INTERVIEWEE: ARCHBISHOP ROBERT E. LUCEY
Archdiocese of San Antonio

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

Saturday, October 19, 1968, 7:30 p.m. at his residence, 140 Sun Way, San Antonio, Texas

L: My first contact with Lyndon Johnson was in the year 1941. There was a strike of pecan shellers in San Antonio since the wages of this rather small group of workers were about fifteen cents an hour. Mr. Johnson at that time was in the House of Representatives. He replied that he would do all he could, but of course he realized, and I did also, that a minimum wage law in that small industry would not be easy to achieve. The king of the pecan merchants came to see me a few weeks later and brought his secretary along--probably to make a record of what I said and what the king of pecan merchants said. I simply told him a couple of Irish jokes and at the end of the second joke he was in pretty good shape and he motioned to the secretary to close her notebook and forget it.

The next contact with Mr. Johnson which I recall was in Austin, Texas. I had been given the distinguished service award by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. That was October 19, 1957, eleven years ago today. I was given this award for alleged leadership and achievement in the advancement of democracy and improvement of human relations among my fellow men. I was not as successful in that field as I would have wished, but I certainly appreciated the award from B'nai B'rith.

P: Archbishop, may I ask you a question? What were your first impressions, and how would you characterize Lyndon Johnson when you first met him?

L: The first time that I really got to know him quite well was at this affair in Austin. Perhaps the impression he made on me would be clear if I say a few more words about this talk that evening.

P: All right.

L: The principal address was given by Lyndon Johnson, who was then Majority Leader in the Senate. In his remarks he was most kind and generous. In fact, several times during his gracious address, I looked around the speaker's table to see if there might be some other archbishop present about whom he was speaking. Finally, I decided he must be talking about me and I was profoundly grateful. I wondered how he had collected so much information, which was largely true, but of course he didn't know very much about my faults--all that my friends told him were the good things that I did. However, I felt that he was a very earnest man, a very devout man, he spoke from the heart, and, as I said a moment ago, even though I didn't deserve all the praise that he handed to me, I was deeply appreciative of what he said.

It's pretty well known, I think, that I contacted him rather personally at the inauguration of 1965 when he asked me to give the invocation. It was a very cold day and the president caught a cold. His wife also caught one and they both went to the hospital, if I remember it correctly. When the moment came for my invocation, I stood before the microphone with my overcoat on because, coming from the warm climate of Texas, I was not accustomed to that kind of weather. I felt confident that a little extra apparel would not detract from the spiritual value of my prayer.

A couple of years ago a state dinner was given in the White House honoring Chancellor Kiesinger of Germany. I was invited to attend and to spend the night as a guest in the White House. During the social hour before the dinner, many distinguished guests were present and I saw Justice Black of the Supreme Court. I remember a decision which he wrote to the effect that no public funds in any amount, large or small, could be spent for one religion or for all religions. When I was presented to this distinguished jurist, I said, "Mr.

Justice Black, I'm delighted to meet you. I've read with interest many of your decisions." At that he gave me a quizical look as though saying to himself, "Is this man with me or against me?" Then he smiled in a kindly fashion.

There were interesting talks at the dinner, including cordial remarks by Chancellor Kiesinger and I returned to my White House room at a rather late hour. Harry Jersig of San Antonio and his wife occupied the apartment across the corridor from mine.

During 1966 the President appointed me a member of the National Advisory Council for the War on Poverty. Sargent Shriver was head of the Office of Economic Opportunity and presided at our meetings. A number of very distinguished Americans were members of the Council and all were anxious to do whatever was possible to alleviate the tragedy of poverty pressing so heavily on millions of our citizens. The basic philosophy of the OEO is constructive and much good has been accomplished for the poor and the uneducated, but in some areas there has been an injection of politics beyond reasonable measure into the program and the Congress has not been too generous in appropriating necessary funds. There were several conferences of the national council in the White House--some of them attended by Mrs. Johnson and altogether it was a happy experience to be associated with this historic movement.

In the spring of 1967, President Johnson dedicated Victoria Courts as a pleasant home for senior citizens in San Antonio. I expressed a desire to honor the President by being present at the ceremony. I expressed this to some of the local leaders of the reception that was being prepared, but no ticket of admission was forthcoming. Apparently, somebody in this town doesn't like me, which may well be the understatement of the century. Quite by chance, I mentioned my predicament to my old friend Maury Maverick, Jr. Maury's name is not unknown in high places, and in no time I received an invitation from

local bigwigs to honor the occasion with my presence.

When called upon to speak, the President put his prepared speech in his pocket and proceeded to give a magnificent address appropriate to the occasion. He graciously directed a good deal of it to me with the obvious intent of letting the little reactionaries know that they must not be mean to the President's friends.

After the ceremony, the President and his party came to San Fernando Cathedral for the Good Friday services at three in the afternoon. His security team took adequate precautions to protect our distinguished guest at prayer.

In August of 1967, the President graciously appointed me one of the twenty-two observers to take a trip to Saigon, Viet Nam, in connection with the national elections. Most of the observers boarded Air Force Two in Washington, D.C. But a few of us in the West found it more convenient to take the plane in Seattle, Washington. We flew first to Anchorage, in Alaska, where we stopped for fuel and then went on to Tokyo. The next day we took off about noon for Saigon, reaching there at 5 p.m. We were all assigned to homes of different Americans, which was a wise arrangement because food poisoning is rather common in that area. My assignment was to the pleasant home of an Embassy official whose wife and family were in the States and I was indeed very comfortable.

P: Who was this, Archbishop? Who was this family? Do you recall their name?

L: Oh, yes. Stone. They called him Rocky, but his name was Stone. Actually, he was a CIA man, but everybody thought he was an Embassy official. One day, I visited a small hamlet about seventy-five miles from Saigon, which we reached by chopper. I sat on one side of the helicopter and Senator Hickenlooper of Iowa was on the other. We each had a machine gunner standing beside us, who watched small clumps of trees below us for any action by the Communist forces.

I shall never forget that my machine gunner wore a flak vest and a steel helmet. I had on a light summer coat and a straw hat. If any flak came up at us, I doubt if my black straw hat would have given me very much protection. It would have taken a lot of holy water to turn that hat into a helmet. Fortunately, the Communists let us alone.

This hamlet was a center of a civic welfare program for rural people in the area. A Vietnamese captain told us what the American leaders were trying to do to teach democracy and civil government to the peasants. Some of these very promising programs have been slowed down owing to attacks of Communist armed forces. I visited a classroom in which children were being taught to read and write Vietnamese. I also saw a platoon of young men and women who guarded the little hamlet at night against attacks of the Communists.

On another occasion I visited an American army post about twenty-five miles outside of Saigon. The commanding officer was cordial, and the men in his post seemed to be in good spirits. They had some magnificent heavy artillery which we heard in action at that time.

The American Embassy made an appointment for me to be received by His Excellency, Archbishop Binh, the Archbishop of Saigon. He was quite cordial, and I greatly enjoyed the audience. An Embassy official who spoke Vietnamese accompanied me, but when I met the Archbishop, I learned that he spoke Italian. It was therefore easy for us to converse as we both had studied in Italy. I also enjoyed an audience with the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Angelo Palmas, who speaks English very well. He greatly appreciated what the American government and people were doing to stop unjust aggression in South Viet Nam.

On election day I went to the city hall to observe the voting. Since many Vietnamese cannot read, the candidates were distinguished not only in words, but also in the sign language such as picture of a dove, an eagle,

and so forth. As I walked up the steps of the city hall, I noticed that I was covered by a half dozen TV cameras and confronted by several reporters. They asked me if I thought there was any religious element in the election. The reason for the question was that the leading candidate for president was a Catholic. His name was Nguyen Van Thieu. The vice-presidential candidate was a Buddhist, Nguyen Cao Ky.

In the election booths, everything seemed to be in order. There was very little talking and the voters seemed to meet with no difficulty whatever. Election officials were available for those who wanted information. The election is now history, but it seemed to us to have proceeded in good order, at least in the downtown area of Saigon which I covered. The religion of the candidates did not seem to be a factor.

On our trip home we stopped at Honolulu where we spent the night and the next afternoon we took off for Washington to give a report of our trip to the President and to attend a press conference in the White House. In the afternoon the President graciously invited me to accompany him to San Antonio in Air Force One.

In April of this year a mass was celebrated in historic San Fernando Cathedral for a large group of Latin American ambassadors representing the republics of Latin America and also some accredited to the United Nations. President Johnson attended and I had the privilege of giving a sermon on peace and progress.

About six weeks ago I enjoyed a lunch with the President at his ranch and he kindly furnished a helicopter to take me to his home and later back to San Antonio.

More recently, Mr. Johnson was present in St. Francis Xavier Parish in Stonewall for the dedication of a new rectory. I also said a few words on that occasion and defended the policy of the Administration in Viet Nam. During the

sermon, I had to be careful not to step on little Lyn, the President's grandson, who was crawling around the floor at my feet. It was doubtless the first time in history that an archbishop had a lovely child pulling on his knee during a sermon.

P: May I ask you a few specific questions?

L: Certainly. Certainly.

P: We can go back over these. Briefly, you covered everything I had notes on. I wanted to ask you some specific questions on yourself. Archbishop, two years ago, in 1966, you celebrated your Golden Jubilee, which was your twenty-fifth year as Archbishop of the diocese and simultaneously the fiftieth anniversary of your ordination and your seventy-fifth birthday.

L: Yes.

P: That's quite an achievement. May I just ask you, when did you first come to Texas, and from where?

L: Well, I came from Los Angeles, which was my birthplace and I went out as Bishop of Amarillo in 1934, which means that I have been a bishop now for thirty-four years. I was there for seven years and then I was sent down here as Archbishop of San Antonio and I happen to have a very questionable distinction of being the senior Archbishop of the United States, not that I am the oldest, but I am the senior in point of service.

P: Since your arrival in San Antonio you have raised some furor. You described to me previously, when this wasn't being taped, various names that you have been called. Would you explain to me a little of your reputation as it has developed in San Antonio?

L: Well, the people here are not wildly liberal. In fact, that's true in a good many parts of Texas. And when I first came here and happened to mention the value of organization for workers just as organization is valuable for teachers,

nurses, and anybody else, they didn't like it very well and they decided I was a Communist. So, for the first ten years of my happy residence here, I was known as a Communist by certain little people.

P: This was from 1941 to almost 1950?

L: 1941, yes. Then, they decided, after ten years, that that name wasn't sticking very well. So they reduced it a little bit and called me a Socialist for another ten years and somehow or other that name didn't stick very well. So they all got together and they said, "Well, we've got to find some name for this man, and maybe we can say now that he's more mature and he's not quite as radical as he used to be." Of course, the real truth was that they were gradually learning something and somewhat coming over to my side. They thought I had changed when actually their hearts had changed.

P: And the valley pecan workers that you explained to me already about, that was in 1941, too--when you first came here?

L: Yes, shortly after I came here.

P: And that contact with Lyndon Johnson was strictly through correspondence or did you see him personally?

L: No, it was just through correspondence. He wanted to do whatever he could, but of course minimum wages were not easy to put over. As a matter of fact, some years ago, I would say forty years ago, the infallible Supreme Court said that minimum wages for women were unconstitutional. They learned the truth a little bit later and found out they were constitutional. But forty years ago they were unconstitutional. They said that liberty is mentioned in the Constitution and everybody must have liberty and freedom to sign a contract and consequently, a lady that is getting fifteen cents an hour for her work must be free to sign a contract for fifteen cents an hour and a minimum wage law would be against the freedom of contract. Of course, that's all nonsense and it's recognized as

nonsense now, but forty years ago people weren't quite so bright as they are today.

P: Why did you happen to approach your Congressman from your area? Was your recourse to political action natural to you?

L: Well, there are some things that can be accomplished by the Ten Commandments but it takes a long time to do it. For example, there is a great deal of moral legislation enacted by the Congress of the United States in recent years. Take, for example, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, the new amendments to the immigration law which give hope to people who were born and lived in countries where they had no chance whatever to lead a really human life. And these people have been allowed to come to our country where there is a great deal of freedom. And then the various types of minimum wage laws, they apply now to some of our agricultural workers, these are all moral legislation. The difference between the weight of civil legislation and spiritual legislation is quite obvious. In church law, if you are condemned to hell, you must die to get there. But in civil law you can be put in the penitentiary without dying. You can go there while you are alive. So most people know that the penitentiary is just around the corner. They will obey civil law rather than go to the penitentiary. But so far as hell is concerned, they say, "Well, I'll take a chance and I'll repent before I die." Now, whether they all get a chance to repent is a question, you know. But anyhow that's one of the values of civil legislation--that people can see the penalty and they can feel it if they don't obey and so most businessmen obey and pay legal wages.

P: In terms of your correspondence this first time, how successful were you in 1941?

L: Well, there was no chance of getting a minimum wage law through Congress at that time and the people of the United States weren't ready for it either. But by our hollering and talking to people and all that sort of thing they gradually learned

that fifteen cents an hour is a terrible tragedy for the families. Some of these girls were not really young girls. They might have had a husband who had died or had deserted and they might have one or two children; and fifteen cents an hour was simply tyrannical. It was cruel. And the people here gradually learned that that wasn't the thing to do and it's very bad for the prosperity of all the people to have a low wage area. That is to say, an area in which wages are commonly low because that means that nobody has very much money and businessmen don't make very much money. Just think what business would be doing here in San Antonio if 300,000 Mexican-Americans got a living wage. The businessmen--people who run department stores and so forth, would sell shoes and dresses and hats because when poor people get a better wage, they spend it right away because they need it. The wealthy man can put his money in a bank or he can invest it in some way. But the poor people have very few investments. They have to use what they get in order to survive. So it's unfortunate that in many parts of Texas we have poor wage areas and the people suffer and unfortunately businessmen suffer too. And now a study about eight or ten months ago showed that poverty in rural areas is worse than the slums of the cities. People didn't know that before, but rural slums are worse than urban slums, which is something. But we're doing pretty well. We're gradually being civilized. I think that in a few years probably we'll be practically civilized around here.

P: Did you know anything about Congressman Johnson when you chose to write to him in 1941?

L: No, I may have heard that he was a sympathetic man toward working people, toward the poor, and all that sort of thing. As a matter of fact, all his life he has been sympathetic to poverty. That's one reason why he organized the War on Poverty--because he believes that American citizens, in fact every, human

being, has a right to a decent life. Just because he is human, it doesn't make any difference whether he's Irish, French, American, or what he is--he's a human being. And all human beings have a right to a decent life, one that is worthy of a human being.

P: And then your first actual contact with him and introduction to him was the B'nai B'rith occasion?

L: It could have been. I might have met him at some smaller celebration, but I remember that one quite well because he gave a talk which I thought was very fine. Unfortunately, it was about me, but if it wasn't about me I would say it was one of the finest talks I ever heard. But, of course, I knew him from his reputation, knew what he was doing in the Congress and all that sort of thing. But that is embedded in my memory because of the fact that the thing was in my honor.

P: I saw a piece of correspondence from you in which you wrote Lyndon Johnson regarding sending medical help to the ailing Cardinal Stepenack in Yugoslavia.

L: I did what?

P: Regarding sending medical help to Cardinal Stepenack in Yugoslavia in the early 1950's and I believe it was--

L: I don't remember that at all. I was asking that he do something about it?

P: You were asking that people approach the State Department in order to send a doctor to Cardinal Stepenack.

L: Is that so? I don't even remember that.

P: All right. I won't pursue that line any further. It was just a brief letter and I was going to ask you what the results were.

L: Yes. I probably have tried to help a lot of people in my way. If a man can't accomplish some good in seventy-seven years I think he ought to quit.

P: Do you recall much surrounding the 1954 National Reclamation Law, which was to obtain and maintain small families' farms?

L: I knew something about it at that time. I've never been stationed in a parish which was rural. I have always been sort of a city slicker. That's no excuse for not knowing pretty well the problems of rural people and I think I do, but the Reclamation Act, of course, was a very broad one. For example, federal waters, that is to say, water that has been impounded by the Federal Government, has always been something that has been very challenging to me because out in California big growers have used all kinds of force on the Department of the Interior, Secretary Udall, to get large access to these federal waters. And most of us had thought that the waters ought to be for all the people and not just big growers. That's one interest that I have taken in the Reclamation Act.

P: Right close to this same time there was quite a sizeable sum being sought in Congress for the Labor Department and the Bureau of Labor Standards for migratory workers and I believe that you had some correspondence with Lyndon Johnson on that. Do you recall this?

L: Quite possibly, yes. I went to Washington and spoke before a subcommittee of the Senate on agriculture and I pointed out that the migratory workers were coming up here and taking jobs that should have gone to not only Texans, but people throughout the Southwest. In other words, work in agriculture should go first to our own people if they need it. And then we extend good will to visitors after our own people are taken care of. In other words, charity begins at home. At one time, there were more than 400,000 Mexican Nationals coming here from Mexico. And that means 400,000 jobs that Americans didn't get--it was quite serious. I gave a talk in Washington in the Senate Building to the subcommittee of the Senate on agriculture and I explained the whole business

to them. There was a young Senator there at that time, and he picked up what I had said and repeated it on the Senate floor that same day. The young Senator's name was Hubert Humphrey.

P: Very good.

L: And I was in that same room last year and he reminded me that seventeen years had passed since I made that speech to the committee.

P: During the vice-presidential years, 1961 to 1963, did you have any contact with Lyndon Johnson?

L: 1963?

P: From 1961 to 1963, when he was Vice-President?

L: I don't remember. You know, he's not one of the mob--he's a very, very distinguished and very special gentleman and particularly has great ability in the field of statesmanship, but I probably have met him casually many times that I don't remember.

P: In 1965, when you gave the inaugural invocation, could you tell me a little more about how you were asked to do this and what arrangements had to be made?

L: Well, I was sitting in my office one morning, I guess it was about a month before the inauguration, and our telephone operator said, "The President is calling," as she rang my bell. And I said, "Which President?" because we have the President of the Council of Catholic Men, the President of the Council of Catholic Women, Council of Youth, and what have you. So she said, "I think it's the President of the United States." So I said, "Put him on." So, it was Lyndon, and he was asking me to give the invocation which I appreciated very much. You know, he has always been a very good friend of mine. I don't know why, but that's a fact.

P: Did you have to make any particular arrangements regarding the wording of the invocation in the time allotment?

L: No, the only restriction on us was that we shouldn't talk too long which is a very lovely restriction. Lots of people should learn that lesson, you know. As a matter of fact, we had to get the talking over with in a limited time, I suppose for TV and other reasons. But in any event, I think we were allowed 250 words if I remember correctly. And we could say practically anything we wanted at that time, but I sent it on. I don't remember whether it went to the State Department or to the White House, but somebody got it back there.

P: You told me, and I would appreciate it if you would record it for the tape, that after you finished the invocation, you turned around and, unaware that the mike was still on...would you tell me about that?

L: Well, I congratulated Lyndon and shook hands with him and told him that I hoped that God would bless him, that I also hoped that he would have a great administration and be one of the great Presidents of all time. And then I turned a little bit to the right and spoke to the President. I said, "Now, this man beside you, the Vice-President, is also going to be a great help to you and I hope that God will bless both of you." I found out later that the mike was open and that 50,000,000 people were listening to me. You've got to look around when you are in public.

P: Later there was a luncheon and a reception at the White House which you attended. Would you tell me a little bit about that?

L: Yes. Well, the President moved around pretty well. He likes to meet people, you know, and he's very gracious. And he came to our table and the gentleman sitting beside me I think was a Greek Orthodox Patriarch, and there were some Baptist friends there and some Episcopalians and so forth. People of various religions and the President came up and spoke to me and said very kind things to me and I was just wondering whether it might have been a source of irritation

to some of them that he was so kind to me, but I suppose he felt that since I had said a prayer for him that morning, he ought to say something to me about it. He's a very appreciative man and I think if you do something for him, he appreciates it. On the other hand, he doesn't like to be crucified and he has been crucified. The greatest tyranny in our country today is the public press. He has been crucified and it was a very sad day for the United States when, because of his crucifixion by the press, cartoonists, and these other people, he decided not to run for another term. That was a great tragedy for our country due very largely to the tyranny of the press.

P: Why do you feel this way regarding the press?

L: I think the press could be a very constructive sort of thing, but it's quite sensational. I presume that it's something like a rat race, and different papers in different cities try to be as sensational as they can. I've suffered a great deal from the public press. They like to say sensational things about me whether they are true or false and usually they are false. And you have no comeback. You can't sue for libel. You have to prove malice and all sorts of things. And if the attorney for the defense wants to prove that the editor had no malice, he just puts him on the stand and says, "Do you hate the President of the United States?" "Oh, no, why I love the President. I think he's a great man." You can't convict a fellow like that, you know. So they can crucify a man that they don't like politically or maybe they don't like him religiously. They can crucify such a man and you just can't stop them, that's all. There isn't a high enough level of integrity in the public press so that you can be sure of the things that are said. And that's why I am against that phase of the public press. We have a lot of fine writers, of course, but they are not all fine.

P: I was going to say, they do consider the free press one of the mainstays of

democracy and it is necessary, you know, that we have a competitive--

L: Yes, but freedom is not license, you see. They are using license to defame anybody they don't like. And they have defamed, downgraded and crucified the President of the United States. And that isn't any great honor at all. And I told them that at our press conference when we came back from Saigon. I said that the press has been very unfair in telling about the things... the way things are going in Saigon. There isn't any stalemate there. We're winning. We've always been winning. We're too strong for those people over there. But they say there is a stalemate and the press has been guided largely, perhaps unconsciously, but very largely by Communist thought. And they have echoed Communist thought in the press which isn't American thought at all and that has been very bad for our boys. I remember sending some priests to Manila a few years ago and they came back and said they had met some GI's there who had come over from Hong Kong and they had heard of a speech that I gave, a sermon that I gave on peace, and they said they were very glad that some bishop in the United States said that that was a just war because they were fighting for our country, for our people, for freedom; they were fighting against unjust aggression and they felt that somebody ought to say that they were not crooked, they were doing the right thing, and they found that the Archbishop of San Antonio said they were doing the right thing and they were very grateful for it. But the press doesn't say that. The press is just unfair many, many times. And that's what I don't like.

P: You told me that during this reception, back to that again, in 1965, that after the reception you were wandering around the hallway and you happened to be with Speaker McCormack when an incident occurred.

L: Oh, yes. He took my arm and we walked out. He took me over to the door to get

down to my car, and there was a battery of about six or eight TV's and reporters and so forth. And Mr. McCormack remarked that we had a very fine lunch in one of the rooms of the White House, and I said, "Yes, that filet mignon from Texas was great." And the price of meat in Texas went up ten cents that afternoon, ten cents a pound.

P: Because you were on national television.

L: Yes.

P: At a later time, did you participate or aid in helping the Apostolic delegate in Washington form a liaison with the White House?

L: Well, I'll tell you, if I did, that is quite confidential and we'll have to leave it that way. You must have been reading some letters.

P: Yes, sir.

L: I don't think we had better have that on tape, though. You can get it out of the letters.

P: Well, no, it just mentions that. Well, you can of course place any restriction on this in the tape. I would enjoy hearing it if you want to tell it.

L: No, those ecclesiastical matters are not too good for tapes, you know.

P: Well, they are a part of the days and time that we are recording. When you were asked to be on the National Advisory Council for the Office of Economic Opportunity, could you elaborate a little for me on when you were asked and how that happened?

L: Well, to tell the truth, I don't recall that. I don't think the President called. I think one of his secretaries called me and wanted to know if I would accept and I said yes. I get calls from the White House occasionally and probably that was the way it was done. I was appointed also to the Committee of Citizens for Peace in Viet Nam with Freedom. Jack Valenti telephoned me and

said he would like to have me on that committee and that the President was favorable; so I said, "Well, if Lyndon favors this committee, it's all right with me. Put me on there." Because I didn't like to join a committee and then find that the President didn't like it. But this happens to be a very fine committee. I'm a co-chairman with--

P: You are currently serving on this?

L: Yes. I am co-chairman with George Meany and General Omar Bradley; he's a five-star general. I'm in very good company.

P: I guess you are. Could you tell me a little of the activities of this committee?

L: Well, we get out statements from time to time. For example, there is a great deal of nonsense going around our country and the world today about the halting of the bombing. We have halted the bombing at least seven or eight times in Viet Nam. On one occasion Mr. Johnson halted bombing for thirty days and during that time, the Communists loaded munitions, they loaded men, guns, armor, food, everything that they could down into South Viet Nam and it made it very bad for our troops. Every time we've stopped the bombarding with planes, they have brought in additional troops because the bridges were not being broken, the roads were not being torn up, and a halt in the bombing simply means that they can get their trucks through and just kill a lot of our men. Every time that we halt bombing, it means American blood. And this is all nonsense, this talk about ending the bombing or at least to halt the bombing until the Communists can have a chance to make peace. The Communists are not looking for peace, they don't want peace until one thing happens. Until they are convinced that they can't win--then we will have peace, but not before. Halting the bombing isn't going to do a bit of good. We've got to convince them that they cannot win the war in South Viet Nam and they'll quit because they are not stupid.

P: Of course, they do say that the bombing of North Viet Nam is not that effective.

L: They say that, but again the Communists love to have people believe that. It's very effective. Very effective. I'm not a general or anything like that, but we wouldn't be sending our boys up there if it didn't do some good. What it is doing is stopping the Communists from bringing so much material of war down. No doubt they bring some. They come in from Cambodia and Laos and Thailand and, of course, that's a shame too, but we don't like to bomb those places. We don't like to bring war to those little countries. But only Communists would take advantage of the neutrality of republics like that and send troops in there and then they attack our men. We are fighting at a great disadvantage because of the dishonesty of the Communists. They have no standard of integrity or decency at all. No standard of integrity. But it doesn't do any good to stop the bombing unless this time we hope they might say they will agree to clear out of the demilitarized zone and to stop bringing reinforcements down into South Viet Nam. If they don't promise it, I wouldn't favor slowing down the bombing at all because it costs too much blood and the Americans are making a tremendous contribution of blood and treasure. It's costing us billions and billions and we certainly can't stop now when the job is only partly done.

P: How long have you been on this committee for peace in Viet Nam?

L: I think that was about two and one-half years ago. It has done a lot of good. It has brought a sense of justice and appreciation of freedom to a lot of people in the United States because the press has been so bad that we were one of the very few committees that were telling the truth. A lot of young people in colleges and universities don't want to go to war. Some of them are living with women that are not their wives and they just don't like to get shot. They have enough sense of morality to know that you are supposed to be decent if you want to save your

soul. And there are just a lot of people burning up draft cards and all that sort of thing. The sense of responsibility in the hearts of many men has disappeared and we've got to have a moral cleaning of our country and get back on our feet again, because we're not doing very well now.

P: About how many people are on this committee?

L: It's rather large, I think it's 130 or something like that. There are--the three cochairmen are rather active--and then probably about ten others--President Eisenhower has been very good, Omar Bradley has been fine, President Truman, at times, is consulted and there are some men in the Congress that have been consulted. But Senator Douglas, formerly the Senator from Illinois, is a sort of acting Executive Secretary for this thing and he has managed the whole work and he has done a magnificent job. As I say, one of the few committees that really tells the truth and acts like Americans, which is something, I think, because there are a lot of people who are not acting like Americans today.

P: Do you all meet very often?

L: No, it's largely by telephone and correspondence.

P: On the National Advisory Council for the Office of Economic Opportunity, what achievements do you think that you have--

L: Well, I would say, for instance, Headstart, while it's in the field of education, has been a very fine thing. I think that the job training is probably one of the best things that we have done. A great many men who have not had very much education simply can't achieve any high position in the field of employment. There are some men who are human, just as human as we are, they have some rights also, who can hardly do more than cut lawns. They just haven't had any training at all. Now, this War on Poverty comes along and gives these men, when they are younger, a chance to study and learn at the same time. In other words,

some dropouts are put back into school but at the same time they are given a chance, two or three hours a day, to learn good employment and while it isn't possible for all of these people to get jobs, a good many do because we have had a wave of prosperity now. The gross national product of the United States is tremendous. It's over 800 billion and everybody should have a chance to lead a decent life and you can't do it if you are weighed down by poverty. So I think that the War on Poverty has been very helpful, but unfortunately some politics has gotten into the thing and also the Congress has not been very generous. And you can't carry on a big welfare program without money. Of course, this is an election year and the Congressmen don't like to lose too many friends, so you can understand why they behave like that. But they also have been rather tight in foreign aid and I think that is something that is conducive to peace; and I think that we ought to give as much as we can. After all, God didn't create this world just for Americans. I'm glad to be an American and I think we are the greatest country in the world but we are not the only people in the world and I think that we ought to share what we have so abundantly with people that have less than enough to live on. A great many people just don't survive because they don't have food. So we can help them. It doesn't hurt us at all, but of course, a man who is elected to public office has to have the confidence and respect of his constituents and if the constituents don't know anything about foreign aid, why I guess a Senator or a Congressman has to be careful. He can't go around teaching everybody the value of foreign aid. And I can appreciate the fix they are in.

P: What have your specific functions been on these committees? Serving on these committees?

L: You mean like the Citizens for Peace and Freedom? They either telephone and

read something to me if there is a hurry and a statement has to be made or they send me a copy and ask for amendments or corrections or additions. All the members that get it, I don't know how many they send out, make any suggestions that they think are good and send it back and finally, the finished product is sent to us and then if we approve we tell them. I think it has been very, very helpful and Senator Douglas is a very capable man.

P: In 1967, the President's message included some remarks regarding urban and rural poverty. And this, of course, ultimately developed into the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Headstart program which we have already mentioned. Did you have some thoughts on that that you made to the President?

L: No, there's still a long way to go. We've spent billions on the War on Poverty and a lot of other welfare fields too because the War on Poverty wasn't the first time that the federal government got into welfare work. They have aid to the blind, aid to children and all that sort of thing, you know, aid to the aged. But there is a great deal still to be done--in rural areas, as I said a moment ago, because there's great oppressive poverty there and in the slums of the cities. And we'll have fewer riots, we'll have fewer dissatisfied citizens if we give all men, so far as may be possible, an opportunity to live a life that's worthy of a human being.

P: Did you relay these thoughts, correspond these thoughts, to Mr. Johnson?

L: I don't think so. My speeches get into the papers from time to time and I suppose somebody around the White House might show him a speech once in awhile but he's pretty busy to be reading speeches, you know. He has got a lot of work to do.

P: I believe you are also a member of the Inter-Religious Committee against Poverty.

L: Yes.

P: Can you tell me a little of your--

L: Well, I think that's very helpful. Again, a great deal of the welfare of citizens must be procured by the government. Churches can urge people to help their neighbor, love their neighbor and we Christians are proud of the fact that our greatest commandment is the commandment of love. But at the same time, it takes the power of a government to start a tremendous program. So if Jews, Protestants and Catholics can engage in dialogue with their Senators and Representatives on the national scale and with their state and county representatives at home and if the three groups, the three large religious groups, can engage in dialogue with their legislators, that makes the progress much easier for the legislators because they know that the Catholics won't be hollering or the Jews won't be hollering, or the Protestants won't oppose it because they have had the assurance from representatives of the three groups. And so if we, as a people, want to really make progress and we've got tremendous areas to cover, I think the best way to do it is by the three large groups getting together, whether it be in a small hamlet or city, county or state, or the whole nation, getting together and using the facilities and the influence of religion and of religious groups to get this job done.

P: To go on to your being one of the observers in the Viet Nam election, in your opinion of what you saw, do you consider that an open and fair democratic election?

L: Oh, yes. As far as I could see, as I said in my few remarks, I covered only the city hall which was rather central. But some of our men went out into small towns and hamlets, some went to a large city, Da Nang, I think it was, up in the North, that's 300 miles north of Saigon. We spread around, some went south and some went north, but in general we all agreed that it was done quite

well. Perhaps we had our tongue in our cheek saying that they did well over there when we know that not infrequently you have tremendous corruption in United States elections and we can't point the finger of scorn at those poor Asiatics over there who might make a little mistake once in awhile. We've made some big ones. But we think that so far as human beings are concerned, they did a good job. I met the President, Nguyen Van Thieu, and I met Nguyen Cao Ky, the Vice-President. He said, "Oh, you're from San Antonio. I know that place. I learned how to fly at Randolph Air Force Base. I went to one of those big hotels and had a great big Texas steak in San Antonio, and I'll never forget it."

P: Do you feel that the consensus of the twenty-two observers was that this was a fair election?

L: Yes, in general. There was a newspaperman there, his name was Knight. He had a string of newspapers in the South. I don't think he was too well satisfied, but fairly well. I spoke to him afterwards and he was not enraged or anything like that. I think possibly he dug up some information that some of us may not have had. But in general, I would say that they were quite satisfied.

P: There were some charges in this election--that both the election and the observers were sent to sort of support the Johnson Administration in having these elections. Could you comment on that?

L: It just isn't true, that's all. Otherwise, it's fine, but it isn't true. No, we didn't have any urging, we didn't have any prompting to be dishonest, and everybody was on his own. As a matter of fact, I walked up the steps of the city hall and finally, when I got through the TV cameras and the reporters and got into the voting section, there wasn't anybody with me at all except a chaplain. He happened to be my guide over there. He's from New York. But

nobody put any pressure on me. If I didn't like the way the election was going, I could say so. We reported to the President but in general we were quite satisfied. And I think that the President, the Vice-President, and the Congress over there have done a pretty good job under the circumstances. They have been at war for years and years and they are a very poor nation. If we had spent as much blood and treasure on war for twenty years as they have, there wouldn't be much left of us either. They are a very remarkable people.

P: Did you talk to any citizens voting and ascertain that they did understand--

L: Well, they talked Vietnamese and I couldn't speak to them. You mean during voting?

P: Yes.

L: No, I saw them.

P: With a translator?

L: No, there was one lady that I found that spoke English. I don't know what she was doing there. I don't think she was an official. But they, as I said, used the sign language in the sense that if a man was a very gentle, nice sort of fellow, he'd be pictured as a dove. And another man, perhaps very wise and powerful, would be an eagle, and so forth, because a lot of the people can't read and can't write. But, considering the humility, the humble status of these people, I think they are doing a very good job. Now there has been corruption in the government. There's just no doubt about it, but we've got to remember that there are a great many of those people who are not Christians, not that Christians are perfect. But at least we have a standard to go by. We may not keep the standard, but we know it. But they don't even know the standard. They are pagans, as they are usually called in religious circles. They are pagans and they don't have the standards that we have. So,

considering all the circumstances, I think they are doing a very good job and we ought to stay with it and finish that job and if we don't, then we shall see going down the drain Australia, New Zealand, Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia with 80 million people, and the only reason why the Indonesians threw out the Communists was because Uncle Sam was behind them. They knew that we would help them. And we are encouraging those people to fight on and to regain their liberty. If we ever quit nobody else will take up the job. Uncle Sam has got to do it or it won't be done. Now, they should help us. Other nations should help us and they are. A great many nations are sending nursing supplies, medicines, and all kinds of things. One government had a ship over there, a hospital ship. Things like that are being done but we are carrying the burden and perhaps we ought to be because we are the strongest nation in the world and the wealthiest nation in the world. God has blessed us but we can't hold on to all of it. We have to share it with other people.

P: And you don't feel that there was any credulence to the charge that the election was controlled and that the candidates available and--

L: No. It wasn't. No, no. The others had perfect freedom, they had perfect freedom. The fellow that lost the race for the presidency was shooting off his mouth for days and weeks after that. He was finally convicted of something that had nothing to do with the election at all.

P: You don't think this was a move to remove his influence?

L: No. You see, in the United States you can say, "Well, Bill Jones, he has been elected governor and he's no good. He's a scoundrel." A lot of people say those things. But if you say to the man, "Well, why is Bill Jones a scoundrel?" then he doesn't know. And that sort of thing can be said about the Vietnamese. They are a pretty good people, I think, a pretty good people. While a lot of them

are Christians, yes, a great many are not. But I don't think we can look down our nose at those elections at all. If we do as well, always, we will be doing very well.

P: Did you observe if any among the twenty-two observers were of the philosophy of the necessity of our withdrawal from Viet Nam and peace at any price?

L: I don't recall that any of them were of that philosophy, or that mentality. Probably they didn't mention it if they had that mentality. I doubt it, but there could have been some. But they were quite congenial, quite congenial.

P: To continue on to the visits the President has made to San Fernando Cathedral. Have there been any special arrangements that have to be observed when he is attending?

L: Oh, yes. The Secret Service people, the security squad, they get into the building no matter what it is, whether it is a theatre or a church or what it is. I understand that churches are very dangerous places, you know, for public officials. Not that the gospel is going to hurt them, but there are so many angles from which to take a shot at them. And when the President comes to San Fernando or to any church, I think they put him in a different pew every time to sort of fool the people that might be trying to shoot at him. But, yes, there were security men in our sanctuary, behind the altar and over at the side and we were glad they were because we didn't want any unfortunate incident to happen.

P: On the April 1968 occasion, when the Latin American ambassadors were in the church, or came to the San Fernando Cathedral, did you have to make any special preparations for the sermon that you gave?

L: No, I talked on peace and progress but I had been studying international relations since 1917. I left Europe in 1916 and the Papal Peace Program, the program

given to us by the papacy, began in 1917. The essence of it was a world court of international justice and some sort of sanctions which at first were simply boycotts. Later on, under the administration of Pius the XII, force was advocated. I think that the use of force is logical, because people who are crooked politicians--leaders of other nations who are crooked--don't care anything about boycotts. And so, Pius XII said force is the only thing that will keep the peace and while he was very sad about all the wars that were going on in various parts of the world, still he said that if the people who are meek and humble don't use force, then the unjust aggressors will take over the whole world. So that papal peace program began in 1917, August 1, and I have been studying international relations since 1917, which is quite a long time. And so I didn't have to spend very much time getting that speech ready. I've probably given it a good many times in other forms.

P: Did you have to submit the text of this?

L: Yes, it went to the State Department. As I recall, they warned me that these Latins might be a little bit sensitive, and they would like to make sure that everything would be agreeable to them. I didn't mind at all. I didn't call it censorship. I sent it. I think some local man looked it over. At any rate, one sentence was taken out and the rest of the speech was all right. I think that we have to be led by leaders in things like that. I think a man might get into the pulpit and talk about peace and step on everybody's toes. So the fact that the State Department was helping me wasn't disagreeable to me at all.

P: Have you ever been attacked by the press from one of these times in which you were in the presence of Lyndon Johnson, or in conducting a service?

L: You mean for my social welfare ideas and things like that?

P: Well, I was thinking particularly, any services you have given for President Johnson, or sermons, or--

L: Oh, sure. The New York press attacked me. It was about three or four weeks ago. The New York Times attacked me. I said something about the Administration policy in Viet Nam and the Times attacked me.

P: To whom were you speaking when this occasion arose that the New York Times attacked you?

L: I was speaking to the group in Stonewall, Texas, where we had just dedicated a rectory and little Lyndon was pulling on my knee. His mother was kneeling down and whispering, trying to coax him to come away. It was funny.

P: And he had just gotten away from his mother?

L: Yes. He escaped from his mother's arms and tapped me on the knee. So I thought it was quite interesting to be giving a sermon with a little youngster, I think he's less than two years old, pulling on my knee. Maybe he'll be an archbishop some day.

P: Maybe so. Did you participate in Luci Nugent's conversion to Catholicism?

L: No, I didn't have anything to do with that at all. She was living in Washington at that time. She would come back here from time to time but I think it was a priest somewhere in the East.

P: Did you ever discuss her conversion with Lyndon Johnson?

L: No, I never did.

P: There was some furor over her rebaptism in the Roman Catholic Church.

L: Yes. Well, I think a statement was made by the Archbishop of Washington about that. Again, that's his business, not mine.

P: Did you attend Luci's wedding?

L: No.

P: Or the baptism of her son?

L: Let me see now. I don't think I did. The President was there. I think Father (W. W.) Schneider did that.

P: Oh, in Stonewall?

L: Yes. He's the pastor.

P: I believe it was Father Schneider who--

L: He's the pastor at Stonewall.

P: --who went with Lyndon Johnson to the--

L: To Germany?

P: To Germany.

L: Yes.

P: And this was in your jurisdiction to permit him to go. What arrangements were made?

L: Nobody interferes with such a splendid friend as Lyndon Johnson. If he wanted a priest to go, why he went, that's all there is to it, you know.

P: Have you attended other White House occasions, social occasions? Oh, I wanted to ask you. You had told me something, regarding the State Dinner you attended, on Chancellor Kiesinger when you were going through the receiving line, and I wonder if you would repeat that for me?

L: I think that might be just a little bit too elaborate for the tape. He was a very cordial man and spoke very kindly to me. But I don't think that would look very--It might look a little bit too elaborate on tape.

P: I believe I have seen it in a book. So I think--

L: Is that so? What kind of a book?

P: I believe it is one of the books on the President, so I--

L: Did the President tell it to somebody, because I never told it to anybody. Of

course, there may have been people there that overheard it.

P: No, I'm sure it was from other people.

L: Someone else. Well, of course--

P: Now will you tell us?

L: No, but I--

P: I think it's just an anecdote that--

L: But it was in a book some place. I didn't know that.

P: I believe I have seen it.

L: Well, of course, there were lots of people there.

P: I think it's an interesting aside on the President.

L: Well, some day you tell it, but I won't tell it.

P: All right. May I ask you, does the U.S. position on foreign aid to foreign countries, such as India, in forms of birth control programs, conflict with the American Catholic Church in any form?

L: Well, it isn't necessarily in conflict. I think the President wants those people to be instructed. We have had a council called Vatican II and in there it stated that parents should feel a sense of responsibility about the number of children that they are going to have. On the other hand, they are not allowed to use sinful methods. I'm not going to get into any birth control controversy. I think the President's principal objective is that people should be taught their responsibility. In other words, he stands for responsible parenthood and he's not urging anybody to use any means that are not lawful. But as I say that's a rather sensitive subject and I don't think it would be proper on this little tape.

P: There have been several rumors, sometimes picked up by the press and reported, regarding Lyndon Johnson converting to Catholicism.

L: He has never mentioned it to me. And I've never asked him. He's a very religious man. I think he belongs to the Disciples, or something like that.

P: Church of Christ.

L: I think that's it. He's a very religious man--very, very fine, clean, wholesome citizen. He's outstanding, simply outstanding.

P: Have you had occasion to come to know Mrs. Johnson, and Lynda and Luci?

L: Well, yes, not as well as I know the President. I have met them all several times.

P: Does any one of them come to your mind as a--something that happened that gave you an insight as to the personalities of the First Family?

L: No, as I say, I know the President much better. I've been very much impressed with the gracious character of Mrs. Lyndon Johnson and I think she has had a difficult time in the sense that the First Lady has to go to all kinds of entertainments and so many things and she has got to be pleasant. It must be a hard job to be the First Lady. But I think she has done a wonderful job. I think she has been a great help to the President and that's the way we like it.

P: Have you spoken with the President in any sort of visiting capacity regarding current problems in our country--discussed them with him?

L: Occasionally, I think we have. We've discussed international relations, for example. He's one President that really knows and understands international relations and I've enjoyed discussing them with him. Not all politicians today understand international relations. It isn't easy to learn; it's a science. You don't get it by inspiration. You've got to study. You've got to think. A lot of people that are not very intelligent will never understand international relations, particularly if they are selfish and want everything for

their own nation and nothing for the other fellow. That just won't do. But I don't recall any particular discussion that we have had on local affairs. I have agreed for years with his idea that the government should help all the people.

P: In the area of foreign relations, was there a specific crisis or incident that you and he discussed?

L: No, there wasn't any particular crisis, just in general. But we have to continue and have to keep going in Viet Nam. That's his policy and I agree with it. But there hasn't been any considerable discussion on that.

P: Have you talked about anything regarding race or--

L: You mean race relations?

P: Race relations.

L: I don't remember. He's right on that too. He's right on all these social welfare categories. He believes in the dignity of man and that's the key to the whole thing. If you believe that the Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and everybody else, that all these people are human, and that they have a certain dignity in the eyes of God, then you've got to be decent with them. And that's the key to the whole thing, you know. He does believe in the dignity of man, and he has been a great help to all of humanity, a great help.

P: I'd like to ask you one final question. How would you compare Lyndon Johnson and his career and his Administration with other Presidents?

L: I think that he compares very favorably with Mr. Roosevelt, that's the only one I'll mention. I was very devoted to Mr. Roosevelt, too. He was a great President and Lyndon is a great President. I would say that both of them are two of the greatest Presidents that our country has ever had and two of the greatest national leaders that any country has ever had because they were both

great. Mr. Roosevelt did a tremendous job for the poor, plus the wealthy people. He saved bankers, for example. The bankers cursed him later on, some of them, not all of them. But he saved them, just the same. You were too young to remember the depression, but it was a terrible thing, and they all ran to Mr. Roosevelt for salvation, and he gave them salvation. And a few months later, some of them were cursing him. But he was a great man, and Lyndon is a great man. That's it.

P: Thank you very much.

L: All right.

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By R. E. Lucey

to the

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