INTERVIEW WITH GOULD LINCOLN, WASHINGTON STAR
Interviewer: Dorothy L. Pierce

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P: Mr. Lincoln, you've already made one very good tape for us just a little over a year ago, and I would like to pursue some questions from that interview and continue on with the present and bring it right up to date. As you know, so much did happen over this last year.

To begin with, we know that you conducted the first newspaper interview with Lyndon Johnson on the occasion of his election as secretary to the Little Congress in 1933. How would you characterize the then-25 year old Lyndon Johnson?

L: Well, it was very evident that Lyndon Johnson was an ambitious young man. He had demonstrated that fact by winning the chairmanship of the Little Congress with some other insurgents. Turned out some of my old friends, as a matter of fact.

P: Who were these insurgents? Do you remember?

L: I can't tell you right off the bat. As a matter of fact, I have a picture of them with Lyndon Johnson hanging in my room at home. I didn't think you were going to ask me that question, because they have a similar picture on hand hanging in the library already, the Lyndon Johnson Library.

P: Yes, I have seen a copy. The one seated with three of them together?

You gave me what I was looking for. I was trying to think at that time, did Lyndon Johnson already evidence the ambition and the drive and the motivation that has characterized his whole career, and you think he did?

L: I think he has ever since he was born.

P: To continue on this, in the early 1940's, during Lyndon Johnson's career in the House, do you feel that he did have a special relationship or special lines to Speaker Rayburn and President Roosevelt?

L: Yes, I think he did. I didn't see so much of him when he was in the House, but I did later when he was in the Senate. I knew Speaker Rayburn very well, and I knew that he thought well of Lyndon Johnson. The President, Mr. Roosevelt, did, too.

P: Do you know of any instances where this relation really came to bear or aided the career of Lyndon Johnson?

L: No, I can't answer that.

P: Among Mr. Johnson's peers, or his friends, did he establish any close ties that you know of? This would be in the House. I was thinking of such associations as Carl Vinson.

L: Well, Carl Vinson was a very influential member of the House, and I have no doubt that Lyndon Johnson knew him pretty well. Because before he ever became a member of the House, he had been employed there as, I think, someone on the door, and he knew every member of the House who came in and went out. And he kept track of them, that is, particularly, of the Democrats.

P: Mr. Johnson had been on the door, you mean? Employed on the door?

L: Yes.

P: And in later years, during the Truman years, what about his close friend, Clark Clifford? Do you know of that relationship?

L: I only know that he knew Clark Clifford because Clark Clifford was in and out of the White House and the Capitol a great deal. And Clark Clifford had been a great friend of Mr. Truman's. I can't tell you anything more than that.

P: No more on his early associations? It seems to me as you look back over Johnson's career, so many of these people--their names--recur throughout his career, and that is the reason I was pursuing this end of questioning. To see if you knew of any of the early ties and associations.

But to continue on, during the 1956 Democratic Convention, you described in your previous interview Sam Rayburn's intervention on behalf of Paul Butler, the Democratic National Committee Chairman. Since we know there were some hard feelings between Mr. Johnson and Mr. Butler over a refusal to participate in the Democratic Advisory Council, do you know why Mr. Rayburn intervened and used his influence to keep Mr. Butler on the job as chairman?

L: I don't know exactly why. I can guess that he wanted to keep the Party as unified as possible.

P: Did you feel that Speaker Rayburn also was involved in this friction between the Hill and the downtown Democratic Convention?

L: Yes.

P: And so he was really reversing himself?

L: He was reversing himself doing something for Mr. Butler that was unexpected.

P: Did it surprise you then at the time?

L: It surprised me. I think everyone else-- I still have a story that I wrote in the paper about it.

P: Regarding what?

L: Regarding Mr. Butler and Sam Rayburn's intervention for him. Everybody expected Sam Rayburn to step on him, and then he didn't.

P: A large part of Lyndon Johnson's career has, of course, been devoted to the legislative field. Can you think offhand of specific instances of his

so-called wheeling and dealing or trading back and forth that have directly resulted in passage of a bill? Part of the Johnson Technique?

L: Well, I've heard a lot about Johnson's Technique, and he has a very persuasive way of talking to people, but if he twisted anybody's arm, Mr. Johnson never told me about it, and certainly the man who had his arm twisted didn't say anything.

P: Do you think that this directly came to bear in the Civil Rights legislation?

L: Mr. Johnson was able to get the first Civil Rights Bill through to the amazement of a great many people, and one of the things I have to say about Mr. Johnson is that when he starts on something he sees it through. He made Civil Rights after he became President one of the great issues which he was going to fight for, and he has continued to do so despite many efforts of other people to get him off.

P: Do you think currently that President Johnson has lost his power to get a concensus, particularly over this last year with increased objections against the Viet Nam War led by Senator Fulbright and Senator McCarthy; problems with continued rioting; the gold drain; are there any of these you would like to comment on? It's his ability to get a concensus that I am interested in.

L: Well, these are the great problems of today. Mr. Johnson has adopted a course which I think is a very courageous one, and he has never wavered on any of those particular issues. To the amazement of myself and I guess a good many others, he got through this Congress a new Civil Rights Bill dealing with housing. Nobody expected him to get it through, and he has gotten through an anticrime measure which nobody expected him to do. And he has gotten through a Tax Bill which Mr. [Wilbur] Mills and Mr. Harris

held up for months and months, and nobody expected Mr. Johnson to get that through either. So I think whether he has a concensus or not, he has been able to get things done which nobody expected him to do.

P: Do you think he has used it up?

L: Well, he hasn't used it up completely. This Congress is still trying to get away, and whether Mr. Johnson will call them back after the election or even before the election, if they don't accomplish some of the things he has asked for, I have no idea. But he has the power to do it, if he thinks he needs to. For the sake of the country.

P: Still on this idea of a concensus, of course Lyndon Johnson's reputation is that he gathers the people together, and they reach an agreement in combination. Do you feel that his ability to do that over the years has been in part, say, having been on the scene and being able to extract this from one and that from another--from having, say, worked with them in the past and perhaps giving into something they wished? I think it's called having a favor file.

L: I don't know very much about concensus, but I do know that the President has gotten advice from all sides on questions that have come up. And then he has made the decision, and whether the decision followed a concensus, it certainly didn't follow both sides, because he took one. And may be some of his decisions weren't satisfactory to either side. But he has made the decisions. I don't think other people have made them for him.

P: Mr. Lincoln, when I was going over your clips--through your file--I saw a column that you wrote in 1964. This is really not a nice thing for me to do, but of course every day changes the world situation. You wrote at that time about Dr. King's warning of race riots, if Washington, D.C. didn't

get home rule. And you said it was "an insult to the well-employed Negro community." Would you care to comment on that now?

L: I don't quite understand. I said it was "an insult." What was the insult?

P: Warning that there might be race riots in Washington, D.C. if the District did not get home rule, and in the light of what has happened over this last year, and Washington, D.C. practically burning down in one area of the city, I wonder if you would comment now.

L: On whether we should have home rule?

P: Yes, and why you think there was race-rioting. If the Negro community supposedly is well-employed here.

L: Oh, I still believe that the great majority of Negroes in this Capital City have the interest of the District at heart. And in this Capitol, the failure to allow the people to have some home rule has been a mistake. Now, the Star has conducted a campaign for 60 years or more for the right of the people in the District to vote; for members of Congress from the District; and for their right to vote for President and Vice-President. We've already won an Amendment to the Constitution which grants the right to vote for President and Vice-President. We still have to have the right to vote for members of Congress, and that is the thing I think will do more to help the District than even home rule as such. Because Congress is not willing to take its hands entirely off the government of the City.

P: Do you think that that has had a bearing on the race problem here over this last year?

L: Well, I think that the population here which is now something like 67% or more Negro is constantly demanding more say in their own government. And under this new plan that the President has set out, there is the Mayor of Washington who has not been elected but merely appointed, and the City

Council; he has already accomplished some of this home rule. And also we're going to have an election for a school board which I think is a very good thing. But I think that all citizens should participate in these elections.

P: It's very close to your heart, isn't it? You've lived here for quite awhile.

L: I've lived here all my life.

P: And how long is that, sir?

L: 88 years.

P: My congratulations. To bring this interview up to date even further now, there has been so very much talk about Lyndon Johnson's relationship with the Kennedys. Do you think there was friction between their staffs while Johnson was Vice-President?

L: I think there are some very ardent Kennedy followers who stayed on with Lyndon Johnson. Some of them like Arthur Schlessinger who never really had any use for Lyndon Johnson. They stayed at the President's request and then they moved out.

P: Why do you think there was, if there was, friction or disagreement?

L: Well, Lyndon Johnson was picked by President Kennedy for Vice-President. And the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy told me personally, and he told it to me several times, that Lyndon Johnson was President Kennedy's first and only choice for the Vice-President. There have been a lot of stories to the contrary, including Mr. Schlessinger's, but I had it straight from Bobby Kennedy himself. Mr. Kennedy (I'm talking about him when he was Attorney General when he told me these things) had no particular reason for his telling me anything but the truth. I knew him and I always liked

Bobby Kennedy, but he was very much disappointed when the President did not select him for the Vice-Presidency in 1964. And he took the only course that he could to keep himself in politics. He ran for Senator in New York, and won.

P: Is that your opinion--that he was disappointed--or did he tell you that?

L: Well, I don't think he needed to tell me. I think he made it very evident that he was disappointed, because he wanted it. There wasn't any secret about that.

P: Do you think this disappointment led to a break with President Johnson?

L: Well, after the 1966 elections when the Republicans made a great many gains in the House, a few in the Senate, and particularly among the Governors, I had a talk with--he was then Senator Kennedy, and he made no bones about his belief that it was Lyndon Johnson's fault that these gains were made by the opposition, and I asked him at the time if President Johnson decided not to run, because there had been stories that he might not--

P: In 1966?

L: Well, this was after that. After 1966. I don't know--it was either 1966 or 1967, but it was after the elections which were held in November. It might have been in the spring that I asked him. Of 1967. I said,

"Senator, what are you going to do if the President should say that he was not going to run?"

He had told me to start with, that he had no intention of ever running for President in the 1968 election.

"Well," he said, "if that should happen, I'll have to reassess my position."

P: If I remember correctly, that must be a sort of a change. I thought he had stated pretty much that he wasn't going to run regardless of what happened.

L: Well, that's what he told me. He said that he would have to reassess it, and I think that's what he did.

P: You think this was the first evidence of it?

L: Well, it was the first that I had, anyway. I was riding out to the airport with him at the time.

P: Oh, really?

L: Yes, he was going to New York to make some speech or other, or somewhere. And I had an appointment with him and he was in a hurry, so he said, "Come on and ride out to the airport." And that was it.

P: Do you think there is any truth in the story that Robert Kennedy's entry into the 1968 campaign was due to Lyndon Johnson's refusal to appoint him to that Blue Ribbon Committee on the War in Viet Nam?

L: No, I think that Mr. Kennedy's decision to run was due to the fact that it looked as though he might have a good chance of winning.

P: And overturn Johnson.

L: Yes.

P: You don't think that there was any other motivation beyond that?

L: Well, Mr. Kennedy announced that he wanted to be President because he thought he could do a job for the country. And I don't think there is anything clearer than that.

P: How would you compare or rate the staffs of John F. Kennedy and the now current staff of Lyndon Johnson?

L: I couldn't do that, because I don't know enough about them. You see, I don't spend all my time at the White House. And I just can't tell you.

P: All right. I'd like to get into the area that you are very closely involved in now. And that's press relations. In the previous interview, you spoke of Mr. Johnson during his Senate years as being "frank" and "a man who means what he says." I've pulled these out of your columns. There are so many charges now of his being devious and of the credibility gap. Do you think he has changed since his Senate days?

L: No, I think the President has an idea about the press; some of them he likes, and some of them he doesn't. And he has been unfortunate because so many of them have been opposed to him personally, and because they were great admirers of Jack Kennedy and so forth. I don't think he has changed. I wrote a piece which I think was included in my former interview, although it may be just in a document form that I gave them, detailing how the President felt toward the press.

P: Do you think that personalities have conflicted--in other words some of the news media people have not been objective in their assessment of his accomplishments out of a personality conflict?

L: Well, I think there has been a good deal of criticism of the President, but it has been mostly on personal grounds.

P: Do you have any reasoning for why these charges have increased and become more and more heated up to this point? I would say-- he is not getting a very good press now.

L: Well, he hasn't gotten a very good press for some time. I don't think it's any more in opposition to him than it was before. It has been a bad press where the President believed that he could trust some members of the press to be objective and others he thought couldn't. And he is quite specific in some of his statements.

P: Do you think that the news media has contributed to his loss of popularity?

L: Well, I think that the television has done a great deal along that line. But what has hurt the President very much is a feeling among many people that he has been-- that there should have been something done about stopping the Viet Nam War; and that taxes are too high; that the street riots have been a terrible experience; and that too little has been done to make the streets safe.

P: And do you think that people nowadays directly place the blame on the man occupying the highest office in the land? Is that an innovation?

L: It has always been so. It's the party in power when things are going badly, then the people are very critical and rebellious against that party.

P: Do you think any of his personal mannerisms are involved in his communication with the press, with the public? Or his personal speech, his accent, his method of delivery, are they involved in his problem of communication or dealings with the press?

L: Well, that's what a good many of them say. Personally I think the President's delivery is clear and quite good. He hasn't the magnetism--personal magnetism--or voice of a Franklin D. Roosevelt, which was an amazing thing. When Mr. Roosevelt said, "My friends," everybody just moved up a little closer to him. And that isn't the President's fault.

P: Do you think his image of being devious is correct?

L: No, I don't.

P: You have been covering the political scene for a good many years--I think since Theodore Roosevelt?

L: Yes.

P: This may be a very long question, but would you compare Lyndon Johnson's handling of the press and his press conferences with previous Presidents as much as you remember? I think it would be very interesting.

L: Well, I wrote a long article which the Johnson Library already has, in which I discussed the attitude of the Presidents toward the press. Not the press toward the Presidents. But their attitude toward the press. And in all my experience there hasn't been any President who at one time or another wasn't entirely disgusted with the press. And I even went back into history in writing about that. Started way back with the day that Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. George Washington's farewell address, however, was never delivered, you know. It was given to the newspapers. So, at least he realized the value of the press.

But I've seen these Presidents that I have known at times when they were entirely disgusted with the press. Theodore Roosevelt had his Ananias Club; he used to put newspaper men in that list. I was a young reporter and so I escaped being in that class, although I got to know President Roosevelt in several ways later. And I thought that we had a great President.

P: Would you carry that forward in how any of the others have-- Taft, Wilson, Hoover, Coolidge--

L: Well, Woodrow Wilson, as I said in this piece, he was the first man who really had a press conference as of today.

P: In other words, a press conference in calling the people in-- the news media in?

L: A whole crowd. Everybody. In those days the press gallery was very small compared to what it is now. And the press association, the individual newspapers, had small staffs. But I remember very well when we were all

invited down to the White House for the first time to see Woodrow Wilson. And he permitted us to ask him questions.

P: Were members of your profession surprised; were they delighted with this innovation?

L: Oh, yes, we had had so-called press conferences, but not as sort of a multiple affair.

P: And it was fruitful?

L: Oh, yes. Then the War came along and of course that was the end of the press conferences. And then he became ill and it was no longer possible to see him.

But Woodrow Wilson was quite an innovator. He used to come down to the Capitol and see Senators and Representatives all by himself. He would go to see them in their offices sometimes, and then he would go to what you call the President's office, right off the Senate chamber, and call them out and talk to them. No President has done that.

P: It must have raised quite a furor.

L: Well, as you can imagine, the press liked it.

P: Was there a cry about the separation of powers?

L: Oh, no.

P: Would you continue with any of the others that come to mind? Taft, Harding--

L: Oh, about their dealings with the press? Well, you have got it all in an article.

P: I would like to have it on the tape. It's very good to get a newsman to talk about his profession, and one that has been on the scene for so long.

L: Well, I won't go all eleven of them, because it would be very unfruitful. Too long.

P: Has Johnson taken his cue from Presidents of the past? Do you see any similarities between his conduct of press conferences and his relations with the press that are similar to previous Presidents?

L: Oh, yes, Johnson has opened himself up to being questioned, and everything has been put out. I mean-- he has occasionally said things off the record, not supposed to be published, but he has been quite-- He rarely says, "I have no comment" when a question is asked him.

A great many Presidents in the past just used "I have no comment," not to answer a question. But Johnson hasn't as a rule used that "I have no comment."

P: Is his in any way similar to Franklin Roosevelt's press conference format?

L: Well, Franklin Roosevelt-- he really developed the press conference more and more, but he had a restriction against publication unless he permitted it.

P: This was during the War? Or this was a matter of procedure-- ?

L: Well, he was there a long time. No, he would occasionally tell some reporter that he should go stand in a corner with a dunce cap on. Franklin Roosevelt. But he was pretty good at answering questions. I remember very well the day that he announced he was going to propose to Congress that the Supreme Court should be changed. What afterwards came to be known as Supreme Court Packing Bill. And we were shut in there for quite awhile, and after he got through saying that the Supreme Court was traveling along just as though it were still in the horse and buggy days, we all wanted to get out to telephones, but we had to stay there until he said everything he had on his mind about the Court. But it is a very good story--one of the outstanding stories of his day. And it was the beginning of a lot of

trouble for him on the Hill. Before that, he had sort of run it. After that there was a coalition against him. A good many of his Democrats, Senators and Representatives, resented the idea and then he tried to purge the Party of some of those who had oppoosed him. In both the Senate and the House he didn't succeed. And that was it.

P: I've heard the stories that the press opposed-- didn't oppose but more or less thought John F. Kennedy's formal format was not the right way to give a press conference. In contrast to this, of course, Johnson has a rather informal technique. And yet there is still complaint-- Why would you say that this is so? Was this just in pursuit of the news?

L: Well, I think that President Kennedy had a personality and way of saying things that appealed very much to the press, and he was able to get away with a lot of things. Just turning them off with kind of an Irish wit, if you want, at any rate with the Kennedy wit. I had known Mr. Kennedy because I was working for the Boston Globe ever since he was a young Congressman, when he first came down here. And I had a lot of admiration for him right from the start. He was a very diffident and attractive young man. From the very first time I saw him I found that Mr. Kennedy had a mind of his own and plenty of courage.

At that time old Jim Curley, former Mayor of Boston, a member of the House, was in jail. And he wasn't well according to all reports. John McCormack, who was the senior, I think he was the Democratic floor leader, anyway he was circulating a petition among the Democrats to have Curley's sentence remitted on account of his health and to get him out of jail.

P: McCormack; or Kennedy now?

L: No, McCormack. And I said, "Mr. Kennedy, what are you going to do?"

He said, "I'm not going to sign it," but the Kennedys never did like the Curleys very much. And old Honey Fitz, who was the Kennedys' grandfather, had been a great enemy of Curley.

P: Do you think there are any similarities between John F. Kennedy's press conference relations and formats and Lyndon Johnson's? Or was it personality that-- ?

L: Oh, I think it was largely the personality of Jack Kennedy that carried him along. But he was always a very modest man. Even as President. It may sound surprising to you, but I remember very well when he had been nominated in 1960. He came to meet the Democratic National Committee as nominees usually do, and he came into the room where the Committee was meeting. And he stopped and spoke to a few of us and went along; and he was still just the same modest man.

P: What do you think the impact of television has had on politics; campaigning; government?

L: Well, I think it has had a lot. I think some of it is quite unfortunate.

P: Such as?

L: Well, I was thinking of this television coverage of the two national conventions, both the Republicans and Democrats.

P: This most recent or the last few that have been televised?

L: The most recent ones. And the only reason I mention them-- The television has made a lot of difference, especially to the newspapers. In the days before they had the television, the delegates came there and did their business. They met at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning, or even at noon,

and got through during the day, unless there was a big row on and it came to voting. Sometimes they were up all night then for candidates. But other than that, the business at the convention was covered, and the people who were in the galleries were able to see what was going on in the convention. And they got through at a reasonable hour.

P: Are you saying that you think they are now catering to television?

L: Oh, they don't start their meetings until television time at night, and they make you sit up all night--even the people who have to look. And what I complain about is that a good deal of the time you want to be able to listen to what's actually going on. Now this time-- this last time, I wanted to hear very much some of the speeches that were being delivered by the candidates, and you didn't hear it. Just because they would take you off and have some conversation with somebody down on the floor, or outside of the building entirely.

I was thinking particularly of the one speech that I wanted to hear. I don't know whether it was Muskie's speech or not. But they broke right in to it and bingo, you never did hear it.

P: Do you think this is going to change?

L: Well, if the television people have any sense it will change.

P: In adjusting to the use of the medium?

L: Yes.

P: I know you have covered a lot of conventions, Mr. Lincoln, and I want to go back just a moment for historical purposes to the 1924 Democratic Convention in New York City. I believe there were something like 103 ballots.

L: Yes. I lost 13 pounds while that was going on.

P: Really?

L: That was in July.

P: Oh, that's right, it would have been hot.

L: June and July, and it was awfully hot over there.

P: They nominated John Davis and William Gibbs McAdoo, right, and I believe it was said at the time that the dissent and the division signalled the end of the Democratic Party. Does that--

L: No, they didn't nominate McAdoo.

P: Well, maybe I haven't got my history right on that. But what I wanted to know-- I know it was considered such a chaotic and divisive convention, does that convention remind you of the 1968 convention? Could you draw any comparisons?

L: There was bitter rivalry-- This is 1924 that you are talking about.

P: You are right. It was John Davis and Charles Bryan, who were the nominees.

L: Yes. You have it there, do you want me to say something more about it?

P: Do you think, as they said all this dissent at the time signalled the end of the Party, and they are now saying that currently--

L: Today.

P: About the Democratic Convention today. Could you draw any comparisons?

L: Yes, I was there. Well, I have heard it said many times that the Democratic Party was dead, and also that the Republican Party was dead. But my personal belief is that neither one of them is going to die. And this talk of a third party is a lot of baloney in my opinion. Because we are a two-party country, and if we ever cease to be, we'll be in a bad way. We've had third parties and they've disappeared in no time flat. And this talk about starting a new--

something new-- is in my opinion, not going to happen.

P: In other words,when the current disruptive issue passes, the parties will probably come back in together, or there will be less division.

L: Yes.

P: Still on the conventions, it has been said and I'd like to know if you think, the President was controlling the 1968 convention and influenced decisions in the credentials fights and platform.

L: Well, I wasn't there so I have no idea what the President was doing.

P: Do you have an opinion?

L: On whether he was doing anything? Well, I have no doubt that the Vice-President Mr. Humphrey was aided by the fact that the Administration was-- although the President was saying nothing publicly-- there couldn't be any doubt that Mr. Humphrey had the benefit of people who were party workers. And as party workers, they were connected with the Administration. As to whether the President twisted anybody's arm, as they say, whether he did that personally, I have no knowledge, and he insisted that he wasn't going to say anything and he didn't say anything. He didn't even go to the convention, which I thought was very wise.

P: You did?

L: Yes. Why should he put himself in the position of having the Presidency of the United States booed by that gang out there, which was nothing more than a gang, in my opinion?

P: They're getting pretty large these days. The gangs, as you call them.

L: Well, after all, they were in the minority. At the most there was a three to two proposition all the time in the voting there. I thought that propositions made by some of those Wisconsin people were utterly ridiculous.

In other words, somebody wanted to adjourn the convention and meet in two weeks somewhere else.

P: That was more disruptive, you think, just an effort to--

L: Oh, yes, I think it was a very foolish proposition. If they had gone anywhere else, they would have had worse crowds than they had-- and no police protection to curtail them that they had in Chicago. Suppose they had gone to San Francisco or somewhere in there--Berkeley. Or gone to Los Angeles, or even to Philadelphia--it would have been tougher to handle than it was in Chicago.

P: Yes, except that don't you feel that a great part of it was due to people coming into Chicago and they probably would have come into other cities, too?

L: Oh, sure, they would have gone anywhere. They would have gone anywhere; even if they had gone to Miami, they would have been down there. The only way they could have kept them out would be closing the bridges.

They intended to disrupt the Democratic Convention and work their will any way they wanted to.

P: Do you have comment, sir, on this youthful rebellion and upheaval that we are going through right now?

L: Well, I don't know. I don't know much about it. I only know that when I was young, we didn't try to tell our college professors what they had to do. We didn't tell them. They told us. And we went there to get an education. I don't know what these people go there for now.

P: Well, of course, we have gone through riotous times and times of civil upheaval and turmoil, of labor strikes or women's suffrage and things like that. The Party that has usually been behind it has differed over the years, but we have definitely had a disruptive civil times before, don't you think?

L: Oh, yes, of course, we have.

P: Do you think that this is more violent now over this last year?

L: Oh, I think so. Yes. Much more violent. I guess you've had enough from me, haven't you?

P: You said there was one thing I haven't asked you about.

L: That was my talk with the President after Senator Kennedy had announced that he was going to run. And I went to the White House--I don't think you asked me about this--to ask the President what he thought about Mr. Kennedy's running. And the President told me:

"He has had that in mind to run ever since his brother died." And he said, "I wasn't surprised a bit."

P: To continue with that period of time--last year you wisely declined to prophesy how history would record the Johnson Administration. You said you couldn't even predict what was going to happen next year. Did you have any suspicion or inkling that Lyndon Johnson would decline renomination as he did on March 31?

L: No, I didn't, but as I told you, I had asked Senator Kennedy what he would do if the President did decline. I didn't think the President was going to decline to run. I was amazed when he did. But as I think I said before, a number of studies had been written about the likelihood that he would step aside. I think he had been considering the fact, as it later developed; I didn't know it seriously, as to whether he should run or not.

P: I believe since the State of the Union address, the stories have it, that he was considering stepping aside perhaps even earlier. Did you think he might change his mind before the Convention? Or be made to change his mind?

L: You mean after he had announced that he wouldn't?

P: Yes.

L: I thought he would never change his mind about that.

P: Why? There was quite a bit of speculation.

L: I know there was. But I didn't believe it. Because the President had said positively he was not going to do it.

P: Do you think he could have won this election?

L: Well, are you talking about the nomination or the election?

P: Well, we will start with the nomination and then the election.

L: Well, he might have won the nomination; whether he could win the election, I still-- I can't say.

I would say that it would be very difficult for any President who had said that he wasn't going to run, then announce that he was going to run, with so many objections to what has been going on in the world, particularly in this country--it would be very difficult for him to have won. That's all I can tell you about that.

P: What do you think motivated his decision to take himself out of the running?

L: Well, I think he explained that himself.

P: I'd like to hear your--

L: I have no other explanation. I have none. I think he felt that he had done for his country all that he could do and that he was going to let somebody else take over.

P: Have you seen the President again since having talked to him-- ?

L: No, I haven't seen him again, because the President has not only been away a good deal of the time, but he has had too many important things to do besides using up time talking to me.

P: Would you, now that his Administration is almost over, estimate his contributions and the effects of the Johnson Administration?

L: I think his contributions have been very definite. We've gotten an awful lot of good legislation through, for example, and also we have demonstrated to the world that we're not going to give in to these Communists. And I think that is very valuable.

P: Could you compare or talk about Lyndon Johnson's strength and his weaknesses, either as President or with previous Presidents?

L: I don't think I need say anything more about that. I said that I thought he was a strong President, and that when he started something he stuck to it. I don't think I can compare him to other Presidents in that respect. I think that some of them have been strong and some of them haven't been so strong.

P: And it was through the President's strength, you are saying, that he has been able to pass this large amount of legislation?

L: Yes. He got through a lot of legislation that Mr. Kennedy wasn't able to get through. Then came the elections of 1966, and in spite of those elections, he has gotten through-- I mentioned that one is Civil Rights and among other things, that nobody thought he could get it through. Well, maybe not as strong in some respects as he wanted, but he got them through.

P: Do you have any further comments or observations on Lyndon Johnson as a man, or his career, which has lasted over 30 years now?

L: No. Except that I will say he is a very good friend.

P: Thank you very much, Mr. Lincoln.

L: Thank you.

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Gift of Personal Statement

By J. Gould Livesay

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, J. Gould Livesay, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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