INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 12, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: FRANK PACE, JR.

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Mr. Pace's office, 545 Madison Avenue, New York City

Tape 1 of 1

M: You're Frank Pace, and your last full time government occupation was in 1953 when you retired as Secretary of the Army.

P: That's right.

M: Previous to that you had been the Secretary for three years, and prior to that Director of the Bureau of the Budget in 1949 and '50.

P: That is correct.

M: Right. During any of that time, did you come into close contact with then Senator Johnson, or before then?

P: I came to know Senator Johnson before then. I had gone into government in the Department of Justice; and subsequently I became executive assistant to the Postmaster General who was then Robert Hannegan, who was also head of the Democratic National Committee. At then-Attorney General Tom Clark's suggestion, Bob Hannegan took me in to administratively run the Post Office, because he had other responsibilities. He had a considerable closeness with then-Senator Johnson, and through Bob Hannegan, I came to know Lyndon Johnson.

M: I see.

P: In fact, for historical purposes, it was interesting that Bob Hannegan identified four young men whom he thought would make their mark on the American scene. This was back in 1946. They were Hubert Humphrey,

Lyndon Johnson, Estes Kefauver, and de Lesseps Morrison.

M: He was a pretty good prophet.

P: Of the four, only de Lesseps Morrison failed to become prominent on the national scene, and that was because of the local situation in Louisiana that never permitted him to emerge out of the state.

M: He did become prominent there, though, so it was a pretty good prophecy.

P: Well, it was an excellent prophecy. It was through Bob Hannegan that I came to know the then-Senator Johnson and to know him, not intimately, but casually and most pleasantly.

M: Was this mostly social or was it official at the time?

P: No, it was fundamentally social, because in that period my responsibilities with the Post Office did not bring me in contact with Senator Johnson. So it was more of a social nature. I moved with a group that Senator Johnson moved with also, and I came to know him.

M: Do you have a clear impression of what his chief interests [were]?

P: I have a clear impression of Senator Johnson as a man at that time. I think of him in reference to my association with him, which was again not extensive, both as vice president and president. Lyndon Johnson, in those days, was clearly a man who knew exactly where he intended to go. His priorities were obviously very clear in his mind, not only in terms of total priorities, but his priorities in terms of specifics that he sought. He was not a man to waste time. He identified an objective; he saw what it took to achieve the objective; and he organized himself to do it. He was a highly personal operator.

He was a man who moved through his own powers far more than he moved through any institutional or organizational power, and he thought in those terms. As I say, he had clearly defined objectives; he knew what it took to achieve them; and he moved to achieve them. It was because of this real clarity of definition that to a degree he stood apart from his fellows.

M: Did you become involved with him in an official capacity when you were Budget Director, or was it after you were Secretary of the Army?

P: More after I was Secretary of the Army. When I was Director of the Budget, again, in the whole function of the government I from time to time talked with the then Senator Johnson. But I did not appear before him, obviously again, because the Director of the Budget was not subject to call before the congressional committees. But in the operation of the federal government's total funding process you had to talk to a great many senators, a great many representatives, and Senator Johnson was one of the people that I talked to.

M: This is a little bit irrelevant to Johnson personally, but you're in a particularly good position to comment on it. Do you think that the function of the Budget Bureau as you observed it during Johnson's Presidency is essentially different than it was in the days when you were Director of the Budget Bureau? Has it changed?

P: I would say that, while I can't be sure, there was probably a greater degree of participation in the functional requirements of government in my period than in later periods. Mind you, almost all of Mr. Johnson's period had the Vietnamese War tied as an essential factor to it. That meant that a great many of the things on which he

concentrated his attention were subordinated to the prime requirements of a very demanding war.

With Mr. Truman, in the period when I was there which was prior to the Korean War, the management of government, the function of government, the activities of government, were really quite absorbing with him. Since the emphasis lay so much on the domestic scene in that period, I believe that the Budget Bureau played a more intimate role. For instance, prior to the time that I accepted the Directorship of the Budget I asked Mr. Truman that he not make any decision that affected the Budget in a major way without allowing me at least to participate in the discussions before the decision was finalized. To this he agreed, and he stayed with it. Whether that would be possible to do under the more complicated world situation under which Mr. Johnson operated, I would rather doubt. Although I do not definitively know.

M: Of course, when you became Secretary of the Army and Korea did begin, Mr. Johnson was, I believe, with his Preparedness Subcommittee in the Senate. So you must have some rather close contact with him in those days.

P? I did, and all of them, if I may say so, were affirmative. I mean by that that I was in a position to discuss with the chairman the nature of the problems that we faced and the reasons why the problems existed. For the first time in the Army I had established a civilian general counsel, and it was my practice to require the Army to advise in advance of anything on which the Army might be subject to

criticism. This had to be channeled through my general counsel's office. When it was identified, I had him take it to the appropriate committee and indicate the nature of what we knew and to inquire whether this was something they cared to investigate, or whether they preferred to have the Army investigate it and pass on the information.

Because of that practice of exposing in advance, which I always did with the Preparedness Subcommittee as well as the other committees with which I functioned, it was more a question of how we solved the problem than it was of my being identified as delinquent in the process. In those cases in which the Preparedness Committee on its own came up with meaningful determinations, those were again things that we worked out. It was not a period of abrasiveness between the Army and the congressional body, you see.

M: Some of Mr. Johnson's critics later on, I might say, after he had gone on to bigger things, looked back on that period and said, "Well, he was trying to use the Preparedness Committee like Mr. Truman had used it, to gain public attention and so on." You didn't find that to be true?

P: Quite to the contrary. Really, it was very interesting. Wasn't Don Cook the general counsel in that period?

M: Yes, he sure was.

P: Don Cook wasn't oriented in that direction. I mean, if you were looking for that kind of operation you wouldn't have picked a Don Cook, because Cook was a man of real substance and was aiming at

substance. Neither do I remember from a personal point of view, nor do I remember, frankly, as an assessor of public figures, that Mr. Johnson engaged in any form of sensationalism in that committee.

M: Did he have any strong views that he made you aware of about how he wanted the Army to be run?

P: No, no. I think on that he was wise. Wise legislators do not tell operators how to operate. They discover where operators err, point it out, and if they err too often, work to get them the hell out of there.

M: Get rid of the operator?

P: Get rid of the operator, but don't try to tell the operator how to operate. On matters that came up in which we had discussions, he was not hesitant to present a point of view. I always thought a considered point of view. I never felt that it was an unconsidered point of view. My relationships there were really of the highest in that entire period, and I assumed the Army would be more sought after in this regard. Senator Johnson never asked me to do anything as Secretary of the Army about any individual or any situation in his state. I had no requests from him other than what I assume whatever formal ones arose.

M: Yes.

P: But I had no specific identifiable requests of a political nature.

M: Your tenure included the great imbroglio of the dismissal of General MacArthur.

P: Yes, it did.

M: Did Mr. Johnson get involved in any way in that?

P: Not at all, no. No, he didn't. That was so essentially a President Truman-General Marshall decision that if he did it was not in a fashion that brought him into the center of the situation. Knowing Mr. Truman as I do, I'm sure Mr. Truman advised Senator Johnson what was happening, but that came in terms of Presidential-Congressional relationships and not in terms of our Army-Congressional relationships.

M: What about the hearings that later involved Senator McCarthy and the Army? Did Mr. Johnson ever get involved in those?

P: If he did I would not be the best person to identify, because I left, you see, prior to the McCarthy hearings.

M: That's right. They were in early 1954.

P: 1954. This was in the early period after Bob Stevens came in as Secretary of the Army. I believe, unless I'm wrong . . . I don't remember whether he was on the committee that was directly involved there or not. I don't believe he was.

M: I don't think he was.

P: I think that John McClellan was, is my recollection, and Stuart Symington, but I don't believe that Lyndon Johnson was.

M: Then you left government in 1953 to go into private business. Did you have any contact with Mr. Johnson during the years between then and the time he became vice president or the late fifties, or when he was vice president for that matter?

P: None of any substance. I was quite close to Mr. Sam Rayburn, and

from time to time I saw both Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson. But I had no basis for intimacy of dealing in that period.

M: During much of that time you were associated with General Dynamics. Were you a resident of Texas during that time?

P: No. No, I was a resident in New York during that entire time. I traveled both to San Diego and Fort Worth, where Convair had major interests, but I don't believe at any time when I was in Texas at the Fort Worth plant that Senator Johnson was there.

M: Of course, the obvious connection with General Dynamics brings the TFX to mind.

P: Right.

M: Did Mr. Johnson ever get involved in any way with the negotiations or background for that contract at all?

P: Not at all. No, no. I never, frankly, discussed the TFX with Mr. Johnson personally. I'm quite sure if I didn't, nobody else would have. I'm sure he had an obvious interest in seeing it go to Texas. But, you know, people get such funny ideas about the way things are done. In the time I was in government, either I was extremely naive or--

M: I don't think that's likely.

P: Well, it could be. But no one ever approached me suggesting some kind of a deal or a situation of this nature. My observation is that these things are much too big and much too thoroughly examined to be politically moved. You had an enormously strong-minded and I felt impeccable Secretary of Defense. My own sense was that any political

maneuvering in this regard was a negative rather than a positive factor. Therefore, I myself throughthe entire time, I was not there when the TFX decision was ultimately made, but in the time that I was there I never sought Mr. Johnson's help in this regard. Because quite frankly, remembering my own period in government, if somebody had tried to put the political pressure on me to make a major decision I would have been a little inclined to lean the other way.

M: Negative effect, right?

P: Negative effect. I guess there must have been, certainly in smaller areas, politically oriented decisions that put plants in one city instead of another. But in these big situations it was my own personal philosophy that it was unwise and unsound to go in this direction, and it also happened to be my moral judgement as well. The two coincided. But I never discussed the TFX contract.

M: Do you think General Dynamics failed to get its story told on the TFX thing generally?

P: You rarely ever can tell an affirmative story in this society, as you well know. News is historically created by the negative, by the sensational, and the affirmative story tends to appear on about page 124. Once you get off on a gambit like the F-111 or TFX, it's constantly referred to as the "ill-fated" or the "politics-ridden F-111," and when you start off from there your story has to run along that line. Who wants to say, "Well, a pretty good job was done on it." That's not news, as you and I know.

M: Right.

P: So I think the clear answer is that the TFX had problems, as every one of these systems had problems. None of them failed to have problems. Possibly [there were] a few less with the F-111 than with others because it was under such strong observation.

M: It was that.

P: But the ones it had were adequately publicized. The result is that it'll take a long time, if the airplane is what it is supposed to be, for it to prove that fact.

M: After Mr. Johnson became president, he was known to call frequently acquaintances and former friends and so on outside of government for advice. Did he use you in this way?

P: He did, from time to time. As you know, Mr. Johnson--you must have learned certainly this--was a highly personal man. He personalized the presidency more than any other man that I saw there. I saw a good many, as you will recall. I was on Mr. J hnson's foreign intelligence board, so I saw him in that capacity. But also from time to time in coming to the White House, you'd come on one errand, and before you were through Mr. Johnson would have you both engaged in two other errands and ask your advice in a number of areas. He particularly asked my advice about people in reference to appointments. He was always troubled about his inability to adequately fill outstanding spots. I remember one time he produced a paper in which there were seven blank ambassadorships, all of some real importance. And he said, "What do I do about these things?" He asked me about certain people, and I happened to know them reasonably well, and

I gave him my clear appraisal of them. I'm sure he did this with a great many people.

One of his tactics as president was to use associations with people to get judgments, and the result was that he rarely came up with solutions that were presented solely by staff, which I think in a president has real value. Mr. Johnson was not an institutional president in the sense of institutional presidents. He didn't think in institutional terms. His early training in Congress, where you dealt on a highly personalized basis, made a strong imprint on his practice in the management of any situation. He brought that highly personal approach to the presidency. The result was that while he might not have used staff as effectively as he might, he couldn't be led down the primrose path by staff as some more institutional presidents were.

M: Did he have certain criteria for people that he either demanded or that he absolutely prohibited, things that they had to be or that they couldn't be?

P: Well, I think in his presidential period he put great stress on the morality, on the basic morality of the people he was considering. Quite contrary to the public impression, I think his interest lay much less in whether they could be politically trusted than in whether they could be morally trusted. Public impressions grow out of the past, and the public viewed Mr. Johnson as a politically oriented president. My observations of him were that in many instances, because he knew that this was his tag and identification, he walked

well around the target to make sure that this wasn't the basis of decision.

M: That's an interesting observation, not the one that comes through in the public prints.

P: No, not at all. I think he knew his identification. I think he felt it was not a good identification for the presidency, and I think he sought quite consciously to move away from it in many instances, certainly in his selections of people. Now in the conduct of his office itself, I'm not qualified to say.

M: Given your experience, which at least in some ways was parallel to the Vietnam conflict, did he ever ask your advice or solicit your opinions regarding that?

P: He did not. No. He asked quite often on people. But I believe he was so deeply immersed in the Vietnam situation, that despite the fact there were certain parallels with the Korean situation the people he counseled with, and this is wise, were the people who were intimately aware of the inner situation. I think in Vietnam casual advice based on general impressions was really extremely dangerous and was not sought. And in all frankness, had it been sought I would not have given it, because I just wasn't intimately enough informed on it to be qualified

M: You served on several commissions and boards of various kinds. Did any of those involve personal contact?

P: Only to the extent that Mr. Johnson often said to me, "Frank, I very much would like to have you in government while I am here." I said,

"Mr. President, the things I am engaged in, in my estimate, will be of more benefit to you and to the nation than it would be if I were actively engaged." "Well," he said, "Frank, I'm not interested in part-time support, I want full-time." And he actually suggested on a number of occasions that I might undertake certain full time assignments, which I did not do. He did not press me. In other words, you know, Mr. Johnson's reputation for what he set out to get, he got [was not always deserved].

M: Right.

P: He really didn't press me, because I think it was quite clear that I was honest in my conviction. I think he possibly had enough respect for my judgment to believe that maybe I was right. But being Mr. Johnson, he had to have a try at it. He wouldn't have been happy if he hadn't taken a swing at me. (Laughter)

M: Your business that you're currently involved in is one that is closely related to at least one major government activity, AID.

P: That's right.

M: Was Mr. Johnson's AID an agency that a private group such as your own could work with successfully?

P: Oh, yes, without any shadow of a doubt.

M: I see.

P: There is Mr. Johnson receiving us in the White House. (Points to photograph).

M: Right.

P Mr. Johnson felt quite strongly about this. He actually participated

in its origination.

M: Oh, he did?

P: Oh, yes. He, David Rockefeller and Sol Linowitz were the basic original driving forces. I went down originally with David Rockefeller to the White House at the first of these ceremonies, when the program was instituted there. Then each year we had to report to the President. Here's another picture, as you can see, of David and myself talking. No, this was personally a matter of great interest to him.

M: I had not been aware that he had ever been personally involved.

P: Oh, yes. He felt very strongly about this and was really quite proud. As you know also, he appointed me chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

M: Right.

P: Which was a Presidential appointment and confirmed by the Senate.

M: Yes.

P: Again, he had a great personal interest in this area.

M: Did he give you some specific instructions, or ask that certain things be done in this area?

P: No, because in this regard the corporation was specifically set up to be removed from either executive or legislative direction. He understood that fully and never violated it at all. Doug Cater had a great and abiding interest in this.

M: Yes.

P: He kept the President fully informed on it. I remember one time, when

he went down to maybe El Salvador, where he and the President of El Salvador worked out an arrangement for them to establish public broadcasting for educational purposes. He mentioned our own operation up here and his own deep belief in it.

M: Did you ever get involved in any political activity for him, Businessmen for Humphrey and Johnson in '64?

P: No. As a matter of fact, I never have gotten involved in any political activity because of two things. I'm engaged in two areas that essentially need to be nonpolitical, and this my friends have always understood and have not pressed me on it. Prior to that time I always felt that, again, in the broad contractor field major political support was a very bad idea, both for myself and whomever you chose to support.

M: Right.

P: I have not participated. In fact, the only time I ever have is I supported both Senators McClellan and Fulbright in early days, before I became involved in the governmental process.

M: Right, right. I don't want to cut you off. It's kind of hard to prepare for someone who has been out of office for so long. Are there any areas with which you have had contact and about which I don't know?

P: No. I think you've hit the high points. I think you've gotten my sense of Mr. Johnson. He really had remarkable perseverance with the Vietnamese issue. It's always intrigued me, because here was a man who was politically oriented from the very beginning, very

heavily politically oriented. And that should not be taken, as it often is in this country, as a negative remark.

M: Certainly not.

P: We say that, but we don't really believe it, you know. It's one of the weaknesses of the system. We've created a system that can only be managed by politicians, and then we make "politician" a dirty word. It makes democracy very hard to operate.

M: Right. The worst presidents are the worst politicians, frequently.

P: No question about it. For instance, I always thought that Mr. Truman, who was supposed to be a master politician, was in fact only a fair politician and a superb administrator. Whereas he was thought to be a mediocre administrator and a superb politician. He pulled one of the great upsets of our times, but that wasn't because he was a great politician, it was because he was basically a great human being.

M: Right.

P: He just, by gosh, carried his own convictions to the people. Not because of some shrewd political planning, but just because this was a guy who believed and translated that belief into something that people who were yearning for belief caught on to and held on to.

I was going to say, the thing that intrigued me most about Mr. Johnson was that being a politician he had to understand that the Vietnamese War was political anathema for him and to his party. Yet, out of conviction, he stayed with it longer and harder than anybody else has stayed with that kind of situation. So you have to say that Mr. Johnson left his historical pragmatic attitude towards the accomplishment

and became swept up in what was for him a cause. And that cause superseded any political requirements he might have had.

M: It's very nice of you to give us this much time in the middle of your busy afternoon.

P: It's a great pleasure to see you.

M: It's been a pleasure talking to you.

P: Thanks so much.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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