INTERVIEW II

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INTERVIEWEE: BOOTH MOONEY

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mr. Mooney's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

M: Price Daniel, of course, wanted to get on the Interior [and Insular Affairs Committee] because of that tidelands thing.

I don't remember this about Price Daniel's seating and office space thing. Can you say anything that would remind me of that?

G: Evidently Senator [Tom] Connally had not cleared out his office.

M: So Price really had no place to go.

G: Yes. And evidently officed in Senator Johnson's office for a while until [he got his own].

M: That may have been before I came here because I didn't come until February of that year and they'd probably settled that by then.

G: Do you recall any of the discussion over the New Mexico senatorial election between Senator [Dennis] Chavez and [Patrick J.] Hurley?

M: No, I don't. I know that of course Johnson would have been on Chavez' side, not just for partisan reasons.

G: What other reasons?

M: Well, he liked him and he thought he belonged in the Senate. Johnson was always a friend of the Mexican population in Texas and I expect that had some bearing on it.

G: One thing in particular here, do you remember when Governor [Allan] Shivers came up to visit? Were you working [for Senator Johnson]?

M: What year would this be?

G: This was 1953 also. [Shivers] attended a Texas congressional delegation luncheon and spoke heartily in favor of Senator Johnson at the time he was considering running against Senator Johnson.

M: That's right. Sam Houston [Johnson] has a pretty full report on that in his book--of that meeting. I was not at the meeting.

G: But can you collaborate what he said?

M: Yes, I think that's the way it happened all right. I did see Shivers at some length when he was up here in what, 1956? Was that when the big fight was between them? He was somewhat surprised to see me, although he knew I was here. I'd worked in his campaign in 1950, Shivers. Yes, I think it is about the way Sam told it in his book. Some parts of his book are not completely reliable but I believe that is.

G: Do you recall the initial relationship between Lyndon Johnson and Bill Knowland after Senator [Robert] Taft had to leave?

M: It was always a fairly cordial relationship but Johnson did not hold Knowland in the same high regard that he did Taft. He thought he was sort of a bumbler, which I think he was on the whole. A nice decent fellow, but sort of thick-skulled.

G: Was Senator Knowland at first as easy to work with as Senator Taft or do you think that LBJ--

M: Yes, I think probably easier as a matter of fact because he could be swayed more by Johnson. Taft and Johnson became very good friends but Taft was a stubborn, hard-headed, firm-minded man. He would allow himself to be drawn only so far.

G: I want to ask you about some of the foreign policy issues in that session of Congress in 1953. Do you remember Eisenhower's Yalta Resolution at all with regard to the Soviet violations [of wartime agreements]?

M: Yes, yes.

G: It seems that the Republicans tried, and the Senate tried to turn that into an anti-Democratic resolution.

M: They did. Is that when Johnson enlisted the aid of Senator [Walter] George of Georgia to help him out on it on the floor? I think it was. He got George to make a speech, and George was highly respected by both Democrats and Republicans. It was a fake issue of course, really, but feelings ran high and it didn't seem a fake at the time. That was true also of the Bricker Amendment thing. I mean, George Reedy and I counted the letters to him for and against the Bricker Amendment, and just an overwhelming proportion of the letters received were for the Bricker Amendment. And they didn't know what the hell was in the Bricker Amendment.

G: Did he have any difficulty persuading Senator George to offer this George substitute? In fact, he was the one who persuaded him.

M: I don't think he did really, but it was a prolonged effort. He would come by and have breakfast with Senator George and flatter

him and the old gentleman was not immune, as few of us are, to flattery. I think he finally put it to him, "You're our only chance to beat this." Whether that's true or not I believe that's what he said. Naturally that was music to Senator George's ears.

G: Were you present in any of the discussions on that with Senator George?

M: I'm trying to think. I don't remember whether I was or whether I got it all from Reedy at the time. No, I don't believe I was. I was frequently in on discussions between Johnson and Senator [Richard] Russell, but Senator George, you know, was up pretty high for an administrative assistant to be fooling with. And of course I had a different relationship with Senator Russell because I had worked in his campaign in 1952.

G: Do you remember the negotiation on any of these tariff bills?

M: Just one thing, and I don't even remember the context of that fully, but a League of Women Voters delegation came up to see Johnson on the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] business. Johnson asked me to talk with them, which I did at some length. Then I wrote him a memo saying that they were for our entering into the GATT negotiations and that I believed we should. I think that was the stand Johnson took although I remember he looked at me with great pain and said, "That's one of the most controversial issues we have in Texas."

G: Do you remember the Democratic opposition to the abolition of the RFC that year?

M: No, I don't. I don't know anything about it.

G: There were some related votes evidently on the Small Business Administration bill and the temporary price controls. Does that ring a bell at all?

M: I don't remember it, no.

G: Okay. I wanted to ask you about Lyndon Johnson's role in enabling the northern liberals to get along better with the southern conservatives, such as improving the relations between Hubert Humphrey and Richard Russell. Do you have any recollections on that?

M: Yes, I remember it quite well, but it was just one of the miracles he worked. I guess not Russell, but [Harry] Byrd complained about Johnson bringing him to like Humphrey. I guess it was just a matter of personal persuasion.

G: What did he say about that, do you recall?

M: I think I've got it in one of my books, and I think what he said--I think I can quote that accurately--"Lyndon, I just don't understand how you got me to liking Hubert Humphrey so much." But you've put your finger on a very important point there, because his ability to bring together forces that seemingly couldn't be reconciled had a great deal to do with his success as a leader.

G: How did he do this?

M: He just talked to them. He could always find something that appealed to a man's self interest and he would bear down on that, of course. He would study the man closely enough to know which buttons to push and then he pushed them unmercifully.

G: I get the feeling that with Humphrey and Russell it might have been farm legislation.

M: I'm sure that was a big factor, yes, because I believe Russell was chairman of the Agriculture Committee at that time. Also there was a great tendency on the part of Russell and I guess other southern senators to sort of forgive Humphrey for his 1948 role and say, "He's going to be one of us," and so on.

G: Do you have any recollections of the tidelands bill, the debate on that?

M: I don't think I have beyond what I wrote in the book. It was, of course, the big issue in Texas. It was the platform on which Price was elected to the Senate. In fact, that was Price's one issue I would say. As you know, he resigned before his term was over to run for governor because the Taft thing [?] had got through.

Yes, you have one question here about foreign policy. "Genuinely bipartisan," you say, and a question [mark]. I think so, so far as Johnson was concerned. I think it was.

G: Did he feel like he was consulted sufficiently or merely informed of decisions made in advance?

M: No, I think he was consulted. He and Rayburn often went to the White House in the late afternoon or evening and talked just with Eisenhower. Yes, I think he was consulted.

G: Do you think he had some genuine input here?

M: I think he did. I don't know whether I wrote this anywhere or not, but I remember his coming back from one session with Eisenhower,

he and Rayburn, and he said Eisenhower said, referring to the Republicans in the Senate, "I just don't know what those monkeys are up to." So he and Eisenhower were closer together on foreign policy than he and some of the Republican senators.

G: Yes. In 1953, of course, he had that campaign swing around the state to discourage opposition. Did you travel with him at all?

M: No, I stayed right here. Reedy traveled with him. I think Sam Houston traveled with him.

G: You ran the Washington office when he was in Texas, I guess.

M: Well, Arthur Perry I guess did, to whatever extent. The Washington offices weren't run nearly as much then in the recess as they are now. They were much less active. I remember one summer--that may have been it--when Mr. Perry went on vacation and I was more or less in charge. There were only half a dozen of us or so there. (Interruption)

G: You want to talk about that?

M: He of course believed implicitly in the Reciprocal Trade Agreement program, but he knew there was a lot of opposition to it, not only among his Democrats in the Senate but the people in Texas, although they should have been for it all the time I would think. And that Gore amendment gave Johnson an out where he could more or less point to his support of both sides at times. That was one of the times he and [Albert] Gore worked together peaceably.

G: Do you recall the give and take on that?

M: No, I don't think I do.

G: How he got senators who might not be for it to [support it]?

M: I don't think I do. He must have called for help on the citizens groups that were for the program, like the League of Women Voters, and probably put some pressure on next.

(Interruption)

I do remember a little about this thing in Guatemala because that was 1954 and I think that Congress adjourned fairly early that year. In any case, I know that I was more or less the head man, so many people were gone on his staff. I remember these two fellows coming in--I guess they were from the CIA--and giving me a report on what had happened in Guatemala. Yes.

G: Were you in turn supposed to brief the Senator on these?

M: Yes, I told him what they said.

G: What was his position here?

M: Well, it was a time when there was a lot of fear of communism and communist subversion in this country and this hemisphere. I don't know that Johnson was frightened at this threat but he knew that the public opinion was upset. So this quote of his, that's what he would say, "An unmistakable warning that we're determined to keep communism out of the Western Hemisphere." He never went along with [Joseph] McCarthy any further than he felt he had to at any given moment. He was not an admirer of McCarthy.

G: Let me ask you about the Atomic Energy Act in 1954, an issue of public versus private power.

M: Was that the Dixon-Yates thing?

G: Yes.

M: Well, I don't know. Of course, it never came to a vote as it turned out. Isn't that right? I mean, the Dixon-Yates thing was thrown out. I believe I'm right about that.

G: There was a resolution which would give preference to public versus private power I think in these contracts regarding nuclear plants. A number of other stipulations were construed as being public power issues. Evidently they were pretty much following party lines; the Democrats would vote one way and the Republicans for the most part would vote another way. I was just wondering if you have any recollection here of his [position].

M: Well, I have some, yes. He, of course, had been a public power man in Texas. I think he was a little inclined personally to feel the other way about the nuclear energy. But he never did make an issue out of it with himself. I remember a press conference he held after the election in 1954, when it became apparent that he was going to be majority leader. He had a press conference on the Hill, really jam-packed. In the middle of it Gore showed up at the back end. Johnson pointed at him with great glee at the opportunity and said, "There is Mr. Dixon-Yates himself!" because Gore got a lot of credit for killing it. So he was shifting with the tides pretty much I'd say.

G: Have any recollections of the Dudley Dougherty campaign?

M: Yes, I have some. It wasn't much of a campaign. I don't think Johnson spent any money on his campaign. We didn't appoint a campaign manager or anything. What we did was feed Johnson's men in the counties and districts--he had a pretty good organization then--material showing Johnson in an affirmative way. Just really didn't pay any attention to Dougherty, he didn't. Of course, the people on the local level did. The funniest thing about that really was Sam Houston finding this letter in the files up there from Dougherty, saying to Johnson, "You're just doing a great job and you should be re-elected without opposition." We made sure that the newspapers in Texas got hold of that.

G: Do you recall having good contacts in the Dougherty campaign that would sort of serve as intelligence sources for you?

M: Oh, yes.

G: What can you tell me about that?

M: Well, I can't remember the names much any more, I guess. But we were kept advised on a day-to-day basis, mostly by telephone, from Johnson's people down there. Johnson himself never had any fear; he just wanted as big a majority as possible. I guess it came out about two-to-one or better.

G: I get the impression that Senator Humphrey also gave you information with regard to--

M: Labor and the civil rights people. Yes, he did.

G: But also Dougherty-related operations in Minnesota, evidently he had a scandal sheet--

M: Oh yes, that's right. I talked with somebody from Minnesota that Humphrey sent to see me and we got information about--I guess it was going to be printed in Minnesota--some tabloid newspaper that was really going all out. We got it killed someway.

G: How did you stop that?

M: I don't remember that; I don't know. But we did get it stopped. That was really kind of funny. This fellow from Minnesota came in with this conspiratorial air. But, of course, Dougherty had no business in that campaign. He didn't know anything about politics, just a nice young rich fellow I guess.

G: Do you think someone else coaxed him into the campaign?

M: Oh, yes, I think so. Maybe Jack Porter.

G: Really?

M: Yes.

G: Did you have any evidence there?

M: No, none at all.

G: Now, that fall I guess he ran against Carlos Watson, the Republican. I'm wondering to what extent that was a bona fide effort to offer a Republican alternative or whether they were just offering a candidate to sew up that end of the nomination to keep another faction of the party from running a serious [campaign]?

M: I think the latter is the case.

G: What evidence did you have that this was true?

M: Well, Carlos Watson gave no evidence of having any particular campaign fund that amounted to anything. He didn't have any organization.

G: Do you think that the people who were backing him or offering him as a candidate were really supporting Lyndon Johnson?

M: I don't know whether I'd go that far, but I'd say that they were pretty certain that Johnson was going to be re-elected. I guess they wouldn't go out of their way to irritate him since they felt that way.

G: Is there anything else on the McCarthy censure that you'd like to add to what you wrote in the book?

M: I don't think so.

G: One of the questions I want to ask you about that is with regard to the selection of Democratic members of that censure committee. Do you recall any effort by LBJ to appoint a Democratic Catholic senator to that committee, neutralize the pro-McCarthy--?

M: Yes, I [inaudible]. I don't know. Now I wrote some about that which I don't remember much of now in a book called The Politicians, 1945-1960, which was published in 1970. I guess I wrote more about McCarthy in that than I did in the other book. I know that Johnson was determined to appoint a committee whose respectability couldn't be questioned anywhere and that if these senators voted to censure--which he was sure they would--why, this would have a great public effect.

G: Do you want to shift to 1955 now?

M: Why did he move to Finance? Was it because of the oil depletion allowance I wonder? I don't know. Yes, now I remember more of this I guess.

G: Wayne Morse, whose vote I guess was very critical to organizing the Senate and making the Democrats the majority, got a seat on the Foreign Relations Committee. Do you remember any of Lyndon Johnson's efforts to accommodate Morse?

M: I remember that he did try to. He had to persuade somebody, some senior citizen, to get off that committee, and I don't remember who it was although I may have it written down somewhere. But yes, Morse wanted Foreign Relations and what Morse wanted at that time Johnson wanted him to have.

G: I suppose that Strom Thurmond also occupied a position in the middle that enabled him to swing some power either way.

M: I suppose so. I don't remember anything about him at that time.

G: He was really running without the backing of the Democratic Party.

M: That's right. They had another candidate.

G: Do you remember Senator Johnson's operation? He had a kidney stone removed, went to the Mayo Clinic.

M: Yes, I sure do.

G: He was out quite a bit that session.

M: He was out quite a while and he came back with his removed stone in a bottle, which he showed to all visitors.

G: Then he came back wearing a steel brace, I guess, or some sort of corset.

M: I guess he did for a time there, yes.

G: Do you remember the tax bill that year?

M: I was trying to think of that. Is that the one that Rayburn got through the House and kind of put the monkey on Johnson's back?

G: I think so.

M: I think it was. Johnson really didn't like that at all. Yes, that was it, the tax cut of twenty dollars and some. But I don't mean that Johnson and Rayburn fell out about it at all but Johnson did not like being forced into this position. He had to try to get something through under the circumstances and he didn't believe it should go through and he didn't believe it would, which it didn't.

G: He didn't believe that the twenty dollar--

M: No, he didn't think it would work.

This is a good outline. Whoever did it knows a lot about the whole situation.

G: Is there anything else on that first page that you want to comment on?

M: Well, of course that Formosa Resolution was another one of those rather fake issues that caused a big furor at the time. I guess Johnson did the only thing he could.

Yes, that number seven is a good point; I remember that. He let Humphrey be out in front in all that but he was pushing for it.

G: On the security investigations?

M: Right.

You can see from the outline that he was a little more relaxed in 1955 because he had his election behind him.

G: He also had a majority in the Senate.

M: Yes, that helped, too.

G: Do you remember the highway bill that year?

M: Yes, I sure do, and all that has happened since. As I recall, Johnson was pretty active on that because he had always been supported by the contractors, for one group, who of course were for it. There was no talk about environmental considerations then, of course, [regarding] this bill, this great interstate highway [bill].

G: I want to ask you about this Capehart amendment on the housing bill that year.

M: Oh, yes.

G: That's when Senator Johnson had Hubert Humphrey's plane landed. Do you remember that?

M: Yes, I do.

G: What are your recollections there?

M: Well, Johnson got pretty exercised about that. Humphrey wasn't the only one who apparently was going to be out of pocket when the time for a vote came. But Johnson got them there somehow. Of course, the Republicans had hoped to make a real political issue out of that because [Homer] Capehart himself was not especially popular in the Senate. They felt they saw a good issue there.

G: Did you sense any pressure on that from the real estate lobby, the real estate lobby evidently being in favor of the Capehart amendment?

M: Yes. I don't think they worked on Johnson much because they knew where he stood and they thought they'd better spend their time where they could make some headway.

G: I get the impression that here as in a number of other close votes LBJ managed to get some critical Republican votes.

M: He did, yes.

G: How did he do that?

M: How indeed. Let's see, he and Margaret Chase Smith were always chummy because he managed to get a special staff member assigned to her on the Armed Services Committee. I believe he was of some help to her in getting Jimmy Stewart the promotion to general, which had some trouble. I don't know why she was so hot on it. But still, he got some pretty--George Malone, Molly, of Nevada, now he was just about as far back as you could get, but Johnson could go out and pull him in. I think he just didn't understand the situation.

G: Now Malone was a conservative senator--

M: Extremely conservative.

G: --and yet he could get him to vote for it.

M: Yes.

G: Do you think it had anything to do with getting Malone's cooperation in trade for, say, looking after Malone's interests in Nevada or something like that?

M: It might well, yes.

G: You don't have any particular knowledge of it?

M: No, I don't have any. That would be something they would settle between themselves.

G: How about Senator Langer?

M: Oh, yes. Wild Bill. You know, he kind of liked Johnson personally and I think that was a big factor there. He admired his style.

G: There's some indication that his gesture of letting Langer keep the chairmanship of a little subcommittee was influential in [getting his support].

M: I expect it was. I don't remember that, but that certainly could well be, yes.

Oh, yes, I remember getting a police escort to bring Fulbright back.

G: Do you remember the minimum wage bill that year when it was raised to a dollar?

M: Yes, yes.

G: That was another close vote.

M: Yes, it was quite close.

G: Do you recall how he was able to get the majority on that?

M: I don't know. I expect there's a clue here [reading an outline], "the senators came out of the chamber laughing." No, I don't remember.

G: Now McCarthy introduced a resolution that would have tied Eisenhower's hands at Geneva.

M: That's right. Yes, I remember that the Republicans knew it had no chance and they did want to kill it in committee so there would be no debate on the floor. But Johnson saw an issue and was determined to bring it out.

What's this? "The first slight intimation of his heart attack came during a bitter argument with Knowland." I don't remember that. Did he black out or something?

G: No, evidently he just felt chest pains.

M: Oh, I see.

G: According to a newspaper report.

M: It's not surprising. It wasn't long before his heart attack.

G: Did you have any early indication of his [heart condition]?

M: None at all, nope.

G: Can you add anything on the issue of Alaska-Hawaii statehood?

M: No, I don't. There certainly was a link there between the [admission of] Alaska and Hawaii. A good deal of trading went on on that I believe.

G: Well, he had his heart attack on the second of July.

M: Yes, that's right.

G: I'm wondering if you saw much of him during the time he was recovering.

M: I saw him very frequently, yes.

G: What was his frame of mind?

M: Well, it varied, of course. As you probably know, one aftermath of a heart attack is varying moods of great depression. Sometimes when I would see him out at Bethesda Hospital he would be very low but at other times he would be operating almost the way he had when he was in his office. He felt for a time it had done him in and ruled out any future activity. In fact, he told me once that he doubted he would serve the following year as majority leader. But that was just a passing phase, you know.

G: Was this early on in his recovery?

M: Yes, it must have been sometime in July.

G: Say a couple of weeks?

M: He was still in the hospital, yes.

G: What was your response?

M: I just let it slide past and said, "You'll feel differently," or something like that. I'd become accustomed to his moods by then. They may have been exaggerated or intensified by his heart attack but they were the same moods.

G: Do you think he would express these pessimistic notions to--

M: Be begged out of them?

G: Yes.

M: I think to some extent, yes, yes.

G: Is that what you would generally do in response, persuade him?

M: No, I just didn't pay much attention to it because usually when I saw him, which would be three or four times a week when he was in the hospital, maybe every day, I had definite things to talk about and I would just kind of slide over this kind of thing. It didn't last long. Soon he was up and going.

G: During this time he was recovering, did he maintain an active interest in the natural gas bill, do you recall?

M: Well, I don't remember that. When did that gas bill finally pass?

G: I guess it passed in 1956, but it was being debated in 1955.

M: It was being debated in 1955, but I believe there was a general understanding that it would not come up, at least in the Senate, in 1955, certainly after Johnson's heart attack.

G: What did you meet with him about when you would visit the hospital? What sort of things?

M: Oh, sometimes issues that came up in the Senate, quite often the correspondence from Texas. You know, I'd try to find things to cheer him up, bring him things to read and so on.

G: Let me show you this list of senators in 1955 and I'd like for you to go down the list and indicate how Lyndon Johnson would deal with each senator, if you have any particular recollections of what sort of considerations he would have in mind in each case?

M: Well, [George] Aiken, certainly when they were both in the Senate he regarded Aiken as a very honest man and a strong man, but a man who was somewhat provincial from a New England state. Of course I think Aiken made the greatest statement ever made on the Vietnam War. You've heard that. But by then they were not in the Senate.

[Gordon] Allott I don't remember anything about. He [Johnson] and Clinton Anderson were quite close.

G: Were there local interests in either Vermont or New Mexico that--

M: Well, New Mexico certainly was as interested in the oil industry as Johnson was in Texas. And also Anderson had been the secretary of agriculture and they were both interested in agriculture.

[Alben W.] Barkley I just don't know. I mean, he was a hard one to figure out. He was back in the Senate but he wasn't like the run-of-the-mill senator.

[Frank A.] Barrett I don't know. [J. Glenn] Beall I know he thought was pretty dumb. [George] Bender, he was another extreme

right winger, wasn't he? Yes, he didn't have much to do with him. Alan Bible and he were quite chummy.

G: Let's assume Lyndon Johnson was trying to get the votes of these men. What arguments would he appeal to each one on? Dealing with his own local interests or philosophical interests? What soft spots would he look for in each man?

M: Of course it would vary with each man. He certainly would find out what each senator was most interested in in his home state and then he would try to become an expert on that so he could talk to him on an equal footing.

G: That's what I'm trying to ask you. What were the interests of these senators? For example, what was Bender's interest or Bible's interest?

M: In some cases it was just a matter of--I would think this would apply to Bible--clinging to the leadership because it might help me to be in with the Leader. That certainly wouldn't be true of anybody like Aiken. He and Styles Bridges got along very well because they could talk to each other on a completely progmatic basis about the political considerations involved. Sometimes New Hampshire and Texas weren't so far apart on those. Byrd, I think he appealed to as not a supplicant exactly, but by flattery to an elder statesman. Capehart he had no use for.

G: Did you ever hear him talk about Capehart?

M: Not except when [Robert] Kerr called him on the floor a tub of rancid ignorance or something. He laughed like hell over that when he told me about it.

Hayden, Carl Hayden, again there's where I think he came to Senator Hayden as a junior senator seeking the wisdom and experience of an older senator. He was likely to do that.

Now Olin Johnston and he were chummy although he thought that Johnston was pretty dumb, which he was I guess.

He and Kerr got along fine because, again, they had common interests in oil and agriculture.

G: How about [Allen J.] Ellender?

M: Well, again they had some common interests. Also I believe he flattered Ellender a good deal. Ellender was susceptible to it. And some of those--of course this was especially true of Russell--some of the older southern senators were pretty proud of him. They thought he was their boy even though they didn't always like what he did.

G: Did he have much respect for Paul Douglas?

M: He had a great deal of respect for Douglas; he just didn't understand him at all.

G: What do you think the problem was between these two?

M: Well, they were just so completely different. I wouldn't say that Johnson was a man without any firm principle on any given matter, but Douglas was more of a principled man. Johnson's complaint, which he voiced to me more than once about Douglas, was that even when he was right he didn't seem to care whether he really won or not. He just wanted to make his case. I think Douglas is a great man myself. I think Johnson thought he was a great man but he just didn't understand him.

G: Did you have an opportunity to witness his relation with Everett Dirksen?

M: I don't think so except in the Senate itself, and I don't mean in their public debate but sometimes I'd be over there and they'd be talking with each other. He liked Dirksen pretty well but laughed at him a little, too, because of his histrionic approach to the Senate and to life, I guess.

G: Let me ask you about Eugene Millikin.

M: I can't tell you anything about him except I know that Johnson regarded him very highly and worked with him often on various matters. But I don't think I was ever in a meeting with him.

He and [Herbert] Lehman didn't get along at all and I still wonder how he got Lehman to give up that position on the Foreign Relations Committee so Morse could have it. I'm sure he gave him something but I don't remember what it was.

G: Any recollections of his association with Tom Hennings?

M: I think he liked Hennings quite well and deplored his heavy drinking. This is mildly amusing, I don't think it's of any historical importance. But once in I guess early 1956 I decided I had had enough of this so I quit and went to work for ten weeks for the Federal Maritime Commission. I found I didn't like that. I was not born to be a civil servant. So I was talking to a friend of mine who was a friend of Hennings and he said, "I bet Hennings would like to have you." And I said, "Well, talk to him." So Hennings called me up a couple of days later and said yes, come up and talk to him. I had told Johnson

when I left that if I ever came back to the Hill I would talk to him first. So I talked to him and he said, "Hell, if you're going to work on the Hill you'd better work for me." But he didn't hold that against Hennings. I mean, why should he, for that matter? But I think he had a true fondness for Hennings as a man. It was hard not to.

G: Hennings must have had a very good legal mind.

M: Yes, and he was good company, when he wasn't drinking. I was at parties where he was several times and he was a fascinating conversationalist.

G: What can you add about Lyndon Johnson's association with Earle Clements?

M: Well, of course it was extremely close.

(Interruption)

Where were we?

G: Clements.

M: Oh, well, Clements of course was absolutely dog loyal to Johnson, which is an attribute that politicians prize highly. Clements had a lot to offer him because he had contacts with organized labor that Johnson didn't have. And he would vote for Johnson even on matters that would hurt him. In fact, I think that was a contributing factor to his defeat in 1956. He voted for some measure that got the medical profession up in arms and he lost the election.

G: Was that the extension of the doctors' draft, do you think, or do you recall?

M: I think it was something more fundamental than that. I don't remember. But it was something to do with the medical profession. Clements knew the vote would hurt him--he talked to me about it later--but he said Johnson needed his vote and so he gave it to him. And Johnson, when Clements ran for election in 1956, was very helpful to him. As you probably know he was a great money raiser for political campaigns. I remember Bobby [Baker] came down there one weekend with a suitcase just stuffed with currency for a Clements' campaign. I think it was about sixty thousand bucks, which was a good deal then.

G: Baker seems to have played the role of sort of a bag man on these things.

M: He did, that and many other roles.

G: I've heard it said so many times that no one could count votes as well as Bobby Baker.

M: That apparently was true. The senators trusted him and depended on him, which was fair enough because I don't think he betrayed their faith, although he certainly got mixed up in some funny business. He's still pretty good. When I talked to him the other night he was full of beans, you know.

G: How about Hickenlooper?

M: Bourke Hickenlooper. Funny, I can't remember anything about him at all. I don't know.

G: [Herman] Welker?

M: I doubt if Welker ever voted for anything Johnson was for. I know

Johnson didn't count on him at all. I mean, he may have voted to adjourn or something like that.

G: How about Senator [Theodore Francis] Green?

M: Now there again I think was a case where Johnson's approach was one primarily of flattery, because the old gentleman was getting along in years then, although he was lively as a cricket.

Lister Hill was another one of the southerners that, although he considered himself more liberal than Johnson, which I guess he was, he could usually be depended upon.

G: Estes Kefauver?

M: They had nothing in common at all. Of course, Kefauver was such a loner when it came to the party, and [to] Johnson the party was all, in a way. He thought, and other senators thought so, too, that Kefauver was kind of a grandstander with his crime fight and everything.

Pretty poor pickings, isn't it? I'm sorry but when I was writing this latest book [LBJ: An Irreverent Chronicle] I just combed my mind as much as I could and put everything I could think of into that. I saw Jim Rowe shortly before the book came out and he was asking me what the title was, and I told him. He said, "You wouldn't have given it that title if he were still alive." I said, "No, and I might not have written the book if he were still alive." I guess that's about all I've got to say, Mike.

G: Let me ask you one more question that I've had in my mind for some time about the 1960 campaign. Do you want to add anything on the contact between H. L. Hunt and Lyndon Johnson during that campaign?

M: I think I've got it all in the book, so far as I can recall.

G: There was some indication, however improbable, that Mr. Hunt had sent word to Mr. Johnson urging him to take the vice presidential nomination.

M: He did that.

G: He did do that?

M: He did that, yes.

G: What are your recollections there?

M: Well, I typed the memo. Let's see, now for a long time I had a copy of it but I don't guess I do anymore. Damn if I can remember. Isn't that odd? It might be in the book but I'm not sure. But he did three or four paragraphs and I took it up to Johnson's suite. I don't know that it had any bearing on what finally happened although Hunt--

G: Why did Mr. Hunt want him to take the nomination?

M: I don't know. Maybe he foresaw Kennedy's assassination. I don't know. He had never been for Johnson as senator, you know. In fact, when I was working for Coke Stevenson in 1948, Hunt gave us a contribution. The reasons he gave for changing his mind about Johnson were two: one that he was strong and could lead the Senate, and two was that he was strongly anti-communist. That in the end was everything to Mr. Hunt, whether someone said he was against the communists.

G: He seems to have become more and more disenchanted, though, with the ticket as the campaign wore on.

M: Oh, he did. He did. In fact, he became disenchanted with every president. He supported Goldwater in 1964 and he supported Nixon in 1968, although he was really for Reagan. But after Nixon got the nomination he was for him. But then he became thoroughly disillusioned with Nixon. He had no political sense at all, Mr. Hunt.

G: Did you try to mitigate the conflict between the two during the campaign?

M: There was no conflict between the two during the campaign. If it was, it didn't come to my attention because I'm sure Hunt knew that I was for Johnson regardless, and if he was trying to do anything against Johnson he would have done it outside me. But after Johnson was elected in 1964 then he started in again and said maybe he could do some good, Mr. Hunt did, and started sending him memos, two or three a week, about how he should conduct himself. He once sent me to give to Johnson a flour mill to grind up your own soybeans or whatever. He was a nut.

G: Did you give it to him?

M: Sure. I took it up and gave it to him.

G: What was his reaction?

M: He just laughed. I remember that especially because when I took it up there Mary Margaret Wiley was Johnson's secretary at the time. So I said that Mr. Hunt had sent this up and he felt the flour it produced was the greatest thing since chopped liver. It was just

a manner of speaking, but Mary Margaret wrote out a note and took in to the President and said what I said and then said, "Mr. Hunt dotes on chopped liver."

G: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

M: I don't think so. I'll sort of dip into my brain though and if I think of anything I'll write and tell you.

G: Good.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

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