INTERVIEW I

DATE: August 26, 1969

INTERVIEWEES: MR. AND MRS. DALE MILLER (VIRGINIA "SCOOTER" MILLER)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: The Millers' apartment in the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

F: Suppose, we start with you, Dale, I'm going to have to, I guess be "first name" on this, I've known you so long. Tell us a little bit about how you came out of Texas and wound up in Washington.

DM: After I got out of the University of Texas I spent several years in Dallas as an editor of an editorial magazine that commented on the national scene and that brought me to Washington every now and then.

F: What was that magazine?

DM: Texas Weekly in Dallas, edited by Peter Molyneaux. I took two years' time out in 1935 and 1936 to head up the press publicity and special events of the Texas Centennial Celebration but went back to the magazine until 1940. A year thereafter I came to Washington on a temporary assignment for six months to represent the Dallas Chamber of Commerce. It was rather an experimental thing for the Dallas Chamber to undertake a representation in Washington.

F: They had had none previously?

DM: No, and no other city in Texas had. In fact, I learned at the time I got here there were only four or five cities in the United States that maintained any chamber of commerce representation. So I came

up here on the experimental period of six months and I'm still here. It's been twenty-eight years now.

F: Yes.

DM: I came under an arrangement with the Dallas Chamber of Commerce that as time went on if I undertook to represent other employers, that was perfectly all right provided it did not conflict with my activities for Dallas and that I had the time to undertake them.

F: So both of you have been somewhat mixed up in Washington life from Franklin Roosevelt down to Richard Nixon.

DM: That is true.

F: When did you first get to know Johnson?

DM: I actually met Mrs. Johnson a considerable time before I did the President. We were schoolmates at the University of Texas together and in the journalism school, but I was in graduate school at the time, just at the time I think she was about completing her undergraduate work. I was a student assistant for journalism, teaching headline writing and copy reading while I took two years to get my masters degree. I would like to say that I taught Mrs. Johnson, but I did not. She was in the building all that time but was not in any of my particular classes. My first acquaintanceship with Lyndon Johnson was back--I think it was 1930.

F: Oh, that early?

DM: That early. I did not meet him at the time but . . .

F: This was before you were born?

VM: I wish it were.

DM: There was a vacancy in Congress at that time and Dick Kleberg of the Kleberg and King Ranch Families in South Texas ran for Congress. Now in those years practically all of South Texas was one congressional district, or at least San Antonio and Corpus Christi were. San Antonio was the larger and dominant city and the congressmen had always been from San Antonio. So it was highly unusual when Dick Kleberg from down at Kingsville ran for Congress. My father was his campaign manager. Dick was a very delightful person and extremely popular, but he had had practically no experience in politics, so my father was his manager;and the headquarters, as I recall, were at the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio. I remember taking time off from the University on weekends to go over and write some publicity copy for the campaign.

But right after Kleberg was elected, this energetic young man who had been a teacher approached my father and said he was very much interested in going to Washington and could he be of any service to Congressman Kleberg. My father was instantly impressed with him. He had known the Johnson family before because they had been prominent as you know in Texas life for many years. So it was my father that recommended young Lyndon Johnson to Congressman Kleberg, and that is what brought Lyndon Johnson to Washington; and of course his history since then has been well known. I did not actually know him at that time. I knew who he was, but it was not until I came to Washington on some of my visits that I met him.

F: You weren't involved in any of his early campaigns then in any way?

DM: No, I was not.

F: And so he was already a young congressman when you got here.

DM: Yes, except I was here on some of these visits that I spoke of earlier in connection with my political and economic research, so I knew him as Dick Kleberg's secretary well before he resigned actually to go back to Texas to head up the National Youth Administration.

F: Where did you come in the scene on this?

VM: I met Mrs. Johnson when I first came to Washington. Dale and I were standing in a building waiting for an elevator and a very attractive young woman walked over and said, "You're Dale Miller. You probably don't remember me, but I'm Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, but you knew me as Claudia Taylor." And that's the first time I ever met her. I remembered her because I have an appreciation of people who go out of their way to speak to you. It's not the easiest thing in the world. And as I got to know her better, I realized it was not at all easy for her.

F: She didn't commit that basic error that so many do in saying, "You don't remember me, do you?" and leave you standing there. (Laughter)

VM: No. She always called her name out loud and clear.

F: Did y'all see much of the Johnsons, then, after you came to Washington, or was it a while developing?

DM: No. I would say that we saw quite a bit of them at that time.

VM: Well, the Texas group is a close-knit group, and we were in Texas gatherings so much.

F: Was there some sort of regular get-together, or is this just a "whoever gets invited" sort of proposition to various parties?

DM: Well, as you know, we have an extremely active Texas State

Society here in Washington. I think it's probably the most active state society here, and I believe today it's probably the largest, also. And so, over the years--the Texans, as you know, are rather clannish--we'd get together on many occasions. Of course, Mr. Johnson served as president of the Texas State Society--as both Scooter and I did--and was always very active in it. So I would say that we saw them frequently, not only in larger groups like that, but also on smaller occasions.

F: Do you tend to run toward congressmen in your presidents in the Texas State Society?

DM: No. For a long period of years there was just a feeling that you would alternate year by year. You'd have a congressman as president one year and then somebody off the Hill the next year. But even that practice has been more or less abandoned. [We] might have a congressman two successive years--somebody off the Hill. There's no real pattern now.

F: I see. Did Mr. Sam [Rayburn] entertain much?

DM: No, I would say not. I would put it this way. He did quite frequently, but with a very, very small group of friends, I would say no more than half a dozen.

F: Mainly male?

DM: That's right, mainly male.

F: So this was really just a get together of very close friends.

DM: He had a very small group of friends. He was thought to be, by a lot

of people, somewhat of a recluse. That is not true at all. He delighted in the association with a small group. And I thought it interesting, too, that he always went to every public dinner where he thought the presence of his office should be noticed. I wouldn't go so far as to say he enjoyed that, but he was always where he ought to be.

F: He had a strong sense of duty in that sense.

DM: That is true.

F: When did you begin to suspect that Mr. Johnson was going to be more than just another congressman, perhaps be your senator?

DM: I would say that I suspected that long before he became a congressman even, because he made his presence felt almost instantly on Capitol Hill.

VM: Terrific drive.

DM: Tremendous drive, tremendous energy. And in almost no time at all, he became president of the congressional secretaries club. What did they call that in those years?

VM: I've forgotten.

F: Called it Little Congress among other things.

DM: Yes. That's right. And it had some short, informal name, too that I don't recall. But he was president of that. From the very moment he came--well, before he came, his interest in politics, where he tried to secure this assignment with young Congressman Kleberg, was upon him.

F: Was he, in those earlier days, a sort of "hail fellow well met," or did he just impress with his energy?

DM: I think I would call him a "hail fellow well met." He knew everybody. He never forgot anybody. And you just felt his presence everywhere he was.

F: When did you meet the Congressman?

VM: I suppose just about the same time that I met Bird.

F: But nothing that stands out.

VM: No. I don't really remember the first time I met him.

Well, I do, too. That's a story. In fact, I may have met him before I met Bird. Dale and I came to Washington on our honeymoon, and I met him in the corridors of the Capitol. And I'm not sure whether he was the secretary of Mr. Kleberg's or had just been elected to Congress. I think he had just been elected to Congress.

F: You just came down to the Capitol and ran into him.

VM: And Dale introduced me to him. And I really became closer to . . . my friendship was always with Mrs. Johnson first, and then, through her, with him. I think Mrs. Johnson and I became close because our children were along the same ages, and our birthday parties . . . our connections that way.

F: Did you get to see much of the Johnson children during those years when they were growing up?

VM: Yes.

VM: The Johnsons had the "Open Door" policy. You know, everybody was in and out of the house all the time.

F: So it wasn't very difficult then to drop in on the Johnsons?

VM: Oh, no.

F: Kind of a West Texas spirit?

VM: Yes. And Mr. Johnson wanted to know people. When we first met him, he was a man on his way, and he was working at having people remember him. He was a politician from the bottom of his feet.

F: Were you ever of any assistance in those days in making him known around Dallas? You had the connections.

DM: I wouldn't go so far as to say that I was instrumental in anything of that kind. Although, I think everybody in Dallas knew of my friendship with him and my admiration of him, because I think the mark of future greatness was on him. I think it was evident.

VM: I think you had a good deal to do in your quiet way. Dale is an understated person. Mr. Johnson was much less understated, and Dallas being the kind of town it was, I think Dale was able to explain a lot and make a lot of friends for him through the years.

F: Well now, he had a problem, of course, as anyone does who's emerging. That is, he ran, of course, for the Senate in 1941 against Pappy O'Daniel and lost that squeaker and then ran again in 1948. By '48, of course, he was very well known, but then certainly in 1941 he had the problem of building a statewide reputation and organization. Did you have any role in that at all? Did he ask your advice, for instance, on whom he ought to see in Dallas?

DM: No. I wouldn't say that he did. I didn't have anything to do with the political organization. But I did have considerable to do, I think, as Scooter said,with making his views and philosophies known among Dallas people. He gave the impression--

VM: That was really later than 1941, Dale.

DM: Oh, 1941. I misunderstood, then.

VM: 1941 he's talking about. No, I don't believe [so] in 1941.

F: But when, while he was still senator, or after he started . . . ?

VM: Before the 1948 convention.

DM: That's right. Well before. Before he ran for the Senate.

F: You know I came from that part of the world myself. And a lot of people, as late as '48, thought Lyndon Johnson was almost a dangerous sort of person.

DM: That's what I was getting to. I misunderstood the date.

VM: He ran in 1941 and was defeated. That's the one you didn't . . .

DM: That's right. No. I didn't get that date.

F: You were still pretty new on the ground yourself.

DM: Well, that was the year we moved to Washington, you see. So I wasn't actively involved in anything of that kind.

Later on, when he ran for the Senate, I may have made some small contribution in Dallas to a better understanding of him. He conveyed the impression--I think somewhat erroneously, because of his drive and energies and enthusiasm--of being much more liberal in his political philosophy than he actually was. And there are a number of very substantial people in Dallas who were somewhat skeptical of him. But I would get out his voting record and show that his actual votes placed him almost directly down the center, with respect to political philosophy. It really surprised them when they compared his actual

voting record with this image of drive, enthusiasm and a forward-looking idea in politics.

F: Did Dallas ever take any stand on his presidential ambitions?

DM: I wouldn't say [so]. They hardly could take a stand, as such. But . . .

F: Did you have a substantial element in Dallas who began to think it would be good to have this man in the White House?

DM: Yes. There's no doubt about that.

F: Well, now then, this puts you in a position, since you represent all of Dallas up here. Here you're even in a more delicate position than a congressman, who, after all, does represent a sentiment out of Dallas; it may be the majority sentiment, but you've got to represent the whole place. How do you handle that?

DM; Let me enlarge our perspective for just a moment. I came up here first to represent the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, as I said. But after being here only a short while, I developed other interests, and I represent other areas of the state and other capacities than Dallas. For instance, I represent interests in Corpus Christi and Houston, so my efforts had been largely statewide for a number of years.

F: Yes. What I was thinking, though, was--I'm looking at it from a Texas point now--you're looked upon as Dallas's spokesman in Washington, even more than congressmen, who come and go, or who are Democrats or Republicans.

DM: That is true. When I first came here, old Hatton Sumners was the congressman from Dallas, and that was, well, twenty eight years ago.

so I've been here through several Dallas congressman of both parties.

F: You've seen Bruce Alger, you've seen--

DM: That's right.

VM: I think I understand what you're getting at. And, Dale, you did. Now, in many ways it was very hurtful to you--your friendship with Lyndon Johnson. Not that that would bother you because you are a person that when you're a friend, you're a friend. But many times I felt that people did not appreciate as much as Dale was giving him.

DM: Well, I concede some elements of truth in that, but people in Dallas just had to accept that for what it was. And as the years went on, I think that, well, in fact, I know that many of them, who might have been politely critical of my friendship with him, learned to become rather enthusiastic supporters of him, also. It took a long period of time.

VM: You ask if they ever took a position. I can remember in the 1960 campaign, when we were so desirous of getting endorsements from some of the newspapers, and they had said that if he became the nominee they would take a definite stand. But, of course, he became the vice presidential nominee, and then became the president.

F: Did Senator Johnson ever confide his presidential ambitions to you?

DM: Now I don't know that he ever confided his presidential ambitions to anyone. If he did, I don't know about it.

VM: Well, we started calling him Mr. President a long time ago.

DM: That's right. No, I wouldn't say that he confided such ambitions. I think, however, they were quite apparent. And, as Scooter said,

we used to call him "Mr. President," and I don't think we offended him.

F: I was going to ask what was his reaction when you said that. He didn't say, "Quit," huh?

DM: No. He didn't take any umbrage.

F: Did you go to the Los Angeles convention in 1960?

DM: Oh, yes. We went early before most of them had gathered in order to do what we could in an advance way.

F: Did you feel that you hadn't a shot at the nomination for the presidency?

DM: To be perfectly honest, I just don't think that he did. I think that he had an enormous amount of strength, but he was just up against too powerful an opposition.

F: Did you have any inkling at all that he would be offered the vice presidency or, if offered, that he would accept it?

DM: I thought that he might be offered it. To be quite honest, I did not think he would accept it. I did not think so.

F: Did you have any relationship with either John Connally or Mr. Sam on that to get their viewpoints on this?

DM: Not with John Connally. Now I did speak once or twice with the Speaker. And I am quite convinced at that particular time in Los Angeles, that the Speaker was also opposed to his accepting the vice presidency.

F: Did you see Mr. Johnson during the convention?

DM: Oh, yes.

F: He didn't give any indication of how he felt on either of these possibilities, I gather?

DM: No.

F: After the campaign got underway, did you do anything behind the scenes to help?

DM: Yes. We helped all we could.

F: How?

DM: Well, we believed in the ticket. And Scooter, I think, was more active than I was. But we tried,

F: Of course, that was primarily a Kennedy campaign.

DM: That's true.

F: Mr. Johnson was subordinate in this instance, except you did have . . .

VM: We had the tea party tours for the women.

F: You had the tea parties. Did you help set them up?

VM: Yes. I went on all of those.

F: Tell me a little bit about them.

VM: Well, of course, Liz Carpenter and Mrs. Johnson were the primary movers. I went representing the Democratic National Committee as one of the workers on it. Margaret Price, of course, was the head woman on it. The Kennedy sisters, in different combinations, went. And it was Mrs. Johnson introducing the Kennedys to Texas, which was a necessary thing and a rather difficult task at the time.

F: Did the Kennedy sisters sort of understand the Texas method of operation? Did you have any problems growing out of that?

VM: It was a new kind of thing for me. First of all, they kept to themselves

and they read. I was very impressed with the fact that they were not wasting their time in trivial talk; they were reading a good book or they were reading newspapers. They were ready, and when we went into the town they would do everything that was necessary. Eunice Shriver was very, very nice to my daughter. My daughter was on one of the trips, and she was a student at Wellesley. I remember she asked my daughter to join them for lunch. Different people would go up, and we would always take turns going up to visit with them. They had some women that worked with them from Boston to go along. We would fly into the Ranch at night and they were very good at putting on a show, making fun of various things about us. They would tease Mrs. Johnson about her kinfolks. And then Liz and I would usually put on our little show and kind of make fun of Boston, and we'd talk about Afri-ker, and Cu-ber, which made it a lot of fun, because that way we got to visit with each other.

F: Who set up the itinerary?

VM: Mrs. Carpenter. Mrs. Carpenter in consultation, of course.

F: Was there any problem over who was in charge?

VM: No. I've been very fortunate to be involved with a lot of the women's part of campaigning in Mr. Johnson's campaigns. And if there's been any friction, it's been so minor.

F: No more than just ordinary errors or something.

VM: No. It's really been . . . you know, you hear about these good groups. But I would have hated to have missed them, not only because I believed in his campaign, but they were just so much fun, too, aside from working hard.

F: Did the weather favor you? Did you run into any great problems during the Texas tours?

VM: We ran into one problem when we were at the Ranch and it rained and we couldn't get into town. I drove Mrs. Johnson's car. And I remember I was told some terrible thing like, "There are ninety miles to make in ninety minutes," or something of that sort. There were four of us in the car: Mrs. Johnson sat by me in the front, and there were two women in the back. And I said, "I'll drive, but someone navigate because I'm not familiar with this part of the country." I chuckled to myself because, as we drove, of course, Mrs. Johnson was the navigator; the other women forgot, and in her quiet way she would simply say, "Turn," or tell me. And Olin Teague, Congressman Teague, was in the car behind me, and afterward he said, "Scooter, in my life I never drove behind such a maniac." I crossed one intersection and then went through a filling station. I didn't get my instructions 'til a little late that time. (Laughter)

F: What did you tend to do, as a rule, fly into the Ranch and then use it as a basing point and go out from there?

VM: Right. For instance, one morning . . . you know, this sort of runs together. You make so many flights that you get them confused. But one time, I remember, we were probably in Dallas in the morning, and we went to Denton or Denison, and we went to the Tyler Rose Festival, and then we changed into evening clothes in the plane and went to the opening of The Alamo in San Antonio. And Mrs. Johnson's father died in that campaign.

F: Talking of The Alamo, are you talking about the movie?

VM: Yes. That was the campaign in which Mrs. Johnson's father died, and she joined us. She missed part of the trip and joined us in San Antonio.

F: I presume she was her usual tireless self on the trip?

VM: Very. We got to Laredo, and of course all of the campaigners--we called ourselves "Ladies for Lyndon," and many of us were in costume. Now that was not the most popular campaign in Texas. And many congressmen's wives felt they should not go into costume , and they asked me to intercede for them, and I did go to Mrs. Johnson and say, "Some of these women feel they would hurt their husbands if they land in a certain place in a Johnson uniform." And of course she understood, but there's still that. . . . But Mrs. Frank Ikard, Mrs. Homer Thornberry and I wore the uniform all through Texas.

F: What was the uniform?

VM: Neiman-Marcus made that uniform, and we had a white skirt . . .

F: Did they conceive it or did one of you work out the pattern?

VM: Well, Neiman-Marcus, I believe, worked it out, but I was giving you the costume we wore in . . .

F: In 1964?

VM: No, in 1960 in Los Angeles. But by the time we became a Kennedy-Johnson [group], we were wearing the blue skirt and the red blouse and the red hat with "Kennedy-Johnson" on it. That was what we wore through Texas.

F: Did that come out of Neiman's also?

VM: That came out of Neiman's also. The night that we got to Laredo, everybody crossed the border; except Mrs. Johnson asked me if I would have dinner with her, and we stayed in Laredo. And everybody else went across. And that's the only concession I ever saw her make to her sorrow.

F: Was this because of her sorrow or was this a feeling of protocol that maybe she shouldn't be in a foreign country?

VM: Well, I didn't analyze it that way. I just think her heart was sore.

DM: I remember that night very well, because that was the time when Scooter decided she would call me here in Washington to give me a little report of what was going on. So she waited until twelve o'clock midnight because of a two hour difference. She knew it'd be ten o'clock here, just about the time I'd be getting home. But it turned out to be two o'clock in the morning, and I'd been asleep for hours.

VM: I remember another thing in Laredo: We had a parade. And, of course, that is Viva! country, and they really put on a wonderful parade. And that's really about the last time I saw any sense of humor in partisan politics, because we went right by the Republican headquarters, and they came out with funny, joyous signs. And we waved back to them, and we had fun. And you know, then when we went on the whistle-stop, things had ceased to be fun.

F: Yes. A lot of these things I can take, but the fact that all the sense of humor seems to have gone out of it, it's so deadly grim, it just irritates me.

VM: One of my assignments on the whistle-stop was to write down signs,

and some of them just make you sick.

F: We'll jump ahead. How'd this whistle-stop campaign get underway?

VM: Do you mean the origination and all?

F: Yes.

VM: Well, I am one of Liz Carpenter's greatest admirers, and she's the one that came up with the idea. Of course, the whistle-stop had been used for Mr. Johnson in the 1960 campaign, in the Kennedy-Johnson, and it had been successful. But this campaign needed to go into the South, and it needed to go in as gracious a way as it could. And Mrs. Johnson is a real southern person.

F: It was felt that there was enough anti-Johnson feeling in certain Southern quarters, that probably a campaign wouldn't be as successful for him in 1964 as it had been in 1960, I gather.

VM: But now, remember how the civil rights issue was at that time. It was really a thing. And then you see Mrs. Johnson was a person who carried some political power herself.

F: What did you do?

VM: I organized the hostesses, and our job was to--

F: These were hostesses on the train or the hostesses where you arrived?

VM: They were the hostesses on the train. We wore uniforms, and our job was always to make a picture in front of Mrs. Johnson. If she was going down, we formed certain ways with banners. We were the first ones off the train with bags. We passed out the balloons, the popcorn--well, not popcorn of course, but the Lady Bird whistles--since it was a whistle-stop we passed out whistles--candy kisses,

banners, engineer hats. You see, at each stop we picked up the local leaders of the advance and rode them to the next stop. We entertained them.

F: In other words--I don't know my itinerary this well, but if you were going into Charlotte, North Carolina, before you got to Charlotte, you picked up the Charlotte people and took them into Charlotte.

VM: So that they came walking off with Mrs. Johnson. Now they came off the back of the train. Of course, we all hopped out at other places and were down in front. We tried to make everybody have a good time when they got on. We passed out things to them. Bess Abell had organized the physical set up of the train. And our menus were perfectly divine. I remember you could order steak and it could be "raring to go," middle of the road," or "all the way." And everything about it was very cleverly done.

F: Except for train personnel, was this almost a totally female train?

VM: No, we picked up our advance men and we dropped our advance men. We had men actually running the train.

F: Again using this same analogy: you're going into Charlotte, then you'd also have some Charlotte town fathers, in effect?

VM: Mostly. The only women would be like the national committee-woman or the wife of the governor.

F: Mayor or somebody.

VM: Oh, we picked up congressmen; I remember some didn't want to get on.

DM: They even picked up me in Mobile. I flew down there and got on the

train at Mobile and went the last leg of it to New Orleans.

F: You went on into New Orleans. Well, tell us, from a man's vantage point, which I certainly don't know anything about, how this looked to you as an operation.

DM: Well, I thought it was unusually well arranged and well managed. I thought it would be practically a chaotic situation on that train, but it seemed to me like everybody knew exactly what she was doing.

VM: Well, now remember we had Mr. Johnson.

F: Yes.

VM: You know Mr. Johnson joined us in Raleigh, North Carolina the first night, and he was certainly in New Orleans when we ended up. And of course, you understand, we didn't go into any of the easy towns.

F: Yes.

VM: We went into the toughest there: Savannah. We went through the northern part of Florida. We went through where the real "against" people were.

F: Did you run into any ugly incidents?

VM: Yes, we ran into them. We ran into some.

F: How did those work out?

VM: Well, you know, chivalry is not dead in the South. And I believe the reaction came. The constant thing that we wanted Mrs. Johnson to remember was to never let anything show, never let anything ruffle her.

F: Did she?

VM: One time. Just barely.

F: What happened?

VM: Just her voice showed. She is the most self-disciplined human I have ever known in my life, and it came quickly.

F: Was it the sort of thing that anyone who knew her less well than you would have picked up? I'm talking about the audience at large.

VM: I doubt if they would. All of us that did didn't want her answering back in any way.

F: This was a heckling audience.

VM: It was a very heckling audience and it was the very black audience through the South that we got. We got all of the Negroes--the blacks of the towns turned out--and in some ways, we wondered if that might have been in a way to use against the campaign. We also ran into young, well-dressed boys and girls, the worst hecklers I've ever known.

F: White?

VM: White. Beautifully dressed, and usually you could spot the mothers and fathers a little bit further back. I really learned that, and we would say to the women that were under me--we issued a call for each day, and we would say, "Get in the middle of them. Stand and listen, but do not answer in any way. Be smiling, be charming, don't let them get your goat." And we did. And we recognized certain people that would be at each stop. They would go ahead.

F: You had kind of a counter train going with you.

VM: We had one or two that were always there: they would go ahead.

F: Now, did I understand you to say that you thought that in some

areas they might have whipped up a crowd of blacks just to kind of inflame the crowds?

I mean, make them feel that this is a black [sympathetic to blacks] President?

VM: You didn't know whether they had turned out or whether it had been helped, you know, politics being what it is.

F: Did you have good crowds all the way?

VM: Yes.

F: Did you have a friendly press?

VM: Yes. Yes, I think we did, Dale.

DM: I would say so.

VM: Yes. And I think the reaction came. I say chivalry is not dead in the South; there were editorials, and it would be like "This is a hard thing to do, but Mrs. Johnson came and she was a real Southern lady, and it was the people of our town that were insulting and rude." No, I think it was a big plus in the campaign.

F: She never, in a sense, took them on. She did her best. What did she talk about mainly?

VM: She talked about the political issues and what her husband had done, and what her husband hoped to do. And of course, she had a record.

F: Yes. What did ya'll do between stops?

VM: Well, Mrs. Johnson, we hoped, rested. And we prepared for the next stop.

F: Was she in a car by herself?

VM: Yes, she and Luci . . . . I forget now, but one of the girls was on the

first part and one on the last part. And they were there. When Mrs. Johnson came in, there was a bedroom and she . . . you know, Mrs. Johnson gets energy from candy.

F: Yes.

VM: She would eat some candy or nuts; and also a massage, rubbing her shoulders, would relax her. And then the minute that she had relaxed, you couldn't get her to take too much of that, she would go into the living room and sit on the divan and Warren Woodward and I would bring in the dignitaries that we had picked up to go to the next stop. They were in the car right in front with Governor Buford Ellington and Mrs. Henry Fowler, Joe Fowler's wife, and they would be talking to them; Mrs. Hale Boggs, Hale Boggs was on. I would bring them in one at a time. In fact, Woody would bring them in and I would introduce them to Mrs. Johnson and they would sit on the divan with Mrs. Johnson, and Frank--you know the photographer, Dale?--Muto.

DM: Yes.

VM: Frank would take a picture, and as soon as they had talked where it would be gracious enough, I would then suggest that they might like to go into the further part of the car for some refreshments or to meet some people, and we just put them through like that so that there was a picture sent to each one. And if they were rushed at the end, Mrs. Johnson would say, "Let's take a little more time with them."

F: Well, once again, if you're coming into Charlotte, you've got the mayor of Charlotte on board and the governor of North Carolina. Do

you make some arrangement so that the Charlotte Observer gets a picture on the train of its local citizen with the First Lady?

VM: Well, not that I know of. I don't believe that we would have them that quickly. Of course, you understand we were sending those out as fast as we could. But of course, there was plenty of opportunity as they got off the back for the local paper to take a picture if they wanted it taken, and if some of them were slightly hesitant, we didn't want to embarrass them.

F: Did any of your state and local officials come on with a chip on his shoulder?

VM: No. But there was a governor, I believe, wasn't it Governor Moore of North Carolina?

F: Yes.

VM: She [the Governor's wife] was on the train with us, but he didn't come, and we realized that maybe he didn't want to. But that night we got to Raleigh--the President flew in--and the Governor came and he was a real comfort.

F: I presume that you had a feeling that Mrs. Johnson did make votes through the South.

VM: Yes.

F: Now then, some of that southern area could have been written off; you couldn't get on the ticket in Alabama and Mississippi, but you felt that the effort had to be made to go into those states anyhow?

VM: Exactly. You can't stay out of the South when you're the first southern president. You can't write it off and besides that, all

of us . . . every hostess I had on was a southerner. And that was our country and we wanted to go.

F: Was there a feeling to a certain extent that this was more than a regional operation, that it had national impact?

VM: I think it had great national impact. And you did not ask me where we picked up the votes. We might have picked them up out of the South. But I do think . . . of course, you know the situation down there at that time.

F: Yes, oh yes. Let's get back to 1960. So you have a candidate for President who comes from about as far east as you can get, from an urban area, who is Irish Catholic. Did this give you any particular problems?

DM: You mean in Texas?

D: Yes.

DM: Yes, I think it did.

F: Did you have to do much explaining?

DM: I think that we had a considerable difficulty and it was only because Lyndon Johnson was on the ticket that we really had a chance of carrying Texas.

F: Do you have any idea who thought up that meeting down in Houston with the ministerial association there?

DM: No.

F: You weren't involved in that?

DM: No, I was not.

F: When Johnson was vice president, did you see much of him during that period?

DM: Yes, quite a bit. And I might say this, too. So many people who didn't really know him very well were much concerned by the way he drove himself constantly. They were afraid he would overdo. But I believe I was more concerned about him when he was vice president than at any other time, because he did not have the opportunity in that office to express himself, to express his leadership and drive. He said that he wanted to be the best vice president to President Kennedy that any vice president could be, and we all know the nature of that particular office.

F: Yes.

DM: Just the very fact that he was unable to release his emotions and to express himself and go forward in his own particular way, I was more concerned about him in that particular period than I was at the times when he was most extremely--

F: And you did get the feeling that this was a frustrating period for him?

DM: I did indeed. I will say this to his credit: he certainly avoided conveying the impression.

F: You never sensed any feeling of friction between him and President Kennedy?

DM: No. I did not.

F: Did you ever get the feeling that he felt that the Kennedys might be going to dump him in 1964?

DM: That's very difficult to answer. I never discussed that with him at all.

F: It wasn't something that was at least enough on his mind he'd talk to you at parties about it and that sort of thing?

DM: No, he rarely would discuss matters of that kind.

VM: I think he really was a good vice president.

DM: Oh, I think he was an excellent vice president.

VM: He was very loud in his praise of everything he said about the Kennedys.

F: Did either of you go on any of the trips he made while he was vice president?

DM: No.

F: Where were you on that day in November, 1963, when the assassination occurred?

DM: I was right here at this desk, and that is an interesting thing, too, because that Texas trip, as you know, was to wind up in Dallas.

F: Had you been involved at all in any advice or anything?

DM: Oh, I was closely involved with the Dallas people and the arrangements there for the reception of the President and the Vice President. The first instructions I had from Dallas were to fly down there just before the party got to Dallas and to participate then. But at the last moment it was suggested that I stay on the job here in the event [there] needed to be any kind of liaison between Dallas and Washington, that I'd be better off here. So I was sitting right here at this desk.

F: In official Dallas, was there any resistance to this projected visit or did they want it?

DM: Oh, not at all. They wanted it.

F: You had Erik Jonsson, a Republican, as mayor. That did not make any difference?

DM: Oh no, not in the slightest.

F: He was mayor, again, of the whole city. Nothing partisan here.

DM: Not at all.

F: Did you get in at all on those previous incidents involving either Adlai Stevenson or Johnson at the Hotel Adolphus?

DM: No, I was here in Washington on both of those occasions.

VM: Dale, let me interrupt you. On the time that Mr. Johnson and Mrs. Johnson were there, we were getting ready for their visit to Corpus Christi. We were on the advance. We flew to Houston to meet them.

DM: That is true. We had gone down to Corpus Christi.

F: The Johnsons then came on to Corpus, didn't they?

VM: Came on to Corpus, and of course--

F: Did they have anything at all to say about their Dallas experience?

VM: Well, of course, that's all anybody was talking about. The press was so inflamed. We were so inflamed. In Houston, people would just come up and shake our hands and say, "We're so glad you're from Dallas and you're here." You know, that was a terrible thing. And for a United States congressman to be involved. I mean, I thought it was just awful.

DM: I had a personal sense of outrage about that incident because it was our town of Dallas.

F: Well, from your knowledge of it, was it organized?

DM: I think it was. I don't think there's any question about it.

VM: If you remember, there was a Republican meeting to be held. I did think that maybe whoever advised the Johnson party to come in that day could have given a little better advice. If you remember, Dale, there were women in Republican uniforms and they sort of felt that it was their day, but that still doesn't excuse acting the way they did.

F: Did the Johnsons appear very shaken, or did they just pick right up in Corpus and go on?

DM: Well, I think that they were certainly indignant about it. Mr. Johnson was. I think Mrs. Johnson accepted it with a great deal more aplomb. But I believe that from the standpoint of the political reaction involved, I believe that they realized that an incident like that would be [more] helpful than otherwise.

VM: Oh, I think they realized that immediately. I think Mrs. Johnson was deeply hurt by it. She just doesn't show much. I just thought it was awful, but I do think it carried Texas.

(Laughter)

VM: I really think it carried Texas.

DM: As a reaction against it.

F: Did you ever place any credence in the belief sometimes voiced that the reason Dallas was so long in getting a federal center because it had a rather noisy Republican congressman?

DM: I would say yes. I believe that's right. And I think we understand

the political realities of some of those things. I don't mind now speaking rather frankly on the question of Bruce Alger. He came up here and . . . well, it's all right to be a political independent, but he spent practically as much time inveighing against the Eisenhower Administration as he did against the Democrats. He thought of himself as a knight on a white charger, and he was, I think, rather offensive in many of his political actions, and I say that with respect to both parties. I just believe that the fact that he did not conform more to an accepted procedure and conduct of an ordinary congressman had considerable to do with situations such as . . .

F: No one on either party had any disposition to reward Dallas for having sent [him]?

DM: That is correct. I would say so.

VM: I think many Republicans felt that he cost them the election.

DM: I think that's right.

VM: Many smart ones.

F: Let's go back to November 22, 1963 now and talk about that. You had not gone down.

DM: No, I was here.

F: Were you in your office? Where were you at that time?

DM: I was right here, sitting here at this desk.

F: How did you get the word?

DM: I had the television on and was trying to follow the progress.

F: Well now, what happened to you the next couple or three days?

How much did you get involved in it?

DM: Well, we were very much involved with it and busy as we could be. I think Scooter was very much more directly involved in a personal way than I was and Scooter, you might tell them . . .

VM: Well, I was in the beauty salon just paying off when I heard a flash and I dialed the President's office, his vice presidential office. Our daughter was his receptionist at the time.

F: That's Marta?

VM: Marta. She answered the phone and she was crying, and I said, "Marta." And she said, "Oh, mother, they think that Mr. Johnson may have been shot. He was holding." And I said, "I'm on my way to their home and I'll call."I knew that everybody had gone down to set up the Ranch for the visit they were going to make there that night and when I got to the Johnson's, everything was already under lock. There was somebody on the door and they passed me in. Lee was the only--

F: This was just a matter of minutes practically, wasn't it?

VM: Yes.

F: They were already out there.

VM I had to drive from Dupont Circle to the house and I drove straight. The gates were closed: they were locked. Lee was the only servant that had been left there. Mary V. Busby was there cataloguing, was up on the third floor. Warren Woodward drove out, and the three of us were there with Lee.

F: Oh, Warren was up here?

VM: Warren was here. The President called from Air Force One to Lee and told her that the White House would take over the telephones.

F: (Laughter) Do you mean he even looked after a detail like that

VM: Well, that is my recollection.

F: Yes.

VM: And my recollection is that he did.

F: I'm just kidding. I'm sometimes amazed at the details he'll pull out in the midst of . . .

VM: I was so amazed at what they did. They put pincushions through all, they went over that entire house, they put lights in the yard. Then the afternoon went on, of course, Willie Day had gone to get Luci and little Helene Lindow and they came on. And Luci, bless her heart, said, "I believe I'll wash my hair. Daddy always likes me to look nice." And she got ready.

Mrs. Johnson and Liz came first. In the meantime, one of the doctors had arrived. He wanted to listen to Mr. Johnson's heart. Several people like that had come, and when Mrs. Johnson and Liz got there and Liz walked in front, tears just streaming, of course. And as she walked by me, bless her heart, she said, "Of all the receptions we got, Scooter, I want you to know the Dallas one was tremendous." Because of course she knew you have a feeling for your town, too. And they came on in. Later when I, when I went with Mrs. Johnson upstairs to help her undress so she could lie down. . . . Mrs. Johnson is a very serious person, doesn't have the greatest sense of humor in the world, but--it amused me a little--she said,

"You know, Scooter, I've never had such service in my life." Because . . . what else do you do for somebody? I even know at that time she and I discussed the Dallas situation a little. She said, "Oh, the reception was tremendous and that." And I said, "Oh, we just wanted it to be so perfect for you."

You asked what happened after that: we were deluged with television requests to go on. Of course, for eight years I have been deluged to tell stories about the Johnsons.

F: Yes.

VM: The only thing a friend can do is to not tell stories. (laughter)

F: Did you leave the house then shortly after that?

VM: Oh yes. As soon as Mrs. Johnson was taken care of, I left.

F: When did you see her again? Soon, or was it some time?

VM: Yes. You know, I forget. I saw her at the Elms before. I helped handle the mail. We met on the third floor. There was a group of us. Our daughter was working there, of course. And let's see, Abigail McCarthy was helping, Mary Ellen Monroney, Wendy Marcus, Elizabeth Hutchinson; different friends would come in

F: You really had just a deluge of mail, huh?

VM: Yes. For instance, Abigail McCarthy--

F: To her?

VM: Yes, to Mrs. Johnson. And many people sent Mass cards. Catholics sent Mass cards. I know Abigail McCarthy is a very devout Catholic, and she would say, "Let me handle the Catholic ones," because I one time said to her, "I'm your Episcopalian expert, you're my Catholic

expert."

F: How did you acknowledge these?

VM: Well, you wrote . . . you know Mr. Johnson's favorite word, "Write a nice, warm letter."

F: Yes.

VM: Where I think I was the most helpful is the fact that I recognized old friends' names, for instance, people who had moved out of town, remarried, and they might have got just an off-hand, warm note. But I could recognize the name and I would know what Mrs. Johnson would want to see in particular.

F: Must have been terribly confusing though.

VM: It was. And there were stacks of mail, and all the third floor was utilized. And then Mrs. Johnson gave to everybody who worked just a little bird that had her name written a certain way, so that anybody that worked in those days--

F: Kind of a little pin?

VM: No, it's a little crystal bird that sits . . . . You know you recognize those little things and know you've been in, just like the whistle-stop [memento] was a spike. And then in the '60 campaign she gave, in her wording, to the ten women that had loved her the most a lady bird disc, and on the back it had, like "To Scooter From Lady Bird, 1960." Well, when Mr. Johnson saw them, he liked them so well, he ordered several hundred to give to everybody that had been connected, but they just had the initials on the back. Oh, I may have exaggerated when I said several

hundred, but he ordered a good many.

F: As a sort of wrist band?

VM: It's a disc that hangs on a . . .

DM: A charm bracelet.

VM: A charm bracelet. That's exactly what it is. But I saw Mrs. Johnson that way. You see at the time that the assassination came, our daughter had just announced her marriage, and Mrs. Johnson had said she wanted to have the prettiest party she'd ever had. Now those invitations were out. The first thing we had to do was call the invitations back in.

F: The Johnsons just canceled all social obligations at that time.

VM: [Yes] and the first time we saw them at a party--it was not a party but was one month after the assassination on December 22, Bird's birthday--they lit the Christmas tree down on the mall. And then about twenty of us had a little get-together for her birthday. And we laughed and he brought a funny picture to give to her and you know, it had been a . . .

F: Yes. It had been quite a month.

VM: We were all worn out, and I believe that was the night that Bird was to come out of mourning. I think they stayed in mourning for a month.

F: Let's get back to you now during that fateful month. I'm sure you were always being asked questions about Dallas and sort of being a spokesman for Dallas at that time. What do you think happened? Was this just kind of a pent-up anti-Texanism, an anti-Johnsonism and so

forth? Because it has not seemed to me that Memphis, for instance, with the assassination of Martin Luther King, or Los Angeles with [the assassination of] Robert Kennedy, have gotten anything like [Dallas did]. They've taken the heat off Dallas now, they've shown it can happen anywhere, as you used to say, but there was a real virulent reaction. All I had to do was say I was from Texas, and people would point at me with guns there for a while.

DM: Yes, well, you can imagine my reaction since I represented Dallas here.

F: Yes.

DM: I had a difficult time, I think, during those periods because I naturally resented the fact that this assassin was a stranger to Dallas. He was from New Orleans, he used a mail ordered gun that came out of Chicago, and Dallas was simply just an accidental place, really, for him to be. I remember that shortly after that I was at a convention here in Washington, and some man at the reception made some very derogatory remarks about Dallas. He said, "Now we'll never have the convention down there where they assassinate presidents." And I said, "Then what are you doing in Washington?" And he said, "This is a great city." And I said, "Well, twice as many presidents have been assassinated in Washington than have been in Dallas." Well, he didn't have too much to say about that. But there was that reaction, largely because Dallas had been considered a hotbed of the extreme right. As you recall, there was some question about President Kennedy going into Dallas. . .

F: Yes.

DM: . . . because they thought there might be some demonstration. Nothing so extreme of course, but some kind of demonstration from the extreme right. When this happened so unexpectedly the way it did from someone who had no connection with that area of political ideology, then still people had come to expect something like that from Dallas and it made it very difficult to try to live down.

F: As far as you could tell, did it hurt Dallas from a business standpoint?

DM: It did for a while, considerably. Any number of conventions canceled out. But of course, you know as time goes on . . . . Here in Washington they have spent so much money restoring the Ford's Theatre to precisely the way it was the night Lincoln was shot. And Dallas today has many, many conventions, and Dallas certainly does not attempt in any way to exploit the assassination site. But on the other hand, that's one of the first things many visitors to Dallas want to see; they want to be driven down there. And Dallas right now, I think this month, is opening a beautiful Kennedy memorial park just a block from the assassination site.

VM: I think Dallas itself was conscious of its figure, of its image is what I want to say, and they had gone so all out on this Kennedy thing. They wanted it so.

DM: My criticism of Dallas too at that time, as I told them down there, was that they suffered from a guilt complex themselves. They kept trying to explain this thing to everybody. And Dallas really had

nothing to do with it at all.

F: I got a little annoyed with Dallas sometimes on that.

DM: I did too.

F: [I felt that] look, it happened, accept it now and let's just go from there. Let's quit trying to explain it away.

DM: Exactly. But I had many calls from Dallas [saying] "Oh, what could they do, what could they [do]?". It was just too much of a manifestation of a guilt complex that they shouldn't have felt at all.

F: Well, it was a long time before Johnson went back to Dallas. Did he ever talk with you at all about staying away, or was this just the way his schedule ran?

DM: I think partially it was the way the schedule ran, but of course I believe he could have gone back sooner than he did if he had felt that he wanted to.

F: When he did go back, did he confer with you beforehand?

DM: We discussed it, yes. We discussed his plans.

F: Did he have any doubts?

DM: Not at the time he went back.

F: Did you do anything toward planning his coming?

DM: No, I wouldn't say so. I was in frequent communication with Dallas, or rather, the other way around. Dallas business leaders or convention planners would do their utmost to get him to come down there. I would pass those invitations along, but I respected his own feelings about it and certainly I never pressed him at all.

F: After he became President, did you have any occasion to see him officially on White House business?

DM: Well, yes, I think as anybody would in positions that I occupy, trying to help our Texas people in one area or another, I would have certain groups here from time to time,not often, and we would seek an appointment with him.

F: Was he reasonably available?

DM: Yes, he was, largely because I was careful not to abuse the privilege. It was only on rare occasions really that I would . . .

F: You didn't overuse your welcome?

DM: No, I did not.

VM: And so often you can see somebody else.

DM: That's true.

F: Did you know his staff fairly well?

DM: Very well.

F: Did you get the feeling that I picked up in some quarters that part of Johnson's difficulties that came on in latter stages of his campaign were due to the fact that he didn't have Walter Jenkins pushing the management around?

DM: I would certainly think so. Walter Jenkins was one of the most able men that I think that I ever knew.

VM: One of the fairest men.

DM: Absolutely the fairest. Walter's trouble was that he worked too hard. There was so much that he could have delegated to some of his subordinates, but I know for a fact that as long as seven or eight o'clock

in the evening, he would have, oh, maybe twenty-five or thirty unreturned telephone calls that he would return before that evening was over because he wanted to return them himself.

F: He never let them lie over until the next day?

DM: No, he wouldn't, but more importantly, he wouldn't delegate them to anybody else in his office, even though he would have utter confidence in them. It wasn't for any lack of confidence in some of his subordinates. It was just his desire, his determination to be of service to his friends himself.

VM: And what Mr. Johnson missed with Walter's going was his absolute dedication to Mr. Johnson and no desire to . . . I know that when Mr. Johnson went to the White House or when he was vice president, one of those, I know that he offered Walter, "What do you want?" Of course, Walter just wanted to serve him.

F: What did his becoming president do to ya'll's, I might say, style of life?

DM: Well, I think Scooter pointed out a while ago that we were frequently besieged by reporters and people of that kind for observations and anecdotes about the Johnsons, but we were always careful not to go into any personal areas at all.

VM: It didn't have much effect on us except we lost two real good friends. (Laughter)

VM: You know, I mean we saw them, but as far as, you know, just . . . .

F: Mainly you saw them at, I gather, social occasions.

VM: They were very generous, and you had private and public . . . but we

didn't see them the way . . . we didn't go shopping together anymore. We couldn't, you know.

DM: My closest involvement with them, of course, after he was elected was, as I think you may know, I was chairman of his inauguration.

F: Yes.

DM: I was chairman of the Inaugural Committee and of course that brought me in.

F: Did he name you?

DM: Yes, he did.

F: In person?

DM: Yes, and the background of that was that when he was elected vice President, the president-elect and the vice president-elect can each name to the Inaugural Committee a liaison man to represent his personal interests. That is, the interests of their friends to see that they had proper hotel accommodations, things of that kind.

F: I remember in the Inaugural program that they had a statement by Walter Prescott Webb, University of Texas, whom I doubt Kennedy would have picked.

DM: Yes, that's right. But Vice President-elect Johnson appointed me at that time as his personal liaison to the Kennedy Inaugural Committee, so that was the background of that.

F: So you'd been through one.

DM: I'd been through once. The procedure is that after the national conventions are held, the Democratic and Republican nominees then name a director, a director for each party, of a pre-Inaugural committee

to prepare the way for what will take place after November. And whichever party wins, the director of the other party fades out of the picture and the momentum still goes on without interruption. So the presidential nominee, Mr. Johnson, named me to be his director for the pre-Inaugural, and then after he was elected, he named me chairman of the Inaugural Committee and turned that rather complex operation over to me. So I was rather closely involved with him for several weeks during that period.

F: Did he have a great deal of personal interest in what went on, or did he leave it to you?

DM: No, actually he is the type of person, as you know, who will delegate authority and then often turn his back on it. Now after he named me as chairman, for the first three or four days I would send him a memorandum, and I only had a one word reply to one of them which just said, "Proceed." And that was all, so after a while I didn't really pass on thoughts or suggestions or recommendations to him. I just waited to hear from him or his office on some particular thing he would like to have done.

F: Did you have to make any particular changes in your own planning because of his particular tastes?

DM: No, I did not. He amused me somewhat because in order to accommodate all the hundreds of thousands of people who came to Washington, we followed the procedure, as previous inaugurations had done, of arranging other events. Not only the inaugural ball, but the parade, the reception for distinguished ladies, and governor's

reception and so on.

F: Concert.

DM: That's right, the inaugural concert. I remember during those plans I saw him once and told him about these things and he looked right at me and said, "Dale, the Constitution provides that I take the oath of office at twelve o'clock noon on January 20, and I'll be there, but I just don't think I'm going to go to anything else."

(Laughter)

VM: Dale, tell about the fact that you ended up with so many balls and he was going to go to one ball.

DM: Yes, well, when he said that to me, I just said, "Well, now, Mr. President, that's just fine. That's entirely up to you." And I said, "I recall some presidential candidate a few weeks ago that went around the country telling huge crowds, 'Ya'll come, ya'll come'." And I said, "They're all coming. Now, you participate just to the extent that you feel you want to and should, but your Inaugural Committee is going to have to take care of all these people who are coming, so we are arranging all these events." Well, needless to say, he participated fully and actively in every event. We ended up having five inaugural balls. He not only attended all five, but he was the first president since George Washington to dance at an inaugural ball, and he danced at all five of them.

F: Oh, really?

VM: And he danced a lot.

F: Previous presidents had not danced?

DM: They had not danced at their Inaugural Ball, nobody since George Washington.

VM: And Mr. Nixon didn't dance, I don't believe.

DM: No, he didn't either.

F: Was President Johnson aware of this tradition?

VM: I think so.

DM: Whether they did or did not dance at the Inaugural Ball?

VM: Yes. Don't you think he was?

DM: I think perhaps he was.

F: Or maybe he just came in, heard the music and started, huh?

DM: That's right.

VM: The first ball was right here at the Mayflower, and he asked Mrs. Johnson to dance.

F: Were you here?

DM: We were here.

VM: We went to all of them.

F: Were you surprised when he got on the floor?

DM: Well, you see, we had organized this presidential party in five or six cars with police escorts and so forth, to go to all of these balls, but we picked the first one here in order that we could be ready and so on. So the presidential party came here to this one first, and then we accompanied them to the rest.

VM: You had been advised before we got down there that he was going to dance, hadn't you?

DM: Yes.

VM: Yes, it was a decision.

DM: It was a decision. And I was not sure that he was going to dance at all of them, but he did and gave every impression of enjoying it.

F: Did you have any trouble keeping him on schedule?

DM: No, no we did not, and I was rather surprised at that. Now he did want to stay at different places, but we had a schedule to keep and he followed along right well.

VM: And you ended up at the Sheraton Park where the Texas crowd was, and he spread his dancing out a little there.

DM: That's right.

VM: He danced with others out of the presidential party.

DM: Well you see, at the last ball, the Sheraton Park, our schedule was over. We didn't have to keep him on any schedule. We didn't care how long he stayed there. In fact, the longer he stayed, the better we liked it, and all the crowd did, too.

F: Now then, you made money on the Inauguration?

DM: Yes.

F: Did the President show any interest in that or was that again strictly--

DM: No, I think he would have shown an interest if we had lost money. (Laughter) But fortunately we managed to make some money, and since it is a nonprofit-making organization, I set aside $25,000 for the next inaugural committee, whatever it would be, to get started on.

F: Some seed money.

DM: That's right. Well, $25,000 and . . .

VM: Fifty thousand, $50,000 for the incoming group.

DM: That's right. I'm sorry, $50,000. I did say $25,000, didn't I?

VM: Yes.

DM: The reason I said $25,000: we had found out quite some time before that $25,000 would have been more than ample because the Kennedy campaign, the Kennedy inaugural, left $50,000 for the next inaugural committee, whoever it might be, so that is what we had to start with in the preinaugural period. So then when our returns came in, we found that we had made some money and we left $50,000 to the next one, and that is the money that the Nixon committee got started on. We had $40,000 in profits over and above that which after considerable thought we gave to the beautification program here in the District of Columbia, which was the project closest to Mrs. Johnson's heart.

VM: Dale leaned over backwards to keep that from being political, the money. Now lots of people don't, but I'll say also that most chairmen of inaugurals are not working chairmen. And Dale was a working chairman. He was down there every day from eight in the morning until eleven at night. He wanted not only for the inaugural to be the way it was, but he wanted those books to be just so perfect and for it not to be political. I have been interested in seeing some of the other inaugural things that I have been reading about.

F: Yes. When did you quit being director? When are you out of a job in that case?

DM: You mean, out of a job as chairman of the Inaugural?

F: Yes. Just as soon as you can close out your books?

DM: My final report to the President was delivered to him personally

about two and a half years after the Inauguration.

VM: Well, and you've worked in this Inaugural because you had to tell everybody what to do.

DM: That's true. I was honorary vice chairman of this Inaugural.

F: You had this one as a carryover.

DM: That's right. And as soon as the preinaugural directors, the Democrat and the Republican, were named after Nixon and Humphrey were nominated, they both called me--they were together--and we went to lunch together. We had several luncheons planning the procedures for this Nixon Inauguration. And I was happy to learn that they followed our format, our procedure, precisely with the same events scheduled at the same time. I think they produced a successful Inauguration.

VM: I think it is very interesting that an inaugural chairman has many ideas to go to the next one, but you never assume you're to be chairman of the next one until you're invited. There were many things that needed to be done in connection with this inaugural if Mr. Johnson had been the incoming president, and many people came to Dale and said, "Why aren't you doing something?" So finally after discussion, Dale wrote Mr. Johnson a letter and said there are many things that need to be done about the Inaugural and if you would like for me to be the chairman--I've forgotten how he worded it because it was a very delicate thing; he'd be delighted not to be; it's a lot of hard, hard work--and he got a lovely note back from the President. Now everybody always says did you know that the President wasn't going to

run. Well, of course I certainly didn't But that would have been the one little clue, don't you think, Dale? You tell about the note because I can't remember it.

DM: Well, it appeared to be somewhat ambiguous, but it gave me full authority to proceed to do what needed to be done, because I had been looking forward to the summer with the meetings of the district commissioners here, the District of Columbia.

F: This is in 1968?

DM: That's right, [meetings] during the summer to begin plans and preparations for the forthcoming Inaugural. Because I'd been getting calls from the District government and so on saying, "We think such and such should be done. We should do this and that." Well, I could hardly say, "Yes, do this, or no, don't do that," without some kind of an indication from higher authority that I was expected to proceed.

VM: But the tone of the note was a little like, "Thank you so much and if we do it . . ."

DM: Yes, well . . .

VM: You were awfully glad that you had written him the letter.

DM: Yes, that's right. But at the same time I felt that I had the authority to proceed if any decisions had to be made. So when my advice was asked by district officials early about plans and so forth, I was able to tell them that I thought that such and such would be advisable or not.

F: Is there a strong push from some of your associates in the Inaugural

to make this an all-out political occasion?

DM: I don't think anymore.

VM: This ought to be a continuing committee. You know, I mean a carry-on.

DM: You know, I found out, though, in a sense it is. My work continued almost up to the time the new preinaugural directors were named.

F: It didn't reduce any even after March 31, 1968, the President's renunciation of the [nomination]? You were still involved in it?

DM: Oh, yes, I still . . .

F: Until they got new co-chairmen?

DM: Well actually, you see, a chairman of an inaugural committee has no termination date on his appointment until his successor is named, and his successor is not named until after the next election. So I was still chairman of the only inaugural committee there was and if any decisions had to be made, of course I had to make them. For instance, that beautiful inaugural book that was produced during the Inauguration--even today I will get orders for them. Ten dollars. And of course, I'm not able to satisfy them now because we've gone out of existence. But we had those orders coming in all along and I had set aside a handful of books, little more than a handful, to take care of those requests. And so, even after I had gone out of business and made my complete financial report, I had, I would say, a little more than a thousand dollars in the bank, so when I got these

orders for these books, I put another ten dollars in the deposit and that, too, in addition to the $50,000, was turned over to the Nixon committee. Because we were out of business financially and they were getting started.

VM: The surplus from Dale's Committee went to the beautification program, and devoted to the approach to the airport, so that all the visitors who gave the money would benefit.

DM: Yes, that's going to be a dramatic thing to see, Joe, next spring.

F: Which airport, National?

VM: Yes, coming right in front of Lee's home.

DM: Across from Memorial Bridge, as you leave Lincoln Memorial and cross Memorial Bridge, that big traffic circle over there has been planted with I don't know how many beautiful dogwood trees, and they'll be blooming.

VM: And all of that's the Lady Bird Park.

DM: That has been designated Lady Bird Johnson Park, and we were there last spring.

F: And that's Inaugural money?

VM: That's Inaugural money.

DM: That's the $40,000 of the Inaugural fund that planted that.

VM: And it is so pleasing because everybody will use it because visitors pour in. We thought it was such a fitting thing to have it done that way.

F: Did the departure of the Johnsons make any difference in ya'll's lives, socially or otherwise?

VM: I don't think so, do you?

DM: I wouldn't say that it did.

F: You're bipartisan in that sense. I mean the tempo of your life just goes on.

(Several talking at once.)

VM: And social Washington is an entirely different thing.

DM: You see, any new administration brings in many new people and lots of old friends leave. We were distressed to see them go, naturally, but even so, the process of any change of administration requires that you know new people, new connections, new job assignments.

VM: You know, politically things are one way, but socially things are another and Dale and I have lived here a long time. I remember when Mrs. Johnson used to ask us to take her to embassy parties. She loved to go and of course he didn't. And she didn't know many people. She knew everybody on the Hill.

F: Is this when he was president?

VM: No, no, this was when he was a senator. And it was when he was a senator she first started. Then he became majority leader and I remember one of her first remarks was, "Now I'll have a car to take us." Dale and I used to take her, she was always so pleasant to have along. I can remember at the Italian Embassy the Nixons coming in and my bringing them together, and then I saw Clare Boothe Luce all by herself and I got her and brought her over and she and Bird became so talkative because Mr. Johnson had had his heart attack and Mrs. Luce had written him every day because she was interested in that.

I also can remember when Dale and I used to take her I would introduce her as Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, though I knew Mrs. Johnson was correct, but Johnson is such a name, and once she said, "I'm glad you introduce me as Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, nobody would know me otherwise." And Mrs. Johnson fools many people because you know she's so quiet and non-pushy. One person one time said to me, "Scooter, why do you waste your time with that quiet little Mrs. Johnson?" And I said, "You've never talked to her for thirty minutes. If you had, you'd know what a brain she has." And that part. And then, too, you see, in Washington when you're doing things, you have to have some Democrats and some Republicans because everything changes every four years or every once in a while. People are very conscious of that.

F: Yes. You want to keep your contacts with the next administration. Did he just not like to go to parties or was he too busy or would he just rather work?

DM: Rather work.

VM: Well, and embassy parties didn't have anything to do with politics. You know Mr. Johnson doesn't do anything but politics, never did.

F: So you could get him out if it were some congressman throwing a party; he would come.

VM: You bet.

F: But if it were something outside the congressional area . . .

VM: He was never interested in foreign things. You know, he just was not interested in that. He was very wrapped up in politics. I don't

suppose he went to picture shows or baseball games--well, sometimes to a baseball game.

DM: He would go to a ballgame, but . . .

F: He never watched.

DM: He never watched.

F: I've picked that up from other people.

DM: I've said many times what Scooter just mentioned. I have said many times that I just could not imagine Lyndon Johnson sitting through a two hour and a half movie. I just can't conceive of that. Now a baseball game is something else. You get up between innings, you stretch, you talk to everybody around you, you eat a hot dog. It's a different thing. And even those were political occasions for him.

VM: That is all that he was interested in. And he loved to have parties in his own home. He'd ask me to help him with a party and then tell me how to do it. (Laughter)

F: He loved to plan parties himself.

VM: I remember one party he had over at their old house.

F: Is that the one on Kalorama [Road]?

VM: No, the one on 33rd Place, the first house they bought here, the one he went around and asked everybody whether he should buy it or not.

Remember how excited he was about it?

F: I don't know that story.

VM: Well, you know he just takes everybody in on all his decisions, and he didn't know whether he should pay this much for this house or not.

But he was having this party and he asked us to help and I went over two or three times ahead of time. And then the day of the party came, and I remember Arthur Godfrey was there and I've forgotten who else, but Lyndon decided it was too crowded. And he kept saying, "Get everybody downstairs." Well, I happen to believe that a party is best when it's crowded or when it's small enough for everybody to sit. I can remember that, and he kept on and finally Mr. Rayburn came to me and said, "Scooter, now let's just get a crowd that we like and let's just go downstairs where we're not going to be fussed at anymore." (Laughter) And of course we took the food down and Mr. Rayburn was the 'piece d'resistance.' I loved Mr. Rayburn.

DM: Speaking of parties and Mr. Rayburn, I think this might be of interest: the birthday party that we gave for Speaker Rayburn every year for a period of eighteen years. His birthday was January 6, and I recall the way that started. I was out on Capitol Hill on January 6 and just mentioned to him that wasn't it his birthday and he said, "Yes." And I said, "What are you doing tonight?" And he said, "Nothing." And I said, "Well, why don't you come down and let's have a little chili." So we hurriedly called some friends in the Texas delegation in Congress; I guess we had twenty or thirty up here for chili.

So the next year we decided we'd have another party. Well, we moved it over to the Women's National Democratic Club because it was right around the corner from where he lived. I had forgotten how many

years we gave that party until I read it in an obituary of Mr. Rayburn after he died. Eighteen years. That particular party got to be a Washington institution, largely because his birthday was on January 6 right after New Year's, just at the time Congress was convening. It was the first important function, so to speak, and we had the leadership of both parties; for every Democrat we'd have his Republican counterpart, and so forth. Well, after Mr. Rayburn's death, the year after that, we gave the party for the then-Vice President Johnson. We could hardly continue that because just as Mr. Rayburn's birthday was a convenient January 6, Mr. Johnson's is an inconvenient August 27, which incidentally is tomorrow.

F: Yes.

DM: And many times Congress was not in session, and we couldn't arrange it because he would be back at the Ranch and so on.

F: Did you ever get in a position of sort of being a secondary host for the White House at some function that maybe needed to be done and the White House couldn't host it and they'd ask you would you give a party?

VM: No, I don't think we ever did anything like that. Only thing I can think of in that way would be if Mrs. Johnson were out of town and I might take somebody through the White House or something of that sort. I can't think of but two occasions and that was just a close friend, that she couldn't be there. Just as when The Elms was for sale, anybody who went through it, I took them through because Mrs. Johnson couldn't be there and I just simply represented her.

F: Were they at The Elms long enough to get a real affection for it? Did they hate to give it up?

VM: Yes. I think Mrs. Johnson truly loved that house, really loved it. It's a beautiful place.

F: I've never been there.

VM: It's a beautiful home and I had a funny little thing. You know, I save all--

F: Where is it?

VM: It's 52nd Street.

DM: It's 52nd Street, it's in Spring Valley. It's a beautiful home. The interesting thing about that home to me was that it belonged to Mrs. Mesta, who lived there with her sister. It's a huge house with I don't know how many bathrooms, but there was not a shower in the house.

VM: That's the first thing the Johnsons did. (Laughter)

F: Put in a shower.

VM: Put in a shower and a swimming pool. Oh, it's a delightful home, it's now an embassy except we don't have any diplomatic relations. (Laughter) So it's just sitting there. But Mrs. Johnson furnished that with great thought and lots of good times there. They were living there when the Cuban crisis came and you know they had to have Secret Service with them.

DM: That's where our daughter Marta met her husband-to-be, wasn't it?

VM: Yes. Well, they had the gates closed during the Cuban crisis and after the assassination, the only times that I remember.

F: Did The Elms sort of play marriage broker--

VM: Cupid!

DM: Marriage broker or cupid.

F: --to Marta?

VM: Lynda had a luau. They met there.

(Pause in recording)

F: Let's talk briefly then about the campaign of 1968, which didn't come off. You were involved in getting set up for a campaign that never came, right?

VM: Yes. You mentioned earlier in this interview about the '60 campaign.

F: Yes.

VM: I thought Mr. Johnson was awfully late in announcing in '60, and we were worried frantic about this '68 because nothing was being done.

F: Yes. A number of people think the reason he didn't make it in '68 was because he was so late in giving anybody the go-ahead.

VM: That was my feeling. You were talking to Dale about it and I was thinking of the press conference when he announced. But a lot of us were worried and we kept getting these calls, just like I mentioned Dale on the Inaugural. And finally Liz Carpenter called a meeting of a group of women. Well, I had gone to the Democratic meeting and I had listened to these people, and it bothered me. We had something to sell and nobody wanted to sell it. And then we set up a headquarters down at the Watergate. I was helping Marion Watson; we were going to do the White House participation. I was going to be the organization person. On the Sunday that Mr. Johnson was to speak, that's the day that--I had been all week trying

to get some place and I wasn't getting anyplace, and Dale took me down and I just had this meeting and said, "If I'm going to do this, I have to do it right now." We came back over here and Dale helped me, and we typed, catalogued, cross-filed, and we were ready to start Monday morning. Marion knew exactly what she wanted.

F: You had the Wisconsin primary coming up, too, didn't you?

DM: Our son-in-law was in a plane flying out there. He'd taken a leave of absence from his law firm and he was in the air when he heard the announcement on his way down to work in Wisconsin.

VM: And I turned this on. I nearly died when I heard it. I kept thinking . . .

F: You heard the speech?

VM: I heard the speech and I thought, "He's going to get in so far he's not going to be able to get out. He's going to be in here . . . . " It never dawned on me he was going to say, "I'm not going to run." Oh, I was really shocked. Now, you understand I had had a few little hints, but you know, you always have a few little hints.

F: Well, he could talk on all sides of an issue.

VM: Exactly, and I had paid no more attention.

DM: Well, I had a strong premonition that he was not going to run. I told Scooter about it.

VM: Well, I didn't, and I called immediately. I called Marta, and I said, "Marta, did you know?" And she said, "Mother, I'm shocked to pieces." I called Liz Carpenter, and Liz had no idea. Then my phone rang and it was Marion Watson. She said, "If I'd had any

idea, I would have told you." And it really was, to me, a shock.

F: And you had to get to work and dismantle your machinery that you'd started.

VM: My goodness yes, we had telephones . . .

F: Close down an office.

(Laughter)

VM: Yes, but then we just . . . it really was something though, I was surprised to pieces.

F: Well, that's a good story.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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Dale Miller
Donor

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Date

Virginia Miller
Donor

Feb. 4, 1978
Date

James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

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