INTERVIEW I

DATE: June 9, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: SAM D. W. LOW

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

PLACE: 2511 Inwood Drive, Houston, Texas

Tape 1 of 2

M: Well, first of all, I'd like to know a little bit in your own words about your background. I know you have this paper here which gives some biographical information, but I'd like to hear it straight from the horse's mouth, if you don't mind.

Where were you born and when and where did you get your education?

L: Well, my name is Sam D. W. Low. We like to use the two middle initials, but we like to have them both used if they're going to use any.

M: I see.

L: I was born and bred in Brenham, Texas, which is now almost a suburb of Houston, some seventy miles away. My father was a long-time member of the Texas Legislature and a later member of the Prison Commission, when Governor [William] Hobby was in office, and then later, became the county judge of Washington County.

I was educated in the Brenham public schools, went to the University of Texas, managed to get my law degree in 1920. I entered in 1914, but I dropped out after two years to do a little work for the Industrial Accident Board and make some money to make sure I could carry on the way I liked to at the University. After graduation in 1920--

M: Did you get involved in World War I?

L: Well, I was involved in a left-handed manner. I entered the first Officers' Training Camp at Leon Springs in 1917. But after ten days or so, on our first leave, we were all going into San Antonio and the

automobile turned over and I broke a leg. And that was a civilian camp so that when you had something like that happen, why, you were just out in civilian life again. For that camp, you did not enlist.

M: I see.

L: So I patched up by leg and went back to the University and had no further part in the war until the early spring of 1918. In 1918, I enlisted in the Texas National Guard, was commissioned a first lieutenant, was on recruiting duty during most of that spring. I helped to organize and recruit three troops of the Seventh Texas Calvary, and then we went to the Fourth Officers' Training Camp at Leon Springs, where we were about to graduate and be federalized, mustered into federal service, when the armistice came.

To those of us who were civilians and not regular army people, it was a great day; to Colonel Ben Lear, and Colonel Fitzhugh Lee, and various of the regular army people who were the instructors, it was a sad occasion. They all got drunk, because here was the greatest war of all time that had passed them by. They hadn't been able to lead a cavalry charge or participate in any way except to train a lot of rookie officers. So that was that.

M: So then you went back to the University?

L: So I was back in the University and finally got my degree in the spring of 1920.

I had, in the meantime, by interviewing officials of the Gulf Oil Company, secured a job as assistant to the Gulf's lawyer in Tampico, Mexico. Those were the great boom days of Tampico. So I came to Houston with my trunks all packed and my summer clothes, ready to catch a tanker on Monday to go to Tampico. And I had one last fling

with my best girl and two or three other friends. We had a dinner party of eight at the old Galvez Hotel. We were all dressed in white linen suits; the music was good; the dinner was fine and maybe had a drink or two of some sort of intoxicants. And about as the dinner was over, General Jake [Jacob] Wolters, who was in charge of the National Guard encampment out on the Boulevard. . .

Governor Hobby had declared martial law in Galveston during a longshoreman's strike when several people had been killed, and I had received notice in April, I guess it was, that I was to report at Camp Hutchins. I had gone down to see General Jim [James A.] Harley, the Adjutant General, and said, "Look General, I lost a year or so in getting my degree during the war, and I'd like to get my degree." And he'd said, "Oh, that's all right, Sam. We'll put you in the reserve. Don't worry about it at all."

So General Wolters stalked up to my table and saluted and said, "Lieutenant, what are you doing here?" When I told him I was on my way to Mexico, he blandly said, "Well, all of us are away from our jobs, and you'll report to Camp Hutchins tomorrow morning." And I finally got him to agree to make it Tuesday morning, because I had all my uniforms and clothes in Brenham. So I went hastily up to Brenham and got my army gear and came back and reported.

For about four months then, I was with the National Guard and ended up or during most of that time was the adjutant at Provost Marshall's headquarters, which is virtually the chief of police's job. I slept in the police station for three long hot months. Finally the strike was over and martial law was off. And I decided then to go on to Tampico, although Gulf did not hold the job for me.

So I wandered down without any commitments for employment, but I found a number of my old friends there in good places with various oil companies. And I soon landed a job with International Petroleum in the legal department and was there until late, I guess, in 1922 when the Continental Mexican Petroleum Company was sold by General Petroleum of California to Standard of New York, and they operated as New England Fuel Oil. The company then sent me to South America as an oil accountant, and we went down to examine some loading stations that had been built in Chile at Valparaiso and another one on the east coast at Buenos Aires.

M: You got a wide acquaintance with South America.

L: Well, I had nearly a year in South America at that time: four or five months in Chile, four or five months in Argentina.

M: And what kind of work were you doing for them?

L: Well, I was a lawyer for the company. This particular venture in South America, we were checking over the contracts and the performance of the contractors who had built these loading stations. And we actually were able to recover about $38,000 from the firm in Buenos Aires that had skipped their attention. So the company was reasonably well pleased.

M: That paid your salary!

L: That paid my expenses.

M: Yes.

L: So that brought me back to Texas. And after a short visit at home, I decided to capitalize on my knowledge of Spanish and of code laws obtained in Mexico and these South American countries, Chile and Argentina. So I opened my office in San Antonio, and practiced there from 1924 until 1938.

In the meantime, in 1929 at the beginning of the Depression, November 7, Mrs. Low and I were married. She had been visiting in San Antonio some three months before, and I had met her for the first time. She lived in Houston with an aunt over on Brentwood, just one street over from where we now live. We decided that we would not have a big wedding and that I had spent so many pleasant years at the University of Texas at Austin, that we decided to take a small group of congenial friends over to Austin and be married by a Methodist minister in Austin. Then we went back to San Antonio, where I practiced until 1938, when we moved to Houston.

M: Did you specialize in oil law?

L: No, not really. I did a general practice. And as I said, I went to Mexico a number of times to organize Mexican corporations, secured announcements for American firms, sulphur companies. I represented Union Sulphur Company at one time, and various others, in working with Mexican notaries in getting charters and denouncements and leases, concessions from the government. My practice in San Antonio was rather varied.

I started out as an assistant, not really as an assistant, but officing with the father of a classmate of mine in the University who had decided that he did not want to practice law, but wanted to sell automobiles. There was a second office in his father's suite, and so I made an arrangement with Mr. C. A. Davies, who was a distinguished lawyer, a former Methodist minister, to use part of his office and his secretary, although our practices were entirely distinct. I agreed to handle his justice and county court cases, and he agreed to help me in any case that I wanted his help in. But the difficulty arose that that was in 1924-25 Ku Klux [Klan] domination days and I found that

Mr. Davies was the High Kleagle or something else of the Ku Klux Klan in San Antonio. All of the members of the Klan would come in and be greatly surprised that I wasn't one of their number, and, even more so, that his secretary, who had been with him for twenty years and who he could not do without, was an Orthodox Jewess! (Laughter) So it was a very peculiar arrangement!

I was very successful and made more money than I thought a young lawyer would be able to make, because a number of people in the oil business had come up from Tampico about the same time that I did. And so I had a number of clients who were old friends of Tampico days.

I left Mr. Davies'office. And Harry Polk and I established a partnership, and we were together for about four years, I guess. Then came the Depression. Nobody was making any money and Harry decided to get a job with one of the real estate firms there.

Then I went in with a group of lawyers. We organized the firm of Conger, Low, and Spears, with Judge A. W. Conger and George Conger.

M: Is that C-O-N-G-E-R?

L: C O N G E R. And J. Franklin Spears. Later on we brought in two young lawyers. One was Adrian Spears, who was Franklin's brother who came out from Darlington, South Carolina, just after finishing college. The other was Frank Baskin. B-A-S-K-I-N. Adrian, my former law clerk, is now the United States district judge, the senior judge, in San Antonio. And Frank Baskin is the United States commissioner over there.

Well, we've gone rather far afield. You are interested primarily in my relationships with Lyndon B. Johnson.

M: Right.

L: And his sweet wife, Lady Bird. That relationship began in 1937, again, in a left-handed way because I was not involved personally in that campaign. I happened to be in Brenham in the spring or early summer of 1937, just after Lyndon had announced as a candidate for Congress. His father and mine had been in the Texas Legislature together. And his father sent him down to Brenham, or suggested that he come to Brenham and interview my father and try to get his support. He was a tall, awkward boy from Johnson City, and gangling and all legs. He and my father talked for two or three hours and finally they came out with their arms around each other and he had his wholehearted support. Although Washington County was normally a Republican county and a very conservative county, its Republicanism dating from the Woodrow Wilson days when Mr. Wilson took us into war against the Fatherland, and the county is mainly of German settlers who came over here in the seventies, my father was able to make a pretty good showing for the aspirant to Congress. And that election, he won.

I did not take any personal part in that campaign. I was living in San Antonio at the time, and had not moved over to Houston. So I can claim no credit for his first election to Congress.

My first active participation in Lyndon Johnson's political career came in 1941. And that was when Senator Morris Sheppard died and there was a great scramble of candidates to succeed him in a special election. In those days, it was "high man take all." There was no run-off in special elections. And there were a number of candidates. Besides Lyndon Johnson, there was W. Lee or Pappy O'Daniel, then governor, and there was Jerry Mann, the little red arrow from SMU and former attorney general, and there was Martin Dies, congressman from an East Texas district, and who else?

M: Oh, there were about--

L: There was Johnson, Mann, Dies, O'Daniel. . .Well, those were the leading candidates. And we had tried awfully hard and did carry Harris County. Roy Hofheinz was the guiding genius of the campaign, and I was, perhaps, second in command.

M: Did Johnson recruit you? How did you get into it?

L: Oh, I think Hofheinz called me, knowing that Johnson was the congressman from my Tenth District, the Brenham-Austin district. And in the meantime, I had met Lyndon on several occasions--

M: As a congressman.

L: -- and had had several talks with him.

We had a hard time in1941 finding prominent people who would take the title of campaign manager. We scouted around and finally decided, Roy and I, that Judge Allen Hannay would be a good name, was well known. We assured the Judge that he wouldn't have to do any work, but we wanted him to be the titular head of the campaign, and he agreed to do it. Mrs. Hannay was out of town at the time and, when she came back, she gave Roy and myself both very severe tongue-lashings for having embroiled her husband in politics! He was, at that time, the district judge in the 115th Judicial District of Texas. Of course, she had to eat her words later when, due to the friendships developed in that campaign and the fact that Lyndon Johnson, though defeated in that primary, still had great influence with Franklin Roosevelt, and so when it came time to appoint a federal judge in Houston, why, Allen Hannay got the nod. He's been the senior judge in Houston, was for a long time; is now, still. He's not the presiding judge now, because he's some seventy-four years old, but he's still very active. So that's the way that came about.

Well, that was a very bitter campaign between the several people who were in it, all of whom were men with a considerable following. We thought that the race would be between Johnson and O'Daniel. It developed that that's the way it was. Coke Stevenson was then the lieutenant governor and Mr. Coke had a rather good following in certain circles, although it seemed doubtful that he could ever be elected governor. But it would be a fine thing, he thought, if he could inherit the governorship. And so he is the man who did most of the work in getting the election of W. Lee O'Daniel to the Senate, to make way for him.

Now that came about in this way. When we went to bed on Saturday night, we were, I don't remember, but about 3800 ahead.

M: Where were you at the time?

L: We were in the Rice Hotel at the Johnson Headquarters, until well past midnight, here in Houston.

And we were all jubilant that Lyndon had won. When Monday morning came, some East Texas counties, who had held out their votes, swung the balance the other way.

We were sure although I don't know that we could have proved it, but we were sure that Mr. Coke Stevenson had made the arrangements for those boxes to be held out. And a strange thing about it was that they were all in Martin Dies' district and would normally have gone seven votes for Dies, one vote for O'Daniel, one vote for Johnson, one vote for Mann. But when the count was made, we were satisfied that Coke Stevenson made an arrangement with the county officials who counted the ballots and said, "Now, look, you think Martin has got a chance? Martin's a great friend of mine, and he'd make a great senator. If he's in the running, well, just give him all the votes you can. But hold

your votes out until Monday. And then, if it appears that the race is between W. Lee O'Daniel and Lyndon Johnson, then count the O'Daniel votes for Dies, and the Dies votes for O'Daniel. Turn in just the number of votes that actually were cast, but switch the names." And that made the difference.

We were satisfied that we got swindled out of the election. But the war was coming on and Lyndon decided not to contest it. He went into the navy and stayed in the naval air force until the President called all the members of Congress back.

M: Do you remember Johnson saying anything to you people at the time, other than that he was not going to contest it?

L: Well, he just said that the war is coming on and the time is short, and I'm not going to engage in any contest of this election, although I think we got bamboozled out of it.

So that was the beginning of the relationship between Lyndon Johnson and Coke Stevenson.

M: Yes. Do you remember any of the campaign issues from 1941? What did they talk about in those speeches?

L: Well, cut it off a minute.

M: Okay.

(tape interrupted)

L: Johnson talked about the possibility or the probability of war. And that we had been able to fortify Guam, as I remember it, by just one vote and he had supported that fortification. That was one of the big issues of the campaign.

As usual, Pappy O'Daniel just talked about the professional politicians; had his group of singers, bango players go along with him, and pass the hat for Pappy so that the campaign, his campaign, was self-supporting.

M: Did you learn any lessons about how to campaign from that 1941 experience?

L: Well, the lessons drew fruit in 1948.

In the meantime, there was an intervening campaign of considerable importance in Texas. And that was when the time came when Pappy O'Daniel's term in the Senate was up and a number of us succeeded in inducing former Governor James V. Allred to resign from the federal bench and make the campaign for the Senate against O'Daniel. That race was complicated by Dan Moody being in it, too and that split the anti-O'Daniel votes. And I believe, by that time, there was a run-off. I believe we had changed the law by 1942; it seems to me that there a run-off. Well, yes, there was always a run-off in the regular primary; it was only in the special election that there was not a run-off, and this was a regular Democratic primary.

O'Daniel was high and Allred was second; and in that run-off, well, we got beat. And O'Daniel went back to the Senate. In the meantime Coke Stevenson had become the governor. That was in 1942, and that term was up in 1948.

And in 1948, the contestants for the Senate were Pappy O'Daniel, for re-election; Lyndon Johnson, the then-congressman from the Tenth District; and George Peddy, a lawyer here in Houston.

M: That's P-E-D-D-Y.

L: P-E-D-D-Y. George E. B. Peddy.

M: One other question about this 1941 campaign: did Mrs. Johnson campaign at all for her husband? Do you recall?

L: Lady Bird had not become the accomplished speaker and campaigner that she later developed. She did do her part; she went with her husband most everywhere and she got a number of women interested in the campaign.

I remember Mrs. Low had a tea for her, and it was at that tea that she met some of the people who later on were most helpful to them, such as Mrs. George Brown and Mrs. Wesley West and various others who later became staunch supporters of Lyndon Johnson.

M: Had you moved to Houston by this time?

L: Oh, yes. I moved to Houston in 1938. I was in Houston for the 1941 campaign.

M: I see.

L: I was also in Houston in the 1948 campaign.

M: What were you doing in Houston?

L: I was a lawyer, practicing law.

M: You moved your practice?

L: I moved my office to Houston.

M: Did you join a law firm here?

L: No, I practiced by myself. I had associated with different law firms, just shared offices, but I had an individual practice.

M: Why did you move, incidentally, from San Antonio to Houston? Was there any reason for that?

L: Well, my wife was not happy in San Antonio.

M: That's a good reason! (Laughter)

L: She was a Houston gal; and I thought I could do all right in Houston, as well as in San Antonio. She stayed there for nearly ten years, nine years after our marriage, and she wanted to move to Houston. And so, in 1938, I said, "All right, let's go."

M: And you met Roy Hofheinz then, here in Houston.

L: Yes, I had know Roy slightly. Roy had been a county judge. He had been in the legislature and then was the county judge. And I got to know Roy when I first came here.

Now in that 1948 campaign, which was, of course, the bitterest of all, I guess--

M: You want to talk about that?

L: --again we hunted for somebody who had no scars who could be the titular head of the campaign. Roy was busy with his own interests. So we picked out George Neal, George D. Neal, who had been an assistant city attorney. N-E-A-L. But we didn't do too well. Coke was way ahead of us in the first primary.

M: Let me ask this: did Johnson contact you before he decided to run in 1948? How did he get this thing going, in other words?

L: Well, it's a strange thing. I guess it was Warren Woodward, and one or two others of Johnson's close, immediate family and assistants that came to my office in the spring of 1948, and said, "Well, the Congressman's decided to run. He and Walter Jenkins and somebody else and I were sitting down, and we discussed it and he has decided to run." So I was told that he was going to run. He didn't ask my advice as to whether he should or not. But I was one of the first people in this area to know about it.

M: And you were willing to help him again?

L: I was willing to help. We jumped from 1941 to 1948. In the interval, the Second World War had come on. I tried to get into the army and all my old friends who had kept reserve commissions and so forth, said, "Oh, pshaw, you're too old, in the first place. And in the second place, what little you know about the army is the cavalry and we don't have any horses in this war."

So then I found out that perhaps the best service I could give was in the military government field. They had established a training school at Charlottesville, Virginia for officers, people with some education and experience that could go in and take an intensive course

and come out as officers to take charge of military government after the war was over. So I put in my application and was assured that from my background, I would probably come out as a lieutenant colonel or colonel. And then I found out that I'd take an eight or ten-weeks course up there, close my office, and then come back home and simply sit on my hands until the war was over, without being able to take on any new clients or do any work, because I might have to leave the next day. So I decided that that was not economically feasible, that I couldn't do that.

And about that time, I had a call from the fellow who was the dean of the law school over in Duke University, who had the job of recruiting people for what was then known as the Board of Economic Warfare. He had heard that I had had considerable experience in Latin America and I was invited to come to Washington and was offered the place of legal advisor to the representative of the board in Buenos Aires. So I went through about a six-weeks orientation session and training. And about the time that was over, they came to me and said, "Look, we want to make a change. We have our mission to Chile all ready to go. But the leader of the mission has been blackballed. We had scheduled Mr. Kemnitzer, a petroleum engineer and geologist."

M: How is that spelled?

L: Kemnitzer, K-E-M-N-I-T-Z-E-R, Kemnitzer. They said, "The trouble with Kemnitzer is that he wrote a book about Standard Oil as the octopus and Standard Oil had blackballed him and the State Department won't approve him. Will you swap the number two job in Buenos Aires for the number one job in Chile?" Well, that pleased me very much, because I'm very fond of Chile.

And so I agreed and went to Santiago as the chief representative of the Board of Economic Warfare, which later became the Foreign Economic Administration. Our job there consisted of reporting on requirements for the country--that is, needs of the country for imports, because everything was in short supply--and the blacklisting of Axis' sympathizers and the liquidation of Axis firms and the procurement of strategic commodities such as copper and nitrates and molybdenum and all the other nonferrous metals that are produced in Chile. Later on, we went on into the purchase program of foodstuffs, because Chile does produce a lot of rice and peas and beans and lentils; and it was thought that these things would be useful, after the war was over, in helping to feed the starving people in Asia.

M: So how long did you stay in Chile, then?

L: I was in Chile from December of 1942 until July of 1945. Early in June of 1945, I notified the Foreign Economic Administration--Mr. Crowley was then head of it--that I thought that the war in Europe was about over and the war in Japan was going to be over soon. And now I thought that all of the work of my office could be turned over either to the embassy or to Metal Reserve, which had an office there and that I'd like to close the office and get all my people home in an orderly manner.

My superiors in Washington said, "Oh, my God, we've got great plans for that office. There are a thousand men in Washington that would just love to have your job. If you want to come home, why, that's fine." And I said,"Well, I do want to come home; not that I am unhappy here, but I think that an important part of my work is done."

And, of course, I had had lots of fun, really, with my superiors in Washington during my tenure in Santiago. In the first place, other representatives of the Board of Economic Warfare had had great difficulty

and great conflict with the embassies. They didn't get along with them. And it happened that Claude Bowers, who, by the way, made the nominating speech for Al Smith here in Houston in 1928, a distinguished newspaperman, was the American ambassador. I had known Mr. Bowers for a long, long time, and that helped.

But I also made arrangements with the personnel division of the board in Washington that nobody was to be sent to Chile until I had personally okayed them, because I didn't want to build an empire. I just wanted enough people to do the job that was to be done. All of a sudden, I got a telegram from a fellow named Rosenthal, who was the head of the Office of Imports. It happened that he had not been in Washington at the time of my orientation and clearance. But he was one of the two or three big shots in the organization. The telegram said that they're sending Mr.--I've forgotten the man's name--as your assistant for foodstuffs. I wired back and said, "Who is he?" And they said, "Well, he's a native of Switzerland. He came to this country in 1928. He's a graduate of a Swiss university. He's been sales manager for the Ace Zipper Fastener Company. He's been sales manager for some other gadget concern."

And I wired back and said, "My first assistant, Mr. Harry Graham [?] is a graduate of Harvard University. He's been with the First National Bank of Boston in Buenos Aires for about five years, or had been. He has a thorough knowledge of Spanish, and of the agriculture and economy of South America, particularly Argentina and Chile and I just don't need the man that you've offered me."

I was informed later that Mr. Rosenthal just raised hell and said, "Who is this fellow Low in Chile? I'm running the Office of Imports. I'm sending this man down." He wrote me a scathing telegram to that

effect. He took it over to the State Department. The State Department said, "Mr. Low says this man's not needed. You can't send that telegram." (Laughter)

Then I had some conflict with the lawyers in Washington. You know, our contracts, government contracts, have all sorts of trick clauses in them which provide that no member of Congress or nobody in the executive branch has any financial interest in this contract and so forth. Well, in doing business with a big copper company, as with Anaconda, Kennecott, Wise [?] or what, they understand all that. They've got lawyers who understand English just as well as, better than they do Spanish, and we had no problem. But this time we would be dealing with the commodity brokers in the purchase of foodstuffs. And here, we would fit this twelve-page contract with all of these meticulous clauses in it all in English, and then try to negotiate it with the foodstuff broker. It was utterly impossible.

So I would simply reduce the contract down to a one-page document which said that the Commodity Credit Corporation agrees to buy and so-and-so agrees to sell so many tons of rice of such-and-such a grade at such-and-such a price due to be delivered at San Antonio, or Tankawano, or some other port, by such-and-such a time. And we'd all signed it. When the lawyers in Washington got this one-page contract, they'd say, "Why, you can't do this. It's illegal. This is not according to our instructions." And I would say, "Well, I was fully authorized to make the contract. I've made it; the only thing you can do is fire me, because it's a perfectly binding contract for Commodity Credit Corporation."

Well, we never had any difficulty at all with them. We purchased manganese. Some geologists and engineers had come to Chile before I went down and had induced the Chileans to enter into the production

of manganese. Heretofore, there had been very little. Grace and Company had produced some manganese, but very little other production. But we got a lot of people out with picks and shovels, and they made a deal to accept substandard manganese. They were to deliver X thousand tons, I forget how many, within a two year period.

Well, at the end of the two-year period, they had only delivered about half. And the manganese producers came to me and said, "Now, Mr. Low, you got us into this business. We haven't recovered our costs. We've only been able to deliver half the amount that the government agreed to take and we'd like an extension of this contract and an agreement to buy another hundred thousand tons."

And so I said, "Well, all right. I will recommend--I can't make an agreement, but I will recommend an extension of the contract for another year with an additional purchase of another hundred thousand tons with some provisos: number one, that you produce standard manganese. You can do it. And, number two, I know that Manganesa Anaconda[?], of which Senator Videla is the head, has gotten tremendously rich because they've gotten into this thing; they've produced a lot of manganese and they've got a high price for it. I want the Minister of Economia to agree to establish quotas for each one of the producers. I'm not going to have anything to do with that. But if we'll agree to establish quotas, and they'll agree to fill them, and you agree to furnish standard grade manganese, then I'll recommend it." So they said, "All right."

M: How do you spell that general's name?

L: General?

M: The man that--

L: The Senator?

M: The man in Chile who was making the money.

L: Senator Hernan Videla.

M: Videla?

L: V-I-D-E-L-A, Videla Lira[?]. Hernan Videla Lira[?], who was the senator from Coquimbo, one of the provinces of Chile.

M: Okay.

L: Well, the Chilean Ambassador had a pipeline into the State Department and he got wind of the fact that I had recommended an extension and additional purchase. So he immediately wired his government that he had arranged for an extension of the contract under the same terms, just without any change at all. And so the newspapers were all full of the fact that the Chilean Ambassador had arranged for the extension of the contract at the old price. And so all the producers said, "Oh, oh, you see? Look what I invested in."

And I said, "Well, that's fine. You just sell your manganese to him or whoever he says to sell it to. You and I came to an agreement of the way we were going to handle this, and that's all I'm going to do; and if your ambassador's got a better deal, well, you just sell your manganese to him."

Well, they had my picture with scathing denunciations from the paper for a day or two. And finally I had a call from the Minister of Economia; and all the manganese producers were in his office with their hat in hand and said, "Mr. Low, we made a deal with you. We want to keep it." So we had no further trouble. I was concerned when I left Chile in 1945,and there were thousands and thousands of tons of manganese at the coastal ports at Coquimbo and the other ports along the Chilean coast. And I just knew that I was going to be called before a congressional committee to testify as to why I had bought this substandard

manganese and why I had left it to blow away. But do you know, within a year after I left, every doggone bit of it had been picked up, and the government made a nice profit on the manganese that I bought.

Now, one other illustration of what things that happened in Chile: when we were very short of sperm oil, I was instructed to arrange to buy twenty thousand pounds, I guess. Oh, maybe twenty thousand tons, I don't know. My memory. . .That's a big difference, but a hell of a lot of sperm oil. And the Chileans, prior to my advent on the scene, had had a fleet of whaling vessels. And the big mother ship that was the cooker ship that cooked the sperm oil, you see--

M: What would they be wanting sperm oil for?

L: Oh, it's. . .I'll be doggoned if I know. It's a lubricant, an essential lubricant. But they wanted a lot of it.

Well, anyway, the Chileans had found that it was so profitable to take the machinery out of this cooker ship and had put the vessel in trade as a cargo carrier, that they had unloaded all of the cooking machinery at the place in Chile called Quinta, which is just down the bay from Valparaiso. And they had built a cooking station, a processing station there at Quinta, where there was a great, slanting concrete pier going down into the Pacific. And then the little catcher boats would go out and kill these sperm whales, and put a rope around their tail, and blow them up full of air, and bring them in, and they'd pull them up this incline, and then poke the blubber down through the holes into the cooking machinery below.

Well, in building that plant, they had to have a lot of material that was in short supply. So I had held their hand and I had given them priorities. We were anxious to get this whaling operation under way and sure enough--Oh, I have up on my desk now a tusk, an ivory tusk, out of the first sperm whale that was caught and brought into Quinta--I had a phone call that we've caught the first sperm whale. And we're going to process it and we're going to start delivering your twenty thousand tons, or twenty tons, or whatever it was. And, my goodness, the very next morning, I had a cable from Washington saying that the Norwegian whaling fleet which we had had under lease has just come in with a five-year supply of sperm oil.

Well! There I was. I didn't want to spend any money I didn't have to spend. But it just happened fortuitously that I had been in Buenos Aires some weeks before and had been to dinner with some people over there, perfume manufacturers and soap manufacturers. And they were telling me how they had found a process of using sperm oil in the making of fine soaps, modifying it and making it into the best grade of toilet soap. They were inquiring about the Chilean operation and I inquired about the price that they were willing to pay. And so when I got the notice to try to cancel all contracts, I didn't cancel them at all. I went to the Chileans and said, "Now, I can do you a very great favor, if you want me to. You've contracted with me, on behalf of my government, for the next two years' supply of sperm oil at such-and-such a price. I find that the Argentines will buy your sperm oil at, substantially,some twenty per cent higher price that you've contracted to sell to me. Now you investigate this. And then, if you find out that

you can make an advantageous sale except for my contract, then you write me a letter asking me to relieve you of the contract. And I'll try to get it through."

Well, they found out that they could get a better price than they'd contracted with me. I was a hero! (Laughter.) They were tickled to death. And of course, it didn't cost the government a dime. And it ended up the Chileans gave me the Order of Merit after I left. They offered it to me while I was there, and I said, "Oh, no. A civilian employee of the government can't accept a decoration from a foreign government while he's in government service."

So some months afterward, I had a telephone call from the Chilean Ambassador in Washington saying that the President had sent up this decoration, and could I come to Washington and receive it. And so I went to Washington and picked up Lady Bird Johnson. She and I went out to the Chilean Embassy and they decorated me with the Order of Merit. Then later on, we had an all-stag luncheon. I took Bird home, and we met at one of the very swank hotels and we had almuerzo en la manera pura chilena, which means luncheon in the pure Chilean manner, which began at one o'clock and lasted until six.

Well, so much for my sojourn in Chile. Then I came back to Houston and resumed the practice of law.

M: You arrived back in Houston, then, when? In 1945?

L: I arrived back in Houston in August of 1945. Well, one other thing that might be of interest in regard to my recommendation that my office close in Santiago: They said, "Oh, no. We've got great plans, and if you don't like it, we're sending down somebody to take over." So then I had a telegram that so-and-so would come down to be the special representative of the Foreign Economic Administration and would I remain with him for

thirty days to show him the ropes. And I wired back and said, "The answer is no. I shall remain the representative of the Board as long as I am in Chile, and the day I leave, then your new man can take over." So they wired back and said, "Okay." So I stayed until late July. I hit Washington about the first of August. When was V-J Day?

M: It seemed to me they sailed into Tokyo Bay in early September.

L: I think it was August.

M: Late August?

L: Late August, it was.

M: Now, that could be.

L: This is what happened.

M: We can check the date on that.

L: I went to Washington to write my final report on my operations in Chile. In many countries, in Bolivia, in Peru, and so forth, of course, my office had lent millions and millions of dollars to develop mineral resources. We had only one very short-term contract in Chile because the test to me was that: could a mine be brought into production within two years? If it couldn't, I had no interest and I wasn't going to waste my government's money in fostering it. We made only one small loan, and that was paid out within a year after I left Chile. Well, anyway, I was writing my final report in Washington. It took about four or five days and, before I left, Mr. Truman had abolished the Foreign Economic Administration by Executive Order. I thought my timing had not been too bad after all.

M: That's right.

L: My people had to come scrambling home, you know, and when they could have gotten out in an orderly manner, if they'd just followed my advice.

M: So you got your award from Chile.

L: Yes, I got that.

M: And then you came back?

L: And then I was back in Houston and practicing law; re-opened my law office. This was in 1945.

M: Did your law practice,incidentally, pick up again?

L: Well, it did not pick up immediately, of course. All my clients had found good lawyers. But I was able to win two or three lawsuits, which brought some notoriety, fame or whatever you might want to call it, and was doing reasonably well.

And then came the campaign of 1948, in which, as I say, Lyndon didn't come down at first. Woody, Warren Woodward and maybe Warren Cunningham and somebody else who had been in his office, came down and told me. And we immediately began. My office was the first headquarters, and then we finally got official headquarters for the campaign, made George Neal the chairman.

He got beat pretty bad in the first primary with Coke Stevenson leading, and Johnson second, and Peddy third. Peddy dropped out. Then we called Roy Hofheinz back to take over. And he called Red James, W. Irwin James, who was then a lawyer in Montgomery, Alabama--his family had been in politics all their life--and Red came over. And we had that fateful campaign of 1948, in which we profited from the way we got beat in 1941. I'm satisfied that the friends of both

candidates were stealing votes right and left, and George Parr just had more guts than anybody else and held out longer than anybody else and we won by eighty-seven votes. But there was a lot of skulduggery that went on. It's a sad commentary on our system, but it happened. I'm told that Coke Stevenson's campaign up in Brown County at Brownwood went to the penitentiary for two years as a result of his stealing the votes up there. And, of course, as you know, George Parr had a lot of notoriety about Box 13, or whatever it was, that he held out and were finally burned before anybody could look at them.

M: Did you mainly campaign in the Houston area then?

L: Yes. In Houston. I would go up, from time to time, into Washington County and in the area between here and Brenham. But mostly in the Houston area.

M: Did Johnson find pretty good support in Houston?

L: Well, we had problems in Houston. We thought we had the support of organized labor, and I arranged the meeting of the AF of L and the CIO. They were not together at that time, but both groups came to this meeting. And the question was, they wanted to hear from the candidate. They knew he had voted for the Taft-Hartley law and they wanted to hear from him whether or not he would be in favor of any modification of that law, particularly in the area of the so-called right-to-work laws. Lyndon having voted for the Taft-Hartley law, all the labor people--and there must have been three hundred of them at this meeting--came in with chips on their shoulder. And he came in with a chip on his shoulder. I was informed that some of the people in Fort Worth and Dallas, as a quid pro quo for their financial support, had made him

promise to make the CIO the whipping boy. He flat said he would not vote for any part of any change in the Taft-Hartley Act; that he voted for it; that he thought it was a good bill and that he would not vote for any change. And the meeting broke up with everybody spitting in everybody else's eye. Kimmey, Kimmel, Kimmey, [?] I guess, was, at that time, the head of the CIO here in Houston. He and two or three others took the radio and bought time on the radio to lambast Johnson. We probably picked up enough money to pay for our campaign in Dallas and Fort Worth, but I thought we lost forty thousand votes in organized labor.

M: Now, this meeting you're talking about where Johnson said he would not vote against any part of the Taft-Hartley, now, did this meeting take place in Dallas or Houston?

L: In Houston.

M: This is the one you arranged here in Houston?

L: This is the one I arranged in Houston.

M: And Johnson came to it, and there was this--

L: Johnson came to it.

M: Oh, boy.

L: And the fur really flew. He got on the radio and lambasted, made the CIO the whipping boy, and they got on the radio and lambasted him.

M: Now, was the labor vote in Houston that important?

L: I thought it was. I thought that we would have, without that--and when you talk about the labor vote in Houston, you're talking about the labor vote in Port Arthur, the labor vote in Beaumont, the labor vote in Fort Worth, and all over. Because this thing just went like wildfire, and I think we traded--we got several thousand dollars, I'm sure, that paid for the expenses of the campaign, but I think we could

have won the election by twenty, thirty thousand votes if we'd had [labor]. Of course, subsequently, when the then-Senator became the president, why, he was just all for exactly the things that labor wanted him to do in 1948. But he was obstinate as hell.

M: Wouldn't change his mind on that point.

L: No, not at all, not at that time. Now, of course, people in politics have to recognize the realities. And maybe enough money to pay for radio time and television or newspapers and so forth was more important than the labor vote. I didn't think so, but then, that was the decision.

M: Do you remember Johnson flying around in a helicopter there?

L: Oh, yes. Yes. He flew around in helicopters. He flew in. He landed. We had arranged a big meeting for him at Herman Park, and he came swooping in, in the helicopter for that meeting.

M: That was out there at the Miller Stadium?

L: Well, at Memorial Theatre.

M: Was the helicopter an effective gimmick?

L: Oh, I guess so. I mean, people came to see the helicopter and listen to the candidate. It was an effective gimmick.

M: Did he exhibit a great deal of energy in that campaign? Did he work pretty hard at it?

L: Yes, he's a man of tremendous energy, really. Well, if you've known him at all, you know that he's a slavedriver and he's his own slave. I mean, he drives himself along with everybody else. I would hate like hell to work for him, because Warren Woodward used to say, "Well, what have you done for the Senator today?" It wasn't, "What did you do last week or the week before," but "What have you done today." Warren is the vice president, I believe, of American Airlines.

M: Yes.

L: He calls himself the most expensive baggage handler in America. Because no matter who he works for--hell, he worked for Southwestern Savings and Loan here, but every third day he'd get a telephone call from Johnson saying,"Woody, I want you in Washington." "I want you in New York." "I want you in San Francisco." And, hell, he'd pick up and leave. And the same thing's true when he's with American Airlines. He's been constantly on the Johnson staff although he's on American Airlines' payroll. I don't know how in the devil he holds the job.

M: Was Johnson a pretty effective speaker? Public speaker?

L: Johnson is the most effective public speaker I have ever known to a group of not over fifty. In an off-the-cuff speech in a small group, particularly where he can go around and touch first one and then the other, he is extremely effective. A piece of paper has always scared him to death. I can never forget I was at the convention in Los Angeles in 1960. And I have never heard three worse speeches than Lyndon Johnson's and John F. Kennedy's and who was the other one? Maybe there were only three. Adlai Stevenson made a magnificent speech, but both Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson had their speeches written and it looked like the paper scared them to death; they stuttered, and stammered and were completely ineffective.

Well, we're getting way ahead of our time. We were back in 1948.

In 1948 there were contests that we had. We had a contest here. There were my wife and Miss Rosa Ingelking--an old school teacher here, a very dedicated person who died last year at the age of about eighty-three. She was a notary public. And Mrs. Low and Miss Rosa went to all the hospitals around. They had, I believe it was, one hundred and

eighty-five absentee ballots all notarized and turned over to the County Clerk.

There were fifty-seven of those that the County Clerk delivered to Mr. J. B. Adoue's precinct. Mr. J. B. Adoue was an ardent Johnson hater. And when he saw Mrs. Sam Low and Miss Ingelking's name as the ones who had taken this vote, he immediately decided those votes weren't going to be counted. Now he wouldn't do anything dishonest. The county clerk made an error. There were two precinct headquarters, one almost across the street from the other. The country clerk delivered these votes to Mr. Adoue. They should have been delivered across the street. The county clerk found his error, went out and begged the old man to give him the votes, and he wouldn't do it. And so those were--I can't say...they were secret ballots. I don't know how the people voted, but I'm practically certain that every one of them were for Lyndon Johnson.

But anyway, we had a contest here, and Johnny Crooker represented Lyndon in that contest. And of course, by that time, the matter was moot, really. We'd already won by eighty-seven votes, and this fifty-odd weren't necessary. But those were the kinds of things that happened in that campaign.

M: That must have been particularly tough, when you were waiting for those votes to come in.

L: Oh, yes.

M: And it was so close.

L: Yes, it was a rough night. I think we all stayed up nearly all night, that Saturday night.

M: Did you keep checking the boxes and checking the precinct chairmen and people like that?

L: Oh, yes. Some of us would stay down at the courthouse, and some of us would stay up at the headquarters. We had hundreds of people there nearly all night.

M: Then you'd phone the results in to Austin or someplace like that, to headquarters?

L: Oh, yes, yes. We'd phone the results in. I think that Lyndon was in Austin during that campaign. But as I remember it, he had been in Houston at the close of the campaign in 1941, but at the 1948 campaign he was in Austin.

M: Yes, I believe that he fairly well exhausted himself in that 1948 campaign, did he not?

L; Oh, yes. He was worn to a frazzle. He was just completely worn to a frazzle.

M: Did he worry about his health?

L: No, there was nothing that I remember. His health was not--

M: It wasn't much of a question.

L: It wasn't a question. His throat bothered him. I mean, he was worried about his throat. I remember he had an operation on his throat there at one time. His throat bothered him, but the heart attack and things of that sort came on later. And the kidney stone, I believe, came on later. But this time he was just worn out from physical exhaustion and from the use of his vocal cords.

M: Did you have anything to do with the contest over the eighty-seven votes? Now, you mentioned this local contest.

L: No.

M: Lawyer Crooker.

L: Yes. No. The eighty-seven vote contest, no, I did not. I've forgotten exactly how that came out. I think, by that time, Jerry Mann represented

Lyndon and there were other lawyers. I forget who all. John Cofer, I believe, represented him. Finally. . .Well, I'm a little hazy because I did not personally participate in that contest. I expect I've got some records of it in my scrapbooks, here, of just what happened. Would you like to stop and [see]?

M: Well, why don't we go on? We can fairly well assume that a historian working on this problem would have newspaper records.

L: Oh, yes. Yes. I'm sure that's right.

M: So what we're really after are your impressions, and thoughts, and things of that nature.

L: Well, after the election, he was finally seated. Of course, the Senate is the judge of its own membership and they seated him.

M: That must have been a great relief.

L: But he incurred some very bitter enemies, not only in that campaign, but in the 1941 campaign and even in the 1948 campaign. There have been five rather prominent men in Texas with some political following who dedicated the last eight or ten years of their life to vilifying Lyndon Johnson.

There was first Coke Stevenson, who he beat in 1948. There was Coke Stevenson's lawyer. Coke Stevenson's lawyer was the senator from Fort Worth, Clint Small. And Clint Small handled all the contests and so forth. Clint Small was the father of John T. Jones's wife. And that enmity has Mr. Small so bitter that the [Houston] Chronicle and John T. Jones was never able to support Johnson, because of the bitter enmity of his wife's father. Those were two.

And then there was Wright Morrow. Wright Morrow was a Houston lawyer, a very wealthy man, who had been bitter at Lyndon and dedicated. . . Well, he's still alive; he's one of the few that's still alive. But

he's had a single purpose: to vilify Lyndon Johnson on every forum that he could command.

Then, of course, there was Dan Moody, who was the most vicious of all. Dan, of course, his enmity went back to the one of the campaigns when he tried to use Hardy Hollers to beat Lyndon for Congress. They had a very, very bitter campaign in the Tenth District. Dan--of course, he's gone now, but he devoted fifteen years to it, the overweening purpose was to vilify Lyndon Johnson.

And then there was that scalawag out in Canyon, who--the professor.

M: J. Evetts Haley?

L: Yes, Haley, who wrote the book, A Texan Looks at Lyndon.

M: Right.

L: And anybody that knew the real history could pick up the book and outline four lies on every page and seven half-truths on every page.

But those people often wonder why there are so many Texans that are bitter toward Lyndon Johnson. And the main reason is that you've had five men who have dedicated their damned lives to vilifying the man.

M: Were you greatly relieved when the Senate finally seated the new Senator Johnson?

L: Yes, we were greatly relieved. I thought it would have been a disaster to have had Coke Stevenson in the Senate from Texas.

In the spring of 1948, I became greatly concerned, and almost wished I'd had no part in it, because I had a phone call from the then-junior Senator, who said, "Sam, I want you to be collector of customs for the Galveston District." And I said, "Well, Lyndon, I have no interest in it at all. I've just got

my law practice to where I'm making some money. I don't know anything about the job, and the job don't pay enough to interest me, and I wouldn't take a sinecure. I mean, if I'm going to take such an appointment, I would devote my time to it. And I have no interest in it."

"Well," he said, "go to Galveston and talk to some people about it. I understand it's a very nice plum." Well, I went to Galveston; Mrs. Low went with me. It was a dreary day in February, I guess, or March, and the waterfront was boarded up. And we stopped at the telegraph office and wrote about a hundred page telegram saying we would have no part of it.

Well, the facts were that while O'Daniel had been one of the senators from Texas, he had no part in the patronage. Neither Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Truman had let him have anything to say. The result was that Senator Connally had had all of the say-so as to who was to be appointed collector of customs, or United States marshal, or United States attorney, or federal judge. So when Johnson came to the Senate, Senator Connally called him in and said, "Now, Lyndon, as you know, I've had the full say-so about patronage, but I know that you want your friends up in office, and we'll just share it fifty-fifty." And Lyndon said, "That's very fine, Senator, I appreciate that."

And so the first appointment, the first opening that came up, was United States attorney for the Northern District of Texas. And Senator Connally said, "You know, Lyndon, I promised so-and-so." And Lyndon said, "Well now, Senator"--oh yes, and they'd also said that they would agree they wouldn't select anybody that was personally obnoxious to the other--"You know, Senator, that fellow handled Coke's campaign in East Texas, and you know I don't like it." The Senator said, "I know, but I was committed on this long before you

were elected, and anyway, he's kin to my first wife, and my children would never forgive me if I reneged." And so Lyndon said, "All right, go right ahead."

The second appointment vacancy that was to be filled was the collector of customs at Laredo. And again Senator Connally said, "Well, you know, I promised old John Garner that I would see to the appointment of his son Tully as the collector of customs at Laredo." And Lyndon said, "Well, you know Senator, the Garners did not support me; they supported Coke." "Well, I know, but Mr. Truman's promise is out on this one, you know. The old Vice President had Mr. Truman down on that special train and had breakfast for him and that subject came up, and Mr. Truman's committed on this one. So it's not me. It's Mr. Truman that's going to insist on this." "Well, all right, that's fine."

Third one that came up was the collector of customs at Galveston. And again, Senator Connally said, "You know, there's an official of the Santa Fe Railroad, that's about to retire, and has lived in Galveston, Mr. John Curtain. And Mr. Curtain has wanted for years to be collector of customs down there, and I promised him that I would see to his appointment." And Lyndon said, "Well, now, let me tell you something. This has gone far as it can go. I know John Curtain, and John Curtain supported me in the first primary. But Coke was so far ahead of me in the first primary that he switched horses. He managed Coke's campaign in Galveston County in the second primary I just can't go for that."

Well, Connally said, "Well, you pick out somebody that everybody will agree is a better man than John Curtain, and I'll just tell him that I have to go back on it." Well, Lyndon scouted around for somebody who'd have the job. He finally picked out a customs inspector in Corpus Christi, a fellow named Dewey Tom, a nice fellow. His father was maybe a Texas Ranger, or maybe a constable. His uncle was a constable. He was a customs inspector. He was the fellow that always met all the politicans that came through Corpus Christi. No matter whether he was discharging, overseeing the discharging of a vessel, or what the hell he was doing, if he heard that some senator or the Governor or somebody else was coming, why he'd go right up to meet them and put himself at their disposal. And he had done Johnson a lot of-- been very friendly and very helpful with his campaign in Corpus Christi.

So Johnson wanted to offer Dewey Tom the place as collector of customs. And for the one time in my life, as far as I know, that the records shows, the Treasury Department just said, "No, we won't take this fellow. We're sorry, but he's unacceptable." And that left Lyndon out on a limb. He didn't have any candidate. So that's when he picked on me. And I turned him down, as I said, at first, and then the second time, by telegram.

Then about three or four days later, at seven o'clock in the morning, which is six o'clock Washington time--we didn't have daylight saving time then--I was still at home. The telephone rang, and Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Allred were on two telephones in his office. They had gone through the files of Sam Low's correspondence, and they had picked out a number of letters which I had written complaining about the way the Collector of Customs at Chicago had forced one of my

clients into bankruptcy on this vicious bond for free delivery [?] raising the duty of merchandise after the importer had long since sold it, and changing the classification from that at which it was entered, and which everybody had agreed, at the time, was the proper classification. So I had just raised hell. And they had said, "Now, you're just like a lot of other people. We didn't think you were like this. We offer you an opportunity to do something for the government, and in an area in which you do have some knowledge, and you refuse."

So I was boxed in. And I said, "All right, I'll take it." So, in May of 1949, I became the collector of customs for the Galveston District. And that was a new era in Customs, really, because most of the people in authority. . Customs service is run out of the Bureau of Customs in Washington. In each district, there is an assistant collector. In each port there is a deputy collector-in-charge. Galveston, at that time, was the headquarters, and George Pratt was the assistant collector. Jim Jeffries was the deputy collector-in-charge at Houston; Nelson Williams was the deputy collector-in-charge at Dallas. These were all in the Galveston district. Under Civil Service, to get to that high up, that high a job, it meant that they had been in the employment of the government for a long time. And all of these people had come in during the thirties, during the Hoover Administration, when the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act had just been passed, when we had established the highest tariff that we had ever had, and not only that, but when the settled policy of the administration was to keep out this foreign merchandise. If the tariff won't keep it out, just throw the regulations at them, just make it so difficult that an importer will go broke.

Well, in the intervening years--this was in 1949 that I went into office--in the years between then and the thirties, 1930, we had passed a Trade Agreements Act of 19--what?--34, I guess, and the various extensions of it. The war was over, and it had become the settled policy of our government, in the years immediately following the war, to try to build up the nations abroad, to try to get dollars in the hands of friendly nations, in order for them to again buy American goods. And so we raised the tourist exemption from duty from the historic hundred dollars to five hundred dollars, and it was the settled policy--we'd lowered the tariff by about 50 percent on most items--and it was definitely the policy of the government to encourage foreign trade and foreign travel. But these boys who had come in in the thirties just didn't know that.

And I made a speech or two in which I had said what I thought was the rule of the customs service in 1949, and these civil service employees would just go around, and shake their head, and say, "My God, the new collector makes a good speech, but he don't understand customs! He don't understand that this is a field of administration in which people are deemed guilty until they prove themselves innocent. Now he's operating on the theory that people are innocent until they're proved guilty, but that isn't the way customs operates."

Well, about that time, we had a call to come to Washington to a meeting of collectors, and I got permission. . .In those days, we seized a lot of automobiles for violations of narcotics laws and so forth, and then, those automobiles were doled out to government officers for their official use. So I had acquired--this was 1949--about a 1945 Cadillac, a good running automobile. I got permission to drive to

Washington. So Mrs. Low and I drove out; went over to New Orleans, and I spent a day there; and I went over to Florida, and I spent a day there; and I went up to Charleston, and I spent a day there; and I went up to Norfolk, and stopped a few hours.

M: You were visiting all the customs--

L: Visiting the collectors of customs, and talking with their assistants in all of these ports. So when I got to Washington, I called John Snyder, who was then secretary of the treasury, and John Graham, who was the assistant secretary immediately in charge of customs, and said, "Look, let's have lunch. I need to talk to you." So we had lunch together.

And they said, "What's the trouble, Mr. Low?" I said, "Well, it's not only in my district, but I find the same thing happens all along the Gulf Coast--it is that these customs officers, these career officers, are living in the past. They don't understand the modern role of customs. They're still operating under the instructions of the Hoover Administration. And that was a hell of a long time ago." They said, "Well, what shall we do about it?" And I said, "Well, Mr. Snyder, I think you ought to make a speech before a club--Export-Imports Club or somebody in New York. And John, you ought to make a speech in Chicago, or Richmond, or somewhere else, before a proper forum, and just state categorically what the modern role of the Customs Service is." "Well," they said, "All right. You stay in Washington a couple or three days and write the two speeches, and we'll give them."

So I stayed there and wrote two speeches, and I said, "Now, it's important that you have them printed and that you send them to every port in this country." So, by the time I got back, they had delivered the speeches; they had been mimeographed and later printed, and sent

down to every port. And so the boys decided that I knew what the hell I was talking about. But I had to go to that length in order to convince my own people that I knew what the policy of the government was.

M: And you stayed in this Customs Service till retirement?

L: No. I was appointed in 1949. Then when Eisenhower became president in January of 1952, my resignation was on his desk the day that he took office.

M: Is this an indefinite appointment, or do you have to be reappointed periodically?

L: It's for a four-year term. And actually, if a new resident wants to, under the old-- now all this has been changed. My friend Johnson changed it, and I think not for the better. But anyway he did. But at this time, it was a presidential [appointment]; collectors of customs were presidential appointees for a four-year term, and they were expected to resign when the new administration came in. And my resignation was on the General's desk when he became president. He did not accept it; and there were hundreds of letters and telegrams that went in demanding that I be kept on, and to all of them, I said no.

Because the value of having a presidential appointee as the head of the customs in each district is that he is not bound by [and] he has no fear of the Bureau of Customs. He is responsible to the administration; he is certainly not going to violate the regulations, but he's going to argue like hell if he thinks something's wrong. And he knows that nobody can fire him but the president, and if the president wants to fire him, why, that's all right. But I have been able to get some changes made and do some things because I could pick up the telephone

and call John Snyder, the secretary, and say, "Mr. Secretary, this is a special case. There are the facts."

Now, I can't do that with Mr. Humphrey, the Republican secretary of the treasury. I don't know him; he don't know me. And I would not serve in this particular position unless I had felt like that I had the full confidence of my superiors in the bureau and in the Treasury.

Well, they couldn't get around to finding anybody. The Republicans couldn't find anybody to appoint until came June, and still no acceptance of my resignation. June 30 is the end of the fiscal year. Immediately following that, there are always some promotions and changes; you get a new budget, and so forth. There were several promotions or new vacancies which could be filled after the first of July. George Pratt and I--George was the assistant collector--were in disagreement as to who ought to have these places. If I were going to remain his collector, I took this view: I always listened to the assistant collector, because he had great experience. I didn't guarantee to agree with him, but in nine cases out of ten, I did. But in the final analysis, it was my decision.

Now, if I were going to remain the collector, I would have made the appointments that I thought were proper, but I could not bring myself to forcing these appointments on the man who was going to be running the show as the assistant collector after I was gone. So I wired the Treasury and said, "Please make my resignation effective June 30. I'm going to go to Europe, and I want out." So it was accepted at that time.

M: And so you left the Customs Service at that point in time.

L: I left Customs on June 30, 1953, and we spent two months in Europe.

I came back and reopened my law office.

M: Let me interrupt you at this point, because that tape's about ready to run off, and I need to put a new tape on.

L: All right.

Tape 2 of 2

L: [It was] 1953 when I resigned. I might say that during those four and a half or five years that I served as collector, I had to use about five thousand dollars a year out of my savings in order to keep from moving out of River Oaks and drive the kind of automobile that we like to drive. So, when 1953 came, and there was no salary, I suppose that that year cost me twenty or twenty-five thousand dollars, because I didn't have any clients. So I then began, if I didn't have any clients, I organized one. I set myself in as general counsel into some companies, a little bank up in Brenham, and an oil mill in Brenham, and two or three local corporations, two of them I organized, none of which required any court attendance. And so, within a year, I had built my practice up to where I didn't suffer too much.

Then came the campaign of 1960, and I had got my finances in fair shape. The first time the difficulty had been that my main work was trial work and that I couldn't be in two places at one time. But my practice in the sixties was in an advisory capacity as general counsel, so that it was non-conflicting with the position of collector. So when we won that election, I told the Senator I would like to go back as collector of customs, and I was reappointed on November 7, 1961.

M: Let me ask you about something at this point. Let me ask you about the 1960 campaign. Did you have anything to do with Johnson's run for the presidential nomination?

L: That began in 1956. His first run for the presidential nomination was in 1956.

M: Did you have anything to do with that?

L: Yes, we managed and had the Johnson for President Clubs and headquarters and carried the Texas delegation for Johnson at the Chicago convention of 1956.

M: There was a state fight in 1956, too, with Johnson and Rayburn on one side and Allan Shivers on the other.

L: Well, that was as to who would lead the delegation. It was a question of whether Shivers would lead it or whether Johnson would lead it, Shivers having jumped the party and supported General Eisenhower, both in 1952 and 1956. Well, here was the record that Allan Shivers had jumped the party and supported Eisenhower in 1952, and it seemed likely that he was going to be a Republican in 1956. We didn't think he was the proper man to lead the delegation to the Democratic National Convention. And so we set out to capture the delegation from Shivers, which we did.

That's the only time, I think, in the history of my box here, 217, that it ever went solidly for Lyndon Johnson. And we did it. I got about four of the most conservative Democrats in this area to agree to write a round-robin letter to all of the voters in the precinct, recommending that we support a resolution favoring Lyndon Johnson as favorite son and leader of the delegation. Now there were several old-time Johnson supporters, such as Mr. Jesse Andrews, a distinguished lawyer and a great Democrat, and Arlen Shamblin [?], who has been in political wars, who was secretary of state for Jimmy Allred, Rex Poston who lives next door. I got them all together, and I said, "Now you keep your hands off. You're not going to sign this letter. I'm not going to sign this letter. We're going to sit on the back row and say 'Amen!' We're going to let the conservatives in this precinct carry the ball for Johnson."

And so when we got to the convention all of the Democrats, or the liberal Democrats at least, sat on the back row. The people who had signed this letter carried the ball, and we carried the convention solidly instructed for Johnson as the favorite son candidate for president and as leader of the Texas delegation. By tricks of that sort all over the country, we were able to capture the state convention for Johnson. So we went to Chicago.

M: What was Mrs. Randolph doing all this time? She's a Houston liberal.

L: Mrs. Randolph was an ardent liberal and never fond of Johnson. She didn't like it, but she got out-voted. She went to Chicago, but when we caucused, she was still out-voted, and the Texas delegation stayed hitched for Johnson as the favorite son candidate for the presidency.

Now, I had one incident that would be worth recording. Bill Burke was the collector of customs from Boston. Bill Burke was a member of the McCormack clan in Massachusetts. Bill came running down to my seat and said, "Oh, Sam, you are doing a terrible thing. You are doing a terrible thing in supporting Jack Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, for vice president. The Texas delegation's going to be sorry. The Kennedys are cruel people." Well, nevertheless, we did support Kennedy, and that gave him the jumping-off point. He was almost. . . It was just a very few votes that--Kefauver, I guess it was, that was named as the vice presidential candidate. You remember, Adlai Stevenson threw it open to the convention as to who his running mate would be. And after a bitter fight between Kennedy and Kefauver, Kefauver won. But the Texas delegation went for Kennedy in spite of my friend Bill Burke's admonition that the Kennedy's were "cruel people."

M: If it had so worked out, would Johnson have seriously tried for the presidency in 1956?

L: I don't think that he had any idea that he could be nominated, and I think that he was convinced that any Democrat that was nominated would be beaten by General Eisenhower. So I don't think that he had any real desire to be the candidate in 1956, but it was the stepping stone for national recognition.

M: Did he take a leading role, then, in support of Kennedy for the vice presidency?

L: Yes. Yes. He and Mr. Rayburn kept the delegation for Kennedy right on through several votes. I forget how many there were, but the Texas delegation supported Kennedy for vice president.

M: He convinced you that the Kennedys were not cruel people?

L: Well, I didn't argue the point. I mean, I knew the antipathy that existed between the McCormack clan and the Kennedy clan.

So that takes us through the 1956 convention.

M: Right.

L: And then we had a campaign in which Lyndon participated and had the office, the Stevenson headquarters in Austin. He supported the Stevenson ticket. Mrs. Randolph and some of her friends thought that he didn't do enough, were extremely critical.

M: There is that criticism, that he didn't do much to help Stevenson. You might have something to say about that.

L: I think the criticism is not justified; I think that he did everything that he possibly could. I know he called me and wanted some television time for, I forget who it was, whether it was Kefauver, or whether it

was--but anyway, I got out and raised the money for television time for speakers for Stevenson. And I'm convinced that Johnson did everything within his power to further the interests of the Democratic campaign.

Now I've been a member of the Harris County Democrats. That was Mrs. Randolph's organization. Of course, sometimes they considered me Johnson's spy in the fold. And usually, I got my head bloody because I was at this end of the spectrum of Johnson's supporters, and John Singleton and John Connally were at this [other] end. My recommendations were often overruled, as they were in 1948. When he had this confrontation with organized labor, Singleton and Connally were on the other end, urging him to--they needed money for the campaign--castigate the CIO. And I was there saying, "Labor's got the votes. By God, don't throw them away!" So that went on for years. I ran a clipping bureau, and I'd send him everything that came out in the newspapers, whether it was the death of an old friend, or whatnot. Of course, after he got to be president, why, he had a better clipping bureau than mine, so I didn't carry that occupation on any further.

The 1956 campaign was a stepping stone to the 1960 campaign, which was a serious campaign.

M: Right. Johnson seriously ran for the presidential nomination then? Did you help him?

L: Yes, I helped him in that campaign. We carried out a delegation from Texas. I was a member of the delegation. We got out-maneuvered. We found that the Kennedys were not only cruel people, but smart people. I think we probably spent as much money as the Kennedys spent, but we didn't spend it as wisely because we waited until too late to begin

talking finances and making plans. That's always been a problem with Johnson's campaigns. They came at the last minute. There was no preparation. That was true in 1948, and it was true in 1960.

Now the Kennedys spent their money strategically. Bobby Kennedy, in the off year,in 1958, went through the length and breadth of the country, contacting Democratic officeholders, members of the state Senate, and members of the House of Representatives, and the county judges who had their own little contests in the off year, and saying, "Now, what can we do to help you?" "Well, I need a couple of hundred dollars for some cards. I need three hundred dollars for some newspaper advertising." "Well, fine, we'll do it." And so they spent a hundred, two hundred, three hundred dollars and cemented the Democratic organizations in so many places that the hoopla in the presidential campaign just couldn't overcome it.

M: There's also some criticism that Johnson remained at his duties in the Senate too long, as majority leader, rather than getting out and fighting in the primaries and things of that nature. Is that true?

L: He took his duties [seriously]. He was the greatest majority leader that the country has ever had, I think. Many people were quite concerned that he, in their opinion, stepped down from the majority leadership to take the vice presidential nomination. I didn't think so. I thought no other Democrat but Jack Kennedy could have won in 1960, and I think Jack Kennedy could not possibly have won with any running mate other that Lyndon Johnson. I think it's just that clear.

M: Were you surprised when Johnson accepted the vice presidential nomination?

L: No, I was not surprised; I was--well, yes, I guess I was surprised.

M: You were a member this Texas delegation?

L: I was a member of the Texas delegation. When the announcement came that Jack Kennedy had requested Lyndon Johnson to be his running mate, I was out at the racetrack. We got beat in the bid for the nomination, and I did not know that Kennedy was going to invite Johnson to be his running mate, and I said "To hell with it all. Let's go out to Hollywood Downs!" And as we left the racetrack, I turned on the radio and here was this announcement. So we scurried back and I didn't even get back to the hotel; I just had my family drop me off at the convention hall that evening. But it was a peculiar circumstance that we did not get the nomination. We could not have won with Johnson heading the ticket, in my opinion. I don't think we could possibly have won.

M: Why is that?

L: Well, I don't think that the northern and eastern Democrats would have supported Johnson against the Republicans. I think Nixon would have snowed us under.

M: Was Johnson too much of a southerner?

L: He was, in the minds of the people in the country, too much of a southerner. He could not possibly have won the presidency in 1960. But by the same token, with Scoop Jackson or with any other of the possible candidates for vice president Jack Kennedy couldn't have won with any of them. It was the only the combination, in my opinion, of Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson that could carry the country.

M: Did you work then for the ticket of Kennedy and Johnson in the campaign?

L: Yes. Oh, yes. Yes, we worked hard for the ticket, and carried Texas and carried Harris County and so on.

M: Did you have anything to do with that meeting that Kennedy had with the church ministers in Houston?

L: Yes, I was one of the board of strategy that proposed it. And Bobby Kennedy and various others--what's the name of the fellow that ran for the Senate in California?

M: Salinger?

L: Salinger. Salinger was very bitter.

M: Thought it was a bad idea?

L: Oh, it was a terrible idea. Oh, we had a hellacious fight over it.

I think that was the turning point of the campaign. I think it was the greatest single thing that happened. Jack Kennedy handled himself in a masterly fashion before the ministers.

M: How did you happen to get this idea?

L: I don't know that it was my idea. I don't remember who actually suggested it first. But I agreed wholeheartedly, because I thought it was a necessary device, because well, hell, I was here in 1928 when Al Smith got snowed under. And without this confrontation between Jack Kennedy and the ministers, the same thing might have happened. And I think it would have happened in 1960.

M: Did you set the meeting up?

L: No, I guess the fellow we had employed to handle the campaign had really set it up.

M: Was your role in this ministers meeting to sell it to Kennedy that he ought to do this?

L: Well, I was one of a group who favored it. I don't know that I had any great part in it. I participated in the discussion and thought it was a fine idea, and was very happy that Jack Kennedy decided it against the advice of a lot of his own people.

M: Well, then the luncheon was one. Did you have any contact with Vice President Johnson?

L: Well, I visited the Vice President on numerous occasions, both at the Ranch and in Washington. And it was after that election that I was reappointed collector of customs. By that time the salary was up to a reasonable amount and I had arranged these non-conflicting retainers, so that I enjoyed it, and it was no sacrifice.

But then, of course, after the assassination of President Kennedy, when Johnson became president, he got into the hands of John Macy, the head of Civil Service, who's a very brilliant young man. And John sold him on the idea of placing the Customs Service under the career service, without any presidential appointees, without any political appointees in the service at all. Now, the Bureau of Customs had been trying for years to accomplish this objective, and they had laid the groundwork quite well. Dave Strubinger was the assistant commissioner, and Dave spent twenty years working on this.

They tried to reorganize the service in 1952, at the very end of the Truman Administration. They went to Mr. Truman and said, "If you will file a reorganization plan, putting everybody under Civil Service, you can float some of your best friends into these career jobs. And we want to reduce the number of customs districts from 47 to 18. And the heads of those districts will have so-called super-grades, 17 or so, on the Civil Service scale." And they sold Mr. Truman on the idea.

The Commissioner of Customs, who was then Frank Dow, came down to Houston to see me and said, "Now, Sam, we want to put through this reorganization. And we'll assure you, or I'll assure you, that Houston

will be the headquarters for a customs district, that you will be the collector for that district, and that your grade will be not 14, 15 or whatever it was, but 17. We want your help." And I said, "Well, I disagree. I think there ought to be in each agency somebody who is responsible to the [administration]. I don't believe in a monolithic bureaucracy; I think there ought to be somebody in each agency who is responsible to the administration in power because I know that you bureaucrats don't give a damn about what the policy of the administration is. You just do what you damn please. And I would have no interest in operating as a Civil Service employee."

Well, we took a vote on it and we beat it. We beat three of Mr. Truman's reorganizations by three votes, and the Commissioner was satisfied that seven of them were mine.

(Interruption)

M: We were talking about the reorganization.

L: Oh, we were talking about the reorganization of the Customs Service.

M: I might ask you at this point: did Vice President Johnson see to your reappointment to the Customs Service?

L: Yes. Yes.

M: Did he call you up and ask you if you wanted to do this?

L: Well, he called me and said, "Do you want to go back as collector?" And, of course, much to my wife's disgust, I said, "Yes." She had hoped. . . The wives of all Texas lawyers want their husbands to be federal judges. And I would not have accepted an appointment to the local district bench because I had been out of practice as collector of Customs, as an assistant to the American ambassador in Chile. I would have thought that the local bar would have resented

Sam Low's appointment, not having been constantly in, but I was perhaps well qualified to be judge of Customs Court. But Customs Court sits in New York, and I could not bring myself at my age to life in New York. Of course, Myrtle likes to visit New York and she had a wonderful time on visits in New York. She just thought it would be quite the thing.

(Occasional comments by Mrs. Low follow)

ML: The main thing, I wanted to get you away from politics in Texas.

L: But, anyway, I said no. At one time, I would have liked to. At the very end of the Truman Administration, Mr. Truman offered to appoint me to the Customs Court, but it would have been a recess appointment. And with the Republican administration coming in, it would have been very foolish to pull up stakes and move for two or three months. Under those recess appointments, as I remember it, you have to give back your salary if you're not [confirmed]. You not only have the cost of the move, but you have to give back your salary if you're not confirmed.

ML: In other words, he just didn't want to live in New York.

L: No. Actually, that year in 1952, there was a vacancy on the Court of Customs and Patent Appeals which sits in Washington. Judge Cole, who was a former congressman from Maryland, was a member of Customs Court which sits in New York. His wife was an invalid and their home was just outside of Washington, and he was very anxious to get back. It was many of my friends in Congress who were influential in getting Mr. Truman to appoint Judge Cole to the appellate bench. But the Senate didn't get around to confirming him until the night before the adjournment, so there was no vacancy on the Customs Court. So it would have been folly to accept an appointment at that time.

So then we come back to when Lyndon Johnson becomes president.

Now then, as I back up a little, the Bureau of Customs has been trying for years to get rid of political appointees. And they did it very adroitly in that they went to the new administration as it would come in. The commissioner or assistant commissioner would go to the senators in the various districts where there were customs districts, and say, "Now, Senator, there's going to be a vacancy in the collector of customs in your district, and we want you to know that we have an assistant collector in each district who is thoroughly capable of running the show. And there are no qualifications, background, experience or education for the requirement as appointment of collector. So you can just pick up any of your old friends, no matter what their background is, and give them this appointment because all they have to do is to attend the Chamber of Commerce meetings and come down twice a month and get their checks. So with that to bait to the senators, then we had, in 1963 or 64,the Stover Committee that made that survey of all of the Customs districts. And they could honestly say, and I could not challenge it, that eight out of ten of the collectors of customs in the 47 districts were wholly unqualified and served no useful purpose. It was an honest judgment, but it was a judgment arrived at by the conniving of the bureaucrats who had fostered this idea with the senators. And the Treasury had no minimum standards in ever turning down [anyone]. The only man I think they ever turned down was the man that Lyndon Johnson wanted to appoint in 1949.

At the time of Johnson, while under the guidance of John Macy, a reorganization was planned in which he proposed to create first five and then six, and then seven, and then eight, and then nine regions with a regional commissioner in each region. And the theory was to reduce the number of collection districts. Well, politics got into it

and, actually, they increased the number, in the final analysis, of the collection districts. Houston wanted a regional office and Albert Thomas was strong enough to get it. And New Orleans wanted a regional office and the New Orleans senator, Senator Long, was strong enough to get it.

M: There was some threat of combining New Orleans and Houston?

L: Well, of course. I mean, New Orleans has nothing but New Orleans and Mobile in the whole region. I mean, it's a silly arrangement. If you're going to have regions in order to comprise several districts, the theory was that the Bureau of Customs was going to reduce its personnel down to less than half of what they had had in the past and that the regional commissioners would be given authority. Now, regionalization in 1930 and 1940 would have made good sense. In the sixties, I'm not quite sure that it was useful with jet travel, with TFX communication, with the government having instantaneous contract with the telephone companies so you call back and forth wherever you want to call. I'm not sure that regionalization was important. I tried to keep an open mind, but it appears to me that the bureau has increased its personnel rather than lessened its personnel, and that there have been sandwiched in nine regional commissioners, with from fifty to a hundred employees in between here and the districts, and the districts have increased their personnel.

Now, it was said to be an economy move. Well, at the time the reorganization plan was filed, I was president of what was known as the Associaton of Presidential Appointees in the Customs Service, which included the 47 collectors, the appraiser at New York and the several comptrollers around the districts. I immediately notified my colleagues that this plan had been filed by my President, who I had been very

instrumental, or helpful, or at least legged for for numerous years, and that I could not oppose the reorganization plan. While I disagreed with it, I thought that it was unwise, that, nevertheless, this was the plan of my President and I would not oppose it. The Collector out at Los Angeles wrote a very scathing round robin letter to all the other presidential appointees and said, "This fellow Sam Low in Houston has been promised some high office; he's a turncoat and he won't lead the fight," and so forth.

Well, the reorganization plan went through. I went to Washington and had a conference with the Under Secretary of the Treasury, Joe Barr, and with the Commissioner of Customs. They asked me to come up and talk about what would happen to the former presidential appointees. And they said, "Now, Mr. Low, we realize that these appointees could. . . We've just won an election, and it's perfectly normal that you would have had tenure for another four years or another eight years. We are glad. We wanted this reorganization. We wanted everybody under the career service. Now if you want to be the regional commissioner, you have to make an application, and you'll have to pass an examination. But we can tell you in advance that you will pass. And there are a number of the presidential appointees who are qualified, and those that are qualified will be appointed district directors or regional commissioners."

And I said, "No, I'm not interested. I am not interested in being a Civil Service employee. Maybe some of the others are. But I use as an example the collector in Florida. He is a man who, like myself, is a lawyer. I would expect, in his practice, his income from his law practice would have been thirty-five or forty thousand a year prior to his appointment. As collector he's been drawing maybe twenty thousand.

I am told that although he's not prohibited from taking part in his law office as long as it doesn't conflict with his duties as collector, his income from his law office has dwindled down to about five thousand dollars, because he has been dedicated in his attention to his job as collector."

"Well," they said, "we recognize that. And what we would like to do would be to ask the former presidential appointees who do not want to come into the career service to remain as consultants to the district director or the regional commissioner in their area for a limited period."

Well, I had in mind a period of about eighteen months. Joe Barr said, "I think it ought to be three years." I said, "I think that's ultimately fair, and let me understand the rules: that we get all the former presidential appointees or advisers in the title as program advisor to the Civil Service man in their area, whether it's regional commissioner or whether it's district director; but it will be understood that this is a period in which he will build up his private life. If he's a lawyer, he can start going and getting his clients back together. If he's in some business, why, he can devote more time and attention to his insurance business or his real estate business or something else, and he will be on the payroll for a maximum of three years."

So that was all agreed upon. And I thought it was a very, very fair arrangement. They reneged on one thing. I specifically asked them if the insurance, and the fringe benefits, and the automatic step increases would be forthcoming, and they assured me that they would. The one thing that sort of sticks in my craw is that they immediately put out an order that none of the program advisors would be entitled to these

automatic step increases, which, on my retirement, would have been a substantial amount. But I called it to their attention and John Macy's staff wrote an opinion in which they said this can be accomplished and if Mr. Barr made this agreement, it ought to be done, and it can be accomplished by a simple change in the regulations. And John Macy decided that there was some other groups that he wanted to be included and that he wanted additional legislation. And I wrote back and said, "I do not want to be a part of asking for added legislation. If the Treasury wants to renege on its deal, that's their business. But I do not want to be called to Washington to defend the continuance in office of former political appointees for a limited period of time, because it's just not worth it." So that was dropped.

Anyway, we now have the Customs Service as a monolithic bureaucracy with my former deputy director-in-charge as the regional commissioner in Houston. He's a very able young man. I trained him. I mean, he takes largely the same views on administration that I do. So I still keep an open mind. I hope that the bureaucrats won't snow him and others under.

M: Now when did all this happen? Can you hang a date on it? All this reorganization?

L: Well, the reorganization became effective in this area on May 15, 1966.

M: And when did you talk to Macy and Joe Barr and those people?

L: I talked to Macy and Joe Barr in 1965.

M: I see.

L: Yes, in 1965. It was agreed that the terms of office of the former presidential appointees would expire three years after the reorganization became effective in their region. Now, in some areas, the reorganization became effective in March of 1966, and some, in May of 1966. I think

New York was the last. Ours was next to the last. Ours was in May of 1966.

M: So you remained as a consultant until May of 1969?

L: I remained a consultant, or with the title of program advisor, until the fourteenth of May, 1969. And at that time, I retired.

M: Did you ever say anything to President Johnson about this? The reorganization?

L: I've had minimum contacts with the President since he became president. He knew my position. I wrote him several letters, outlining step-by-step what I thought. He had Jack Valenti call me from the Ranch when he made the decision and made the announcement. I'm satisfied that the President was on the line, although he didn't say so. Jack called me to tell me what the decision was, and I said, "Well, if that's the decision, I'm for it. But I think it's a mistake." But I'm satisfied that Lyndon was on the line.

M: So you think he knows what was going on, then?

L: Yes, yes. There again, for years he took John Connally's advice against mine and, in this case, he took John Macy's advice against mine. I really thought that I knew more about the Customs Service than anybody that was a sincere friend and an old friend of Lyndon Johnson's. But he got snowed under by the head of Civil Service who, as I say, is a very capable young man. I guess he's out on his head now, because that's a political appointment itself.

M: Did you have anything to do with the 1964 campaign, Johnson's running for the presidency with Hubert Humphrey?

L: Oh, yes, yes.

M: You weren't [too busy].

L: There wasn't much campaign.

M: That's right.

L: We were active in it, but there wasn't much campaign. I mean, Texas was going for Johnson, and the whole nation went for Johnson, really.

M: Yes.

L: And there was no great fight on that.

M: Have you had any contact with Johnson since his retirement from the presidency?

L: I've had a couple of telephone calls and several letters. We were up there the week before he announced that he would not be a candidate. Mrs. Low and I were invited up to the White House, as guests in the White House, at a time when the President of Paraguay was to be the official guest. And we were there for the dinner for the President, for the reception with the 21-gun salute and so forth, on the lawn. Then we were there for the cocktail party and the dinner that evening. Luci was my dinner partner for the dinner.

There were two things that happened which should have put me on notice of the announcement at the end of the month. Bird had said, "After these people leave, why, you all come down and have a nightcap with me." So we came down to her apartment, at about one o'clock in the morning.

Luci--in the course of our conversation at dinner, I had asked her if she was going to remain at the White House while her husband was in service, and she said, "Well, Mr. Low, I'm going to

take my child and go back to Austin just as quickly as I can." She said, "That man is ruining him." Well, I didn't know exactly what she meant.

But at one o'clock or one-thirty in the morning, we were down having a goodnight drink with Bird and the buzzer sounded. Well, there were three couples of us. There was Zac Lentz from Victoria, and Ed Ray, the former editor of the Houston Press, and their wives, and Mrs. Low and myself. And she said, "Lyndon wants you to come in." So he was piled up in bed with his pajamas on and with this little tyke of a grandson roaming around the bed at one-thirty in the morning. And Luci came to the door and made a face and said, "You see what I mean."

M: Then you understood.

L: Then I understood. But he had a stack of reports about that thick from Defense, and State, and whatnot.

M: About six inches.

L: Five or six inches, laying on his bed. And he looked up at me and put his hand on these reports and said, "You know, Sam, I'm going to read all of those before I go to sleep tonight." And said, "The man in this job has got no time to campaign. Utterly impossible." So that was somewhat of a preparation for his announcement seven days later that he would not be a candidate for re-election.

M: Were you surprised when he decided not to run again?

L: With that warning, I guess not.

M: Did you know that it was a warning at the time? Can you think back?

L: I thought about it, but I wasn't quite sure. But, you see, Lyndon Johnson is the thinnest skinned human being that's ever gone even as far as a state senator. I mean everything. . . There have been months

that he wouldn't speak to me because I had disagreed with something that he had said. He can't stand criticism. And here he was: the most criticized man in America. And I don't blame him. He couldn't take it. Knowing him, he just couldn't take it.

M: Did he ever get mad at you?

L: Oh, yes. Of course. He wouldn't speak to me.

ML: Oh, not really, Sam.

L: Why, of course, he wouldn't! Certainly he wouldn't. He wouldn't speak to me. I'd disagree with him. And that's not right.

ML: He'd pout, but he didn't--

L: He'd pout. Sure he'd pout, for weeks and months.

M: Was he an impatient type of man?

L: Yes. He's always been an impatient person. He's impatient with people that can't keep up with him. He's impatient with people that don't get the job done that he thinks ought to be done. He's a driver.

M: But he's impatient; he works his people very hard, long hours, even volunteer people who campaign for him.

L: Oh, yes. That makes no difference, hell, the fact that you're not on the payroll. If you're his friend, you're supposed to work.

M: And he gets mad at you. But does he forgive you?

L: Oh, yes.

M: And does he try to make up for this?

L: Oh, yes. Eventually, sure. He will. People are his friends, and he recognizes it. And probably Bird is the leveling influence in his life. She's a great lady.

M: You think she's played her role as first lady?

L: Magnificently.

M: Did she get over her initial shyness as a person in campaigns?

L: Oh, yes. She worked hard at it. She studied public speaking; she studie Spanish; she studied etiquette; she studied everything that was necessary to study. She is an accomplished person.

M: Well, now, I've exhausted the questions I had for you. Let me give you an open-ended question. Is there anything I should ask you about that I haven't or any comment that you wish to make to conclude the interview?

L: No. I think we've covered, to large extent, my relationship with the President and the several campaigns in which I've had a part.

You asked if I had talked with him recently. I called him on the telephone. Well, I had the sponsors of this retirement dinner write him a letter asking him to come down. Then I called him on the telephone and his reply was, "Lady Bird and I have decided that we will not go to any public functions until at least November of this year." And I can appreciate that and I think that's a wise idea. In fact, when it was said that he was to lecture at Rice, and it was said that he was to lecture at the University of Texas, I wrote him a letter and said, "For God's sake, delay any lectures at any educational institution for at least two years after you leave the presidency. Because you're too thin-skinned, and I don't want you to be harrassed by rotten eggs and tomatoes and anything else. The campuses are no place for you for the next two years. Two years from now, history will begin to put things in perspective. Just as I know of no one who was more vilified than Harry Truman in his last campaign and during his last term in the presidency. And yet, beginning five or six years after he left office, the correspondents that vilified him, began to say, "Harry Truman was one of the forceful, decisive presidents that we have had."

I think that Lyndon Johnson was perhaps the best qualified man who's ever gone to the presidency. But he got caught in the web of circumstance over which he had no control, and this Vietnam War, particularly, gobbled him up. There was no turning back, in his view, and he became a very unpopular president. He recognized it and he got fed up. He wanted out, and I don't blame him.

M: Well, I thank you for your time.

L: I hope I've given something that historians may have some interest in.

M: I think you probably have.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and nterview I

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

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Sam D. W. Low

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Mrs. Sam Low of Houston, Texas do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on June 9, 1969 in Houston, Texas and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

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

Mrs Sam D.W. Low
Donor

7-14-79
Date

James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

March 5, 1979
Date