

## INTERVIEW VI

DATE: October 13, 1983

INTERVIEWEE: ARTHUR KRIM

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

Tape 1 of 3

G: Mr. Krim, let's today discuss that period after the 1968 election but before the Nixon inauguration.

K: All right. During that period of some two months, I saw the President quite frequently, both at the White House and at the Ranch and here in New York on two occasions that I recall. What I would like to do, without attempting to talk about the period in sequence, would be to discuss the several topics which we were principally talking about or acting on during that period.

The first would be with reference to foreign affairs. The President during this period was full of frustrations. He hadn't been able to move either the relationship with the Soviet Union or the peace process in Vietnam to the results he had hoped to achieve by the end of his presidency. We had many conversations about that. I remember that in November, probably during the Thanksgiving period, he was still talking about the hope of going to the Soviet Union to have the meeting that had been aborted by the Czechoslovakian invasion. He had proposed through Ambassador [Robert] Murphy--I forget what his first name was and his name does not appear in the notes you gave me, but he was designated by Nixon to be a liaison in foreign policy matters to the administration. I remember he said that he had asked Murphy to explore the possibility

Krim -- VI -- 2

of Nixon joining him in such a meeting and indicated the Russians were still very much interested in having the meeting. From his point of view he felt that it was important to have that meeting for at least three purposes: one, to tamp down possible tensions in the Middle East, which was then a threat from the Soviet side; second, to utilize the Soviet pressures for whatever they would be worth in the Vietnam situation, but, third, more than anything else, to move ahead with the antiballistic negotiations. I remember he said several times that if Nixon doesn't do this, it will be several years before it can be put back on track, speaking mainly of the missile negotiations.

Then I remember around Christmas time he said Murphy had brought back a very strong negative reaction, that Nixon wasn't interested in any joint meeting. Johnson had visualized it as something of unprecedented historic proportions, for the present president to be joined by the incoming president from another party in such a conference. He was disappointed that Nixon had taken the other point of view. But Nixon's ground, according to Murphy, was that he wasn't prepared and he wasn't ready to speak for his coming administration. This was a period when there were a lot of ongoing difficulties between Nixon and Johnson, on who spoke for whom in foreign affairs. Nixon made an unwise public statement that whereas there's only one president, that president had agreed not to move without talking to him. Whereas that was true, Johnson wasn't about to allow that kind of a distortion of the Constitution to be in place, because who would know, if there was an emergency, to what that kind of an alleged commitment to Nixon could lead? So he repudiated that. But as a result, maybe not as a result of this, but as part of the dynamics of the situation at that time, the Russians decided to withdraw the

Krim -- VI -- 3

invitation to Johnson, as I recall. In other words, seeing all this they felt that nothing could be served by having a lame duck president there without being able to commit the next president of the United States. So that was a disappointment.

On the other front, the peace process, I don't remember all the things that were happening, but I remember they were very frustrating to him. That's when the South Vietnamese were still playing all kinds of protocol games at the peace table, and Johnson would have really loved to have a definitive cease-fire in place and a big step toward complete resolution by the end of his term. Of course, none of that came to pass. And as your notes indicate--they are accurate, as I recall--he would have liked to have gone to Vietnam and said goodbye to the troops, but he couldn't do it without being able to tie some kind of ribbon around a concrete step forward.

G: Did he talk to you about such a trip?

K: Yes. He talked about it, but he didn't see how it could be appropriate in the light of what was happening in Paris.

G: Did he also plan to stop in Rome and see the Pope?

K: I saw that in your notes. Knowing the President's views at that time about the pleasure he'd had in the prior trip, I'm sure that would have been part of his thinking.

G: Do you remember Clark Clifford's statement? Actually, there were several statements. He came out and accused the South Vietnamese government of balking at the last out of the ninth inning.

K: Your notes refreshed my recollection on that. I do know that there was a certain amount of testiness at that time between the President and Clark Clifford.

Krim -- VI -- 4

G: You don't think that Clifford spoke then with the approval of the White House or the President?

K: I wouldn't know. I wouldn't know. I think the President was pretty impatient at that time with Thieu also.

So much for the conversations on foreign affairs. Some of the other things that happened in that period were as follows: first, he came to New York for an Urban League dinner. That decision was made at the very last minute. Mathilde played a major part in that as a trustee of the Urban League. I got on the phone and urged him to come and so did Whitney Young. We all had the feeling that this was an opportunity for him to see what an outpouring of affection there would be for him by leaders of the black community for all that he had done, and that it would be an uplifting experience for him. We told him so, and of course he had this constant worry about what the extent of picketing would be on the Vietnam front and having to measure that against the positive aspects of such a trip. I think he was reassured and he came in very quietly, without the usual fanfare, and he came to the dinner and he really enjoyed that evening, yes. I remember that as an evening in which he expanded in the pleasure of the recognition of what he had meant to the black community.

There was much talk--I forget the specifics--about scholarships at the [LBJ] School of Public Affairs that would be established for deserving black students. What I forget is whether the Urban League established something or whether the School of Public Affairs did. But it was mentioned at that meeting and subsequently two black scholarships were endowed by Ed Rosenthal, something that I remember I talked to him

Krim -- VI -- 5

about and he endowed that for several years at the School of Public Affairs, paying for two black students.

He [LBJ] came to a late gathering after the Urban League dinner and it was a moment of emotional fulfillment all around. The black leaders--and there many of them there--were very warm and grateful. So that dinner worked out fine, and later he said he was happy that we had asked him to go there. I remember [Dan] Rather was then covering the White House, and I remember Rather commenting to me on what a nice occasion it was, that kind of thing.

G: You mentioned the picketing. Why was he so concerned about the picketing? Was it because of the press coverage of it or was it just a personal--?

K: I don't want to overdo his concern because he certainly took a lot of it, but I think your guess is as good as any, that he felt the press highlighted the negatives and lost sight of the positives when the pickets were out on such an occasion. He certainly wasn't, as far as I could see, ever apprehensive about the security aspects of it.

Now another thing that we moved along during that period was the sale of the rights to *The Vantage Point*, [or what was] subsequently called *The Vantage Point*, to his memoirs. I remember having two meetings at the White House, one with the Doubleday people and another with the Holt, Rinehart people. By that time we had narrowed down the candidates for the contract to those two publishing houses. In November sometime I brought down the Doubleday people, and then in January just before he left the office I brought down the Holt, Rinehart people, not to discuss terms or anything like that but for them to have the privilege of seeing him while he was still

Krim -- VI -- 6

President and asking him questions about the future, his plans and so forth. So that was another thing that happened during that period.

G: What were your requirements in choosing a publishing house? Was it strictly a question of who would offer the best contract in terms of money?

K: Oh, no. I had in mind the editor who would be working on the book, the prestige of the publishing house, their reputation in the publishing community, as well as money. When you come to two organizations like Doubleday and Holt, Rinehart, it is money, because they're both well equipped editorially and they're both prestigious publishing houses. There were others in that category, but the others, I must say, who qualified on these two levels were ruled out because of inadequate financial offers.

G: Was there any substantial difference between the two in terms of the physical quality of the book? I notice for example that *The Vantage Point* as published, it seems to be fine paper and fine--

K: No, nothing of that was discussed at all. At the time that I'm talking about, I'd already had an indication that Doubleday would probably offer a million dollar advance. It was never made firm. I'd also had an indication that Holt, Rinehart would offer somewhat more than that. The President did take the opportunity at both of these meetings to tell them that he wanted to write these books for history, not for his personal gain, and that he was going to turn over all of the proceeds to the [LBJ] Foundation that would be supporting the School of Public Affairs in Texas. He had already made that decision. It hadn't been implemented, but the decision had been made. He didn't want there to be any public impression that he was exploiting the presidency. That was a different time,

Krim -- VI -- 7

because since then other presidents have kept the money and nobody has said a word about it that I know of, although at that time he was sensitive to that.

G: Well, that series of interviews he did with Walter Cronkite--

K: He kept the money on that one.

G: He did keep the money on that?

K: Yes. That came a little later.

G: Of course, he was not in the White House.

K: Yes.

G: Well, do you think these publishers expected to make a profit on the [memoirs]?

K: Yes. I must say that the publishing world had the feeling that when President Johnson started to write with the bark off it would be a terrific best-seller. There was tremendous optimism about that. Of course, as things turned out it didn't work out that way, but everybody thought there were a lot of things that Johnson had in his mind to say in the book that he hadn't been able to say or write up to that time. Oh, yes, I remember that very well, that feeling. I had it, too, you know.

G: Yes, I know.

K: We'll talk about the actual writing of the book in discussing the post-inauguration period. In this particular period there were only just those two meetings that I wanted to mention. Sometime in December I had a call from Larry Levinson, who was in the White House, and Larry Levinson said that the President would like to come to New York and have some kind of appropriate platform, such as an award in an area that he had been active in, which would be a frame of reference for him to express his thanks and appreciation to the

Krim -- VI -- 8

folks in New York. [He would like] that kind of an opportunity to be created. Larry and I talked about it a couple of times, and out of that came the idea that instead of an award in a specific area, why don't we do something that speaks of all the things he's done in all areas and make this an occasion for recognition of what Larry and I both felt was the most extraordinary legislative record led by him of all time, with the possible exception of Roosevelt and the famous New Deal legislative period.

Gradually the idea began to take shape in our minds. I took it on as a project. I contacted leading people in all the areas--I don't have their names here, but you have them at the Library--and asked each of them to write an essay in that particular area. We had the area of politics, of civil rights, of education, of health, of environment, of foreign policy, and others. There must have been about twelve or fourteen areas. I kept in touch with those various people during the month of December and the essays came in. They were very good. Then working with Larry, we worked up a schedule of all the acts that had been passed in that particular area to match the essay. Then I invited a group of people who were his best friends in New York to share in the cost of putting this together and of giving him a party at which the end result would be presented to him. Those were people like, I remember Henry Ford and André Meyer and the [Charles] Engelhardts and Larry Rockefeller, Brooke Astor, Mary Lasker, the John Loebes, my wife and myself. Between us we worked up a guest list for the dinner of a cross section of New York: business, labor, political, academia, leadership in all these fields, of several hundred people, maybe five hundred people. Actually I guess I more or less put the list together and then sent it around for approval to the group.



Krim -- VI -- 9

G: Was it pretty much bipartisan?

K: Absolutely. And we asked the Governor to make the presentation. That was Nelson Rockefeller. It was absolutely bipartisan, and if you have the list you can see what I'm talking about. A lot of people on that list were surprised to be invited.

G: Really?

K: Yes, because they had not been particularly active in support of the President, but I remember, I don't think we had any rejections to speak of. Everybody wanted to come. It was a very prestigious affair, as it turned out.

G: Did he himself have any ideas about who should be included and who should not be?

K: No. He never talked to me about that. Bess Abell came up to help me with the seating arrangement, which was a massive job. The book, we had it done in a special calligraphy and leather bound, and it's in the Library. I think that it is a wonderful way for anybody who wants to see what his legislative accomplishments were, to see it between two covers. So I thought it came off very well, and I'm sure he did. Nelson Rockefeller presented it to him that evening, and all in all it was a wonderful farewell to the folks in New York. It all went very smoothly. So that was another occasion that happened during that period.

I also remember--and I don't know exactly the time--a Camp David visit. The reason I remember it, I think I made a brief allusion to it in a prior session, was that I remember we were both riding on bicycles and stopping periodically to talk about the Supreme Court. He was also frustrated on that. I see your notes indicate that he wanted to present the name of Arthur Goldberg. I never remember him being that specific about

Krim -- VI -- 10

Arthur Goldberg. He was disturbed at one point when Arthur Goldberg let it be known that he felt a commitment was being broken because when he accepted the U.N. job he had been promised that if there was a vacancy on the Court he would be given that vacancy. Johnson was very clear that he had made no such promise, and that fuzzied up the situation. Arthur Goldberg told me--I never heard it from Johnson--that [Earl] Warren wanted him to be the chief justice, wanted Goldberg to be the chief justice. And I never heard from President Johnson that Warren had conveyed that to him, even though we talked about this a good deal. Your notes--I don't question your notes, but your notes go beyond what he had said to me, that he wanted to appoint Arthur Goldberg at that time. What he said to me was that he had tested the waters and he found he couldn't get anybody appointed, no matter who it was. We just talked about the unfortunate possibility of what Nixon would do to that Court and how it could change the whole face of the country and so forth.

G: Did you ever have an understanding in your own mind of why Goldberg left the Court to begin with?

K: Yes. I don't think there was any ambiguity in my mind or in Arthur's at the time, and that is that he had been everything. He had been a cabinet member, he had been a judge in the highest court, and here was an opportunity to step into the shoes of a great man, Adlai Stevenson, and become an ambassador at a time when the U.N. post was highly regarded and considered very important. Arthur Goldberg told me that the President had made a commitment to reappoint him to the Court when he left the U.N. The President said absolutely not. And I think it was a case of words being used that went past both of them

Krim -- VI -- 11

without clear definition.

G: There seem to be two different versions of Goldberg leaving the Court. One being that the President realized and heard, was told by John Kenneth Galbraith and others, that Goldberg was restive on the Court, that he wanted--

K: Yes, that's part of it.

G: The other was that LBJ talked him into leaving the Court so that he could--

K: Appoint Abe Fortas?

G: Right. But the argument that he used to Goldberg was that "I need you to help with Vietnam."

K: Yes, at the U.N. That was part of it.

G: Well, how would you weave these two together?

K: I would assume that Goldberg heard what he wanted to hear, and that is I think that he did hear that the President put a high priority on the spot and particularly at that time. He did hear all the words of praise for him being the right man for the job to step into Adlai's shoes. He did hear all those things, but somehow or other he also heard that if he wants to come back to the Court he can, and that's where the ambiguity really occurs.

It was not a pleasant thing. I got a call, I remember, from Pat Moynihan saying that Arthur was very disturbed--this came later--at something either in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* article or in the book itself [*The Vantage Point*]*--I really don't know, I'd have to refresh my recollection--at Johnson implying that he had made no such promise and that Arthur had in a sense exaggerated or made it up. It lasted, the estranged feeling lasted. I remember when in later years Arthur Goldberg came to our ranch, and I invited*

Krim -- VI -- 12

the President over and he came. Arthur told me the reason he had come alone and that his wife hadn't joined him--he left her in Dallas on the way to California--was because she resented what Johnson had written about this little episode. So it lingered, that's the point I want to make about it.

G: In summation, do you feel that Johnson's version was more accurate than Goldberg's of the whole thing?

K: I find it difficult to see Johnson making that kind of a commitment. With his wanting to keep options open all the time, it just runs against his character to make a commitment about a future appointment to the Supreme Court. So it doesn't fit my feelings about what would be normal for him to do. On the other hand, I must say that Arthur sincerely believes such a commitment was made.

G: Now, during the time you were at Camp David, or in that period, Nixon evidently phoned Chief Justice Warren and asked him to remain on the Court.

K: Yes, I know.

G: So this must have been frustrating to President Johnson, because it's so early--

K: Also frustrating to Earl Warren. But Earl Warren, I think--and here I'm speculating--agreed only because it became clear that Johnson would not have the ability to appoint *anybody* to the Court at that time. Because he had taken soundings, I know, at the Congress and had been told he could not get approval of an appointee at that late stage.

G: Even someone from the Senate?

K: Well, I'm just saying what he told me. Actually, you know, you refresh my recollection a

Krim -- VI -- 13

bit, because we did speculate on is there any way to get somebody over there that they can't say no to. I do remember that, yes.

G: Normally one would think if he had chosen a senator--

K: Yes. Well, my mind is a little hazy on that whole area.

Now, we spent both Thanksgiving and Christmas with them, and on New Year's Eve we gave him a New Year's Eve party at our house. We called in many of his close friends from Texas. It was a bittersweet party, as you can imagine, very warm, very sentimental. People came from different parts of Texas. I remember the place outside looked like a heliport with four or five helicopters there. We had an elderly entertainer that was one of the President's favorites. All in all it was a fond farewell New Year's Eve party while he was still president. Then in January, of course, we saw him in New York and I saw him at the White House.

Then on Inauguration Day, we didn't go to the inauguration. We went directly to Clark Clifford's house and Clark had the cabinet and others of the important members of the administration there. The President came over right after the inauguration ceremonies and at the end of the party, Mathilde and I drove with him to *Air Force One*. I guess we were the only ones who took that trip with him except Juanita Roberts. The reason I remember that is that he gave Juanita the Legion of Merit while we were in the air.

G: In the air on *Air Force One*?

K: On *Air Force One*. I remember thinking that he was no longer president, but nobody ever raised that point. I think he had signed it before and presented it to her.

G: What was his mood at that Clark Clifford party?

Krim -- VI -- 14

K: Well, you've got seventy-five people you can talk to, but I must say, I guess I sat with him more than anybody else there, I remember, in the corner. He was saying all the things about how relieved he was, and you know, he loved to say at that moment when Nixon said "so help me God," all the weight was lifted off his shoulder. That was the general approach that he made at that time.

When we got back to the Ranch--see, this was the last trip that he had on *Air Force One*. Although even that one I think was courtesy of the new administration. When we got back to the Ranch, there was a crowd there that had been assembled by the Texas group. We didn't stay. We went over to our place with our chopper. But the next morning Mrs. Johnson said what I know she will recall. That all of a sudden all of the baggage had been dumped there, and the usual service had been considerably diminished, and she felt like Cinderella when the carriage turned into the pumpkin. It was the beginning of a transition to the new life.

G: Was there a pretty sharp drop off in the--?

K: Well, I never noticed any change, but there was a sharp drop off in numbers. But there always seemed to be enough security people around and Secret Service people, right up to the time of his death. I mean enough to serve his needs.

G: Anything else on that flight, that last flight on *Air Force One* back to the Ranch?

K: We talked a good deal about the future, and he was talking a good deal socially, rather than politically, the things, the trips we can take together. Now is the chance to enjoy the friendship, you know. He was full of plans about himself, from the change of life and what he was going to do with himself, including that he was going to start to ride the

Krim -- VI -- 15

horses again. That started the next morning. The very next morning we went to the Ranch, and for the first time since we knew him we all found ourselves on horses. I was very rusty then. I subsequently got back my comfort on a horse, but I hadn't ridden for a while. The President was a little rusty, and Dale Malechek and the rest of the staff--I don't know where they had rounded up all these horses--were obviously concerned about these so-called Texans and adopted Texans, who were all a bunch of tenderfeet when it came to the horseback riding.

But we rode for a couple of hours and walked the horses more than we rode. And the President said he was going to do that very often. And this may be wrong, but as far as I know he didn't do it again until he got the use of the [Miguel] Alemán place in Mexico. And then he went on the horse once again, as far as I remember, and the person who can tell you more about that is Jewel Malechek, because she was his riding companion in Mexico and she and I did some riding together later. But I don't think he ever got on a horse again except for that one occasion. That was typical of a lot of the things that we talked about.

That brings us to the four-year post-inauguration period, unless you have questions.

G: Yes. I have a few on some of the things that you've talked about. I'll just go over these and if they don't ring any bells--

K: Sure.

G: During the time that he was interested in going to the Soviet Union and was probing that, [Robert] McNamara made sort of a surprise visit to the Kremlin and met with Kosygin at

Krim -- VI -- 16

Kosygin's request. McNamara was on some--

K: World Bank mission, yes.

G: World Bank. Do you remember that in any of the--?

K: No. I read it in your notes, but it ties in with my own remembrance of the sequence. I think that was in November, was it?

G: Yes.

K: Yes. Because in November he was talking about the Russians still inviting him. Now, you've got a lot of names in there of people involved in that that I didn't know about. I knew Murphy, and you don't even have Murphy's name there. I also never heard of Geneva or Rome or other places, I only heard of Moscow. So I was either getting a wrong impression--or rather, let me put it another way, either my memory is a little faulty or the President was giving me facts that he knew but that are not included here.

G: Well, let me say this. Much of this stuff comes from press speculation.

K: Oh.

G: So, just because it's here it doesn't necessarily mean that it's [accurate].

K: I see. Well, I think my version is probably more accurate.

G: I agree.

In discussing this Soviet initiative, did he feel that there was some difference within the Soviet government about, let's say, detente or having a thawing out of relations?

K: I think that's implicit in what I said. He felt that he could make a meaningful impression on them both in the Middle East and in the Hanoi negotiations, as well as the missile



Krim -- VI -- 17

negotiation, and I think that's based on the fact that they needed prodding in those areas. You know, unlike recent events--although recently the Russians have also stepped up their interference in the Middle East--during that 1968 year when he was debating the Phantom thing, he was very alert to the possibilities of the Russians steaming things up the wrong way. And the reason I know that is that he kept saying he didn't want to press the Phantom thing to a public conclusion because he had these sensitive negotiations with the Russians that he hoped to undertake before that was done. That's why he really let go on the Phantoms only after the Czechoslovakian invasion. He was very consistent on that. He never announced the Phantoms until after that.

Tape 2 of 3

G: Did he feel that the greatest possibility for a nuclear confrontation with the Soviets would be over the Middle East?

K: I hesitate to answer that in the affirmative because I never really thought that he was fearful of a nuclear confrontation there as such. But I guess in the sense that any confrontation between the Soviets and the U.S. posed the danger of nuclear war, the answer would be yes.

G: Did he feel that the Soviets had been useful in Vietnam in persuading Hanoi?

K: Well, during this period there were those signs, as you have in your notes. And I think that was one of the reasons he felt he could justify going there. See, he had a justification problem there after Czechoslovakia, but the missile thing was very important to him. And there--I mentioned this once before, you should get Larry [Leslie] Gelb on the record as to what he hoped to accomplish, because it was Gelb who was in charge of

Krim -- VI -- 18

preparing. I later became a bit of an expert on that during the Carter Administration, but I wasn't at that time. And therefore I'm hesitant in being too specific. But I do believe that the SALT I antiballistic agreement was more or less what Gelb was preparing for the President to try to accomplish. You know, the outline of the SALT I agreement was really to remove the possibility of defending against nuclear attack so as to make the deterrent more meaningful.

G: But did the President feel that there were two competing viewpoints within the Kremlin, that one--?

K: I understood that question but I don't know the answer to it.

G: You said he tested the waters on the Goldberg nomination with Congress-- I mean, not Goldberg, a Supreme Court nominee. Did he also test the waters on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty?

K: Oh, yes. I didn't mention that, but that was part of what he hoped would be done before he left the presidency, and he failed on that, too. But there I think it was Nixon that cut the foundation from under him.

G: On Vietnam and the peace negotiations, one of the issues that's raised in the press during this period is that LBJ himself wanted to do the negotiating in Paris, that he wouldn't give [Averell] Harriman and [Cyrus] Vance the latitude that they needed, that he himself wanted to call the shots. Was there any friction here?

K: Yes. I don't think there's any doubt of that. I don't think he felt that Harriman and Vance left on their own would really accomplish a peace there. He felt strongly, in my opinion, that he had to be in charge to move this along the right way.

Krim -- VI -- 19

G: Did he feel that they would offer too many concessions or that they wouldn't offer enough or what?

K: I think if he felt concessions would bring about the desired end result, he'd be in favor of many concessions. But I think he felt that they would play the cards the wrong way and that they would give too many concessions thinking it would achieve the result, but that they would not have the result and the concessions would have been made. I think that's the way I would like to assess it. Also you must understand that at this particular time he was still fretting to an extent about the way in which he felt they had hurt Hubert Humphrey's chances in the election by causing him to have to slap Hubert down. To the day he died I know he was convinced, and I don't know that he's ever had evidence of it, that Averell was working with Hubert in a way that was inconsistent with what Johnson wanted during that period.

G: When the South Vietnamese government was balking and refusing to join the talks, what pressure did the President apply to them to get them to do that?

K: I wasn't privy to that. I should imagine the pressure became a lot more difficult after Nixon's election, because the pressure that he was applying before then included "you've got to fight this battle yourselves. We're going to start to move back come the turn of the year." That's what caused the flak, you remember, between Hubert and himself. So he was using that pressure. But after Nixon was elected, it was meaningless to say that.

G: He challenged Nixon not to abandon the policy of full employment. He made a statement to that effect. Do you recall it?

K: I didn't get into that.

Krim -- VI -- 20

G: Were you involved at all in his discussions of the European monetary crisis and the franc?

K: I was involved in all of those monetary things in a very peculiar, peripheral way, and that is either to get André Meyer's advice or to put him in touch with André Meyer. It's an area that I never have fully understood, that international monetary area. But I have overheard conversations between him and André which indicated he had a hold on that area.

G: He did?

K: Yes. André was only one of the people. The other person, of course, who advised him constantly was Joe Fowler, in that area. Joe was very close to the President. If you want to talk about that, he's the man to talk to.

G: Do you have any idea why he supported de Gaulle's decision not to devalue the franc?

K: No. I have no idea, but I would imagine that there again André was deep into it. André was very close to de Gaulle.

G: Anything on the President's efforts to help Humphrey pay off his campaign debt during this period? Was he helpful?

K: I don't remember that.

G: The National Commission on Violence, the Walker Commission, had issued its report.

K: Oh, yes. I agree with what you had in your notes there. He thought their conclusions were not sound.

G: The conclusions about the police riots.

K: The police, yes.

Krim -- VI -- 21

G: Did you discuss that with him?

K: Yes, I did, but I don't recall any specifics about it. I remember discussing [Otto] Kerner with him on a number of occasions, then and later.

G: Let me ask you, what can a president do in a situation like this when he establishes a commission and they make a study and then issue a report, and then he's not happy with portions of the report?

K: Not being a president, I'm not the right one to answer that question. (Laughter) But there's always the--what was it?--the bully pulpit, to repudiate, with your reasons.

G: Yes. But there's no way to keep the report from being released.

K: Oh, no. No, no. I don't think he tried to, did he?

G: Not that I'm aware of.

K: I don't think so.

G: In Austin in mid-December he dedicated a low cost housing administration.

K: I had nothing to do with--

G: You weren't there?

K: No.

G: Oh, one thing I wanted to ask you about. There was an attempt to set up a free trade zone off the coast of Maine with Occidental Petroleum. The President refused to approve that. Do you remember that?

K: No, I don't. I saw the note there. Of course, that has to do with Campobello. Armand Hammer, as I recall it, gave that to the government. You know, I don't know much about it, but it had to do with buying it from the Roosevelts and giving it to the government or

Krim -- VI -- 22

something of that sort. It belongs to the government today; it has some kind of memorial status up there. I don't know what this referred to, this free zone thing.

G: But presumably Occidental would have had a monopoly in oil exploration in this area.

K: I've never heard it mentioned.

G: He evidently declined an invitation to address the Democratic National Committee in January.

K: I had nothing to do with that.

G: Ground breaking at the Hirshhorn Museum?

K: I read about it, and Joe Hirshhorn had been a political supporter for a number of years.

G: One of the last things that happened in his administration, Secretary [Stewart] Udall attempted to set aside seven and a half million acres for the National Park system, and he disapproved this.

K: Yes. Well, the thing I remember more than that is that he felt Udall had named the [Robert F. Kennedy] Stadium without authority, and I remember his feeling quite bitter at Udall for having overstepped his authority in that way. That was at this same time I think that we're talking about. I don't remember the other thing.

G: Of course, he didn't change the name back.

K: No. He could have but he didn't, and it would have created a very nasty hue and cry if he had tried.

G: Well, I think we've covered then everything--

K: All right. Then let me say with respect to the four years between the Nixon inauguration and his death, we had contacts on a number of levels, and I thought I would just list them

Krim -- VI -- 23

and then we can go back to any of them that you want me to talk about at greater length.

I will synopsise each of the areas as I go along. First, as to my observation of the President's activities during that period, all his love of the Ranch and of the country came out in that period, of the Texas country. He really seemed to enjoy that part of his life, being the head of the Ranch and really getting into the running of it, but more than that, his love of property in that area came very much to the fore. I remember when they drained the lake, he acquired some property that had been under the lake before it was drained, and before the water came back built those pieces of property up so that when the water came back they'd be above water. He spent a lot of time discussing that and looking at it and surveying it. I really don't know what happened to those two pieces of property, but he felt as if he had gotten a little more of Texas.

In the course of this attention to the land he had some kind of falling out with Judge [A. W.] Moursund. I never learned the details. But as a result of that falling out, they divided the land that they had owned together. I know some of the things he got in the division, but I don't know the balance. He got the Scharnhorst, he got the Reagan, he got the Nicholson, and other ranches went to Judge Moursund. I remember it was surprising and somewhat painful to somebody like myself to see this happen between two very, very close friends. Apparently some kind of falling out over business affairs.

G: Did they ever get back together?

K: Yes.

G: They did?

K: Yes. The last time I saw the President in person alive was the first time after a long

Krim -- VI -- 24

period that I saw the Moursunds in his home, and it was very nice to see. But I'll come to that maybe a little later.

During this period of being the ranch owner, there would be a lot of visits to our place, back and forth. We had the chopper operating all the time then, our little chopper. We kept it at his place or at our place, and it brought our ranches very close together. It was only ten minutes by chopper, whereas it's almost an hour by road. During this period, too, I suddenly found myself going in the fall particularly of each year to a lot of football games with him. We used to go almost every Saturday either to the field in Austin, and on at least one occasion we flew up to College Station for the game between Texas A&M and Texas. We also went to a number of rodeos together.

During this period he also made several visits here to New York to the house. I'd like to comment on one of those visits, where we had a group of ten or twelve of his good friends here and amongst them Bob McNamara and Mac Bundy. After dinner he was in a very reflective mood, and I remember his saying to those two something which I thought was very overgenerous. That was he said, "You know, I want you fellows to know everything that went wrong in Vietnam that's being criticized, it was my decision, not yours." It was that kind of thing, which I thought--it would have been in my opinion more accurate to turn that coin around. But he did say it, and that night he was more depressed later in the evening than I've ever seen him except for one other occasion that I'm going to mention. We had Mrs. Ford here, Christina Ford. Christina and Mathilde decided we've got to pep him up, and we went to a nightclub then in the Sherry Netherlands. He actually had tears and said life is over for him, nothing to look forward



Krim -- VI -- 25

to. It was one of the few occasions where he really felt that too many things had gone wrong and there wasn't anything for him to look forward to. I did not see him in that mood very often, maybe one or two other times. But that was here in New York that night.

G: Do you think it had to do with his health at all?

K: Well, later, the next time it happened I know it had to do with his health. Yes, it could have. But I think it also had to do with the broader psychological acceptance of the loss of power and position, and the fact that he could actually go to a nightclub and there was no big fuss and fanfare about it. Most of the time he seemed absolutely not only reconciled to that but maybe pleased by it. We went to the football games and there would be just one or two security people with us, and outside of that we'd be with two or three close friends. He'd come into the stands and people would wave to him and so forth, but no big onrush. They began to accept him. He always sat in more or less the same place, and I became an expert on Texas football during that period. We always had a bet, and since I had the choice only of betting against Texas, I never won.

G: Did you ever get any points at least?

K: Yes, occasionally, but not enough. But I will never forget the time we were with him the last Thanksgiving of his life, of 1972. I had my two nieces with me and my secretary and my daughter. We all went over and joined him and Lady Bird for Thanksgiving lunch. Then we agreed to meet at the football game, and we met at the game and I sat next to Lady Bird with him on the other side. It started to drizzle, and sometime I think in the third quarter Texas must have been, I don't know, four or five touchdowns ahead, and I

Krim -- VI -- 26

had fifty dollars on A&M. A&M had to punt. They were positioned where their punt would be received by Texas in their own territory. The President leaned over and said, "I want to go home," this weather, and he didn't feel too good. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he said. "If Texas doesn't return this punt for a touchdown, you win." Have you ever heard of a bet where the odds are that much stacked in your favor? The guy punts and Texas returns for a touchdown. I got out my fifty dollars. The kids were with me, they couldn't believe what they heard. I gave him the fifty dollars. He didn't crack a smile. It was as if he was playing the game. Of course, he had to win. Put on his hat and left the game. It's one of those unbelievable bets. You read the story of that game, you'll see that there was a punt returned to a touchdown.

G: Cost you fifty dollars.

K: Well, I had lost the fifty. All we had to do was really wait out the game, but he didn't feel that he could insist on it in the middle of the game.

G: Was he interested in promoting the University of Texas, particularly the football team and that sort of thing?

K: He was quite proud of his own school, but Texas had become by this time his adopted university, because of the Library and the School of Public Affairs and because of his close association with Frank Erwin, who was chairman of the board [of regents] at Texas then. So he really became a Texas University fan and very proud of the University.

G: There's some indication that he encouraged the football team to recruit more black players.

K: That's not only an indication, that is an absolute fact.

Krim -- VI -- 27

G: Let me ask you to--

K: He put the heat to Darrell Royal on that.

G: Did he?

K: Oh, and how. And within a couple of years Darrell Royal had a very important black player and then later, of course, many. Oh, yes, I heard that dialogue several times.

G: Really?

K: Oh, yes. You know, I got to know Darrell Royal quite well. And Darrell would be the first to tell you the President said it just is terrible not to have a black player.

Now, also during this period we would go to Acapulco every year. He'd have a few of his friends there and we'd always be included for whatever time we could find to spend there. He had the use of Alemán's house, and he would take all his own water and food. He wouldn't even touch the ice there, you know.

G: Really?

K: Yes. He had had a bad experience I guess once. We would always enjoy those stays in Acapulco. They were very warm and friendly, and there would be all the opportunity for the scuba diving that we liked so much and the walks. During this period he was quite sedentary as far as exercise was concerned. We would go and see the divers. You're familiar with Acapulco so you know the routine. But I think that happened every year in the four years before he passed away.

G: Would he see Alemán when he was there?

K: Oh, yes. Alemán would come with his right-hand fellow. I forget his name.

G: Oh, Mike Guajardo?

Krim -- VI -- 28

K: Yes. They'd be there together. Alemán was always a very slim, trim man for his age, and I always heard about the other house around the corner, and we would take the boat trip and see the other house. Apparently that was the house for his mistress and this was the house for his wife. You couldn't see one from the other until you went out in the water a way. Alemán and the President were quite friendly. And of course the other thing we did was go to the Alemán place. I forget the name of it.

G: Was it Las Pampas?

K: Well, don't ask me. It was near a town that we would go to. It was probably as big as Rhode Island. I mean, it was a tremendous ranch. It was fifty miles one way and I don't know how many the other. It needed irrigation desperately. The house was run-down. The President, with his brother [in-law] Tony [Taylor] and with the help of everybody, had ideas for redecorating it and actually did redecorate it. We all had kind of our assigned room there. That's when I saw him go horsebacking once; he also brought a lot of cattle down there, including cattle that he got from us. We sent all our little calves down there, about thirty of them, for feeding and then. . . .

G: Did he have an interest in that ranch?

K: Well, this was acquired at a time when he and Moursund were still partners, but then while they had it Moursund dropped out. That may have been part of their problem, I don't know, because they each had to make an investment to ranch this. You see, Alemán allowed them to ranch it and gave them a lease for a few years with an option to buy, which option was never exercised. The ranching didn't work out as well as they had hoped, but we made several trips down there. It was a new passion with the President.

Krim -- VI -- 29

Actually, he had some kind of arrangement because we would take the plane and we were never stopped right across the border. I never remember any customs or any passports or anything of that sort. He had a big plane at that time, which was a turboprop. I can't quite fit into my mind how he got that, but probably it was made available to him by somebody.

G: Well, what was so different about this ranch as opposed to any of the other ranches?

K: Well, this ranch was a city in itself--I mean, not a city, because there weren't that many people but it was an entity, a complete entity. It had its own little stores. But more than that, it had a lot of uneducated kids on it and he brought teachers down there. He started a school. It was a challenge, like going into a Third World country and giving them all the means for lifting their standard of living. He was challenged by it. We were very impressed with the way he went at it: irrigation, teachers brought in, clothing for the children, fixing the main house, you know, that kind of thing.

G: Were there problems with, say, an American having an interest in [Mexico]?

K: Yes, it was a very touchy situation because the problem was really with Alemán having aggrandized himself in the presidency to the extent where he could own this big hunk of Mexico. Apparently it was not well known in Mexico, but the President's presence there began to make it well known and suddenly it began to appear in the Mexican press, more anti-Alemán than anti-Johnson. But that caused problems, yes.

He found this ranch a real pleasant challenge I know, and it was. He gave it up I think before he passed away, or maybe Lady Bird had to give it up. I don't remember that aspect of it.

Krim -- VI -- 30

G: Well, I guess this was one of the last really huge ranches?

K: Yes. Well, I'm telling you, I think it was fifty-five miles in length. You want to compare that to the Scharnhorst? (Laughter) It was a different world.

G: Did you go on any other trips with him?

K: No. The trips that I went with him on were to Mexico. Acapulco, I think we always had found our own way after he was there. He started increasingly during this period to talk about the comforts of home. We had talked about traveling all over the world when we were riding back from the inauguration, but he lost the zest for that. I think it was probably health, but he began to talk about how he enjoyed sleeping in his own bed. I remember he went on a yacht trip with the Engelhards, and when he came back he told me they were all so very nice but he was yearning for his own comforts of home. Then when our daughter left for the army service in Israel he said, "I'm going to come over there and visit you," and he wrote her a couple of times saying he was going to come over. He even told Golda Meir on the phone I remember once, "I'm going over there to visit my friend Daphna Krim." She didn't even know who he was referring to. And we really wanted him to go to Israel. Like with the Urban League, he would have had such a reception. And our good friend Ambassador [Ephraim] Evron wanted it. But we couldn't get him to get up the energy to plan it and to go. So I do not remember. Did he take any trips? I'm trying to think. I don't even remember that he took long trips at that time.

Now during this period, too, we spent a lot of time on the Library and the School. Of course, he had asked me to be a member of the board there, so I was involved in the activities. Of course, it was during this period that the School and Library were

Krim -- VI -- 31

inaugurated, and that was a great day for him. Nixon came there, and we gave a party at our ranch that was very nice. During this period the seminars started. There were at least two seminars before he passed away.

During this period he established an award committee and we had hoped at that time to make it a very prestigious award that would be a source of helping people in important areas financially and also become a prestigious award like the Lasker Award, et cetera. And the committee that he appointed was a very prestigious committee. You know, we had Earl Warren and Thurgood Marshall and Kay Graham. He asked me to get the president of Columbia to chair it. He did co-chair it with Lady Bird. That was Bill McGill. Then he asked me to get a scientist, and I got the head of Sloan-Kettering, Bob Good. We had a number of meetings. We gave four awards each year in a different field. But after he passed away we decided that it hadn't achieved the purposes that we wanted and so we disbanded it. But while he was alive we gave one award I remember to [Roy] Wilkins in the civil rights area. My best recollection is that by the time of the second or certainly the third award, he had passed away. We gave four awards. I got to know Earl Warren during that period. I'd known Thurgood Marshall before, but Warren was always extremely complimentary about LBJ and his recollections of his presidency. And of course Thurgood Marshall thought LBJ was the greatest president of all.

G: There was also a Zale Award, wasn't there, for a few years?

K: Zale, yes, put up the money for the first award.

G: I see.

K: But then we took it over and put up our own money because the Zales were trying to tie

Krim -- VI -- 32

commercialization into it. Actually the President accepted the money the first year. I remember when he came and he said, "Look, we can get the money from the Zales." And we took it. But it had complications, and by the time of the second year we appropriated the funds out of our own Foundation monies.

During this period the Foundation met quite often to decide what was needed to support the School. Through Frank Erwin's efforts the legislature had given a lot of support to the School that we had originally thought the Foundation might have to support. It was during this period, too, I guess that--you know I was then in charge of raising the money for the Foundation in the early days, and I guess I helped raise about twelve million dollars from a very small group of people to get it started. Of course, after that a lot of people have done great work in fund-raising. But in that first year after the inauguration I spent a lot of time on that. Of course, he would be involved with the people who were being so generous. And of course not being president, it was a lot less complicated to have them to the Ranch and take them out to the site of the building and give them a tour.

G: But on the other hand, were people inclined to give less?

K: No, not the people--the people we got important money from, people like George Brown with a million dollars, Perry Bass with a million dollars, McDonnell with a million, subsequently it became five hundred thousand. Lew Wasserman with two hundred and fifty thousand, but since then he's given into the millions. Engelhard with five hundred thousand, André Meyer with five hundred thousand. These are people who were not different in their relationship because he was no longer president of the United States.



Krim -- VI -- 33

G: Did he have any special requirements on that Foundation? Were there people that he wanted or people he didn't want? Or did he want it to do certain things?

K: Yes. He vetted every member of the Foundation at the beginning. And yes, he wanted the Foundation to make certain that the Library would be the most successful library of all the presidential libraries and that the School would become the most successful school of public affairs. Let me say rather categorically that his vision of those two operations was very prescient as to what he thought they should do, and what they have done is more or less what he wanted them to do. They've both been very successful. I know while the Kennedy operation was struggling for years just to get started, the Johnson Library and School were flourishing and they have flourished to this day. Now, that's a whole area that I'm sure you'll be getting information on from many sources, but that took a lot of time and counted for a lot of the contacts in that period.

The other thing was the book in this period. I won't mention Lady Bird's book, which we worked on, too. But on *The Vantage Point* he had a whole group of people working and my participation pretty soon began to be mainly reading the chapters to give him my advice, and my advice became more and more critical. I had hoped and had talked to him at the beginning that he would sit down with a tape recorder and be himself. Because in one-on-one conversation, there's nobody to compare with him. And not only to tell the anecdotes, but to tell the history in his way, because his mind was--

Tape 3 of 3

K: His mind was way ahead of the people he assigned to do the job. And what began to come out was a very plastic, uninteresting recapitulation of what had been public. There

Krim -- VI -- 34

was no inside information, there was none of the personality of the President that got into the book, and it became an apologia for a lot of things in Vietnam and elsewhere. Unlike Lady Bird's book, which had an openness to it, his was clearly in a sense a plastic cosmetic. One of the most troublesome things for me in our relationship was when he called me when the book was finished and said he wanted to give a credit to me in the preface, along with several of the generals from the Vietnam period, as having helped him. I, of course, I hadn't helped in that sense, I didn't want to be linked with the generals, and I didn't want to--I don't know, I just didn't feel an affinity with this book, and it hurt me to tell him I would prefer if he wouldn't do it and it was a mistake for him to list the generals. He ended up making the credits a family thing, you know. With Lady Bird's book I was pleased to be given the credit. I know it hurt him and it hurt me, but I just felt this book was not what I had hoped it would be.

G: Why do you think it turned out the way it was, because he didn't have the time or the inclination to sit down and dictate the book?

K: I don't know. He spent a lot of time on it. In Acapulco and at the Ranch, all the chapters would be laid out and he would be reading and re-reading. I think it's because he assigned people to do chapters, and in my opinion none of them could substitute for him. I don't remember that he wrote any of this, to speak of, he just edited it. It was doomed to commercial failure.

G: Do you think that he felt that if he simply dictated it in his own words with the bark off that it wouldn't have been presidential?

K: That might be part of it, but nobody expected it to be published as he dictated it with the

Krim -- VI -- 35

bark off. It would be a starting point for the kind of book that some of us had in mind, including the publisher.

G: Was he himself disappointed in the product?

K: I'm sure he was, although we never talked about it. Of course, Lady Bird's book did much better than his book.

G: Yes. Was his publisher disappointed?

K: Yes. The editor assigned by the publisher, I forget his name, had hoped for more, but long into the process became reconciled with what he had and was not as critical as he should have been toward the end. I know I just felt this isn't the President that I knew.

G: Were there to be additional volumes?

K: Yes. There would be three more.

G: Three additional ones?

K: It was supposed to be four volumes, but as I think I mentioned when I talked about this earlier, I made sure the big money came for the first volume.

It was also during this period that we made a deal with CBS for the TV appearances. That did not go to the Foundation, as I said before. I was there most of the time when Cronkite came down, and I might just as well talk about something that happened on that that just comes to mind at this minute. The President said to Cronkite in one of those interviews that he was pretty well convinced that Kennedy had made a move to have Castro assassinated, and that his own assassination was a retaliatory act. He also always spoke of the fact that he felt the Kennedy Administration had not exactly killed Diem, but had allowed it to happen. At the moment, the Castro part struck me as

Krim -- VI -- 36

pure fantasy. I was asked to read these interviews all the time. A year later it would not have been pure fantasy, because I began to read about [John] Roselli and the others who were encouraged to try to assassinate Castro. But at the time I'm talking about, that hadn't come out. The only thing close to it was a D.A. in New Orleans who had made some statements to that effect.

I was appalled on behalf of the President at this getting out at that time, that it would seem to be a real attack on Kennedy and would be misinterpreted by all the hordes of Kennedy advisers. Why take it on? The President authorized me to try to get it deleted, and I went to Frank Stanton and I pointed out that in the contract, which I had negotiated, we had a right to delete, that this was not on the level of the pure journalistic effort, this was memoirs that were subject to editing, and we were exercising our right of editing. Cronkite blew his stack but deleted it. Two years later he broke the agreement and when it all come out about Roselli and so forth he put that segment on the air with Johnson's statement in it. But we got it out two years earlier, and I must say, later on I realized that the President had information that I didn't have, but he didn't tell me about it. Apparently he was convinced, too, that maybe it would be better to take it out.

G: Where did the impetus for the Cronkite interviews come from? Did CBS come to you or did you approach them?

K: Yes. CBS came to me.

G: And did you have any difficulty getting them to agree to that right to edit when you were negotiating the contract?

K: No.

Krim -- VI -- 37

G: Because that's not usually--

K: No. No, because actually they were, at the time, buying something that was tied in with the Holt, Rinehart publishing. It turned out differently. We didn't really know what it was going to be when we made the deal. We just gave them a certain number of hours that they could explore his memoirs with him, with our having the right to edit, and they paid very little for it. I think they paid three hundred and fifty thousand dollars for--what was it?--four interviews or something. And I think they did all right with those interviews ultimately.

G: Do you think that the President was relatively candid in those sessions or was he stilted?

K: He was not as candid as he could have been, but this one episode when he was candid, I must say he ran into not only my own feeling but also I remember Abe Fortas had a strong feeling on it. Yes.

G: Now, do you feel like CBS did a fair job of their own editing in compressing their questions and his responses and what actually aired?

K: Yes. I don't remember any negative feeling about that other than what I've just mentioned to you.

G: Did the President feel that the programs as--?

K: I never heard him say the contrary.

Now, one other point of contact was in connection with the Pentagon Papers. I forget the date of the publication of the Pentagon Papers, but shortly after that there began to be statements about the possibility of a congressional investigation, going back over the Tonkin episode and the dispatch of troops, because the *New York Times* was

Krim -- VI -- 38

stressing the secrecy aspects and the fact that the Tonkin was a hoax in order to get a resolution passed and so forth. So there was a hue and cry for congressional investigation in certain quarters.

The President called me and asked if I would prepare the defense of such a congressional investigation. I went down to the Ranch to discuss it. I remember asking the President if I could invite Abe Fortas, which he agreed to, and Abe came with me. We talked about who I should see, and we had a list of about twenty possible witnesses. And I conducted about five of the twenty before the thing died away of its own weight. I had long meetings with McNamara in Washington, with [Dean] Rusk in Atlanta, with Mac Bundy here in New York, with his brother, Bill Bundy, who was at the State Department working on the same history of the Vietnam War at the time when Gelb was doing it I guess in Defense. And somehow or other, I don't even remember now how, where, or why it died down, but I had gotten enough evidence so that his defense would have been overwhelming. I mean, the *New York Times* and the Pentagon Papers had made so many blatant misstatements in their headlines and in the documents, such as--I can remember some of them--that the big contingent of troops in July of 1965 was sent surreptitiously. And there was an announcement, it was in the press. And the same thing was true with other aspects. It was such a hatchet job that this fellow who did the newspaper story on the Pentagon Papers had done.

Later I had the painful situation, as a member of the board of trustees of Columbia University, to have the Pulitzer award committee recommend that the *New York Times* get the Pulitzer award for the Pentagon Papers, and one of our trustees was Punch [Arthur

Krim -- VI -- 39

Ochs] Sulzberger, the publisher, who left the room while this was being debated. I protested it vehemently and got a majority of the trustees to agree with me that there was too much venality and bias for this to get the Pulitzer award. However for thirty years the Pulitzer award committee had never been repudiated by the board of trustees, who have to give the official stamp. And whereas a majority of the board were opposed to the board giving the award, they were also concerned about repudiating the Pulitzer award committee. So we voted a new constitution at that meeting where we would no longer vet the awards. It would be the Pulitzer award committee alone. And we issued an announcement saying that we were allowing the award because we were giving the full power to the Pulitzer award committee. But if it had come before the board of trustees, we would not have given it. That was the public announcement. We went at this hammer and tongs, and Punch Sulzberger was outside the room for six hours wondering what was going on inside.

Well, that's just an aside on that. But I did spend some time on that and learned more about the Vietnam thing than I had ever known before. All of these four, the two Bundys, McNamara, and Rusk, were absolutely certain of their ability to defend their position.

G: Do you think that the President had any regrets about the way the policy shaped up? Do you think that he felt in retrospect in retirement that he had done the wrong thing in Vietnam?

K: The reason I mentioned that meeting in this house that sentimental evening is that he, as far as I can recall, always said the contrary, that he had done what had to be done, and if

Krim -- VI -- 40

he had to do it over again he would do it over again. He didn't want to admit the contrary to himself, at least not to me. That doesn't say he didn't admit it to other people.

You know, one of the conversations I had with him in this period was shortly after he came back from a visit to the White House. He was very impressed with [H. R.] Haldeman and [John] Ehrlichman and the way they had organized things. This is, of course, long before the structure collapsed. But one of the things he said was that he was glad Nixon had a strong approach to the Vietnam situation. So he was still talking in that vein.

G: He also came up here to address the New York University's Graduate School of Business.

K: Yes, I was with him that time. It was the [A. K.] Salomon Prize, and the head of Salomon Brothers was then Salomon himself. He paid a stipend for that, which I think went to the Foundation. It was an annual event; it was well attended. Then Salomon and the President and a few of us had a meal together after that. It all went very well. I don't remember anything of particular significance about it, except that Salomon made a number of nice statements both publicly and at the lunch about Johnson's high standing in the business community and in Wall Street. You know, Johnson had a very good relationship with the business community, the normal Republican community. Of course, if you go back on what happened in the stock market during his presidency, it was very bullish.

Now let me see what else. Next comes the discussions about the [George] McGovern candidacy. He knew I was working for McGovern, and so naturally we talked about it. He had extremely mixed feelings about McGovern. McGovern had really given



Krim -- VI -- 41

him trouble on Vietnam and was giving him trouble in the campaign. He had been really downgraded in the convention at which McGovern had been nominated, so much so that a friend like Leonard Marks turned to support of Nixon. I would just like to summarize what our conversation [was]. The gist of our conversation was as follows: that Leonard Marks and folks like him were horses' asses if they thought this was helpful to the President for him to do that; that he was bitter about [John] Connally leading the Democrats for Nixon; that he was a Democrat, he wanted to be known as a Democrat; that whereas he had no love for McGovern he was going to vote for him and wanted that to be known. He was delighted that Luci and others were speaking up against the Connally position and for McGovern, and he was, if not exhilarated in any way, not displeased that I was working for McGovern. But he never gave me the feeling at any time that Connally had done this with his blessing, just the contrary. And I think Lady Bird will confirm that, because she knows that.

G: Did he ever try to discourage Connally or Leonard Marks or any of these other people?

K: If he did, he didn't use me for that purpose. But I arranged a meeting between McGovern and Johnson, gave McGovern my chopper actually.

G: Oh, to go to the Ranch?

K: To go to the Ranch. My pilot took him there, Firmin Bey. They had a meeting which ended by McGovern telling me what a wonderful man President Johnson is, how much he had misunderstood him. That was what he said. Now, I tried to get Johnson to come out for McGovern in a big way, or in some way, but he said he had to do it his way. And the way he did it was when he voted, he said, "I voted for McGovern."

Krim -- VI -- 42

I said before that I was going to refer to another day when I saw him depressed, and tied in health with it. It was on one of those days that we were talking about the McGovern campaign. He was then preoccupied with his newest land priority, and that was the fixing up of the Reagan building on the Reagan Ranch. We were sitting there in front of the building that was then not quite finished, the Pedernales behind us. And he had just been advised of a horrible health choice. It had to do with removing his inner tubing and having to do both his urinating and his defecating in a bag he would carry around with him. And in doing that he'd be maybe prolonging life but jeopardizing his heart in the operation. This was a time when we would take walks together and after twenty steps he'd have to take one of his pills. His health had really deteriorated. It was also a time when he said, "You see how wrong you were, I wouldn't have had the stamina for the second term." My stock answer always was, "If you had had the adrenalin of the presidency, you might not have this health problem," and so forth. But you know, that's. . . .

G: Now he'd already had that heart attack in Charlottesville, hadn't he, that second [heart attack]?

K: Yes. He had. But at this point he had gotten some advice from Mayo people. I remember the McGovern conversation paled into insignificance, because he sounded very fatalistic. He said, "Look, I love the Pedernales, I love this place, but I'm not going to be here long." It was a most depressing conversation. There was just the two of us there. And I was very saddened by that conversation. It seemed unfair for him to have all these health problems at that time and not being able to enjoy life. But this was a

Krim -- VI -- 43

good four or five months before he passed away. So that's the McGovern thing and his health and his depression and so forth.

G: On the McGovern visit, did McGovern have any reluctance to come to the Ranch?

K: No, he wanted to. He needed Johnson desperately.

G: Did Johnson have any reluctance to have him there?

K: I think the chances are yes, but I don't remember it specifically. You must realize that McGovern had been very extreme in his criticisms and had really torn into Hubert in the campaign and had really won by mobilizing the anti-Johnson constituents out there in the country.

G: Was there any significance to [Sargent] Shriver being there?

K: Well, Shriver was the vice presidential candidate so it was a natural. If he was there. I'm not even sure he was, was he?

G: I think he was.

K: I don't remember that. He could have been there, but I don't remember it.

Now during this period, as I say, he was working on the Reagan. He finished the Reagan place and it was all fixed up for something to happen. On my way back from the coast in December I stopped in to see him and, lo and behold, it was Lady Bird's birthday and he was celebrating it with a party at the Reagan Ranch, the new Reagan house. That's when he invited the Moursunds, and it was the first time in a long time I had seen them together. The whole family was there and a few of the local friends. It was the last time I saw him alive. It was a time when he got up toward the end of the party and called Lady Bird to him, and then called the kids, and then to my surprise--it was quite

Krim -- VI -- 44

emotional for me--called me. He said, "This is my family." It was very moving for me.

It was the last time I saw him alive.

G: You were at the Civil Rights Symposium I guess earlier that month.

K: Oh, yes. That's when he made that statement at the end.

G: He did single you out then, didn't he?

K: At the end he said something about I did all this, which is a big exaggeration. But the part that always struck me as being something special was after that these nice words, according to the book, the next sentence is "These were the last public words of the President."

G: Were you privy to any of the discussions about whether or not he was physically able to speak?

K: Yes. Actually he was sitting in the anteroom in great pain before the meeting started, and he took some of his pills, and several of us who were there--and I'm sure he got a lot of it from Lady Bird--wondered whether he should undertake to come to the meeting. Then at the meeting itself you could see he was in pain, and he took a pill before he went up for that last and wonderful statement when one of the blacks criticized some of the others. He went up and made an extemporaneous statement, which was magnificent, about don't foul your own nest. There was a lot of concern about his health at that seminar.

Then of course along about this time his pilot crashed our helicopter and it was totally destroyed. It was very much on his mind, more than it should have been. As I say, the last time I saw him alive was at the meeting at the party at the Reagan. The last time I talked to him on the phone was a few days before he died, in which he said, "I've

Krim -- VI -- 45

got to do something about that chopper." And I said, "Don't worry about it." He wanted to get a new chopper. Those were the last words that we spoke on the phone, and it always struck me as being an unfortunate circumstance that he was worried about that at that time.

Then of course came the news of his death, and I was down there within a couple of hours and returning to Washington with his coffin in the plane, in that plane we had been in so often. It was a draining experience. Mathilde and I knew that something very important, a very important phase in our life, was over. But more than that, a very important phase of the life of the country and of Texas had also had a watershed moment. Of course, we miss him and yet he's always there when we're there. Even today we have the feeling when we're in Texas that he's there. But Texas, the whole area is different; it doesn't have that drive that he would give it. Lady Bird has been just magnificent in her carrying on the things that were important to him. We've had a lot of time that we spend with her. She's been a wonderful wife to leave behind for somebody who wanted his dreams fulfilled.

But that's about where the story ends.

[End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview VI]