

TAPE RECORDING BETWEEN LYNDON B. JOHNSON, JACK VALENTI,
AND BOB HARDESTY MARCH 8, 1969

VALENTI: I remember one scene on Air Force 1. I had just come aboard the airplane. I remember that when I came aboard Air Force 1, there were a lot of unfamiliar faces aboard, but there were some familiar faces aboard--Congressman Albert Thomas, Congressman Jack Brooks, Congressman Homer Thornberry come to my mind. One particular scene that is still vivid in my memory is that I came mid-ship to the President's cabin--the President's office cabin which was used by the President. There were two tables--one large table on each side and one smaller table you could sit at and a chair facing the President. These two chairs were empty. I sat with Congressmen Thornberry, Thomas, and Brooks. The President was not in sight. I learned later that he was in the aft-cabin, a small bedroom that is used by the President, and suddenly his long frame loomed up before us in the passageway going from the aft-cabin to the President's office cabin. It was the first time

I had seen him and while I don't know whether or not others had been with him before, there was almost a mystical thing taking place. Automatically without any kind of pre-knowledge, all of us stood up in the presence of this man who had now become President, and I remember that Congressman Thomas said: "We are ready to carry out any orders you have, Mr. President." This was the first time I had heard him addressed as "Mr. President." It seemed to me that there was a change in the Vice President (now President.) He --his demeanor was grave, he seemed much quieter and all of these restless forces that had heretofore been deployed in him had seemingly been gathered under some kind of stern discipline. He seemed, if not assured, unafraid. He gave that impression -- a strong, rock-like determination and courageous so that those around him could draw upon that strength. The tempo and the atmosphere in the plane were one of near hysteria, blank, opaque kind of grief, stunned silence-- almost ghostly walks through the plane by various people whose names at that time were not known to me.

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I felt there was something in the magic of the word "Mr. President" that caused everyone in the cabin, long-time personal friends, to view him in a totally different way than the way they had considered him before. It was the kind of feeling that obscured old friendships and even reformed old concords, and even a man like Homer Thornberry who is probably the most intimately connected person with Lyndon Johnson and who had known him the longest and been closest to him and his family was also affected by this vast and cataclysmic change in which a man becomes President.

I remember that scene very well though and it sticks in my mind because it was the first time I had seen Lyndon Johnson as President. It was the first time that when he came into a room as courtesy and respect those in the room stood in which they paid their respects to the office and to the man.

As I recall, the President spent a good deal of time in that office cabin, seated for a time in the chair

reserved for the President and also at the larger table, every now and then looking up to glimpse a picture on the television set that rested on the outer edge of the table near the window. He asked Bill Moyers and myself and Liz Carpenter to give him suggestions for a draft statement which he was going to make on landing at Andrews. I know that all three of us all scribbled on it, scribbled our suggestions to him. He went over them, made changes and we had several typewritten drafts made before he finally determined upon the one he wanted, which was the final one delivered at Andrews.

All during that trip back, these vague and unfamiliar faces which later, of course, became well know to me, were moving in and out of the cabin and I never really was aware of any hostilities overt or covert upon the airplane. Perhaps if they were there they were invisible because of the hard duties that were being pressed down upon us who were around the new President.

JOHNSON: What we wanted to do for the country is what we did. It was that simple. I really wanted

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a country where the Congress and the Government would provide education for every kid from Head-start to adult education by '75 and we got those going--health, conservation, pollution, consumption and on down and that is what we did. This is what I wanted to see done in Civil Rights and this is what we have done about it. We wanted a country where a man could own his own home and we got it and we provided in the last Housing Act the framework where that can be done, where there can be equality in housing. We were a long way from it when we came in.

HARDESTY: I have typed up some questions which I think probably are some of the things that ought to go in, if not the chapter will eventually go in the Memoirs anyway. We will probably be writing an awful lot and have stuff left over.

JOHNSON: Well, I guess we will give some thought to this and I will talk to you and answer these as I get a chance. You go home this weekend--Friday--don't you, and will be back Monday or Tuesday? I will try to come down the early part of the week then and go into all of this.

HARDESTY: I think it has to be very personal narration. The record

is all there. It has been written about so much.

JOHNSON: I don't remember a great deal of this. I think your approach is rather good though. I wouldn't get a lot of advice. I believe though we will have to see about our statements. Jake Jacobsen worked up all these answers. Don't you have them?

HARDESTY: I have all of those.

JOHNSON: Who told us to get on Air Force 1, Ken O'Donnell, wasn't it?

HARDESTY: Ken O'Donnell.

JOHNSON: I talked to Kennedy and he called me back and I think went over the oath with me as I remember it.

HARDESTY: I think he interrupted you. You were talking to Walter and I think he cut in on the line and told you to have it administered down here by a Judicial Officer.

JOHNSON: We ought to have that.

HARDESTY: I have all of that.

JOHNSON: Yes, I was talking on the phone. I was in the President's bedroom. Hell, I was President. This wasn't to go to a museum. This was the White House. I thought it was terrible that he made us stay over at EOB for eleven days rather than have a public spectacle because he didn't want anybody to move in the White House and as soon as they came aboard I was talking. I couldn't talk to twenty five or thirty

people in the bedroom, but I don't see any difference in the bedroom and the sitting room. He wasn't going to sleep in the bed and I was trying to talk to Kennedy and take pills and locate the Judge and do all these things I had to do.

HARDESTY: I don't think those are important points.

JOHNSON: I know, but I don't think I would be apologetic about it. His trip to Texas had nothing to do with the political situation in Texas. That is just a misnomer. He wanted to do it. He was advised by me and by Connally and by several others not to come to Texas. This wasn't the time to raise the money in Texas. He wanted to come on my Birthday, August 27, but Connally told him that it was too close to Labor Day, that everybody would be gone on that Weekend, the rich folks would be gone to Colorado to cool off and the poor folks would go to Galveston to get in the Gulf to cool off and that they couldn't raise any money and what he wanted to do was raise some money and they kept telling him that he could raise a million dollars in Texas and we owed three or four million so Connally finally--the President got Connally up without telling me about it and got Connally to the

White House and they agreed on this November date, and I heard Connally was in town and I called him and asked him what it was all about and he said well he assumed that the President would tell me if he wanted me told--that he had called him and asked him to come talk to him about it. They had agreed on this date. This was the first I knew about the date. This was purely a figment of somebody's imagination that he came to Texas to settle a political difference between Senator Yarborough and me. Whatever differences we had we were both in Washington. He didn't need to come to Texas to settle it and we were both five minutes from there and I had no differences with Yarborough. Yarborough felt that he should have more voice in appointments and I had an agreement with President Kennedy when he asked me to go on the ticket that I would approve all Texas appointments. There was a natural conflict there and Yarborough was offended by it. He felt like other Senators could make recommendations that didn't have to go through the President and Vice President and that he shouldn't have to. There was a difference between two men but Kennedy didn't try to settle it. Yarborough did refuse to ride

in the car with us I was told. He never told me

that, but Kennedy was very irritated by that and according to reports told Yarborough to ride in the car or not to come with us, but it had nothing to do with Kennedy coming to Texas or not coming to Texas. He wasn't down here to serve Texas. He was down here to serve the Treasury of the Democratic National Committee and try to raise a million dollars, which we had raised a good deal of and he had promised Albert Thomas that he would go to his--he was a great friend of Albert Thomas' and Albert was one of the Liberals and he was encouraging and that he would go to Houston for his dinner so he went to Houston to see Albert's dinner and went to San Antonio to a space meeting and then to Fort Worth and Dallas, but the primary thing was fund-raising. I think we ought to say that.

He was warned not to come and I was warned not to come. People thought it was a bad time to come, bad time politically, bad time for fund-raising, bad time for all. It was thought he was low in his popularity. This business about him being the most popular President we had ever had at that time just wasn't true at the polls -- there or here, and he

told me--the last words he uttered to me
at Fort Worth was that we were going to carry
two states in the Union if we don't carry any
others -- Texas and Massachusetts. That was
the last I heard him say in Fort Worth--walked
out and got on the plane to Dallas, went out
and got in the caravan and was killed. But I think
generally speaking this is a little bit apologetic--
kind of like I was in a hurry and for that reason
I was insensible. I wasn't. I told them all I would
like for them to stay with me and I did everything
I could to show respect and affection and grief to
Mrs. Kennedy so I don't know of any niceties that
were overlooked at all and what's more I think
everybody in the party will say that.

HARDESTY: Did you feel any hostility at all on the plane at any
time?

JOHNSON: It was a peculiar situation that they sat back in the
back and never would come and join us. Afterward
she joined me in his office and very frankly--I
wouldn't want to say this in the book, but I thought
they were just wine heads. They were just drinkers,
just one drink after another coming to them trying
to drown out their sorrow and we weren't drinking of

course. We didn't have anything . They were drinking and I just thought they didn't want to-- they were bereaved and wanted to be there and I went back and asked them to come up or to join us , tried to talk to them about the arrangements. The full significance of it, in the light of the developments, but I never felt that--that feeling all of the months they worked there for me -- O'Donnell would go out to lunch about 11:30 and frequently not come back in the afternoon, just sit over there and drink and I would have to call in a new man to take his place--Marvin Watson or Jack Valenti. Jack Valenti would do it . He stayed on the payroll for several months and he always professed loyalty to me until he got out. That was very much like the Udall thing.

HARDESTY: There weren't even any rumors about any hostility or resentment during that whole period. It really didn't start until the Manchester book and if that had been going on, it would have leaked out to some columnists.

JOHNSON: I think the Manchester book was a predicate for Bobby to run in '64, that was to run immediately and he wanted to be on the ticket and that knocked

that off when the Manchester book came along
until 1968. No question about that.

HARDESTY: Now here one other thing that might be valuable.
It is from a book that was written earlier, but it
has a good chronology .

JOHNSON: Whose is this?

HARDESTY: Oh, that's a book "First Hundred Days of
Lyndon Johnson" that came out in 1964.

JOHNSON: Oh no, this is all wrong because we called Kennedy
after we got on the plane. Yes, I guess that is
right.

HARDESTY: You were on the plane.

JOHNSON: He informed the nation and informed me before.
I would ask Dick Helms to see if we can't get
that briefing.

HARDESTY: Lois Nevins checked . Theyall are in McCone's
safe in CIA and he is the only one that has the
combination to it.

JOHNSON: All right, I would call McCone and ask him if
we could get it .

HARDESTY: We might as well get all of them for November and
December , don't you think?

JOHNSON: You mean--

HARDESTY: All of the briefings. You had almost a dozen briefings

the first couple of weeks.

JOHNSON: How many jobs did we have when we went out?

How many people were there? Oh, let's skip that.

HARDESTY: There were over seventy.

JOHNSON: Let's skip that. I think it was seventy four or

five or close to that--seventy three something

for a long time, but it has been growing.

Let's get this first press conference. I would like
to see that.

HARDESTY: First press conference?

JOHNSON: I wonder who the First Hundred Days --

HARDESTY: I have it in my office if you want to see it.

JOHNSON: Be careful --cut it off if we are going to tape
this because I am through and I don't want ____ (machine
cut off.)

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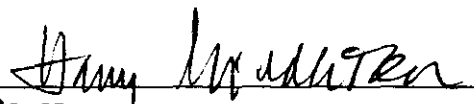
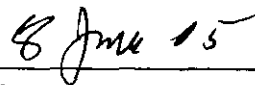
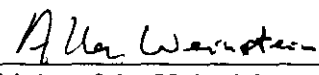
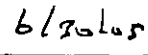
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LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON, JACK VALENTI, and ROBERT HARDESTY

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