Wagner's request, was getting him to be ambassador to Spain.

G: Now anything else on the legislation? The Congress had just adjourned and there were a lot of bills, the Higher Education Act of 1965 that he had just signed.

K: Well, this was the heyday. I mean, he had gone through a tremendous period of legislation which went on for a while after that. He was very, very clear that he had a honeymoon and that he had to use it to the hilt. He has said that in his book, and I certainly agree that he said it then.

G: He vowed then that he would push for the repeal of 14-B of the Taft-Hartley.

K: Taft-Hartley, yes.

G: Was that discussed that weekend, do you remember?

K: I don't remember that specifically, but I remember it in general terms.

G: Now there were a number of things that he was unhappy about. One, a Teacher Corps appropriation was cut out by the House committee. Do you recall his reaction to that?

K: No, not specifically. I would guess that he'd be angry at that.

G: The other thing, there was a provision of a rivers and harbors bill that I think he viewed

as a violation of separation of powers.

K: I don't remember that.

G: Well, I think that's all I have on the [October visit].

K: All right, then let's move on to the dinner at the White House. He had told us in October that he'd like us to come to the dinner when the princess came, so the invitations were not unexpected. We did not stay at the White House at that time. I remember we were at a hotel in town, which is quite unusual because most of the times we stayed in the White House, but more after that than before. I remember it was the first night that I met Cristina Ford. She made quite a splurge at that.

G: What was the President's reaction to that? I have to ask.

K: Oh, he thought she was lovely looking. Apparently while dancing her dress fell down. I didn't see it, but everybody talked about it. There was nothing underneath and so it created a bit of gossip.

The President was very gracious with Mathilde and me. He danced with Mathilde; he took me around and introduced me to everybody, including [Lord] Snowdon. All in all he made us feel exceptionally comfortable that evening, and it was a very prestigious group. You have the list of those who attended.

The next morning I think I got a call at the hotel to come over to see him. He was in a bit of a dither at something that had happened the night before.

G: Do you remember what it was?

K: Yes, I do. The staff had invited a number of people to come after the dinner just for dancing. Somebody had come from Buffalo, at the suggestion of Jim Wilmot, who was one of our contributors upstate, who had a criminal record. I didn't know about it, but

apparently the President had seen it on the wire service and it had broken in the press by the time I got there. He asked me if I knew this man, and I said no, didn't have the slightest idea. He said, "Well, did you know that Jim Wilmot had recommended that he be put on the list for the dance?" I said no, because I hadn't. I said it came as a complete surprise to me. He took me into the little office off the Oval Room. We sat there for a while, and he called Marvin Watson in. He said, "Marvin, I don't want anybody ever invited from New York without your clearing it with Arthur Krim from now on. Arthur's got to pass on all of these people from New York," meaning those with so-called political connections. Then he called Bess Abell and told her the same thing, that from there on out that he wanted to feel that I would take responsibility for everybody who had come as a result of political connections, connections with the committee or with the President's Club. More or less that's what happened over the next two years.

G: Were you able to determine who had a criminal [record]?

K: No, but that was done by the FBI. There was a check on everybody, and if there was any question, I would read the check. I would be at the White House occasionally to read the check, because some of the things were not criminal but involved possible embarrassments. I would know what they had done politically, which was the important point. Most of the time we would make the recommendations. So that wasn't so much a case of passing on somebody else, but we would actually make the recommendations. It extended to the rest of the country, too. In other words, the recommendations for the so-called President's Club members or the DNC would generally either come from me directly or Bess Abell or Marvin would call about them, and we coordinated that very carefully. I don't think we had another episode of that sort. Certain people were never

able to go because it could have been possibly construed as venal in nature, and that went beyond their records. We had to be sure that nobody was at that moment seeking any kind of favor from the government or special interest decision. It was a touchy and tricky course. I'm glad we navigated it as well as we did, not without one front-page mishap. That was in late 1966. I had arranged a President's Club fund raiser in St. Louis, which was on the day of the all-star baseball game. The principal speaker was going to be Hubert Humphrey. August Busch, who owned the St. Louis team--that is, the stadium which was host to the all-star game was owned by Busch. Busch invited us to come in his plane and then come to his home and be entertained and so forth. Hubert and I accepted. In the back of the plane was somebody we didn't know, with a baseball cap on, and his kid. The next day it was front-page news that Augie Busch had a problem with the Justice Department. This fellow in the back seat was the assistant attorney general handling his case. We went there for a President's Club meeting to raise money for the President. Well, if you go back on the records, you'll see it was blazoned across the papers in the Midwest and also I think the ***Washington Post*** and the [***Washington***] ***Star***. It was a one-day wonder. Hubert and I learned that you don't take private planes, and if you do, you find out who's in the plane with you. But that was the kind of thing we had to try to avoid with every White House dinner.

G: And Busch was an old friend of the President's.

K: Sure. Augie, Jr. was on the plane with us. Busch was a good friend. But he had this thing before the Justice Department, and he didn't tell us. And this fellow in the back, I don't remember his name, but he should have known enough to say, "I'm not going to fly in this plane because we've got this pending matter." But that was the worst of that kind

of thing that happened to us.

So that was the Princess Margaret dinner.

G: It was also their wedding anniversary. Was that apparent to you? Did he talk about that?

K: Well, Luci made it apparent I think to everybody by a toast, as I recall it, to her father and mother on their wedding anniversary.

G: During this period, he was interested in that Northeast power blackout and asked for an investigation of it.

K: Yes. He put Joe Califano on the job as I remember it, because I remember talking with Joe about it. He called. It involved a good friend of ours whom the President knew, Chuck Luce, the head of Consolidated [Edison], a man subsequently even considered for the Supreme Court on the recommendation of [Warren] Magnuson. I didn't get into that other than I remember Joe calling and asking me questions about it.

G: During this period there was also a good deal of discussion of exclusion of blacks from juries in the South, and the acquittals of people who were accused of murdering blacks in southern states and being acquitted by all-white juries. Did the President talk to you about that?

K: Yes, well, we talked about justice in the South and his desire to put people on the bench who would be fair in these matters. I don't remember this specifically, but I'm sure we talked about it.

G: Also in Texas evidently a number of the people who owned property across from the LBJ Ranch did not want to sell their land.

K: Yes, I think I mentioned that in one of our prior sessions. I'm not sure; I thought I had. The fact is there was one man in particular who was giving him a lot of trouble on that,

and he was determined to solve that because, as I think I mentioned earlier, he didn't want that to become a row of honky-tonks and pizza and hot dog stands. This one man could sell to the wrong person. I think he was trying to avoid condemnation. Maybe he ended up with condemnation; you'd have to straighten me out on that. Maybe it was a question of price, I don't know. But I do know that some time after that he told me he had the whole thing bought out and settled. I think it was a question of price, wasn't it? This man was holding out for--

G: I think so. Sure. I think he wanted a price well above the market value.

K: Well above what he had paid to the others. But that was very much on his mind.

Another thing that he talked about constantly, because he enjoyed it so much, was the management of the ranches that he owned jointly with Moursund. I learned a lot about ranch management just listening to those conversations. The whole idea of owning land was very important to him. Of course, when he left the presidency that became his preoccupation.

G: Shall we go to November?

K: Yes. Now, the one visit to the Ranch that you had notes on was the one on Thanksgiving. I thought there was another one.

G: There was in December, I think, after that.

K: Oh, then maybe I. . . .

G: I have some material on that.

K: I knew there was more than just that one during that year. But in any case, in that Thanksgiving weekend, apart from the repetition of the activities, I remember one thing in particular that stood out at the beginning of it. That was that he had told us I think in

October that he had somebody living on the Ranch and could we find some good serviceable clothes that we weren't using for this man and his wife and a big raft of children, I forget how many. I remember during Thanksgiving we visited them, [Hilmer] Hartman, and we had brought suitcases full of clothing for them. And he had clothing from all other friends. I think this fellow could have established a chain store clothing concern by the time he got through. (Laughter) But it was a lovable aspect of Johnson that we saw there, with the kids and with the family and wanting to take care of them. It was very heartwarming. We also I think during that weekend for the first time met Bill Heath, who had a ranch near there, and various other new friends.

One of the reasons I thought that there was another weekend was I remember somewhere in this period he asked us to come to church with him and with George Hamilton and Lynda. I did not see that in the record of the Thanksgiving weekend and I have such a clear recollection of it that it must have happened at some other Ranch visit around that time. Lynda had been staying at our house in New York and we had met George at the house in New York, but this was the first time we spent with him at the Ranch. I had known George, of course, peripherally in the motion picture business before he started to see Lynda. This one was actually reported in the press, as it would be, because whenever he was accompanied by anybody the press would mention who went to church with him. Well, it's of no great importance. I was just trying to refresh my recollection on the number of visits at that time.

Now, the other thing that happened on Thanksgiving is that Mathilde and I were riding with him in the fields, just the three of us, and he turned on the news and the news said that the President, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Krim, were going to attend the

Billy Graham services in Houston. That was the first we heard of this. It surprised us, number one, that he had given out our names, which again was a little inconsistent with what we thought his master plan was, and also that he hadn't mentioned it to us. I can't say that he was a fan of evangelism, but he obviously was a fan of Billy's. So Mathilde said, "My, are we going to that?" and he said, "Yes. Don't prejudge it, you're going to like Billy Graham." And we went. We were the guests of Roy Hofheinz in that ornate, posh, gilded quarters of his in the Astrodome. He took us all through those quarters there. They are very special. Then we listened to Billy Graham, and then Billy Graham came and joined us. All in all, it was an interesting experience. I can't say we became Billy Graham fans, but it was an educational experience.

G: Do you have any insights into their relationship, Billy Graham and Lyndon Johnson?

K: They seemed to like each other. I think Billy Graham was sort of a president gatherer. In subsequent years I noticed with what ease he moved to Nixon and then Ford and then Carter. Now he seems to be breaking a little bit with Reagan on the nuclear issue. I met Billy Graham after that at the Ranch a couple of times and actually I think once gave him a helicopter ride in our chopper. I found him very nice as a person, but I couldn't empathize with his evangelism. So that was the time we met Billy Graham.

G: There was also in that appearance I think a statement of support of the President's policies in Vietnam.

K: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He said nice things about the President from the pulpit that day. And I think politically it was a boost for the President. He didn't need that kind of support at that time, you know; it was coming from all sources.

On the way back I remember sitting with the President in the back of the car, and

his asking me about Ben Heineman. The reason I'm mentioning it is that it was in connection with Ben Heineman entering the cabinet. I was wondering if [Robert] Weaver had already been appointed to Housing [and Urban Development] and whether he was talking about HEW. But I knew he was talking about one or the other. Subsequently, when the HEW thing came up, he did offer the job to Ben Heineman. Now, the reason he mentioned Ben Heineman to me is that I had brought Ben Heineman into the political arena back in the Kennedy days. I knew Ben well and we were trying at that time to do some things for the President in Chicago.

G: Was this fund raising?

K: Yes, the President's Club, with [Richard] Daley. I was in the President's bedroom--Ben didn't know this--when he called him and offered him the job as head of HEW. And Ben explained that for business reasons he couldn't take it on. I just don't remember if the conversation about Ben at this time had to do with that or about Housing. But it did have to do with a cabinet appointment. I don't think it has any particular significance, but I remember that's what we were talking about on the way back to the Jetstar to go back to the Ranch.

G: Now I have some notes on that weekend that you went to the Birthplace.

K: Now my memory is beginning to serve me better. I think the HEW thing was long after. I think it was after he had actually said he wasn't going to run and after--was it John Gardner who had been in that job and left?

I'm sorry. You were asking a question.

G: Visiting the Birthplace, just touring around the Ranch, is there anything else there that you did that weekend?

K: Well, touring the Ranch had more to do than the Birthplace. It was also, of course, the cemetery. It also had to do with these two prefabricated houses that he was bringing in.

G: The cedar houses.

K: They sprang up overnight with Cousin Oreole in one of them. It meant visiting Dale Malechek's place. And it also meant a lot of deer--not hunting, but searching--and the cattle and the irrigation.

G: Did he try to sell you cattle?

K: Not then. He did later. I bought cattle from him later.

G: Did you?

K: Yes. Oh, and also I should tell you on this weekend in Thanksgiving my wife and I went back with him to the ranchettes, and that's when my wife picked out this piece of land with the windmill on it, five acres. Before we got through we had two hundred and fifty acres. But we bought five acres that day.

Now, Mike, I think there's no point to continuing in sequence. I would like to say that the--

(Interruption)

Where did you turn it off?

G: Well, you were saying that from the period of Thanksgiving, 1965 through 1968 there was a kaleidoscope of [events].

K: Yes. Through January of 1969 there was a kaleidoscope of activity and I see no point to going at it sequentially. I see more point in taking topics and covering them regardless of sequence. But I'd like to describe what I mean by the contents of the kaleidoscope. That is that whenever the President was leaving Washington to go to the Ranch, either he or

somebody on the staff would call us and ask us if we wanted to join him. More often than not we did, both before we had our own place there and after we had our place. We would generally go down and either spend the night at the White House before the trip, or go down early enough of the day on which the trip was to be made. Then we would all go down in ***Air Force One*** and we would always be sitting in the President's quarters. In the back would be generally, if not always, the congressmen from the area, particularly [Henry] Gonzalez and Jake Pickle, who would also get the notice of the trip. We all began to be kind of a club in ***Air Force One***. Then he would occasionally have special guests, working guests, from the Congress other than the Texas contingent on the cabinet or whatnot, and he would call for them to come up to his quarters for their little chat, and then they'd go back. He would take naps in those quarters, and there would generally be a meal. Then we'd end up either at San Antonio or at Austin, more often at Austin, and then move by Jetstar to the Ranch and occasionally by chopper. He had these big choppers at the Ranch. Once we had our place there, we would generally get a chopper ride to our ranch until we had our own chopper, and then it was back and forth in the chopper.

Apart from that, he would often invite us to the White House and we would generally have that same room, room 303. It got so that when I was in Washington I almost automatically went to the White House, so much so that once he didn't know I was there and he put in a call for me and we were talking as if I were in New York and he was in Washington. Suddenly I said, "Well, I'm upstairs." (Laughter) So he said, "Come on down," and I came down because he wanted me to meet a lady that I knew, Jeanne Vanderbilt, with her kid. We all had a laugh at the fact that he had called me to give

regards in New York and I was in the White House.

Of course during the course of those three and a half years I had the opportunity to be alone with him many, many hours, just the two of us, or just my wife and I with Lady Bird and him. It's just impossible for me to recollect all the things we covered. He used to pick my brains on anything that he could think of. But of course, since a lot of people knew that I was able to see him one-on-one, I had to carry a lot of messages to him and also get things done. I must say that of the group that came into the money aspects of politics through me, the things they wanted the President to do almost without exception had nothing to do with them or with their business. It had to do with broader issues of importance, in their view, to the country. But not small, petty things. It'd have to do with health legislation, with Israel, with tax legislation. For instance, André Meyer would be giving me messages on the financial community; Mary Lasker would be giving them to me on health legislation, Abe Feinberg on what to do about Israel. I'm giving you examples of the kinds of things where I was kind of a liaison in all of these areas. Through it all we got to know the President better and better, and our impression of him was that he had one of the brightest minds, if not the brightest, that we had ever had the privilege of being in contact with. We often wondered whether that mind would have been improved or possibly damaged by more formal education.

G: Did he ever wonder the same thing?

K: Well, I don't know. But it was an electric mind. One of the things about it which borders almost on extrasensory perception is revealed by the number of times when I had something awkward to discuss with him and I didn't know how to bring it up, and he would open the subject.

G: Can you give me an example?

K: I can't at this moment, but my wife and I have often talked about his prescience, about his coming, not only into a one-on-one conversation, but into a room and sensing what was on people's minds. It was a rare quality. That's one aspect of him that came out.

Another that came out in large measure was his compassion, his personal empathy with people who were deprived or being discriminated against, and his feelings of support for those who had had to make it the hard way, as he felt he had. He felt himself the object of discrimination and therefore sympathized with others who were being discriminated against. One of the things that I personally found in him, for instance, was a feeling about Israel and the Jewish people that you would think would come only from somebody who had roots that had some connection with that, which he didn't. But he had that feeling, and he had that feeling for the poor and so forth. So that compassion was another thing that we saw.

He was a warm friend, the kind of friend you don't find very often in life and you're surprised to find it in a president, who became your friend only after he became president. But he exuded warmth, he exuded the desire to make you comfortable. He did things, he went out of his way to take you when you said goodbye, to receive you when he said hello, things of that sort, which are very, very precious on a personal level. And he had traits that drove us up a wall.

Before I get to that, let me say he was in every sense a big man, not only physically but he just was big enough so that in any room you knew he was the center, he was the leader. I've known two other presidents on a one-to-one basis, and in that sense of awesome power he stood alone. Kennedy had a tremendous charisma which also

made you think of him as somebody special. Jimmy Carter I think compared to Johnson would be lost in the crowd, not only because he was shorter, but he didn't have that sense of strength emanating from him, which Johnson did.

Now, the frustrations, which were in many ways the other side of the coin and in other ways evidence of his being true to himself, of his own inner strength: He was given to exaggeration and frequently left it there, so that people were confused by the exaggeration and wondered, does he really mean it? But he was a master of hyperbole and you had to know how to mesh it with the rest of his--

G: Was there any formula for sorting this out?

K: Time. I mentioned that evening at Camp David. If I had never seen the President after that I would have had a different view of him. He had an abnormal need to keep his options open, and it extended all the way from not letting Mrs. Johnson know who was coming to lunch until five to one, to not permitting anybody to make any official announcement about an appointment or about a trip, even though he had made the decision, until he announced it. Because up until that moment he was free to change that decision. This permeated his approach to both his daily life and things of greater importance.

In 1966 it had a real impact on the congressional elections. He had planned a trip to the Far East, and he planned when coming back to make some campaign support speeches. These were the congressionals in 1966. He told it to me, he must have told it to a number of others. It appeared in the press and he was furious, he said no such decision had been made. Even his friend Marianne Means accused him of inconsistency in a column, and he called off the campaign speeches. If you go back to the press of that

time, you will get quite a lot of evidence of what I'm talking about now. But that option bit, you know.

G: So he would pursue the opposite course because his--

K: Just to prove that he had never locked himself in, even if it hurt him. That's the frustrating part about it, and I'm mentioning it.

He could be very strong in times when to everybody else compromise was called for. He was also a compromiser, but in many instances he wouldn't give. A lot of times he was right, but he was--should I use the word "stubborn?"--on a number of occasions. Now if I stop to think about it, I'll give you examples. I'm just trying now to kind of give you a sort of parachutist view.

G: Do you think that this stubbornness was due to a perception of his chances of having his view prevail, or do you think it was a matter of saving compromise until later until he had gotten some more accessions from the other side perhaps? Was it calculated or was it basic to his personality?

K: I think he was a man who was deeply hurt by feeling that he had communicated something and have it come back the other way, particularly with the New England establishment, the Harvard-***Time-Fortune-Newsweek*** axis. He would wear himself out trying to present his point of view, then have it come back, from his viewpoint, distorted. He felt, I think, that he was president and they were not. He just, I think, got his back up as a result of a lot of that. I'm not trying to be a psychiatrist here, but I know that this ate away at him. What it did in many ways was to cause him to be more of himself with those very people. In other words, if the ***Time*** editors, when they came down there were going to be New England snobs, he was going to give them real Texas treatment. He

wasn't going to change his manners or his language or his anecdotes or anything just to change his image with them. There have been a lot of nasty cracks about how he tried to demean people by talking to them while he was on the toilet, and his table manners. All of that has always made me so angry. The fact is, in that particular way he was natural. If he was with a guy it didn't seem to make any difference whether he was in the men's room or in the swimming pool or in the lounge. I've rambled a lot here, but I just wanted to give you some general impressions.

G: The frustrations, did they seem to increase or diminish as time went on?

K: Oh, I think they increased. I think they had a big part to play with his decision in 1968, and they increased as these so-called intellectuals began to attack him on Vietnam. That became a big contest. Even the strongest erstwhile supporters turned on him on that.

G: The desire to keep his options open, how did you even know when you were going to the Ranch and when you weren't? I understand the press was always in doubt whether the President was going to spend a weekend at the Ranch or not.

K: Well, we knew enough never to say anything.

G: But would you often suspect that you were going to go and then end up not going?

K: No, that didn't happen very often. We were usually advised at the last minute, and we were told when there were some doubts. But yes, he did play that game. And as time went on, he played the game even harder with them. You'll notice in that weekend in Thanksgiving he had the press for a photo session. I don't remember that ever happening again while we were there. On the contrary, the lengths we went to were absolutely extraordinary to avoid the press. I remember the one episode where Mathilde was sunbathing on the deck of the big boat and as far as we knew, we were miles away from

the nearest reporter. The next day [there was] a big picture--who was the blonde on President Johnson's boat? He bawled the hell out of his press people for not spotting that photographer, and Secret Service and everybody came in for a dressing-down.

This was another trait that was frustrating. I think he overdid that, from his own point of view.

G: The secrecy thing or his temper?

K: The secrecy thing. Because like what I mentioned the last time about his being angry about it getting out that he came to a New Year's Eve party; I think a lot of that would have been considered innocuous by the public.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III

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Legal Agreement pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of Arthur B. Krim

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, Arthur B. Krim of New York, New York do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on October 8, 1981, May 17, 1982, June 29, 1982, November 9, 1982, April 7, 1983 and October 13, 1983 in New York, New York, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) During my lifetime, the transcripts shall be available only to those researchers who have secured my written authorization. Thereafter, the transcripts shall be available to all researchers.

(2) During my lifetime, I retain all copyright in the material given to the United States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter, the copyright in the transcripts shall pass to the United States Government. During my lifetime, researchers who have my written authorization may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcripts without my express consent in each case.

(3) During my lifetime, copies of the interview transcripts may not be provided to researchers except upon my written authorization. Thereafter, copies of the transcripts may be provided by the library to researchers upon request.

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Signed by Arthur B. Krim on May 1, 1984

Accepted by Robert M. Warner, Archivist of the United States, on May 22, 1984

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ACCESSION NUMBER 85-09

Arthur Krim: Addendum to Interview III

Received by the Lyndon B. Johnson Oral History Project: March 18,1984

7 p.m., New York, Friday, March 29, 1968. I had just come back home from the office and was entering my bedroom. The telephone rang. The White House. The President.

Would I arrange to have private polls taken to see where he stood vis-a-vis [Eugene] McCarthy and [Robert] Kennedy in Indiana, Nebraska, Oregon and California? These were the primaries that loomed ahead. He wanted the arrangements made over the weekend. He mentioned Oliver Quayle, who was in fact then conducting some polls for us. However, the President said, he did not want the interviews started until Monday.

I told him that I had already commissioned such a poll in California and that I believed the actual interviewing was already under way. He said, even if it was, we might go back after Monday to see if there were any changes.

Obviously something significant was going to happen over the weekend. I did not ask what it would be. I said I would get things under way that evening.

He then asked what we were doing over the weekend. He said he would like Mathilde and me to come down and spend the weekend with him. Mathilde had entered the bedroom while I was talking. I told her of the invitation. She acquiesced. I then told the President that we would be down. I said I would come during the morning, that I had some things to do with some of the staff at the White House and at the Committee, and that Mathilde would be down late in the afternoon, because she had some things which she first had to do in Long Island. He expressed his pleasure that we would be coming down and that he would see me in the morning. That ended the conversation.

I turned to Mathilde and said "Well, he's running, that's very clear."

As far back as November, 1965, I had had a talk with the President in which he had said he would not run in 1968. It was one evening at the Ranch in Texas. The President was recuperating from his operation. Mathilde and I were about to leave for New York. The President had been expressing his deep concern about the problems of the Democratic National Committee. He was worried about the vast debt, about the fact that he could get no accurate information about it, about his feeling that the operating budget was wasteful and nonproductive. He said he felt as if the debt were a personal one, that it had to be paid before he left the presidency, that "if something happened to him" it was an unfair burden for his successor to have to carry. At his request I undertook to make a complete analysis of the problem, to try to suggest some approaches. I expressed the view that a strong, viable Committee would be important to him in 1968. He passed this off as irrelevant, since he would not be running in 1968. This was for me the first time the disclaimer was stated so bluntly. I gave it little thought at the time. I put it down to post-operative fatigue, to an uninhibited but not too serious venting of frustration among friends.

Over the ensuing months I learned there had been much such talk before the 1964 Convention. Nevertheless he had subsequently run. This seemed to confirm my conclusion.

Similar conversations occurred periodically over the next two years. For five months, starting in November, 1967, these conversations had been exhausting. On Thanksgiving weekend Mathilde and I were riding with the President. He was as usual at the wheel. He stopped the car at a high point, with a 360° vista of the Hill Country. He said he had just about made his decision. He would not run. We talked for some time. He explained his reasons--the

job too killing, particularly in the light of his and his family's medical history, the difficulty of his governing in the light of the divisions in the country, the honeymoon a new president, any new president, would have, which could break the logjam on the vital issues, and through it all the desire to come back to the land, this land around us, his great love. We were surprised, taken aback by the ring of determination. We remonstrated, protested vigorously. We were troubled but still certain the final decision had not yet been made. Before the ride was over A. W. Moursund joined us. The conversation continued. It was clear A. W. had been through this before. He was noncommittal.

Now the conversations became more frequent.

Lynda was married in December. After the wedding I flew to Texas with the President. A few days later, before I left to return to New York, we talked in his new living room at the Ranch. We covered various matters. A phone call from a Georgia friend interrupted. A favor was asked. The President, preoccupied with world crises, patiently heard him out. When the talk was over, he expressed his distaste for the relentless pressures which needlessly took up so much of his time. Cause and effect, perhaps, but again he turned to the question of withdrawal--again the matter of health, of inability to govern, the need of the country for a honeymoon with a new president--but now he talked of the great misconception that he was drawn to power, that he sought it and needed it. I was one, he said, who from day-to-day contacts over the past two years, knew how false this was--that he was not interested in power, that he constantly shied away from using it--that in fact his was the least political of any administration in recent history, the one in which less was done to build a personal power structure than any other, the one in which there was the least exercise of power to crush those

opposed to him. I agreed. From where I had sat this was certainly a valid statement. He said a final review would be made at the family gathering over Christmas but he doubted his mind would be changed. I still felt he could not mean it. Once again I expressed my deep disagreement.

The President called on Christmas Day, just after his return from the around-the-world trip occasioned by the death of Prime Minister [Harold E.] Holt. I was alone in New York. Mathilde and Daphna had gone overseas to spend the holiday with relatives in Switzerland. He said the family were together at the White House and were thinking of me; why didn't I come down. I said I would be down the next day. I asked about the trip. He was excited about it, felt much had been accomplished, happy about the scope of it, including as it had, visits with so many Asian heads of state, the soldiers in Vietnam, the Pope. He did not sound like a president about to give up voluntarily the mantle of the office.

During Christmas and through New Year's, both at the White House and at the Ranch, there were no talks with me of withdrawal. I began to feel relieved.

On New Year's Day I met with the President again, privately in the new room at the Ranch. I said there was much planning to be done, fund raising to be started, organizational plans to be moved forward, events to be scheduled. I wanted his blessing to move forward on the basis that he was going to be a candidate. He agreed, though cautioning that he had not yet made his decision. We left it on that basis. In my capacity with the Committee, and with the small political task force that had been formed for liaison with the White House, the word to me was "go," with the caution that these activities might be aborted. On this basis I did not think they would be. I was encouraged.

The uncertainties persisted, but they were highly personal and compartmentalized. They did not affect the work that had to be done. They did not affect others with whom I was working, since they were not privy to them.

In December and January there were several confidential meetings at the White House of the President's top advisers in political matters--Clark Clifford, Abe Fortas, Jim Rowe, Marvin Watson, Larry O'Brien and myself. Out of these, certain assignments had been made. Mine, amongst others, were to arrange the fund raising and to help select a top advertising agency or expert for liaison with the media. With the latter, I had experienced difficulties--the ones whom I wanted--Carson, on the Coast, Birnbach in New York--had reservations because of Vietnam. As of March, we still had no solution.

On the other hand, the plans for the fund raising had been proceeding and events and solicitations were well under way in California, Texas and New York, all looking toward a campaign chest of some $15,000,000.

In January, too, Criswell and others had been working on the composition of the delegation in California. One weekend during the month, Jess Unruh and his aide were in the East and were invited to the White House. It was a Sunday afternoon. Criswell and I were with the President--when Unruh was announced, we went to greet him. I had known Unruh for some time. I first met him in 1962 when he came to my office at the suggestion of Ken O'Donnell to set up a liaison for fund raising for President Kennedy in California. In 1967 Unruh had been helpful in setting up a fund-raising dinner for President Johnson in California which had brought together in one place representatives of all of the various elements in the party. This time we sat in one of the main floor rooms of the White House chatting about these past experiences and

other matters until the President arrived. Then the aide, Criswell and I went into the Fish Room and Unruh and the President went into the President's office. They spoke for almost an hour. After the meeting, the President told us that Unruh had said that from his own career viewpoint, he did not feel that he should join the delegation, but he promised the President his support. The President's conclusion was that he was holding back for Kennedy, even though he had said the contrary, and that his expressions of support were lip service.

In February, some five or six weeks prior to the March 29 call, we had spent a weekend at the White House which was the most exhausting of all. For two days the President again expressed his determination to withdraw. He was adamant. He told us that he had almost made the move the night of the State of the Union Message. He showed us the statement that had been prepared. He showed us a similar statement that had been prepared in 1964. He asked me to work with Mrs. Johnson on improving the statement. Over the weekend I tried for a few minutes, then gave it up because my heart was not in it. Both Mrs. Johnson and he felt that if the move was going to be made it should be made by the end of March, which was when President Truman had made his withdrawal statement in 1952--to give other candidates enough time to prepare.

It was a most depressing weekend. Again we protested as vigorously as we could. Sunday morning we stayed in the President’s bedroom, talking for two hours about nothing else; first, the President and I, then we were joined by Mrs. Johnson and Mathilde. In the afternoon we visited Lynda's and Chuck's new home. At day’s end the conversation finally shifted to messages from the Middle East, political matters. Once again, despite the vehemence, we were

still not certain. Would he actually withdraw, or was he asking us to unburden frustrations, knowing we would respect his confidence?

Then the New Hampshire primary, and on March 16 the Robert Kennedy announcement.

The night before the Kennedy announcement, Sunday [Friday], March 15, we were in the President's bedroom. It was near midnight. He was being given a massage. He showed us his projected speech the next morning to the International Monetary Conference. One phrase caught our eye. It said that a small increase, possibly 30,000 troops, would be needed in Vietnam. Mathilde and I urged him not to include this. No matter how small, it was still escalation. Once again it would paint him the war candidate. Could it militarily be so important that he had to perpetuate this false picture of himself? He argued this was infinitesimal compared to what the military had wanted. I felt, despite this argument, he accepted the point--that no matter how infinitesimal, it was still escalation. The next day the statement was in fact not made. There was no further talk on this particular occasion about withdrawal. I felt some hope.

He spoke to the Monetary Conference as Robert Kennedy announced. Mathilde and I watched the announcement in our White House bedroom. Immediately it was over we rushed to the helicopter to join the President on a trip to Texas. In the helicopter we spoke briefly of what Kennedy had said. He told us of his speech. Nothing much more was said on this the next two days at the Ranch. The President was introspective throughout the weekend. Sunday night there was some work on a speech to be delivered Monday in the Midwest. It was a reaffirmation of the Vietnam policy but he accepted to express more forcefully the thought that his was the true policy for peace, for lasting peace. We began to hope that if he had thought of withdrawing, the enlarged challenge of McCarthy, and now Kennedy, would persuade him to run.

The events and conversations with the President over the next ten days seemed at times to bear out this hope, and, at others, to dim it.

Early in the week he suggested that Jake Jacobsen and I visit with all of the cabinet officers, other than the Secretaries of State and War [Defense], to solicit their suggestions for the campaign, particularly in fund raising. At different times during the week we met with most of them--C. R. Smith, [Stewart] Udall, [Alan] Boyd, [Robert] Weaver, [Joseph W.] Barr for [Henry] Fowler, [Willard] Wirtz--and in each case we were able to report to the President that they were all ready to roll up their sleeves for him--even Udall who stated he was all out to work for the President because he did not approve of the step which his good friend Bobby Kennedy had taken.

Also, early in the week, I was in the President's bedroom when he talked to Walter Reuther. Reuther was an important key to the Michigan delegation. It had been suggested that the Vice President contact Reuther to be sure he stayed with the President. That morning the Vice President called to say he could not get through to Reuther. The President called and reached him immediately. I listened to the President's end of the conversation. It was impassioned. The conversation must have lasted fully thirty minutes. The President reviewed his history with Reuther, with the UAW, what he had done for the working man, the progress in housing, education, welfare. The most Reuther would say was that he was for the President, but that he could not speak for his board, and he would have to be guided by what his board did. He mentioned some of his board who might try to swing support to Kennedy.

After the conversation the President expressed his disgust with this equivocation from somebody from whom he thought he was entitled to support. He called the Vice President and

told him to contact all his friends on the UAW board. He asked me to follow up with the Vice President which I did in a telephone talk later in the day. The Vice President was confident of the outcome. I reported this back to the President.

On Thursday, March 21, we had a luncheon meeting scheduled at the 21 Club in New York. This was to be the start of the 1968 campaign fund-raising drive. Some twenty of the leading New York friends and supporters of the President had been invited. John Bailey, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and John Criswell, treasurer, were coming from Washington. So, too, was the Postmaster General, Lawrence O'Brien who, it was anticipated, would head up the President's campaign. I had asked the President if he would agree to have Marvin Watson come and he had approved--a good sign. Even more, Marvin Watson, who had been his appointments secretary and constantly at his side, had, since the weekend of the sixteenth, been assigned the task of coordinating the political campaign. He had moved to new quarters away from the President and had been busy with telephoning and meetings, firming up delegations for the contest ahead.

Just before the luncheon, I spoke with the President on the telephone. He wanted me to talk to Larry O'Brien. He said O'Brien was under strong pressure from Kennedy. He felt it would be very harmful if Larry were to resign and move to Kennedy. He pointed out that it was he and not John Kennedy who had elevated O'Brien to the cabinet. He said he had not been able to get a clear statement of loyalty out of Larry. I said I would talk to Larry.

The luncheon was a great success. The pledges privately made came to well over $2,000,000 from this small group alone. Several who had had qualms about deserting another

friend, Nelson Rockefeller, felt reassured when word came through during the luncheon that Rockefeller had just issued a statement withdrawing from the race.

Now Larry O'Brien was very careful to avoid a total commitment in his remarks to the luncheon group. He spoke of his loyalty, that he would never, as a cabinet member, do anything but support the President. He did not close the door to the possibility of supporting Kennedy--by resigning from the cabinet. The group, other than Criswell and Watson, who knew the background, did not catch the subtlety--their spirit was enthusiastic.

After the luncheon, I had a talk with Larry O'Brien. I pointed out the historic implications of any break. I referred to the sad experience of Jim Farley when he broke with President Roosevelt. I stressed what the President had done for him. Larry countered with the statement that I had no idea of the kind of pressure that was being brought to persuade him. I knew his long history with the Kennedys. Now they were drawing on this. He said he would not be a disloyal cabinet officer. He implied that he would stick with the President--that that was his intention. He did not button it up unreservedly.

By the time I got back to the office, the President was on the phone. I told him of the success of the luncheon, also of the ambiguity regarding Larry O'Brien. He said that Marvin Watson had already told him of the luncheon. He expressed his pleasure--also his concern about O'Brien.

On Friday, March 22, I attended a luncheon meeting in Washington of a group that had been hastily convened to take charge of the campaign. Several Texans, who had not previously been active on the national scene were present, particularly Cecil Burney, who appeared to be acting as coordinator. His presence was obviously of the President's doing. Others present

included Larry O'Brien, Jim Rowe, John Criswell, Bob Burkhardt and several others. The tenor of the meeting was pessimistic. The primary that loomed immediately ahead was the one in Wisconsin and all preliminary reports were on the down side. At one point, Jim Rowe blurted out that if we lose Wisconsin, there goes the ball game. Others were more realistic. They anticipated a loss in Wisconsin, but that we should not exaggerate its importance or permit its importance to be exaggerated.

On Saturday morning, March 23, I was with the President in his bedroom. I told him that all the reports that I had from every corner of the country indicated that the party leadership was desperate for him to make some dramatic de-escalation move in Vietnam. I told him that he was being painted more and more as a war candidate. He told me that Abe Fortas had just had a call from his friend [Richard] Cudahy, the state chairman in Wisconsin, more or less to the same effect. He called Abe and told him of our talk. He said that more and more it appeared that he was going to be the Barry Goldwater of 1964, the war candidate of 1968. He asked Abe to meet with me so that I could give him the full weight of what I had picked up on the political circuit. It was arranged that I would have lunch with Abe at his home.

At lunch I went into great detail about the political realities as I viewed them. I told Abe that I was not trying to evaluate the military situation--obviously I was not competent to do so. I told him, however, that unless something were done to reverse the trend of escalation in Vietnam, the President would be faced with mounting political difficulties. I went into chapter and verse, reciting what party leaders and supporters were reporting from all parts of the country. Abe expressed sympathetic understanding of the problem and assured me that something was in the offing which he felt would reverse the trend.

On Tuesday morning, March 26, I called Abe and told him matters were getting worse--that the reports from Wisconsin were disastrous and that the whole emphasis was on the President as the war candidate. Abe told me that meetings were in progress and that he was confident action would come shortly.

The day before this call, on Monday, March 25, I received a call from the President late in the afternoon. He said he was fed up with the way [Mike] Mansfield was acting. He felt there was no room for the two of them in the government. He said I should contact Charles Engelhard, who was Mansfield's best friend, and more or less express this opinion to him--that it was unfair of Mansfield to expect the President to carry all these burdens and not support him, both in the campaign and in the Senate; that the President was entitled to a majority leader of his own party who would support him, or else it was inevitable that one or the other of them had to go. I told Engelhard to press Mansfield to call the President and ask for an interview in order to clear up this situation. After this, there were several telephone calls on Monday and Tuesday between Engelhard and myself and between Engelhard and Mansfield. Engelhard assured me that Mansfield wanted to support the President, that he had differences of emphasis on Vietnam, but that basically he was for the President and wanted to work with him. After some backing and filling, Mansfield agreed to call to ask for an appointment with the President so as to make this point of view clear to him. On Wednesday, I was advised by Jim Jones that the appointment was made for later that day. Late on Wednesday, I was talking to Jim Jones on another matter and he told me that the President had already been closeted with Mansfield for two hours and that they were still talking. I was hopeful that this kind of a heart-to-heart talk would clear the atmosphere. Later still, Jim told me that when Mansfield left, there was an air of real cordiality

between the two men and I was encouraged. However, the next day when I talked to the President, I asked how did it go--his answer was "just awful"--Mansfield, despite all his lip service professions of friendship and support, could not be relied on to give him any meaningful support or sincere leadership to his program.

It was against this background that I evaluated the call on March 29.

I called Oliver Quayle immediately and asked him to make preliminary arrangements in the three states other than California. I also asked him about the interviews in California. He told me that only the past week the interviews had been started in California, but there were still some interviews to go; he did not have full information. I told him that I would probably be talking with him over the weekend to see whether we would want to start from scratch again in California and, also, whether we would want to finalize the arrangements for the polls in the other states.

The next morning, Saturday, March 30, I arrived at the White House. Our usual room 303 was occupied. I was assigned to room 328. On arrival there was a call from Ashton Gonella, Mrs. Johnson's secretary. There was a question about lunch and I said I was going to have lunch with John Criswell. Mrs. Gonella said that the President and Mrs. Johnson had been invited to a party that evening in Washington at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Ikard and they wondered if Mathilde and I would join them. I said we would. I then visited with some of the White House staff to clear up some matters. As I recall, these included Joe Califano and Marvin Watson. I learned that the President was tied up in various meetings in preparation for a speech which was going to be nationally televised on Sunday night. The importance of Monday for the start of polling was now clear.

At around one o'clock, I walked out of the White House on the way to the Hay-Adams where I was going to have lunch with John Criswell. As I was walking past the garden, I saw the President and Bob McNamara. They were sitting around a luncheon table. Their lunch was finished. I went in to say hello. Just at that moment, the nurse appeared with little Lyn and the President started playing with Lyn. There were pictures taken of the President and Lyn and then of the President, Bob McNamara, Lyn and myself.

The President and Bob McNamara were quite obviously working on the draft of the speech--the papers were on the table. When I walked in they were in earnest conversation about the contents.

The President asked where I was going. I said I had a luncheon date at the Hay-Adams. He said he would see me later in the day.

The afternoon was taken up with various phone calls. I had word periodically that the President would probably not leave with Mrs. Johnson for the Ikard party. I was told to be ready around 6:30, I rather expected that Mathilde would be a little later than that and so I thought I would go over with Mrs. Johnson and the President would come with Mathilde later. As it happened, Mathilde came just as I was about to leave with Mrs. Johnson. She hurriedly made her necessary arrangements and the three of us went over to the party together. It was at a private home about one-half hour drive from the White House.

At the Ikard home, we found a number of the Washington-Texas contingent, including Congressman [George] Mahon, Governor Price Daniel and others. There must have been about forty or fifty couples there. A number of them were folks we had not previously met, but they all

knew about our friendship with the President, our place in Texas, and so there were topics of mutual interest.

At around ten o'clock, the President arrived. After going around the three rooms or so to say hello to everybody present, he sat down for a late dinner. He spent most of the time at his table with Congressman Mahon. I gathered there were some important items which he wanted to get out of Congressman Mahon's committee and there were conversations about these.

The President was very gracious about us. He repeated to a number of the folks at the party there how close we were to him, and how much he appreciated our friendship, how much help we had given him, about our place in Texas, etc. At around 11:30, he signaled that we were to go back to the White House. We left in the President's limousine--just the driver and a Secret Service agent up front, and in the rear, Mrs. Johnson, Mathilde and the President, and I on the jump seat.

As soon as we entered the car the President closed the partition glass that separated the front from the rear, took the draft of his Sunday speech out of his inside pocket, gave it to me and asked me to read it aloud. I began to read. When I came to the part early in the speech that the bombing in the North was to be considerably limited, I looked back at the President. He smiled. Mathilde and I both gave strong indications of approval. He made some jest that he was doing this because we had insisted on it. We said it sounded fine.

I continued to read out loud. While I was reading, the President's eyes were closed, but he was listening, apparently to get the sound of it as spoken by somebody else. Mathilde and Mrs. Johnson were both listening carefully. I do not know whether Mrs. Johnson had read the

speech before, but I gathered she knew its substance but not the final wording, so that she, too, had a special interest in the reading.

The reading took the entire time of the trip back to the White House. As a matter of fact I finished the last sentence just as we entered the White House grounds.

I turned to the President and said that I thought it was a fine speech and I was delighted that he was going to make it. Mathilde and I both felt pleased. We would have hoped that he could have gone the whole way and stopped all the bombing of the North, yet the fact that he was stopping it over so much of the territory was still a great step forward, and to us had a special significance as the key turning point away from more escalation. We felt the speech would bring a lot of political capital to the President. I now understood, or thought I did, why he wanted the polls taken on Monday.

As we stepped out of the limousine, we congratulated the President.

The four of us walked into the White House. As we were going up in the elevator, the President suggested to Mathilde and me that we come into the bedroom with him while he would have his massage. We all got off at the second floor--we went into his bedroom and Mrs. Johnson went into hers. A little later Mrs. Johnson returned in nightdress and robe and got into bed. When she was settled under the covers, the President said "Bird, let Arthur read the rest of the speech, I want him to tell us what he thinks of it."

Mrs. Johnson then handed me a typed statement. Because of past events I immediately recognized it as the statement of withdrawal. Automatically, we expressed our shock. Mathilde and I both said "Oh no, not again. Why do you want to consider this? Why don't you wait for the reaction to the speech?" On our part we felt that the speech would start to reverse

antagonisms against the President, and strengthen his candidacy, and yet he wanted to use this very same action to withdraw from the race.

Now started the debate which we had been through many times before. We again pointed out that he owed it to the country and to himself to finish what he had started, in Vietnam, in the Middle East, in the welfare programs, in the economy, the surtax. We felt that no matter which way the election would go, he would be repudiated and his policies scuttled by his successor. Not only would he not achieve his goals, but he would be unhappy and frustrated. He made many of the usual arguments: first, that he could no longer govern and that any president would have a honeymoon in which he could accomplish more. He pointed out that the media were against him and that in view of both of these realities, even if elected--and he felt he could be elected--he would not be able to manage the country as it had to be managed at this time. He said again, as he had so often in the past, that no president can really govern if he doesn't have the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, Time and Newsweek at least neutral, and certainly not, as in his case, actively antagonistic. Also that he did not have the support of the leadership in Congress. He went into some length about the meeting with Mansfield. He had come away completely convinced that Mansfield was against him. He said that Mansfield had said a lot of nice things about friendship, etc., but the very next day had gone out West and attacked him on the basis of his Vietnam policy. He was just completely fed up, trying to do the job with somebody that high up in his own party putting roadblocks constantly in his path--and with respect to the primaries and the election itself, he felt that he would have to go after his friends again for tremendous sums of money and he was just not about to do that. He referred again to the popular misconception that he desperately wanted the presidency, could not

live without it. He said that we knew the contrary was the fact, that he had never wanted to use the power of the presidency, that he fought against using it. He felt that if he were to take any more of this intolerable burden, it would mean for him a much shorter end to his life. He spoke again of the fact that the men in his family for generations back had a tendency to die of heart attacks around the age of sixty, and here he was just approaching that age. He didn't feel well--he felt that anything could happen to him.

And now he added the argument that if he did not take this step his sincerity in making the speech would be questioned. It would be written off as a political gesture. We asked if he thought the North Vietnamese would respond. On this he was very pessimistic--he did not believe so--but his withdrawal as a candidate would let this country and everybody else know that he meant what he said. And if he rid himself of the burden of being a candidate he would be free to devote himself not only to some movement toward peace in Vietnam but he might be able to remove many of the roadblocks to the solution of other pressing problems. He did not believe it possible for him to be both president and candidate.

He asked me to evaluate the statement of withdrawal and to improve upon it. I told him that this was a labor that I could not undertake. We had been through this before.

It was his practice to go over correspondence, memoranda, and other papers from the various departments at night while taking his massage. This night was no exception. Periodically he would interrupt the conversation by showing me memoranda on the political scene. I remember particularly one item off the ticker in which [Robert] Docking, governor of Kansas, expressed a neutral attitude. I thought that this was a plus, because Docking had, in my book, always been a strong Kennedy supporter. The President took it as a real minus, saying that

Docking had promised to support him very recently in conversations with Marvin Watson and there he was straddling the fence. This to him was a straw in the wind of the kind of race that loomed ahead. He kept saying that sure he felt he could win and would win, but look at all that it would take in money and in energy and he felt, as to the latter, his energy should be directed to the country's problems in these next few months and not to the problems of the primaries.

However, showing me these political memoranda, he asked me to follow up on certain of them in a way which was clearly inconsistent with his announced intention to withdraw.

And so, once again, when this exhausting and frustrating evening was over and Mathilde and I went up to the third floor to go to bed, we said to each other that this time, although it appeared more ominous than ever before, we still did not believe that he would go through with it. We noted, particularly, that, although in prior talks over the past few months Mrs. Johnson had been more or less in favor of withdrawal, this was not her attitude on this particular night, now that the crisis time appeared to be near. She had only said, and he had agreed, that if he was going to withdraw, it should be before the end of March, which would mean now. This was again by reference to the date on which Truman had announced his withdrawal and which seemed the proper time to give other candidates a chance to make the race.

When I got up the next morning and called the kitchen for coffee, I found that the President had left word for me to call him when I awoke. I called the President and he suggested that I come down to his bedroom to have coffee with him. I went down to the bedroom, and to my surprise found the President fully clothed and sitting on the edge of the bed. This was unusual--practically all the other times when I would have breakfast with him, he would be in bed in his pajamas and would work, going over all of his papers and remain in bed while we

were talking. This time, he had apparently gotten up early in order to go to church, and to greet Lynda who had come back from the West Coast early that morning. The two of us remained alone in the bedroom while I had my breakfast and we talked about a number of matters. We talked for about an hour--the President obviously avoiding any renewal of the conversation of the night before about his withdrawal. Although he went into various areas of politics, he didn't go back to his intention to make the withdrawal statement that night. We spoke on a number of personal fronts, particularly in reference to the helicopter which I was going to buy from Bell Aircraft for our mutual use. He wanted to be sure that I could make a good deal with Bell, considerably below their list price, and in order to accomplish this without it appearing that Bell was doing a favor for the President, it was necessary for us to buy a helicopter which already had some hours of use. He called Dale Meeks to give him his ideas about how to proceed with the negotiations. He also tried to call Joe Mashman, but Joe was out; he left word for Joe to call him back.

At the end of an hour or so, around 10:30, Horace Busby came into the bedroom. This to me was the signal that the President was most serious about his withdrawal intention. It was clear to me that Horace was there to do some polishing on the withdrawal statement. Just after Horace came in, Luci and Lyn came in and there was some family talk and then the President said to Horace "I want to see you for a few minutes" and he stepped out of the bedroom with him. Again this was a signal to me because the President obviously didn't want to talk to Horace in my presence in a way that would renew the debate of the night before. He had limited time and he wanted to give Horace his instructions, to tell him what he had in mind. He had limited time, because, as I recall, the particular Mass that he wanted to attend was going to take place at

eleven o'clock and time was pressing. After a few minutes of private talk with Horace, he and Luci went off to church. I went back to our bedroom. Mathilde was awake, she was having some coffee. I told her that things looked bad. I told her that the President was off to church but that Horace was downstairs and in my view, he was working on the words of the withdrawal statement. We then went down to the West Room and sat for a time with Mrs. Johnson. We looked at two television programs--one with Max Taylor and one with George Ball. Both of these programs were very favorable to the administration's position and policy in Vietnam and we thought that this was a good augury and an indication of how the President could really fight through to a successful fulfillment of his policies if he would continue to be the President in the next four years. The President came in, back from church, just in time to see the last ten or fifteen minutes of the Ball program. He said he and Luci had paid the Vice President a visit and he had told him of his intentions. When the program was over, we told him briefly about how Taylor and Ball had both been on the positive side and very strongly and lucidly so. He accepted this without comment and then turned to Mrs. Johnson and said "Well, have you worked on a statement for me?" She apparently had done some work. She took out a statement and started to read it. This was a statement which, in effect, said that he would stay out of politics in the ensuing months, that he had no time for party politics, that he would spend no time on the primaries, that the business of the country would take up all of his time and energies, but her statement fell short of a flat statement that he was going to withdraw as a candidate.

He was rather harsh in his reaction, "Well, if nobody is going to help me draw my statement, then I have got to do it for myself" and at that moment Marie Fehmer came in with a statement. He asked to look at it. This was obviously the statement that Horace Busby had

dictated to her. He read it and it was a clear statement of withdrawal, not quite, but almost in the words that were used later that night. He read it once out loud and said "Let's go in and have lunch."

We went in to lunch. At lunch there were Luci, Horace Busby, Mathilde, Mrs. Johnson, the President and myself. There was a lively debate and an air of great sadness. The debate was, in fact, one between Luci, Mathilde and myself on the one hand and Horace Busby on the other. Mrs. Johnson participated only peripherally, but Luci, Mathilde and I were very vehement about the fact that withdrawal by the President would be abject capitulation and beyond that, he would be an unhappy man in the coming four years as the structure which he had so painstakingly built would be torn apart. Horace was the advocate for withdrawal. Horace stressed the point that the President could not govern in the next four years and that there was no way for him to heal the divisiveness in the country and remain president--that by withdrawing he would make a big contribution toward eliminating the divisiveness and that he could accomplish a lot in the next six or seven months and go down in history as a great president.

The President himself said very little during the luncheon--he left the arguing to Horace. When we spoke of the fact that it would either be Nixon or Kennedy, Horace took the position that we should not be too sure. He felt that events might take a different course. Horace was obviously not only doing the President's bidding, but strongly in favor of the withdrawal decision.

After lunch, the President went into his bedroom for a nap.

At this point, Lynda came out of her bedroom where she had been sleeping since her arrival in the morning. She was still in her nightdress. She was crying hysterically. She

apparently had just heard what the President intended to do. She said to me "You must stop him, somebody must stop him." She had just seen Chuck off to Vietnam the night before and now her father was about to abandon Chuck and all the other soldiers in Vietnam. She felt that he was abandoning all of his policies to those who had fought against him--at the sacrifice of all the boys in Vietnam who would be repudiated. I had never seen her so agitated. I told her we were trying our best to persuade her father but we were pessimistic.

At this point Busby came out of the bedroom where he had been for a few moments with the President. He said the President had asked him to talk to Mathilde and me. He said that the President was very anxious that we understand his reasoning. He spoke of the respect the President had for our opinion and his friendship with us; the President knew how distressed we were and he wanted Buzz to go over all of the ground so that we could see his point of view.

We walked down the main hallway and sat just outside the Lincoln bedroom. We talked in hushed tones for the better part of an hour. Buzz took the position that this was the one step which would bring to the President the kind of respect and recognition to which he was entitled. He said that events had reached the point where if the President were to be re-elected--and he believed he would be--he would not be able to govern and solve the problems of the day--whereas the contemplated step of withdrawal would be widely applauded as a sacrifice on his part to bring people together in the country--also that it would give credibility to the proposal to North Vietnam in his speech. He also said that the President would have nine months in which he would not have to spend his time in politics; he could concentrate on the big issues and accomplish a great deal before he left office. He was referring to Vietnam, accommodation with the Russians, the Middle East, and the surtax. He also felt that the chances were very good that

the new president would not be one antagonistic to President Johnson. He did not think it would be either McCarthy or Kennedy. He felt that if the President had withdrawn before March 13, it might very well have been Kennedy, but now he felt that Kennedy had shown his true colors, not hesitating to divide the party, if it could advance his personal ambition, and that just enough time had elapsed to give him the rope with which to hang himself.

We took the position throughout that the withdrawal was a big mistake. We felt that all the things that Buzz said the President was trying to accomplish by withdrawal could be accomplished without it if he were to take the important steps of de-escalation in Vietnam. We said that this would undoubtedly be the course that would be taken by any other president, only then it would appear to be repudiation of the President's policy, whereas the President could himself be the architect of the same policy. We felt the President could change the temper of the country overnight. We felt that there was nobody else to carry on the programs he had started on all fronts. We believed that the chances were almost inevitable that the next president would constantly repudiate the President and make his life miserable. We did not see him as relaxed or fulfilled in retirement, but on the contrary, fretting under constant attack and powerless to answer adequately. We thought that in the long run this might be much more injurious to his health, and to his state of mind, than if he were to continue with the burden and see some fulfillment of his objectives.

Neither of us persuaded the other.

Busby left the slightest crack in the door. He said he was still not positive the President would add the withdrawal statement to the speech. He had been through similar situations in the past where the President had kept his options open to the last minute and then had done the

unexpected. He felt the President had still not made up his mind irrevocably, but it was almost certain that he would withdraw.

Busby then told us that [Anatoly F.] Dobrynin was coming in to see the President at six to be briefed on the contents of the speech--obviously except for any reference to the withdrawal.

We did not want Dobrynin to run into us when he arrived. We decided to leave the White House for a walk while this meeting was taking place. The cherry blossoms were out and we walked among them. They were beautiful but we were depressed and talked about the chaos we felt this move would create in the Democratic Party and in the country. On the path along the Potomac we ran into Warrie Lynn Smith, Lynda's best friend, and her escort. We exchanged pleasantries. Naturally we said nothing of what was about to happen.

At seven we were back at the White House. Jake Jacobsen had called. I called back. It was about a trip to California that we were planning to make the next week to finalize plans for fundraising events in Los Angeles and San Francisco. I stalled. I told Jake I would talk to him on Monday. Late that night I again talked to Jake. He had just heard the broadcast and said he now understood why I had sounded, as he put it, so uncharacteristically low in the earlier conversation. He had been puzzled--now all was clear.

At seven-thirty Marie Fehmer called. The President wondered if Mathilde and I would like to come to the rehearsal for the speech. We walked over to his office. Outside of the technical crew there were Mrs. Johnson, Jim Jones, Larry Temple, and some of George Christian's staff. The President read through the speech. He did not include the withdrawal statement.

I walked back to the Mansion with the President. I said I hoped he had changed his mind. He said he had not. I then said I hated to contemplate the future. He said "Maybe it will be Rockefeller." He thought that was a real possibility and one which he would not find unpalatable. I said that I supposed there was no point in going ahead with the Quayle polls. He said we should go ahead but on a quick national spot basis.

As soon as we got back to the Mansion I called Quayle and gave him these instructions, so that he could be ready to go first thing in the morning.

Between eight and eight-thirty we gathered in the West Room. Mathilde, Lynda, Luci, now joined by Pat who would soon be going overseas, Mrs. Johnson, Buzz and myself. Pat was obviously downcast, as were all in the room. Even Buzz had begun to feel the contagion of depression. Everybody, now including Buzz, said for me to go into the bedroom and give it a last try. Mathilde urged me on. She felt we might always regret not having made this last plea. So, too, did Mrs. Johnson, Lynda, Luci and Pat. At about eight thirty-five Marvin Watson came in. He, too, was in a low mood. He went into the bedroom. I followed. The President was in his bathroom getting the final touches from his barber. He gave some instructions to Marvin about the calls Marvin and his staff were to make the moment the speech went on the air. These were calls to key friends around the country to tell them what was coming at the end of the speech.

The President walked into the bedroom to put on tie and jacket. It was eight-forty. The speech was to start in his office at nine. Only Marvin and I were present. I said "Mr. President you still have time to change your mind. Everybody outside hopes you will." He was not angry,

as well he might have been, having been through this so often over the weekend. He said simply "Arthur, it's done. There can be no change now. I have just ordered it put on the teleprompter."

At that moment Clark Clifford and Walt Rostow entered the bedroom. I walked out and reported that the decision had been made and was irrevocable. A few minutes later Clark and Walt came out. They had just been told the news and expressed their surprise. So, too, did Marny Clifford and Elspeth Rostow who had remained outside the bedroom and were now hearing the news for the first time. Clark said he had told the President that after what he had been through as president, he was entitled to make this decision and that no one was justified in telling him he had to go on carrying the burdens of the presidency.

At about ten to nine the President came out of the bedroom. Together with Clark Clifford he left for his office. Luci, Pat, Lynda and Mrs. Johnson followed.

Marny, Elspeth, Walt, Mathilde and I stayed behind to watch the program. At nine-thirty, after what had been supposed to be a thirty-minute program, and he had not yet reached his withdrawal statement, I said "I hope they cut him off the air." They did not. The die was cast.

The speech was over. We were looking at NBC. [Edwin] Newman came on as commentator. He was at a loss for words. Finally he said something very complimentary about the President--how this act could only be interpreted as an act of great personal sacrifice, of great statesmanship. Was Busby being proven right this soon?

The President came back. He appeared jubilant. He changed into a sports shirt. Friends began to appear. The telephone kept ringing. Some of the calls the President took in our

presence; others in his bedroom. By ten o'clock there must have been over thirty in the room--cabinet members, other close members of the administration.

Some of us now compared notes for the first time. We had never discussed our conversations with anybody else. Now we learned that he had since last November been having similar conversations with George Christian, John Connally, and Marvin Watson. Christian and Connally had encouraged him to make the move. Watson had been opposed. Christian and Watson both said that until he actually made the statement they were not certain he would do so. He had kept everybody guessing until the last moment.

By midnight all had gone except the President and Mrs. Johnson. We went into the bedroom with them. Both the President and Mrs. Johnson got into bed. We talked for ten or fifteen minutes--just the four of us. He told us of some of the telephone calls. He was more than ever convinced he had done the right thing. He mentioned, particularly, the call from [Richard] Daley. Daley had told him he had made a great sacrifice in the interests of the country and that he would be "drafted" in Chicago. He had promised to go to Chicago the next day to speak at a luncheon.

We told him, now that he had made the decision, we wanted him to know how much we hoped it would bring him happiness and fulfillment. I said I did not want to get into fund raising for any other candidate, and that I would want to stay out of the fight looming ahead in the Democratic Party. He said he wanted me to stay out. I was too closely identified with him and anything I did could be misconstrued as violating his promise to stay out of politics in the months ahead. He said there was much to be done before January, and he would want me to work with him.

At twelve-thirty we said goodnight.

At nine the next morning we left for the airport. We went by the President's bedroom to say goodbye. The door was closed. The light was out. We thought the President was still asleep. In three years of frequent visits to the White House this was the first time we could recall him sleeping this late. We left without saying goodbye.

It had been a long weekend.

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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, Arthur B. Krim of New York, New York do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on October 8, 1981, May 17, 1982, June 29, 1982, November 9, 1982, April 7, 1983 and October 13, 1983 in New York, New York, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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Signed by Arthur B. Krim on May 1, 1984

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