

INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 28, 1974

INTERVIEWEE: JOE MASHMAN

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Bell Helicopter Company, Hurst, Texas

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F: Mr. Mashman, first of all, where are you from?

M: I was born and raised in Chicago. 1916 is my birth date. I spent my first twenty-some-odd years in Chicago; I went through our school system there, specialized in civil engineering, Armour Institute of Technology. Shortly after that, I became interested in aviation as a hobby.

F-: Out there by Wrigley Field? I don't guess it was then, was it?

M: No, it was actually the other side of Chicago. I was born in the south side.

F: I don't mean Wrigley; I mean Comiskey.

M: Comiskey, that's right. In fact, I lived about four blocks from the present mayor of Chicago, Mayor Daley. I used to be his newsboy; I delivered newspapers to his home. At that time he was an alderman.

F: Right.

M: As the years went on, I believe he and President Johnson became quite good friends.

F: Yes.

M: But at the outbreak of the war, or shortly before the outbreak of the war, my interest in aviation had developed to the point of my becoming an airplane flight instructor. Consequently, I gave up the civil engineering practice and embarked on a career of a flight instructor.

F: Were you a flyer yourself?

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M: That's right. I was an instructor pilot under civilian contract in Northbrook, Illinois, right near the Glenview Naval Base. I worked on one of the small airports in which the operators had contracts to train both Navy and Air Force pilots.

F: I personally have spent a lot of time in Chicago; I've taught at both Northwestern and Chicago, so I know both sides of the town pretty well, you know.

M: Oh, I see. Well, that's really where I got my start in aviation. I was hired by Bell Aircraft Corporation in 1942, as a production test pilot, test pilot, because of my aviation experience coupled with my engineering background. Back in those days a test pilot hadn't become a formalized profession and most test pilots were people who had just learned to fly by the seat of their pants, the old-fashioned way.

F: And were foolish enough to do it. (Laughter)

M: If they could find a pilot with any kind of engineering background, even civil engineering, they were quite eligible. As the war started to diminish in intensity and peace was on the verge of breaking out, I became strongly involved in helicopters. I went from test flying of airplanes including the first U.S. jet airplane, the P-59 Comet, into the experimental test flying of our first civilian helicopter to be certified.

Shortly after the aircraft was certified in late 1946, deliveries started in early 1947. The very first large order of twelve aircraft was to a Latin American country, Argentina. The company sent me down there to set up a pilot and mechanics training program.

F: Great. Was that in Buenos Aires?

M: Buenos Aires. I lived there with my family.

F: I envy you that.

M: That was really a wonderful experience. I spent a year down there and returned in the early spring of 1948. I was getting ready to relax and get caught up with things at the plant. Within a matter of weeks after I returned, the founder of our company and then-president, Larry Bell, called me in his office and said, "Joe, I want you to take a helicopter down to Texas and fly this young congressman around who wants to become a senator. He started his election campaign late, but thinks he still has a chance. We're interested in helping him out because helicopters are new and if we get an important person such as a congressman showing enough confidence to fly in our aircraft, it would help us and the overall industry.

F: Bell didn't have a plant here then, in Texas?

M: No, our plant was in Niagara Falls, New York. It was not too many years later that the decision was made to build a plant here. That's another story. That was due to the arm-

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twisting of Amon Carter, when Bell was trying to decide what part of the United States to build [in].

F: Another superb arm-twister.

M: That's right. We went ahead and took this helicopter, fairly new with only a year of certification experience, and commenced on the campaign trail.

F: How do you think Johnson got together with the helicopter? Where did the idea originate? Was it his idea or did someone on his staff or did someone in the helicopter industry suggest it to him? Do you have any idea?

M: I don't have a specific answer to that.

F: This doesn't mean so much to us now, but in 1948 that was sure kind of far out.

M: He was considered a young, forward thinking congressman. He was close to the technical people in our government. When I say technical people, other congressmen, senators involved in the development of new materials and, of course, our new materials, our new technology breakthroughs are usually initially funded and started because of military developments.

F: And he'd been on the Naval Affairs Committee a long time.

M: He'd been on the committee which had an awareness of military helicopter development that were involved in the Pacific Theatre during the latter part of the war.

F: I saw some shipped off. I was on--

M: So I'm sure--I'm just conjecturing here--that based upon the fact that he decided to enter the campaign late, so many discussions between he and his friends must have centered around, "What's the quickest way for me to get around this large state within the short period of time I have?" And the helicopter had just begun becoming publicized at the time.

F: He didn't have any close connections, as far as you know, with anyone here at Bell.

M: No, no. In fact, I was quite sure that Larry Bell didn't know him at all.

F: He just recognized a good PR man when he saw one.

M: That's right; Larry Bell always had, and even subsequent to that, recognized the importance of having a new concept identified in as many areas as possible and, within those areas, have people of stature whose confidence or use of that equipment would arouse the interest of other people.

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F: Did you fly down by yourself?

M: I took with me a mechanic who is now manager of our service engineering department. He's Bill Diehl, D-I-E-H-L.

F: Did you fly from Niagara Falls?

M: We flew from Niagara Falls.

F: How long did you take?

M: It took us several days to get down here, either two or two and a half days.

F: Should have been a very interesting trip just in itself at that stage.

M: That's right. It certainly was, but it wasn't anything new to us. The one thing that I do remember was that as we got further on down south it became warmer and warmer, and we were both sort of congratulating ourselves on the fact that we didn't have to live down in that part of the world, and that it was a short-term assignment. We didn't know how long it was going to be, whether it was going to be two weeks or three weeks. We were just told to go on down there and stay with the program as long as we could be of help to this man.

F: Where did you go, to Austin?

M: We went to Austin. Immediately upon arrival, KTBC radio engineers came out to the airport and immediately began to take dimensions and measurements on the aircraft to install a loudspeaker system which we didn't know anything about. They installed this loudspeaker system over the weekend.

F: Did that give you any weight or balance problems?

M: Oh, it gave us a weight problem that affected the aircraft performance especially during the warm spring weather. I hadn't met the Congressman up until then and was dismayed to find out how much he weighed, his size, and coupled with my size and weight--back in those days I was up at about a hundred and eighty, a hundred and eighty-five pounds--I knew that performance was going to be very marginal. But I still didn't know what sort of places we were going to be flying in and out of.

F: What was the model helicopter?

M: It was the Model 47, Model 47-B helicopter.

F: Except that no helicopter in that day was routine, was it just a routinely put together [one] or did Bell do anything in the way of special equipment itself.

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M: No, it was just a production machine. It was just a plain vanilla machine.

F: Now with the speaker weight on it.

M: Back in those days that helicopter only had about a hundred and seventy-eight horsepower and that basic model of aircraft just went out of production last year. At the time we ceased production that hundred and seventy horsepower engine had been replaced with one of over three hundred and fifty, approaching four hundred horsepower. So you can envision what the lack of performance was back in those days and how that little engine had to strain just to keep the aircraft airborne.

Right from the start of the campaign, I was very much impressed with the caliber of people that he had around him, young aggressive people. Of course, I met and worked with John Connally. It was weeks later that I met the key young man whose assignment was to go around and visit all these communities where I was going to land to judge whether they had an area large enough for the helicopter to land in. Then that information would be passed on to me, say the previous night so the following morning, I would know where I was supposed to be going and how to identify it. But this young man it turned out had never really seen a helicopter, had never ridden in one, had no idea what its performance capabilities were.

F: A real expert on picking landing sites.

M: A real expert and since then we've become extremely good friends, personal friends. He's now the vice president of American Airlines, Warren Woodward. A number of years ago, I had the pleasure of teaching him how to fly a helicopter.

F: What did you do? This is getting ahead of the story a little bit, but would you have given enough time for somebody like Woody to get to the next place then or was he working several days ahead of you?

N: It ended up whereby he was working anywhere from about six or eight hours to a day, day and a half ahead of us. But the basic strategy that we used there was, first of all, the helicopter was the drawing card.

F: Yes.

M: The helicopter wasn't just a means of getting him from place to place. The helicopter was quite an innovation. It would draw people. Even these days, if you land a helicopter in the center of a small community, the children want to come out and the parents have to go along with the children to keep them from getting hurt and once you get the parents there, you try to keep them there while you tell them your story. That was the basic technique used then.

The thing that impressed me then was how well organized this small compact group of individuals were, starting off in the morning when we had a list of places where

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we were going to land. The previous evening we had gotten an up-to-date list of the people in the community who had written to the Congressman sometime or other during the past, the critical issues, the key issues, interests in the community. And that was all digested by the President and whatever information that had to be passed down to the people on the ground that were there. We had contingency plans so that if we got to the area and for some reason or other I deemed it inadvisable to land, there was a car that would follow us to an area outside of town, usually right alongside the highway where I would land the President so he could ride in the car to my scheduled landing spot.

In most cases I was able to land at our scheduled spot, but in many cases, due to the lack of performance of the helicopter compounded by obstructions, wires and surrounding buildings, we were unable to take off with the President. This was compounded by the fact that we always tried to land right next to the courthouse or the center of town. The President would stay on the ground and dramatically tell the people of the impending dare devil feat. In fact that was one of the drawing cards: Before he got out of the aircraft I would inform him as to whether he was going to leave with me or not; if he wasn't going to leave with me, he would tell the people, "Now all you folks come on around here. I have a story to tell you and before I tell you the story, I want you to know that my good pilot here, Joe, tells me that it's going to be too dangerous for the two of us to take off together because of those high-tension wires,"--or whatever the reason might be--"so if you all stay here with me until we get through, we'll all wait and hope that the good Lord sees that Joe gets off safely. We'll be here helping pray for him." Or some such thing as that. (Laughter)

F: The Lord and Lyndon Johnson.

M: Right. We covered as many as thirty towns a day and some little towns, we'd just fly over because if we were going from one speaking town to another, we would pass a number of smaller towns on the way. In that list of activities for the day, we'd have perhaps the names of one or two of the individuals in the little town who at one time or other had written to the Congressman. As we'd fly over the town, we'd slow down and after a few weeks I'd just about memorized this jargon that said: "Hello, there, Mr. Jones. This is your friend, Lyndon Johnson. I'm sorry we can't land today, but I want you to know that I'm up here thinking of you and appreciate your kind letter and comments. I just want you to be sure and tell your friends to vote for me at election time." And then we'd go on.

F: Mr. Jones was well hooked by then, I imagine.

M: That's right.

F: None of this was ever by chance. You weren't flying from, say, Weatherford to Graham and just suddenly realize that's Peaster down there or something like that.

M: No, no. It was all planned and programmed. And then the press followed in another car or cars so we actually had a program route. However, we did have unscheduled stops.

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Sometimes on the way if he'd see, say, a railroad repair crew working there on the railroad tracks--there was, you know, four or five men there--we'd stop and land there and talk to them, especially if it was an area close to the highway where the press were bound to be, keeping up with us. We'd land there so the press could get--a story.

F: Did the press try to sort of keep to your route as much as possible? Did you try to stay close to the highway so they could?

M: Not necessarily. In most cases the highways were the important connecting points to the communities.

F: Right. How fast could you go?

M: We could push along about seventy or eighty miles an hour and, if we were in a hurry, if we had a tight schedule, we would just disregard the press. It was more important for him to see the people and talk to the people.

F: Now, he was notorious in later years for getting behind in schedule, because he'd talk too long in places and visit too much with people. Did he do it in this case or was he scheduled so tightly that he pretty well stayed with the plans?

M: No, he would fall behind back then, too, at times and then once he got in the aircraft, he'd expect you to make up for it. (Laughter) Which brings out another very, very lasting impression I had of him and I think one of the things that I like to think he sort of had an influence in the way I conducted my life in later years. That was, he had a knack of creating an air of need, an atmosphere of need and he had a knack of getting people to work together to support him in doing something and you supported him not only because he identified the need, but because he himself put his shoulder to the wheel and he pushed just as hard as he expected you to push. And speaking about pushing, the one thing that he would do, he would urge you on. He had a knack of getting everything that there was to get out of you and in the field of aviation, it's a very dangerous thing. And among us people in aviation, we feel that that's one thing we should not be subjected to, but, of course, which we are. Because a person, where safety of life is involved, shouldn't be pushed to the limits of his capability and the capabilities of the aircraft. But the one thing he did was anybody he'd trust, he'd put maximum trust on them. And if he'd trust you, he went all the way; but if you let him down, he wouldn't give you many more chances. And if he pushed you to the point whereby he was definitely wrong in doing so, and you definitely couldn't do it, if you just stopped and laid it on the line and said "Mr. President," or "Senator, I don't think this is a safe thing to do," that we are just pushing things too hard; we just can't do it period. Then he would back down and say, "All right. You're the boss. You're my expert on helicopters. If you say so, Joe, that's the way it's going-to be."

F: What was it like when you first met him?

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M: Well, when I first met him the impression that I got was that I became a very important person in his campaign by virtue of the fact that he depended on me and me solely. For his helicopter transportation. If I took ill, if I turned down places to land or decided that I couldn't fly beyond a certain time in the day, it would affect his campaign because there was no back-up person. And he also depended upon me for decisions relating to safety. Bill Diehl, my mechanic, and myself were to be given good rooms, rooms where we wouldn't be bothered by road noise. We're not to be kept up late other than his usual evening conference where we had a critique of the day's activities and we weren't to want for anything. We were an important part of his campaign and this was before I even got to know him personally.

F: Did you stay well?

M: Oh yes, I certainly did and as the days went on and the weeks, I sort of got carried away with the campaign myself and I became enthused on his behalf.

F: His competitive feeling took over.

M: A competitive feeling, just hit all the staff, his whole organization the Warren Woodwards, John Connallys, Walter Jenkins, and who was the other gentleman who is now in Washington as a consultant?

F: Consultant to Johnson now?

M: Oh yes. He's in a consultant field of his own. Has a very short name.

F: Busby?

M: Busby! Yes. Horace Busby.

F: Horace Busby.

M: Yes. And, of course, Mary Rather. She was working twenty-four hours a day. And Mrs. Johnson. I was so much impressed with the team, with the husband and wife team of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson.

F: Where did he first see the helicopter? In Austin?

M: He first saw our helicopter in Austin, yes.

F: Where were you? Were you at the municipal airport or out at Bergstrom?

M: It was at the municipal airport and we took off shortly after we got [there]. I think we landed there over the weekend, had the radio equipment installed and left shortly after that. Everything was tightly scheduled.

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F: Did he examine the thing particularly? Or did he just get on the thing and say, "Let's go"?

M: He just got on and said, "Let's go." And, within the matter of a day or so, he was relaxed sufficiently to read his mail, et cetera. The helicopter was so noisy.

F: Yes.

M: It was noisier then than it is now. And we'd fly with the doors off because it was so warm with that plexiglass bubble. Within a couple of days, he learned to relax and actually doze off in between stops. He would just stretch his body out and wrap himself around the controls. And he'd usually have his thermos bottle of ice water on his left side, next to the door opening. A number of times we'd land and the thermos bottle would be gone. It had fallen out. And one time we landed and one of the local people came up and said, "This fell out of your helicopter," and gave us a thermos bottle that had been smashed to pieces.

F: (Laughter) What did you do about rest stops?

M: As far as rest stops were concerned, well, we'd just stop out in some open field when nobody was around or else we'd stop at a farmhouse if we were running a little bit ahead of schedule and stop in and just ask for a cup of coffee, you know.

In many cases, the press would catch up with us. And they'd be in there talking with the farm people and that would constitute both a rest stop and press coverage.

F: And a couple more votes.

M: And a couple more votes, right.

F: Was it basically as easy to land then as it is now?

M: No, it was more difficult and more marginal because of lack of power. It was primarily a power and performance problem.

F: Well, could you hover very successfully?

M: You could if you had enough wind. You could hover successfully in the morning or in the cooler part of the day. But another interesting thing that happened and years later--in fact, it hasn't been so many [years], it's been during his term as president, I was in Washington and he invited me over to the White House. And we were reminiscing about some of the early campaign days and I brought to his attention, which I hadn't up until then, that during that campaign he helped pioneer in a phenomenon; that is in discovering a phenomenon whose discovery has later affected the design of helicopters. It's a phenomenon which at that time ended up in many cases of crashes, aircraft going out of control, and so talking about difficulties in landing, he was involved in one of the early

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discoveries of this phenomenon whereby as you approach hovering on a hot day with a heavy load, it's possible for your rotor system to go into a form of stall and the aircraft just suddenly drops out of the sky to the ground. This occurred to us landing on a street out here in East Texas. Oh, golly, what's the name of the town just before you get to the Mississippi River border there? It's an oil community here.

F: You mean, the Mississippi?

M: Just this side of the Mississippi River. It's due east of Dallas.

F: Not in Texas.

M: That's right.

F: You mean, Marshall?

M: Marshall, that area, right?

F: Or Daingerfield?

M: No, it was right near the Marshall area. We landed in the street and we had planned to land further on down at a predetermined spot. Then we got about half a block prior to that, we were still flying over the street with cars and all, and all of a sudden we dropped, lost all of our lift and the helicopter landed between a couple of parked cars. We hit hard and we bounced up in the air over one of the cars and we regained control and continued on to our intended landing spot. And at that time Johnson turned to me and said, "Joe, this isn't where you wanted to land, was it, back there?" And I said, "No, no. We just had a little problem. I'll tell you about it later. And I never did get to tell him about it. But I did just a few years ago in the White House.

F: Did that give you an idea that something was involved or did you look on that as just one of those things at the time?

M: It had been about the third or fourth time that it had happened within our limited experience.

F: Well, now, could you at that stage do anything to prevent its happening in the future, or did you just have to hope it wouldn't happen again?

M: At that time we decided that the important thing was not to get to a certain low air speed unless you were within proximity to the ground. And we had felt that that would be the way to keep out of it after the first few times it happened. Then it happened again to me and this had been the second time it had happened to me, and the fourth time in our recorded history, we decided to alter our flight techniques which solved the problem.

F: Did you ever jar anything loose where you couldn't take off, but you had to go by car?

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- M: No, no. We didn't have any of that. About the only maintenance problem we had was in flying over Houston. When we got close to Houston and Corpus and the Gulf states, we had campaign literature aboard the aircraft and we made one particular day some flights prior to an evening rally which I was going to fly him to after dark into a large baseball field on the other side of Houston. That afternoon, I was up there flying, doing some loudspeaker work, and we were also throwing leaflets out of the door of the helicopter, and those leaflets as they went out the door, were drawn back into the cooling system of the engine. You know, there's a fan similar to a fan in a radiator except there's no radiator there; but this fan blows air over the engine air cooling fins and the fan just chewed up the paper, the paper lodged in the cylinder fins of the engine, and the engine overheated. We had to make an emergency landing. This was about an hour before our programmed flight for that evening and because of the shortage of time, we had to clean out all the paper and make the necessary inspection.
- F: You knew what the trouble was.
- M: Oh, yes, knew what it was. So we had to abort landing by helicopter at that evening deal and that was really the only time that we had any difficulty that affected our schedule.
- F: No contest with birds?
- M: No, no. We delayed a few times due to thunderstorm activity when we had to land and again we'd always land in a farmer's backyard; did this several times.
- F: Well, what did you do? Did you go in and over a courthouse square and make a last-minute decision on whether you would go down?
- M: It ended up that way because I didn't have a chance to review the exact landing site either by photograph or by dimension, so as the campaign went on, Warren Woodward had a better idea of what space I needed.
- F: You were both learning on the job.
- M: The final decision was made when you got there, the direction of the wind was important, the temperature of the day, and the last-minute look at wires that perhaps hadn't been seen when they first inspected the site.
- F: Did you have sort of an automatic first alternative like the local ball park or something in case the courthouse wouldn't work?
- M: We'd always try to pick a place nearby because in most cases we had no legal problem as far as landing. In other words, the local community, the police officials or the town officials would never give us a hard time. Our primary concern was the safety of people in the aircraft, and people on the ground. The other concern, of course, was to be sure

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that we had the permission of the local authorities and in this particular case we never had a problem with the local authorities.

F: They probably were eager to see it.

M: That's right. So in a few cases we'd have to pick an alternative spot.

F: Did you have problems with kids getting too close?

M: No, no.

F: I can see that they could practically, they could just stay under you wherever you moved.

M: We had that fairly well organized by the police on the ground. In other words, the campaign personnel would see to it that [this was avoided].

F: Did they use ropes or did they just kind of do a "Stand back, everybody."

M: In some cases, they had ropes. If there was a street, they'd actually rope off a section of the street. But once we landed, then the President would encourage everybody to come around: "Come around me." He wanted them to come as close to the helicopter as possible. And that's where my problem was: to keep the children from climbing all over the tail rotor and yanking and twisting and a couple of times we'd find that the kids bent an engine vent line or swung on the tailboom.

F: I know kids that would take your rotor off.

M: And turn a valve and start draining the fuel tank because they didn't know what they were doing. It was a little valve with a handle to turn.

F: They just wanted to see what that'd do.

M: To see what it'd do, yes. (Laughter) So prior to take-off, there was always a fairly quick but careful inspection of the aircraft to be sure it was all there.

F: Was Johnson kind of tentative and a little bit maybe scared at first or was he so convinced this was the thing to do?

M: No, he cared less about the technical aspects of the machine, never asked me what's the principle of flight, how do you fly it.

F: Yes. It's just "when're we gonna get to Abilene?"

M: That's it, "When are we going to get to Abilene?" "Are we running on schedule, Joe?" "Joe, I'm going to take a nap and we're going to fly over this town and, if you want to,

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we'll just slow down there and you can just say whatever you want to, but I'm just too tired, I've got to [rest].

F: Did he let you make a lot of the announcements?

M: I made a number of the announcements, right. In many cases, I did it because he'd fallen asleep inadvertently and I figured, well, the man needs a rest and we're just going to make announcements and the quality of the loudspeaking system was such that the person's voice couldn't be identified too well anyway.

F: Now, since Johnson looked on time as his great ally and any waste of it was virtually criminal in his eyes, let's say you're visiting those twenty places today and you're going to get to Abilene right about the end of daylight, latest flying time. Would he have something scheduled there that night in the way of public performance or would his public performance be the landing at the helicopter site?

M: No, in many cases, he would have an evening performance scheduled, especially as you got into your larger cities. As we got into Fort Worth, I remember we had an evening performance scheduled; it was a late arrival coupled with this performance. It might be right then. Sometimes it was after landing. However, in most cases, we were an early-to-bed organization. We'd have an early dinner and then a handful of us would meet in his room; he'd usually be in his pajamas and we'd sit down and he'd give us a critique of what happened that day. He might say, "John, this fouled up. This didn't work out. Now, I want you to look into it. We're going to do better tomorrow." He had a knack of critiquing an operation, criticizing an individual but not in a way to lower the individual; in other words, it was a constructive type of criticism which he passed down. It would inspire you more than it would make you feel, "Doggone it. I did a dumb thing."

F: Yes.

M: He'd make you feel, well, "There's a better way of doing it, Joe. Why don't we try this way?"

F: Did you have a kind of a rationale in which you gradually move from the smaller towns to the larger cities as the campaign went on or did you just kind of hit where you could when you could?

M: No, no. It was all well organized and we had a rationale, but we also knew the areas where he had strength and we wouldn't have to spend too much time and also the areas where he had weakness due to the strength of his opponent. But something that impressed me: he had a knack of playing on people's emotions and getting people to think the way he wanted them to think.

I'll never forget one time we landed at--this might have been Weatherford; I think it was Weatherford. We landed right next to the courthouse. And I still drive past the courthouse almost every weekend when I go up to Possum Kingdom. We landed

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alongside there; this was a particularly hot day and I believe Coke Stevenson was scheduled to have been there that day. But we landed there around noon time and it was hot. We always arranged, as soon as we'd land, I would slowly move the rotor around so that he was shaded from what little shade you could get from the main rotor. And he would loosen his tie and tell people around him: "I'm out here to talk to you man to man and tell you exactly what I think and what I'm going to do if you elect me as your senator." This particular case his conversation was in essence this: "Folks, I'm out here talking to you man to man telling you what I'm going to do." He says, "On the other hand, my opponent, that pipe-smoking, fence straddling opponent of mine is up there in that air conditioned courthouse, just looking down at us." As he pointed up there--we could look up there at the windows, you know--sure enough there were people on the upper floor looking down and sure enough it was an air conditioned courthouse. And I'm sure everybody imagined that was Coke Stevenson up there looking down.

F: (Laughter) Did you ever hit simultaneous with Coke anywhere?

M: Not openly, no.

F: Did he to a certain extent lay out his campaign with one eye cocked on where Coke was going to be?

M: I'm sure he did. I'm sure he did because he was running an offensive campaign.

F: What did you do about fuel supplies?

M: That was all laid out beforehand and that was carefully worked out with the ground party inasmuch as there were airports from place to place that the ground party would pick up fuel in these five-gallon Jeep cans. I forget now, we must have had about two or three support cars on the ground.

F: How far could you go on a tank.?

M: Oh, back in those days, we were good for about a hundred and fifty miles on a tank of fuel.

F: Which was a pretty good day's run.

M: That's right and you'd have no problem. In fact, in many cases we were careful not to have too full a tank in order to get maximum performance.

F: Basically most of your servicing went on in the evening after you'd get in.

M: That's right. After we shut down for the evening, then our inspection of the aircraft started and every night there was a thorough complete inspection.

F: What did you do with Diehl? How did he get from place to place?

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- M: Well, he was part of the ground party and he was always in one of the first cars.
- F: Did he show up at every scheduled stop or was it only at the end of the day?
- M: No, in some cases if we were only going to be at a place for a short period of time, then he'd just keep on going in order to be there by the time we got there at the end of the day. But he was always available by means of two-way radio communication, so in case I had a problem, he could be at the helicopter as soon as possible.
- F: Were the ground cars equipped with loudspeaker systems so that they could go around whipping up a crowd and letting them know you were coming?
- M: There was, in many cases, always, if I remember a light van or truck with a loudspeaker system in the area just prior to the helicopter landing.
- F: Now, would the staff wait to hear Johnson speak or would they immediately take off to the next place?
- M: Part of them would take off. There would either be a support staff or else there would be, if they had strong support right there in that particular community, some of his local people would be there in a car to take care of him if for some reason or other the helicopter wouldn't start or I had mechanical problems with it, they could just whisk him to the next spot.
- F: Was your helicopter knowledge too rudimentary at this time or did you have a fairly accurate knowledge of what your upper weight limit was?
- M: Oh, no. We knew what our upper weight limit was because that was part of our certification test. We also knew what our performance characteristics were like.
- F: How close were you to the weight limit?
- M: Well, we were operating close to maximum performance at all times.
- F: Could you take on much in the way of pamphlets? Paper's heavy!
- M: Well, what we'd do in many cases, on take-off fortunately we would go ahead and try to take off, and to take off in a helicopter, you first lift off the ground. If you have enough power to lift off, then you can progressively lift up a little higher and higher; then by looking at your instruments you can determine if you have enough reserve, enough power left to safely climb on out. It's unlike an airplane where you have to go tearing down the runway just to find out if you're going to lift off. In this case, you can lift off vertically without moving forward and then determine how much extra power you have and if you have no power left--it takes all the power you have and if you have no power left--it takes all the power you have just to hover close to the ground--well, then you set down and you

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say, "Mr. Johnson, either you or I have got to get out of this helicopter and it's going to have to be you, because I'm the only one who knows how to fly it."

F: Right.

M: Or it might be taking the doors off. If it happened to be the morning while it's still cool and we had the doors on and I might say, "Mr. President, we've got to take the doors off." And that would save about ten or fifteen pounds.

F: Did that make any difference in flying? Other than weight?

M: Other than weight, it would make it nice and breezy in there and on a warm day it made it comfortable. On a cool day, it made it pretty cold.

F: When did it begin to dawn on you that you weren't going to be here for just a few days?

M: Well, it didn't until 1951, you know. I was really happy to leave and also sorry to leave. It'd been a very enriching experience and I hoped that once he was in office, I'd have the opportunity to see him in later years, but not necessarily come back down there to Texas.

F: Did you tend to go out from Austin on Monday and come back on weekends or did you just keep going once you left?

M: Our tendency was to come back and we did, I believe, two weekends that we spent back in Austin and we had several weekends which we spent outside of [Austin]. We stopped in Houston one weekend, Fort Worth another weekend.

F: Did it make any particular difference, either in the candidate or in the plane or in you, whether it was the highlands of West Texas or the lowlands of East Texas or the Valley?

M: Oh, it sure did.

F: It was a little cooler in West Texas, I guess.

M: Right, now you are asking me the difference in handling characteristics?

F: I'm talking about handling characteristics, your own attitudes and so on.

M: Well, the handling characteristics were different and of course I Was ready for that because I had spent a year of demonstrating flying in Argentina and also demonstrating it in the other countries up in the mountains, in the high temperatures of Peru, Brazil and Chile. However, some of the big differences were in the man himself, depending upon where we campaigned. His speech, his choice of examples of what he was going to do and how he was going to do it, when we were in the cities his presentation was definitely tailored for a person of the city. When we were out in the small rural areas, he would tell a story about when he was a kid and he would go out to the shed and take potato off the

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coal oil can and so forth. Then when he got to the coastal cities like Corpus and Galveston, his speech and the examples he used were catered to the people whose livelihood depended upon, let's say, fishing, if that might be the case.

F: And I suppose he'd talk about his schoolteaching days when he was out with the Mexicans.

M: That's right. But even though I listened to his same basic campaign appeal to the voters, it was never dull. It was never stereotyped because he would change it as the day went on, change it as the locality and the community changed and one of the things that impressed me: I was basically an engineer and an engineer deals upon facts. I never at that time had the impression that he would say one thing to one person and another thing to another. He might say it in a different way to make it more understandable, but I was impressed that he was an honest, sincere person.

F: Fundamentals remained the same.

M: That's right. One evening, I'll never forget, just he and I were sitting talking and I believe I mentioned to him about the fact that his speech content might change, the way he delivered it certainly changed depending on the area we were in. And what he told me then was essentially, "Joe, regardless of how well qualified you are for political office, the most important thing is to get elected and you have to have people understand your language. You have to speak to them in a language that they understand and you have to tell them what you're going to do in terms that they understand and it's going to change from -person to person, community to community. A successful politician is a person that is able to do that and that's essentially what I'm trying to do here in this campaign."

F: Did you talk much in the helicopter or was it just too darn noisy?

M: No, it was just too darn noisy.

F: I'm sure with the doors off, too.

M:- And I'll tell you we learned to talk in gestures and probably one-word sentences and so forth.

F: A few loud grunts here and there.

M: Yes, that's right.

F: Did you always stay in public places or did he once in a while go stay with private people?

M: I'd say, in most cases, we stayed in public places as a team. I always had the impression that we were a team. There was no different class in the whole group, but the team was this handful of people. There was a KTBC radio technician, the helicopter mechanic, the

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helicopter pilot, his wife, his secretary, his campaign manager, from time to time John Connally would meet us, although most cases he was back at headquarters, and he was the focal point of information coming in from Washington.

F: That's one thing that always struck me about Johnson and that was there never was this kind of officers club/enlisted man situation. The whole crew goes together or they don't go.

M: That's right. We all lived first class or we all lived tourist class.

F: Yes.

M: And if his taste was for caviar, boy, everybody could dip into the caviar.

F: Do you have any idea how many hours or miles were involved?

M: We logged a very high number of hours for those days. Because those days it was quite uncommon for a helicopter to fly as many hours as we did. I would say that we averaged probably four or five hours a day in the air, which was quite a bit. Four or five hours in the air would mean about a ten to twelve hour working day, just roughly.

F: When the primary was over and he's in a runoff, with Stevenson, does it make any great difference in the pace or did it step up? Did it remain the same; had it been just as full as it could be up to then?

M: Now, in the runoff, let's see, what time of the year was the runoff held?

F: Runoff would have been held at the end of July. We had the primary in June, about June 28, 24.

M: Well, I think it was decided in the runoff that we wouldn't have to use a helicopter because he had more time to get around.

F: He's known now.

M: Yes. That's right. I was there at the primary as an emergency expediency for his getting around.

F: You stayed?

M: And I was on call for the runoff. They were going to call me if they needed me, but they thought that for the runoff. I wouldn't be needed and perhaps it might be to our disadvantage.

F: Were you under Johnson's direct campaign payroll or were you still with Bell?

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M: I was still with Bell. Essentially I was on a demonstration tour which we'd done a lot of.

F: It was a mutual benefit thing.

M: A mutual benefit thing. And even today, if there's a new field of endeavor that we think the helicopter can be used for, we will put it at their disposal. Back in those days even the oil companies, about the same time concurrent with that, we felt that for exploration for natural resources, oil, starting off in the Gulf of Louisiana, helicopters could be useful for that purpose. So we'd just turn a helicopter pilot and a mechanic team over to an oil company for weeks or even months, and just tell them to use it.

F: In a way, this was an amazing performance that you could take one helicopter down there and keep it going at all times, so that it never interfered with the schedule. Were you conscious that other people were watching your performance and getting impressed? Did people come to you and ask you questions?

M:- There were a lot of questions, because we're down here in an aviation community. Of course, Texas had been the training ground for all of our pilots during the war. There were a lot of skeptics, and we had a lot of questions to answer. But back in those days, the helicopter was new, but we were a young enthusiastic group, and we had a lot of faith and confidence in the equipment. Only about three or four years earlier, we wouldn't consider-flying that same basic model helicopter more than twenty minutes without taking it apart and seeing the condition it was in. We were talking about flying Harry Truman in later years on a visit to the Ranch. About three years prior to this particular tour which was in 1948; it was just before the end of the war when Truman was vice president; it was the day before he became President, due to the death of President Roosevelt.

F: Yes, April, 1945.

M: I was called upon to put on a demonstration before this head of the Senate Investigating Committee, who was at Buffalo visiting some of the military plants. He wanted to see this new type of aircraft, the basic prototype. We were based at a research center twenty miles away from the Niagara Falls Airplane Plant, where Vice President Truman was at. And we wouldn't even fly it that distance. We put it on a trailer. That was our policy back in those days. We'd trail it to the back of the plant, and then move it off the trailer; I'd start it up and then fly the couple of hundred yards from the back of the plant to the front of the plant and put on about a five minute demonstration for then-Vice President Truman. Then we'd go back and put it back on the trailer and trail it back to this research center and take it apart and see if it was still in good shape.

F: You'd come a long way in three years.

M: Yes. That's right. So we had a lot of confidence in them. Of course, we've come a long way since 1948, too.

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- F: Did Johnson's experience cause other politicians to query you?
- M: It certainly did. And although we were asked to become involved with other politicians, we turned it down based upon the fact that once we establish a need for it, we felt--
- F: Yes. You'd made your point.
- M: We didn't want to compete with potential operators or customers who would buy them, and then, in turn, lease them.
- F: Right. One piece of folklore I've picked up through the years: that is that Johnson would lean out as he came in over a public gathering and would lose his hat, and somebody down on the ground would invariably shout, "He's throwing his hat in the ring," or something like that. Did he purposely lose hats?
- M: Well, no. He actually flung them. He would take his hat, and he would just hold his hat out; wave to the people; and then he'd pull it in and usually get it across my face, you know, and then just fling it out. Throwing his hat into the ring. He'd do it with a lot of flair and gestures.
- F: With a good long backhand throw.
- M: You bet! He wanted the people to know that he was throwing his hat in the ring.
- F: Did someone always bring the hat back to him?
- M: That's right. They would, just as they did the thermos bottle.
- F: How many tosses would a hat take?
- M: God, I don't know, but I'm sure he went through, I forget how many hats, but he could go through a number of hats. But he always wore his hat. He always had a hat aboard.
- F: Where did you spend the primary election night? Were you back in Austin?
- M: I believe we were back in Austin at that famous old hotel there.
- F: The Driskill.
- M: The Driskill, which has since been refurbished.
- F: Yes. What was it like there? Cause she was a close one.
- M: That's right. Had a lot of . . .
- F: Was everybody pretty tense?

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- M: If I remember correctly, it was quite tense. They were not sure. There was a lot of expectation.
- F: How, in effect, did you wind up your relationship that summer with Johnson? Or did you? Did you continue to hang around?
- M: No. I was in a hurry to get back to the plant. I had other programs that I was being involved in. The marketing program in which we had to develop a military market for our products. And then it was only in later years that, strictly on my own, in the early fifties, that I decided to visit him during my trips to Washington on helicopter demonstration business. And I'd get to see him personally and in many cases, I'd get to see Walter Jenkins, and sit out and chat with Walter. I'd just sort of bring him up-to-date on my travels. Shortly after that I began traveling and demonstrating very extensively throughout the world. And knowing the President's interest in world affairs through Walter, many times if I'd get to see him personally, I'd just tell him what was going on, the interest in other countries in helicopters.
- F: Did you feel that Johnson's experience helped you sell to other governments?
- M: No. I don't think there was any direct relationship there. Once I started traveling extensively foreign-wise and then as Johnson became vice president and started his international traveling, I was at times a little critical of the advice that his people gave him and in his relationships with the other countries, and the image that the press portrayed, in that, I was sure that he didn't necessarily carry with him in these countries. Frankly, I don't think that I would have gone to him personally to ask for advice on what country did he think could best be served by helicopters, or where the helicopter interest was.
- F: Did you fly him any more after that?
- M: Yes. Whenever he was down in this part of the country, he'd ask for me to fly him around. Oh, back in the early fifties when he visited this Civil Defense Center set up here in Denton, Texas. I picked him up here and I flew him over there. And many cases when he had [occasion], as in the case of the visiting President Lopez Mateos of Mexico, although the military was responsible at that time for supplying him with helicopter transportation, he asked me to personally supervise the assembling of the military helicopter, to set up an operation center and to direct how they were going to be used.
- F: Where did this take place?
- M: This was down at his Ranch.
- F: How many did you assemble down there?
- M: We had about four helicopters down there.

F: What did you do? Just kind of run-through of exercises?

M: No. They were just used for transportation. There were many guests at various ranches: to pick them up as they arrived, some arrived at Bergstrom; some arrived at neighboring ranches in private airplanes; to give them transportation to his Ranch.

F: That's when you brought Sam Rayburn and Harry Truman over?

M: That's right.

Then he has invited me to come down just for weekends. I know one weekend my son and I flew down in a helicopter. And at that time the Pedernales River had one of its historic floods. The following day, he and I went out rescuing people. This one place we landed between the Ranch and Johnson City, there was an elderly woman there that he knew, and we stopped there to rescue her because her house was completely circled by water. She insisted upon taking her dog with her, and Johnson said to her, "Okay, get in the helicopter, but you're not going to take that dog with you." She said, "Why, I certainly am! Lyndon, he's coming with me." He said, "All right, bring him in." And as the dog got in, he proceeded to bite Johnson right on the leg. (Laughter)

F: He didn't much have sense of protocol, did he?

M: As soon as we had dropped the woman and her dog off at a safe place, I immediately flew him in and landed him right next to the hospital in Johnson City. (Laughter)

Anyway, the previous night as the water began to get higher and higher . . .
Who was the governor at that time?

F: When was this?

M: This was about 1958-59.

F: That would probably be Price Daniel.

M: Price Daniel. Price Daniel and his wife were guests there for the evening, and about midnight--my son at that time was about eleven or twelve; we were staying in one of the quest houses--the lights came on, and we knew there was some problem going on, it had been raining very hard. So I got up and called the main house, because we saw lights on all over the place, and said, "Is there anything we can do?" The Vice President answered and said, "Yes, Joe. Come on up here and give us a hand. We need some hands here." So we went out there and waded through the water; there was thunder and lightning and rain. And the ranch hands and all of us got to work, taking up some of this aluminum irrigation pipe that he had alongside the river; the river was threatening to wash it away. We had to go down there and lift it up and tug it up on dry land. He wanted everything secured, so we all pitched in. He was there directing us all; giving us all orders.

F: Did Price Daniel get in on that? (Laughter)

M: Very, very reluctantly. (Laughter)

F: But everybody was supposed to work.

M: That's right. "When I work, everybody works."

F: Did he take Lopez Mateos up for a demonstration flight?

M: Well, you see we brought Lopez Mateos when his official presidential airplane arrived at Bergstrom. And the President was there to meet him. We had all the helicopters lined up, and the President Lopez Mateos and Mrs. Mateos and their daughter were escorted to our helicopter along with the President and Mrs. Johnson. In fact, it was a state visit with all the embellishment required of any state visitor. The helicopter was used to transport them to the Ranch and then sight-seeing, showing them the herds of deer. He liked to show the visitors the hundreds of deer that he had there.

F: Did he like to run them a little?

M: And we'd run them, right. We wouldn't--We'd go behind them, slow to the right.

F: Just kid 'em.

M: He was always interested in new helicopters. When we developed a new small helicopter, a jet-ranger helicopter, "Joe," he says, "I've got to get one of those for my farm. How about you bringing one up here and demonstrating it to me?" I said, "Well, Mr. President"--this was '67--"we've just gotten into the production on this ship. We don't have enough experience on it. Wait until we build a few and get them out."

(Interruption)

M: Anyway, he said, "Well, Joe, I want you to stay in touch with me now, because I need a small, efficient helicopter, and I don't want to have to depend upon these military helicopters which I am entitled to. I want to have my own. I don't want to depend upon the government because some of the things I want to do are personal, private things, and they're not necessarily consistent, you know, with my duties as president." From that time on, usually about every six to eight months, normally he'd call me directly or one of his staff would call me and ask me, "How's that program coming along?" So finally, it got to the point, and I went ahead and brought one down just to demonstrate to him. I said, "Well, we're not quite ready, but I'll show you what the machine is like." And by that time, surprisingly, he knew quite a bit about our competitor's equipment. He had checked into our competitor's equipment, about their designs. He could tell me about some of the good points and bad points of their design, even though he's not a technical man. He said, "Joe," he said, "you people are from Texas and you are my helicopter

expert and I put my life in your hands years ago. And my life, the life of my family and friends are still in your hands, and I'm going to leave it that way. I want you to bring the helicopter up. I want to see what it's like." So I brought one up there for a weekend. This was about 1968, the latter part of 1968.

He had some guests up there, and the first thing we did, we got in the helicopter, and the Secret Service wanted to pile in, you know. It's only a five place, two in front and three in back. First of all, the President said, "I'm going to sit in front with Joe," because the Secret Service wanted to sit in front with me, one of them. And then he said, "Lady Bird, you get in the back there," and then he had another person get in the back. And that left enough space for one Secret Service man, much over their objection. He said, "Joe, take me over to Moursund's, Judge Moursund's place." So we went over there and landed and in the meantime he was on the two-way talkie thing, and the Judge came lumbering out. Johnson said, I forget what exactly, he said, "Judge, you get up there in the front seat. I want you to get in that front seat." By this time the rest of them got in the back and the Secret Service man was kicked out altogether, much to his--Oh, God, was he upset about that. Anyway, the Judge got in there, and he's quite a large man. He filled up every bit of that co-pilot seat there, in fact wrapped himself around the controls. And just as we were taking off, Johnson bent forward and said, "Judge, I want you to pay particular close attention to what Joe's doing, because you're going to learn to fly this helicopter. I'm going to get one of these, and you're going to learn to fly it, and you're going to be my partner in this god damned thing." (Laughter) The Judge just looked around, you know.

F: (Laughter) He wasn't quite ready to change his career at that time.

M: Anyway, we took off--and this was in the spring, come to think of it--and we started heading down towards one of his ranches there near the lake. As we were flying along and looking down, he said, "Judge, look at all those bluebonnets. Is this my property?" And the Judge said, "No. This isn't your property."

I never will forget--later on my wife and I laughed about it when I told her about it--he said, "Well, Judge, damn it, I want bluebonnets on my property now. Why can't I have bluebonnets like they have down there?" (Laughter)

F: I wonder if he got them?

M: I don't know. He probably did.

F: He probably did. (Laughter)

Did you ever visit him in the White House?

M: Yes. I visited in the White House on several occasions. One occasion this was while he was trying to make up his mind as far as getting a helicopter, and he found out [I was in town]. In fact, Warren Woodward was with him at that time and he was having dinner

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with him in the White House. And Warren Woodward mentioned to the President, "Well, Joe Mashman's in town because I talked to him yesterday."

I had just gotten through dinner. I had had a long day and I had a couple of martinis before dinner and a martini during dinner. I was at the Hay Adams Hotel, and I had no schedule, so I was going to go right back up to [my room].

F: No pain. (Laughter)

M: No pain. I was going back up to bed and really go to sleep. This was about seven-thirty in the evening. I was sitting at the dinner table there and I was paged on the telephone; a voice said on the other end--it was the President: "Joe, what are you doing over there?" I said, "Well, Mr. President, I'm just finishing my dinner and getting ready to go to bed." And he said, "Well, Joe, I don't want you to go to bed. You already had your dinner?" And I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Well, you come on over here and have some good homemade apple pie with us for dessert. We're just about finishing our dinner, too, but you come over and have some apple pie." So I went ahead, you know, and walked across Lafayette Square. I was tired and . . . (Laughter) But everybody was expecting me and there was just a handful of people; we sat around the dinner table, and his cook, Zephyr, brought in the President's favorite pie. And after that, the--

F: The trouble with that kind of evening is you don't know when you're going to get home.

M: That's right. We sat around and talked.

Who was his public information man?

F: Depending. That could be Moyers?

M: No.

F: Or Tom Johnson?

M: Nope. No, it was a . . .

F: Are we earlier or later? Was it Reedy?

M: No. He wasn't directly on the staff. It was an appointment deal, and a fairly short guy [Jack Valenti?] [Horace Busby?]

F: I can't think of who that would be?

M: Well, there was just he and a few of us, and then, at that time while reminiscing about his old helicopter days, that's when I told the President the story about his pioneering in more ways than one, when he used the helicopter back in 1948. He said, "Well, Joe, I didn't know that."

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F: I guess he really justifiably always felt that he was a real helicopter pioneer in a way.

M: Well, he was.

F: Passenger pioneer, say.

M: And you know, the interesting thing, even in his last days at the White House, was the fact that my wife and I and our youngest daughter were invited to the White House the day before he left the White House, the next to the last day. In fact, we stayed in the guest bedroom that was right next to the Lincoln Study. I remember early in the evening, we walked in the Study, just sat down and commented, it was very small, and very cozy. In fact, that's the present President's, I guess, favorite room.

F: Yes, nice little room.

What was he like that last evening? Did you eat with him?

M: We didn't eat with him because we had tentatively made plans to come to Washington on several occasions and had to change them several times. Then finally, on very short notice, we decided to come on that particular day, because it would have represented [our last opportunity]. If we didn't do it then, we couldn't do it at all.

F: Who knows when?

M: He was having a reception there that was the last formal affair that he had for some visiting dignitaries, and so forth. So we saw him before the reception, and we saw him the next day. Both he and Mrs. Johnson.

F: Is this the morning they were moving out? Or when?

M: This was the morning that they're moving out. Right.

F: Did he seem reasonably happy?

M: He seemed very happy. And speaking of seeming happy, to me a memorable occasion, and I have it in my diary the exact date, was on the day, it was a Sunday, I believe, when he announced to the world that he did not intend to run for re-election.

F: March 31, 1968.

M: Okay. On that morning, I was up at our lake place at Possum Kingdom Lake. We had no telephone there. Our next door neighbor had a telephone. About nine or ten o'clock in the morning, I got a call from the President. He'd called me on several occasions in the previous months in the year prior to that. Just over the telephone, he'd call me and talk to me, many times from Air Force One. We'd talk about helicopter development, and what's

doing with helicopters. And sometimes it would have to do with establishing a heliport on the roof of the federal courthouse building in Austin. In fact, he brought me in there on a special assignment to redesign the requirements for the rooftop. But on this particular day, he called me and said, "Joe,--and he was in Air Force One--"I want to get this helicopter situation finalized for after I leave the presidency, because I definitely am going to have a helicopter. I want to train my pilot." The pilot he had on his property for flying his airplane around. He says, "I want you to arrange for his training. I want to have it finalized as soon as possible." I said, "Yes, Mr. President. I'll arrange [it]. I'll make a place for him in our training school, and he can come in at the first of the week if he wants to. We'll teach him to fly a helicopter and we'll discuss delivery of your helicopter when you are ready." So we must have carried on a conversation in a very relaxed manner for perhaps thirty or forty-five minutes. I was in our neighbor's kitchen there talking to him over the telephone. As the conversation ended up, he was asking me, how do I like Possum Kingdom? "Any good fishing up there?" And all that stuff. Anyway, it was such a normal, relaxed conversation.

And then that evening when I was watching the television and saw the announcement, to me it was just amazing how a person could be so cool, calm, and collected, and think of something really as unimportant as I would think it would be--It must have been important to him--as the training of his helicopter pilot, to have called me and taken forty-five minutes to an hour of his time on this important day in his life.

F: The mind always kept going. I've seen that, you know. He's busy, just hammering away at something, and suddenly he picks up the phone and he talks about something entirely different.

M: Something entirely different, yes.

F: Goes right back and picks it up.

Did he ever talk to you about his presidential use of the Army helicopters, about either the landing problem or opportunities, and so forth, on the White House lawn, or anything like that.

M: No. But he would often talk about the reluctance of his military pilots, of his Army pilots, to be imaginative; that they say "It can't be done." And he'd say, "Now, Joe--

F: It wasn't like 1948.

M: He said, "Well, Joe, I don't want to know why it can't be done. I want to know what it takes to have it done. I want people to be doers." You know that expression: "I want doers." (Laughter)

F: Did he talk to you at all about the helicopter pad down there in the LBJ Library?

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M: Yes. He talked to me. In fact, he had me tie in with his--First of all, the problem was the pad on top of the Federal Building.

F: Yes.

M: The CAA, the Civil Aeronautics Authority, their specifications would have required that the pad would be extended beyond the roof line. It would make an eyesore of the building and so forth. So he said, "Joe, I want you to get into this thing."

F: Why would they want it?

M: Well, because of their so-called standards, you know. They wanted the absolute epitome of everything for the President. And so, you see, he had me get into it. So I worked with the Secret Service and GAO and the architect.

F: Max Brooks.

M: Max Brooks. And we worked with the FAA and re-established acceptable standards. Then I got the Amy pilots there, and got them to agree that those dimensions were acceptable.

(Looking at photographs) This was the Christmas--

F: Who is that?

M: That, I believe, is Mrs. Moursund, isn't it?

F: It may be. I don't recognize her.

M: This picture was taken at the Krim home, and that's the LBJ bedroom.

F: That's Mary White.

M: Yes, that's right.

F: Go ahead with your two pads.

M: Yes. And then he had me work with the Brooks people to establish the dimensional requirements of a pad that wouldn't be too expensive. He didn't want things to be ostentatious; he didn't want them to cost too much, but he wanted them to be effective.

F: He could spend money and cut corners about as well as anyone I ever knew. I mean+, he was cost conscious.

M: He sure was.

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- F: He would have been a whale of a controller in some corporation; he would have driven you nuts.
- M: Right. And then on the helicopter thing he wanted to know, "Well, now, how about the cost to maintain this machine. What's it going to cost me?" And, of course, as far as getting a pilot, he wouldn't consider getting a separate helicopter pilot. He wanted to have his airplane pilot trained as a helicopter pilot. He wants to make one thing do two jobs.
- F: Yes.
- M: Just like he had his airplane pilot, of course, when he wasn't flying the airplane, he was also working as a farmhand, driving a tractor and trying to keep himself busy. He couldn't understand why an airplane pilot, if he wasn't flying, shouldn't be doing something else.
- F: He would be a devil around a firehouse. (Laughter)
- M: That's right. But you can't do anything but admire a person that thinks like that.
- F: Well, now, did you do the same thing then out at the Library?
- M: In the case of the Federal Building, the Federal Building was already designed and built and the heliport was an add-on thing. On the Library, the heliport was part of the basic layout of the building.
- F: You wrote that in from the beginning.
- M: That's right. So we pretty much gave Max Brooks' people an outline of the requirements, some standards to use. And in that case, it wasn't necessary to obtain any deviations from FAA.
- F: Did you ever go out relaxing with him?
- M: Out at the Ranch, if you can call it relaxing, driving across the pastures in his car or an electric cart. Relaxing, sitting around the dining room table.
- F: That kind of talk.
- M: Yes, that kind. But, of course, sitting around fishing; I've never seen him fish. Never been with him hunting. Whenever I've been with him other than sitting in a helicopter, there were always other people; he was always surrounded by other people and he was a wonderful raconteur. He always made you part of what was going on. I remember one day there at the Ranch I had just landed the helicopter and he drove up and said, "Joe, get in the car." And I got in the car along with, I believe, Mrs. Johnson was there and also

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some guests. I think on this particular occasion there was this famous heart transplant doctor from . . .

F: [Michael] DeBakey or [Denton] Cooley.

M: No, the one from South Africa.

F: Oh, Barnard. Christian Barnard.

M: Christian Barnard and his wife were there for that weekend, and then we drove over to the Ranch house and they got off to go in to get cleaned up for dinner. And one of his aides brought a long communique, I guess it had to do with the Vietnam war; they were doing it constantly during the day, you know, bringing him up to date. He read it and then he made some statements and he turned and he said, "Well, Joe," he says, "we still have problems over there." And then he said, "Look at this." He'd just read to me a couple statements and it made you feel as if you were part of history right then and there. He knew that I wasn't going to give it to the press and knew that just that little bit of information he gave me wasn't a strategic bit of information.

F: No, but he talked to you

M: But he talked to me and made me feel as if I was--

F: A colleague in this case.

M: That's right. A part of it. And he had the knack of doing it with everybody around him, I felt. But at times I know one of the things that sort of embarrassed me, in a way it did, in recent years, back in the late sixties, early seventies, I wanted our president, our past president of our company to meet the President.

F: What's his name?

M: His name is Ducayet, Edwin Ducayet. And there was some valid reason why he wanted to meet him. There wasn't any business discussion really going on, but he just wanted to meet him. So I flew he, the president and his wife and my wife and myself down there for lunch one day, left in the morning and got there shortly before lunch. And we had lunch together with Mrs. Johnson and one or two other visitors. And it was embarrassing to me that during the luncheon conversation, most of the conversation was with me, a good part of it was with me instead of with my boss, the president, who I'd brought down specifically to chat with him.

F: Yes, I can see that.

M: But I think also part of it was the fact that my boss might have been awed by his presence there.

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- F: No, I think Johnson was just interested enough that he'd think, "Well, I'll just show the president what a man Joe is here, you know."
- M: Probably so.
- F: Nobody quite to equal him. Well, can you think of anything else we ought to add? It's been fascinating.
- M: Well, let's see. When did the President die?
- F: He died in January of 1973. He died the day after Nixon's inauguration.
- M: All right. Now when was he last [up here]? He was here in Texas attending a football game on a cold, January day.
- F: He came up here to the Cotton Bowl.
- M: It was the Cotton Bowl game. I happened to be at a friend's home on that day and of course he has a knack of being able to find you regardless of where you're at. He called me right after he got back to the hotel and I talked to him and he says, "Joe, I'm tired." And we talked about something about the helicopter. I think he had a helicopter problem down there. He wanted to talk to me about the helicopter and he sounded very tired and, of course--
- F: Now, did he have his own helicopter or was that a government?
- M: No, no, the one that he used was actually Arthur Krim's helicopter. See, Arthur Krim bought a helicopter because with the place that he built out there near the lake there was no way really of getting to it other than by this long winding road. So Arthur Krim bought it, but then the President would let him keep it at his Ranch. And Arthur Krim's caretaker of the place there was a former Army helicopter pilot who likes farming and so forth so Krim hired him as a combination helicopter pilot and caretaker of his place. But, anyway, the President had called me concerning a problem with the helicopter and the President felt because he was using it part of the time that he'd want to have something done for it. Anyway, that was the last time that I talked to him.
- F: He was feeling a little weary at that time.
- M: Yes. And it was a cold, blustery day there and I guess it'd taken a lot out of him.
- F: I saw him a little before that somewhere. I didn't usually ask him how he felt, but for some reason I did that day. He said, "Joe, I just can't get easy in my gut." And I kind of had a feeling then that things might not be going right.

He was an intriguing man.

M: He certainly was.

F: I'm sure he loved to reminisce with you.

M: Oh, he did. I know I did and of course, I had a certain amount of technical know-how, but I represented some of the things identified, I guess, with his early career.

F: Did he use to tease you in those days on being a Yankee and his educating you and that kind of thing?

M: He would. That's right. He would.

F: Tease you a little bit about beans and cornbread.

M: Oh, yes. And then in later years he'd always tease me. He said, "Well, Joe, now that you've gotten to be a big executive, you just don't care about your old friends. I can tell." Or else he'd say, "Joe, now that you've gotten to be a big executive, you're not thinking about the things in life that count. You're just worried about big companies, selling more helicopters, making more money." I'd say, "Well, no, Mr. President, I enjoy thinking about the things in life that really count." He'd say "Well, now, Joe, then act that way. Just relax now."

F: "Just don't be too big for your britches."

M: Sometimes he'd say, "Joe, where did you get that expensive suit? Where'd you get that expensive suit there? You're really putting on the dog." (Laughter)

F: Well, I suppose this is a good stopping point, although if we think of something else in going back through.

(Interruption--tape resumes abruptly)

M: It had to do with the campaign period following President Kennedy's selection of him as his Vice President nominee . . . as his teammate. Their headquarters were there on Connecticut Avenue right across from our Washington office building. One day I went up there just to visit and he happened to be there, and it was just amazing to me the polarization that existed between the two camps, you know the Kennedy and the Johnson group there and how outspoken the Johnsons were and I'm sure the Kennedys were even more outspoken against the Johnsons. But again it wasn't just the Vice President being outspoken, it was his whole professional group, shared a common feeling.

F: Well, I really think that he and Jack, left to their own devices, got along pretty well, but the Kennedy staff wasn't about to let Johnson get up on an equal basis.

M: It was for Bobby that they had the strongest words. They were always against Bobby Kennedy; they didn't trust him; they weren't sure what he was going to do. The only

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thing they were sure of was what he said, but they weren't sure what he meant, what he was going to do

F: I think there was some sort of chemistry there anytime that Johnson and Bobby Kennedy got together, they were just going to kind of rub, like two pieces of sandpaper against each other. I think each one of them could have started out with the purest of intentions, and I think it would have gone sour eventually because they just weren't made for each other; whereas I think he and Jack and he and Teddy had a little better understanding, what the ground rules were, the reason why the other fellow might . . . Bobby stuck in his craw and . . .

M: Yes.

F: He can mimic anybody. He's great on that.

(Interruption--tape resumes abruptly)

M: . . . He said, "We have a Christmas party going on up here at the Ranch and we've invited some underprivileged children to come up here from a neighboring area and, although we tried to find some helicopter toys--all these children know I've always been interested in helicopters--we just can't find any. Do you think you might have some helicopter models of some kind around there?" And I said, "Absolutely, Mr. President. How many do you want?" And he said, "Well, I don't want to ask for too many. Just a few." I said, "Will half a dozen do?" And he said, "A half a dozen is more than enough now if you want to send those. If you want to send them, just get in touch with Warren Woodward and he'll arrange to put them on an airplane. I've got some packages coming down here from Nieman Marcus on an airplane."

So, anyway, he'd ask you to do something for him in a way that you're doing him a favor, you're also doing somebody else a favor.

F: That often intrigued me, too. I mean a situation like that, because in the same situation I'm not sure that I would think of old Joe Mashman, you know, and "He can come up with some toys for me." But he can do it. He's wonderful at coming immediately to mind with the person he wanted to turn to.

H: But the mere fact that he could think in terms of a small detail like a toy for a child and then he just passes that thought on to somebody else. (Laughter)

F: Yes.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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Signed by Joseph Mashman on March 28, 1978

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