

INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 21, 1975

INTERVIEWEE: JAMES P. NASH

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Nash's home in Austin, Texas

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G: Mr. Nash, let's begin with a little of your background. You were born in Pennsylvania, I think, Philadelphia?

N: Yes, a long time ago. In fact, it was 1892. I went to Washington in 1910. I went to school there, at George Washington University, and also worked for the government at the same time. I studied civil engineering and graduated there in 1914. At that time, the University of Texas decided that they wanted to establish a testing laboratory at the University. They wrote to Washington to the Bureau of Public Roads where I was working, to recommend somebody to start this laboratory and take over. For no reason at all that I know of, they picked me out. I was free and not married or anything, so I came on and decided to take this position. I made a trip up through the North, bought all the equipment for the laboratory, and sent it down here. I figured maybe I might just start the laboratory and maybe go back to Washington, but in the meantime I met a very charming lady here, which has always kind of messed up a lot of peoples business. It did mine, too, because I got married about the end of the year. Incidentally, I have been married ever since, which next year will be sixty years, which is really too long to live with one woman. I told her.

I stayed with the University here about four years and got into the engineering

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business. I decided I would just practice engineering on my own. I got into doing a lot of work up in North Texas in the oil fields, which eventually worked into a position with the Railroad Commission as Deputy Oil and Gas Supervisor. After I had been with them a year, I decided I could operate just about as good as the rest of them, got a string of tools and started in drilling. I've been in the oil business ever since.

G: Do you recall the first time you met Lyndon Johnson?

N: I met him when he was running for the Congress.

G: In '37.

N: Was it '37? I didn't know him very well. I first really got acquainted with him at a dinner at Herman Brown's, where Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Lady Bird and Lyndon and my wife and I were the guests. That was really the first time I really got acquainted with him. He was already elected to the Congress at that time.

G: What was he like then?

N: Well, he was very energetic and very knowledgeable, particularly in politics. He was a natural politician. He was very affable and easy to know and, I think, quite charming.

G: Do you recall what you discussed? Did you discuss national politics or local politics?

N: No, not particularly, it was not that kind of meeting. It was just strictly a social gathering and we talked mostly about different people we knew, the usual conversation at a dinner table. I don't recall any particular version of politics except that we kind of congratulated him on getting elected to Congress.

G: What about Mrs. Johnson then? What were your first impressions?

N: Mrs. Johnson, I thought, was very, very charming and in my mind, she was one of the

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greatest assets that Lyndon had. I think she was compassionate and understood his problems, and I can't help but believe that she was one of his greatest assets in his political career.

G: Was she shy then?

N: Pretty much. Of course at that time, Lyndon Johnson was really a poor boy. They lived in an upstairs apartment here and were having a pretty tough struggle. I think he had about spent everything he had getting elected and a good bit of what his friends had. So he was not in very good financial position, but it never did bother her any, and it didn't seem to bother him any. But he finally got out of that after he got into politics and acquired a little standing and probably got into maybe some financial ventures. I don't know much about that.

G: What issues were important in that election, local issues that caused his election, do you know?

N: All I know is that running against Lyndon was a good friend of ours, Needham Avery, and about five or six more people. Most of the people in this part of town particularly, this side of the tracks you might say, voted for Avery because we knew him and knew him to be just a good fellow well-met. We'd always have a friend up in Washington. The main supporter of Lyndon Johnson was E. H. Perry, who considered him kind of a foster son and was very enthusiastic about him and thought he was a person who was going to go far.

G: Did Perry try to get you to support LBJ, do you remember?

N: I was in business with Perry on some things, and he never did try to influence me in any

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way except that he did say that he thought that Lyndon would get elected and he was going to go far. I think at that time, Lyndon had been a secretary to [Richard] Kleberg of Corpus Christi. He had acquired considerable knowledge of politics and the ways that things are done in Washington in his tenure of office there with Kleberg. But they fell out about something.

G: Senator [Alvin] Wirtz supported LBJ in that first election, too.

N: He had quite a bit of support, but the reason LBJ got elected [was that] he went around in all the surrounding counties here and shook hands with everybody and got their votes. He was not well-known at all here. In fact, very few people knew him, but they did know him after the election. His big support was outside of Austin, rather than the silk-stocking element.

G: He did very well in the rural counties.

N: Yes.

G: What about the Court-packing bill, when President Roosevelt introduced a bill to increase the membership of the Supreme Court.

N: I don't recall just what stand Lyndon took on that.

G: Well, he supported the President on that.

N: Yes, I expect he did, because he was a great friend of Roosevelt, and it was always said around here that he was the one boy that came in the kitchen way to see the President. He didn't have to go through the other formalities. Apparently Roosevelt thought an awful lot of Lyndon, and Lyndon thought a lot of him.

G: But in going back through some of the old newspaper public opinion polls, it seems that

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this Tenth District, the Austin district, favored the Court-packing bill overwhelmingly, about nine to one. Is that right?

N: I don't recall that. I was busy in the oil fields at that time. In fact, I was away from Austin a good part of the time. I spent most of my time in the oil fields. In 1922 I drilled in Luling, and I had always operated in Young County, Stephens County, Jack County, and that country, and still operate up there. I don't operate. I've just got a few wells.

G: After Congressman Johnson was elected and took office, he devoted a good deal of attention to developing this Lower Colorado River, finishing the work--

N: Oh, yes. I think he was probably instrumental in getting that thing through.

G: Can you recall any incidents or episodes in which he was working with, say, Senator [Alvin] Wirtz on that, or George or Herman Brown?

N: No. Of course, Brown was one of my best friends, Herman Brown. He was very much interested in that Lower Colorado River Authority and built the first dam up near Marshall Ford, he and McKenzie of San Antonio. As I recall, Brown was not too enthusiastic about developing the Colorado River until he got that contract. He got very enthusiastic then. I told him he was a damn hypocrite.

G: What were his arguments against it beforehand?

N: Oh, just spending money, use of the [], unnecessarily.

G: What about Senator Wirtz' role in this? He was an expert, wasn't he, on riparian rights?

N: Yes. He was, of course, a lawyer here and had some experience around Seguin, where he came from, on the Guadalupe River deal. But I don't recall any specific incident except I know he supported it very much.

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G: How important was he as a mentor to Lyndon Johnson? Was he a mentor?

N: A supporter?

G: Well, more or less a teacher, I'm thinking.

N: Yes, I think Lyndon had a great deal of respect for him and thought well of his opinion.

So did a lot of us. Wirtz was a very capable man. I recall that the day he died, we had a party here at this house just before a football game. He left here, went out to the stadium there and collapsed with a heart attack. I remember that very well.

G: Had he been in ill health, or was this just sudden?

N: Not apparently, not that I knew of. No, I think he just all of a sudden collapsed. We had a few drinks here, of course, and food, and I think climbing those steps and everything was just a little too much for him. I remember that incident very well.

G: Were you together when it happened?

N: No, no, I was not with him. But he was at the house here. We had, oh, maybe sixty or seventy people in for lunch that day.

G: I hear that Senator Wirtz was a great raconteur and storyteller and just an enjoyable person to be around.

N: Yes, a very nice person to be around.

G: Can you give us any examples?

N: No, I can't. I wouldn't remember. It's been so long ago.

G: Who else did Lyndon Johnson look up to for advice and support?

N: He was a great admirer of Perry, E. H. Perry, who was in the cotton business here. He looked to Perry for a lot of good, sound advice, not particularly as a politician but just as

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a person. Perry was a very fine person himself, and Lyndon respected him and respected his views. I think probably Lyndon thought very well of Brown, both George and Herman Brown from Brown and Root. They were associated a great deal together. Of course, I think Wirtz was another one of his favorites. I don't recall too many others. I remember after he had become a congressman. When Brown moved to Houston, he had Apartment AF at the Lamar Hotel, and we all used to assemble there--Jim Abercrombie, Brown, Gus Wortham, George Butler--and kind of just talk things over.

G: I guess that big business in Texas was pretty much divided on Lyndon Johnson, weren't they?

N: Yes, he was a very controversial figure. Of course, he came out with all these very, you might say, extravagant I guess you might call it, deals like Social Security, housing, and taking care of the people and civil rights, which was at that time not a very popular issue in Texas. Consequently, he was not too well supported by particularly the silk stocking element, anyhow. He was spending a lot of money, and of course, taxes had to be paid. But it got him votes.

G: What about the oil industry in Texas? Did he get more support from the independents than he did from representatives of the major companies?

N: Yes. I don't think he was too popular with the oil industry. As far as I know, he had very little support from the oil industry. Although actually, Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn almost single-handedly kept 27½ percent depletion for the oil industry intact for 25 or 30 years. Just as soon as they got out, they started lambasting it, and they finally cut it to 22 [percent]. And now it's finally gone out all together.

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(Pause in recording)

G: I think we were talking about the oil industry and LBJ.

N: Oh, yes.

G: You were saying that Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson had done more to--

N: Oh, yes, almost single-handedly they for 25 years were the main instruments in keeping the 27½ percent depletion for the oil industry. As soon as they left, it went down to 22 percent, and now it's going to be eliminated altogether.

G: Speaker Rayburn once made the statement that he felt they tried to destroy him, that the oil industry had tried to destroy him.

N: I don't know if this is on the record. One morning Price Daniel--he was governor then--invited me over there to a breakfast for Jack Kennedy. He was running for president you know. I wasn't going to go. I said, "Oh hell, that's just a lot of politicians, and I'm not interested in them, and there will be a big crowd there." My wife insisted on me going and said, "Well you ought to go anyhow." So I went over there, and I was the only outsider that wasn't a politician there. Sam Rayburn was there, and Lyndon Johnson. Of course, I sat next to Kennedy at breakfast. This boy that used to play on the football team for SMU--what was his name?--he was there. I believe he was Treasurer of the Democratic Party here in Texas then. There were just about ten of us there. Lyndon was raising hell because the oil industry was not supporting him when he did so much for it. He kind of looked at me, but I couldn't do anything about it. I said that I told some of them that they were just nuts, that he and Sam Rayburn had done more for the oil industry than any other two people in the whole country. There wasn't much that I could

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do about it.

G: Why didn't the industry support him?

N: The only reason was because he was an advocate of spending lots of money and high taxes, and they don't like that. Of course, those that knew, supported him, but a lot of them didn't, you know. They were just popping off.

G: I've also heard that he really helped the independents out in getting the Big Inch, and all of this thing, enabling the independents to compete with the major oil companies.

N: Well, he was always interested. I think that Lyndon Johnson was always interested in anything that helped Texas in any way, whether it was oil industry, or cotton, or most anything. I must say that he supported most anything that had some benefit to Texas, as far as I could tell.

G: Did Sid Richardson support him?

N: I think so. I don't remember talking to Sid about that particular phase, but I would think that he did, that he would. I don't know about Clint Murchison; I don't remember. In fact, I never did talk much to him about politics. I never was particularly interested in politics, to tell you the truth. I just knew Lyndon Johnson as a friend rather than as a politician.

One of the most interesting things, though, that ever occurred in connection with Lyndon Johnson was that my wife and I were invited to the White House to a dinner one night when [Eamon] de Valera, the President of Ireland, was over here. It was quite an occasion, and Lyndon and Lady Bird came walking in with a Marine, an air force man, the army, and the navy, all their flags and of course the bugle call and all that, with de

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Valera and his wife. I was standing there and watching them, and I couldn't help but think, "This is a wonderful country where a little country boy from Stonewall, Texas, can be the head of the greatest nation in the world and do it by his own efforts and skill." It made a tremendous impression on me. It was a very impressive ceremony anyhow, but to me it was particularly, because I made a geological survey up in that country. I knew more about that country than Lyndon did, really, from the surface geology and so forth. I was really impressed, because Stonewall was a pretty tough place to make a living.

G: Do you recall LBJ's efforts to get the "Big Inch" pipeline during the war? Didn't George and Herman Brown build that?

N: Well, yes, Herman and George Brown and Gus Wortham. I should have been in it, but they came up here to talk to me one day when . . . I think Price Daniel was governor then . . . no, it was Beauford Jester. I was chairman of the Inaugural Committee, and I was having more damn problems. Everything was going wrong, like it always does, and then you have to get them straightened out. They were talking about the "Big Inch"--Gus Wortham, Herman Brown, and my partner Windfohr here. I really should have paid a little more attention, but I didn't. What they were doing was inviting me to come in on it. I remembered it afterward. After the "Big Inch" was built, that was after the war you know, and they turned it over to make a gas line out of it.

G: Do you recall LBJ working with the Interior Department on this?

N: Oh, yes. He was very instrumental in getting it. Well, they built two lines, the "Big Inch" and what they called the "Little Big Inch." One was 24-inch, and I think the other was 12-inch, if I recall. Came from Texas up to New York.

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G: What was the significance of this for Texas oil producers?

N: The reason they built that oil line was the fact that submarines were off the coast in the Gulf of Mexico and also off the Atlantic Coast. It was a great hazard to move oil by tanker around Florida and up the coast, with these German submarines, so they built this line and transported it. I remember I was running oil to the Atlantic, maybe ship oil out of Aransas Pass--Port Aransas, really. They just didn't take any oil. They quit shipping oil by tanker from there during the war. I had some production down in Bee County at that time, drilling oil with Atlantic down to Aransas Pass, and they just closed down: "We've got to close our wells down."

G: Before the war, the price of Texas oil was quite low, wasn't it?

N: Yes. Of course in the Thirties when they brought in the East Texas Field, it got down to ten cents a barrel. I had some wells over there, and I shut them in. I just wouldn't sell oil for ten cents a barrel. In West Texas, as I remember, the price got down to 54 cents in Young County for this high-gravity, forty-gravity oil. Very fine oil.

G: What accounts for the increase in the prices of oil? Did LBJ help at all on this?

N: No, no, he had nothing to do with that. The price of oil went up because the Arabs raised the price about ten or twelve dollars a barrel.

G: But I mean, didn't it go up in the Forties, too, considerably? Texas oil?

N: Well no. Oil just went up and down. When I first went in the oil business, it was \$3.50 a barrel, then it got down to \$1.00 and everything shut down. Then it got adjusted and started going up, and in the Twenties it got up to \$2.50 a barrel. Then in the Depression it went down again. And at one time, as I say, East Texas got down to 10 cents and West

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Texas 54 cents. Then it readjusted itself.

(Pause in recording)

G: We were talking about--

N: I was telling you about my experience at this dinner party at the White House, which was as I say very impressive. I thought it was a great feat that he got to be president of the United States from the little country place of Stonewall. Of all places in the country, that's about as dismal a place as you could come from an economic standpoint.

G: He ran for the Senate twice, first in '41 against Pappy O'Daniel and lost. Then he won in '48. Did you have a role in those campaigns at all? Did you support him?

N: No, as I said, never was interested in politics. I just knew him as a friend and let it go at that.

G: Did he ever talk about that first election, the '41 race?

N: Not to me. He talked a lot to Brown, though. Oh, about Pappy O'Daniel?

G: Yes.

N: Oh that was a miracle, fantastic. Pappy O'Daniel was a flour salesman on radio--we didn't have television in those days--selling his flour and how to lead them all in prayer. He got a tremendous following and, my God, ran for governor. I was up in Graham one day, talking about Pappy O'Daniel. I drove into town. It had one of those big squares, you know, with the courthouse in the middle, and the place was full of people. I said, "What the hell is going on here?" Somebody said, "Oh, Pappy O'Daniel is coming to town." I had a room in the hotel there where I could look right out on the square. Sure enough, here he appears with this musical team and the boy going out with the barrel

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collecting the money. He collected a lot of money. It was fantastic the following he had, particularly with the voters. You see, I was operating in different parts of the state, and just to find out what was going on, I always talked to my lease men. I said, "Who are they going to vote for around here?" They usually knew. They would always come up with, "Well if you're not going to vote for Pappy O'Daniel, you had better keep your mouth shut." So I knew that nobody had a chance against him. It was fantastic.

G: Herman Brown supported LBJ in '41, didn't he?

N: Always. He always supported him from almost the first, after the first go-around.

G: What about the second election, when he ran in '48 against Coke Stevenson?

N: I would just as soon not talk about that one.

G: That was a close one.

N: That was when Duval County got involved in that.

G: I think what they made up in Duval County they probably had lost someplace else.

N: That was something else.

G: Senator Wirtz used to say that no Texas election is ever over until the last readjusted total is in.

N: I remember so well we were over at Brown's there one night, election night, when [Wilmer] St. John Garwood was running for the Supreme Court. By God, this fellow Jefferson Smith, who was supposed to be a lawyer but never did a lick of work. About the only thing he ever did was do some notary public work. His name wasn't even listed in the phone book. We were all standing around there. He was ahead in the reports. I said, "Who in the mischief is Jefferson Smith?" Well, nobody knew. Nobody had ever

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heard of him. They got to looking in the phone book and he wasn't even in the phone book. I don't think it could have happened any place but Texas, and if in Houston they hadn't thrown in about five thousand votes quick, he'd have been in the Supreme Court, and he could just about read and write, I think. That has nothing to do with Lyndon Johnson, of course, but it was something that was interesting about Texas politics, I think.

G: I understand that in '48 that Houston business, for example, was divided right down the middle. About half the leaders there were supporting Coke Stevenson, and the other half was supporting Lyndon Johnson.

N: Yes, it was very close. All over the state it was the same way.

G: Roy Hofheinz supported him, but I guess Judge [James] Elkins did not?

N: It was a very close race all over the state. Of course, I think Duval County swung it over to Lyndon Johnson unquestionably. What was the final tally, about 80 votes, something like that?

G: Yes. Well, he goes to the Senate. Did you have more contact with him after he went to the Senate?

N: Yes. When I would go to Washington, I would go to see him.

G: He played a more prominent role, I guess, in national Democratic Party politics--

N: Yes, and he became Senate leader, which was a very, very important job, I think really more important than the vice president, to tell you the truth. Then of course, he got to be vice president. I dropped in to see him once or twice when he was Senate leader and also when he was vice president. Of course, when he was president I went up there to the White House. But as I say, I was just from a personal standpoint rather than political.

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G: You were a delegate to the National Convention in Chicago in 1956.

N: Yes.

G: Did you go to any before that, or was that your first one?

N: No, that was my first one, first and last.

G: What happened? Tell us about that convention, your experiences there.

N: Of course the Texas delegation voted as a unit, a unit vote. As I recall, being a large state they had probably the fourth [largest number of votes]. I think maybe New York, California, Illinois, and possibly Pennsylvania--I'm not sure about Pennsylvania. We were next in number of delegates, you know, so we were important. We met with him and Sam Rayburn. They were promoting him to be president, with the possible hope that he might be vice president. Of course, we voted solid for him, but it didn't do any good.

G: He, I think one time, had made a deal with Governor [Allan] Shivers to the effect that--sort of a compromise on the Democratic Party in Texas, and I believe that--

N: I was telling you about this meeting over here that one morning.

G: Did they make the deal then?

N: No deal made. The deal was, when they ended up, Lyndon was going to take the Texas delegation to the Chicago convention, which he did as the Leader.

G: And Governor Shivers didn't think he could do it, or did he resist?

N: Well, he thought he ought to, of course, which is traditional before that and since then. But Johnson prevailed.

G: What arguments did he use in that?

N: Oh, it just got very hot, and they were accusing one another of everything from

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manslaughter to plain murder. I just shut my ears because I was entirely out of place; I felt that way. Johnson came at seven o'clock and he was going to leave at eight, and he had his plane waiting out there. It was way after ten o'clock when he left the house here. So it was kind of a tough session. And that is certainly off the record, and I never talked to anybody about it.

G: You had organized this breakfast meeting for the purpose of getting the two men together.

N: To see if they wouldn't compromise and decide who would go, amicably, but it wasn't amicable.

G: Did you get the feeling at the end of that that LBJ had been the more dominant of the figures?

N: Oh, yes. He was pointing his finger at Shivers. I felt sorry for Shivers, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I was a little out of my class.

I made a speech for Lyndon when he was running for the Senate, I guess, on radio. I think he appreciated that, too. Old Clark wanted to read the speech, and I said, "Hell, no. If I'm going to make a speech, I'm going to make it. You're not going to make it." So I wrote it and gave it. They seemed to all like it, anyhow.

G: When you went to the convention in '56, the Texas delegation did vote for John F. Kennedy for vice president. I think Estes Kefauver was being nominated, and he was opposed by Texans, who supported John F. Kennedy. Is it true that Walter Reuther blocked that Kennedy move?

N: I don't think so. I think it was more or less of an inspiration on Kennedy. I don't think

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there was any too much organization, because when they had him up for vice president, they had to go get him. He was asleep. This was early in the morning, around noon time. They had to get him out of bed and get him over there. So I don't think it was any big organization on anybody's part to push Kennedy.

G: What did you learn about the relationship of Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn in that convention?

N: Sam Rayburn was the one leading, more or less, the delegation to support [Johnson] and kind of pulling the strings what each delegate was supposed to do, and getting other delegates to vote. We had several meetings up there outside the convention hall.

G: Did Lyndon Johnson treat Sam Rayburn with considerable deference?

N: Oh, yes, they were great friends. They worked together. You see, Lyndon was the head of the Senate and Rayburn the head of the House, and they worked together just like a team.

G: But do you think Rayburn was regarded as the senior partner in that relationship?

N: Well, he was quite a bit older, of course, than Lyndon. I think Lyndon kind of deferred to his greater experience and knowledge of politics. I think we all did, as a matter of fact. We all considered Rayburn as a past master. He had been up there from time immemorial, since I was a kid, pretty near. He had been head of the House of Representatives.

G: I understand that in 1954, President Eisenhower nominated you as an alternate delegate to the U.N. Do you know why you were selected?

N: Yes. They tried to balance the delegation. They had one Negro in there, and a labor

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man, and a woman, and I represented it as a Catholic. I think probably that had as much to do with it, that they wanted one Catholic on the delegation. That was me. I think that probably had as much as anything to do with it, and then of course, I was a friend of Lyndon's and he just happened to think of me, maybe.

G: It was Lyndon Johnson's doing?

N: Oh, yes. I was down in Mexico. I was at a wedding. A friend of mine in Parras, Mexico, was getting married, or his daughter was getting married, and we went to the wedding. I got this telegram. That's the first I knew about it, that I was appointed delegate to the United Nations. It was a complete surprise to me, because I didn't even know they were talking about me. Of course the FBI checks on you before any job like that. Someone told me they made the fastest check they had ever made and got it all over in less than 48 hours. I was confirmed by the Senate faster than anybody, and I knew nothing about it. Of course, I guess not being a politician, I didn't have any enemies one way or the other.

G: You then spent some time in New York. You went up to New York?

N: We were at the meeting that fall. We went up there in September and came back about Christmastime, a little over three months.

G: What were your impressions of the U.N. then?

N: Of course at that time, there were just sixty nations in the United Nations. It was created in, what, '46 wasn't it?

G: The charter was signed in '45.

N: Forty-five, maybe, '45 and then there were only sixty nations. Now I think there are

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about 125, and they represent all these small nations, mostly in Africa. It's a different deal altogether. I've got a book there written by Buckley. He was a delegate here about a year or two ago, Will [William F.] Buckley. He wrote a book about it. I didn't write any book about it.

G: Did you have any contact with LBJ when you were with the U.N.?

N: Only in Washington. Yes.

G: What would you do? Would you go by his office and see him there, or see him at home?

N: No, no. I was sworn in in Washington, and he was there at the swearing in ceremony.

That's as far as our connection went with the United Nations. I was on my own up there.

It was very interesting. It's like the fellow that had nine children: he said he wouldn't take a million dollars for any one of the nine, but he wouldn't give a dollar for the tenth.

That's about the shape I was in. I was glad to do it, but I wouldn't want to make it a practice.

G: During the Senate or vice-presidential years before LBJ became president, did you visit him much in Washington--

N: Not too much.

G: Or at the Ranch in Texas or anything?

N: Yes, I visited him at the Ranch and also in Washington, but just if I happened to be there, to let him know I was there, or something. Homer Thornberry was in the House of Representatives there, and we'd go over together, or something like that.

G: Did you ever think he would be president then, or do you think he thought that he would ever be in the White House?

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N: No. If he had anything in mind, I don't know, but he never mentioned it to me. It was one of those things. As I say, he had a fantastic career, and that was just part of it. [It] worked out that way.

G: When President Kennedy was assassinated, he became President, of course. You mentioned earlier a visit to the White House at a state dinner, I guess, for the president of Ireland.

N: Yes.

G: Do you have any other memories of being with the President while he was in the White House?

N: No. We went over there for cocktails one afternoon just in his suite upstairs, but that was just sociable.

G: What did he talk about then, do you know?

N: Well, he had been in some kind of session. We just had a drink together. Mostly Lady Bird was doing the reception work. He was tied up over there in his office, and he came on over and just stayed about fifteen or twenty minutes and left. We just talked about social things, mostly. I was a little concerned about his health. He'd had that heart attack, you know. In fact, he had two bad heart attacks. Most people didn't know that, but he did. He was at Brown's place in Virginia when he had the first one. Then they took him into Washington, and he had another one on the way in.

G: I didn't know that.

N: Oh, he was lucky to be alive. It was much more serious than most people thought, I think. They kind of brushed it off, you know. And of course, finally he died of it. But I

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think that was probably the most prevailing idea when he did not run for the presidency again, the fact that he had this heart condition. I don't see how he stood up under all the pressure he had. Really, it was remarkable.

G: Did he ever ask your advice while he was President on matters?

N: Not directly. I always considered Clark the master politician around there. You know Ed Clark? Clark would always come to me with these things. It always tickled me: Clark would be strong for Lyndon Johnson, and then the next time you would see him, he was a dirty louse. Herman Brown was the same way. They were for him, and then they were against him. He would do something that they didn't like and they would be off of him, but altogether it was just temporary.

G: I guess Ed Clark was one of his close Texas friends for many years.

N: Yes. Clark was just a natural politician. In fact, he was what you might call a political lawyer. I don't think he did a damn bit of law work; he had some good help to do that. But he got the business for the firm.

G: Jesse Kellam did a lot of his business work, too.

N: For Lyndon Johnson, yes. One of the places I met Jesse was up there in Washington with Lyndon Johnson and Jesse and me together.

G: Do you think he kept up his contacts with these old Texas friends very well?

N: Who, Lyndon?

G: Yes.

N: Oh, with Clark and Brown, particularly George Brown. George Brown really thought more like Lyndon than Herman did. Although, Herman was, I guess, my closest friend,

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really. And of course, Wirtz, Herman, and some of those boys like Jim Abercrombie in Houston were good friends of his, although Abercrombie was an oilman and not a politician. And Bill Heath, of course. He had a great deal of respect for Bill Heath's ideas.

G: These people were primarily in private business. Were they considerably more conservative than he was, do you think?

N: Oh, yes. Yes. Heath was a lawyer here, and he was on our Board at the Capital National Bank. So was Clark, and Allan Shivers was too for a while. He got mad about something entirely personal, and he went over to the Austin National Bank, which wasn't quite cricket, but he did it anyhow.

G: Were there ever any problems because of Johnson's liberalism, do you think?

N: Oh, they objected. Nobody can be right all the time. As I say, Clark would be 100 percent for him, and then he would be like a dirty shirt--he was off of him. Brown, too, and all of them. Just what he would do, problems he had, and the way he would solve them--they wouldn't agree with him, and they would get off of him.

G: When was the last time you saw President Johnson or were with him?

N: Oh, I don't recall particularly. He used to come over here to parties we would have. I don't remember just when. Not too much in the last few years, because I kind of slowed up a little myself and didn't get around too much.

G: His health was bad, I guess.

N: Yes, he was taking care of himself. Sometimes we would go out to just a private dinner at the Ranch and sometimes a big barbecue or something, but just entirely social on my

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part.

G: What was he like at these affairs? Was he expansive? Would he tell a lot of anecdotes?

N: Oh yes, he was always interesting, and he always had some incident that he knew about, or something like that. Just like anybody else, something would remind him of something else.

G: I get the impression that he was always trying to get his friends to do something.

N: I tell you one thing: he worked his help to death. Of course, he worked himself to death, too. Anybody who worked for Lyndon Johnson or was with him had to be with him 100 percent. He didn't like any messing around about it.

G: Is there anything else you would like to talk about regarding President Johnson?

N: I think that pretty much covers the waterfront. Oh, of course, there are a lot of little incidents, but they're just incidents, that's all.

G: Well, if there are any that you would like to put on tape--

N: I don't recall anything in particular that I haven't mentioned.

G: I'll stop then.

(Pause in recording)

N: You asked about Lady Bird and her relation[ship] with Lyndon. I would say that I think she was one of the greatest factors in his success. She was always considerate and thought of Lyndon first above anything else and was a great help. I have a tremendous respect for her. I think she did a tremendous job in environmental control and cleaning up the country. She was a great believer in concealing all things that were unsightly, concealing them from people traveling across the country, which included automobile

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junkyards and billboards. She has done a great service here to the City of Austin in cleaning up the Colorado River and Town Lake. I think she takes an untiring interest in that and has done a great service. I think [she] almost single-handedly got the thing into the shape it's in now.

G: I get the impression that whenever there would be hard feelings between the President and one of his friends that she would help to soothe these hurt feelings and repair the--

N: I think so, yes. As I say, she was always working for Lyndon Johnson and very considerate of his . . . After he had that heart attack, she was particularly interested in his health.

G: She was a good campaigner, too, wasn't she?

N: I expect so. I never did consider much that phase of it, but she didn't hurt him any.

G: I certainly do thank you, Mr. Nash.

(End of Tape 1 and Interview)

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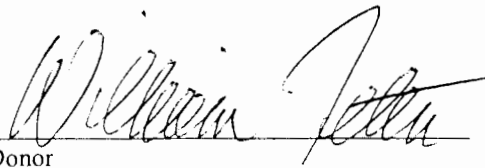
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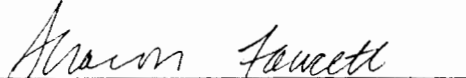
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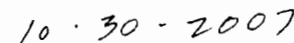
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