

INTERVIEW IV

DATE: August 25, 1971  
INTERVIEWEE: J. J. (JAKE) PICKLE  
INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ  
PLACE: Congressman Pickle's office, Federal Building,  
Austin, Texas

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F: Mr. Congressman, were you involved at all in the 1956 convention and what went on there? Now, we have on tape already the effort to hold the Texas delegation and the Shivers versus Rayburn-Johnson fight. But Johnson was kind of a dark, dark horse there.

P: Yes, he was, though he had won the May delegation fight to go to the national convention, his possibilities as a presidential or a vice presidential nominee were remote and not very practical.

I was not involved in that 1956 campaign.

F: You anticipated that this was going to be a Kefauver versus Kennedy fight?

P: I'm just not knowledgeable. I can't recall. I was actually involved with Governor Price Daniel and his campaign as governor. We had been in a hard campaign both in the spring and then in the runoff election. At that time, the runoff was into July, and we therefore had been interested in the state campaign and not in the precinct elections. So we were not involved in the Dallas convention, and we weren't involved with the national convention, as such.

We found ourselves in a very awkward position after that

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election. When the governor had been elected as Governor Daniel, we were going to the state convention and we didn't have control of the delegation. That's another story, believe me, all unto itself. But I, working with the Daniel forces, was involved in the state election and I therefore was not a delegate to, nor did I go to the national convention. So therefore I don't really know what they thought were the possibilities, except that Johnson led the delegation, and it in effect gave him the control of the Texas delegation forces for 1956 and 1958.

I really don't think it was much of a fight between Kennedy and Kefauver. Mr. Johnson, as I recall it, actually had put up Jack Kennedy's name as the [vice presidential nominee].

F: He threw the Texas delegation to Kennedy.

P: That is correct.

F: To the surprise of a lot of southerners.

P: Yes, that is correct.

F: But you're not in the middle of all that?

P: No. I don't think it was an anti-Kefauver as much as he just thought Kefauver was too much middle-ground, middle-part of the country, and he really thought that Jack Kennedy had more possibilities, that he was young and a new face. Therefore he just pushed him instead, and came within an inch of doing it.

I may recall this incorrectly, but I believe that John Connally perhaps nominated Kennedy for that.

F: We'll have to check on that.

P: I'm not sure. All things considered, that would be an interesting recollection, wouldn't it, if that were so?



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F: Yes. That's worth checking out.

As you come down toward 1960, did you get a sort of feeling that you may have a presidential candidate on your hands, or was this played low key?

P: It wasn't played low key in the sense that everybody talked in hush-hush terms. Mr. Johnson was very definitely the strongest legislator on the American scene. He had proven his ability working, with Speaker Rayburn, to get bills through which Congress had never been able to pass. The 1958 Civil Rights Act, the first major civil rights acts of any kind were accomplished because of his insistence to the President that this be done. On every legislative front his imprint was placed. So he had to be considered as the ablest and the strongest man in the United States Congress. Now when you have that kind of reputation and there are no proven leaders for the nominee, you have to be one of the persons to be considered. But nobody really thought that it might come about because of the geography more than anything else. There was a good campaign being revved up between Senator Kennedy and Senator Humphrey. Mr. Johnson was just sort of an alternative.

F: As far as you know, he never considered going into primaries?

P: No, not at all. I don't think so. Oh, I think some had mentioned, "Do you want to," but at that point he did not want to be, did not choose to be, refused to be; and instead though, quietly worked with his section and his region who would prefer to be with him just instinctively [more] than they would with, we'll say, Senator Humphrey or Kennedy. It was for that reason that he was encouraged by a lot

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of these southern blocs and some midwestern states to get in and make a pitch for it, because he was such a strong man. I don't think anybody doubted that he was the most effective man on the American scene at the time, so far as knowing Congress and how to get laws passed, and how to be a top administrator. So there was a quiet movement all along to get--

F: Were you doing anything?

P: No. Except that I was then serving as executive director of the State Democratic Executive Committee under Governor Daniel. Then Senator Johnson and Speaker Rayburn had a general understanding that they would go together at the convention and try to present a united front and to get as many other states as they could. Governor Daniel was a popular governor with the various state governors. He had been a U.S. senator, and he and Mr. Johnson were good friends. There was a good working relationship between the three of them: that is, Rayburn, Johnson, and Daniel.

F: Daniel though was in no sense a Johnson protege, was he?

P: No. Not at all. I think Mr. Daniel went to Washington without being a pro or an anti-Johnson man, he just knew him and was a friend of him, and that was about it. But I think when he got there, Mr. Johnson "took care of him." That is, he helped him on committee assignments, he introduced him to key people. Every time they had a meeting or council of any kind, Senator Daniel was involved in it. I think there developed a very strong fondness and respect for each other, and that ripened into an abiding friendship that showed



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itself when he came back and served as governor. Because in many, many instances when something came up that affected both state and federal relationship, before Governor Daniel took action, he would talk to Mr. Johnson to see if there was general agreement about what we, as a state, were to do and how to do it. This included conventions; this included appointments; this included policy positions. So there was a good relationship.

Therefore when we got ready to go to the Los Angeles convention, our state committee was united. We were able, through our conventions in the early part of that year, to get delegates who would be pledged to support our nominee. We agreed to vote under the unit rule in those days. We knew that we would support Mr. Johnson as favorite son. The delegates were almost a hundred per cent united in their efforts. So we went as a body united to get something done at Los Angeles, and there was good spirit and good planning on it.

F: But you didn't really go out there as a part of the Johnson team. You went out there as part of the Texas delegation.

P: No, not exactly. Mr. Johnson wanted me to go and asked me specifically to go, and to help at the convention. Actually, I was the director for the state Democratic committee. And I went to Los Angeles as director or coordinator more or less in charge of the Texas delegation; that is, I was placed over in the hotel with the Texas delegates, and was supposed to look after the Texas delegates.

F: What was that? The Biltmore?

P: No, that was the New International Clark, a fourth or fifth rate hotel. I will not say it was a flophouse, to use polite terms, but

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it was a hotel that had seen better days thirty years before.

F: It was not a luxury hotel.

P: They gave us that hotel, they said, because we insisted, being one of the strongest delegations coming to the convention and being a state represented by a candidate for the nomination, that we were due the consideration of having a hotel near the hotel convention headquarters which was the Biltmore. So they gave us the New International Clark, which was two and a half to three blocks from the Biltmore. But it was an old, dilapidated, horrible hotel, dark, dingy; the beds swayed; the tubs were iron-stained with marks of constant sulphuric acid dripping; the faucet had the small pipes where when you turned on the water it went nearly straight out instead of down; we had wooden shutters that fluttered when you had any kind of a breeze. Many of our delegates came in and took a look at it and just wept because they were such poor accommodations. Now, Governor Daniel and Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn all stayed over at the Biltmore. They had to be right there.

F: They were first-class citizens.

J: So, they were first-class and we were second and third-class citizens. But I must hand it to our delegation. They for the most part took a look at this and said, "Well, we'll show 'em." And they just hunkered up and took it. They then began to laugh about it. We had so much fun thinking about what horrible accommodations we had that we all accepted it and entered into it. I'm telling you, it wasn't just improper accommodations, they were just unbelievably horrible



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accommodations. And we said then, and I guess it was a fact, that we suspected that the Kennedy campaign managers, Larry O'Brien and Dick Maguire and the rest of them, perhaps Bobby [Kennedy], just flat consigned us to the New International Clark.

F: I imagine the hotel itself was a little overpowered by having a big group like that come in.

P: I think they had lost their power, or feeling for having power over power, thirty years before. But it was terrible. But the group did operate closely.

So what I did over there--I got them all located, I knew where they were, we got their passes, their credentials, we'd hold caucuses there at the International Clark, and then go over to the Biltmore. My job was taking orders or instructions from the Biltmore, Mr. Rayburn, Mr. Johnson, Governor Daniel. And then saying, "We need this state worked on. Who can you contact over here?" And we kept feeding information in from our offices in the New Clark to the Biltmore headquarters, which inside was operated primarily by John Connally, and I think they had Jim Blundell.

F: I don't know Jim Blundell.

P: I also think Bobby Baker, at that time, was there. Jim Blundell was a PR man in Texas and is now in Washington. Culp Krueger, Earl Cocke from Georgia, Judge Bob Hall of Dallas, John Singleton of Houston. But our group over at the New Clark tried to put as much muscle as we could into our organization. We had a very interesting and fun time, but we also had a good organization.

F: Let's go back a second. Just a short time before the convention,

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John Connally had opened a Johnson for President headquarters in Washington late in the game, as such things go.

P: Yes.

J: Had you done the same thing here?

P: No, we hadn't. But we, our state delegation, had already voted to support Mr. Johnson for favorite son. We were already committed, and we were already at work from here, but we were not advertised. There wasn't any point in proclaiming a Johnson headquarters, so we didn't operate as such. And actually Mr. Johnson did not want to be identified as a candidate. He felt that the best thing was to go to convention as a man who was not seeking it, who was not an official candidate, and yet who would be "available" if prevailed upon, and yet quietly try to have as much commitment as he could. So we didn't have a headquarters here. At least I was not involved through the state committee, except we were already committed and we were already at work and organized for it.

Now that convention at Los Angeles--I think an interesting thing to remember is that the Kennedy group was not anxious to help our causes, and that's understandable. So we got bad accommodations. Secondly, we tried to get extra passes and badges to get people inside the convention, and we couldn't get them. Normally, you could pick up a handful, you can pick up twenty-five or fifty extra badges one way or another, so your workers and others can get in on the floor. The Kennedy forces were so tight about it they wouldn't give us any extra badges, or just a handful, just a pittance. That



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made us furious. We had charges in the paper and over the radio interviews that we were being discriminated against. People who were in Los Angeles who would hear about it and read about it said, "Oh, that's terrible," but that didn't make any difference to the people who were running the convention because they wanted their friends inside the convention hall. So we were faced with the proposition: how could we get enough people in as delegates, or if it came our time to hold a demonstration, we needed bodies, and we couldn't do it because we didn't have the passes.

So we literally had to resort to what we called the underground movement. We had to literally smuggle people in on the convention floor. Do you know about that?

F: No.

P: This took quite a lot of cooperation on the members' part. A delegate would go inside the convention with a regular badge. Once we got inside, one man would collect half a dozen badges from delegates, put them in his pocket, and he'd go out the door and put the badges on somebody else. Then they'd come in. They'd say, "Well, that's fine." But when you do that dozens of times, that means somebody, mainly me at that time, at different times, had to go back and forth, back and forth, and I'll bet we must have walked twenty-five miles each day trying to walk from way outside to way inside that big colosseum. And the difficulty was that an individual who is at one of those national conventions hesitates to give his badge up almost as if he would to give up his birthright. He just doesn't want to let go of it. Each delegate had to trust the other or trust me or whoever

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had gotten it, that we would gather up the badges and we'd go outside that we'd come back in and get that badge to that person. But we had two or three flare-ups where peoples' badges were lost. One lady, whose name I won't mention, blessed me out good then and two or three times during the convention. It was a very spirited and unpleasant occasion because we did lose some badges. It was inevitable. Of course, we have talked about it now, and we see each other at parties and receptions and we hug each other and laugh because it was an interesting experience. But that's the odds we were working against at the convention.

F: Were you ever apprehended?

P: No, not really. I guess the doorman understood maybe what was going on. All they had to do was account for the badge. But, you see, nobody would know the next person by identity, so if you had a badge on you were entitled to enter. It just took an awful lot of "doing." We had to get set for the morning of the demonstration. We had to go in early and stay late to get our bodies in, but we got them there. They wondered how in the world did they get so many Texans in on that floor. I'll tell you, we started the original underground smuggling movement for delegates, but we got them in there.

The convention was pretty much set, actually. There was a chance, I think at one point, that two or three of the states had come over to Mr. Johnson, but the Kennedy forces had been into these primaries, had gone into the states, they had their people organized on the floor. They had just done their homework, and they were a highly



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professional group who knew what states wanted what, and they had made their deals with them. It was very, very difficult to break the ice. Had we ever stopped the flood and could have halted the steady swing, at one point I think the Kennedy organization would have crumbled. It wouldn't have taken much because, though they had a commitment, if they had been forced into a runoff, I think then we would have had a very good chance. It wasn't just shooting fish in the dark from my standpoint. We were geared and ready to go, and we needed just another hundred votes or two, and we could have swung this around.

F: Do you change opinions after they've already come to the convention?

P: Not often. You change opinion quite often though when you get in either a deadlock or you get into a runoff. That's sort of a new ballgame then, because a lot of them at a convention make promises that they'll give you the votes on the first ballot. After that, with three or four different candidates, you see, a lot of people would be free agents. So the real test was, could you have prevented the Kennedy nomination on the first roll call? If so, then I think we could have been into the thick of it.

I remember one incident, just to show you how much tension there was, because everybody knew that they thought the Kennedys had the votes. And we weren't kidding ourselves, but we had some promises, had they come across, that we might just have stopped this thing. At one stage of the game our delegation was seated, and everybody was wondering what was going to happen. There were rumors all afloat

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that Kennedy wasn't going to get a certain state, or that he was not going to sweep it, but rumors were so fast that you couldn't even keep up with them. In order to keep spirits alive and going, I picked up an afternoon paper that had come out the afternoon before-- it was one of a half dozen newspapers floating around in Los Angeles-- and the headlines, of the day before now, said, "Kennedy Loses Ground." It was a story about some state I think in the Midwest, who was being quoted, but it had no bearing really on the actual convention vote that was underway at that time, and they were just fixing to take a vote, the first vote.

I took the paper then and just had the idea to have a little fun. My group was sitting around kind of listless. I unfolded the headlines and I shoved it out at them, and I said: "Look at this! Kennedy loses ground!" And they began to applaud, the Texas delegation stood up and clapped and whooped and hollered. The network people wanted to know what was going on, and they came running around. The next thing I knew I had the national radio and TV men zeroed in on us holding the headline, "Kennedy Loses Ground!" And that little incident came as near unbuckling the Kennedy people as anything did. It was just a gag, but they were so much on needles and pins then that that type of thing could have happened. It didn't happen. But had we survived the first ballot, we would have been in the middle of that convention fight.

Those of us who were in the delegations and doing the work really, though we may have worked on individual states and we had some



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reconnaissance, the real contact work was done by Mr. Rayburn, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Connally, and the people that were funneling the information between the other states. We just didn't have enough clout to stop the first ballot result.

F: In a case like that does Mr. Johnson sit in his suite and see people as, for one reason or another, they want to see him, or wants to see them? Of did he, too, go out and buttonhole people?

P: For the most part he was in his hotel suite and stayed there. Mr. Rayburn and Governor Daniel had two key seats on the aisle of our delegation row with a walkie-talkie next to them and a phone nearby. It was through Mr. Rayburn and Governor Daniel that most of the information was fed to Mr. Johnson from the convention floor. That's how we kept our contacts. I don't recall that Mr. Johnson ever worked the floor or came down there until after the nomination.

F: So you hold the ballot and the Kennedys have it. What do you do then?

P: When Kennedy received the nomination and it was official, of course everybody in the Texas delegation just quit. And we brought things to a head and everybody went back to the hotel.

F: A lot of Texans went on home, didn't they?

P: Some went home. Some said, "Well, that's it." We were very disappointed because, though we didn't really kid ourselves that we were that close, we knew that had we been able to stop the first ballot that we might have gotten into this thing. And when it happened we said, "That was it," because Mr. Johnson had made it very plain that he

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wasn't interested, of course, in the second position. Had he taken that position, we wouldn't have held any votes because they would have just said, "We'll vote for you for the vice presidency." And had he been a candidate for the vice presidency, he never would have gotten it because the opposition would have been geared against him, and I don't think that would ever have come about. So we went on home, and for the most part everybody said, "Well, that's it."

I don't think there's any need for me to speculate what happened between that late afternoon time when Mr. Kennedy received the nomination and the next morning when his [Johnson's] name was placed in nomination as vice president. The participants can remember that better than I. Most of us really thought it was over with, and that was all of it, and we really did not know that this was a possibility until early the next morning when we were passed the word that Texans should be there for an important caucus just before we went on the convention floor.

F: When you got that word through, you figured that was what it was all about.

P: It had to be. And the word was spread, it was being rumored.

F: But it was the next morning before you had any educated guesses of how things were going?

P: I remember we went to convention that night and went back to the hotel, everybody pretty much went their way and weren't doing any politicking because, from that point on it was a matter that was being worked out primarily by the nominee Mr. Kennedy and his friends and with other delegates. There was some casual speculation, and



some were for it, and some were against it.

F: But you weren't involved?

P: We, the delegates, were not involved. I don't know anybody in the delegation much that was involved unless Governor Daniel was, and, I don't think he was involved until he was called that night or very early the next morning.

F: I haven't gotten there with him.

P: I've forgotten just when he was called and told there was a possibility of it.

F: So you're called the next morning then as part of the Texas delegation to get back over there.

P: That's right. We were informed that we were going to place Mr. Johnson's name in nomination as vice president. Everybody agreed to work and do something about it. Well, nearly everybody. But of course it was a listless sort of group.

F: Who told you?

P: I don't remember. I imagine Governor Daniel advised us that this was going to be done.

F: Johnson didn't personally appear before you.

P: No. I don't remember that he did. At that point it was obvious that anybody who received the blessings of the president[ial nominee] would also receive the selection, because the nominee is entitled to that consideration. That was true this year, and probably will always be true because they run as a team. So it wasn't so much whether we were for or against it. Of course, history knows that this decision of Mr. Johnson's was not a popular decision of the Speaker's, of Governor Connally, or Governor Daniel. I know that Mr. Rayburn was furious about it. He was furious at the Kennedys to think that

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Mr. Johnson wouldn't make a good nominee, but he was also furious to think that Mr. Johnson would give up his powerful majority leadership to be a roving ambassador as vice president. And he didn't think that that was the thing to do. He did not like it and expressed himself in a very sour, firm manner. Connally was even more vehement about it because he was personally unhappy with the Kennedys, and he sure didn't think that it ought to be done. As I recall, Governor Daniel did not like it but reasoned a little bit more moderately. He's sort of a moderate person. I think he reasoned a little more that it might work out all right. And I think he probably recalls that he advised that it would be all right to go ahead and accept this nomination.

The delegation really didn't have very strong feelings. Some thought he ought to, some thought he wouldn't, some took it as a little bit of a peace offering to us because we were heartbroken.

F: You did your work as a display of loyalty rather than any great enthusiasm.

P: Yes. I think that is a fair statement. We did get into it more in spirit as the nomination was made and as we approached the time because some of the labor leaders, some of the more liberal delegates, some of the candidates that had been defeated, said, "Johnson will make a terrible vice president." This began to make us mad so we began to get our fight back, and we began to get our spirits.

F: Part of it is the sheer competitive urge.



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- P: Yes. I don't know whether it would have made any difference because when the President said, "We want Mr. Johnson," and his men said, "Okay," then it was a matter of whether the states said, "Let's do it."
- F: Did you go talk to other delegations?
- P: Yes, we moved around as best we could to the delegations. Now, let me tell you! It's not easy to move around and talk to the other delegations. People think, by watching television, that you move over and talk to one state and then another state. In the first place, you've got a huge auditorium that literally has got a "million" people inside of it. You can't move up and down the aisles. You can't move about. You couldn't go a hundred yards across the convention floor to get to another delegation without just a real effort. And when you did, it would take you twenty minutes to get back.. So you pretty much had to have your own key person, i. e. a person is assigned to a delegation, or in key places in the hall, say, one man was a talker and he was to cover four delegations within that area, and through our walkie-talkie we could talk to him. He'd go and talk to the person of the state and send a message back, more than individuals roaming the floor. We did some of that, but you're rather limited in your ability to get about. There is little if any maneuverability at a national convention on the floor. It's just not[possible]. Forget it! You're in a big mob and that's about all you can do.

Our delegation was split on it. Some thought that Mr. Johnson ought

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to take the nomination, some thought not. But our sense of loyalty said, "Let's do it." I remember, I think Ronnie Dugger asked me, "Are you going to support the nominee?" and I said, "You bet. I'm supporting the Democratic nominee of president and the vice president." He was questioning would we, Texas, support Kennedy! I told him, and it got quoted in his column that I would do it. I felt that night that we had lost the battle--the first night--and that I was going to support the nominee. And I certainly knew we were going to when they put Mr. Johnson on the ticket.

But it was an interesting convention. Our delegation had a good time, and they worked hard at it under adverse conditions. It just shows you again though what happened when, by the decision made that Mr. Johnson would take the nomination, when he said that he would do it.

F: Did you ever meet with Mr. Johnson personally at Los Angeles?

P: Yes. We'd go into some of the rooms. At times we'd go over to the Biltmore, and in my position I could go in and out of those rooms and get to talk and visit a little bit. But I wasn't "mixing medicine" on the level that I was any policy decider. Mine was more visitation and coordination. Or if we had to plan a big reception at the Texas delegation headquarters--we had one room at the Biltmore then--I would have to get all our people over there to greet all these other people. When Mr. Johnson and Mr. Kennedy had this debate before the balloting ever started, the day before, we had to get all our delegation there, and then we had to get them into the Debate Room. The Kennedy people had to get theirs into the meeting hall. Of course,



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here again they had badges and they could fog their people in, and then we had to, secondly, smuggle people in again, you know, even in the Biltmore. But we got them in the room in big numbers.

We had a working delegation. We didn't have all the states lined up, but our delegation--every member, nearly, had an assignment to work on a certain state or with certain couples.

F: Who made the assignment?

P: Primarily I, working with the Governor and the offices in the Biltmore. Of course, the leaders were out there earlier. They got there early enough to know where everybody was staying. And each one would have assignments. For instance the delegation from Dallas, Judge Robert Hall had the Alabama delegation, and we'd keep in touch with him. Now, the Alabama delegation was out in Los Angeles somewhere, ten miles away. So Bob just stayed with them. And let me tell you, he stayed with them! Alabama incidentally is one of the states that went with Mr. Johnson, and stayed with him all the way. I think it was a tribute to the fact that they knew Bob Hall, and he went over there, and they trusted him. Alabama didn't feel like they had much place to go, and so they just stayed with LBJ all the way. But that was an example of a delegate being given an assignment and delivering. Judge Hall really produced. Others had several assignments and couldn't produce, but it wasn't their fault. But we made a lot of good friends, and had we gone into a runoff, then I think we could have had a payoff. Just didn't quite make it.

F: What did you do after the convention? Come on back?

P: Yes. First I tried to pay our bill, and I tried to get money back

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from rooms that they were charging us and which were not occupied. But I had to settle the bill. And I figured that they owed us some four to six hundred dollars. I couldn't get them to give us any money because they didn't have any money. That's the truth of the matter. We threatened to sue, and I even turned the lawsuit over later to Lloyd Hand who was an attorney out there then and tried to get him to handle it. He had to tell us he didn't think we had any chance. They charged you for everything. They would give you credit for nothing. That hotel, I think, went out of business about the same time we left town. But I stayed over a day or two, just trying to mop up, getting things together, and getting all the files and all the records. That was the most unpleasant part of the whole thing-- just mopping up under those conditions.

F: Like cleaning up after a party.

P: But I came on back. Now, some of the others left early.

F: What did you do with the records incidentally?

P: They're at the State Democratic Executive [Committee] headquarters, I'm sure. That's where we brought them, and I guess they're still there as part of the files now.

Some of the people left early because they thought it was over with. Some were mad and said, "I ain't going out to the Convention Hall or have anything to do with it." Some, as soon as he got the vice presidential nomination, flew off. I think Connally went to Nevada or some place, and he had a good pout on. He was very unhappy about the whole thing. Mr. Rayburn disappeared. They all just broke up.



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F: Did Mr. Sam become reconciled while he was there, or did he still. . .?

P: I don't think he was really very happy. He was willing to take it when Mr. Johnson said, "We'll do it," but not until that point. Once LBJ said okay, he certainly wanted to be sure that they couldn't give us the double embarrassment of not taking Mr. Johnson, so he was pushing for it at that point. He began to see though that there was a reason for it.

All of this just shows, again, that Mr. Johnson, when he accepted the V.P. nomination, he had smarter judgment than all of us, because he recognized that this had potential. He had lost the presidency, and he knew his job as majority leader would not be the same. And if he stayed as majority leader, he'd be in the position perhaps of feuding with the new administration itself, or choosing what he wanted to push and what he didn't. That would have put him in an awkward spot, so really it was better, and he knew that.

Many of us were feeling our emotions. All of us like to say, a lot of us, "We thought it was all right, and we pushed for it." That's not true. I honestly can say that I think I was one of the few who thought it was the thing to do; at least I was willing to accept it, and said so to Ronnie Dugger. The leadership though did not easily accept it and were not happy. But they became happy and each week as it went by got happier about it, and accepted graciously, and then put spirit in it.

F: What did you do during the campaign?

P: I was with the State Democratic Executive Committee. By and large we took care of our state; that is, we would go into different parts of Texas holding rallies. We'd hold elections. Our problem was to

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get out the vote as much as anything because if we could do that, we could carry Texas. It wasn't easy, though, in those days to carry Mr. Kennedy in Texas.

F: The religious issue was real in Texas.

P: You bet. Until Mr. Kennedy came to Houston and held that debate.

F: Did that clear the air as much as it seemed to?

P: Yes, I think it did. It was the first time they had ever had, I suppose, a presidential debate or interview on the Catholic religion the issue. You see, Mr. Kennedy was being interviewed by various ministers. It wasn't just part of a program; it was the program.

F: It wasn't a set-up.

P: I don't remember ever in the history of the country where you had a nationwide television broadcast on one subject: could you trust a Catholic as president! He answered the questions forthrightly, gave them positive answers. And though you would see him and you'd say, "Well, I don't believe him," you had to know that's what he said because you saw him being interviewed. He gave straightforward answers, and he was quick, and he was able. This satisfied a lot of people, at least in Texas. It didn't make them happy, but it erased a lot of prejudice. It gave us a chance to go to work then. And it took that. That was an interesting story.

F: Why did he do it in Texas? Do you have any idea?

P: No, I'm not sure. Except there was some kind of ministerial convention being held in Houston at the same time he was there, and it was kind of a logical thing. If I remember right, Mr. Lloyd Hand was one of the representatives in Houston. You see, Lloyd Hand had come from Houston, that was his home. He was on Mr. Johnson's staff for many years.



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and he was sent to Houston as an advance man and he completed arrangements for the broadcast. I think he arranged it originally; at least Mr. Johnson and the Kennedys thought that this would be an interview where religion would be one of a number of topics discussed. Before the arrangements were finished up, by negotiations going back and forth, it was finally decided that this would be an hour program almost solely on this one issue. As I recall it, Mr. Johnson got very unhappy about it, and he expressed himself strongly to Mr. Hand and told him he thought this was a bad mistake. But by that time, Lloyd had been given clearance by different ones to go ahead and proceed and he had set it up, and they had to go ahead with it. I know because Lloyd Hand came to Austin and asked me about it, and how to handle it. I told him I thought he had done right, i.e. had carried out orders.

F: But they couldn't withdraw.

P: No. It had to be held. Mr. Johnson was not happy about it, and berated Lloyd about the arrangement of it; thought that Mr. Kennedy would be very unhappy. But the broadcast was held, and actually had as much to do with the election of John Kennedy as president as any other one thing that happened, not just in Texas but in the whole country, because this went all over the United States. It was an honest, straightforward answer of a man who said, "Here's my position, and this is what I'll do." And people, in a sense of fairness, [thought] "I believe that's right." So the Catholic issue got to be less of a problem from that point on. It was always a problem because of the Baptists.

F: Who was calling the shots in Texas on who went where? You all

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were fanning out over the state and drumming up your crowds and so forth. Who decided?

P: Primarily Governor Daniel. Of course by that time Mr. Johnson was covering all of the United States. I don't remember what Mr. Connally was doing at that point; I think he made a few appearances. He finally got in right at the last and helped, as I recall it, but I'm not sure. But he wasn't operating from the State Democratic headquarters. Governor Daniel more than anybody had the job of the campaign. Now, we did set up headquarters here, you know, and I then went over and took part of the headquarters' office here with others like Bill Moyers and people who came in here to set up the campaign. We had headquarters over at the Littlefield Building. We were maintaining our contacts not only in Texas but in the neighboring states. But we with the state committee fanned out all over the state and had our meetings in different places, particularly when Mr. Johnson came down and made several appearances in the state. He made four or five in one and a half days, and this got the state moving. We didn't carry it but by about forty thousand votes. It was that heated and that close. So it took a lot of work to carry Texas.

F: What happens to Jake Pickle's business at a time like that?

P: You just absorb--

F: Do you suspend, in effect, your other clients, or do you have enough staff that they can go on in their direction, or is this it? Total.

P: That's it. Total! You have about a fifteen to sixteen hour day of dedication to that job under those conditions. I was working for



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the state committee but I also had a public relations agency at the same time. I didn't do a snapping finger's worth of business during those days. No way to! I just pitched in because the Governor said we ought to do it, and I was on his staff and not Mr. Johnson's staff, but with a lifetime relationship with Senator Johnson I sure wanted to do my part. So I just gave in and gave full-time on it without pay. I was just receiving what help I got from the state committee and that was it. Mr. Johnson was mindful of that, and he remembered it afterwards.

F: Did the Governor and the vice presidential candidate pretty well see eye-to-eye on campaign tactics in the state?

P: Yes. We were not trying to second-guess what ought to be done. We were just trying to help. So the headquarters in the Littlefield Building would say we ought to do these things and asked us can we do this, and could we set up. And the Johnson people and our people were much the same.

F: Did the Kennedy people pretty well leave Texas to the Johnson-Daniel group?

P: Yes, they did.

F: They didn't try to run it?

P: Not at all. They reasoned that Mr. Johnson had to carry his own state and was in a far better position to do it than they could. They were just hoping that he could. Actually Mr. Johnson, because of his leadership and because of his strength, carried this great bloc of the southern states without which Mr. Kennedy would never

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have gotten in the White House. So it turned out to be a good gamble for President Kennedy and a good arrangement for then Senator Johnson. Nobody knew just how it would work, but it sure worked that way.

F: Do you have any insight into John Connally becoming secretary of the navy?

P: No, I do not. I think that was something handled between Mr. Johnson and President Kennedy. I do not.

F: Were you involved at all in Johnson's sort of advocacy of Henry B. Gonzalez for congressman?

P: You mean when he ran for Congress?

F: Yes, the first time. You know, they brought in Cantinflas.

P: Well, I remember something about it. Mr. Johnson wanted very much to see Mr. Gonzalez elected, offered him all the help he could. Mr. Gonzalez had sure delivered for him in San Antonio during the election, and he wanted to return the favor, and he had a personal fondness for Henry. So he went to San Antonio. I had this connection: Cliff Carter, I think, called me one day and said, "Now, what can we do in San Antonio? We want to help Henry Gonzalez." He wanted to know my ideas on what kind of a campaign or party or speech we could make and so forth: "What could we do about it?" Cliff said, "If you were doing the promotion, what would you do?" This was before Cantinflas came down. I reasoned that the best thing you could do for Henry was to show your personal affection for him more than just appearing at a political rally. I suggested what he could do: Mr. Johnson come down



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and go to Henry's home and have a little rally or a little personal visitation there. Now I reasoned that the Mexican-American personality would say, "He came to mi casa," mi casa su casa. But Henry didn't have a home or yard or place at that time that really would be big enough or located right. So, as I recall it, Mr. Johnson then went to Henry's brother's home. He was a doctor or some official there. So he [Johnson] did that. He went down and paid a personal call at his home which I think put an edge to people in San Antonio; that is, they just thought and I think it was a good thing to do, personally a tribute to Henry, as well as offering him help politically. Then he appeared with him on the platform and made a speech, and went over San Antonio in the right parts of town at the right hour to show his support. So he did give Henry a big boost and showed Henry that he appreciated his loyalty.

Incidentally those two have been loyal friends. Whenever Mr. Johnson wants to go to San Antonio to get anything done, he gets in touch with Mr. Henry B. Gonzalez. And if he wanted to get anything when he was president, he'd call on Mr. Henry B. Gonzalez. It wasn't easy to locate him. He used to tell Henry, "Henry, I can get hold of the Pope a lot quicker than I can find you," because Henry's hours are a little erratic, believe me. He reads late and works late at night. He'll come in late, or he'll work from his room. Henry doesn't like to go there in the office and be available to every person who comes in who has got every

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problem, because he's working on other matters, studying and reading them. So his hours are a lot different than anybody else's. But you're right, Mr. Johnson sure did go to San Antonio and help Henry Gonzalez.

F: Going back a minute, as you know, the special election to fill in for Johnson's old senatorial seat got out of hand in one sense with that multiplicity of candidates, so that really you couldn't vote very intelligently; and as a result we got completely confused. Finally it got down to a runoff between Blakley and Tower, and Tower won the thing which put the Republicans in the Senate from Texas for the first time. Did Mr. Johnson not try to contain the candidates? Did he ignore that election completely?

P: I don't remember what part he really played.

F: I'm sure he's interested in who his successor is, but I never saw his hand anywhere.

P: He supported Senator Blakley when Mr. Blakley was the nominee very much. He supported him.

F: But in the primary.

P: The primary, I don't think he took an active part in. I don't believe he took an active part in it particularly. He got along with Senator Blakley well and respected and liked him, but I don't think he was involved.

F: Was it anticipated by Governor Daniel or by Senator Johnson when Blakley got that interim appointment that he would come out and run for a regular term? Did that kind of catch everybody off guard?



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P: Yes. It's my recollection that Senator Blakley wasn't particularly interested in being a candidate. And when he decided he was going to be a candidate, it changed a lot of the planning. It changed Governor Daniel too, because Governor Daniel had actually appointed him originally. He was friends with Senator Blakley naturally because Blakley had been a big supporter of his. Governor Daniel had to support Senator Blakley, and he really supported him more than I guess Mr. Johnson did. I don't remember what Mr. Johnson did during that election.

F: Did you consider running?

P: Oh, no.

F: Did you see much of Mr. Johnson during the vice presidential years?

P: Yes, quite often at the Ranch when he'd come home. I didn't have any business in Washington really except when I would go up on business with the Texas Employment Commission. I became a commissioner and was appointed in December of 1960, that fall, and then took over in the first part of 1961. When I'd go to Washington I would be invited out quite often to his home at The Elms; we'd have a party and reception out there, or they'd have me to the Capitol for dinner. We've had two or three or more luncheons in the Capitol right off the Senate floor. The Johnsons were always very kind and gracious to me.

One thing about that man: he will remember favors. You do something for him or his family, and he'll salt that remembrance away, and he'll turn around and he'll do ten things for you in payment back.

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Now while he's doing those ten, he may get in a little feud with you, and he may fuss at you, and he may cuss at you, and have a little pouting spell going on there. But he'll still come back and he'll do ten times as much for you as you've done for him. There's something about him. I guess growing up as a boy, he was poor and he didn't have any acceptance or any means, and I guess he always remembered. You know, he was that way. He was a poor country boy from the hill country and when somebody did something nice for him or his family, it touched him.

To give you an example: He knew that I was working for Governor Daniel and my loyalty was with him because I was working on the state Democratic committee. He also knew that I loved him and that I was really one of his boys that he had picked up and got into the business, so to speak. And I don't think he ever doubted my loyalty and love and respect for him. So when he got in the campaign I always left whatever I was doing, and I was always involved in some way. When we went to Los Angeles, I could have, I guess, let somebody else go to Los Angeles, but he wanted me to go out there to head up the direction of that delegation. Governor Daniel wanted me to go up there as the working head of it. I wasn't the policy head, but I was the force that kept our people together. So I was pleased to do it.

When I came back from the convention and we got in the election here, although I was still representing the state committee, I went over to the state headquarters. So I worked full time for the committee. I didn't want any money, I just put in my time. So I shaped up the



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schedule, that is, where we made appearances in Texas. Nobody should be misled that I alone chose the cities and the time and place because, believe me, Mr. Johnson chooses those times and places. And only in a few instances will some of us take the liberty of changing without checking with him. You have to make decisions sometimes. But for the most part, you make your offers and somebody checks it with him. Instinctively the candidate knows best, believe me. You'd better check him. Well, I worked over there, and I didn't receive any pay on it, didn't want it, because I wanted to make my contribution, first, to Mr. Johnson and then my party, or vice versa, in any order you want to take it.

When it was all over with, Mr. Johnson remembered it and called on me personally to thank me. It wasn't long after the election that I got married. It was a small family wedding, just ten or twelve people, my family and Beryl's family who came down for the wedding, just a handful. And, bless you, in walked the President of the United States and Mrs. Johnson "uninvited" to shake hands and to sit on the family front pew of the First Methodist Church. And they went out to our reception at Walter and Frances Benson's, Beryl's sister. He was the only non-family member there. Well, I was intensely impressed and proud because we weren't trying to keep him from coming, or anybody else, but it was a family wedding. But that shows you now, though he was a busy man and he was the vice president, he always remembered his friends. In this case I had pitched in and helped for a couple of months hard, did all I could on the election, just to do it as a contribution of my own. He wouldn't

let it rest at that, he wanted to tell me how much he appreciated it. As we left the church, he shook hands with me and slipped me a check for \$1000.00 for services! I could tell you stories on end of just that kind of response.

When they'd have people in to the Ranch, when he'd have down Senator Russell or any of the senators whom he loved and respected, and he had them down all the time, usually he'd have some of us come up from Austin if we could, and join him. And quite often I was included in those numbers. So I kept in touch, just as a friend at that point, though I was with the Employment Commission. And that lasted for nearly three years until I made this fateful decision to run myself for Congress.

F: Let's talk about how J. J. Jake Pickle became a politician.

P: You mean a candidate for Congress?

F: A candidate.

P: I was the employer representative on the Texas Employment Commission and was enjoying my work very much. I gave myself wholeheartedly to it and worked long hours and felt like I was making a contribution. I was happy with my work. The TEC group there in the TEC Building were a great organization, and I felt that as a team we were probably as close a group of friends as I ever had, so I wasn't looking for something else. I was very happy and very proud to be working with that group.

When it was announced, however, that Mr. Thornberry was going to be appointed federal judge, of course speculation became rampant about who was going to run. Some people began to get speculated on real early. One of those on the Democratic side was Jack Ritter, who had called me about it, and I told him that I thought he'd make a



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good candidate and that he ought to give it serious consideration.

F: Did Charlie Herring ever talk to you about it?

P: Yes, I talked to Charlie Herring, and I talked to Gene Fondren, I don't know how the rumor got started, but I think [TEC] Commissioner J. E. Lyles, Ed Lyles, probably began to tell some people around town and leaked to the paper that I ought to be a candidate. Ed and I had worked together at the commission and liked each other very much. So I think Ed probably leaked it out as much as anybody. It got into print. Then you're automatically in the position of saying, "Yes, I will," or that "I won't."

I don't know what kind of brought me to the decision. I had worked the Tenth District as an aide to Mr. Johnson for years and years in one way or another, as either an NYA employee or with the state committee. So I knew the Democratic leaders and some of the leaders in the towns and knew them for fifteen or twenty years, knew them well. I had worked with them. Usually when Mr. Johnson wanted to get something done, or a crowd or a barbecue or something promoting the district, he'd call me, among others, but primarily me, and I'd get it attended to. So I knew that I had friends and I had connections out in the district. And I thought maybe I could be a good candidate. But, you see, when you become associated with the State Democratic [Executive] Committee and you head up the organizational work that decides who is going to be delegates and who's going to serve as party officers and who gets thrown out of the convention and who gets attacked or who gets concentrated on,

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then you get to be a "hatchet man." I got to be a hatchet man; that is, I got termed as the man who was the fellow calling the signals, and who was really doing the work. Well, I'll admit to some forcefulness in some of those actions because if you've got a job to do and your boss man the Governor says, "Let's do this," you do it! And you don't do it in a pussyfooting manner. You get it done. So I always felt that I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. In the process though I got labeled as hatchet man.

You might remember, I don't know whether I told you, but in one of the campaigns I was so cut up that I was trying to join hands with the Democratic National Committee to put on a fund-raising drive in Texas. It was called "Dollars for Democrats," the theory being that if one dollar was paid by every person, then everybody could put it in the big pot, and the big corporations wouldn't have to carry the load. We're still having problems, incidentally, about how to finance campaigns. But that was an idea advanced back in about 1958. So I told them I'd help on it. And I tried my best to get liberals, conservatives, labor, management, all together and say, "Now, let's go in. We'll take 20 per cent, the national committee will take so much, the district will take so much, and we'll split it any way you want to." I tried to sell the so-called liberals or the Democrats of Texas. They wouldn't have any part of it. I began to hold meetings around through our committees and tried sincerely to advance the idea. They started a little slogan. I think Alex Dickey of Denton probably started it.



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But they started a slogan that said, "Dollars for Democrats, but not a Nickel for Pickle."

F: Right.

P: And I was given that image. Three years on the commission! That was one reason I took the job with the Texas Employment Commission because I felt like that I was becoming more controversial than the candidate. So as a consequence--

F: You wanted to get a low profile for a while, didn't you?

P: Yes. I ought to get out of the controversy. So that's one of the main reasons why I went over to the Employment Commission. I hesitated for some time when Governor Daniel offered the TEC job to me, wondering if it was the thing for me to do. But I was glad later of course that I did go. But because of that previous service with the state committee, I had received a lot of scars. And some people felt that I was so cut up that I couldn't be elected. I had some people willing to work hard for me, but some said I was too cut up because of other campaigns, not mine. But I had that image. And there was a certain amount of fact to that.

I talked to the then-Vice President and he did not give me any particular encouragement--I might say less than encouragement--to run.

F: He didn't offer to help.

P: The public will think that I was his candidate, and, believe me, that is not the fact. I talked to Congressman Thornberry, who was my very close and dear friend and who I had visited with on a personal basis probably more when he came to Austin than anybody

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else. We just loved to get together and visit and talk, play Pitch, and have a relaxing time. I remember Congressman Thornberry told me, "Now let me tell you something about this job. There are a lot of people that think there's a lot of glamour to it, but you remember, this is damned tough." And he'd repeat it and use a little more colorful language. He says, "It's a mean job, and the fun of being a congressman is a thing of the past. Everything that is going to be done from now on, you've got to choose sides, you've got to choose friends, you're going to be publicized, and it's going to be difficult. So don't think you're walking into a pleasant thing. It's a big challenge, a big opportunity, but it's damned tough." And I can still hear him bellowing that out to me on the phone to impress me. But I wasn't listening to it really because by then I had had a lot of people call me thinking I ought to run.

I think one of the things that made me run was they had a poll and it showed that I didn't have much acceptance in a race for Congress; I had a mighty low acceptance. Others at that point, Senator Herring and I guess Jack Ritter and others had a higher standing than I would have received. So I had to decide whether I wanted to run or not and how bad.

I talked to the Vice President and his people, and they did not give me any encouragement because they thought maybe I was too cut up, politically. I think that fact bristled me more than any other thing. They didn't say, "Don't do it, it would be a mistake."



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But "they" would tell somebody else that maybe they ought to tell me that I was pretty cut up. I don't know whether that meant they wanted to support somebody else or they thought I couldn't make it, but they were kindly saying they didn't know whether I'd have a chance. I know Mr. Johnson wanted me personally, but he kept trying to decide if I could win. It made me mad to be counted out on the basis of scars that I might have picked up in other campaigns. And I think that was the one thing that encouraged me to go ahead and to get into this race.

Now I did talk to Senator Herring and I did talk to Gene Fondren, who was a member of the state legislature at the time. And I offered to Fondren, because it has been rumored that he might run, that I--

F: Gene is from where?

P: Taylor. I, in effect, said to Fondren, "If you're going to be a candidate, I don't think I'd give any further consideration to it." Fondren said, "No, I'm not a candidate, and if I'm not a candidate, I'd support you." Fondren and I had an understanding about the race. I also talked to Senator Herring to see if he was going to run because I didn't want to be challenging Charlie Herring who was my friend and who would have made a strong candidate. But when Herring said he would not be a candidate, wasn't going to run. He had a good law practice just starting for the first time, and he didn't want to break that up. The salary then wasn't much-- I think \$18,000. Herring was making better than that, and so he didn't want to be a candidate. So when Herring and Fondren

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said they didn't want to, and when some of Mr. Johnson's friends were saying, "Well, I believe you're just too cut up," that's when I about decided that I was going to be a candidate.

Now I don't want to leave the impression that Mr. Johnson wasn't for it, because, though he may have felt that Ritter would have been a young, energetic campaigner and a good congressman, I think he also felt that he had years of friendship and dedication and would really want to help me any way that he could. Until the issue was settled of who was going to be the nominee in the runoff, either me or Ritter as against Dobbs--

F: As far as you know he never took a part in any primary, did he?

P: No, I don't think he tried to get in openly. I'm just sure he passed the word to a lot of people up and down the road that Jake Pickle was his friend. He didn't have to. Everybody accepted that because they just assumed, I guess, that I was his candidate. That was not so, because he played it rather impartially and I'm sure though helped as much as he could and as he could.

An interesting story that took place, as I recall it, President Kennedy came to El Paso in September for a Democratic meeting. And Mr. Johnson was there as the vice president. At that time it had already been announced that Mr. Thornberry was going to retire and was going to be appointed a judge. So the speculation was around of who would run. One evening, just before the banquet took place, Mr. Johnson was going down to the banquet hall. Too many people got stuck in the elevator, and the elevator gradually



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sunk down toward the basement and got lodged, and they couldn't get them out and couldn't get them up either way. It was just stuck. And while he was talking in the elevator, was visiting with John Connally. He had a little conversation in an elevator with fifteen or twenty people, and they were there for thirty minutes or an hour, however long it took, and so he naturally had a conversation back and forth. And you talk rather freely in a small group, and you're just talking and jostling. It happened that a reporter was on the elevator, and he was listening to it. He couldn't hear everything, but he heard enough to say that it was rumored and it was discussed on the elevator by Mr. Johnson and Mr. Connally that "Merrill" Connally ought to run, but that his wife thought it might not be all right, so "Merrill" wasn't too happy about it. You'd have to encourage Merrill as a candidate.

And the next day in the paper, the question mark on the headline was: "Johnson to Campaign for Connally's Brother?" And that brought up all kinds of question marks because this reporter was quoting what he heard on the elevator, and the speculation was why would Johnson be trying to support Merrill Connally in the first place. Merrill Connally lived in another congressional district in Floresville. Merrill Connally was then a county judge. They figured how could Merrill be in there. Said, "Well, he's going to come up here and run. Maybe somebody's going to resign." And they speculated all kinds of things about how "Merrill" Connally could be convinced that he ought to run.

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That wasn't what Mr. Johnson was saying. What he was actually saying was that he really thought that Jake would be a good congressman if Beryl would be for it. Beryl happens to be my wife. We hadn't been married very long, and nobody in public life was thinking who was Beryl, and this reporter thought he said "Merrill." So for two days the speculation was rampant that Johnson was trying to push Connally's brother Merrill into the congressional race. The Austin paper was full of it.

I knew what had been said and who they were for. The local paper called me and asked me for a comment. And I thought my reaction ought to be a forceful one to show, one, independence, and secondly, that I wasn't cut up too much either! I was going to prove my point. So I gave the Austin American a quote, I think I gave it to Dave Shanks. But at any rate I said, "I haven't made up my mind. I think I'm going to run. But when I do, I'll announce it to the public so everybody will know. I won't make my announcement from a falling elevator. I'm not a kingmaker, nor have anything to do with kingmakers."

Mr. Johnson exploded. He nearly died when he read that because he thought I was demagoguing a little bit, you know, because he was trying to, I think, be helpful, and felt he was. But here I was publicly taking him to task.

When John Connally read that in the paper, that I was quoted saying I wasn't going to make my announcement from a falling elevator, he was in Houston. I'm told that he fell back on



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the bed and laughed and grabbed his sides and laughed and hit the wall, and thought that was the funniest thing that ever was.

The public doesn't know this; that the real personality of that little episode was my wife Beryl, and the issue was whether we could convince her; that she wasn't for it and you had to work on her and not Merrill. And I'll bet dozens of times since then, Mr. Johnson has said, "Now, Jake will always tell you the truth. Every now and then he'll demagogue. If you just bring up the subject about an elevator, he'll demagogue on you there." And he'll wax off in one of his stories.

F: I imagine Merrill was mystified.

P: He was totally confused and didn't know how to answer it, of course.

F: You and Jack Ritter were not personally obnoxious to each other?

P: Not at all.

F: You were acquaintances anyhow.

P: Jack's daddy and I have been good friends for many, many years, fraternity brothers. I wasn't against Ritter, and I had really told Ritter that he would be a good candidate. And he was a good candidate. So it wasn't a matter of personal opposition to him. But I felt that a man either has to decide to either fish or cut bait sometime if he ever ever wants to get into a race. And I felt that if I ever wanted to do anything like that, this was my chance. If I made it, well and good. If I didn't, then I'd go on about my business and I wouldn't have any regrets. Because usually in the political business, the

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brass ring comes around once. You grab it or you miss it. Very seldom in the political world does it float around a second time for you. So if you have a desire to do it or think you can serve, you've got to offer yourself and then get with it. If you make it, fine; if you don't, then you have to accept it. And you've got it out of your system a little bit. The bug bites, and it's a big bite when it does.

F: Okay. Now you and Jack ran a close race. You won the primary. That puts you in against Dobbs.

P: Well, it wasn't a primary. It was a special election. It was Ritter, Dobbs and myself.

F: It was close though between you and Jack. Dobbs had the Republican vote sewed up.

P: Yes, it was close between all three of us. I led the ticket, Dobbs was second, and Ritter was third. Therefore, I went into the runoff with Jim Dobbs rather than Ritter. Ritter came in third. But there were about fifteen-hundred votes separating the three candidates; I suppose I was about fifteen-hundred votes ahead of Dobbs, and Dobbs was about fifteen-hundred votes ahead of Ritter. In a special election that was a fairly close race. We all had put on good campaigns, and that put me then into a runoff with Dobbs.

F: And it makes a clear-cut issue of a Republican versus Democrat for the first time.

P: Republican versus Democrat, although it was a special election, and you didn't run with party labels. You just ran. You had to advertise it as such, but people knew.



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Now, you've got to remember in those days the Republican conservatism had a great surge to it. If not Birchism, it was close to it. They were against government. Bruce Alger and his group, the state organization was strongly organized on the conservative lines. They were going to stop a lot of this spending and just change the whole direction of government.

F: Kennedy by this time had picked up a certain disaffection in the country.

P: That is true. He certainly did. And it was questionable how much Kennedy could help with a man. They were trying to shore up their own races, and that was the very thing that brought President Kennedy to Texas. But the election for the congressional seat occurred in the middle of that visit to Dallas and the President's assassination. I had received the highest votes and was facing a runoff approximately thirty-five days later with Dobbs. About two weeks after that or ten days after the first election, the assassination occurred. Then we had a three weeks period, I suppose, between that and the runoff between Dobbs and me.

The assassination and the clear delineation of Democrat and Republican and particularly with Mr. Johnson coming in as president and being from this congressional district sealed Mr. Dobbs' campaign. I suppose after the election, if neither one of us had done any campaigning, we'd have been just as well off because people just almost froze in their position then. We did have sort of a moratorium for a while, and then resumed for about two

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weeks before the election. But the Dobbs candidacy had lost its zing at that point.

F: Is it worthwhile when I come back--I think we're hitting the end--as a line of questioning, to talk about John Connally's decision to run for governor?

P: Yes. I can tell you, I think, a good deal about that. And if you wish, I'd be happy to visit with you also about some of my either associations or experiences with Mr. Johnson as president. He was very interested in me personally and gave me so much attention that I've often felt sometime when I didn't vote exactly the way he wanted to, I had the greatest case of remorse. My wife always used to fuss with me. I'd go home at night, and I'd walk the floor, and I wouldn't sleep good, and she'd sometimes be unhappy because I felt so bad when I didn't vote that way. But he was always personally interested.

In that special election, after he had become president and he had been sworn in, Mr. Johnson would call me from the White House. And quite often either early morning or in late evening, he'd put in a call. Now at that time I had my home on Cherry Lane. I'd get up to try to get organized to get going, and here would be the President of the United States calling. He would talk at length, either in the morning or at night, maybe thirty or forty minutes. Now the President of the United States talks to you about all kinds of things.



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F: There goes that schedule.

P: I'd get my daughter late to school. My daughter, Peggy, bless her, never could understand why the phone always rang early or late when she and I were trying to do something. I think she developed sort of a distaste for the political life. But I couldn't explain to her or make her understand that it was the President of the United States. It was Mr. Johnson to her, and mainly she was going to be late for school. Invariably I'd get her late to school because I'd be talking an hour with the President of the United States, and she didn't understand that.

But I've thought back on it many times. Here's a man with all the worries of the world just come into the presidency and would call me to talk about my campaign, and what I ought to be doing, and things we ought to be doing, and things to plan for, and just trying to be helpful. So you remember those things as the days pass by. You remember how much concern he really did have.

F: Good.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview IV]

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