

INTERVIEWEE: CANON GERALD MC ALLISTER  
INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

Episcopal Cathedral House, Patterson Avenue, San Antonio, Texas  
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P: Canon McAllister, how long have you been an Episcopalian minister and where have you served?

M: I have been an Episcopal minister since being ordained as a deacon in 1953. The first portion of my ministry was spent in the Rio Grande Valley at the city of Raymondville, where I stayed for some several years. Then I moved from Raymondville to Corpus Christi to begin a new Episcopal mission there. I spent about four and one-half years in Corpus Christi and then at the invitation of the Bishop to begin yet another mission, I moved to Victoria.

P: What year was that?

M: It has been about ten years ago now, so this would be about 1958. And I stayed in Victoria for slightly over four years and then about five and one-half years ago, I was appointed by the Bishop to be the First Canon of the Diocese and have been living in San Antonio and working here for the Diocese ever since.

P: You were appointed a Canon in what year?

M: About five and a half years ago.

P: That would make it 1963?

M: I guess so. That's about right.

P: And that is your current position--Canon for the Diocese of Southwest Texas?

M: Of West Texas. Geographically we're South but actually in terms of our title, we're West Texas.

P: You are a native San Antonian and have a well-known father, Mayor McAllister, in San Antonio. Has this exposed you to a lot of the political side during

your growing up?

M: Well, yes, I have always had a family that has been community-oriented. Certainly when you're concerned about a community, eventually you become involved in its politics, because the way in which you get something done within the life of a community--at least the public sector of it--is by exercising political influence in one way or another. Actually, my father has only become active in politics--at least in the foreground, let's say--in recent years. He went under President Eisenhower. He was appointed to the Home Loan Bank Board and served as chairman of it in Washington for about four and a half years of a six-year term, and then resigned and returned to San Antonio. Shortly after he returned to San Antonio, he was first appointed as a member of the City Council to fill an unexpired term. Then he ran on his own and since then has been serving as mayor of San Antonio for almost eight years now. So about the last thirteen years, his life has been very definitely in the public sector and in the political field.

P: Has this involved you just in the family connections in more recent years at all? In the functions as mayor of San Antonio.

M: Well, our lives are pretty different, and they go in different channels for the most part. My life within the church and duties and functions that I have within the life of the church occasionally bring me into contact with my father in his official capacities, but most of the time they tend to insure that we go separate routes. We're good friends, however, even though we sometimes differ sharply on political matters. We do follow each other and each knows what the other is doing. That type thing.

P: When did you first meet the Johnson family and how did this come about?

M: One aspect of my job as Canon of the Diocese is to work with what we call mission churches of the Dioceses; these are the new ones that are not yet self-supporting parishes. I occasionally will fill in as a supply priest when there's a vacancy in a particular community. We have churches in Fredericksburg and Comfort that are linked together and normally are served by one man. It happened that this mission field was vacant and so as a part of my service to the Diocese, I began going, not every Sunday but at least two Sundays a month and sometimes three Sundays a month, to take services at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Fredericksburg and St. Boniface Church in Comfort. Services in Fredericksburg are early and I would drive to Fredericksburg and get there in time for a 9:00 o'clock service, and then have a minute or two to greet the congregation and have a cup of coffee with them, then drive back to Comfort in time for an 11:00 o'clock service. It was while I was serving these two missions and conducting services and preaching at St. Barnabas that I first began to have contact with the Johnson family. Like most Texans I had seen President Johnson on a number of occasions, and I had visited with him and been present at political functions when he was a Senator. But I really had had no continuing contact, and no contact that you could begin to term "personal" so to speak, until this relationship sprang out of my ministry in Fredericksburg.

P: Do you remember the first time and the date when this occurred?

M: I'm sorry, I do not.

P: The year?

M: Well, it would have been some time last year and probably in the spring of 1967.

P: What were your impressions of the Johnson family and how would you characterize them?

M: Goodness, that's a tough one; they're quite different, of course, each one. Well, let me say this to you. I think in many ways that they are a very close family. There is a strong bond that exists between all four of the members of the family. On the other hand there is a very obvious aligning, not in a partisan kind of a way, but just simply in terms of I guess the natural affections and the direction that they go; there's a strong alignment between the President and Luci, and then likewise between Mrs. Johnson and Lynda. But even with this deep bond that exists between the mother and one daughter and the father and the other daughter, there is a closeness between all of them. I think you sense this when you're with them.

I hesitate to try to characterize the President, because he is a many-faceted person, and he is called upon, and the nature of his life has led him to fulfill a great many different roles. He moves in and out of these roles at times with a rapidity that sort of leaves you with your jaw a little bit slack, and you're not real sure whom you're talking to at the moment--whether this is the President or a Texas rancher who enjoys sitting down and chewing the fat with the neighbors, or whether you're talking to the head of the Democratic Party, or just what role he's playing, you know, at any particular moment. By role playing, I don't mean anything that is insincere or phony, because all of us play many different roles in life. I mean by role playing the same kind of thing that I find myself involved in where in one aspect I'm a husband, another aspect I'm a father, and in another aspect I'm involved in several business affairs, and in another sense I'm an official of the church. All of these are roles and I don't mean to imply any hypocrisy or any superficiality or a lack of genuineness,

but rather the fact that as you fulfill these roles, they bring out and provide a means of expression for all of the many facets that go to make up that mixture of everything that's called "you," or in this instance, President Johnson.

P: Are there any specific arrangements that have to be made when you are informed or learn that the President may be attending a service?

M: Yes, there are, although I must say that a great deal depended upon what particular group of Secret Service agents were in charge at that time, not that one group was careful and the other was careless, but rather some of the men, I think, gave expression to their sense of responsibility on occasion in a somewhat officious kind of way, and others go about the fulfilling of their duties rather quietly and unobtrusively. Normally, when they knew that he was to be there, the agents would come and go through the church quite carefully and they also would post themselves on the streets outside and around the building and so on. The little church is quite small and it's an easy place to provide security. Normally one of the agents sits immediately behind the President, and another one right across the aisle from him.

But other than that we made an effort always to simply provide an opportunity where he could come and just be another person who was there to worship God. I always tried not to overplay his presence in the congregation; to make note of the fact that he was there and to greet him and the First Lady, but to try to communicate both to them and to the other members of the congregation that perhaps the best and nicest thing we could do for them would be to let them be themselves and not be in the position of having to fulfill one of his manifold roles that I was talking about a

moment ago. But rather to be another person who simply expressed the needs of his own soul and his own life to come and offer worship to God. And in the main I think the congregation did this. I think this is one of the reasons why the President and Mrs. Johnson enjoyed coming there. Because they were not fussed over to the extent that they had to be official.

P: About how many times and in which church did they attend where you were preaching the service.

M: Well, they always came to the little church, St. Barnabas, there in Fredericksburg, and of course it varied, depending upon when they were in Texas. I couldn't help but notice and I don't know whether it had any significance but it always seemed to me as though when the President was in Texas and there was any particular crisis that was involved, he seemed to seek out the Episcopal church. I'm not trying to infer anything particularly from this, but right before his operation and the crisis in the Near East--the Arab-Israeli War, and many, many occasions when the pressures were great in terms of his office, he seemed to make a conscious effort to turn in this direction.

P: Do any of these occasions particularly stick in your mind and could you tell me about them?

M: Well, yes, there are a number of them that stick in my mind. I think one of the first times that I had any inkling from the President, at least, that he was genuinely grateful for the ministry of the church to him was shortly before he went into the hospital for his operation which involved a growth on his vocal chords along with some other repair work that he had to have done. As is true with anyone, even though the doctors tell you that they don't think there's any malignancy there and that there isn't any danger,

he and Mrs. Johnson were naturally enough anxious at this moment. They wouldn't have been human if they were not. The Sunday before he went into the hospital he was at St. Barnabas and I had prayers for him on the occasion of his approaching surgery, and we had a celebration of the Holy Communion. And he came out of the church and thanked me very warmly with tears in his eyes and said that he felt stronger as a consequence of having been there and better able to go on and face the things that lay ahead.

P: Any other occasions?

M: Oh, there are lots of them. You don't want all of these occasions, do you?

P: Yes, I do.

M: I think another time that sticks in my memory is the first time, as a matter of fact, that he was there. As I remember the first time he came it was a communion service and in the [Episcopal] Church press some months before, there had been a very derogatory comment about the President's receiving communion in some Episcopal church when he himself was not a communicant of the church. I don't particularly share this viewpoint nor does my Bishop share this viewpoint. So I made a particular point without singling the President out but just to make plain that any person was welcome to come to the communion rail and receive communion in the Episcopal church.

P: Did you say this during the service?

M: Yes, I said this during the announcement period, and it wasn't said directly to the President at all, but on my part there was a great consciousness of the "tempest in the teapot" that had proceeded out of his previous attendance at communion service and without his saying anything about it, I know he got the message because he was the first one to appear at the

communion rail and he understood.

P: Do you recall where this event originally occurred?

M: I don't, I'm sorry. I try to forget that kind of thing as quickly as I can.

P: Would you continue on with any others?

M: Well, another occasion that I remember quite well was on Memorial Day, in fact the day before Memorial Day; I was at home the evening before and as a matter of fact had gone to bed and either had just turned the light out or was about to do so when the phone rang. I think it was Marie Fehmer, who is one of the President's secretaries, and she was calling from the Ranch and asked me if I would come out and have a Memorial Day service for the President and for the portion of the staff that were there at that time. And I told her I'd be glad to. I went out the next morning and arrived and they had chairs all set up out on the lawn near the swimming pool. It was a beautiful sight for our service.

The Reverend Mr. Akin, who is a lay minister and a school teacher and has a little church up in Johnson City, and Father Schneider from Stonewall were also there, and we visited briefly ahead of time. It developed that they had both been asked just at the last minute to come, and they very graciously insisted that since I had been the first one contacted and had thought more about it that I should be the one to do the service and make the comments, and so on. One of them had an opening prayer and the other had a closing prayer, and I took the remainder of the service. It was a very informal type service with prayers for peace and so on. Incidentally this happened to be right at the time that the Arab-Israeli situation was heating up and just really a matter of hours before the outbreak of that war.

P: Did you have any inkling-- ?



M: Well, I had no inkling that it was going to happen; I think anybody who read the papers knew that things were pretty tense and that there was an excellent chance that it would erupt into war. So I had this on my mind and it influenced my putting together the service. Once again I think the President was grateful for the fact that the church and the person of the three of us was there and afforded him strength and sought guidance for him in a particularly difficult time, because that was a pretty tense situation for a few days there until we were certain that the Russians were not going to become active participants in it and until we knew the extent of the warfare itself.

P: You spoke of putting together the service--what did you arrange for that particular service?

M: Well, I used a litany, primarily a litany for peace, and then I had a brief talk in which I tried again to show some of the ways in which the gospel is a source of strength to man in times of war and particularly at times when you are faced with exceedingly difficult decisions. I remember using an illustration of one of our American admirals who was faced off the coast of Japan with the decision as to whether or not he would turn on the searchlights to pick up a downed American flyer who had not quite made it back to his carrier from a strike against the Japanese homeland. The admiral had the decision of whether or not to run the risk of the lives of many of the fleet to save one life, or to sacrifice one life in order to be certain that he'd protected and saved all the rest. I commented that a good friend of mine had found his call to the ministry at this moment, because the decision of an admiral to risk the life of all for the sake of one had helped him to understand for the first time in his life the way in which the offer of

Christ and of His life on the cross could be for the benefit of all.

Again I think the President was able to identify himself very strongly with the admiral, because of course at this point he had all of the anguish of our commitments in Viet Nam that were hanging over him, which incidentally I think had been probably the foremost thing in this man's mind for certainly the last year. Also, the anxiety over what was going to happen in the Near East. He knew what it was like to be in the position of somebody who makes a decision that is a life and death decision for other people.

P: Do you recall who was there other than the ministers?

M: No, I really don't. All the crew and staff of the various air force planes that are at the disposal of the President and several of his secretaries, and so on, but I don't remember everybody that was there.

P: None other than the Executive office staff?

M: No, it wasn't a public service in terms of being open to a large number of people. There were a number of people who were there; there always are.

P: Any guests of Lyndon Johnson that were not actively part of his coterie?

M: No, not that I recall at the moment.

P: Did he speak to you after the service? And did you stay there?

M: Yes, I stayed afterward. They served refreshments; I think they had punch and coffee and cookies and so on for all who were there, and served them afterwards. And I stayed on for a few minutes, a half an hour or so, and visited quite a while with the President at that time. This is one of the things that has always amazed me about the man--that he has taken the time to be thoughtful and gracious to people. You know he really has nothing to gain from them and has no particular reason beyond just his own desire and his own natural inclination in that direction. So I remember visiting with him;

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at that point he got off on the subject of his daughters and the pride that he felt in both of them. I remember his recounting a number of incidents where Luci in particular had been active in his election campaign for the Presidency, and he showed a fatherly pride as he recounted some of her trips on his behalf and a few of the comments that she had made; apt quips that she had gotten off at various moments, and so on.

P: Do you recall any of these?

M: No, I really don't. I should but I don't remember them in detail right now.

P: Do you feel that you know the President very well?

M: Well, I think it would be presumptuous for me to say that I know him very well. I don't; I've not been with him that much. I feel as though I know him as a person apart from the President as a personage.

I feel that I do know him in that sense, but I can't pretend to say that I know him well. I know him well enough to know that he's an immensely complex guy, and that he has-- everyone has, a number of different facets-- but he has many more than any average man does.

P: Would you call Mr. Johnson a religious person?

M: Yes, I would. I think he has a very deep and a very genuine religious side. As a matter of fact, I'll go even further and say that I think in very many ways he is a seeker. He really is a seeker. I think he wants very much to know God and to know what God's will is for him and for this country, and I think this is a genuine aspect of the man. I really do. In fact I feel this so keenly that it has tempered in large part and helped to structure the relationship that I've sought to have with him, because I'm a lot more interested in being related to him as a priest and as a man of God than I am in attempting to be just another friend of a long list of friends. By

which I do not mean that I am not interested in his friendship or would not seek it, but if I had my choice between simply relating to him and to his family as a friend or as a priest, I would choose to be related to him as a priest. I felt as though this was the way in which I could be of most use to him both in helping to bear the burdens of the Presidency and also at a future time.

P: Have you gotten to know the family--Mrs. Johnson, Lynda, and Luci separately?

M: Yes, I have. Again I can't pretend that I know them all exceedingly well. I feel as though I am quite close to Mrs. Johnson. I've had a number of occasions when I've been able to visit alone with her and to be with her. I have profound respect and affection for her. I think she's really a remarkable person and someone who has carried the task and the burdens of being First Lady with a graciousness and down-to-earth humanity that would be real hard to duplicate or improve upon. I really do. I think she's a really wonderful person.

P: On what occasions have you visited with Mrs. Johnson?

M: Well, most of my time with her has been either at the Ranch or at St. Barnabas or I had a number of opportunities to be with her on two occasions, when my wife and I were guests at the White House in connection with preparations for the wedding. One about a month, or perhaps two months, before the wedding and then the other occasion a few days before the wedding itself. She is a person who immediately puts you at your ease and she has that happy faculty of seeming to have been someone that you've known for a much longer period of time than in fact you have known her. She just is a very genuine, real person. I've heard her speak on a number of occasions, when she made a brief address.

Say, I just remembered the first time I did preach to the President, too. It was before I really took over as priest-in-charge of St. Barnabas, and it was at the time of the dedication of this new church which was built in Fredericksburg.

P: St. Barnabas?

M: St. Barnabas, that's right. And Mrs. Johnson had brought a stone from a monastery on the Island of Cyprus--from St. Barnabas Monastery. The monastery is built on the site of one of the places where St. Barnabas (who was one of the early Christian missionaries) went while he was proclaiming the gospel in the ancient world. And she mentioned, when she was there on a visit, that the name of her church back in Texas was St. Barnabas, and they insisted that she take with her this stone in order that it could be incorporated--

P: How large a stone was this?

M: Well, it's probably about--perhaps 18 inches long and 12 inches high and a foot or 18 inches in depth. And it's in the wall of the church. So she and the President were there before the dedication services and my Bishop was supposed to be the preacher for the occasion, but his schedule got in a mess some way or another so he asked me if I would go ahead and preach on that occasion. So I did and--

P: When was this?

M: Well, I'm sorry, I don't know, but it probably was maybe a year before I went up there last spring to take over, so perhaps in the spring of 1966, somewhere in that general neighborhood. So that was my first occasion.

I remember it too because of the fact that my children were with me on that occasion--my wife and children--and we thought it would be a big treat

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for the kids to be able to be seated directly behind the President and we saved those seats for my family. And the children were most unimpressed and decided they'd rather play in the church yard instead of coming in for the service. Well, they helped us keep perspective. They said, "this isn't really a big deal, you know."

I think what happens to children these days is that with television and all the other mass communication, it's old stuff, you know.

But at any rate it was memorable for mama and papa whether the children remember it or not.

P: Did he or Mrs. Johnson speak to you on this occasion and do you remember what was said?

M: Yes, they both did, although I don't think at any great length beyond just the pleasantries that would be normal for an occasion like that. I don't remember anything else.

P: You were talking about Mrs. Johnson at that point when you remembered this occasion. Do you have other impressions of Mrs. Johnson?

M: Well, yes, I do. I think she's a superb source of strength for him in many, many ways. She certainly takes the burden of a great many things, particularly personal things, off of the President. She's a person of exceedingly sound judgment and generally of very good taste. She has a right instinct for the word, the act, the thing to be done; and I think really even beyond what the President has. I think the President's instincts are also good, but he shines most when the setting is a political one, so to speak, and Mrs. Johnson comes along and furnishes a lot of the-- I don't want to say "know-how" because I don't mean to imply that he doesn't have the "know-how." He does. But she's able to keep up with a whole lot of things because of

the press of time and his inability to devote himself to small details and to things that make the difference between an occasion's being a nice one in which obviously somebody has thought out everything, and everything is as it should be, or one where you get the feeling that it just kind of happened at the last minute.

P: You spoke of her shouldering some of the personal things for the President. Were you thinking of a specific one?

M: Well, I'm sure that she is the source of a great deal of the attention to detail and just small thoughtful, personal things that just seem to flow in an almost unending stream from that family. Again, I don't say this to take away from the President. Because knowing something of what the schedule of his days looks like, it's just not possible for him to give attention to this kind of detail, and yet this kind of detail was always taken care of.

P: I'd like to ask you also your impressions or characteristics of the daughters.

M: Well, they're very different girls, and their orientation is exceedingly different. Of course, they're different even in terms of physical makeup. Actually from the standpoint of physical makeup, Luci is short and tends to resemble Mrs. Johnson, and Lynda is quite tall and leggy and is built really more like her father in terms of her physical structure. Luci is very much a homebody, really; her primary interest is in the home, her husband, her child, her father, because she continues quite close to him. She is interested in politics and in certain affairs, but she's interested in them as they impinge upon the family and not for themselves, really. I wouldn't say that I consider Luci to be a particularly intellectual somebody, because she isn't. She feels things very deeply; she has deep and strong emotions and deep attachments. I think she's the kind of person who either loves

deeply or hates deeply, and she's going to feel one thing or the other. She's not capable of much detachment or objectivity; she's always very much a partisan.

Lynda on the other hand has a very keen and inquiring mind, and is quite a conversationalist. Lynda can talk about almost anything, and she's interested in almost anything. She reminds me a good bit of other people that I have known along life's way who maintain their zest for life and their interest in different things and are continually learning, always asking questions, always wanting to know more about this, more about a person, more about an idea. So the two girls are very different in this respect. I'm sure that [as] Lynda goes on as a married person and as she begins to have her family and so on, she's going to share more of the interests that preoccupy Luci all the time, but they're two very different people. While at times the difference serves to enrich, it also at times, I think, serves to create a certain amount of tension between the two girls.

P: Very normal.

M: They can snap at each other just like any other sisters on occasion.

P: Have you seen that?

M: Oh, yes.

P: To continue on with Lynda Johnson Robb, I believe that you took part in her wedding.

M: Yes, I did.

P: I'd like to ask you some questions about how this came about--the arrangements and procedures that had to be done and any things that happened that you recall.

M: Well, the announcement of Lynda's engagement to Captain Robb came some time in September or October, if I remember correctly--I'm not positive of this, but somewhere along in there.



P: In 1967.

M: Right. At the time of the announcement, there were no details given out as far as the wedding was concerned or anything about it, and I certainly didn't think anything about it beyond being pleased, because I had met Charles at church. He had come down one weekend and been with the family at the Ranch and I had met him. There's always to me a real joy in being in the presence of two people who really love each other and I think you usually can tell whether people really do love one another or not. It was so obvious that they did love each other and I was happy for them because of that. However, I certainly didn't think of myself as having any connection with the wedding and didn't anticipate anything in that direction at all. It just seemed natural to me that they probably would either have somebody in the Washington area or that they would perhaps ask a presiding Bishop or somebody or another on this level of the church's life to do the job.

So I didn't anticipate it at all. I was out of town in Kerrville for a church meeting on a Saturday--it's been just about a year ago, maybe a little over now--and I came home about supper time and my wife said that I had had a call from Mrs. Johnson at the White House and that I was to call. I called and Mrs. Johnson greeted me, and then she said, "How would you like to handle the wedding for Lynda and Charles?" And I said, "I can't think of anything that would give me more joy or that I would feel better about than to be there." And then I told her that they seemed so right for each other and they were so obviously in love with each other. About that time the President, who had been listening in on the conversation with Mrs. Johnson, chimed in and I could tell that he was pleased over

Lynda's choice and happy over the prospect of the coming occasion. He expressed his own pleasure that I would be there and would be able to share the occasion with them, so it was, again, just a kind of warm, folksy, thoughtful kind of thing. I mean, he could have been sixteen other places, he didn't have to be listening in on the phone and came through in a way that just made the occasion mean more for all of us. I think this again is a measure of both the closeness of the family and of the thoughtfulness that has always characterized his relationship to me and my own family.

P: Was it announced at this time that you'd be the minister?

M: Well, yes, the next day. No, it wasn't-- I'll tell you there was a mixup on the thing, because they had hoped to be able to make the announcement for the Sunday papers because of the fact that they have such wide distribution as compared with the daily papers and probably more people read the Sunday paper than they do the daily paper, but my being out of town until as late as I was made it impossible for the announcement to be given in time to make the Sunday papers, so it didn't really appear until the Monday papers, because of my not being around.

I had one little humorous incident at the house in connection with Mrs. Johnson's calling. My wife was not there the first time she called and my second son, who probably was about nine years old at the time and is very blase' and casual about all things, passed his mother as she was coming into the house and he was going out and she said, "Were there any calls?"

He said, "Daddy had a call from Mrs. Johnson."

And my wife had the presence of mind to try to pin down which Mrs. Johnson, so she said "Which Mrs. Johnson?" And David, without breaking stride, says "The one in the White House," and just kept right on going.

P: What arrangements had to be made regarding the service?

M: Well, in that same conversation with Mrs. Johnson the first time, she asked when I could come to Washington. We talked at that time just a little bit about one or two of the details of the service, and I told her that I would only be able to come to Washington one time before the wedding itself. She told me the date, which would be the 9th of December. And so I told her that I would stand by and hope to hear from her as early as possible because I thought it would be better if I came up as quickly as I could in order to get the ball rolling and work with the various people in getting preparations underway for the wedding. We didn't decide on a date at that point, and it seems to me as though about, oh, I don't know, within a week or thereabouts, I had a telegram from the President and Mrs. Johnson inviting my wife and me to come to Washington to a State dinner for the King and Queen of Nepal. This was about the first of November, if I remember right, of last year, 1967, and I assumed quite rightly that this was the first way of giving me an excuse for being in Washington so that I could go ahead and begin to work on the details of the wedding.

Also, and perhaps most important, I needed not only to get underway with plans for the wedding, but I needed an opportunity to counsel with Charles and Lynda since this is a part of what the church requires for people who come and seek the blessing of the church before they are married; we are required by Canon law to have at least several hours of counseling with a young couple and to talk about the nature of Christian marriage and all this type thing with them. So I needed time for that, and I asked Mrs. Johnson in that same phone call--conversation--if she'd try to see to it that Lynda and Charles were able to be available to me when I was

there so that we could do this and have that job done too. She said that she would; so when the invitation came, this created a good bit of scurrying around and also some questions in the McAllister household, because neither my wife nor I had the proper clothes and attire for a trip to Washington and a State dinner and so on and so forth.

We then had to wrestle with the issue of whether she should go with me on this first trip or not, and was it really worth spending all this money when the needs of the world were what they were and we saw so much human need all around us; so we wrestled with it awhile and finally with some help from other people decided that this came under the category of being a once-in-a-lifetime occasion, so we'd go ahead and throw prudence and caution to the wind and buy all the glad-rags and be able to move with the proper plumage in those circles for that period of time. So we did and I'm very glad that we did, because it provided both of us with a most memorable occasion and I think it would have been a mistake not to have gone on and have her go with me and share in the whole thing.

P: How long did you stay and were you staying at the White House?

M: Mrs. Johnson invited us to come and stay with them at the White House. I think we went up the day before the State dinner and we stayed a total of about four days in the White House. Once again, I just was so amazed at the way in which this family's graciousness and their presence in the White House-- I went up with the idea that staying in the White House would be sort of like pitching a tent in the middle of the Smithsonian Museum or something, and you don't have this feeling at all. You have a feeling that it's a home. You're not overwhelmed by history; you're conscious of it and certainly I think any American would be somewhat exalted by it as well, but you don't have any trouble dropping the second shoe, you know. Needless to say, it's

just a very natural place to be and it's obviously a place in which people, who are real people, live, and you don't feel like you've got to be just so or anything of this kind.

Anyhow, we arrived in Washington after having had dinner on the plane and we were met by one of the chauffeurs and taken to the White House and then met by one of the ushers and taken to our rooms. He told us at the time that he took us up that he would give us a few minutes to freshen up from the trip and that Mrs. Johnson and the President wanted to come by and visit with us for a few minutes. Sure enough, in about 20 minutes, they both came to our room and visited with us for a brief time there and then invited us to come to the family dining room on the second floor and have dinner with them. Well, I, having already eaten, didn't require another meal, but I enjoyed the opportunity to be with the family. As I remember, there were just the President and Mrs. Johnson and Marie Fehmer, who was one of his secretaries, and my wife and I and we had a very pleasant and leisurely meal and had the usual banter between Zephyr and the President about how many calories he was taking on at this point, and he grousing about all the good things having too many and so forth.

As you probably know there's a telephone mounted on everything that you can mount a telephone on in the White House, including the dining room table. So he was back and forth on the phone from time to time, and my presence there reminded him of San Antonio and of the fact that our Postmaster there, who is a good friend of both him and Mrs. Johnson, was celebrating his birthday; that he was trying to get a bill through to enable Dan Quill to continue for a longer period of time beyond normal retirement age as postmaster. So he picked up the phone and called Dan and called a number of different people in the course of the meal. But with all he was able to be very much

present and to enjoy the visit and displayed a considerable knowledge of San Antonio politics. Of course, he knew my father quite well and he was able to talk about a lot of things that I had also had knowledge and experience of so it was a very pleasant evening.

Then we went from the dining room into the family sitting room. The President stayed with us for a few minutes and then excused himself and went back over to do some work and read some of the evening communiques from Viet Nam and so on. And we stayed and visited until-- oh, I don't know-- quite a while, with Mrs. Johnson and then went back to our room.

The next day we were in on the so-called welcoming ceremonies which are given at the White House for any visiting Head of State, for the King and Queen of Nepal. Then the next afternoon we had tea with Mrs. Johnson and one or two others and Lynda and Luci. A couple of their friends, the McDermotts from Dallas, and the McKnights from Santa Fe, New Mexico, and I think one other couple was there that had tea with them in the Lincoln sitting room and a very pleasant visit for awhile with all of them.

Then that night the State dinner was held and again following the State dinner--there were two or three couples who were staying in the White House: Charlie Urschel and his wife, Betty, from San Antonio; John Pease and his wife--and we were all invited to come again to the family sitting room afterwards for a nightcap at the conclusion of the State dinner and the dancing that followed. That ended about 12:00, I guess, and we stayed and visited until about 1:30 or so, and then went on back to bed.

P: Did the President stay through the whole thing?

M: Yes, he did. He stayed through the whole thing.

P: And danced?

M: Yes, and danced. He brought his grandson down about midnight to greet everybody, a typical grandpa, you know, showing off his--

P: He must have been pretty young, then.

M: Well, he was. He was just a few months old--hadn't begun to walk yet. But he has a very nice disposition. He's a nice youngster and a very happy baby, so he was lots of fun and enjoyed being part of the occasion.

Anyhow, I had worked both of those days--the day before and the day of the State dinner; then I stayed on for another day or two to work with Bess Abell, mainly. We started working on plans for the East Room, for its decoration; and the sketches for the altar; and for a cross over the altar; and for what would be on the altar--just the whole thing; where people would be seated; and all the details on this.

One of the really remarkable things to me about the whole wedding was the fact that Mrs. Johnson commented to me in the beginning that she wanted things to be done right and to be done as the church would have them done. And they were, all the way through; there was not a single detail that really had to do with the wedding itself that I didn't have the final decision. And I thought this was really, again, a remarkable thing, because gosh, I've had small weddings where 15 or 20 people were in attendance and had people trying to tell me how to do it; and what should and shouldn't be done, and so on. But this was another instance in which, I think, her instincts were so right and her taste was so very much in order.

P: When they had spoken with you originally, had they already made plans at that time to have the wedding in the White House?

M: Yes, I think that decision had been made.

P: That was an historical event itself, about 100 years or so--

M: Yes, I think it was. I think it was the first time in 50 some odd years, 54 years, or thereabouts that there had been a wedding in the White House.

P: What were some of the decisions that did have to be made regarding the church's position on the service?

M: Well, there's not a problem in terms of having the service at the White House itself. Because the prayer book directs that a wedding can be held in the church or in a fit house, and I think it would be difficult to argue that the White House is not a fit place for a wedding. So I didn't have any static from any of the brethren on that score. Although I got one or two letters from people who were indignant over the fact that it wasn't being held in the church. I just quoted the rubric out of the prayer book back to them and said no more.

But the other questions were really primarily questions of arrangements. For example, the design of the altar; what height and what length it should be; whether the altar should be on a raised platform. Many, many questions related to lighting and the placing of television cameras and all this kind of thing, because again I made plain that the church would not permit a live broadcast of the wedding (I wasn't asked whether it could be done--this is just one of the things that I said), so what was done was that the only place the network photographers were permitted was at the foot of the stairs as Lynda and her father came down from the living quarters into the hallway that leads on into the East Room, where the wedding itself was held. All the rest of the ceremony was photographed by government photographers and then they turned over the clips of what they had done to the networks, so there was no live telecast of the service. They conformed, in other words, again with what the desires and the requests of the church had been in this regard.

P: Were there any restrictions on photographing the service?



M: Well, yes-- well, not by the government photographers, because it was being done for the archives. Of course, the only restrictions were that they be placed in such a way that they did not detract from the solemnity and the beauty and the worship aspect of the occasion. But other than that, there were no other restrictions that were placed on them.

P: Is it a sort of tradition or a principle of the Episcopal Church that photography or pictures cannot be made within the church, and does this not hold true--

M: During the ceremony, that's right. You can come back into the church after the ceremony and take pictures if you wish to do so. But again, the reason for this is that a wedding, even the wedding of a President's daughter, is basically a religious ceremony, and it's not a spectacle. There was a continuing tension that existed between myself and the news media, of course, in connection with the wedding. But I must say, again, that the Johnsons just leaned over backwards to try to do the thing as tastefully as possible. There were one or two occasions when understandably, and I regretted it, but consented to it-- where they had to interrupt, so to speak, the flow of the service at the foot of the stairs as Lynda and her father came down. She paused there with him for about 30 seconds to permit a number of the photographers to get pictures at that point.

But other than that, that's the only concession, so to speak, that was made and was the only time in which the service was any different than it would have been for any other person. I think this was fair as there were 400 and some odd newsmen who were assigned to the wedding, and of that number, only four were permitted in the East Room itself. They were hurting, too, you know, from their side, and I think this was a concession that certainly should have been made. They had a job to do.

P: You say that there were government photographers taking pictures during the service?

M: Yes, that's right.

P: And this was according to the Episcopal thinking on the subject.

M: Well, let me say this to you. For an occasion that has the historical significance that this occasion had and for the intent for which the things were made, because the film went into the archives-- again, it wasn't as though some one of the networks had sold the time and the occasion to a sponsor and was turning the occasion into something that it wasn't intended to be. The reason for the government photographers was two-fold: one, because it was a news event of considerable significance; and second, they did want to have a record for the archives of the United States, and the only way they could do it was to go on and have the photographers there. But they were concealed to each side of the altar. Nobody could see them in the congregation. Nobody even knew they were there. And if you didn't know where to look to see the lens of the camera, you would never have been aware of the fact that they were there. Nothing visually or in terms of the audio portion made you conscious that there were photographers there.

P: Did Lynda Robb make any changes or ask for any changes in the wording of the service?

M: No, that was a real balled-up thing. That was one of the Washington Post reporters who, when my wife and I arrived in Washington, met us at the airport and she got that all messed up. She was asking about the word "obey," and I told her that the word "obey" had been dropped out of the present revision of the American prayer book, but it was still in the English prayer book. She got it all fouled up; either that, or she decided that it would make a good story, one of the two, to say that Lynda had asked that the word "obey"

be dropped out. But this is pure fiction. No, Lynda asked for no alteration to the service at all, nor did anyone else in the family or Charles either.

Lynda and Charles are both, I would say-- they're faithful and devoted in their relationship to the church. I think each wanted the thing to be, from the church's point of view, as right and as beautiful and as dignified and so on as it could be. Charles has a great sense of the dignity and rightness of things too.

P: He is an Episcopalian, isn't he?

M: Yes, he is. I can't say it all comes from early Episcopal training; I think some of it has to do with having been a social aide at the White House, too. He got a little of it there.

P: Do you remember anything unusual that happened during the service?

M: No, I think the only thing that was perhaps a trifle out of the ordinary-- and I could certainly sense, as a number of the reporters commented, on the fact that the President was deeply moved and was emotionally involved in the whole occasion and his voice and his eyes, and so on, gave evidence of this. No, I think the only thing that was in any way out of the ordinary was that at the time that the priest asks the question "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" the prayer makes no provision for anything to be said. It's simply that the father or whoever is giving the bride away takes the bride's hand in his own hand in token that he is now committing this woman into the groom's care and under his protection from this time forward. In the rehearsal I discussed with the President and Mrs. Johnson this particular part of the service, and the question came up as to whether or not anything was said at this point. I said, "Well, the prayer book makes no provision for anything to be said, but on the other hand it does not direct that something may not be said at this point either."

There have been instances that I've known of in the past where a father either said "I do," or where a father said on behalf of himself and his wife that "We do," or "her mother and I," and so on. That was the end of it, and I didn't really know for sure whether the President was going to, but I felt sure he was, because our conversation had been about this and about the appropriateness or lack of appropriateness of this; and I felt reasonably sure he was going to say something but until he did say-- I think he said "Her mother and I," I wasn't sure what he would say at that point. Or whether he would. I thought he would, but again, you can't always outguess somebody.

P: Did you think there was a long pause while you stood there and waited?

M: No, there was no pause at all. But I thought the service went very well, and I was delighted with every aspect of it. I thought the East Room was just magnificent, just beautiful, and all of the arrangements had been perfectly done. I had had the opportunity of selecting all the music; I had talked with Lynda and Charles about it and I had incorporated a couple of things that Charles especially had wanted; he'd wanted Purcell's Trumpet Voluntary as at least part of the processional; and of course it's a magnificent thing and most suitable for that occasion. But all the rest of the music I selected; I did the whole program entirely for the wedding itself, the little service booklet that was handed out to the guests after the wedding. Really, outside of the one concession in terms of pausing for 30 seconds while they got their pictures, the whole thing went just exactly as I would have wanted it to go. Again, simply because of the fact that this is the way the family wanted it.

P: Did you comprehend at the initial acceptance the enormity of the details it would involve?

M: Well, no, I didn't really. It wasn't until I got into them. I think I sort of heckled some of the staff up there, because I'd keep telling them to calm down, you know. Easy does it. I think I exasperated a couple of them once or twice by refusing to get quite as flustered about the whole thing as they were.

P: I can imagine how some of the staff people felt. I'm sure they were a little bit worried that something would go wrong.

M: I remember one of the, to me, humorous occasions--I don't remember which member of the staff it was--but there was some really tiny, tiny question that didn't deserve all this attention under any circumstances--

P: What was it?

M: I don't remember what it was, and anyway, I turned to this gal and I said, "Look, this is not a big deal, calm down; take it easy," and she says, "Canon, everything about this wedding is a big deal."

P: I would approach it that way.

M: I don't mean that I didn't think that the wedding itself wasn't important, and I don't want to give you that impression, but she just was terribly exercised about some detail that was minute, really.

P: The President is known for being a stickler for details, and I would imagine that they felt the need to have everything run perfectly smoothly.

M: Well, it did run smoothly and in no small measure because of the cooperation of the staff and everybody on it. Bess Abell did a superb job in helping with the arrangements. A lot of the decorative details and so on that didn't have anything to do with the ecclesiastical appointments, I didn't bother with. I mean I talked them over with Bess because she wanted to see what my reaction was to them, but I didn't consider this to be my concern really. She certainly has a tremendously capable staff, and they just did a superb job.

Whatever I needed, however. I wanted the thing to be, they saw to it that that was the way it was. They were very helpful in the order of the procession and in the timing of the procession and all this kind of thing.

P: Did you attend any of the prenuptial parties or celebrations?

M: Yes, we did.

P: Your wife was with you?

M: Yes. I forget all the different things that we went to. Two that I remember: I went to the bachelor dinner and it was a very happy and warm occasion; it was held at the Army-Navy Officers' Club and the President was there. He's excellent at something like this; he's a good storyteller; he has got a nice sense of humor; his timing and the pacing of things is just so great. It's really tragic in a way that he doesn't come through on a more formal speech or address on State of the Union or whatever in the same fashion that he comes through on an occasion like this, because he really is without peer in something like this. The whole thing was very, very tastefully done and yet it had a whole lot of fun and ribbing in it, you know, in terms of teasing Charles and giving Charles a hard time. Ambassador [James] Symington, who at that point was Chief of Protocol, did one of his renditions-- sang several songs to which a number of them had written the words they had made up for the occasion, and the whole thing was just loads of fun. It really was, all the way around.

The other occasion that was most enjoyable was the rehearsal dinner which was held at the City Tavern, which is not quite what it sounds like. It's a very posh private club in Georgetown. We went there and had cocktails early and then went on down into the dining room, and my wife and I searched all around trying to find our place in the thing, and came back and discovered that we were at the table with the President and Mrs. Johnson and with the

Robbs (these are the parents, not Lynda and Charles--they were at the next table), and with several other couples who were there.

Once again, the President was just at his very best as he got up and made a few comments. He had to leave early, had to go back to the White House to sign into law several bills before midnight, because the deadline on them was expiring at that point. But he got up and was teasing with Charles and saying that now that Charles was going to be in the bosom of the family, he thought he would be kind to him. As a part of his wedding present to Charles, he would give him some of the Secret Service reports on Charles and Lynda. He had a bunch of papers up there which were, actually either the forms of the Secret Service reports or the genuine reports, because they were marked for his eyes only. And he said, "Now, Charles, this is that trip to Acapulco," and tore it up and it was one of the few times I've ever seen Charles flustered, and he really got red in the face. He just blushed all over. The whole evening was just in this same fashion, just warm and loving and really all you could ask for an occasion of that kind to be. Just lots of fun.

P: Of course, you did attend the reception after the wedding--

M: Yes, we did. I got a couple of laughs out of that, too. This was another instance for my wife and me, a way of life--

P: Were you staying at the White House, by the way?

M: Yes, we were. We stayed at the White House for the wedding, too, --a rank of life that neither of us were much accustomed to. I had been told by one of the White House aides that they wanted me to go through the reception line in about the first five minutes or so, because they were only going to

allow the photographers to be involved in that portion of it, and then they were going to move them on out. So when the wedding was over, I went and changed out of my vestments back into my clerical garb and came back down and we stood for a while in the hallway where the receiving line was forming in one of the downstairs rooms. I think they had the reception and the receiving line in the Blue Room, I believe, downstairs. I'm not positive, but I think that's where it was. But at any rate one of the aides caught my eye and said, "Come over here so you'll be one of the first ones to go through." So I moved over but in the meantime a lot of other people came and began to push in and so on.

Finally the line was ready and the pictures had been taken, the early ones, before the receiving line started through. And the members of the Cabinet went through. About that time Perle Mesta was there and right at the door and she was right in on the heels of the Cabinet. One of the aides came up and said, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Mesta, would you please step back for Reverend McAllister?" We had a lot of fun being in this rarefied atmosphere. We went through the line right after the Cabinet went through and before any of the rest of the guests did. I had been asked actually earlier in the day by Marvin Watson whether or not I would like to go back to Texas with the President that night after the reception was over; and Mrs. Johnson had asked us to stay and be with the other members of the family that night, and to take a look at the television tapes as they got them and as they were completed and shown on the network, and so on. We were torn with whether to head for home or stay for another day. We finally decided we'd go ahead and leave for home.

So we flew home on Air Force One that night with President Johnson. We got to see all the programs anyhow because as we got on the plane, he got



kinescopes delivered to the airport and ABC, NBC, and CBS's 30-minute coverage of the wedding. And we also got to see the film that had been done by the government photographers. So after the wedding was over, all the way from Washington to Texas, I watched the wedding another four times on the network. There were quite a number of people who flew back to Texas with the President that night. He has a cabin of his own in Air Force One and when we were about 20 minutes off the ground on our way back, one of the stewards on the plane came back and invited my wife and me to come up and sit with the President and with Governor Connally and one or two others, I forget who, and watch the films of the wedding. By the time the last film was over, we had time to go back and sit down and buckle our seat belts and it was time to land at Randolph Field.

P: That was quite an occasion. Did you see anything in television that you hadn't noticed occurring during the ceremony?

M: No, I didn't.

P: Were you much bothered by reporters either before or after the service?

M: Not a great deal. They really were pretty nice to me all the way around. I tried as much as I could to help them. Of course, Liz Carpenter was a big help too, as I'm sure Liz probably kept a number of them from bugging me all the time that I was there. But the ones that I did have contact with were really very pleasant and outside of the one gal with the Post who wrote that article about the word "obey" in the service, I thought the bulk of the coverage of the wedding was accurate and fair.

P: Who was that Post reporter?

M: I don't know. I can't remember what her name was.

And there was another Post reporter who later did a story on me who

as far as I was concerned more than made up for the slip of the other one, because she was just a very human, open somebody and she wanted to be sure that what she had was what you said and how you said it and what you really meant by it, and so on. I didn't have much difficulty with them.

But I will say this. It was for me the most difficult part of the whole thing, really.

P: Why do you say that?

M: Well, simply because I just am not very much at ease with them, and there are so few at least in my experience, who really are responsible in the way in which they report the news.

P: Does this come into your thinking in relation to your father?

M: Yes, it does.

P: Was there much furor in San Antonio over your presiding over the marriage of Lynda and Charles Robb?

M: Well, there was a lot of conversation about it. We had a lot of people who were interested and of course who may not have shared Mr. Johnson's political views decide this was a good occasion to tease the Republican Mayor of San Antonio and give him a hard time. But he's sort of used to that so he took it with considerable aplomb and poise, and I think voiced what I certainly felt myself--that it was a very happy thing to have been involved in what was after all both a joyful and an historic occasion. So we managed to turn aside some of the flack and what not.

P: Does anything else come to your mind regarding the service that I haven't touched on and you haven't covered already?

M: No, other than to make the comment that I made once before in our conversation and which I made to the newspapers and other people at the

time; that it really was a very happy time and a very joyful time simply because of the fact that the wedding couple themselves are two very fine people and irrespective of the fact that they're in the public eye.

They're just two people that I think anybody would enjoy knowing and would be glad to count as friends. Charles is a real fine person that I'm very fond of and have a lot of respect and admiration for as well as Lynda. All the way round it was a good time.

P: Have you been invited to serve on any commissions or councils by the President?

M: No, I have not. I've been with them on really few occasions since the wedding. I went back to the Ranch; my wife and I were invited by Charles and Lynda to come up and have a meal and spend a Sunday afternoon with them immediately before Charles left for Viet Nam. We did so and enjoyed being there and just had a pleasant time. I think there were one or two other people who were guests there, Luci and Pat were not there; they were in Laredo and came back in late that day to the Ranch. We visited with the whole family for awhile, and then Lynda wanted to go out and play in the theater, which is a converted barn-type thing up at the Ranch, the film of the wedding which I had not seen in the form in which it was made up; the film she had was not just of the wedding but it was of her entire courtship with Charles, and it's very nicely done and the photography is good. It was done up at the Ranch because of part of their courtship was there. We just talked a lot about their courtship, which was started by seeing the film itself, and then we talked some about Charles' leaving for Viet Nam and how the War was going; we stayed on and visited until perhaps 4 o'clock or so in the afternoon. Then we bid them farewell and

wished Charles God-speed, as he prepared for Viet Nam, and then we headed on home.

P: Are there any social or other functions that you have attended that we have not covered in San Antonio or Washington in regard to--

M: No, none of any real significance. I was with Mrs. Johnson briefly when she came to open HemisFair here in San Antonio and had a chance to renew acquaintances and visit briefly with her at that time, but--

P: That was in April of 1968?

M: That's right, in April of 1968, but I haven't seen her since then.

P: Have you seen the President since then?

M: No, I haven't seen him either.

P: Or corresponded with them?

M: No, I've written once or twice to Lynda about various things, but I haven't had any correspondence with either Mrs. Johnson or the President.

P: What were the things you corresponded with Lynda about?

M: Well, I'm not being coy but I just can't share those with you. I would if I could.

P: That's fine. Have you had occasion to speak with Lyndon Johnson on any governmental problems, foreign or domestic?

M: Let me say this. Let me go back to an answer that I made earlier--a comment I made earlier about the kind of relationship that I wanted to have with him. Being governed by that desire, I won't say that I have avoided topics of conversation like this, because I have not; but on the other hand neither have I sought them out and certainly I have made a real effort not to attempt to be a Presidential advisor on foreign affairs or on domestic policy in this area or that area.

Now, in conversations with him from time to time, it either was appropriate or I was directly asked to comment on something or another, and at this time I would. I have commented in conversations with him a number of times on Viet Nam, on the unrest in our American cities, on the racial situation, on the extremists on both ends of the spectrum, and topics of this kind; but the one that I feel that I would like very much to include in this interview is to simply state a conviction of my own with regard to the President and Viet Nam. It seems to me as though for certainly the last year and a half he has really been deeply preoccupied with the depth and the nature and the consequences of our American involvement in Viet Nam. I'd be inclined to say that probably nowhere has the burden of the Presidency been heavier on this man than the tremendous sense of responsibility that he feels for our involvement as a Nation in Viet Nam and for the individual lives, now including the lives of his two sons-in-law, who've been touched or lost, altered or in any way affected by the War in Viet Nam; so I personally am very, very sympathetic to him in this regard, because I'm one of those who really does not entertain as being viable possibilities most of the suggestions that other people are making with regard to where we find ourselves in Viet Nam. I don't go along with the idea that has been expressed that it is simply the President's pride or his own arrogance or egocentricity that makes him unable to consider any other alternative in Viet Nam. I think he's just as sincere and genuine as he can be when he says to his critics, "All right, tell me another way. Show me another way." And I have to say with him that for myself, I have yet to hear a suggestion that I think is within the realm of possibility.

I did want to include that, because I think there has been a tendency,

and I don't doubt in the least but what he has brought it on himself in large measure because he has tried to control the news; and he has tried to see to it that things appear in the light in which he wants them to appear; and I think this is wrong. But I also think that he has been wronged by many people who have presented him as being either arrogant or cynical or prideful with respect to Viet Nam, because I don't think any of these things are true. I think that if there were a way in which he could settle this thing, and he could find another alternative than the one that we are presently embarked on, I don't think there's anything in this world the man would rather find. And I just want to record that conviction.

P: Was this the essence of what you commented to him regarding Viet Nam?

M: Well, yes, it really is pretty much. And I might say this is also pretty much the essence of the conviction expressed by my church, the Episcopal Church, through her general convention. I don't think that anybody sees any other alternative at this point that is in the ball park. Now, you hear all kind of ideas, but when you're sitting in that seat beyond which there isn't any other seat in terms of passing the buck and having a policy get translated into an action that we can all live with--I don't mean live with in terms of national pride or anything else, I mean live with in terms of responsible action under God--I just am not real sure that as much as I despise the War and as much as I think he does, too, that I can see any other route for us to be on.

P: There are many men of your calling who are quite outspoken critics of our commitment in Viet Nam. Do you have a comment on this?

M: Yes, I think a lot of them are speaking from a purely theoretical point of view.

P: They are not comprehending the realities of this situation?

M: They are not comprehending the realities of the situation, and they also are playing the old American game of being the Monday morning quarterback, which is a very easy thing to do. And I must say that I think it's perhaps easier to be irresponsible in the life of the church than it is to be irresponsible in the life of politics.

P: Why do you say that?

M: Well,--

P: Is it the significance that is attached to someone's speaking as a member of the church?

M: Well, no, I say this because you can say things as a churchman that sound great, but when the time comes to translate them into some kind of a concrete action, this isn't nearly as easy as experts on Viet Nam would have us believe. Most of what I hear people in the church having to say about Viet Nam and the suggestions that are being made about what we ought to do and what they ought to do just simply make no sense. Because nobody's going to do them. I mean, it isn't going to work that way. It's all great to say that if we do this and they do that; but they have yet, except possibly in the last few days, to give any indication that they're going to do one darn thing in response to anything that we do beyond continuing the War just like it is. And I think you've got to look that in the face. And I don't think these people do.

P: Canon McAllister, you are speaking, of course, of our current situation as it stands now. I am just wondering what your opinions are on our initial involvement in that area as directly relating to our national interests.

M: Well, I think you can go back and say that we were very foolish to allow

ourselves to get involved in this fashion. But the point of the matter is that three Administrations have been involved in making these decisions, including two Democratic and one Republican Administration, and we've made mistakes--I don't think there's any doubt about that, but simply because we've made mistakes is all the more reason why it is not possible at this point to simply (as the idealist would have us do) wipe the slate clean and act like all these things didn't happen. They have happened, and we've got to deal with them. And we've got to make our present decisions in the light of them. That doesn't mean we've got to stand by them as though they're right, if indeed they're wrong. But it does mean that whatever we do has got to some way or another eventuate out of what has been done.

P: How to deal with it.

M: How to deal with it. I just think a lot of these people have absolutely no sense of history at all. They talk about doing things as though you do them in a vacuum, and you don't. You do what is politically feasible; what is historically achievable; what's within the realm of possibility. And a lot of times this is a long way from being the ideal. Now, I think they're talking about the ideal and expressing their own frustrations and dissatisfaction that where we are is a long way from being the ideal position. With this I have to agree. But I can't agree with the sort of dreamy solutions that I hear them offer for where we are.

P: Just one other area that I want to ask you about. You did mention discussing with Mr. Johnson the current unrest in our country. Could you tell me a little about what you spoke of with the President or explanations which you considered?

M: Well, I think that he is genuinely troubled by this also. I think he has



a real conviction that the white community has brought a great deal of this on itself; on the other hand, I think he's also convinced that the black race is ill-served by the kind of extremism that's represented by Rap Brown and the SNIC crowd and all this group. I think he's genuinely puzzled as to what really lies behind a part of what has happened on the American scene. I think he has lost contact, in other words, with the aspects of American life.

P: In the capacity of being President or just--

M: Yes, probably. Well, I think that probably, and maybe even primarily, through being President, because it's awfully hard to sit in a top chair, whether it's a top chair in a corporation or a top chair in government or a top chair in the church, and really know what's going on. It's very hard, because for the most part you do not have time to go back and refresh yourself with the primary sources at the grassroots (and this is something that the President always loved to do but has very little occasion to do), and secondly, it isn't very long before the people who are around you are busy telling you what they think you want to hear. And that usually "ain't the way it is!"

P: A part of this unrest on the American scene is youthful people, apparently, I was thinking in terms of that when I asked you about not only racial problems but our youthful disturbance right now. Did you comment on this to Lyndon Johnson?

M: Not in any detail at all. We touched on it in conversations but have not dwelt on it really.

P: Were you personally surprised when, on March 31st, President Johnson said that he would not run again for the nomination?

M: Well, let me put it to you this way. I'm pretty confident that-- and indeed his later statements and statements of other people have revealed--that this was a decision that had been mulled over for a good long while. I was a little bit surprised, yes, because I thought that he probably had made up his mind that he was going to go on and run again for the Presidency. On the other hand I wasn't surprised, and I pretty much take him at face-value in terms of what he said in the address to the Nation, in which he indicated his unwillingness and his absolute certainty that he would not run again. Whatever else you may think of this man or you may say about this man, he is a patriot. He really is. He loves America. Now, he may not make always the right decisions--none of us do, but he genuinely loves America.

I am not, again, able to go along with the cynics who on the one hand either say he knew he'd get whipped if he ran--I think this is a lie, or those who professed to find a lot of reasons other than the ones that the President shared having to do with the soul's health of America as to why he was not going to run again, because I think he meant just what he said.

P: How do you think history will rate the Lyndon Johnson Administration? He has been a highly criticized President, at least in recent times, and you have had personal contact with him.

M: Well, gosh, this is a hard one to try to answer. I guess that I would look for his Administration to be in the middle upper-range from an evaluation of history of Presidential Administrations. In other words, I think the decision is going to be that it was above the average, and yet I have my doubts that it's going to be seen as a great administration. I really do. I think that this is one of the tragedies of this man's Administration.

He is an exceedingly capable craftsman from a legislative point of view, and yet he is largely inarticulate in terms of really being able to give expression to the deepest roots of his philosophy and to give expression to an overall plan for his Administration, both in the domestic field and in terms of foreign relationships.

I don't think that he's going to be rated as one of the really great Presidents. I just don't, but I think that he's a great deal more intelligent man than a whole lot of people give him credit for, particularly more than the Eastern-Kennedy establishment gives him credit for being. Because he's no dumb-bunny. He has got a fine mind and he has got a quick mind and he has been right a lot more than he has been wrong.

P: Canon McAllister, do you have any further comments on anything that we have discussed or anything else that comes to your mind?

M: No, I've enjoyed the visit. Sorry I took so much of your time.

P: Thank you very much.

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By CANON GERALD McAllister

to the

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