

INTERVIEW I

DATE: November 11, 1983
INTERVIEWEE: FRANK W. MAYBORN
INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger
PLACE: Mr. Mayborn's office, Temple, Texas

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M: At the time of this election which was in controversy, I was in Nashville, Tennessee putting up a radio station I was building there called WMAK, and we were right in the throes of trying to get a five-tower line of towers put up in the Cumberland River Valley with a twenty-eight foot overflow. I was pretty well over my head in debt and was concerned about the *Atlanta Journal* tearing down their five-tower line, and I thought maybe I was heading for disaster and I was worried and spending my time up there rather than in Texas. I wasn't around here, except I was reading and I was familiar with what was going on in connection with the election and the vote and how it turned out and the controversy and the fact that it had been thrown back by the courts, I guess, onto the [State Democratic Executive] Committee, of which I was a member but not very active at that time because I'd just got back from the army. The first thing I did was to start buying newspapers and doing things, and I wasn't very much involved with political party activity. I don't remember having gone [but] to maybe one or two meetings, if we had any at all, none of which amounted to anything.

But in connection with that meeting that was held at the Blackstone [Hotel] in which the state committee was going to have to recommend a nominee to the state convention, which was to meet the next day,

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Byron Skelton, the floor leader of the loyal Democrats supporting Lyndon Johnson, called me at Nashville the day before and said he wanted me to come down and vote. He thought it was going to be a close vote, and he knew that I had already complained about [Coke] Stevenson, because Stevenson on several occasions had been invited and had accepted to come up here to Temple to make speeches, and probably for good reasons, but at the last minute something came up and he could not make them; and I had a banquet on my hands to fill, and this irked me. I concluded that probably he was a little old for the job and probably a little bit too far conservative. I was sort of a middle-of-the-roader. But he hadn't impressed me with anything he'd done. He was pretty much a status-quo sort of a fellow. A nice guy, I'm sure, and I liked the cut of his jaw and I thought he was going to be a good governor, but I didn't feel like I wanted to vote for him if there were any other opportunities.

I had been reading about Johnson since then and felt really kind of sad about the fact that I had allowed my temper to get the best of me when somebody threatened to start a paper if I didn't support Johnson in his bobtail race for [Morris] Sheppard's office. While it probably didn't really change the course of events, we were on the wrong side, as it turned out. So I didn't have any objection to coming down. In fact, I really wanted to, but I was pretty well tied up. But I went ahead and made the concession and, as Bob Poage said, "I think you flew the furthest and paid your own fare and without solicitation from Mr. Johnson cast a vote for him." And I said, "Well, maybe so, there's been an awful lot of talk about who was solicited and under what conditions,"

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all of which I considered to be mostly hearsay and just tripe that was put out for the purpose of besmirching his name.

So I came down and walked into the Blackstone Hotel about ten o'clock or ten-thirty and found out that--I knew I was late, but I didn't know they were going to start voting before all the people were there. Because I had told them I was coming--I think Skelton told them --I guess they knew I was coming, because when I walked in it was like sitting at an Irish wake. Everybody was sitting there like statues, with people talking in corners. When I came in, they quickly put me in a chair and gave me a ballot, which I marked for Mr. Johnson, and they took it away from me. Apparently I was the last one there and was afraid maybe the thing wouldn't even count. But apparently they held the polls open until they got everybody in that they thought was coming. Everybody was there but me, and so after I cast my vote, why, I was through.

I was talking to some of the people that I knew there when somebody picked me up and gave me a big bear hug--it was Johnson. So I sensed immediately that I must have cast the deciding vote and found out later that I had. That meeting was adjourned, and Johnson went off with his group and I rode with Byron Skelton back to Temple. He and his wife were up there, and I rode back to tend to some business. I was going back to Nashville the next morning. That's really about all that happened that I can truthfully report about the great events that took place.

G: Were you there when Charlie Gibson is supposed to have come in the room and stood on a chair and announced he was voting for Johnson?

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M: When I got there it was static. Whatever happened had happened. They were just sitting there, I guess waiting to see if I was going to show. And I came straightaway as fast as I could. I think they knew that I was on a tight schedule, and I think the arrangements were made that they'd wait and get me.

G: I see. How did you fly down from Nashville?

M: I came down on American Airlines from Nashville.

G: I see. Did you have a chance to talk to your partner? I believe it was Mrs. Wade Sadler who was the other member from your district.

M: No, I was not consulted by anybody. When I got to the room, why, I was led right to my desk almost like they were waiting for me, which they were, but I didn't know how much they were waiting for me. That's really what happened. I was sort of dazed by the expedition of the way I was seated. Everything was greased. I sat down and I voted, and it was all over before I really got my breath. I don't suppose I had been there ten minutes till it was all over.

G: And then you flew back to Nashville the next day?

M: I went back to Nashville the next morning. I came on home to Temple, where I had my business here, of course, running the paper. I had been neglecting it and leaving it in other hands while I tried to get that station (WMAK) out of the way and get the critical part out of the way.

G: Did you play any part in the subsequent campaign, the actual election in November?

M: Well, I supported him, of course, and the paper did what we could to support him. We did the usual things, we gave him the publicity that he was entitled to. Coke wasn't very ambitious. Who was he running

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[against]? I don't recall the race after that really. He was already elected then, wasn't he?

G: Mr. Stevenson, you mean?

M: No, Mr. Johnson then, he had the vote in his favor. He was elected.

G: Yes. Oh, yes, he was elected.

M: Well, that took care of that. I've been his supporter from then on; all through the years we were close friends. I flew with him after the great events out in California, when the meeting adjourned with Johnson being [the nominee for] vice president and Bobby [Kennedy] still fussing, and we couldn't find anybody. We heard that Rayburn had talked to Bobby and that the deal was made. When I got back I found out that, yes, he was the vice president[ial nominee].

So when it came time for the campaign to start, at Johnson's invitation, I had an opportunity to ride with him up to Hyannis Port. So I got on the plane. He had a man from Georgetown and he had [Allen] Duckworth from the *Dallas [Morning] News*. Most of the agencies preferred to have their people at the various points to make the contact. We had some other people. I think Charlie Woodson from Brownwood was there. Charlie and I were always good Democrats together, [for] almost everything, including during the Eisenhower race. Even though I had served under Eisenhower, we worked for Adlai Stevenson.

G: What did you do in Hyannis Port, do you remember?

M: Well, on the plane we stopped in Kansas City, I believe it was, where Mr. Truman was, and we all went over and went to some state building. Our group went up and sat down, and Mr. Johnson let us all be privy to the conversation of what he thought and what Mr. Truman thought, and

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what he should say when he saw Mr. Kennedy. As I say, it was an effective little open strategy meeting among trusted friends. I've forgotten what all he told him to say, but it wasn't anything earth-shaking. It was about what you'd do anyhow. So really I was more impressed by just shaking hands with Mr. Truman again. I had met Mr. Truman. Back before the war, why, we'd entertained Mr. Truman when he was chairman of the Senate committee to see that the army behaved out in the field, which was a device, including [George] Marshall, to get to the core of the problem without having to run through so many channels to straighten out things that were not going right.

That committee I think had leaks from Mr. Marshall where things weren't going right, and I think Mr. Truman caught them. He got things done in a hurry that way. He sent his battery commander down, I know, to Fort Hood to find out why we had all these people dying in the heat of the day, and found out that we were eating pork and after being served pork, the men were allowed to go down to the PX and eat ice cream afterwards and then march. They got out in the hot sun and we had a few deaths, so right quick we had a scandal on our hands at North Fort Hood. So the battery commander that commanded a battery with Mr. Truman in World War I, who was his field investigator, came down, and we showed him what we were doing. We got rid of the pork and we fired a few rounds of ammunition in conference with the commanding general, and that was the end of that. We didn't have any more deaths--we got very fast action. I don't know all the mechanics, but I think that there was a device which Mr. Truman was privy to knowing what was going wrong, since he was on the Senate committee to be concerned, and I think Marshall

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confided in him where he had trouble, and Truman moved faster than the army could without going through so many channels and catching the wrong guy.

G: That's interesting.

Did I understand you correctly, that you went to the 1960 convention in California?

M: Yes, I went to that convention.

G: Were you in the hotel when the deal was struck on Mr. Johnson accepting the vice-presidential part of the ticket?

M: I was out of the room when the thing happened. I heard about it and we spent the rest of the night trying to find him, with a bunch of Dallas reporters and editors. We couldn't find anybody; they all disappeared and we just took it as hearsay, and we gave up that afternoon and packed up and went home.

G: I see. Were you surprised at the news when he had accepted?

M: Well, it made pretty good sense to me. Johnson was doing real well, you know, in that convention, and we had a real stampede going for Johnson when they trotted Mrs. Roosevelt out and that killed the impetus, just let the water right out of the big movement and the screaming and the hollering and "We want Johnson," so that we all had to all start behaving. That just took the steam right out of us.

In that particular campaign, why, we worked all night long getting our committee plans ready. The next morning we'd read the Los Angeles paper, which was being put out with the aid of Mr. Kennedy out there, wherever he sat his headquarters out in the woods somewhere. The strategy meetings were out there, and we'd come down in the morning and

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find that we were working against wind that we hadn't anticipated. We had a pretty hard time keeping up with the show the Kennedys were putting on, all the pretty girls in the sailor hats and all the marching going on. We were steamrollered and we kept hanging on, and we had some determined [people]. We had some votes and they needed some votes, so I guess in the background the trading was made. I think Sam Rayburn, who was a very able fellow, figured that the best solution was [having Johnson on the ticket], and he, being respected by everybody, was in a position to do it. I think he worked out the agreement as a sure-fire way to bring the convention to an end without a riot and a split in the party. So I guess that's how it happened. I'm not sure what went on behind the door. But anyhow, I think Rayburn engineered it.

G: Did you know Phil Graham, the publisher of the *Washington Post*?

M: No, I didn't know him. I knew who he was. I knew the people that ran the Los Angeles paper and all that. I knew the Chandlers. But they were all for Kennedy. Their political writers were all-out for him. They had their blueprint every morning when they picked the paper up, what to do. We were already defeated, and we had to go back and fight our way into the rooms, you know. It was rough. It was a pretty well engineered, pretty well staged job, by a bunch of pros who knew their way around.

G: Some analysts have said that the Kennedys did a better job of going after the state organizations, and that's where their strength was.

M: They had everything money would buy and they had the political know-how. We had good people working, but we weren't as experienced, didn't have the funds, we didn't have the groundwork laid, and we didn't have the

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ear of the Los Angeles paper either. So the combination made it a pretty uphill fight. But Johnson distinguished himself there, I think. Finally I think we had enough votes around there to where I think that the compromise was about the only solution. I don't know what would have happened if we hadn't have compromised. There had to be compelling reasons because, after all, they had to get elected after they got nominated, and I think Rayburn convinced the Kennedy people that they needed somebody from the South and the West. I suppose that's how they decided to run.

So we went up there to see him [Truman]. Then we went on to Hyannis Port. They stashed the reporters and people that came with him [LBJ] out in the hotels. The next day we went out to his [Kennedy's] home out there. We were served doughnuts and stuff by his sister, and we had a rowdy meeting with the photographers who practically tore his house up when he and Johnson came in to be interviewed. It was so bad that whoever was in charge had to threaten to call it off, because photographers are eager, but these fellows were beyond eagerness. They were fighting for position to the point that it was tearing up the house. It was crowded, you know, in the front room. So they had to be told how to behave, which embarrassed me for the team. Then we stood around, and they had a lot of pictures made between Johnson and Mrs. Johnson and the Kennedys. Then it got to be sort of desultory, waiting for everybody to gather up and meet the schedule for the buses.

I was walking down, just wandering around there, standing with a group talking, and all of a sudden somebody grabbed me from behind, kind of like Johnson did in that meeting. I turned around and it was the

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Ninth Air Force PIO [public information officer], that worked for me when I was acting chief and assistant chief of SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force] public relations in World War II. This boy was the Ninth Air Force public information officer, that's what they called them then. I can't remember his name just offhand, but he also was employed or a part owner of the *New Bedford Standard-Times*, which was the paper at Hyannis Port.

It was old home week, and after the usual hugging and everything, I said, "Do you know this Kennedy family here?" He said, "Jack's my best friend." I said, "Well, call him over. I can't get near him as the traffic is too heavy, and they're sequestered in a picture-taking thing and everybody is standing back in deference." And he hollered, "Hey, Jack, come over here. I want you to meet the man that helped me win the war," you know, the same old thing we all did. So he came over. Meantime, on his way over, I said, "Well, Jackie's standing over there in a turtleneck sweater doing nothing at all, [and] I don't know her. I'd like to meet her just as much as him," so he says, "Jackie, come over here," so they both came over and I met both of them and had a few pleasantries.

About that time they announced it was time for the bus to go, so Jack got hold of me and he walked down the sidewalk there, and he said, "What do you think of our chances of getting elected?" I said, "Mr. Kennedy, I think that if you're big enough to put up with Mr. Johnson and his idiosyncracies and will let him have a certain amount of head and everything, and if Johnson is big enough to put up with you being higher ranking and him taking orders from you, and if you can keep

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yourself with a solid front with the public and don't let the public tear you apart, which they're trying to do, you can win." And they did that, too, in the first days. They jointly came over to the broadcast meeting together and they did a lot of things together, and they did it in the campaign. It looked like a working team, and I guess it was. I'm not privy to anything to the effect that it wasn't.

G: There's a story that Mr. Johnson at one point was so frustrated as vice president that he was thinking of getting out of politics and going into the newspaper business. Did he ever say anything like that to you?

M: No, I don't think so. That doesn't ring a bell, because anybody that's been around people in office knows that anybody that's in politics very long is a victim of a virus and they just aren't going to go anywhere but right back there. Every time the bell rings they're back and running for something. You see it all the time.

G: You stayed relatively close to President Johnson all through the subsequent years, is that correct?

M: That's right.

G: Did he ever have you up to Washington?

M: Oh, I was up to Washington. I didn't ever stay in the White House. One time I went in there when Kennedy had all the Texas press in there, and I wasn't on the list and I got myself invited. That was the famous day that we all went in to see Mr. Kennedy, and Ted Dealey insulted him with that scurrilous letter he read. He didn't read that until after Johnson got up and had excused himself because he had to go to Georgia. You know all about that. But on that occasion, after he was gone, why, Ted had had a few drinks of wine and he had an editorial that somebody

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wrote--I don't believe he wrote it, I think it was his editorial writer--which began, "Mr. Kennedy." [He asked], "If we can sit around here just all folks now and making ourselves at home?" "Oh, yes, sure." "I hope it will be all right if I read this little piece that we just dashed off here," so he started out saying that we need a man on horse-back and not somebody on Caroline's tricycle, and the fat hit the fire with that, you can see. Kennedy started chewing on his cigar and looking stern and didn't look anywhere, and all of us began having a slight case of cardiac arrest as this thing was read. When he got through, everybody jumped up in protest to the statements. Charlie Woodson said, "Let's take a poll on it."

Finally, I was used to being around people like that and they didn't throw me. I said, "Gentlemen, sit down. Let's behave like gentlemen here. For goodness sakes, we're guests of the President at the White House. Let me speak for you, because this is pandemonium. This is worse than what Ted did." So they all shut up and I then apologized on behalf of everybody to Mr. Kennedy, and I said, "This was an unfortunate incident and not anticipated. Nobody thought it would happen. We're all sorry, and I'm sure even Ted Dealey is sorry that he read it and probably missed his perspective on the time and place to make such remarks. But his remarks about speaking from the grassroots of Texas is erroneous. The only grassroots of Texas he knows are the sidewalks of the First National Bank in Dallas. On behalf of the rest of us, we apologize. We are dismayed"--and I used that word; every reporter in town used it for months. "I'm dismayed at what has happened. It's just unbelievable that such a thing would happen, because

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Ted comes from a good family, good people, and knows better, and I can't understand what happened. It bewilders us." And so I sat down and that was the end of it.

So the President said, "Well, would you all like to have a tour of the White House?" Nobody wanted a tour of the White House, they wanted to get out of there, they were all embarrassed to death. And so the party broke up.

But I've had a lot of meetings with Johnson. He came up to the dedication of my station, even though I built a tower a little taller than he thought I was going to build. Why, I had an opportunity to go up higher. What we were applying for wouldn't have succeeded, so we went on up to a little higher tower, and we overlapped the A pattern of his station in Austin. But he had all the business he could handle and he was running those prize stories, you know, they were paying those huge sums for advertising on his station. He was not hurt and he knew he wasn't, but he fussed at me a little bit about that.

But on different things that we wanted down in Texas, he was very helpful. In one case, why, he took over the Senate rivers and harbors flood control committee. He presided in the absence of the senator that was supposed to be there. He opened up the meeting, came in fresh and full of stuff. He spent the first five minutes eulogizing me and what made Central Texas go and embarrassed me, but it was great. That made everybody listen to it, when they were up there for rivers and harbors and everything else.

I was up there for a dam on the Brazos River system, because we had created the Brazos River Authority here in Bell County years ago.

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It had been languishing because it wasn't a very popular thing, to build dams, with railroads and power companies. But the vote was loaded by appointments by the governor and so it was static for a long time. Until finally when Sam Rayburn came along and saw the problem, why, he set up the Southwest Power Authority, which distributed the power between private and public enterprises, which in turn eliminated all the fighting. The railroad people realized there wasn't any chance for any navigation problems, so they all lost interest in the Authority. And Jack Kultgen, who had been chief of the Highway Department, as the chairman of the commission saw what was going on. He got on the board and brought the thing back down on the Brazos River at Waco, where it then began to be a viable operation working with the federal government on flood control projects. And today all thirteen dams are built on the Brazos River. We got two of them right here in Bell County, and with them, we got what we were fighting for all along--water. We had been promised water from the Corps of Engineers a long time before we ever thought we'd get it. I got a price out of them of fifteen dollars an acre foot. I had a letter to that effect from the Corps of Engineers, so when we got the dam, why, we bought twenty-two thousand feet of it at fifteen dollars a foot and it was worth about two hundred. Had the commitment.

G: Did you and the President ever compare notes as operators of television stations?

M: Well, we've talked about television stations. He took a definite interest in the stations. They fascinated him. TV fascinated everybody at that time, and he had one of the earlier stations. It was the only

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station really we could get in Temple for a long time until we got our tower up. We didn't talk technicalities and we didn't talk personalities, except we had one understanding that I suggested to him. I said, "We might get one thing straight that will make it happier for both of us. If neither of us will hire each other's employees we can keep out of that pit." He said "That's fair enough," and he never did and I never hired any of his.

But we had congenial arrangements. In fact, our relations were off and on. When he was in Scott and White hospital, he called me over there and I sat there with him for hours when he was getting over his first heart attack in Temple. He didn't ask for anybody else. He just wanted to know what was going on, visited, and he was out. But he came down here the last three weeks, about, before he died. He came here to make a speech at a big meeting of the doctors from this hospital, and the president of the AMA who was here. He, with Arthur Scott and Byron Skelton, had set the foundation up for this hospital years ago, and I guess he knew he wasn't here for too long.

But anyhow, he accepted the invitation and came up by helicopter on a rainy night, brought Lady Bird along. He sat in the chair there waiting for his turn to speak, and I talked to Lady Bird, and I said, "Lady Bird, tell me the truth. What is the score?" She said, "Well, I hate to say it, but it just doesn't look good." And I said, "Well, I'm distressed to hear it." So I went over and talked to him, because the doctors didn't know what to say to him. They had nothing in common. He was sitting over there by himself, so I went over and sat with him for about twenty minutes.

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Then he went on the air and made a speech in the high school auditorium to the group, on just the general subjects of medicine and what had happened in Temple, congratulated them on what had happened and talked about being proud of the school. It was a nice speech. And then he went on down and sat down in the audience somewhere, I guess. I didn't know where he went. So I looked around, didn't see him, so I went out there. When the president of the AMA got through speaking, why, the lights didn't come on. They had some amateurs staging the show in the auditorium for the first time. They didn't know where the light switch was, forgot that you had to turn them on and let the public out. But the strobe lights started popping right in front of me, and I was back about twelve seats, and I could see then what was happening. Johnson was sitting about eight seats back from the front, and it lit the room up. I was sitting there watching the shooting arrangement.

About that time he stood up, took two steps with his long legs. He grabbed me by the arm--he had followed where I had gone--pulled me back and sat me down and said, "Lady Bird, you know Frank, sit down here by him." And we sat there and endured about five minutes of picture-taking, which turned up later, if I'm not mistaken, in the *Washington*--what was the other paper, not the *Post*, but the one that quit?

G: *Evening Star*, was it?

M: *Star*, *Evening Star*, and the *Sunday Star*. Why, it's been dead so long I forgot about it. The *Evening Star* had a big panel on the editorial page called "Old Wheat," and there was Johnson and Mrs. Johnson and me sitting there talking about old friends. It was a mellow piece, after he had passed on, about how he had made lots of friends and had lots of

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people that admired him. All of us were impressed with how he grew in stature as he took that job on, beginning with the whip and on the way up. He actually very obviously grew in stature and did great things and got a lot done up there, and he was a powerhouse.

Once before I went to a tea in the Rose Garden, and I tried to get around--he had a lot of his friends around out there in the patio. One evening I was up there with my wife. So I worked around to get as far away from him as I could, because I didn't want to get in the target again. I'd been targeted too many times; he always had either fun with me or bragged on me or something, and I didn't need any bragging. I just didn't want to interrupt what he was doing. So I managed to get a seat way around on the back side of the circle. The podium was over here on the other side. We'd been up shaking hands in the Rose Garden up there as we came in, having drinks and things. And so it got dark. I presumed he was going to start on that podium, and to my great surprise, the voice started over the back of my head. He'd come over and got behind me behind the tube, and he started talking there. He said, "I picked this place" and he made some kind remarks about me and identified me and all, a lifelong friend and all that, and then went on talking. So I defeated my own stuff. I went out of the way and got caught anyhow.

G: Well, he could do things like that.

M: Yes, he was always full of surprises. I found him very interesting.

G: Do you recall where you were when President Kennedy was assassinated?

M: Yes. I had just returned from Florida where I went to the Southern Publishers Association meeting, which I'm getting ready to do now, next

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week. They had chopped out the back of the hotel down there to let Mr. Kennedy go through and not expose him to any parades or anything, because the security just didn't think well of that. I then flew back home and stopped in Dallas. I was invited by the Stemmons family to sit up there in a position of honor, because I'm friends of theirs for years, and they owned the Dallas Trade Mart. Storey Stemmons worked and helped Trammell Crow get those big marts set up, up there, those marts that you see. Are you familiar with the market? You've got a trade center up there, looks like Chicago.

Anyhow, they invited all the bigwigs of Dallas out there, for him to come out there and address us. So we went out there. I was a little concerned when I found out that they'd announced his route, where he was going to go, and the time he was going to leave, and go down through the underpass. I was horrified, but hell, it was too late to do anything I could do. The Secret Service was supposed to know what they were doing. About every law enforcement officer in Texas was around. But the Secret Service has a way of dominating other authority and they're jealous of their prerogative of guarding the president, and don't want any help and don't ask for any, and [they] resent anybody trying to help them. But anyhow, it was a serious mistake to let that parade go down through an empty, vacant part of the city. I for the life of me couldn't understand why they didn't announce a false route and then take the other route. It's so simple to change the route.

But it went just on schedule down there. I was sitting out there waiting, and we got nervous and we began to see that there was some movement around the head table. Nobody would say anything. And pretty

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soon it leaked out, and we finally all found out that the President had been shot and he was in Parkland Hospital, and they didn't know whether he was going to live or die. So it broke up in sadness, and we didn't eat, and that was the end of that. We strung out, and then you know the rest of the story. It's all been printed.

G: What did you do next?

M: After that? Well, I didn't do anything about him because he was out at Parkland Hospital and I know enough about public official stuff that there wasn't any use going anywhere near there. So I went back to the hotel, and I went down with Storey Stemmons to his office and we sat around and talked about it. I talked about having not gone to the speech in Florida because I was going here. But I said, "They had tight security down there. I was surprised that both of them wandered all over Texas in parades and had a love feast and talks in San Antonio and they were exposed everywhere they went." And in view of the fact that we'd had some ugliness in Dallas toward Johnson [the Adolphus Hotel incident], when he'd been up there he'd been spit on one time in public, a mess. I just didn't see any point in having these big parades, but I wasn't consulted. And they had this parade and all that, and I thought it was bad.

I think that the atmosphere was not good. Dallas was not a Democratic town at that time, at least the leaders weren't. It looked to me like they were asking for trouble. I'm sure that this was discussed by all the people and by Johnson and by everybody, and I suppose that Kennedy did what he wanted to. He had [John] Connally with him and they loaded up and took off. And as far as the people of

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Dallas, why, there wasn't anybody going to give them any trouble, but apparently there was one guy there that nobody seemed to know he was there. Although it later turns out the FBI had his record, and knew he was there.

G: Did you come back to Temple then after that?

M: Oh, I suppose I did. That's where I usually go back when I get through going to Dallas.

G: When did you hear from Mr. Johnson next, do you recall?

M: Oh, I didn't hear from Mrs. Kennedy directly. I had no reason to be hearing from her. I had written her. I'm sure I got a perfunctory thank-you note. I wrote and sort of expressed my sadness about the thing. But we didn't get involved in the big celebration of the funeral up in Washington. That was just too much. I watched it on TV, of course, and we watched the shooting of [Lee Harvey] Oswald on TV. That was an amazing incident to see on TV. But everybody was distressed, and there just wasn't any answer for what anybody could say. We were bemused and sorry and sad.

None of us were close enough to the arrangements that I talked to. The people in Dallas that I talked to, the people who are prominent, assumed that everything was laid on by all of the security [people]. We assumed everything had been handled. Why not assume it? We've got all these people. Every law enforcement guy in Texas was up there to see the parade, and they were all up and down the streets just of their own will and accord. They were obvious there. But they got down at the end there--I wasn't down there, but there was bound to be a big crowd down there--but there were a lot of empty buildings down there, old build-

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ings. I don't know whether they were cased ahead of time or not. They could have been and still not found anything, you know. You can't case an old eight-story building room to room in a short time.

But I didn't think much of the parade idea at all. I thought that was dangerous. Because we've had too many cases similar to that. I had been aware of all of the protection that they had in Florida, which was acute. They had it real tight, no parades, no nothing. But I guess that maybe they both wanted to show their love and affection jointly and went around together. Even [Ralph] Yarborough got in the act. I forgot some angle on that down there. It was kind of a happy meeting. I think they went to Fort Worth or were going to go to Fort Worth, too.

G: They had breakfast there, I think.

M: Yes, I think they went to Fort Worth and had breakfast and they drove around. I think they sort of got careless. There wasn't anything that happened up to there that gave them any alarm. It wouldn't have happened in Dallas if it hadn't been for this one incident. So there's no way to say that everything wasn't done, except that one guy got by. That's what happens. So presidents are now becoming more astute because we've got more wild Indians going and more changes going.

G: Yes. Now, did you go to the White House after this, after President Johnson assumed the office?

M: Well, I was in the White House. I went to the White House because they invited all of the broadcasters to come over to the White House, and I went to that thing and shook hands with everybody. I didn't have any occasion to go to the White House and see anybody but Johnson. I went in to see him a time or two after that was all over because we were

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friends, but it was hardly worth the trouble because you had to sit first in the green room and his little assistant, who was sort of the social secretary, that's head of the movie racket [now]--

G: Jack Valenti.

M: Yes. Well, he was sort of custodian of the visiting firemen of his particular. . . . I went down there to see him a couple of times. I never had much to talk to him about because I usually would go to Sam Rayburn's office beforehand and get what I wanted quicker--he was in touch with him all the time--by shaking hands with him.

G: How about the Ranch? Did you have occasion to visit him at the Ranch?

M: Oh, yes. Every time he had a shindig, why, he always invited me along with a lot of other people that had airplanes. I didn't have an airplane. But he had a big gang. I always made his Ranch parties. It was always very cordial, a very nice, warm relationship. If I'd see him-- I've been to banquets where he singled me out if he saw me and come over and give me that usual big hug. He astounded people. They'd say, "Who the hell is Mayborn?" He didn't bother about it. He didn't forget his friends at any place.

G: Did you ever go hunting with him on the Ranch?

M: No. No, I wasn't on the inner circle of the people that do that. I was probably on the professional circle of where we were close friends more as participants [?] of the same party. He remembered that I cast the vote for him. Once he didn't want to come up to a broadcasting meeting, but he did. I said, "You're my senator and I voted for you and damn it, you come up here," and he did. And he stayed around for the reception afterwards and we had a nice time. But being a president is a very busy

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job, and unless you're in the very inner circle, why, you're not likely to go hunting with him or you're not likely to go over and have a casual luncheon with him.

I was over there after the Vietnam thing. I went over to Vietnam with General [Bruce] Clark. And Ted Connell, who sort of acted as a self-appointed sergeant major to Johnson all the time, in any event where he was in movement and needed transportation, called me and told me I was going with General Clark, who was invited by [William] Westmoreland just to come over to Vietnam to take a look around and see what he thought about what they were doing. Ted said the President asked him to find out what was wrong with the M-16. I said, "Well, I'll do that. I know at Fort Hood we've only got six of them and the Americal Division left with having nothing but a look at them. And there are not many of them out but what there are, are over there [in Vietnam], and I'll just make it a point to do it. And if you want me to, then I'll come back and report to you or him or whomever you want me to."

So we went over there and we made the tour of all the fire bases, Clark and I did, and sat in on all the briefings, and went to the Korean base, and we received a lot of honors and pictures and all that. It was very interesting. Got shot at. Everything happened that was supposed to happen.

G: How did you get shot at?

M: Oh, people at My Tho. We got there the day that they opened up after Tet. We'd been up there. We couldn't get into Vietnam until Tet was over because Tan Son Nhut was closed and all the airports were closed. So we stayed in Southeast Asia Command in Honolulu, and then we flew in

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a day ahead on orders, and stayed in Bangkok where we were to be picked up by [Creighton] Abrams' plane. This was Bruce Clark, who was a four-star and who ran the European army and then retired.

But as soon as it was safe, Abrams sent his plane over and brought us in there, and we went right over to the embassy in a helicopter. The embassy had been fired on the day before. They'd had all this bunch of problems with losing the dictator over there just shortly before that. We went up to see [Ellsworth] Bunker, whom I'd known. I knew Bunker before; I'd known Bunker in other places. So we talked a little while and told him we were going down to Bac Lieu and what we were doing and all that.

Then that night before we started out, they had a press conference, which I didn't go to, but a man named [Barry] Zorthian was handling it for the State Department, and it got out of hand in the course of questions about who won Tet, and what effect it had on the people at home, and what effect it had on the troops, and it got so balled up that nobody knew what anybody--you could say anything you wanted to. But the truth of the matter was that the troops were about the finest bunch of troops you ever saw, and their morale was not bad at all. We won Tet. It came out that the soldiers were disheartened and in bad shape and all that. The question was, what did it do to the people back home, and nobody here knew what the hell went on in Vietnam and what the effect was back home. So it got all loused up and it was never corrected, and that night it came back on TV that the troops were demoralized by their defeat in Tet, which was a blank-damn lie. The troops I visited were the finest jungle troops, finest any kind of troops I've seen anywhere,

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and I've been all over the front, and I was acting chief and finally the assistant chief, and finally pretty well ran the PR for SHAEF all through there, and later visited the German fronts and went down along the Czech border. And I've seen some fine troops when I visited Clark, when I went to Heidelberg after the war was over and I saw those troops down there. They were fine troops.

But anyhow, the troops we had there had whipped the jungle fighting, they had learned how to do it, they had learned how to survive. We had equipment there that was perfected at Fort Hood by IBM and a bunch of people that were Ph.D.s in electronics, where we had portable vans that we put around all the bases, and you could read the mail of anybody within five miles, movement, weight, size, smell. The whole bit was all recorded. We didn't get booby trapped anymore after that. We'd learned how to take care of ourselves in the jungle and keep the malarial fever in two kinds of levels and to take one kind of pill at one level and take another kind of pill at another level.

We flew from Bac Lieu--we'd stopped at My Tho, which was still burning. We got up in the air, and we got shot at--we had escorts. The dive bombers every now and then would pass by at my window, cleaning out whatever the hell was shooting below. But we were up pretty high. We were about two thousand feet up, and they didn't do any damage to us. But they did shoot down some--Bruce Ware [?] got shot the week we left, going down over the same route, and [was] killed. So it was a hazardous ride, but then soldiers don't pay any attention to it. When you get in the helicopter and go over the firing lines you know what you're doing.

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So we went to Bac Lieu. Then it was all the way up north to Dak To, and went over to Nha Trang and visited the Koreans, and visited the Cambodian places.

Everywhere I went I either fired the gun or talked to the key people, asking, "What's wrong with the M-16?" They said, "Nothing. The barrels are too light, they burn out too quick. But we understand we're going to get some new ones." I said, "What about keeping them clean?" He said, "Well, it's a precision instrument but the buffers are a little too tight. It's hard to keep them clean, and it's a precision weapon. You can't treat it like an M-1 rifle. It's a very fast-shooting gun and it's very effective." Everybody that had them liked them.

So we talked to Westmoreland when I got back there. We had about an hour session with him. He needed some RP-7s [?] and couldn't get them, and he needed more M-16s, and he needed them with heavy barrels and he needed them with loose buffers. That's all they needed, and maybe handles so they could carry them better, because they were just an empty weapon the way they first--they were only being made by the Colt Manufacturing Company at that time, and they were in short supply and what they had went to combat. But nobody here ever trained with them. They were exposed to them on the ground, and it's a different kind of weapon. If you've seen one or shot one, you touch it, it's like a sewing machine and twenty rounds are gone before you wake up. You've got to have a lot of tracers on them to know what you're doing. You take a Russian AK-47, which is still in use by the Cubans, you can throw one of those things in the washtub, pick it up a month later and shake it and load it and fire it, and it will fire, but it's not very accu-

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rate. It's loose. Everything's loose. Cheap wood, cheap everything. But it sprays the countryside, and you get out of the way. So it has an effect.

But anyhow, we reported when we got back. I got a call that the President wanted us to come over to be debriefed, so the General and I went over at the President's invitation to go to a decoration for two Congressional Medal of Honor people, which we did, and shook hands with the President and [he] asked about the trip. Then these two chaps took us in and we sat somewhere in a cubbyhole in a pretty room of the White House, and they bled us out of what we knew. And when they got it all recorded, why, Johnson then--Ted Connell called me up and said, "I never talked to the President about what I found there except that on the M-16." He seemed to know all about it. And he said, "So I found out that he had cancelled the exclusive contract with Colt and had since ordered up M-16s from twenty-nine different manufacturers, with heavy barrels." And the Pentagon knew it, but they were in a big fight because General [James] Gavin was trying to make the M-14 the army weapon. It was all hell to get in the middle of an arms fight in the Pentagon. Any smart guy that gets in the middle of that doesn't get promoted anymore; he's dead, if you know the army. So everybody clear down to Redstone [Arsenal], my friends wouldn't even talk to me, [they] said, "We don't talk about that."

So the M-16 was out there by itself with a limited amount of manufacture and Gavin was still trying to do it. Well, the history from the medics that I talked to and everybody, the M-16 is so much more effective as a weapon that there's no comparison. And the little people

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at eighty pounds can shoot that thing. We're fighting all over the world, and we can't take an M-14--a big heavy gun--and expect to be able to arm other people to help us. It's just too damn heavy; it's too heavy for a small man. It's too heavy to pack a long way. It's just an obsolete weapon. It's like the .45, it's only really good just to clout somebody on the head with.

So Ted Connell called me. He lives out in Killeen. You probably know him. You need to talk to him because he knows more than I do about a lot of things. But the President finally arranged transportation, and they were shipping a hundred thousand a month beginning March 1, because we were over there February 8; I think the thing was over on February 8. Maybe it was March or April. Anyhow, they started shipping out the guns that they wanted. I talked to the field commanders about that I knew we were going to get more help and everything. He said, well, they could taste hot pursuit. I said, "Forget it. You're going to fight in enclave because we've lost our touch, we're fighting a battle in a country that we don't control. Censorship is not invoked. You can't fight a war without censorship. We have no business here without censorship. Everybody in Christ's creation is over there, and all the old men and everybody slumming around there printing rumors. This is a disaster, just from a PR standpoint. You couldn't keep the people in the field there with that kind of publicity emanating all the time and things are going on that are erroneous. We couldn't have been worse off if we had the fifth column there, if we had a war."

So as it is, we couldn't make up our mind to quit and we couldn't make up our mind to come home, and we left those men over there in those

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sweatshops, and they turned the recreation centers into just anything, something to do. And they should have brought them home immediately. But the problem was, we had all these loyal people around there, and there was a moral feeling that they would all be killed anyhow. But most of them were anyhow. We didn't save very many of them.

G: A lot has been made about the way the press covered the war. Have you got any comments on that?

M: Well, the press couldn't have an opportunity to cover that war, because it was jungle war and we were fighting in enclaves. If you go to a fire base up on a mountain with ironwood trees up there, they're living up there with portable water and everything there, and they can't handle but a platoon. They're sitting up there guarding the border of the next country there, the Twenty-fifth Division was. Their outpost was sitting up on a mountain being protected by helicopters and served under ungodly living conditions. There was nothing to see up there. We were not having briefings, and I asked the commander, "Why don't you have briefings for these people as to what's going on?" He said, "Well, we've talked about it, and they think we're trying to manage the news and they don't trust us. So we just aren't going to tell them. We just give them the casualty list." So every day at five o'clock, they had what they called the Five O'Clock Follies, and everybody went over to see who got killed. All we had was just a death list. But there was no briefing as to what had happened. So they had nothing to write about, so they went back to writing about anything they could think of. So it was an unfortunate thing.

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I got back and I went up to see AP, and I said, "Why have we not had briefings over in Vietnam?" He said, "Well, nobody has asked for them. We haven't asked for them," or he gave me some lame-duck answer. I said, "Well, this is a funny damn thing. Why haven't you talked to the army about why can't you have briefings?" He said, "It's the army, we don't run their business," and he gave me kind of a lame answer. I said, "Well, they told me over there that they had offered to do it and that the attitude was such that they [the press] didn't trust their briefings, so they just didn't intend to get into it and be criticized for telling things that they didn't believe [inaudible] can't call conversations that they knew would be unruly, which they know how to be."

So they never did put it together, and it's one of those things that I don't understand myself. But we were in another man's country, and that's the first thing that's wrong. We should never get in a war that we don't intend to win, or the country is so prostrate that we can take it over like we took over this little island down there [Grenada]. We took it over and set up shop, and that's the way to go. The press is making an unjustifiable complaint about covering that war. Just the minute we secured something, we were carrying pool copy down there. That was pool copy that was being carried, and that's what we did in Europe. Where we had critical situations, we would tell them when we knew ahead of time. That was an organized war. We had a year to get ready. But you can't start a brush fight and get it organized and confide to everybody in town you're going to have it or you'll have a

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bunch of correspondents either on the point or over telling the people what's going on, bragging about it at the bars.

G: Did you ever meet Barry Zorthian? I think he was the PIO.

M: No, I don't remember meeting him. I only saw him--I didn't even see him that day. I just had heard that thing, and I said, "Who in the hell handled the broadcast?" They said, "Zorthian." I said, "Well, he lost control of the people and he tried to answer questions in a shouting match." Any time you get in that, you need to call everybody to order and get the damn thing straight, and he didn't do it. It came out backwards and different on every network. It was very discouraging to have the people back home think we were distressed. We'd just won a battle and everybody thinks we lost it. We didn't lose anything. The damn field was absolutely littered with dead and of course there were a lot of civilians there, too, because they made the civilians march in front of them. When they start marching, they're behind with guns, what the hell do you do? You clean the country around you, that's all you can do.

G: Do you remember your reaction to the March 31 speech when President Johnson announced he was not going to be a candidate?

M: Yes, I remember the broadcast when he said it, the "I do not choose to run" speech.

I was up at the convention up in Chicago where it was mishandled up there. They let the hippies have that damn area across from the hotel, which was fatal. They should not have let them have that space; they should have put them down away from the hotel. They burned the flag, and we had gas, and it was a hell of a mess. So he was advised

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not to come to that meeting, and I don't much blame him. It was a rat race. But they only followed where the cameras went. They were smart. No use having demonstrations in the dark. But in front of that hotel, why, they just had a field day.

G: Were you a delegate to the 1968 convention?

M: No, I went up there as a reporter.

G: I see. Did you write copy on--?

M: Oh, yes. I filed on telephone copy what was going on. I took Jack Kultgen, who is a Republican, with me. He's a good friend of Temple's and everything. He'd never been to a convention of either kind, and he was fascinated by what went on.

It was unbelievable, the things that happened at that meeting. Started out with a taxicab strike when we got there, and we had to have friends come get us. Then the buses ran, that was about all. People were distressed in Chicago about the way that things were being done. But it was a mess. We were following one bunch of marchers out toward the cow house, and we were in a car, a taxicab. There must have been five thousand of them marching toward there. All of a sudden some guy jumped up on the top of a car with a megaphone and says, "Let's turn back, we haven't got any cameras." So the thing dissolved. They all went back downtown again. So the cameras are the magnet. You take the cameras away, they won't march. It's their way of getting public expression. The pure cure is just to take the cameras away and you've got it made.

G: Did LBJ ever tell you when he made that decision not to run? Did he ever discuss that with you?

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M: No. I wasn't very close to him. You know, he had lots of friends, but I wasn't sitting in the middle of it. I knew John Connally and I have sat around with him at times, but I wasn't with him at all and I didn't know he'd decided not to do it. But I can understand why he did it. My understanding is that, and I think I'm right--see, Sam Rayburn had passed away, who was a strong supporter, just like a right arm. And he had offended Mr. [Richard] Russell, I think, when he marched the FBI through Georgia, and Mr. Russell took a dim view of that, I think. Those were his two mentors and he was pretty much kind of fighting the air by himself. I'm not privy to all the things that went on or what he thought or expressed, but you hear these things. I could imagine it was a pretty lonely job. The war situation was one that five presidents couldn't seem to figure out what the hell to do about. Who was he to be the great solver?

So when I saw him, it was friendly, but I didn't see him all that much. If I'd see him two or three times a year, that was pretty good. But I'd see him down at his ranch whenever he'd have a barbecue. But trying to have a private conversation with a president when everybody is in the room around there, you don't go very far before somebody's busting in to you when they start another line of thought. So you have a cordial meeting and you pass the time of day and ask each other questions and a few things, maybe one or two things that may be on the hopper and say, well, we got that fixed up, or something. That's about all you can ever get done. Because he's exposed to everybody there and everybody's pouncing on him. Wherever he goes, why, people follow him. So you don't have many private conferences, and I didn't have any

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private luncheons at the White House. That was the only time I'd eaten at the White House, was on that day that somebody had hooked up a press conference for the Texas delegation, and I had called up and finally wangled my way into it. I forget who got me into it.

G: Could it have been Liz Carpenter that got you in?

M: No. I didn't call Liz. I don't know who I called. I might have called Bentsen, I might have called Bob Poage. I might have--somebody, maybe Sarah McClendon. I don't know who the hell I called. I called probably all ports because I wanted to go. I'm glad I went, because somebody that knew how to do it needed to get up and say what I said. Because we put the best possible face on it we could after rather a fiasco.

G: All right, sir, shall we pause here?

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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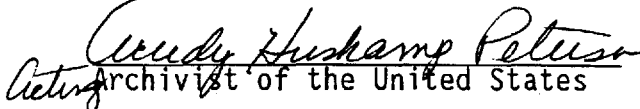
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