

INTERVIEW I

DATE: August 16, 1972

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE MAHON

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Congressman Mahon's Office in Washington, D. C.

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F: Let's start this, then, with talking about when you first became friends with Lyndon Johnson. You came up here in 1935?

M: I was elected in 1934 from the--

(Interruption: Congressman Mahon goes to vote)

F: We elected you in 1934, and so you came up here then in January or March, I guess, then, wasn't it?

M: No, no, that was after the time we met on the third or another fixed date of January of the year after one's election. I was a candidate in 1934 in the new district, the Nineteenth District, that cut Marvin Jones' district about half in two. I ran along with--there were nine of us--no incumbent [who] ran for the position and I was elected; nominated in the runoff primary and elected. I came up here in December, late December, and was here, of course, and have been here since that time. This is my thirty-eighth year in the House.

F: Now Johnson was Bob Kleberg's secretary as they called them in those days?

M: Yes, Johnson was there. I brought a young man up with me who had helped in my campaign who as a teacher in my area and was interested in

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politics and who was a graduate of Texas Tech. And he and Johnson became fast friends and buddies. So in 1935 I got pretty well acquainted with Johnson through Lloyd Croslin who was with me for a number of years and later went back to Lubbock, served as district attorney there and died of a heart attack rather prematurely. But they were great friends. Lyndon and Lloyd Croslin worked together in the Little Congress, all their shenanigans and so forth when the staff people had their Little Congress. I don't know whether they still have that kind of thing or not.

F: It's not very noticeable anymore, is it?

M: No, I don't know if it exists at all, but this gave Johnson and Croslin a considerable acquaintance among the staff people, and Johnson and Croslin would be together from time to time in my office. Johnson was then a thin, gangling sort of fellow. I've been a little skinny all my life myself, you know.

F: You're one person he can't tower over. (Laughter)

M: Yes, so this was my beginning of acquaintance with him.

F: Did you have an idea then--did you see enough of him to think that he might be a future colleague of yours?

M: Well, not necessarily, but I was impressed with his drive, his ambition, his constant absorption with political matters. It was his whole life, more or less.

F: Kleberg just gave him a free hand?

M: Yes, Kleberg gave him a lot of control in the office. He worked very hard. Dick Kleberg was quite a character. I had not known Dick before I came to Washington, but I began to play a little golf in 1927, when I was a district attorney, and so I found it good and refreshing exercise.

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Whenever I could I tried to get out into the country. I was a farm boy, you know, born on a farm. So Dick and I would play golf some and did for all of his years in Congress out at Burning Tree or the Army-Navy Country Club. And so it is true that Lyndon had a rather free hand working for Dick Kleberg. This was very helpful to Dick and very helpful, of course, in giving Lyndon and opportunity to develop understanding and contacts.

F: Did you get to know Congressman Buchanan very well?

M: I never did get too well acquainted with him. He was so senior and I was so junior that I never did get to know him very well. Buchanan was, of course, from the Austin area. He was chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, became chairman and later died in office, I believe.

In reviewing the history of the Appropriations Committee, the Appropriations Committee was formed about one hundred and six or one hundred and seven years ago. Prior to that time appropriations and ways and means were all one committee. But then about one hundred and six or one hundred and seven years ago they set up--they split off the appropriations. At that time Thaddeus Stevens, whose picture is on my wall here, was chairman of the Ways and Means [Committee] which included the appropriations. So when they created the Appropriations Committee, and divided it, Thaddeus didn't stay with the Ways and Means [Committee]. He came over to this office where we are now sitting and where his picture hangs and became the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He was the first man to occupy this office here. This wing of the Capitol was completed in 1857. Now Buchanan's portrait hangs outside in the adjoining room here. We have about fifteen, twenty or thirty rooms around here for the Appropriations Committee. We have had as chairman of the Appropriations Committee from Texas a man who at one time was

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governor of Texas, Governor [Joseph] Sayers, and then Buchanan. I myself became a chairman when Clarence Cannon of Missouri died in office at age eighty plus in 1964.

F: Kind of like waiting for the King of Sweden to pass on.

M: Well, yes. I was heavily involved with defense spending, all the missiles programs and so forth, and I enjoyed my work tremendously as the head man of this committee handling all appropriations for defense which was then, is now, the largest money bill in the Congress. The President is requesting for all defense purposes over 85 billion this year and the defense appropriation bill as such contains a request for about 79 billion plus. That doesn't include military construction and some other items.

But Lyndon Johnson was totally absorbed in politics. Other people liked to talk about their bridge games, their golf games, this, that or the other, but people like Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn could hardly talk about anything or think about anything but politics. They were thoroughly absorbed, where the average politician is not dedicated and motivated to that same extent. They have a greater diffusion of interest.

F: I judge at the outset when Johnson came up as congressman that he and Mr. Sam weren't particularly close, that this grew after awhile.

M: Well, I think so. I think this grew after awhile and they each would kind of spar with each other from time to time, in good humor, you know. Of course, Mr. Rayburn was completely aware of Johnson's ambitions. I don't mean to be speaker or as a rival of his, but of his desire for power. Johnson wanted power, Rayburn wanted power. And Rayburn had all the power he needed and all he could handle, but Johnson wanted a place in the political sun. That was obvious all along but he wasn't obnoxious about

it or over-self-asserting. Very, very charitable, very friendly and he got along handsomely with his colleagues. In those days, we would often go for walks after we met at noon. The House met, and maybe we'd eat a bite and, if we weren't having roll call, we would take a stroll around the Capitol. Usually the man who led those strolls was Ewing Thomason, who was senior to us in Congress and later became a federal judge and now lives in El Paso, as you know. So we would do a lot of talking there. I know with Lyndon I would from time to time walk with him over to the Cannon Building where our offices were from the Capitol, and instead of just walking hurriedly over and going to our offices, why, Lyndon often had something he wanted to talk about, some problem.

There was one thing about Lyndon Johnson that was quite characteristic and was to some considerable extent the secret of his success: he tended to cultivate acquaintance with the right people, the big newspaper people of the state and of the country, the leading people of the area. He realized that it was important to have the Harte-Hanks and Houston Harte people, people like that, on his team. No doubt he looked forward to the Senate and all, and he loved people and he loved the state. And, through the telephone and otherwise, he kept up a relationship with these people and these were the people who were very influential in helping him get to the Senate.

Then, of course, in the 1930s, it was sort of popular to be a rubber stamp. It hasn't been popular since then for people to be a rubber stamp for anybody, but it was rather popular for my first years in Congress to be more or less a rubber stamp for FDR, for Franklin D. Roosevelt. The country was prostrate and the people were anxious for leadership, and Roosevelt got by with murder so far as Congress was

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concerned. We just agreed with practically everything he proposed, and we did this because we thought the course we were following was right and because the President had almost unanimous support of the people he represented. If you crossed FDR on any kind of a vote, the people back home said, "Hey, what is wrong with you, Congressman? What are you getting out of line for?" Now and ever since him, it's been, "Well, listen, show a little independence on your own part. Don't be a rubber stamp for anybody." This was an interesting period in our history and it hasn't been duplicated and probably this was bad, but at a time when there was so much needed to be done quickly, it was probably a very good thing. But I wouldn't say as a rule.

F: When he was taking over, the country was sort of desperate.

M: Yes, yes.

F: Well, did Johnson make much of a splash when he first came back up here as a Congressman?

M: No, no, he didn't.

F: He sort of knew his place?

M: He knew his place. He was a good boy, so to speak. I was not too senior to him, as you know. I was elected in 1934 and he was elected I believe in 1937.

F: You've got three years on him.

M: One of the interesting things about Johnson is he decided at one time that he wanted to be a member of the Appropriations Committee which is a pretty good power base. And a vacancy arose; this was following my becoming a member of the Appropriations Committee about 1939. So Johnson decided he wanted to be a member and he did, I assume, a bit of lobbying with the fellows about it, with the members of the Texas

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delegation. You see, the Texas delegation, we're one zone in the democratic set-up. Texas is. So we would recommend the person for the position on a committee. The senior man, usually the senior man who sought the position would be favored though he might not necessarily be the popular choice. Unless there was something pretty obnoxious about him, he would be selected. Well, Thomas of Texas--

F: Albert?

M: Albert Thomas, more senior than Lyndon but not to a very great extent, sought the position. He was elected I believe in 1936. So, at any rate, Albert Thomas got the position and Lyndon didn't. I have often thought that if Lyndon had gotten this position it might have changed the course of history and the course of his life because there are so many responsibilities connected with the appropriations. And there is so much power in the area that if you really try to use it wisely, it's a full time job. And it would have been very challenging to him, though I never thought of him as a man too concerned with figures; but nevertheless, there's a lot more involved than figures. Money means policy. Money means elections. It can mean many things, you know. I have always thought that it was a good thing for Lyndon Johnson that he failed to get this plum which he sought.

F: He would have weighed it awfully heavily before he would have given it up.

M: That's right. That's right.

F: For some other office.

M: Yes, this is right, and it might very well have changed his whole political career. I, for example, have never been interested at all in going to the Senate. I never gave it a moment's thought. When I got

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the Appropriations Committee, I knew that I was in a position where ultimately great power would be available. You don't like to feel that you are a nobody; you like to feel that you are accomplishing something, that you can have some little influence on the course of empire, so to speak.

F: Right. Move a few things, move a few people.

M: Yes, yes, you do a little something. I know that in my first years in Congress, it was not very rewarding. It was good to say, "Well, I'm elected to Congress, the first member of my clan who has been elected to Congress. This is great." But that wore off pretty rapidly. I wanted to have some influence in Congress. I served on a number of unimportant committees and I had a feeling of futility, but when I got on the Appropriations Committee, I knew I was in the big league, even though I was very junior now. And then, as you move up, you know that money talks and that this is a very interesting spot and you can be of some assistance to the country. You can get some self fulfillment in feeling that you are achieving something worthwhile for your constituents and for the nation.

F: When Johnson as a congressman reached for something and didn't get it as in this Albert Thomas situation, he never seemed to hold that against the man, did he, but just bowed his neck and went on to something else?

M: No, no, no, he wasn't the type to be embittered. He had kind of a long memory in a way, you know, but he was a practical man. He was and is a very practical man. And he was not resentful and bitter, but he was a man of strong convictions and strong likes and dislikes, as you know.

F: Did the third term of Roosevelt as against the possible Garner candidacy give the Texas delegation much of a problem?

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M: I don't remember too much about that. Garner was, of course, in the picture at that time, but on my level and with my limited seniority at that time, I didn't get very heavily into the picture. Now I don't know to what extent Lyndon Johnson got into that picture. I don't remember it.

F: Did Johnson talk to you at all about running for the Senate against Pappy?

M: Johnson talked to me about many of his political ambitions and races and senatorial aspirations, but just when and where and to what extent I don't remember.

F: But you had the feeling very early that he was going as far as he could.

M: Oh, yes, very early, very early, it was apparent that he was going, as far as he could go. He was a man of tremendous drive and of tremendous ambition. And so none of this was surprising. That is after he got going, after he got on the track.

F: As you know, Pearl Harbor came one day and he joined the service the next.

M: Yes.

F: Did he talk this over with any of his friends?

M: I'm sure he did. I'm sure he did.

F: But you have no--

M: I don't remember the details. I remember--at that time, I was forty-one years of age--we all talked about whether or not, what we should do. We didn't want to feel like that we were doing a disservice to the country by--

(Interruption)

F: We were discussing whether we ought to get into World War II actively.

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M: Yes. Well, some of the fellows went into the service. Eugene Worley who had come in along about this time from the Amarillo district. We talked about it. Of course, Lyndon was considerably younger than some of the rest of us and so was Worley. So I was serving on the defense subcommittee, the Army Appropriations Subcommittee at that time. So it seemed to me that my position--that to be of greater service to the country would probably lie in being in Congress. So I was on this subcommittee and I was present at the discussions having to do with the atomic weapons, a lot of these things. This committee handled the Air Force appropriations for the so-called Air Corps--it wasn't the Air Force at that time--Air Corps and the Army. We did not deal directly with the Navy, though of course I was on the Appropriations Committee which had as one of its subcommittees, a subcommittee on the Navy.

F: Of course, Roosevelt pulled everybody back before long.

M: Yes. The joining by members of the Armed Services was not exactly convenient from a standpoint of the services, but people were in a spot. They weren't sure what they should do. They wanted to serve the country appropriately.

(Interruption)

F: Johnson came back and he went on the Navy subcommittee under Carl Vinson. Did that bring you two in any sort of relationship since you were looking after the Army appropriations to some extent?

M: Not to a very great extent. Mr. Vinson, the chairman of that committee, overshadowed everybody on the committee. And the members of the committee more or less were just numbers on a checkerboard.

F: Showed up when he told them to.

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M: The dominant force there was Vinson. But Johnson was rather active in some of the areas. But there wasn't much chance for a man on the Naval Affairs Committee to distinguish himself, as I see it. I'm sure that Johnson would say that that was not a very fulfilling role. At that time, the Navy Committee authorized a lot of things, but, well, it didn't have the power that it now has. That is, the Armed Services Legislative Committee, because now they authorize many things to a much greater extent than they did at that time which to some extent has eroded the power of the Appropriations Committee and upgraded the power of the Armed Services Committee.

F: When it comes down to 1948, this puts Johnson in a different guise from 1941; he could run and lose and still have his seat.

M: I always supported Johnson for his races without exception.

Now you were about to say something.

F: Yes. Did he talk with you, as you recall, in 1948 about running against Coke Stevenson who was a pretty popular man?

M: Well, there again, it is hard to recapture those things. In those days Congress was more deliberate, easygoing, folksy type of place, and you talked with your colleagues about practically everything. Now we are all so terribly busy, we hardly have time to say good morning when we encounter each other in the corridor. Of course, in my case, it rose to some extent out of the fact that I have a responsible position. But even a junior member of Congress is so occupied now with constituents, with legislation, that it's just impossible to--

F: Well, the mere physical fact that you are scattered over three buildings makes a difference.

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M: That makes a difference, too. But in the old days the federal government did not have to do with the daily life of the people like it is now. Now it's school milk, school lunch, it's everything in connection with education, it has to do with health, it has to do with business, it has to do with loans, it has to do with practically everything. So the constituency of a member is so heavily involved with the federal government, the member has a tremendous problem of trying to keep abreast of the demands that are made of his office. But in those other days you had time to sit and talk and exchange ideas and think a little.

F: Deliberate.

M: And deliberate. We don't have the time now for deliberation that we used to have.

F: In that brief period when Johnson was in the Navy, did you get any opportunity to observe Lady Bird running the office.

M: Well, Lady Bird was always a great favorite of mine. She was and is a remarkable woman, and she's meant so much to the President. She was a lady of much charm and ambition and drive and she was, to some extent, made of steel. She was no pushover. She is a very great woman by every standard. Gracious in every respect, but not just a soft, easygoing, agreeable person. She was a strong person and meant a great deal to the President when he became president and to Johnson when he was in the Senate and, of course, when he was away, she helped to tend the shop.

F: Did Johnson show in his congressional days that sort of empire-building that he developed in the Senate of a huge staff and lots of spaciousness and so forth or did he have any opportunity?

M: I don't think he had much opportunity to do that, but this would be a natural outgrowth of his reaching for power and opportunity.

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F: Did you see much of him during the Senate years?

M: Well, I would see him at the Texas delegation and then we'd made joint announcements. Sometimes we would get a little irritated with our senator maybe, members of the House, because an announcement of some project would be made by the senator rather than by the House member. But Johnson, through his staff and himself otherwise, would talk with the Texas members at our delegation meetings, and we worked out an arrangement whereby if a grant was being made--and there weren't many made during those days--then we would have a telegram sent by both and so forth. He had a good working relation with the members of the House and our relationships were always most cordial.

F: Did you get much opportunity to observe his and Mr. Sam's relationships?

M: Oh, yes, and the "Board of Education" from time to time.

F: You used to drop in there?

M: Oh sure, oh sure.

F: What did you do, just talk about whatever was on anybody's mind?

M: On anybody's mind. What happened that day, what is planned for the future, stories about this, that and the other.

F: By very nature of things, you are not always going to agree with everything or everybody there. Could you disagree and argue without carrying any hurt feelings out of the place?

M: Oh sure, sure. The people who went to "The Board of Education" were like-minded kind of people who more or less saw things eye to eye. Not always agreed by any means, but, no, these were low keyed meetings.

F: I presume it was pretty exclusive and that you, one, wouldn't bring in old Joe Frantz from your home district just because he was there. Or you wouldn't bring in Congressman X from Montana just because . . .

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M: No, that's right. This was pretty exclusive and, well, I was not as faithful to the "Board of Education" meetings as some of the others. I didn't always go because of office problems and things otherwise. But I know the Speaker would often say, "Well, I haven't been seeing you lately at 'The Board of Education'," or something like that, you know. But this was a good place to find out what was going on and to cement friendships and so forth.

F: Was Johnson able to either help you or you to help him during those Senate years or were you pretty well operating in two different worlds?

M: We were in a way operating maybe in two different worlds but not in two conflicting worlds. The relationships were normal.

F: Just the usual of a senator with him.

M: Yes.

F: Did you work with Johnson on the Tidelands issue?

M: Yes, I did. I didn't get as deeply into Tidelands as people like Price Daniel and others, you know.

F: Because your constituency didn't have much coastline. (Laughter)

M: But of course I've been heavily involved in the oil and gas problems and Ways and Means Committee in trying to protect the just rights of our state, that is, what we interpret it to be. And we worked together very closely in these matters.

F: Did you ever work with Johnson in those congressional days in his pet projects of rural electrification.

M: Oh, yes, oh, yes. My people were very much interested in rural electrification. Rural electrification was a popular part of the New Deal, and I, of course, voted for the beginnings of rural electrification

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program and you could hardly talk to Johnson without him expanding upon what was being done and what his plans were in connection with the rural electrification program. Oh, there was a man who later became--what was it, his name doesn't come to mind--I don't believe he became secretary of the Interior.

F: Are you thinking of Alvin Wirtz as under secretary of the Interior?

M: Alvin Wirtz. Yes, Alvin Wirtz, you know, was one of the buddies of LBJ's at that time. And Johnson was very, very much interested in the development of his area. And, of course, Johnson ran as a pro-Roosevelt man and he was a darling of FDR and he was favored in many ways and Johnson capitalized on this in an appropriate way.

F: That did give him a certain clout on the Hill.

M: Yes, it gave him a certain clout.

F: As you come down toward 1960, well, even before that, as early as 1956, did you get any sort of information that Johnson was going to make a bid for the presidency?

M: Well, this is a little foggy in my own mind. I don't remember the details. Of course, I think we all knew of his ambitions to go as far as he could and we were very much pleased when he became the leader of the Senate. And while we had always thought Johnson was a man of talent, the things he did with the Senate were beyond our expectations. He was a marvelous majority leader, reflecting great credit upon himself and our state and the Democratic Party. Of course, there was no[where else to go]. The next step from that would very well be the presidency.

F: When he sort of maneuvered the Civil Rights Act back in 1957, put you on [several words inaudible], did that give you any particular problems over here in the House or with your own district?

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M: Well, we, on civil rights--well, of course, Johnson had his problems on civil rights.

F: Yes.

M: And Johnson had a civil rights position that wasn't too satisfactory to the liberals, but he of course maneuvered into a more realistic position. As did we all. The truth is you can't say that this was done necessarily for political reasons. We just had not in this country fully thought through this matter of the just rights of the minority races. We just hadn't considered that. We had considered that the minorities had their place in our economy and in our way of life but it was their place. We didn't really think of them in terms of being on parity from a standpoint of--

F: You inherited the situation.

M: This is something we inherited. And as these issues were debated we all came to realize that we had to change our philosophy and that we had been wrong and that people--all people--are entitled to justice and equality under our Constitution and under our way of life. And I think that transformation came in the minds and hearts of most people in and out of public life to a greater extent with some than others. I think this is one of the things that helped turn Johnson into a more tenable position in this field, along with the rest of us. While I have voted against a lot of civil rights legislation, I certainly have not held to any theory that we shouldn't have fairness for all of our people.

F: Going back to 1952, Eisenhower carried Texas, as you know, and [Adlai] Stevenson lost it. Did you work with Johnson at all in trying to hold the state in the Democratic--?

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M: I worked hard in an effort to hold the state. As you know, many Texans, in view of Eisenhower's great popularity--Eisenhower was a great friend of mine and had done me many favors and I had been helpful to him in some respects.

Interruption

F: We were talking about 1952.

M: Yes, so some people kind of tended to go fishing, submerge themselves. I felt that I was a Democrat and I was going to stay with the party and I thought Stevenson was not an unsatisfactory candidate. I didn't like all his views, but he was a man of very great charm and very great talent. I know I conferred many times during that period with LBJ and I went to various meetings and Johnson over the years has told me many, many times how pleased he was that I showed my colors and joined with other loyal Democrats in support of Stevenson. I remember on one occasion we had a big meeting--it seems to me it was the fair grounds in Dallas--where Stevenson spoke and many of our delegation were not present on the platform but I was there and I showed my colors under all circumstances and Johnson was very appreciative of this because he felt that he had a stake in this thing himself.

F: When you get down to 1956, you've got a real problem in the state politics with, in one sense the Shivers group on one side and the Johnson-Rayburn group irate against it. Did you get involved in that?

M: I didn't get too heavily involved in that. Of course, I cooperated with the Johnson-Rayburn group, but I have never been heavily involved with the party political machine in Texas.

F: When you come down to 1960, it is evident that Johnson is probably going to run against Kennedy and whoever else, Stuart Symington and other

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people, maybe Stevenson. Did you take any part in the preliminary maneuvering before Los Angeles or in joining the Johnson team?

M: Well, I don't remember the details, but we were all involved at that time. If you'd kept a diary as to what was done, it would be very useful in responding to your question, but I was a delegate to the convention. I was there and I was as cooperative and helpful to Johnson as I could be along with the other fellows.

F: You really didn't have much hope that Johnson was going to get the nomination.

M: No, no, the fact that he was a big man in the Senate and a big man in the nation didn't mean that he had the delegates. That's the way it is. There are other candidates for the presidency that seem to think that if they are big and important people that they might get nominated for something, but you've got to go out and do the homework, you've got to line up the delegates. That is an onerous and difficult task requiring money and talent, and this demonstrated very carefully that, because Johnson was qualified, the best qualified man by far, certainly better qualified than Kennedy, to be president, that made no difference. Kennedy was nominated.

F: Did you have any idea that Johnson would be offered the vice presidency?

M: No, I didn't. I was pleased that he was.

F: Were you there at that time?

M: I was at the convention.

F: While all that was going on, how did you learn about it, through the papers?

M: Oh, well, I was there.

F: Word of mouth.

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M: Well, everything, all kind of rumors were circulating at the convention. And I myself was pleased that he accepted. Of course, there were some statements made that Speaker Rayburn maybe didn't approve it or Johnson did it reluctantly and so on. But I didn't see why it wasn't a good thing myself. I think it was a very material factor in the election of Kennedy and the triumph of the Democrats in that election year.

F: Did you campaign for the ticket in 1960?

M: Oh, sure.

F: Did you find that Johnson's presence did make a difference in Texas?

M: I would say yes. Sure.

F: Did the religious issue give you much of a problem?

M: No, it really didn't.

F: I've always thought of your part of the state as being much more relaxed in this sort of thing.

M: This religious issue didn't bother us too much. The thing that took the sting out of this issue was an appearance by Kennedy at someplace, wherever it was on the TV.

F: Houston.

M: And he did a marvelous job of portraying a sense of fairness that I thought people of all religious inclinations could tend to live with.

But, of course, there were some people who were very violently opposed to him on religious grounds, but they were in the minority.

F: With Johnson as vice president, one of his prime concerns was space and he's running Kennedy's space program as vice president. Now that he brings in, of course, NASA appropriations. Did that bring you two back into some relationship?

M: Well, Albert Thomas was serving during that time on the committee on what we call independent offices which handled appropriations for states.

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Of course, I never thought Johnson was too interested in space, in a certain sense. He was interested in space, but he was assigned this particular field of operation. Albert Thomas of course had a very key position here and there was considerable rivalry, I think, though I couldn't document this, between LBJ and Albert Thomas over who gets the credit for the NASA going to Houston.

F: I've heard two versions of that. One is, of course, that Johnson put it there and the other one that Kennedy would put it just about anywhere that Albert Thomas wanted it.

M: Well, I don't know what the truth is. I don't know what the truth is. As you know Albert Thomas was a very strong man, very, very strong man.

F: He died before I could get at him.

M: Yes, well, he could have given you really the story on this and I think he would have. I don't really know what that story is. There are people living no doubt that know it, but I don't know the details of it. I know the little ruffling of feelings that took place at that time.

F: Did you have much opportunity to see Johnson while he was Vice President?

M: Oh yes, he would come to Texas delegation meetings and we would talk to a great length long after the luncheon was over about various problems. He was obviously restless and not too happy.

F: Just didn't have enough to do?

M: Didn't have enough to do, and he was not too happy with some of Kennedy's actions and so forth, you know. Though he was loyal to Kennedy, I don't remember the details of these things but I know at times he wasn't in complete agreement with Kennedy, but there was no open breach.

F: Did you get the impression that he felt sometimes that Kennedy didn't work the Hill quite as adequately as he might have?

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M: Well, of course, Kennedy was a mere novice, a mere amateur when it came to working the Hill, so to speak. Johnson was a professional of the highest quality when it came to dealing with the Hill, with Congress.

F: I judge though as Vice President Johnson to some extent tried not to make his presence felt too much up here.

M: Well, he was very circumspect insofar as President Kennedy was concerned.

F: Did you get the feeling that Johnson and Ralph Yarborough were on good terms?

M: Do you mean when Johnson was president?

F: Before that. I'm thinking about when Kennedy went down there. I know the Connally-Yarborough problem and I wondered if Johnson were kind of independent of that or if he were mixed up in it.

M: Well, Johnson, of course, had many conflicts, I believe, in connection with appointments. You know, Johnson as vice president wanted to dominate federal appointments made in Texas, so it was alleged. Yarborough wanted to dominate appointments in Texas because he was a senator. And, of course, this made for a rather unhappy situation. Of course, Yarborough tended to work with Johnson as president. He supported Johnson very vigorously on many of his Great Society programs and so forth. But there never was, I assume, any real close feeling between the two men. I get the impression that, I always got the impression that they just weren't too close. I'm sure that's right.

F: When you had these Wednesday luncheon meetings with the Texas delegation, at least superficially, did Yarborough and Johnson tend to get along?

M: I don't remember that there was evidence that they didn't get along at these meetings.

F: They observed, at least, the formal.

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M: Oh, sure.

F: You went to Texas at the time Kennedy came down there?

M: I went on the plane with President Kennedy from Andrews Airport.

F: Did you get the feeling that was just good politicking or that he really was concerned about the Yarborough-Connally feud?

M: I got the feeling that he was just, to some considerable extent, politicking for Texas. Now there were others who took the position that the whole object of this trip was to get the Democrats united, you know.

F: If you ever do that in Texas, you've done something. (Laughter)

M: Ever do that in Texas and you'll go places. But I know we went down; we took off from here and we went to San Antonio and then I believe I didn't ride with the President from San Antonio. I believe I rode with the Vice President from San Antonio to Houston where they had the party that night for Albert Thomas. Then that night after the party in Houston I rode with the President and visited with him considerably on the way to Carswell [AFB] in Fort Worth. And then the next day which was the day Kennedy was killed, assassinated, I rode in the plane number two [AF 2] with Johnson and Lady Bird into Dallas. Then I was about four or five cars behind at the time of the shooting.

F: Everything seemed to be going fine on the trip as far as Love Field?

M: Yes, I think so, but even so Albert Thomas was interested in bringing Yarborough and all these factions together and he was talking about these things and so forth as the trip progressed and wanting Yarborough and somebody, I forget who now, to ride in the same car.

F: Must have been Connally.

M: But Albert Thomas was trying to be the man to help cement relationships. He looked upon this as that being the object of the trip. I had not

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considered it to that same extent. It would be interesting to know what the facts are; maybe in your interrogations you have gotten a much better view of all of this business.

F: I've got several views of this trip. What was your reaction in the motorcade? Did you have some idea of what had happened? You went on to Parkland, didn't you?

M: Yes, well, I was a little unhappy with Dallas because they had been so bitter against Kennedy prior to the visit and then the first day--

F: Of course, to Johnson too.

M: Yes, and I felt a little bit--

(Interruption)

F: You were unhappy with Dallas?

M: Yes, and I thought I could sense--I was riding in the back seat of a car, top down of course, with Homer Thornberry, it seems to me, and Walter Rogers. Sitting in the front seat with the driver was Larry O'Brien, and we commented that we thought the people looked a little antagonistic and unfriendly. They didn't act like they had at Fort Worth and that whole--some "Hurrah, Hurrah" at San Antonio and at Houston. This cold atmosphere--it may have been imagination, but I don't think so-- was a little upsetting. And then we went down a certain street and turned to the right and shortly after we turned to the right and we were facing the building from which the shot was fired we later learned, we heard these shots fired. I remember I had a coat, a raincoat or a light top coat, I held it over my head. I don't know why I thought that would protect me from anything.

F: Kind of like pulling the cover up over your head? (Laughter) A reaction.

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- M: Yes. It sort of shocked us. We just didn't know what had happened. But then we saw the cars at the corner and then we saw them race off. We were I'd say about four or five cars behind. And so Secret Service men were falling on cars and, you know, all that kind of business. And we dashed off to the [rade] art and they said they had gone on to Parkland and we followed as fast as we could to the hospital. There we went to the car and we saw the blood and brains in the car and we knew it had been a terrible thing. And I went inside.
- F: Were things fairly clearcut? Did you know who had been shot?
- M: Oh, I think so, yes. Connally and the President. So we went inside and I know I went to the door in the corridor which lead more or less into the intersanctum of where this business where the President was, not in the very room, but in that area. I remember there was some conflict arose at that time between FBI agents and Secret Service. One of them challenged the other and they wrestled and went to the floor.
- F: Over who got jurisdiction?
- M: Who got jurisdiction. This was a little upsetting. I never heard anything about this and if the press had seen it I think they would have played it up. But we stayed outside and talked and wondered and so on. And then finally I believe Thornberry and Brooks and somebody went inside. It wasn't long before Johnson left the hospital along with Brooks and the fellows who came back with him. We followed shortly after that.
- F: You didn't get to talk with Johnson personally?
- M: No, I didn't talk with Johnson personally after the shot was fired. And then we talked with Cabell who I believe then was mayor of Dallas at the airport.
- F: Earle?

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- M: Earle Cabell. And then we took off in Air Force Two and landed here in the evening.
- F: You weren't too far behind Johnson?
- M: No, not too far behind. I don't know how far behind.
- F: What did you do then? Go on home?
- M: Went on home. This was a very traumatic experience, you know.
- F: What did you do--do like the rest of us, spend part of the weekend watching TV and trying to figure out what was going on?
- M: Yes, yes that's right.
- F: Were you getting many calls through your office or at home on this?
- M: I don't recall. I don't recall too much. But there was a kind of resentment against Dallas for creating an atmosphere that made this, to some extent, possible. Of course, I'm sure this was overdone because this fellow Oswald was not in any way motivated by the spirit of Dallas.
- F: Like a guy shooting George Wallace you don't blame the parking center up here in Maryland.
- M: No, that's right, that's right.
- F: That's just where it happened.
- M: This is right. In other words, if some Dallasite who just suddenly as a result of the resentment of Dallas against the President had shot the President it would have been a different matter. But this vanished pretty rapidly-- this spirit.
- F: When did you see Johnson?
- M: Oh, I don't know. I saw him, of course, very shortly. They moved to the White House before long.
- F: Did you get out to The Elms before he moved in?
- M: To The Elms?

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F: Johnson's home out there between the time--you know, it was about two weeks before he moved into the White House.

M: I'm sure, yes. I believe so. We were out there many times.

F: When you began to see him after he was president, did he pretty well lay out the ambitious program, and what he was going to be needing in the way of--

M: No, I don't think he did that too quickly. At least I don't remember the details.

F: Just sort of gradually moved into the position.

M: But he was very ambitious to do what Kennedy hadn't been able to do. That is, to get the program enacted and he got it enacted with a vengeance, with vim and enthusiasm.

F: Do you recall whether he talked to you about keeping on Kennedy's staff or whether he ought to bring in a new staff?

M: Well, he would reminisce or talk about these things from time to time, but he felt like he wanted to do everything he could to comfort and to appease and to please the Kennedy Administration.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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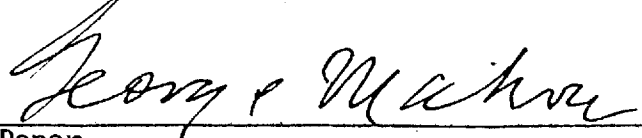
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