INTERVIEWEE: BOOTH MOONEY

INTERVIEWER: THOMAS H. BAKER

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B: This is an interview with Booth Mooney, who was on Senator Johnson's staff in the 1950's and is the author of The Lyndon Johnson Story and Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mooney, you were born in Texas in 1912 and then were in the newspaper business, magazine business, World War II service in the Air Corps, and, after the war, your own public relations firm. When in this process did you first meet Mr. Johnson?

M: I saw him when he was running for the Senate in 1948. I did not actually meet him, as I recall, until the latter part of 1952. In 1951 his Administrative Assistant, Walter Jenkins, left the Senator and came down to run for Congress in a special election. Through a mutual friend in Dallas, Mr. Jenkins was put in touch with me to do some of the public relations work of his campaign. He was not elected, but we got along well, and afterwards he started coming to see me from time to time and said that he had told Senator Johnson of the work I had done in his campaign. To quote him, he said, "The Senator said, 'Maybe we ought to try to get him on our side,'" because I had been on the other side in the 1948 campaign. I had worked for Governor Coke Stevenson in his unsuccessful race for the Senate.

B: Yes, sir, I wanted to ask you about that. To back up into the '40's, even if you had not met Mr. Johnson had you formed an opinion about him? Had you classified him as a Congressman?

M: Yes, I had. I was a pretty conservative young man, and it seemed to me and to many others in Texas, that he was too liberal. He's since been accused

not being liberal enough, and I've since been accused of having become more liberal--so who knows? But I did have an opinion that Governor Stevenson would make a good Senator. He'd made a good governor, most people in Texas thought. And it was a political race, and feelings were aroused. Naturally I was working as hard for my man as I could.

B: What made Mr. Johnson seem liberal?

M: I suppose association in the minds of many people with President Roosevelt.

B: Still on into the 40's--

M: Oh, yes.

B: Presumably his association with Mr. Truman, too.

M: Yes, I think so, although he was never as closely identified in the public mind down there with Truman as he was with Roosevelt because when he first ran for the House of Representatives in 1937, he had--it was a special election--he had come out for the President's Court Packing Plan. That instantly and forever identified him as a New Dealer in the minds of many people in Texas.

B: Did you have anything to do with Mr. Johnson's unsuccessful 1941 race for the Senate?

M: No. The only thing that I did on that was I wrote a few speeches for one of his opponents, Gerald Mann. Afterwards I wrote a rather long article on the campaign from the standpoint of the opposition. I never did submit it anywhere for some reason. I ran across it in some files recently. It gives a pretty detailed picture of the campaign.

B: That would be worth keeping--

M: Yes. In fact I think I promised somebody that I would send a copy of it down to the Library.

B: I was going to suggest that is the kind of thing the Johnson Library would like to have.

M: Yes, I think it might be more worth while than anything else I have to offer, as a matter of fact.

B: Then, in the 1948 campaign, when you worked for Coke Stevenson, was that a pretty bitter campaign--personally bitter?

M: Yes, it was a bitter campaign and it became increasingly bitter after the first primary. It became more bitter after that because I think Senator Johnson began to have a real feeling that he could lose again as he had in 1941. So it was an all-out effort on the part of his people, less all out than I would have liked on the part of ours. I think Governor Stevenson's campaign was too relaxed and not excited enough. I remember that an associate of mine was involved in the campaign, too, and Coke said, "Don't let him come around any more. He makes me nervous." And we had a deep feeling that he ought to be nervous.

B: You mean the candidate himself, Governor Stevenson, was over-confident?

M: It was not so much over-confidence, I think--although he was confident. It was more a personality trait. He just did not get excited. He was as unflappable as Harold Macmillan, at least outwardly.

B: Who was the main architect of Governor Stevenson's campaign?

M: It was hodgepodge. I don't know that we had a main architect. I may have had as much to do with it as anybody because I wrote all the speeches, and he rarely changed them. He did not make two speeches that I wanted him to which would possibly have made some difference.

B: What were those, sir?

M: Senator Johnson was basing his campaign in large part on his opposition to the Taft-Hartley law, which he had voted for and then voted to override Truman's veto of it. Governor Stevenson had made some kind of agreement with one of the labor leaders in Texas that he would not come out for Taft-

Hartley. He just ignored the issue, and I thought it was fatal because Johnson more and more bore down on that as we said nothing. And the other speech that I wrote that he did not deliver--I guess the only two I wrote that he rejected--attacked the George Parr influence in the southern part of Texas. In the first primary Johnson had carried the Parr counties, oh, you know, a hundred to one, or something like that. And I wanted Governor Stevenson to make a speech attacking boss rule and what it meant in an election. Of course, it may be just my still prevailing vanity that makes me think they would have made a difference.

B: Did Stevenson give you any reasons why he didn't take either of these stands?

M: He said that Johnson would come back and find out that every time he ran for Governor he, Stevenson, carried the Parr counties. So I asked him why he lost them and he said it was because he refused to appoint a man as district judge during the war who was recommended by Parr. That was the reason he gave, that Johnson would say that he always carried them in the past. He may have had something there.

B: Actually you got the formal endorsement of the Texas AF of L in the campaign?

M: That's right. And there was one Sunday when Morris Roberts and I thought we were going to get Stevenson to come out on the Taft-Hartley thing. We thought we had him persuaded, and then that afternoon in the hotel in Austin, he went into conference with this labor leader--and I can't remember his name; I think he was a railway man. And Stevenson emerged, just saying, "I can't do it. I promised him."

B: No more reasons than that?

M: No more reasons.

B: Did you ever find out later what went on?

M: No. Certainly I could never see that any influx of money came into the campaign from them. There may have been some that I didn't know about. I was not particularly interested in the financial part of it. But we never did have a lot of money, which was surprising because people thought, you know, that the big oil men would come in very heavily for him.

B: The Texas CIO was tacitly supporting Mr. Johnson, weren't they?

M: Yes.

B: Curious kind--

M: Yes, very curious,yes. That was Johnson at his political best or worst, depending on how you look at it. I mean, he was determined to win.

B: Did you ever figure out how he got the CIO support?

M: Well, he had always been considered more friendly to labor than not. I imagine they had some talks--if not he, perhaps his brother Sam Houston would have talked to some of them.

B: Actually, I suppose the real question is how Governor Stevenson got the AF of L?

M: That really is, and I don't know that. I know I wished we didn't have it at the time and the place. It was better not to have it.

B: Kiss of death kind of thing.

M: Yes.

B: What was the opinion in the Stevenson camp of the campaign Johnson was running?

M: It was rather unrealistic for the most part. Morris Roberts was as easy-going as Stevenson. He was the campaign manager. Stevenson's younger brother, Pierce Stevenson, was also a close advisor, and he was perhaps even more easy-going than Stevenson was. So the campaign was too relaxed all

around and that included their feeling toward Johnson. They would listen to his speeches and say, "Oh, that's a lot of boloney," and that sort of thing. I don't think they realized the extent of the effort Johnson was making. For example, when a Houston lawyer named George Peddy was the third man in the first primary--he got about 20-percent of the vote--the Stevenson people had expected that he would not get more than 10-percent, but Johnson had somebody seeing Peddy the Sunday after the Saturday voting. I mean, they moved fast and they got a large share of the Peddy vote support too.

B: Was it Johnson himself who was working so hard?

M: He did work very hard. Now, I think he talked to Peddy on the phone and then somebody else went to see him, as I recall.

B: Who were the main figures in his campaign other than himself?

M: Johnson's?

B: Yes.

M: John Connally was the campaign manager, of course he's just as aggressive and smart as he can be. Much of the inner strategy, I'm sure, was worked out by his younger brother, Sam Houston. Johnson has always had a great respect for his brother's political savvy.

B: Let's see, Walter Jenkins was with him, and George Reedy.

M: Walter was there, of course, yes. No, George was not there in 1948. He didn't join him until 1950, I believe.

B: Who was doing the speech writing for him then?

M: Horace Busby was doing much and there was also another young man named Roy Wade, I believe, who was doing some speech writing.

B: Did national politics play much of a part in that campaign, that is, the Presidential election that was going on--Truman and the Dixiecrat movement

and all that?

M: Yes, I think it did and in fact many people who were confident that Stevenson would win felt an identical sense of shock on the second primary night as on the general election night. Yes, I think it did play quite a good deal.

B: Then, of course, that's the election campaign that ended up with the disputed vote count and the ruckus at the certification meeting, and the court trials and so on. Did you ever come then or later to any firm conclusion as to what went wrong, if anything?

M: I came to several conclusions. I think it was an illegal election. I still think so. I went down in April of the following year to Mexico City with my wife for a vacation, and I met down there the man who had been spirited away--the South Texan accused of burning the ballots, you remember, and they were burned. This man was brought down there for safekeeping until things died down a little.

B: Brought down there by whom?

M: An employee of the Department of Agriculture.

B: With the knowledge of the Administration?

M: Oh, yes.

B: That's an interesting point.

M: It's interesting.

B: You recall the names of those people?

M: No, I don't. The Department of Agriculture man later came up here, and the last time I talked to him, I think he was going to South America. Sorry I can't remember his name. It's been twenty years or more.

B: Was the Stevenson side completely free of any--

M: I don't know. I doubt that it was. I remember there was some charges made

with respect to some votes in Brownwood, I believe--Brown County. I don't know anything about that. They wouldn't have told me, in any case.

B: Of course, it is true, as you mentioned before, that Stevenson had carried those South Texas boxes.

M: That's right. And of course, I think that a lot of the talk of corruption in that election--and in other elections in Texas--ignores the fact that often local men will go ahead and do things on their own. The candidate may suspect it but he's more likely to think about something else. For example, I've seen Johnson do this and other people do it. Suppose in conversation he's had with somebody on some subject, he says, "I've never talked to him about it." That's true, but Walter Jenkins has talked to him about it and has told Johnson what he said.

B: In addition to the long series of court fights over the disputed boxes there was a wild meeting of the State Democratic Executive Committee.

M: Yes. I was not there. I was in New York, but my business associate was there. Yes, it was very wild, I understand.

B: Of course, Johnson was certified by one vote--

M: One vote. Charlie Gibson's vote from Amarillo, who had left and, I believe, taken a few drinks but he was salvaged and brought back.

B: Did that campaign leave any ill feelings, more than usual?

M: I think it did. I don't think it did on my personal part but I believe Governor Stevenson still remains very bitter about it. And some of his closer friends such as Mr. Harry Benge Crozier the last I heard was still bitter. In fact, Crozier was so bitter that he severed relations with me after I went to work for Johnson.

B: Who is Mr. Crozier?

M: He's an old-time newspaper man. He used to be an Austin correspondent for the Dallas News at one time. He goes back many years in the newspaper work there.

B: That's Harry Crozier?

M: Yes. And he was at one time, when Stevenson was Governor, he was on the--what did they call it--Unemployment Commission. He was a member of that.

B: Did you stay out of politics for awhile after that?

M: I guess I did. No, I was involved in the City Council election in Dallas, in 1949. In 1950, I was involved in Governor Shiver's first campaign for Governor--after he succeeded to the governorship.

B: You were working for him?

M: For Shivers, yes.

B: Then, you said at the beginning, about that time, about '52, you were approached by Walter Jenkin's campaign.

M: Yes. So, Walter came and said this. I said, "Well, I can be on your side but I don't think I want to work for you or anything." But then that summer, Senator Johnson asked me to come up and work in Senator [Richard] Russell's effort to get the Democratic nomination [for President], which I did. Then at the end of that campaign, Walter asked me again if I would be willing to work for Johnson, and I'd seen enough of Washington to think that maybe I would like it. I said, "Well, I would consider it." He asked me what my salary would have to be and I told him. He said, "Well, we just have one job that pays that much, and I have it." So we broke off negotiations.

But after that we were in touch frequently and in December of '52, Senator Johnson called me from Austin--I was in Dallas--and asked me to come down to see him. This was when he and Russell had pretty well settled it that

Johnson would become Democratic floor leader in the Senate. Johnson said that if he did he would have more salary positions available and would I come to work with him. We spent about, I think, about three-and a-half-hours talking that day, which is longer than I ever spent with him after that. Still nothing was resolved. You know, I had my home in Dallas and had a business there and so on.

Then at Christmas I went with my wife to upstate New York to visit her father and they started phoning me there--yes, that's right--they phoned me there several times. Also, he had the man from Dallas call me--the man who had originally put me and Jenkins in touch with one another. I believe I agreed sometime late in January, after I had gone back to Dallas to come up. My partner had worked in the Eisenhower campaign, and he wanted to come up and join the Eisenhower Administration. So we sold our business and I came up here very early in February of '53.

B: You've mentioned your partner several times. Who was he, sir?

M: Gerald Cullinan. I believe he's assistant to the President of the National Letter Carriers Association here now. He was in the Post Office Department during the Eisenhower Administration.

B: Did you have any qualms about coming to work for Senator Johnson when you--

M: No, not really because it's, you know, it's a professional job and what he wanted me to do was work that I felt I was equipped to do.

B: In that three-hour conversation did you go over the past any? Did you talk about the '48 campaign?

M: We talked some about the '48 campaign. Of course, Johnson, especially after that period of time, had a completely professional attitude toward it and talked about mistakes we'd made, mistakes they had made and so on.

B: Did he also outline what he had in mind for himself as a Senate leader and--

M: He did say then that he was not going to follow Taft's admonition that "the business of the opposition is to oppose." I think for several reasons. One, he undoubtedly felt that way sincerely, and two, he could read the election returns as well as anyone else.

B: This was after Eisenhower's victory?

M: Yes.

B: You mentioned one other thing of interest. You said that the summer before you had worked at Johnson's request on the campaign to try to get the nomination for Senator Russell.

M: Yes.

B: Was Mr. Johnson extremely active in that?

M: He was very deeply interested, yes. I think that, being realistic, he realized that there was little chance of success. But he had and has, so far as I know, a very great respect for Senator Russell--who if he hadn't been from the South might well have gotten the nomination and probably would have made an outstanding President.

B: Yes, well, you mentioned what I was going to ask, if the people including Johnson and Russell working on that really felt that he could get the nomination.

M: I think that Russell along toward the last did being to think that maybe he had a chance. You know how those things go, against all reason and reality. But he had such a handicap to carry. I remember at the first and only fund-raising dinner for Senator Russell in Atlanta some dolt from Mississippi bawled into the microphone, "If the South can't eat at the head

table, we won't come to dinner." Which was, you know, just a threat to walk out unless Russell got the nomination. Of course that was headlined in the papers here and on television everywhere.

B: Friends like that you don't need any more enemies, do you.

M: Right.

B: Then when you joined Mr. Johnson's staff, what sort of duties did you have? Or was it clear-cut at all?

M: It wasn't clear-cut and it became steadily less so. I wrote his weekly so-called newsletter. That's a report to the newpapers in Texas. I wrote some of his speeches. I wrote statements for the Congressional Record. Of course, George Reedy was his principal writer, especially in his capacity as floor leader. Then later--Johnson had a yen for what he called "warm letters," and they decided that I could write very warm letters, so pretty soon I was handling a great deal more correspondence than I wanted to. In fact, I was going through something [for a book] I was writing recently, and I was going through the President's files, which he very graciously made available to me. I was amused by the hundreds of letters with my initials on them.

B: These were letters in reply to constituents?

M: That's right and letters for his signature, of course.

Incidentally, that's something I suppose somebody will figure out, but in all of Johnson's files, at least when he was with the Senate, no initials appeared on the original letter. But on the carbon there would be the initials of the person who dictated the letter. So some historian in the future may want to figure out who really wrote this letter.

B: That's a useful tip. Did Johnson work very hard on keeping on the good side with his constituents?

M: Yes, yes he did.

B: Was he, himself, actively involved in this or did he just turn the whole thing over to someone in his--

M: A combination. Some days he would sit down at the end of the day and read all the letters that were going out. Most often Walter Jenkins read them and if there were some that he thought were questionable or outstanding, either one, he would call them to the Senator's attention. Walter was really the indispensable man for Johnson.

B: He was clearly the top man on the staff? In all areas?

M: Yeah. In all areas really.

B: While we are on Mr. Jenkins, were you involved later on, on into the '60's, in Mr. Jenkin's difficulties that eventually caused his resignation?

M: Yes. I was one of his first callers at the hospital.

B: Can you shed any light on the--

M: None at all. I was as shocked as any of his other friends. I hold to a suspicion that there's more to it than meets the eye, to coin a phrase, that whatever incident may have occurred it was, if not set up, at least preparations had been made to take full advantage of it. And I've always admired Senator Goldwater for refusing to touch it.

B: I've heard others on the Johnson staff intimate the same thing.

M: I think it's because we know Walt and it just seems so impossible.

B: You mean there had been no symptoms or evidence of it before?

M: Not so far as I could see.

B: Is there any other basis for implying that there might be something of a frameup?

M: No, I don't know that there is. One basis is the speed with which it reached the newspapers. It was a tragic thing, but fortunately Walter and his

family seemed to have surmounted it.

B: Did you feel at that time, there in the '64 campaign when that broke, that Johnson's behavior was correct?

M: No. I think he should have said what Mrs. Johnson said. He was a very nervous politician. He didn't know how that campaign was going you know, although he hoped for the best. But no, I think he should have spoken out immediately and forthrightly. I would have said, "Regardless of the truth or lack of truth of these charges, this man is my long-time friend and still is." Something of that sort.

B: Actually, Mr. Johnson couldn't have been very worried about the '64 campaign.

M: You wouldn't think so but the shock of something like this that could plunge him into the depression, to which he is subject at times.

B: Simply as an unpredictable factor on the electorate?

M: Yes. And I'll give you another example since it's all known, I suppose. It was when Congressman Joe Kilgore wanted to run for the Senate in 1964 and Johnson--well, he kept him from running.

B: Oh, really.

M: By cutting off sources of support and by virtually ordering him not to run. And he did that because he was nervous, I'm certain. He had people telling him that, "You've got to support Yarborough or you'll lose the labor vote," and so on. As it turned out, his action was unnecessary and I expect that he afterward regretted it because he and Joe were very good friends. But that's another example of his nervousness sometimes in the face of unknown quantities.

B: What was Mr. Kilgore's reaction to that?

M: He didn't like it at the time. I think he more or less has forgiven Johnson for it.

B: To get back to the rest of the staff there in the '50's, if Mr. Jenkins was the number one man, was Mr. Reedy the number two man, or can you give this kind of comparison?

M: It's hard to make that kind of distinction because actually so far as the Policy Committee was concerned, I suppose Reedy was the number one man. But overall, over the whole organization, Jenkins was number one. For example, if,and this is an imaginary example, if Reedy had proposed to do something that Johnson decided that he didn't want done, he probably would tell Jenkins to tell Reedy not to do it. And of course don't forget Gerry Siegel who was over there too.

B: Why don't you just describe the rest of the staff members and roughly what they did?

M: All right. Gerald Siegel was, I guess, he was Counsel to the Policy Committee. He had to do almost altogether with legislation, usually national legislation--nothing to do with Texas as such. George Reedy, as I've said, was the speech writer and also the general idea man. He kept a long string of memoranda going to the Senator on almost every subject. Pauline Moore, Mrs. Cordell Moore, was inherited from--she was on the staff when Johnson came in. So many of the Senators said to Johnson, "Whatever you do, be sure to keep Pauline Moore," that he had a prejudice against her and was pretty much inclined to have her do something else. But after he saw her at work for a time he changed his mind completely. She was a very valuable member of the staff. She kept all the statistical information on bills and those other things.

B: Because so many Senators said be sure to keep her?

M; Oh. I should have explained that. However, I accept it so much as a Johnson characteristic that I didn't explain it.

Harry McPherson came later and he was more-or-less assistant to Gerry Siegel. Also, there was a young lawyer from Austin, Jim Wilson--James Wilson--who was there for one session at least--I don't think more than that. He was also in the legal end of it.

In the Senatorial office, Jenkins ran things. Arthur C. Perry, who was also Administrative Assistant to Senator Connally, and before that Senator Shepperd of Texas, was largely in charge of much routine Texas mail, what they call case mail, people writing in saying, "Get my son out of the Army," or something of that sort. He'd been here so long that he knew all the people of the agencies and departments. He's still living. He's a very gentle, kindly man. And the young girl stenographers who came and went liked him very much. They got along well with him.

Two, really three, staff members probably should be mentioned because they dated back to Johnson's days in the House of Representatives. Glynn Stegall, G-L-Y-N-N, he spelled it, and his wife, Mildred Stegall. They were steady, dependable workhorses.

B: Could you spell Stegall?

M: S-T-E-G-A-L-L. Another was Dorothy Nichols, Mrs. Phillip Nichols. In fact, she went to school with him when he taught at Cotulla that one year down there. Then she went to work for him after he came here. She would go on and off the staff. She had a privileged status, when she felt she didn't want to work any more, she would drift away. Then when she wanted to come back, she would.

She was very good and of course she knew everybody that had been around. Her husband is now a judge on the Court of Claims, I believe. And then of course there were numerous young girls who came and worked a few months or a year and were succeeded by someone else.

B: Wasn't Bobby Baker on the staff when you were here?

M: Bobby Baker, yes, of course he was. He was on the Senate staff. He was, you know, appointed by the Senate, of course, with Johnson's recommendation. He was a very valuable man to Johnson and Johnson depended on him very heavily, especially in dealing with other Senators. Most of them, especially the Southern members, accepted Bobby as almost a Senator, you know.

B: Was there any hint at that time of the kind of activity for which Baker was later indicted?

M: The only hint I ever heard--this probably ought to be told because I don't think it ever has been, one day--I didn't even know Bobby had a law office downtown but apparently he did with a partner--and one day I was in some kind of meeting with Walter Jenkins and the Senator. The Senator suddenly turned to Walter and said, "Tell Bobby to close down that damned law office." That's the only thing I ever heard of because all this other trouble came after Johnson had left the Senate, of course.

B: But that means that Senator Johnson was aware of the law office--

M: Yes. But apparently he was aware that it had been in existence, but I suspect he thought that his order would close it down.

B: Did it?

M: Evidently it didn't or if it did they started it up again later.

B: Was there any other sign of the other kinds of activities, the favor selling?

M: There wasn't at that time. I thought I saw some signs of it on one or two occasions after Johnson went out of the Senate.

B: Of course, the question would be, if that kind of thing were going on, how much Mr. Johnson was aware of it.

M: Yeah, that would be the question. I don't know. I've never discussed it with him or with Bobby.

B: You were a friend of Mr. Rayburn's, too.

M: Yes, during the last ten years of his life.

B: Is the often quoted phrase that Senator Johnson was a protégé of Mr. Rayburn a correct assessment?

M: Yes, I think it is correct. Yes, I do. When I was studying the President's files recently, I came across a whole file of letters that he had written Rayburn through the years beginning with the time he first came up here. He would write very flowery, effusive letters--obviously courting his favor, you know. It was really kind of funny. Once in, I guess 1939, he wrote Rayburn on his birthday about a two page letter, you know, very effusive. Rayburn's reply was characteristic, too, three sentences.

B: I was just going to say that that doesn't sound like the kind of technique that would be really effective with Mr. Rayburn.

M: Johnson thought in those days, at least, that that kind of a technique was effective with anybody. I agree with you. I don't think it was effective. But their relationship had some peculiar aspects.

Once Mr. Rayburn decided he would like me to go to work for him. He'd never had a press man, you know. So he called me and asked me if I would come over and see him. So I went over and he asked me if I would like to go

to work for him. And I thought maybe I would. He asked about money and I told him what I was getting. He said, "Well, I don't know if we have a job open that pays that much." He called in John Holton, his Administrative Assistant, and he asked him. John disappeared for awhile and came back and said yes they did have one. So Mr. Rayburn said, "Well all right. Have you got the nerve to tell Lyndon?"

And I said, "Well, I'd rather not tell him." He threw up his hands and said, "Well, I haven't either. I guess we'll just have to forget it."

B: You mention in your book, Mr. Speaker--I think it's in that book.

M: I believe I did put it in after I got the galley proofs. I remembered it--

B: No, well, this incident maybe--it's in one of your two books--about Mr. Rayburn occasionally being worried about Mr. Johnson working too hard, taking things too seriously.

M: He did. I don't think I put this in either book, although I have it in one that is coming out in February. The night of the 1954 primary when Johnson was running for re-election, a group of us were up in Johnson's office getting late returns over the telephone from Texas. Finally at midnight, Rayburn said crossly to me, "I'm going home, and I'll give you a ride if you want to go."

I said, "All right."

And as we went out Johnson was yelping into the phone, "46 votes to 8, huh. That's pretty good. I just got 6 votes there last time."

We walked down the corridor and Mr. Rayburn said, "I just don't understand Lyndon. He's winning two or three to one and he's all exercised about some little box up in the Panhandle."

B: And on the other hand, you also mention in one of the books that sometimes Mr. Johnson had the opposite worry, that Mr. Rayburn took things just entirely too casually.

M: Oh, he did. He really did. And he thought that Rayburn had a very inefficient staff, you know. Somehow the staff got to knowing that, so they did not think much of Johnson over there. Mr. Rayburn and John Holton did, but the girls didn't. They'd heard that Johnson had made disparaging remarks about the quality of their work.

B: Did Senator Johnson actually defer to Speaker Rayburn? What precisely was the relationship between the two? Did they argue about things?

M: It changed. Yes, I would say he deferred to him more than not. Yes, I would. For example, in 1952 when I was working with Mr. Rayburn on the Democratic committee we had to set up after Shivers and his group went off, I called Rayburn in Austin--oh, yes, he was down there and I called him because Bert Andrews had broken his story about our man from the National Committee who was down there being a five percenter, which he was not. But anyway, the story was in the papers and I called Mr. Rayburn so I could get a statement for him to issue when he came back the next morning. And Johnson answered the phone and never did call Rayburn to the phone--just relayed the message.

Now, I think the relationship changed gradually and perhaps only slightly as Johnson became Majority Leader and began to feel a little more important.

B: Important on his own, with no help from anybody.

M: Yes, that's right.

B: Before I forget about it, you mentioned that you have a new book coming out. What's it about, sir?

M: It's called The Politicians, 1945 to 1960, and it's an effort to do a narrative about the principal national political figures of that period.

B: It ought to be quite good. Who is going to publish it?

M: Lippincott.

B: You've mentioned something about this in passing, about Mr. Johnson's depressions. Was he, in the senatorial years, subject to moods, being up one day and down the next?

M: Well, not that frequently, but he would be down at times, yes. And almost always the symptoms were the same. He would talk about, well, he didn't think he would run for reelection and maybe he wouldn't take the leadership next year, and that sort of thing. It didn't affect any of us because we knew that he would feel differently pretty soon.

B: Was this just an effort to get someone to talk him out of it?

M: No, I don't think so. I think he thought he meant it at the time. But mostly in the years that I knew him best, his mood was more often ebullient because he was really running up quite a record there, and he was pleased with it.

B: You also mentioned the mid-'50's Texas political situation--Governor Shivers defection from the party and the aftermath of that. Were you actively involved in those affairs?

M: I was not in that 1956 fight between Shivers and Johnson because I had decided that I didn't want to work on the Hill any more, and for a period of ten weeks I worked at the Maritime Board. And that was during that ten week period. What I did was--I saw Walter Jenkins almost everyday, and we'd talk over ideas, and I'd write memoranda to send down and that sort of thing. But I was not actively involved.

B: But previous to that you had help set up the Democratic Advisory Committee--in the four years before that. As I recall the thing, Shivers took over the state committee--

M: Oh, yes, that's right.

B: --and the loyalists set up a Democratic Advisory Committee as a loyal party group.

M: Yeah, we had to. Mr. Rayburn had to form a new organization for the campaign and he did. That's when I got to know Mr. Rayburn very well, and it was from that time that our friendship dated.

B: Was Mr. Rayburn pretty unhappy about Governor Shivers' activities?

M: Yes. He never forgave him because it was due to him that the Shivers delegation was seated without a fight in 1952.

B: Presumably with some kind of pledge, at least of loyalty.

M: That's right. We felt we had it. He felt that Shivers had lied to him and betrayed him, and it was the kind of thing that he didn't forget.

B: In that kind of activity, in that and what went on for about the next four or six years in Texas, did Mr. Rayburn or Mr. Johnson take the lead in the Texas political affairs? Or to phrase it better perhaps, did Mr. Johnson get involved in these--?

M: He was involved, yes. I don't know if you'd say took the lead, but he was involved, yes. You see, he was still trying to hold as many conservatives and get as many liberals as he could, and Mr. Rayburn didn't have to worry about that because he had his district in his pocket at all times. People there didn't especially know or care what he was up to in Washington. They were just going to vote for him. So he didn't have a state-wide constituency to worry about as Johnson did.

B: Did you participate in the struggles with the Democrats of Texas, the liberal labor group?

M: Not to any great extent. I was at that convention--when was it, 1956?--where Mrs. Randolph was elected. I attended that convention. There again, Johnson and Rayburn felt they were betrayed because they had been promised that if they let that man who's in Temple become National Committeeman--

B: Skelton.

M: Yes, Byron Skelton,-- they could name the National Committeewoman.

B: That was the fight between Mrs. Lloyd Bentsen and Mrs. Frankie Randolph.

M: Yes. Mrs. Randolph won because too many of Johnson's people had become the way Stevenson's people were in 1948. They got complacent and walked away before the convention was over.

B: Did you see any signs at this time, in '56, of presidential ambitions on the part of Senator Johnson?

M: Yes. I never have known fully what happened with respect to Johnson that year, but you will probably recall that at some point just before the convention officially started a reporter said, "Well, are you just a favorite son, or are you a serious candidate?"

And he said, "I'm always serious about everything I do." And I think that for a few improbable hours he had some hope.

B: Like Senator Russell in '52.

M: That's right, yes.

B: Did Mr. Rayburn have hopes for him, too?

M: No.

B: Was Mr. Rayburn pushing him, too?

M: No, he didn't. They came up [to Washington] just before the convention started. You

remember the congressional leaders were summoned to the White House because of a crisis in the Middle East. I rode back on the plane with Johnson and Rayburn and Charlie Halleck and several others. Mr. Rayburn and Johnson and I got off together and a bunch of reporters approached and Johnson stopped to talk to them. Rayburn kept marching determinedly toward his car and said, "I don't know how Lyndon lets those buzzards catch him everytime they want to." He said, "He's getting all steamed up over this presidency thing. It's all sewed up." So, no, he had no illusions.

B: It was about that time that The Lyndon Johnson Story was first published, wasn't it?

M: Yes, just before the convention.

Oh, this is kind of funny so I'll tell it because I'm sure it won't ever be published anywhere. After Johnson had his heart attack he wanted me to go to Texas with him, with other staff members, when he left here. And I had not done so before and said I wouldn't this time. So he gave me a sort of quizzical look and said, "You know, usually when a man is working for another man, why, he does whatever his boss wants him to." I said, "Well, that's true and I won't have any complaint about any decision you make." I mean we both evaded the question and nothing else ever came of it.

But what I started to say was that, before, I suggested to him, after the heart attack, that he let me write a book about him and he said, "No," he didn't want to. But now that I was going to be left up here he decided that it would be fine for me to write a book. I wrote a little campaign biography of Coke Stevenson in '48, so he said, "Now what you do, you get that book you wrote about Coke and study it and then write one about me." Silly!

B: Was there any--the timing requires that I ask this. There was no hint that The Lyndon Johnson Story was a campaign biography for '56.

M: No, there was not any hint that it was for 1956. I thought myself that it might serve as a basis for one in '60. But what I really--I don't think it's a very good book, I'm sorry to say, but you have to consider the circumstances under which it was written. But I thought he had come so near dying I did feel that there was something for the idea of getting down a record of what he had accomplished, even though it was tackled from a prejudiced point of view. And that was my main thought in it.

B: You said you don't think it's a very good book. The usual comment is that it's entirely too favorable.

M: Yes, that's right. I think it is. It could have done with more objectivity but since I was working for him I was hardly in a position to be completely objective.

B: How much did he have to do with the book?

M: None. Nobody read it before it was published except his mother. She wrote some notes that are here in this notebook, and I'll read you one or two of them. It's funny.

B: Sure do, please.

M: She liked it on the whole, but she objected to my used of, in one place, of the word "brash" as applied to her son. Boy, calling him brash was an understatement. Also, she has some things about he didn't borrow $75.00 until the next year. I think I straightened out some of these things--"family background well described." The last was what was funny, "factual but not fascinating."

And you know, Johnson was well pleased with the book when it came out,

but the following year--or two years later I guess--he'd probably been listening to his mother. He was talking about the book, and he said, "Well, you just didn't catch my dedication to my job and all that."

B: You mean, he thought it wasn't favorable enough.

M: Yes, wasn't favorable enough.

B: Did he write his own foreword in it?

M: I think Jim Rowe wrote that.

B: While we're on the subject of writing, who was the author of Johnson's Credo of 1958, the one that starts out, "I'm a free man and a member of the United States Senate."

M: My understanding is Horace Busby. It sounds like Buz and I believe he told me once he wrote it.

B: You said that in '56 you had a faint idea that this might serve as a campaign biography for '60.

M: Yes. But I never did mention that to anybody. I was just thinking that if he were a serious candidate in 1960, and if I had been first with the book why it might do well.

B: Then let's see, you said you left the staff there late in '56, for a period or so--

M: No, I believe it was early in '56. Yeah, it was during that spring campaign down there.

B: And then you were persuaded to return.

M: Actually it wasn't quite that simple. I soon found that I was not fit for the life of a bureaucrat after working for Johnson in that--I'd walk past people who were riding the escalator, and get to work on time and all that. I just didn't have enough to do. So some friends of mine downtown said, "You've

got to go back to the Hill."

And I said, "I don't think that I will do that." But they then talked to Tom Hennings, who I guess was going to be up for reelection pretty soon, and they convinced him that he should hire me. So he called me up and I said, "Well, I would do it with one provision that I told Johnson <u>if</u> I decided to come back to the Hill I would talk to him first."

So I talked to him and he said, "If you are going to work on the Hill, you'd better work for me." So, I did.

B: And stayed on until '58.

M: And stayed on until September of '58 and they--I'll probably never publish this either so I might as well tell you. When I left, I gave notice in June that I was going to leave at the end of August. So Johnson quizzed me closely as to what I was going to do and what my prospects were and I think with a real interest in my welfare. I think that was all he had in mind. So then he accepted it. That year the session was over, I think a week into September. My wife and I had reservations in Bermuda--I hadn't had a decent vacation in six years--and so I left the last of August. When I came back, of course, they had all gone to Texas--except Sam Johnson was still here and I asked him what the Senator said. He said, "Well, he said Booth is just like the bride who goes right up to the church and then doesn't go through the ceremony." June, July, August, September--I'd given him three months notice but he thought he wanted me here these last few days. Of course, I was not <u>that</u> essential. It was just he didn't want anybody to leave him before he left.

B: Is Lyndon Johnson a hard man to work for?

M: I guess he is. Everybody says so. I never had what I would consider any difficulty working for him. I think maybe it was because I took a somewhat impervious attitude. For example, I went home every evening at six, I think with only two exceptions during the six years. And he complained about that, but not to me. I told you when he, in effect, said, "I can fire you if you don't go to Texas."

I said, "Well, you'll have to do it."

However, I've seen him bawl out Reedy, and Stegall and even Walter at times. I guess he is hard to work for. I don't know why he wasn't for me unless I just--I'm older than those other fellows by about five years and perhaps more experienced and things don't bother me as much.

B: Is the Johnson temper in action as terrifying as people have said?

M: I never have seen him angry, which is just a measure of the fact that I didn't see him much. I guess it is, yes. He can be--well, you have heard all this--he can be surprisingly and deeply considerate of people and, also, just give them hell. For example, he's fully capable of saying as he did say about Bobby Baker on the floor, that "He's my right hand man, the last man I see at night, the first man I see in the morning" and so on. Then saying to somebody else in a private conversation, "Sometimes I think Bobby's just a cheap conversationalist." Which is the real Bobby Baker!

B: Did you--you left in '58--you went into public relations.

M: Yes, that's right.

B: Consulting and free lance writing?

M: That's right.

B: Which is what you are still doing now. Did you still keep your lines open to Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson?

M: Yes, I did very much so, and of course as 1960 approached I was, at times, almost a member of the staff.

B: It was the '60 campaign I was going to ask about. I have seen it written that Mr. Johnson's campaign for the nomination was not nearly as effective as it could have been, that surprisingly enough apparently both he and Mr. Rayburn were not really knowledgeable about the nature of convention politics.

M: I think that's completely true. I think that they thought they could run a convention the way they'd run Congress so successfully. Johnson, with a few exceptions like John Connally and Jim Rowe, after Humphrey got out of it--and of course Reedy and Jenkins--had no--he had amateurs and some of them were pretty loudmouthed, uncouth bragging amateurs at that. It was a terrible campaign.

B: Was part of that the fault of Mr. Johnson for not making up his mind--

M: I think much of it was his fault for not, at least, telling his intimates what he was hoping to do.

B: Because at least publicly it was very late when he officially made himself a candidate.

M: July 5, I think.

B: Did the staff ever discuss the question earlier of whether or not Johnson should enter the primaries--

M: I'd discussed it with anybody who would listen to me from October, I guess, of '59. We weren't in any disagreement. It was just the rest of us against him.

B: He just didn't--was the question specifically put to him about entering the primaries? What reasons did he give for not doing it?

M: He said he couldn't do it and do his job in the Senate. I think he was not willing to enter the primaries because he didn't think he could win them. But he could still have gone after delegates in a sensible way. There weren't enough primaries to affect the outcome materially anyway.

B: How about Mr. Rayburn's part in all this?

M: No, he wanted him to announce. He forced him into some things by just going ahead and doing them himself. I think one thing we did--I suggested this and it was approved and I think--did it, you could probably check it somewhere. We prepared letters for Mr. Rayburn's signature and sent out to leading political figures all over the country well before Johnson announced he would be a candidate. No, Rayburn was trying to push him all the time.

B: Did you go to the convention in Los Angeles?

M: Yes.

B: Were you active in the hotels and on the floor there?

M: I wasn't active on the floor. I was active in the hotel. I did not think by then that Johnson had a chance to get the nomination.

B: Was it obvious to everyone that Kennedy had it sewed up?

M: No, no it wasn't. Some of these Johnson partisans were still thinking that he might have a chance.

B: How about Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson--did they think till the last that he still had a chance?

M: I don't think so. I know that Johnson on the morning of the nominating day said, "I don't see how we can beat him." I think Mr. Rayburn was principally--he was afraid that Kennedy would get the nomination and that his being a Catholic would defeat the party. So he was strongly for Johnson.

I don't think he had any great confidence after he had talked to some of his old friends out there. But then of course we come to this vice presidency thing. I understand somebody--Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.--has written that Johnson grabbed at the vice presidential nomination.

B: Yes, anything that you can contribute to that will be helpful.

M: Well, I guess I can contribute some things.

B: There is a great deal of confusion.

M: On Tuesday before the nominating date, I sent Johnson a memorandum giving the suggestion that--really one of his rich Texas supporters--that if he did not get the presidential nomination that he take the vice presidential nomination and gave some reasons for it.

B: Who was the rich Texas supporter? Do you recall?

M: Well, I guess we'll have to censor this for some period of years--anyway, H. L. Hunt.

I took this memorandum up myself and gave it to Juanita [Roberts], and I saw her open it and give it to the Senator. There was no indication that it had made any impression on him at all. In fact, either that afternoon or the next morning--I guess it was that afternoon--Bobby Baker came to see a man who was with Mr. Hunt out there and said, "I know what you are doing about this vice presidential thing and I want you to stop it. We won't trade our gavel for a vote,"--which sounds like direct Johnsonese to me.

B: You mean that Johnson had sent Baker to Hunt?

M: Yes, I'm sure of it. After Kennedy was nominated that night-- what I'm doing is mounting evidence to support my theory that he did not grab for the vice presidency. After Kennedy was nominated that night, Johnson had been looking at it with Mrs. Johnson and the girls on television, and

he snapped off the television and said, "Well, that's that. Tomorrow we can do something we really want to do, go to Disneyland, maybe."

Later that night Mr. Rayburn telephoned him and said, that "I have an idea Kennedy is going to offer you the vice presidency and I don't think you ought to take it."

Johnson said, "Well, I don't think he is, but if he does, I won't do anything about it until I talk to you." And then you know the story, of course, of how Kennedy did call him the next morning and then come to his room. After that there was great agitation all morning--more people advising him not to take it or to take it. Bob Kerr got so irritated with Bobby Baker, who by then was urging him to take it, that he slapped him when Bobby kept talking. Then Senator Kerr talked to Mr. Rayburn, and he changed his mind.

The Texas people were especially bitterly opposed. Marvin Watson left Wednesday night after Kennedy was nominated. John Connally was against his taking the vice presidency. Price Daniel was sore as hell over it. Mr. Rayburn finally changed his mind, I guess, because he became convinced that Johnson would make a stronger addition to the ticket than anybody else--which I think is true. I don't think the Democrats could have won without Johnson on the ticket. I guess that's one of three factors that he couldn't have won without--Johnson being on the ticket; and that interview with the Houston ministers, which was used all over the country; and then anti-effects on Nixon in the so-called "great debates". I think if either of those elements had been missing the Republicans probably would have won.

B: Was it really Mr. Rayburn who convinced Mr. Johnson to accept the vice

presidential nomination?

M: No, I think Johnson convinced himself. But of course the fact that Rayburn stopped opposing it and started favoring it was a factor. No doubt about that.

B: Could you pin down a time when Mr. Johnson decided that he should do it?

M: I think only about 10 or 15 minutes before he went on television. I was in the room. Of course there was a lot of confusion, but I believe he announced his decision and then just came out and faced the cameras right outside his suite there.

B: Is Mrs. Johnson influential in that kind of decision?

M: No, she was against it. She remained against it. She was crying.

B: Was there at that time a certain amount of bitterness between the Johnson and Kennedy staff members?

M: Yes, there was bitterness and suspicion in that debate--if you care to call it that--between Johnson and Kennedy. Jake Jacobsen was passing water glasses down to the people who were on the platform and Bobby tasted it before he handed it on to his brother. So that was almost paranoid, I guess.

Yes, there was a lot of bitterness, especially on that day when Johnson, you know, implied or said that Joe Kennedy had been soft on Hitler.

B: Was that just an example of Lyndon Johnson getting carried away with himself? Or was that a thought-out campaign strategy?

M: I don't think it was especially thought out but I don't think Johnson was carried away. I think that he thought it would help him and that there was enough of an element of truth in it to justify his saying it.

B: There's been a good deal of speculation, apparently with justification that the Kennedy camp was not entirely happy with the choice of Lyndon Johnson--Robert Kennedy, particularly.

M: Oh, I think they were very unhappy. I think they would have preferred anybody else. Of course they were in a bad position because Bobby had at least seemed to promise the vice presidency to several people, you know. Now he had to face them.

B: You mean Bobby Kennedy?

M: Yes.

B: Was there any hint perhaps this was just an elaborate political ploy, that the offer was being made to Lyndon Johnson for political purposes on the assumption that he wouldn't take it.

M: I've read a lot to that effect since then. I don't believe it. I think that Kennedy, who had become a very knowledgeable politician, saw that he needed Johnson badly, that it was his only hope of carrying the Southern states.

B: Yes, you would think that all emotion aside, that a real hard-headed politician, like John Kennedy or Sam Rayburn, sat down and thought about it would be--

M: Yes, that's it. No, I don't think it was a political ploy at all.

Oh, and another thing--I'll tell you something else that makes me think it's not--and this I know has never appeared anywhere because there was nobody else there. Johnson said to Kennedy in the early stages of their discussion, "Well, now I don't know about this. I think I'd rather be Majority Leader."

Kennedy just looked at him straight on and said, "Well, how do you know that you will be Majority Leader?" Which was a clear statement of an

implication that had come before--he'd told some of the liberal Senators that if he were elected he would try to throw his influence against Johnson being Majority Leader.

B: What conversation was that taking place?

M: I don't know. It was in Johnson's suite at some point. There was nobody there except the two of them and Walter Jenkins and me. Have you talked to Walter?

B: No. We will, of course.

M: You might ask him about that because he may have a clearer recollection of that than I do.

B: But this would have been on Thursday, early Thursday, before--

M: Yes, this would have been Thursday but after Kennedy's nomination--but before Johnson's acceptance of the vice presidential nomination.

B: Do you recall anything else of that conversation?

M: No, I don't because I wasn't there all the time. I just happened to be going through when this took place. I didn't think much of it at the time, but afterwards it seemed to me that it was an implication, "Well, I'll try to keep you from being Majority Leader."

B: It sounds like the kind of thing--

M: So that would indicate that there was no political ploy.

B: Yeah.

M: No, I think Kennedy wanted him.

B: You mentioned one thing that perhaps ought to be explained futher, the relationship of H. L. Hunt to Lyndon Johnson at this time.

M: He was for him for the presidential nomination; and when it became apparent, at least to him, that Johnson would not get the presidential nomination, he felt he should be vice president.

B: Was he also contributing finances to the campaign?

M: He contributed but not heavily.

B: Was this a continuing relationship that--

M: No, it was an off-again, on-again relationship. I know that he contributed to Coke Stevenson's campaign in '48. I expect it was because Johnson's defense of the depletion allowance as much as anything else--although that doesn't do the old gentleman quite justice. Regardless of how odd his ideas may seem, I think it is true he has a deep feeling that Communism is a great danger to this country, and he thought that Johnson would be a strong man against any Communist aggression or subversion. So it would be only partially selfish and partially perhaps misplaced patriotism, but partially patriotism.

B: What was Senator Johnson's relationship to the Texas big-rich generally, the oil and gas people and the rest of them?

M: It was sort of mutual acceptance that they needed one another. But I've seen him lecture a group, such as you've mentioned, in his office and just give them unshirted hell for their short-sightedness in opposing all social legislation and saying that they would finally come to the point which they seem to be approaching now.

B: Of course, John Connally was fairly close to that group.

M: Oh, sure, he worked for Sid Richardson.

B: Worked for Sid Richardson before?

M: Yes. John was undoubtedly closer than Johnson was, but Johnson benefited to some extent from John's closeness.

B: Did they contribute regularly to Mr. Johnson's campaigns?

M: I don't know. I never knew anything about the financial side of his

campaigns. I would assume so.

B: After the '60 convention, did you work in the campaign?

M: Not very much. I would see him from time to time if he thought there was something he needed me to do. Once he called and asked me to come to see him, so I went in and he said, "I've got to improve my speeches because every-time President Kennedy makes a speech, why, it makes me look sick; and I want you to find me a lot of new trite sayings to use in my speech." I went away puzzled but I figured he meant quotations finally, because you know Kennedy was famous for dropping in quotations in his speeches.

B: Could you help him out?

M: Well, I tried. Yes, I'd see him from time to time--I seemed to see him more in public functions than I did privately while he was Vice President. He was pretty unhappy during those years.

B: Did you get the impression that he was under some sort of unusual restraint for Lyndon Johnson?

M: My wife got the impression that he was mostly under tranquilizers when we saw him at these public functions--so I guess if you could call that a restraint.

B: Did you see or hear anything of the relationship between him and the Kennedys?

M: I think the relationship between him and the President was pretty good. I mean, the President would make cracks like, "It'd be easier to compose a birthday telegram to De Gaulle than it is to Lyndon," and things like that. But I think Kennedy was enough of a Senate man and had sufficient empathy for another strong politician to treat him pretty well. But now his brother and some members of the staff, it's a different story. Some of them were as openly contemptuous of him as they dared to be.

B: Was that left over from the '60 campaign or fear that in the future Lyndon Johnson would run again?

M: No, I think it was almost altogether left over from the campaign. And then his Texas personality was repulsive to them, you know. He has maintained that part of their treatment of him was due to the fact that he wasn't a member of the Eastern Establishment. Well, that's sort of corny, but I think there's a lot of truth in it. They thought they were better educated, which they are, than he is; and they thought they had more social graces, which they do, than he has. They downgraded him for the wrong reasons and would not give him his proper stature for reasons growing out of their downgrading him.

B: Could you amplify that?

M: I don't think they made full use of his abilities. I think he could have done more in the Senate--not openly because that would have been a mistake--but he could have done more legislatively than he was encouraged to do. And you know, they made fun of him at parties and that sort of thing, and word of that kind of thing always gets around here.

B: Where were you in November of '63 at the time of President Kennedy's assassination?

M: I was having lunch at the Metropolitan Club with a friend. The waiter burst in and told us. We went downstairs where there was a television and then shortly I left and went to my office and called Walter, who was here, and offered my services if they were needed. Then I went home. My son--what was that, five years ago--he was twelve years old. He came home from school and that's an age, you know, when you don't like to display your emotions in public. He had managed to contain them but as soon as he got inside he flung himself into a chair and just cried.

B: Was there any service you could perform for Walter Jenkins?

M: No, there wasn't. That was on a Friday, I guess, wasn't it? I talked to Walter again Saturday, and he wanted to know if I'd be interested in doing anything as a staff member. I told him that I didn't want to, that I would help in any way that I could as an outsider. I don't mean that I was ever offered a position because I wasn't, but I presume that I would have been if I'd--there was one mention in the papers that I might be considered as Press Secretary but that was pure speculation on the part of a reporter. It didn't come from me or from anybody in the Johnson Administration.

B: Why wouldn't you want a White House staff position, Mr. Mooney?

M: I was five years older than I was when I left the Hill, and I thought it would be harder work than I wanted to do and also at a financial sacrifice. I thought the combination with two young children coming along to go through school and all that, I'd just rather not do it. It probably was a mistake. I probably should have done it, but I haven't been sorry that I didn't do it.

B: That apparently is mighty long hours of hard work. Did you, during the Presidential years, do any part-time work for the President?

M: I never did anything for pay. Yes, especially--yes I did. I was going to say especially until Walter left but actually I had almost the same relationship with Marvin Watson. So I did odd jobs and errands. I contributed sections sometimes to speeches but I didn't do any great speechwriting.

B: What kind of odd jobs and errands would you be called upon for?

M: Sometimes they would want something to get to certain newspapermen and be absolutely completely removed from the White House, and that sort of thing.

You know, they felt that by this time they could rely on me and trust my discretion, so that kind of thing. But nothing of any great moment. I was not any shadowy inside figure or anything of that sort.

B: Did you ever offer any advice to the staff on Lyndon Johnson's press relations, which were obviously one of his weak points.

M: No, I offered it to him, but it didn't do any good.

B: What did you suggest?

M: Oh, the obvious things. That he not try to fool the press, that he not try to be one of the boys with the press when he was feeling good. If he had information to give them, give it to them, and if he didn't have, or didn't choose to give it, not to try to mislead them about it. It was obvious, and I'm sure that George Reedy tried to give him the same advice all the time.

B: Would he just not listen or not understand?

M: No, he would listen. Sometimes, especially the early years, he'd say he was going to be better, but he just couldn't keep from being Lyndon Johnson.

B: Has this problem dated back from the Congressional years?

M: Yes. It got worse when he was President, as everything does in that job, I suppose. But, yes, it did. He blew hot and cold with the press when he was in the Senate.

B: Does he just not understand the function of the press?

M: George Reedy and I have discussed that many times, and we think that's really it--that he has no conception of how a newspaper is put together, that he really doesn't understand anything about the profession--because he's too intelligent to act this way all the time if he did understand it. And now, I'm told that he's still playing this broken record about his unfair treatment by the press--and he was often treated unfairly but I think he

brought it on himself in large part.

B: Had you known Bill Moyers before?

M: Yes. Bill came up here in the summer of '54 or '55 and worked as my assistant in the Senate. So I know him from that time.

B: Was he a good Press Secretary for the President?

M: No, he was a good Press Secretary for Bill Moyers, in my opinion.

B: You mean, that he was deliberately self-aggrandizing--

M: Yes, I think he was.

B: --at the expense of the President?

M: At the expense of the President, yes.

B: I've heard--

M: I mean when Time Magazine runs a cover story on the Press Secretary in one issue and in the next issue gives the Press Secretary's boss hell, well, you have to draw some conclusions.

B: I've heard others say or hint the same thing, but it brings up a question, how Lyndon Johnson would let him get away with it.

M: He was absolutely blind to it for so long but he finally became quite bitter about Bill.

B: Was he blind to it just because he wanted to be, because "this was his protege" kind of thing?

M: I guess so. I don't know. I thought he treated Reedy badly in that connection.

B: You mean dismissing him as Press Secretary?

M: Yes. First they had this--well, it was a reason, not an excuse, this foot operation that George badly needed. But he could have gone on leave of absence.

B: Do you feel Mr. Moyers maneuvered himself into that position?

M: Yes, I sure do.

B: And then handled it badly.

M: Yes.

B: Which is accusing Mr. Moyers of being a very ambitious, self-seeking young man.

M: I'm afraid so.

B: And you say, Mr. Johnson finally figured this out?

M: I don't know how it came about. He became aware of it. I don't know whether somebody whose judgment he respected, perhaps Clark Clifford or somebody, brought it forcibly to his attention--or whether he just saw it himself.

B: I've also heard it said that Mr. Johnson's troubles really date from when Walter Jenkins left him. The implication being that from that time on he didn't really have a top notch Number One man on his staff.

M: Well, I think that's true especially one who, although held him in respect and even awe, was not really afraid to voice disagreement with him.

B: You mean, Jenkins would argue with him and get him off the wrong course?

M: Yes.

B: And Mr. Johnson would accept this?

M: With reluctance sometimes, but yes he would accept it.

B: This sort of sounds like the criticism Mr. Johnson made of Mr. Rayburn, not handling his staff correctly.

M: I think that's true. Of course, I think Mr. Rayburn had the kind of staff he wanted. He wanted a relaxed, easy-going staff. So, I don't agree with the Senator that he handled it badly.

B: It may be unfair to compare the staff of the Speaker of the House of Representatives to the staff of the President.

M: Yes, I guess so. Of course in my opinion, which obviously is unsound Mr. Rayburn could do no wrong anywhere. I never knew a more honest man.

B: There are a lot of people who share that opinion.

M: Yes, he was a great man. I was talking to my publisher last week. I would like to do, but I guess its an economically unsound project that I can't afford, a book on the relationship between Roosevelt and Rayburn. They were so different, you know, and worked together to accomplish so much.

B: That would be interesting.

M: It'd be interesting, wouldn't it.

B: Make a good article maybe.

M: Well, maybe it would. I'll think about it some more.

B: Did you participate in the 1964 political campaign?

M: Not the campaign. I went to the convention at the President's request, although I hadn't meant to go. But we wanted me to be there to talk to some of the people in the Southern delegations and try to keep things together. I don't know that I accomplished anything.

B: Were you involved in the controversy over seating the Mississippi delegation?

M: No, I missed that one because I thought it was above my head. Other people handled it.

B: Were there rumors of the same kind of trouble in other delegations? Is that what you were sent for?

M: Yes, there were rumors and they turned out to be either unfounded or we were able to quiet the situation down.

B: What particular states were involved?

M: I don't know that I remember completely. Georgia was one, and I guess the Carolinas--yes.

B: I don't recall anything other than the Mississippi--

M: No, there was nothing else that ever got out into the open. It was just the usual rumors going around the convention, you know. As I say, I don't think I played any helpful role. I think there probably would have been no trouble anyway. And other people were working on the same thing.

B: But you didn't then take part in the campaign itself?

M: No, I didn't. No, because I figured by now he had all the skilled professional help around him he needed.

B: Is there anything else that you think ought to be added to this kind of record?

M: No, I seem to have expounded at greater length than I would have expected to. You're a very good interviewer.

B: We find that people will approach this kind of thing with some trepidation and then end up enjoying it.

M: Of course it's obvious that despite the various criticisms I've voiced of Johnson, I admire him greatly. I think that, in the Senate, he was an absolute legislative genius. I think things would have gone better for him in the White House if it hadn't been for this damned Viet Nam war.

B: Did you ever talk to him about it?

M: No. No, the only times I saw him in the last year or two that he was President, I just said that I continued to wish him well and that he had done many things that all of his friends could be proud of. I just thought I'd try to build up his morale a little.

B: You know, you've known him over a long period of time. Have you noticed a personality change? Has the Presidency or the Viet Nam war changed him?

M: I don't think I have seen him enough to judge that, but I would be inclined to think so, yes. I think it has changed him.

B: In what ways?

M: His periods of ebullience are certainly less frequent than they used to be. He's graver and more restrained in his conversation.

B: Privately as well as publicly?

M: Yes. Have you read Goldman's book, by the way?

B: Yes, sir.

M: What do you think of that?

B: Oh, I have mixed opinions about it. I think it's probably very good on those things that Mr. Goldman was directly involved in.

M: That's right--such as this tragically hilarious account of the arts and festivities--

B: Yes, I'm afraid I find that right amusing, which may be the wrong--

M: I did too--all the more so since I know all those people and have for years and concerned, you know, with some of the descriptions he gave of them--highly amusing. But I enjoyed the book. And, as you say, the parts he was in on, it seemed to me were well done and worthwhile.

B: Yes. Mr. Goldman--I'm familiar with his earlier historical works, which are quite good.

M: I wish I'd known him when he was here. He made a snide reference to The Lyndon Johnson Story in the book. Arthur Krock told me about it before I'd read the book and he said, "What do you think about that?" You know, he said it was "sycophantic" or something like that.

I said, "Well, I guess I wouldn't be inclined to quarrel very heavily with that opinion. It just depends on your definition of the word." Mr. Krock was amazed at the confession. And I'm not sure it's the right word, but I know what he means anyway.

B: Did Mr. Krock see the manuscript of Goldman's book?

M: Yes, he must have.

B: He must have if he mentioned it to you before. Incidentially are--

M: I think he saw the galleys maybe.

B: You a friend of Mr. Krock's?

M: Yes, I am. He belongs to the same club I do. I see him most days at lunch. His book has done awfully well.

B: Yes.

M: 60,000 copies, I understand.

B: Yes, still on the Best Seller List, I believe. I was wondering if you've--though there's not really an important incident I guess--but Mr. Krock seems to have been close to Lyndon Johnson up until the time he made the satirical references to Lyndon Johnson and the camel driver. Then I believe in his book, Mr. Krock says, all of a sudden he was cut off later on.

M: That's right. Do you think you'd like to interview Mr. Krock, or have you interviewed him?

B: We already have. Of course, his book is so complete--

M: Yes, that's right.

B: Very little to add in the interview. I was just wondering if you had any light to shed on the relationship of Mr. Krock and Mr. Johnson, it seems to be an interesting one.

M: It certainly was close when I was there. Johnson would call him, you know not with news but to tell him something funny that had happened on the Senate floor and that sort of thing.

B: Is that just friendship or Senator Johnson courting an influential newsman?

M: A combination, I'm sure. Johnson has always liked to talk to newspapermen individually--one at a time, you know, or maybe two. I think on those occasions he has felt a friendship toward them. Funny thing, Mr. Krock is not quite as sure as he makes out in his book that that vice presidential camel thing was the cause of the break--but I think he's right; I think it was. Because he's asked me two or three times if I thought that was <u>really</u> it.

B: Yes actually the break--I guess his confusion comes because the break comes later, really.

M: Yes.

B: I think they stayed on fairly--publicly--on good terms for awhile after that.

M: Yes.

B: Well, is there anything else you feel you can add?

ML No, I guess I've been pretty well brainwashed.

B: Okay. That's a wrong word to use, Mr. Mooney!

M: I've enjoyed it and it's been nice talking to you.

B: Thank you. I have too.

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B: We are continuing the Mooney interview. In private conversation something came up of interest.

M: I wrote the original addition of <u>The Lyndon Johnson Story</u> in 1956, and it was published by Farrar Straus. It sold a few copies but obviously was not sensational. But on the night of the day that President Kennedy was assassinated, Roger Straus, the head of the publishing firm, called me from New York at my home and asked me how quickly I could do a

revised edition. And I said, "Well, a month."

He said, "Can you do it quicker than that?"

I said,"Two weeks."

He said, "Try to do it in ten days."

So I started to work that night going through the book and seeing what parts could be kept and what would have to be revised and what would have to be added. Then I worked pretty steadily on it for ten days. It was published within 30 days after I got the manuscript to the publisher, which is an unusually quick job not from the writing standpoint but from the publishing standpoint. And at that time we got mostly new photographs to illustrate the book. Senator Johnson's people made his photographic files available to me and I picked up some new ones.

B: Did Mr. Johnson or his staff know that this new edition was planned?

M: Yes.

B: Did anyone in the White House see the manuscript?

M: No, I think the President was a little nervous about it because some parts of the original book may have, in his opinion, pointed up too heavily his Southern associations and his aversion to the Americans for Democratic Action and that sort of thing. There were some indications of nervousness. He told Walter Jenkins that he wished I didn't have to do that. I told Walter to tell him to stop worrying; the book was going to be all right. And that was the only thing I ever heard.

B: This was in connection with the revision--

M: Yes, that's right.

B: --in late '63?

M: Yes.

B: Thank you again.

M: All right.

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