INTERVIEWEE: JOHN W. MACY JR. (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: DAVID MC COMB

April 25, 1969

Mc Let me identify this tape as the second session with Mr. John W. Macy, Jr. The date is April 25, 1969, and my name is David McComb.

Last time we were talking about your career and had gotten into the Eisenhower period of the 1950's. You were going to tell me about your appointment to the Civil Service Commission.

M: Yes. This was an interesting series of events that related to the transition between the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. As I told you when we were together before, I had served as a special assistant to the Secretary of the Army during the final days of the Truman Administration, had been involved in preparing the briefing for the incoming Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens, and how the efforts that I had made at that time did not meet the needs of the Secretary particularly. That experience, plus some others of that particular time, convinced me that I had reached the pinnacle of my career service in the government and that I should seek my career objectives in some other avenue.

I consequently talked with a number of people outside of government about opportunities. While I was in the throes of such interviews, I was approached by the then-Budget Director, Mr. Joseph Dodge, whom I had known at the Pentagon through his assistance to the Army in connection with the Japanese and Korean financial matters. As a result of that, we had been professionally associated. He called me, asked me to come over to his office. In the course of the conversation he informed me that the new administration was going to enlarge the

leadership element of the Bureau of the Budget; that he had the approval of the President to designate two additional assistant directors of the Bureau of the Budget; and that he not only had the approval of the President, but he had the approval of the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, a gentleman of less than liberal persuasions called John Tabor. He said that he had been looking over the field of candidates for these two new positions, and he had decided that he wanted to have someone with government experience and that he had reached the decision that I was the man that he wished to have.

I told him that I was flattered at his consideration and I would be happy to weight this opportunity, along with others that were being presented to me. But that I had one reservation which I felt he ought to explore. I confessed that I was a registered Democrat, even though my performance had been nonpartisan as a career employe, and that it was my impression that many in the Eisenhower Administration felt that it was important to clean out Democrats who had been in the service for a long period of time, and that perhaps my appointment would be a source of embarrassment to him and possibly might injure his relations with such important people as John Tabor.

He said: "Oh, no, that'll be no problem at all. I've been given a blank check to designate anyone that I consider qualified for these posts."

I said: "Well, that's fine, but I think it would be worthwhile to check on this. Why don't you at least discuss it with Governor Adams?"

So we departed, and I heard nothing for two weeks, three weeks, four weeks. So finally as time went by and I was holding other people off, I called him, and I said: "Do you have any further word for me on the matter we discussed?"

And he said, "Yes, I'm glad you called. Do you remember that reservation that you raised?"

I said, "Yes."

"Well, that reservation was an appropriate one to raise because I did talk to Governor Adams, and I guess I have to withdraw the offer."

So with that as a further confirmation of my status in the eyes of the new administration, I was convinced that I should seek my career elsewhere. Having made that decision and before determining precisely what I would do afterwards, I had a call from Philip Young, who had been appointed by President Eisenhower as Chairman of the Civil Service Commission in March of 1953. And he asked me to come over and talk with him.

In the course of that conversation he explained that the top career job in the Civil Service Commission, that of executive director, was about to be vacant through the retirement of the long-time incumbent, and that he had decided that he wanted to have someone from outside of the Civil Service Commission but someone who had long experience in government to occupy that post. Would I be interested?

I said, "I might be. However, I think you're wasting your time." And I proceeded to tell him the Dodge story.

He laughed, and he said: "Well, you know your experience there just convinces me more than ever that you're the man I want."

I said, "Well, I think you'd better talk to Governor Adams."

He says, "I will."

So he called back later that day, and he says: "This is all right with Governor Adams. He thinks that it would be well for us to have someone who is an acknowledged Democrat in this particular position as long as his credentials are career background."

So to make a long story short, I agreed to take the position, and in August of 1963 I transferred from the Pentagon to the old Patent Office at 8th and F

Street in downtown Washington, and moved into the Civil Service Commission.

I immediately faced problems of their budget.

Mc Let me interject a question. Why would Adams agree to this one and not the other one?

M: I never knew. I never had a chance to talk to Adams about it. But I must say that Dodge's assessment of the situation was an accurate one because Young did have difficulty with certain Republican leaders, particularly with Senator Knowland, over my appointment. He also had some difficulties with his Republican colleague, Commissioner George Moore, who felt that this was a missed opportunity to bring a career man who at least wore a Republican jacket into this particular job. As far as my performance in the job is concerned, I don't think anybody outside of those with whom I had had these conversations ever knew of my political affiliation. But it made for a very interesting story, and actually it was revealed at one point publicly because I was attacked by Fulton Lewis, Jr., as one of the exhibits of how inept the Eisenhower Administration had been in republicanizing the Executive Branch. I felt highly honored to join the select group that had been attacked by Mr. Lewis.

But just to show the contrast between the two government organizations, when I entered the commission I became involved in the budget process, and I found that the commission's total budget for that year was roughly equivalent to the amount of money the Army spent for baked goods--you know, dough of one kind and dough of another. So I suffered a slight sense of decompression in moving from high funding to low funding.

But my experience at the commission was a rewarding one. The staff was remarkably cooperative in view of the fact that I was from outside the organization and this position had traditionally been reserved for those who grew

up within the organization. Most of the key staff were considerably my senior--in most cases twenty years my senior--but I feel that we were able to operate as a team. Shortly after I arrived, Chairman Young joined with me in a total reorganization of the Commission to bring it into contemporary times, an organization which I found sufficiently wise so that during my term as Chairman I left it basically the same.

Mc The Republicans had been out of office a good while.

M: Twenty years.

Mc Wasn't there pressure on the Civil Service Commission to appoint Republicans, or at least to find Republicans to fill slots?

M: There wasn't pressure on the Commission actually to find Republicans, but there was pressure upon the Commission to ease its standards to permit preference for Republicans. I admired Chairman Young tremendously for his valiant efforts to hold this off, and I'm sure he had very difficult times in resisting. Frequently it was necessary to provide him with strong documents of advocacy so that he could deal with those who were concerned about providing more change.

In fact, I think a more accurate expression of this would be a desire on the part of the Republican leadership to rout out the Democrats. They did not have, really, the numbers of people interested in government to make the replacements, so that it was a desire to change.

And you must recognize that this was still the McCarthy era. One of the early involvements that Chairman Young and I had was in the whole matter of the loyalty security program. By the time I moved to the commission the Eisenhower Administration had already written a new executive order broadening the Loyalty and Security Program. And the Civil Service Commission had a substantial role in the administration of that program.

My first exposure to Richard Nixon was in connection with the Commission's reporting of cases where loyalty and security conditions had resulted in the individual's removal from the job. He was very much interested in that. He used those figures for political purposes, and in my view frequently distorted those figures.

So when the Democrats became the majority party in the Congress in 1955, the Democratic-led committees had extensive investigations of the manner in which the Loyalty and Security Program had been conducted. I feel that to a material degree this undermined the effectiveness of Philip Young as chairman. He was forced to spend so much time defending a program, which was basically political and which did at least border on being a violation of individual rights. It was through the process of explaining that program that I first met Hubert Humphrey. He was chairman of a committee that investigated this program, as were a number of other committees. So we spent a great deal of time in 1955 defending this particular program.

I think the program was fairly administered insofar as the Civil Service Commission was involved, but there were those who were excessively zealous in administering it in some of the departments and agencies. There were those who tried to make political brownie points by recording large numbers of individuals who had been excluded for security reasons.

In 1956 there was a Supreme Court decision that invalidated a portion of that executive order. That really ended the play of the program and the attention that the program received. Subsequent to that time there were virtually no separations for that purpose. There were separations but on grounds of poor performance, or on the grounds of malfeasance, or something else, rather than on the more tenuous grounds of security.

Mc It's a historian's judgment--at least this is what comes out in the books--that McCarthy had threatened about all these comments and yet never proved a single one. Is that true?

M: That's true. I don't think there ever was a case proven by McCarthy. He made no effort to prove his cases. There were instances where some of the people he named--and others he did not name--had been involved in communist associations. Some had been members of the Communist Party and affiliated groups in the late '30's during the period of the Popular Front. Yet I don't think that basically they were disloyal to the country. Subsequent judgment has proven that there were not constitutional grounds for taking action.

Mc You were able to defend your program without difficulty?

M: Yes. And I really feel, without any self-aggrandizement, that my presence there provided a balancing and liberalizing point of view in its administration. Many of my liberal friends wanted to know why I was willing to stay with this because it was so allegedly oppressive. But my view was that if you disagreed with it, it was much better to stay with it and see if you couldn't moderate it than to get outside and throw rocks at it because that wasn't likely to have any particular effect.

There were a number of affirmative things that were achieved during those years. We had a complete recasting of the government's college recruiting program. We had the initial moves on some government training. We had some efforts to redesign the whole appointment system under Civil Service so that it was more pertinent to modern conditions. We spent a good deal of time, particularly in the early days of the Eisenhower Administration, handling massive reductions in force. There were about 200,000 people that were separated from the government's rolls during the first two years. This was the

tapering off from the Korean war. And that was controversial and occupied an extensive amount of time.

The election came in '56. Eisenhower was reelected. Shortly after the election Chairman Young called me in and told me he was going to resign. He had reached the conclusion that he had been there long enough, that many of his credits had been consumed, and that he felt that it was important that there be new leadership in the Commission. He also had had some difficulties in his relationship with the other Republican member, Commissioner George Moore, and the understanding was that Moore would resign also. So only the Democratic member, Frederick Lawton(?), would remain.

The previous year there had been passed by Congress a change in the terms of the Civil Service Commissioners. The changed had been from service at the pleasure of the President to fixed six year terms. To some degree this was attributable to the relationship that we had within the Commission at that time. Under the Reorganization Plan of 1949 which created the strong chairman for the Civil Service Commission, there was also a provision that made the Executive Director his in-line deputy for operations and consequently virtually the acting chairman during periods of his absence. Since my performance was activist, I frequently was involved in representing the agency before congressional committees and outside groups in the absence of the chairman. This was not viewed with any great favor by the other Republican member. And although I don't believe that he necessarily was behind the legislation, he was able to stimulate enough congressional opposition in this so that a rider was placed on a pay bill that changed the terms of the commissioners. I think that also contributed to Philip Young's decision to leave.

President Eisenhower then appointed as chairman a lameduck congressman who had been defeated in the 1956 election by the name of Harris Ellsworth,

and appointed another Republican, Christopher Phillips, to take Moore's place.

It became very evident to me after Ellsworth's appointment that the commission was going to stand still and not go forward. Many of my plans ended up in his desk drawer without action. It was pretty clear that the signals from the White House were "Don't rock the boat." I felt that in view of the change in leadership and change of policy atmosphere, that probably my time had come to leave as well.

It was at that particular point that the president of Wesleyan came to me and indicated that they were creating a new post and would I be interested. I canvassed the situation and concluded that this would in fact be the time to move to a new career. I made this known publicly in November 1957 and I left the government at the end of January, 1958.

The following three years were spent at Wesleyan. I never really totally escaped from public service. I continued as a consultant to various agencies at various times. I joined the mission for the AID agency to Spain in 1960. I served as a consultant to the Veterans Administration in 1959. I worked with the Fund for Adult Education as a consultant on a program in Education for Public Responsibility. And I served in 1958 and '59 as President of the American Society for Public Administration. During that year I visited about thirty-three of the chapters of that organization across the country.

Mc It sounds like academic life was too slow-paced for you.

M: Exactly, it was! I really became quite restive with the slow pace. And I also became quickly aware of the low regard in which faculty held the administrators. I had, as a part of my agreement when I accepted the post, a faculty assignment of my own. So throughout this period I had what I called a half-a-professor's load, and so my teaching diluted the quality of instruction at

Wesleyan for those years. I taught a course in Public Administration one semester. Each year I joined in a joint Seminar on Social Ethics and Contemporary Professions with a member of the Religion Department and a number of the Economics Department. We had a marvelous time there. This was with a group of topflight seniors and juniors.

Then the final year I taught a seminar on the Presidency at the time of the 1960 Presidential campaign--very timely and very interesting to the students.

Mc Did you make predictions on who would win?

M: Yes. We made predictions all along. And the final class was on inaugural day when the assignment of those in the seminar was to listen to the Kennedy Inaugural, and then write me a paper on what it augured for the future stature and style of the presidency. By that time I had already moved down here in response to President Kennedy's call, and I spent a good many evenings reading and grading those papers after I entered office.

My call from President Kennedy came after an interesting series of circumstances. The first entreé to the Kennedy Administration came on the 9th of December 1960 when I had a call from the then-Governor of Connecticut, Abraham Ribicoff, with whom I had had some association in the previous years, particularly as vice chairman of a state Economic Development Commission. I was vice chairman to a man named Ellis Maxey, so this was known as the Maxey-Macy report. And I had become acquainted with the governor through that and other associations. He called and said, as I knew, he had already been named the Secretary of HEW, and that he had been told by the President-elect that he had a blank check to select anybody that he wished for the other presidential appointments within the Department, and that he was very much interested in my giving thought to becoming his Under Secretary. I told him that this was a consideration that

appealed to me a good deal, that I would think about it and call him back the following week.

My thinking didn't really take me that long. My wife was already eager to return to Washington. So I called back and said, yes, I would; however, in thinking about it, I wondered if he really shouldn't check this out a bit more carefully with the President-elect because it seemed to me that it was politically traditional not to have two men from the same state in the same department and in related offices. And I said: "Besides, I think you should realize, if you don't already, that positions in HEW will be very attractive to Kennedy followers, and it may be that there would be interest in appointing somebody to the Under Secretary's spot who had been in the campaign." And I had not been active in the campaign.

So on December 27 he reached me out at Chicago where I was addressing an alumni group and said: "When you get back to Hartford, stop by and see me." So I stopped in to see him at the Governor's office in the State House. He said: "You know, you were right. There are dozens of people who want to be Under Secretary of HEW, including the President's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver. So I think that wouldn't work, but," he said, "everybody down there knows you and they've got other jobs that they want you for, and they've asked me to ask you which you would prefer, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower with Secretary McNamara, or Chairman of the Civil Service Commission."

So I told him that I would be willing to accept either post, but I preferred the former.

I heard nothing more until I had a call on January 3rd from John Bailey, also of Hartford. John said: "How about coming by and seeing me this afternoon?"

I said, "Okay."

We met in his office. And he said: "About this position you're going to take."

I said, "Well, I haven't accepted any position at all as yet."

He said, "Well, the President-elect thinks that you're going to be Chairman of the Civil Service Commission."

I said, "Oh, is that the decision that he has made?"

He said, "Yes, don't you know? Didn't the Governor tell you?"

I said, "No, but that's all right. But I'd like to hear it from the President."

He said: "Oh, he wants to talk to you."

So he put in a call to Palm Beach and talked to Pierre Salinger. It was arranged that I would return to my home and was to call a certain number at Palm Beach an hour hence. So I called that number and the President-elect had gone out, but he would be back in an hour and he would call me.

So he called back about 7 p.m. on January 3. I had a fifteen minute conversation with him over the phone, at which time he proffered the position and told me that he wanted to have a career man running the Civil Service; that he had found that I was known to and well regarded by a number of people that he had talked with; and that he hoped that I would take it.

I then asked him about some of his policy positions with respect to the career service, and his response was: "well, I'm for making it the best in the world, making it one that will attract the quality of the country, and how that is achieved I'll leave up to you."

So I said: "The answer is yes."

He says, "Fine. Call Pierre in the morning and work out the details for the announcement." And so the announcement was made the following day.

I came to Washington the following week to talk with my predecessor, Roger Jones, whom I had known, and to talk to the people I had known for a long time at the Civil Service Commission.

The transition here took an interesting turn because in the 1961 changeover there was far more preparation than there had been in '53. There had been a good many lessons learned at that time. And there had been some scholarly consideration of the problems of transition, largely led by people at Brookings Institution. There had been a designation of a Transition Officer for the incoming Kennedy Administration. That was Clark Clifford. So there was a good deal of preparation in each and every department and agency.

But, again, it was futile in this case, because most of the material that was presented was material that I was familiar with. Certainly I knew all the people because I had been largely responsible for placing them where they were in the organization. So it was a very easy and smooth transition.

There was some delay in getting my name up to the Senate. It actually didn't go until some time in February, and I didn't take the oath of office until the 6th of March. So actually I served for more than two months at no compensation at all and without full credentials.

Mc There was no trouble in the Senate?

M: No, no trouble. I was introduced by Senator Dodd to the committee, and the hearing was a very pleasant one. I took the oath of office on March 9th, and that started eight years of active involvement in the matters of civil service. President Kennedy was highly supportive in all of the programs that I endeavored to initiate and advance. I sat in on cabinet meetings from the beginning. Usually there was a scheduled presentation that involved something in the personnel field. And the relationships with the Congress were, for the most

part, constructive. I was very pleased with the cordiality that I was able to maintain with Senator Olin Johnson, who was chairman of the Senate committee. Even though we had substantially different views on certain issues, it was possible to work very constructively together, and I owe a great deal of credit to his understanding.

In the House, the chairman in those days was Tom Murray, who was not well and really quite inactive. So largely the work was carried on through the staff director of the committee, Charles Johnson.

Mc You have been characterized as Lyndon Johnson's chief talent scout, under President Johnson. Did you also operate that way for Kennedy?

M: In a very limited way. Really, after the initial surge of search and selection in 1961, the talent activity tapered off. But Ralph Dungan had some interest in it, and what was done was done under his leadership.

Along in 1962 we became aware--a number of us--that there was need to keep this alive, because there were always vacancies coming up. You never totally staffed the government. So Ralph and I discussed this, and we jointly brought in to the White House a man named Dan Fenn, who became really the continuing talent scout of that particular period. He and Dungan really laid the foundation for much of the work that I subsequently did in the Johnson Administration. Beyond that, my association with the search for candidates for presidential appointment was on frequent calls for reference information or for search information that came from the White House.

My association with the White House took a number of different special forms. President Kennedy named me to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commitee, a committee where Lyndon Johnson was the chairman. This was where I first became really closely acquainted with Lyndon Johnson, because he saw

very quickly that where we could make the greatest progress in equal opportunity for Negroes and Mexican-Americans was in the Civil Service, because here it was the government as the employer. I had frequent association with him, did staff work for him, had him participate in many of the meetings that I organized within the government.

Mc I have heard that you went out of your way, in comparison to other people in the Kennedy Administration, to keep the Vice President informed, to tell him what was going on--at least in your area--and to give him information. Did you make a special effort to do this?

M: Yes. I made a special effort because I believed, particularly because of the association in the equal employment opportunity area, that his leadership was highly beneficial and that he was in a position to reinforce many of the President's programs that I was working on.

Mc Quite frequently a Vice President is neglected or otherwise thought to be a rather unuseful individual, and yet you didn't take this approach at all.

M: No, no. Not at all. This was no calculated move on my part. I felt that the Vice President was a significant force in the areas of my responsibility. And I viewed one of my key responsibilities to be in this area of equal employment opportunity. So I did endeavor to keep him informed. He asked me to put on conferences in which he was the principal speaker. He asked me to organize training programs where he was one of the principal lecturers. He asked me to deal with specific situations which he had identified as needing attention. So I had a very congenial and constructive relationship, where I hope I was helpful to him, but he was tremendously helpful to me.

I remember I asked him to give the principal address at the Civil Service anniversary celebration we had in 1962, and he very generously came. This

was a tremendous shot in the arm, not only to our own people within the Commission, but throughout the government.

So I do feel that it was a particularly unique relationship.

Mc He seemed to appreciate your efforts then?

M: Oh he did. There were other instances. President Kennedy put me on the Commission on the Status of Women late in 1961. He apparently asked the Vice President to keep an eye on the deliberations of that particular group. Mrs. Roosevelt was the chairman of that committee. I found the work there very interesting, very rewarding. Again, I established a relationship with Mrs. Roosevelt, which I'll never forget. She invited me to be a guest at her home in June of 1962, the last weekend she had anybody in her home. She became ill shortly after that.

I'll never forget the tour that she took us on as a commission through the old Roosevelt house there at Hyde Park, the family residence, and her various stories about parts of the house were just fascinating.

So Lyndon Johnson was very much involved in that. And when Mrs. Roosevelt died in November of 1962, he very kindly invited me to accompany him and Mrs. Johnson to the funeral in the Vice President's plane. He was always very thoughtful about recognizing my interest in matters that were of interest to him.

Mc Johnson apparently had an inordinate interest in women in government and in the hiring of women for high government positions if possible. Did that possibly relate to this work that you did with Mrs. Roosevelt on the status of women?

M: I'm sure it was a stimulant to it. He was very much interested in the work of that group. And, once again, a focus of that group was employment, and again, employment of women in government. So he became interested and knowledgeable about this.

One thing we were able to do in that committee was to work out a reversal of a legal decision that had been made by Attorney General Cummings in the 1930's. His interpretation had been that appointing officers in the government could determine whether or not a job should be filled by a man or a woman, without establishing any standards for such determination, and could then request the Civil Service Commission to submit men only or women only. This, it had turned out, had led to tremendous abuse, and there were many "men only" occupational determinations which were without any justification whatsoever.

I detected this shortly after I came onboard in 1961 and called the attention of the Roosevelt commission to this and was asked by Mrs. Roosevelt to go to the Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, and see what we could do about reviewing that earlier interpretation. So it was possible for the President to set standards that would have to be met in the event you wanted men only or women only.

At this meeting at Hyde Park in June 1962, Nicholas Katzenbach came to the meeting with a new interpretation from Attorney General Robert Kennedy, indicating that his interpretation of the law was that the President did have that authority.

So later that year the President issued an executive order delegating to the Civil Service Commission responsibility for establishing standards. The result was that virtually no positions were judged to be either men only or women only after that. Now that didn't automatically open up jobs for women, but it at least eliminated a major barrier that had existed in the name of Civil Service and with the support of an attorney general for nearly thirty years. So it's interesting because here's an interplay of President Kennedy, Vice President Johnson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Robert Kennedy, and Nicholas Katzenbach.

Mc It was during these Kennedy years then that you got to know Lyndon Johnson fairly well?

M: Yes, indeed--and the association extended beyond the official bounds. The Johnsons were very nice to the Macys. We were included a number of times in social events. It became a very cordial association. Yet I certainly wouldn't say that we were in the Vice President's inner circle or anything like that. It was a relationship that grew out of what I believe was mutual interest and mutual respect with respect to the programs that we were both working on.

Mc Before I get to Johnson's presidency, are there any developments in the Kennedy years that you might want to comment on as far as the Civil Service Commission is concerned?

M: As I say, I feel that in the Kennedy years the Civil Service Commission was really mobilized for the first time to carry out its responsibility on equal employment opportunity. And I feel that Lyndon Johnson was a decided inspiration in making that possible. He recognized progress; he kept a prod on us; he was always available to give us support. And although neither of us would feel that we went as far as we hoped we would be able to, I think it really turned the government service around during those periods.

I also recall very well as a part of that program sort of a triangular relationship with Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy. In May of 1963 when the Birmingham difficulties were occurring, I had a call one day from Robert Kennedy saying that Burke Marshall was trying to bring the Negro leaders and the white civic leaders of Birmingham together to resolve some of the complaints lodged by the Negro leaders. He said that one of the complaints was that Negroes had not had opportunities for employment in the retail establishments of Birmingham and that all the Negroes wanted was one Negro in each department store

and that the leaders in the business community were saying, "Why should we do this when the federal employers in Birmingham are not hiring any Negroes in clerical positions."

So Robert Kennedy asked me to ascertain the facts, which I did with a quick survey. I sent a man to Birmingham to explore the situation, and the result was deplorable. There was very little action that had been taken to give Negroes an opportunity, particularly in visible assignments of a clerical nature.

So, when I reported this the Attorney General said, "This has got to be corrected. See what you can do."

So I sent a team down there and got a group of agency people together. We found that there were some job openings, and we proceeded to really do a massive recruiting job in the Negro community of Birmingham.

Mc Is this the first such effort by the Civil Service Commission?

M: This was the first concentrated effort in a given community. Prior to that, in the two years preceding that we had sort of dealt on a nationwide basis. We'd had some meetings in communities.

Mc You'd faced the problem of hiring minorities before?

M: Oh yes, we'd faced the problem, but we hadn't analyzed in the necessary depth each community and each agency. We found in Birmingham that the Post Office and the VA were doing fine, but all the other agencies were miserable. Some agencies had no Negroes at all. We had a crash job. I sent a team in there. I involved the agencies. This became a key point.

We had a cabinet meeting at which this was brought up by the Attorney General. And at that time, when the cabinet meeting was called and the Attorney General asked me to come and explain what we were doing, I realized, "Oh, oh, the Vice President hasn't been involved in this."

So I called the Vice President, gave him a report. He was disturbed. And I said: "Let me give you a complete rundown on what I'm doing."

Mc He was disturbed. Why?

M: He was disturbed on two bases. One, the poor record that was revealed; and, two, that he had not been involved in this himself. So at the cabinet meeting he was forewarned. After I made my comment, then he made some comments as chairman of the Committee of Equal Employment Opportunity. So I felt that this was a situation where I was sort of in between the two men.

There had been some tension between the two men at some of the meetings of the committee. I frequently felt that Robert Kennedy was unduly pressing on the Vice President, demanding results out of the committee beyond the committee's capacity to produce. This was disturbing to the people that were present. In fact many times since then, those who were present at that table, such as James Webb and others have commented on the significance of the apparent sword-crossing that occurred at those meetings.

Mc On occasions like that, did the Vice President try to play a subordinate role to the President? Did he try to stay in the background?

M: Oh yes.

Mc I've heard that he did.

M: Oh yes. And he only responded to the President's request. In other words, he did not try to put himself out in front.

Shortly after this particular episode in the spring of 1963, President Kennedy put his own full leadership behind the civil rights movement for the first time. I mean, I felt that up to that time really it was Lyndon Johnson who was carrying the bulk of the civil rights freight. But after Birmingham the President caught fire on this particular issue. He made that magnificent

address of June 10th, I guess it was, which was one of his finest speeches in my view. Then there proceeded a series of meetings at the White House of leadership groups which featured the President, the Vice President, and the Attorney General. And it was Lyndon Johnson who came across strongest in every one of those meetings--I heard this from educators, labor leaders, businessmen, civil rights leaders--because he had lived with it. And his own passionate support for equality came through. The Kennedys were brilliant in their intellectual understanding of it, but the passion of the Vice President's observations was particularly persuasive with the people who were there. And he was asked to do this by the President.

I always felt that the relationship between the President and the Vice President was a very constructive one. The President kept the Vice President informed; he brought him into major decision making. The Vice President never tried to take a position outside of the President's policy orbit on anything. There was no cleavage.

Mc In other words, he played the proper role of the Vice President.

M: I feel so. I feel that, contrary to some of the history that's now coming out, I didn't see evidence of dissatisfaction on his part with his role or dissatisfaction on his part in his relationship with the President. I never did. Now there were those who were much closer to him who may have observed this or have been involved in it. He used to joke about the office of Vice President, but that has been sort of an endemic characteristic of every vice president. And I'm sure that his tremendous capacity was not utilized to the fullest, but I think he directed it where he knew the President wanted it--and directed it forcefully and convincingly.

Mc Is it your impression that the Vice President had any control over appointments?

M: My impression is that he had very little. I think there were instances where he may have had some influence on an appointment because of his known interest in a particular person, but I don't think that he really carried much weight on appointments. I did not have any involvement in any of them.

Now he did call me a few times about individuals who he wished to hire in some of his vice presidential capacities. He was always looking for ways and means of augmenting his vice presidential staff, and he had a very tight budget as Vice President. He used the Space Council; he used the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity as a means for trying to augment his own staff--not in the sense that this was inappropriate, but to make sure that he was able to carry out the functions the President assigned to him.

On two or three occasions he called me about members of his staff who had evidenced an interest in assignment in an executive department or agency, and he sought my cooperation in expediting their transfer or something of that type.

Mc Upon the death of Kennedy, did you have any immediate contact with the new President Lyndon Johnson?

M: No, I didn't. My first contact with him directly must have been on the 2nd of December when he called in the heads of all the independent agencies, and we met with him around the table in the Cabinet Room. That was really the first direct contact I had subsequent to the assassination.

MC What did he tell you then?

M: This was largely addressed to the regulatory chairmen, indicating his desire that they pursue their tasks in the public interest. He told them that he wasn't going to make any changes in the appointees that were in those agencies. He expressed his confidence in them. He expressed to them a judgment which

he had expressed to me a number of times before, and that was that one of Kennedy's greatest contributions during his administration was the quality of the people that he brought into government. He had told me that prior to the assassination a couple of times when we had talked about the people that he was working with. So the assumption that he felt alienated or had a low opinion of the personnel in the Kennedy Administration, I thin, is a canard, because he, I felt, was very sincere in his assessment of their ability.

Mc There's a companion criticism--and there's a question that goes with it, that being, did Johnson make an effort to move the Kennedy people out once he got in office?

M: No, it was the reverse. He made an effort to have them stay. I think that's very evident. And many of them he reappointed when their terms were up, if they were on terms. So it was the opposite. He urged the people to stay, particularly in those early days after the assassination. He urged them to stay. And that was the time when there were really two layers of people in the White House--his people and Kennedy's people.

Mc Now wouldn't that cause friction? I mean, eventually.

M: I think there was some friction. It was difficult going, and I think that the Johnson people performed with great skill in keeping the relationships from becoming too irritating.

Mc It would seem to be a very delicate period of transition in there from Kennedy to Johnson. And it would seem that your office might be somewhat involved in that.

M: It was. For example, I put out an early statement from the President, which I didn't deal with him on personally but I sent through Valenti, a statement to the bureaucracy entitled "Let Us Continue." And I prepared a number of

things that went to him, which became part of the Presidential Papers during those early days.

Then the other episode I had shortly after the assassination involved the presentation of the Presidential Medal for Freedom. This had been an activity that I had been associated with in the Kennedy years. In fact, the idea of the Presidential Medal of Freedom largely flowed from Arthur Goldberg, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Fred Holborn and myself in response to an indication of interest along this line on the part of President Kennedy. I won't take time to go into the details but suffice it to say that the President issued an executive order on February 22, 1963, establishing the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and then designating a panel that would give him recommendations of people who should receive it. I was the executive secretary of that panel. And we met several times in the spring of '63 and gave the President some names in May. Then on July 4 he announced the first Honors List.

Mc Did you set up criteria for that?

M: I was involved in writing the criteria in the executive order, and then worked with the committee that was chaired by Undersecretary Ball. It included among its members Henry Cabot Lodge. We made up a list of names for the President, and then he spent a great deal of time personally going over those names, throwing some out, adding others, and finally agreeing upon a list that was published July 4. He and Mrs. Kennedy spent a good deal of time in designing the award decoration--the medal itself. And the delay in getting that cast postponed the date for the presentation of these awards at the White House, until finally early in November the date of December 4th was selected. I went ahead with all of the logistics that were involved in getting ready for the ceremony, writing the scenario, and sending the invitations to the recipients and

determining how many guests there would be and all of the details. It was a great deal of fun. I enjoyed it immensely.

And then the assassination came. I assumed, as did George Ball, that the event would be called off. But Mrs. Kennedy and President Johnson insisted that it go on. So we went ahead with the arrangements.

I spent a good deal of time with the President during the hours preceding that particular ceremony, because after he had decided to do it, he then had some misgivings about his own involvement in it. I felt very strongly and was very outspoken in my own advocacy that he do it. I felt that this was important--not just to honor President Kennedy--but I felt it was very important for the Presidency as an institution.

Mc You appealed to him that it was a presidential job, not just a Kennedy job or anything else?

M: Exactly. And a number of other people, I'm sure, appealed to him. The ceremony came off on December 5th at noon in the State Dining Room because the East Room was still in mourning. Mrs. Kennedy came downstairs and stood in the shadows, and the medal was presented to about thirty people. Beautiful citations that had been written by a variety of people were read by the President himself. He gave the medals. Then at the end of the ceremony, the President awarded the medal posthumously to President Kennedy and to Pope John. So this was an area of very close association, and, for awhile, a rather tense association. But I spoke out what I believed. I think I shocked Valenti, because he didn't think people talked that way to the President. But I always felt that he respected that kind of judgment, if it could be supported in terms of the interests of the President.

To finish this particular story, in the following year, in 1964, we went through the same process and gave a group of names to President Johnson. He

reviewed the names and sifted them out as President Kennedy had, and made his selections. And the selections were announced on the 4th of July, and a presentation was made in the East Room early in September of 1964. Again, I felt it was a marvelous event and ceremony.

We proceeded with the same process in 1965. But after the President received the names from the committee, he decided not to act. And I think there were a variety of reasons. We'd had the abortive experience with the arts event that Eric Goldman put on where people being honored at the White House misbehaved. Also, one of the names on the list happened to be Herbloc, and the day that the list reached the President, the cartoon with Valenti's words appeared in the Washington Post. And thirdly, several people with high ambition to receive the award were lobbying the White House very vigorously. So there were no awards in 1965, in 1966, in 1967.

In 1968 the President asked that a list be made up, it was given to him late in the year, of people that he thought he would want to honor. Now I confess that most of these judgments were mine personally. But nothing happened until finally on the morning of January 20, 1969, at nine o'clock I recieved a call from Jim Jones, the President's appointment secretary, that the President had decided to present the Medal of Freedom between then and noon to eighteen people on that list. So I provided him with the background and the names. We reserved a necessary number of medals, knowing that we couldn't possibly have the medals engraved and the citations embossed between then and noon.

At 11:45 I had a call back from Jim Jones, saying, "The President is going to announce between now and noon those eighteen names, plus two others."

And I said, "Yeah?"

And he said, "The two others are McGeorge Bundy and John Macy, and I've got to go." So at roughly 11:55 telegrams were released from the White House notifying

these twenty people that they had been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

So that's the comprehensive story on that particular program, with which I had deep involvement through these years. I think also reveals a number of things about President Johnson.

Mc It is 7:10.

M: It is 7:10?

Mc It is 7:10, and this is a good place to break.

M: I think this is a very logical break.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
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Gift of Personal Statement

By John W. Macy

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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

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Signed John W Macy Jr

Date December 15, 1976

Accepted James B. Rhoads
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Date December 17, 1976