INTERVIEWEE: CONGRESSMAN W.R. POAGE

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

November 11, 1968

F: This is an interview with Congressman William R. Poage in his office in Waco on November 11, 1968. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Mr. Congressman, tell us a little bit about your background--where you came from, how you happened to run for Congress in the first place, and what you have been into while you've been in Congress.

P: Well, I was born right here in Waco--I like to say a century ago because it was December 28, 1899.

F: You just barely made it in, didn't you?

P: Yes, that's right. But when I was six weeks old, we moved out to Albany. I lived there possibly a couple of years and went on out to Throckmorton County; my father was ranching out there. We moved back to Albany in 1912, and we moved back to Waco in 1913, I believe, and I've lived here ever since. I graduated from Baylor Law School in 1924 and like a lot of other would-be lawyers, I was running for office before I graduated, and was nominated in July, 1924 to the legislature. I served down there in both the House and the Senate.

F: Was that during Pat Neff's days, or was that just after Neff?

P: I served ten days or a week under Pat Neff. He was the outgoing governor when I was elected. I went there in the first Mrs. Ferguson administration, really. Back in those days we had sixty day sessions at $5.00 a day and $2.00 a day thereafter; we served there twelve days at $2.00 a day. Even in those days, you could

hardly make it.

F: That discouraged lengthy sessions.

P: Discouraged lengthy sessions. In 1934, I ran for Congress; of course, I guess this was largely ambition. I don't know that I was particularly qualified better than anybody else, but I felt I was. I felt that service in the legislature was what we needed in Congressmen, so I ran against the incumbent, Hon. O.H. Cross. He beat me by about 5,000 votes, but I announced immediately that I'd run the next time. He didn't run the next time. Mr. Tirey, who was the former district attorney here, ran, and also a Mr. Sherman, but I beat them both in the primary and went to Congress in January of '37. I was sworn in on the 3rd of January of '37.

Of course, at that time Mr. Buchanan represented the tenth district; Mr. Buchanan was then chairman of the Appropriations Committee, but he died, I believe in April '37, and they held a special election in which Mr. Johnson was elected. Of course, he was ill at the time and didn't get to Washington and get sworn in quite as fast as he would otherwise have done. When he came to Washington, as was customary with new Congressmen, he had to take what was available in the way of office space. Congressman Albert Thomas had come from Houston the same time I did. We had offices on the fourth floor of the old building about as far from the front as you could get, over on that east side; and there was an inside office across the hall from us. Lyndon got that office.

Clarence Elwell of Waco and Austin was my secretary at that time; Clarence had been assistant state superintendent, and I

had gotten him to Washington to work with me. I had gone to school with him at Baylor; he was one of the greatest men I ever knew in the way of ideas and he had the energy to try to work on things. We would stay up there--my time was a good deal less taken up than it is today, and we would stay up there at night. Lacy Sharp was working for Albert Thomas; Lacy later became my secretary and worked for me for nineteen years--He is still in Washington. We would sit around up there and talk with Mr. Johnson about the future, on politics and how we would try to do things.

I've always felt that if I was ever able to be of any assistance in the world to him, it was right then. I think Clarence and I talked him into a decision that I've always felt was helpful to him politically--At that time, he had his mind made up to move to Austin; of course, he was actually living in Austin, but he was voting back in Blanco County. I remember we discussed it night after night, and Elwell and I very strongly felt that he'd be making a great mistake if he transferred his legal residence to Austin. He, at that time, thought that it would be wise to do so.

F: There's that temptation to go to the major city.

P: Yes, I pointed out to him that while I couldn't leave Waco and move to a smaller town, that you could always stay in a smaller town and not offend anybody in the larger city. He decided that he wouldn't make that transfer, and I felt that maybe we had some influence on that decision. I felt that it at least helped him in relation to the Senate anyhow, if nothing else, because I know that in those days that people in the small counties always had great prejudice against the larger counties. It's not as important in politics today as it was then, in my judgment, but

I think it was important in those days. I never claimed to have had any special influence in helping Mr. Johnson get where he did, but if we did have such influence right then was when it was.

F: Did you continue to be across the hall with him for some time?

P: Not very long. As I recall it, he stayed there until the next January probably. And beginning the next January, I moved a little closer--I moved on the same floor, but around a little closer to the front door and saved about a two-block walk. I believe at that same time that he moved up on the fifth floor into what became his Congressional offices for some time. Of course, he finally got three rooms up there--sort of an attic space, but he recognized the need of space and recognized it before we did and got the extra space even at the--

F: A little desirable quarters but more of them.

P: That's right.

F: Incidentally, what is Lacey Sharpe doing in Washington?

P: Lacey represents the American Hospital Association. He left me about six years ago, maybe even longer than that, because I've had about three or four secretaries--now, we call them administrative assistants, since then.

F: Did you play any role at all in Mr. Johnson's decision to run for the Senate against [W. Lee] Pappy O'Daniel?

P: I wouldn't say that I played any role at all in it. Mr. Johnson did discuss with some of us the possibility of making this race, but I certainly wouldn't say that I played any part in it. I remember very well that we were all in attendance at Mr. Shepperd's funeral over in Texarkana. I drove on from there to Washington, but

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Dies and Mr. O'Daniel were there.

F: The whole contending group?

P: Everybody even at that time contemplated that they would probably run. Of course, nobody had announced at that time, but I think it was just the next day that they did. I was on my way to Washington when the announcements were made. Personally, I've always felt that Mr. Johnson won that race. I know that he didn't contest the count, but that is one that in my judgment should have been talked about more than the eighty-seven votes. There were 3,000 votes in East Texas that just had such a fishy look that I've never been satisfied that he didn't win that race, just as the Dallas News conceded it to him, I believe on Sunday--the race was held on Saturday. But then they just kept counting in East Texas and nowhere else, and the votes all kept coming in for O'Daniel when they hadn't been coming in for O'Daniel. They'd been coming in for Dies in that area. I just can't believe that there could have been such a remarkable set of circumstances that would keep out 5,000 votes and that they'd be overwhelmingly for O'Daniel, when they hadn't been running that way before.

F: You have some company in that belief, I might add.

P: Yes, I think so. I think that was probably the most outstanding incident of questionable vote-counting that we've had in Texas during my lifetime.

F: Were you around Mr. Johnson when he made the decision to go into the service after Pearl Harbor?

P: Yes, I was. In fact I rode with Mr. Johnson in his car--he had an old car of some kind, I've forgotten what it was--some kind of sports

model, big thing in those days. He was driving, and we drove from the White House out on Massachusetts Avenue--I can't think of the name of the partner of Mr. Fentress, the man that ran the papers at Austin--

F: Marsh, yes. Mr. March's house. And Lyndon talked to me very seriously about that question of going into the service right then. He had just about made up his mind, but he was telling me what his decision was. Lyndon rarely ever asked--I don't know if it's true with everybody, but with me he rarely ever asked my opinion, he'd rather tell you his and get your reaction to it. And he did do that. He went over his situation with me, why he thought that it would be wise for him to go in, that he had made up his mind that he was going in, and he was going to announce it the next day. Yes, I remember that very well.

F: Did you have any particular special interest in his running for the Senate against Coke Stevenson in '48?

P: Well, I wouldn't say special interest. I supported him. I was for Mr. Johnson in the race, and I felt that there again he was rather maligned. Of course, the eighty-seven vote deal was another one of those things that always seemed to me to be more window-dressing than anything else. I think I fully understood why the vote changed in Duval County. Mr. Stevenson either didn't or wasn't able to deliver on the commitments to the local people, as to what they wanted in the way of patronage. I understand that certainly in those days that that area voted pretty well on the basis of who could give them something and for what they could get for it in the way of governmental patronage offices.

F: I have one interview that I think is going to be an interesting document for students of voting history on how you organize--I got it from a man in the valley--on how you organize Mexican-American block voting in this sort of situation, or how you used to, you know.

P: They sure did it. Of course, I served in the House and the Senate of Texas with Senor Don Archie Parr in the days when the county would vote eleven hundred one way and four another way. Don Archie used to say, "Well, that was my wife and daughter and their friend, I couldn't control them: And that was about the truth of the situation down there. I don't think it took anything in the way of money to buy that vote; I don't think it was a matter of paying off, as some people indicated, except that they voted with those that they thought were helpful to them.

They had all voted for Stevenson in the first primary, thinking that he would be helpful to them. An appointment came up and I don't know that he could have done anything about it, but he didn't do what they wanted done, and whether that was right or wrong I don't know. I don't see that Lyndon had anything in the world to do with it one way or the other. He was just the beneficiary after Sevenson had offended them. I've found politicans getting in that sort of shape a good many times. I've had to appoint postmasters that offended a lot of people. I'm not saying that Stevenson did anything wrong in connection with it, in fact I don't think he did, but he didn't do what those people wanted down there.

F: He just got caught.

P: Even though Johnson had nothing to do with it one way or the other, they changed and voted for him, and I think that's all there ever was to that.

F: Of course, you had the opposite side of that that hampered Mr. Johnson; that was the fact that having been in Congress he had voted for the Taft-Hartley Bill which sent labor into the rather unlikely position of supporting Mr. Stevenson, who was not exactly pro-labor.

P: That's right. That was the other side of it, but it just didn't show up between the primaries as this did. This Duval County situation happened to show up between the two primaries.

F: Did you have any particular memories of having worked with Mr. Johnson on any legislation, or having worried about any particular legislation during that period the two of you were in Congress together?

P: Of course, Mr. Johnson was probably the man who was most active in getting me originally deeply interested in the rural electric program. He had taken an early and active interest in it. We used to talk about it quite often. I don't recall whether there was any special legislation real early that he was particularly interested in. But I became quite interested in the rural electrification fight, and I guess possibly took up--possibly he would have been more active in it and I would have probably been less active in it had he not gone to the war. But you will possibly recall about 1941, I guess that was before he did leave, I was on the agriculture committee--on the subcommittee on Conservation and Credit which--I'm still on that subcommittee--which rewrote the REA Act. Steve Pace was then the chairman of that subcommittee. And that was the legislation which fixed the interest rate at two percent; it had not been fixed before. At that time, the government rate fluctuated right considerably and some co-ops were paying one rate and some were paying another. We fixed the rate which has been the rate ever

since. At that time Lyndon was not a member of the agricultural committee which brought that in, but of course he was interested in the general matter of legislation for the co-ops.

During the war there was quite a bit of legislation for the co-ops, and by the time we got around to organizing something on a permanent basis after the war, Lyndon was elected to the Senate, I believe, in '48, and it was '49, as I recall it, when we passed the bill for the rural telephones, of which I was author. Of course, he at that time supported it in the Senate. Mr. Hill was the Senate author of it. You know, Lister was the long-time Senator--Mr. Johnson was brand-new in the Senate at that time, but he did have his cooperation at that time.

Of course, Mr. Johnson was also always interested in all kinds of convervations projects and so was I. In fact, he went further than I would on some of those, such as the large projects of the West--he was more ready to support them than I was. But of course during that earlier period, he had been able to really make the Lower Colorado project function, and it wasn't all legislation by any means. It was mostly negotiations, which I've always considered him to be a master of negotiations, and obviously he was there too. I had been in the state Senate when we passed the Lower Colorado Authority--when we created the Lower Colorado Authority, the state agency. I had little familiarity with it, but we hadn't given it any strength, neither it nor the Brazos--not much more than paper organizations. But he was able to get--I believe it was the public works loan that enabled them to really become the important entity that they are, and it was of course his negotiations with the power company--with

the TP & L that finally made the LCRA the real functioning agency that it has become. But that was primarily done outside of the Congress; primarily that was a matter of dealing with the TP & L, buying up their franchises in varying towns in those various counties there. Not too much of it was done in Congress.

F: Incidentally, are you pretty much the father of this Brazos River development?

P: Oh, I wouldn't say that. The Brazos River District was created in 1929, and I had very little to do with that. In fact, I was not in the legislature at that time. I had served two terms in the House, then I was out and came back in 1931 to the Senate--that's what happened. But that legislation didn't do anything except it just created a sort of a shell or paper organization.

In 1935 I was the author, along with Senator Stone and Senator Sanderford, of the legislation which gave the district the authority to actually begin to function. And the very first resolution I ever introduced in the Congress was for a comprehensive survey of the Brazos River, which we were able to make and to build the Possum Kingdom--the Morris Shepperd Dam up by Mineral Wells. I have been rather closely associated with the Brazos organization ever since, but I was not there at the time of the original creation of the Brazos district.

F: Of course, the original creation just hung for long without moving. I wasn't really going back to it so much as I was the impetus that got it started.

P: I was in on that, yes. It was a good deal like Lyndon moving the Lower Colorado River Authority that we had created in the legislature,

and of course he had nothing to do with the action in the legislature, but he did come in and make the thing function--made it really a going conern.

F: You and he had adjacent districts during this period; did you ever have any trouble with his overlapping? I have run into people who said that he always looked on himself as a kind of Congressman for the whole state.

P: I didn't think that was true. He and I got along real well. We had a rather long continued problem about the LCRA and one of the Brazos cooperatives--electric cooperatives, Bell-Falls Cooperative, or what was technically known as Milam 21. The LCRA was supplying a number of people with power directly in southern Milam County, I believe in fact there were about 120 subscribers there. We finally worked out an arrangement whereby we transferred those people to the Bell-Falls Cooperative; it took us a year or two to do it, but we finally got into agreement on it. I found Mr. Johnson to be perfectly reasonable on that sort of thing. Of course, he didn't want his LCRA people to lose anything, and I don't think they did. On the other hand, he recognized that they were in our district and that it probably meant better administration if they were members of the co-ops that had their headquarters up this way.

F: What had they done--come in your district in advance of any other service?

P: That's right. From the South. You see, the eleventh district goes within twenty-five miles of Austin or less.

F: Down there below Georgetown.

P: Below Taylor. The line runs straight down, sort of south of Thrall, possibly ten miles south of there--Watson's

Branch is about the closest point. The Connally community may be the closest, but that was the area. And it was perfectly logical that they moved in there, but then when we had this local development, it seemed to me to be perfectly logical that these customers be transferred and they were transferred. That probably was about the only conflict that we had. And that was not a conflict, because we worked it out. We were both perfectly satisfied when we got it settled.

We did have a matter that we worked out while he was still a Congressmen that hasn't until this day been completed, and I've had similar agreements with both his successors. We got the agreement on the dams on the San Gabriel just about the time that he made the race for the Senate. You will recall that our Corps of Army Engineers recommended the Laneport location as first. Frankly, it's the one that I selfishly preferred to see because it gave more immediate protection to people in Milam County, in the eleventh district, than the other dams would give. On the other hand, I can understand why the people of the tenth district wanted the dams upstream. But Mr. Johnson and I and a number of others came to an agreement that we would support any dams that the Army Engineers approved, and we would support their construction in the order in which the engineers recommended they be constructed. And he always stayed with it; so did his successors. I've got no criticism of either Judge Thornberry or Mr. Pickle; they both stayed with it. We now have authorization to build two of those dams which, of course, we understand to be the Laneport and the North San Gabriel. But all those years, we haven't built anything down there. It has always

to me seemed to be clearly the result of the local people not being able to agree to accept that kind of an agreement that Lyndon and I made twenty years ago. I think that if the people would have followed it, it would have resulted in them having all three dams in operation right now. We did that sort of thing up here. Of course, I had nobody to announce it with, but I announced that on the Brazos and the Leon I'd support the dams the engineers recommended, wherever the engineers recommended, and in the order they recommended. And we built Whitney Dam first; we built Belto Dam next, then we built Proctor Dam in Congressman Burlison's District. We then built Waco Dam, and we built Stillhouse Hallow next, and we've got them all in operation. But we took them just when and wherever the engineers would recommend them and as fast as they would recommend them. Some of the people in Williamson County refused to accept the agreement that we made. They kept insisting that we build the dams where they wanted them built, and the result is they don't have a dam today. I'm hopeful that we will have in the next year or two, but I just think it was due to the fact that people down there just didn't recognize that they couldn't dictate to the engineers where the dams would be. But I do think I should say that my relation with Mr. Johnson on that was perfectly satisfactory; we had no problems. We had problems but we agreed on a solution to them, and we've been trying to work out that solution ever since.

F: Does the Colorado River come across the western end of your district at all?

P: No.

F: It's all outside?

P: Not an inch of it. Until two years ago I never had an inch of any

drainage basin other than the Brazos. Of course today, as you know, up in Parker County nearly two-thirds of Parker County, or 60-percent of it at least, is the Trinity Basin, but that's the only drainage we have in the eleventh district today that doesn't go into the Brazos. And possibly a few miles in northern Limestone County that nobody ever has been real sure of the survey, I think.

F: It goes its own way?

P: It may go. There is up there north of Tawalkin, after you climb that escarpment that may drain back into the Trinity there.

F: As I recall, Senator Johnson dedicated the Whitney Dam?

P: That's right.

F: Did you choose him, or how did he get involved in that?

P: I think I'm the man that invited him; I'm not real positive of that, but I believe I am. We wanted his cooperation; we weren't entirely unselfish, but we wanted his cooperation. We always had it; I would say that. Senator Johnson is the man who made the ground breaking speech for Belton Reservoir. On one cold day there down on the river bottom below where the present dam is--

F: Where is that?

P: Up above Belton, about three miles above Belton.

F: Oh, that's the Belton. I've been there.

P: It was actually below the present dam. The original dam was contemplated building down at Miller Springs, oh, maybe a mile down the river from where the present dam is, but there were too many cavities in the rock. There are cavities all along there. We've got cavities to deal with out at the Stillhouse Hollow, of course, with that type of dam. It wasn't quite as much problem as it was at the other place.

F: You built up a good lake there at Belton.

P: We've got another magnificent lake at Stillhouse Hollow, the other side of Belton, the Austin side of Belton.

F: I haven't seen it. Is that on the Leon?

P: On the Lampasas. You see, the Lampasas and the Leon and the Salado Creek run together down there below Belton at Three Forks, and that makes the Little River. The Little River flows 104 river miles down to where it runs into the Brazos in Milam County.

F: And this is before you get to the Little River?

P: That's right. Both of those dams are before you get to the Little River.

F: I haven't been there. Did you have much either opportunity or necessity to work with Senator Johnson after he moved into the Senate?

P: Never as much as some people assume, I guess. Of course, I had the opportunity to work with him. The whole Texas delegation worked with him, and he had a practice that worked out well with the delegation, I thought, of cooperating with the delegation on any kind of announcements or anything coming that should be announced in your district. Either he or we would announce it, and it made no difference. Whoever got it would go ahead and announce it, and we would always--In those days, you made announcements entirely by wire, and I would send them as "Congressman Poage and Senator Johnson," or he whould send them as "Senator Johnson and Congressman Poage," if it was in this district, or whoever's district it was.

F: You must have worked with each other somewhat on appointments?

P: Well, on appointments it was somewhat different. Appointments always have been different. We just divided the appointments--the patronage

very strictly. A Congressman gets those that are entirely within his district, which means postmasters and rural carriers. And anything that goes beyond one Congressional district goes to the Senator, and we had nothing to do with his Senatorial appointments. But I do not mean he was uncooperative in making announcements of public interest, for instance, building a dam or something of that kind. Of course, we didn't have as many of those as we've had in recent years; they were probably more important then than they are now, too, for that very reason. But we had no problem with Senator Johnson about the announcements. In fact, he was always very fair about it, and the members, I think, were fair to him about it. The result was that nobody got scooped on these things. I [have] seen instances where there was a good deal of rivalry between the Congressmen and Senators; I think it was rather a bad thing for all of them. But we didn't have any problems. I had no problems with him about appointments whatever. I can understand where Congressmen and the Senators get into problems; where you have a Senator from your district. Of course, I long had Senator Connally as a constituent--a grand and able man, but in those cases the Senator feels he should name the postmaster in his home town, and he should name a great many people who any other Congressman would name.

F: He is the local Congressman also?

P: That's right. He feels himself to be the local Congressman. Possibly I found it easier to deal with Lyndon for that reason that I could even with Senator Connally. We had census supervisor appointments.

They normally are given to the Congressman, but if you have a Senator in your district, he naturally feels that he should control, and there's where you have problems with appointments.

F: It was in this period that you had these regular luncheons of the Texas Congressional Democrats?

P: We still do. We still hold those. We've held them ever since I-- Well, we began those regular luncheons, really, after I got there, but they go a long ways back, thirty years, anyhow.

F: I have been a guest at a couple in which it seemed to me that they were just good sociable occasions and about half the members were gone on a quorum, or vote-calls during the period. But do you transact business at these?

P: We never transact business at such open meeting but every other meeting is a closed meeting, at which we talk with nobody present except the members.

F: This is strictly an off-the-record session.

P: Strictly off-the-record session. Mr. Johnson was always a persuasive advocate of his own views, and he would make many appeals to the Texas delegation, not at the meetings at which the public is present but at our closed meetings. He used to come over and appeal to us, and he used to do it even after he was Vice President. In fact, he did do it some after he was President.

F: But through his Senate years, he was a fairly faithful attendant?

P: Very regular attendant, yes. And he almost always had something he wanted us to do. While we never did anything in the way of business,

we'd hear anybody--we do it today. If I have something that I feel that I want my colleagues of the delegation to understand, and hope they'll support me, I use that opportunity to tell them about.

F: An education system.

P: Tell them about it, and plead with them. Mr. Johnson was good at that and did a whole lot of it. They talk about the arm-twisting. Of course, it's arm-twisting! Of course, everybody knows that after he got to be Vice President and President that obviously if you didn't go along, you might find yourself in deep trouble. I don't mean he said it to you, but you knew it. That makes sense. Of course, it's arm-twisting, but also there was never any formal action on it; there was never any such thing as taking a vote and saying, "Now, we're going to support you on this." But you had a forum in which you could present your case, and he always used it.

F: He had some overlap with Senator Ralph Yarborough while he was Senator. Did that create any problems in those luncheons?

P: Of course, it did. It always created problems. He and Ralph were both my friends, but they had so many conflicts that obviously they moved on into the delegation--their conflicts did.

F: Well, in a case like that, would they lay out their sort of conflicting viewpoints, or did they tend--?

P: I don't recall much of that. Neither one of them was much inclined to present their views in the way of a debate with the other, although they both were inclined to try to get a chance to talk to folks, but there wasn't much in the way of debate. I've said, and I don't mean any disrespect to anybody, but I've said it several

times--you can't talk to either Lyndon or Ralph, nobody ever talked to either one of them. They both talked to you. Lyndon grabs you and talks in your face and tells you what he has done for you. And Ralph tells you what they've done to him. Lyndon always tells you that he has done great things for you, whether they affect you or somebody else--they may affect somebody in the State of Washington, but he'll try to make you believe that he has done great things for you. Ralph, on the other hand, always is complaining about what somebody else has been doing to him, and how they've mistreated him. He's a professional martyr. And again, he's my friend; he has done a great deal for Texas and our district. I don't mean to say that either one of them is all bad about it, because they're not. But then you don't talk to either one of them.

F: For the record, these luncheons are strictly for Democrats from Texas?

P: That's right.

F: Have you ever had one of your Republican colleagues?

P: Back in the old days when we didn't realize that the Republicans were a real threat, Ben Gwill used to always take a very active part in them.

F: You looked on him as kind of unique.

P: And Ben was elected in sort of a freak election. I don't mean he was a freak, but up in the Panhandle, and he only served about one year, or such a matter, and was pretty well received by the Democrats; we made no distinction. It was only after we began to get fellows like Bruce Alger in the delegation that we felt we couldn't go along and have those people in there, and have any freedom of discussion.

F: When 1960 started around, did you play any role in trying to persuade Senator Johnson to offer his name to the Presidency?

P: Yes--I don't know that I played any role, but I urged him to do so. But in '56 at the Chicago convention I had thought that it might be well for him to be running. I never was as much of a Stevenson man as some others were. But of course at that time he realized more than I did--how futile it would be. Of course, he wasn't a man to get out and do things where it wasn't any chance of success.

F: Not for the love of losing.

P: No, not for the love of losing. And in 1960, why, yes, I felt that he was the logical candidate and did urge it on him. I did go to the Los Angeles convention.

F: I've run into some belief that he could have at least carried the convention into at least more than one ballot if he had released the people to work for him sooner, but he started too late. Were you aware of his delay in letting people campaign for him?

P: Yes, I was one of those who felt that he was too slow in moving, and I still think he was.

F: Why do you think he delayed? He never did really formally announce, did he?

P: I don't believe he did.

F: He finally permitted a boom to go on.

P: I think he did the same thing in the Presidential race that many people do in Congressional races. It is a philosophy that I never have believed in because I usually announce for office about the first of January, but there are a lot of people who believe in a late announcement and a short campaign. Even on the Congressional level,

will wait to nearly the last minute. I ran one of those races--
I said I never did, but my first race for Congress I didn't announce
until the last day because I didn't make up my mind to run until the
last day. I expected other people to get in the race and they didn't.
But there are lots of people who believe that the best way to run
a race is wait until the last minute and get in. And I think that
Lyndon was at that time convinced that the way to win that race was
to wait very late and come in and be a sort of compromise force around
which folks could rally. I think he thought that Mr. Kennedy would
create many enemies, and he didn't create the enemies that I believe
that Mr. Johnson thought he would. He thought he could come
in and be the peacemaker and folks would rally around him. As I
see it, it had already jelled; there were too many commitments out.
Kennedy had gone much too far. Of course, I also recognized that Mr. John-
son was at that time struggling with the Senate, having a difficult time
there, and was achieving a great deal there in the Senate. While
I know that he felt an obligation to stay with that, I think
really the thing that was hurting him most was that he
wasn't in touch with the political realities as he would have been
if he hadn't been devoting so much time to the Senate.

F: He had a little too narrow a view.

P: He was listening to those fellows there in the Senate and they don't elect a President.

F: Did you anticipate that Mr. Kennedy would ask Mr. Johnson to be his Vice President?

P: No, I did not. In fact, I left the convention after the defeat for President. I left the next day about noon and was on my way flying back to Texas when we heard about it.

F: You heard about it on the plane?

P: Yes.

F: Were there a number of Texas delegates on that plane?

P: Two or three.

F: You must have broken out into a little conversation.

P: Yes, it certainly did.

F: Do you think Mr. Johnson made the right decision in accepting?

P: Oh, sure, I think he did. Very definitely he did. I didn't think so at the time. I was a little resentful that he made the decision.

F: Did you take any active part in that campaign?

P: Yes, I did a little speaking.

F: Where--around Texas?

P: I can't tell you just where I was. I think it was entirely in Texas.

F: Did you have much difficulty here in Texas with the religious issue?

P: Not much. Of course, my particular area at that time was supposed to be probably the most difficult because of the Baptist influence at Waco, but it didn't develop that way. Of course, Carlton Smith took a very leading part in behalf of Mr. Johnson.

F: Who's Carlton Smith?

P: He was at that time on the board of trustees of Baylor University, deacon of Highland Baptist Church--he still is, I believe, a local lawyer who has always been interested in politics and my partner in our farming operations. He has always been very helpful in my political campaigns.

F: Did Abner McCall play any role in this?

P: My recollection is that Abner said that this shouldn't be an issue--the religious part of it. I may be wrong on that. I think Abner voted for Nixon, but--

F: But not on religious grounds?

P: No, he didn't make any campaign at all on religious grounds.

F: Where were you on that November day when Kennedy was killed?

P: On my way to Austin to the dinner which was to have been held there that night. I was down between Belton and Salado.

F: You were driving?

P: Yes.

F: What did you do--get it on your car radio?

P: I heard it on the car radio.

F: What did you do then?

P: Went on to Austin to see what we could hear.

F: Where did you wait around Austin?

P: Down there at the Stephen F. [Austin Hotel].

F: What was going on down there?

P: Well, there were a lot of politicians gathered there that had done the same thing I had done--planned to attend that dinner, hadn't been in Dallas--there were quite a number in there. Of course, we got all the conversations we could listen to all afternoon. Carlton Smith was with me on that trip. Judge Smith here in Waco was with me at that time.

F: When did you get back to Washington then?

P: Well, I came on home that night and went to Washington the next day, as I recall. I know I did.

F: You were at the joint session then?

P: Yes.

F: What was your sense of the reaction to Mr. Johnson as the new President under rather difficult circumstances?

P: Well, I thought that it was much better than many people have since interpreted it to be there. I thought that he was well received. I didn't sense any hostility and resentment that many people have since then written into it. In fact, I thought Mr. Johnson was received right sincerely and most everybody was ready to go along and work with him.

F: Were you surprised at the March 31 address this year when he announced he was not going to run?

P: Yes, certainly I was. I was terribly surprised.

F: Where were you then?

P: As a matter of fact, I had been to a dinner party at which Mr. Johnson was present out at Frank Ikard's house just the day before, or it was the night before. I had talked with him; nobody had gained the impression that anything of this kind was in the air. I was just taken aback by it. I recall it, I was home when I heard it. In fact, I'm sure that I was.

F: Did having a President from Texas either benefit or hamper you in any way as a Congressman, particularly a President you knew so well?

P: I think it hurt me. In fact, I know it has. Now, Lyndon would never admit it, but here in Waco I think it's perfectly clear that he closed James Connally Air Force Base solely because he was from Texas. I didn't fall out with him about it. I think I could rationalize it and understand it. He was in a difficult position. He had to close some bases.

F: And he'd better close one in Texas.

P: He had to close something in Texas. We had two navigation schools, one here and one out in California. There was no justification at all from a strategic or military or business standpoint for moving

it to California. They can't get their planes in the air half the time. The area round there is saturated with air force bases, and it's right at the edge of a fog-zone. It's one of the poorest locations.

F: Where is it?

P: It was right east of San Francisco, between San Francisco and Sacramento. Mather is the name of it. But he couldn't, and I understood that full well at the time. He couldn't close that base and bring it to Texas when he was closing bases all over the nation. I so explained to the people here in Waco. He never would agree that that was true, but I know it's true and I recognize that anybody put in that position would have to do just what he did. I never did understand why he moved the Twelfth Air Force Base to Austin; that probably was a much smaller proposition than James Connally. It's one place where I thought Mr. Johnson's political understanding wasn't as good as it should have been, because he doesn't seem to understand and never understood that there was more resentment here about that. It didn't involve but about one-tenth of the number of people that closing James Connally did, but people could understand James Connally. And what you can understand, you can accept. But they couldn't understand the closing of Twelvth Air Force Base and hauling it down to Austin. He could have sent it anywhere else in the United States and created less resentment, but he moved it to Austin, and there's still a lot of resentment in Waco about the Twelvth Air Force Base. don't think there's much about James Connally, for I think most everybody understood it. I think I understood it. I think I can understand that a President has got to

recognize national needs, and he has to sort of lean over backwards sometimes about his own localities. We just happened to be in the unfortunate position that the only school in the United States that could be consolidated, and they had to be consolidated, that it had to go out of Texas rather than bringing it into Texas. I think we understood that; I understand it.

But I do think that it is very hurtful to us--the fact that the President was from Texas. If he had been from Kentucky, I think we'd have still had the base. So, it was hurtful. It's a proposition that in the Congress you were always having people who were more or less jealous of you because of the President, but it worked out--they didn't understand it--it works out sort of like I said awhile ago about having a Senator from your Congressional district. Selfishly, I'd much rather the Senators from Texas live in Austin and Wichita Falls than live in Waco. I think it makes it easier; I think we have less complications in our district as a result thereof. I think the same thing's true about the President. I think whenever you have a President living in your state, there are complications. On the other hand, I know that the President has been able to be helpful to Texas and has in a big way. I know the NASA Project has come to Texas--

F: Did President Johnson tend to compensate any way for the economic blow that has been dealt to this Waco area?

P: We're still hoping he's going to in the fast train test grounds out at McGregor. We've got that pending right now and we're still hoping that he will somewhat compensate by approving that. Of course, I don't know whether he will or not, it hasn't been done, but we are hopeful that

within the next few weeks that maybe that will be done.

F: Let's go back a little bit. In the 1950's, the credit for the success of Mr. Eisenhower's domestic program is tended to be placed by historians and critics in the hands of the Democratic delegation in Congress, particularly under the leadership of Senator Johnson and Speaker Rayburn. What's your opinion on this?

P: I agree with that viewpoint. I think that Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson did a great deal more to make the Eisenhower Administration somewhat of a success than the whole Republican party did. In fact, I think it would have been a dismal failure if they had not cooperated with it, but of course it would have hurt the nation if they hadn't. I think both Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson did put the country ahead of embarrassment to the Republicans.

F: Was this approach talked about in these Texas Luncheons?

P: Yes, ofttimes. Mr. Rayburn particularly always liked to more or less lecture us that it was important to see that we kept the country going regardless of who the President was.

F: Was there much disagreement?

P: No. I don't recall any open disagreement.

F: From a partisan standpoint, you tended to believe then that the party would be better off if it sacrificed maybe some temporary political gain for the long-run national gain?

P: I think the party and the nation is better off. I think we could have defeated Eisenhower in '56 if Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn had been willing to just play politics with him, but what would we have gained? We have disrupted our national economy doing it, and we would have, I think, hurt the whole country and probably in the long run

greatly hurt the party.

F: Let's go back and pick up your career in the early stage in Congress. First of all, there are not very many people senior to you now in the House, are there? Say, maybe six.

P: I'm number seven.

F: I thought you must have been one of the very longest. That's quite remarkable in itself.

P: Well, we've got two Texans senior to me. Wright Patman and George Mahon.

F: And the three of you control a good bit of the committee action up there. When you first ran for Congress, you came in just before the first AAA was declared unconstitutional, is that correct?

P: Yes, that's right.

F: Did this create special problems for you as a new Congressman?

P: Frankly, I was so new that I didn't recognize the problems that it created. I look back on those things and--

F: Your district is very heavily, particularly then was very heavily attuned to agriculture.

P: Yes.

F: So to a certain extent you were a representative of agricultural interests?

P: Well, I didn't get on the Agriculture Committee until 1940.

F: But I mean you had a natural bent toward agriculture concerns.

P: Yes, sir, I did.

F: You couldn't come to this black land and not.

P: No, I couldn't represent this district without doing that. Of course, I was reared on a ranch in West Texas and had been associated with

it all my life.

F: But from a professional standpoint then, agriculture was not a first concern of yours in your early days in Congress?

P: No, because I couldn't get on that committee. Marvin Jones was then chairman and Dick Kleberg was the member from Texas. And in those days you couldn't think of getting more than two men from Texas on the Agriculture Committee. Of course, in those days the committee was much smaller than it is today. Now, it had thirty-five members; I believe they had about twenty at that time.

F: Well, now, agriculture has been, as you know, a prime concern of the nation since the middle '30's--well, it goes way back before that, but from our standpoint since the middle '30's- down to the present and I don't think we've had a really popular Secretary of Agriculture in that whole time from either party, or at least one who remained popular.

P: I don't think we will have. I don't see how anybody can be Secretary of Agriculture and remain popular.

F: Well, that's something I wanted to ask you. What progress have you seen in the agricultural scene, and what do you think the basic problems are that keep this as a continuing problem that leaves so many people dissatisfied?

P: It's the basic conflict between producer and consumer. Of course, we're all consumers, everybody is. Only 6 percent of our population are producers of agricultural raw products; nearly 40 percent of our population is dependent upon--their work is with agricultural products, but they don't depend upon the actual production. And there's no understanding on the part of the great masses of our people

that those producers mush have an adequate income if they're to continue to produce abundantly as they're doing now and have been for some time. We've got the most modern techniques in the world in agriculture in the United States. We have the know-how to produce even more than we're producing now, but you can't do it unless you can pay the bill for those techniques and they're expensive. Chemicals are expensive; implements are expensive; labor is expensive; water is expensive. All these things are expensive.

The consuming public in the United States has so long enjoyed the fruits of this productive research and study by our scientists--that's where it basically comes from--that they don't realize that this could all be taken away. Actually, the American consumer today spends seventeen-and-a-half percent of his percent of his disposable income--family disposable income--in the grocery store. In Russia, it'll run nearly half; in western Europe it'll run a quarter. Of course, in the Far East it'll run three-quarters of income just for a meager diet. The American housewife doesn't realize that she's buying the bargain she is because prices look to her to be going up. They have gone up in the grocery store, but actually most farm products are selling for less than they were selling for twenty years ago. I mean a bushel of wheat will bring a dollar a bushel less than it brought twenty years ago. Corn is selling for fifty cents less than it did. Cotton for somewhat less. Cattle are almost the same; they're more nearly bringing their parity price than any other major farm product. But in the fact of the way everything else has gone up, you simply can't hope to continue to maintain the kind of agriculture that we've long enjoyed; that is, I mean family agriculture.

I recognize that even family agriculture may today involve several sections of land, but you can't maintain that unless we can get a more favorable price structure, not in an economy where farm costs have gone up as they have. Of course, if your costs were what they were back in the days of ten-cent cotton, we'd be in good shape. But our costs are not what they were back then; our costs have gone up just like all other costs.

So I think that's the basic reason we continue to have problems with our agriculture is because masses of our people don't understand that they have any interest in agriculture, and therefore they don't concern themselves with it, they don't try to understand it. They simply say, "Well, all I want to know is how do I get my milk and bread the cheapest that I can get it?" And they try to get it as cheaply as they can which is implicit in our economic system of free enterprise, but they don't look down the road at all. When we had so many of these do-gooders and good-thinkers that feel that, "Well, just wait a few days and the population will take care of that; we're going to have so many more people to feed in the world that agriculture will get in good shape." Well, I've heard that all my life and I'm nearly seventy years old. It doesn't happen as long as your scientists are continuing to develop a better method, and they're going to continue to do it--they should, and we want them to. It doesn't happen as long as your production increases faster than your demand, and production has increased faster than demand during my lifetime.

F: Technologically it's a real success story.

P: That's right, and I think it will continue that way. Therefore, any

Secretary of Agriculture, and I don't care whether he's Democrat or Republican--whether he has got a Democratic House or a Republican House or a President or what he has got--he's going to find it an unpopular thing to try to see that the producer gets an adequate return for his production. Any administration is going to have to face that, that it's unpopular to try to do the things that they know are needed to give agriculture a little more income. Agriculture doesn't have to have a tremendous large increase in income. Take the wheat man. If you give him one cent more per loaf of bread, he'd be in good shape, but he doesn't get but two-and-a-half cents out of each loaf of bread now that costs you a quarter. He's getting about one-tenth of it, but if he had another cent he'd be in real good shape. We don't recognize that it would be a relatively small burden on the consumer, and yet it would bring agriculture into a prosperous situation if it had a relatively small increase in prices. But I don't know whether it's going to come about. Of course, every Secretary of Agriculture tries in one way or another to bring about that better price situation.

F: Well, they adjust parity back and forth and--

P: Of course, parity has never been understood, again because people say, "Why should I bother about parity." and it is a formidable formula--I couldn't give it to you to save my life just as it is in the law, but basically it's nothing but what it says it is. Parity between what the farmer gets and what he has to spend--parity of income and outgo; parity or equality between producer and consumer--that's all it is. And a hundred percent of parity, if your parity is correct and of course it's an arbitrary

formula which we realize is not one hundred percent perfect, but the objective is one hundred percent sound; and if we move toward that parity, I think you get the greatest degree of prosperity for all sections of the nation because it's on that parity that you can have a maximum interchange of goods. The producer, only when he's getting full parity for his products, can he buy what he ought to be buying from the industrial segment of the country; and it's only when that industrial segment is getting their full parity that they can buy a maximum amount of agricultural products. So I think you get your maximum exchange at one hundred percent of parity. If you let farm prices go above a hundred percent of parity, you stagnate this exchange. I would not be in favor of letting farm prices go to any hundred and twenty-five percent of parity, although today they are approximately twenty-five percent below parity.

F: Now, I've heard many a tax-payer consumer complain about subsidizing the farmer. I've heard you speak in which you said that the farmer could also be credited with subsidizing the consumer. Would you like to elaborate on that?

P: Well, I think it is perfectly clear that if the farmer is not getting enough in the market place to pay all the cost of production, somebody has got to subsidize the producer if he is to keep producing. Now, maybe this producer himself, if he has the means--he will subsidize himself. He has subsidized himself over a period of years to a large degree, and he has done that through increasing land prices. Land prices have been going up for the last fifteen or twenty years steadily at the rate of about seven or eight percent a year. What has happened in so much of our agricultural community has been that the farmer who has

got a section of land upon the plains and it was worth fifty dollars an acre and he had thirty dollars borrowed on it, it got to where it was worth a hundred and he borrowed seventy-five on it. Now, it has gone on above that and he has borrowed a hundred, and he just keeps borrowing more and more, and what he does with that money is mostly--of course, there are all kinds of exceptions, but by and large he puts that money right back into production. He spends that money on his irrigation, on his insecticides, on his new implements; and that enables him to continue to produce. That enables him to continue to sell wheat at far less than parity. Because he hasn't had to rely entirely on income from the sale of products to buy his new equipment. He has bought it out of the enhancement of his land value, so he has been subsidizing the consumer. He has actually lost his land to that extent, to the extent that he has got three-fourths of it mortgaged. The Bankers Life or somebody else holds a mortgage for three-fourths of its value--he has lost that much of his land. He has subsidized consumers with that much of his land, so he has subsidized consumers to some extent.

Now, of course, the government has subsidized consumers because the programs, everyone of them, that are intended to enhance farmer income result in enabling consumers to buy for less than they could otherwise buy. In other words, if I am growing wheat, let's say, and there is a fifty cent subsidy in that wheat, and if I am growing that wheat and I can't grow it for the dollar and quarter that it might bring in the market, but I can grow it for a dollar and seventy-five cents which includes the government subsidy, now that gets cheap wheat on the market that wouldn't otherwise come on the market. So the consumer gets the benefit of that program. Sure, it helps the

farmer too; I'm not one who's going to say that it doesn't help the farmer at all. But the consumer gets a direct benefit from the farm programs. Then, of course, consumers or the public have gotten the benefit of a great many of our special programs that are charged to the Department of Agriculture.

I know that people like to say, "Well, we spent over five billion, two hundred million dollars on the Department of Agriculture last year." Well, did we? We spent a lot of money, that's true, but we didn't spend it on farmers. We spent nearly two billion dollars of that on what I call consumer subsidies, not to just lower your housewife's budget but we spent a quarter of a billion dollars roughly on school lunches. Well, that's clearly a consumer item; it's not a producer item. We spent it on school milk; we spent it on commodity distribution in all these counties where they give out free commodities. That's all charged to the Department of Agriculture. We spent it on food stamps, and that's all charged to the Department of Agriculture, but it doesn't add a dime to the farmer's income. But it does give many consumers their foods for a less than they would otherwise by paying. All of that is charged to the budget of the Department of Agriculture. Anything that will reduce the surpluses tends to improve farm prices, in my judgment. But basically those are direct consumer subsidies, so I think the consumer has been getting a tremendous amount of subsidy.

F: Do you think that--we go back to where you and I can remember ten-cent cotton, or even six-cent cotton--do you think that we have made real progress in grappling with agricultural problems over the past thirty

years?

P: No. We've made real progress in agricultural production--tremendous progress, but from the standpoint of grappling with the basic problem of income, I don't think we have. Now, of course, we have kept the system moving through these subisdies, but we haven't kept it moving on its own productivity. I don't know where you could go today in the whole United States and buy a farm and pay it out on what it will produce. You couldn't do it in Central Texas, I know that. And until you can, you haven't solved your basic agricultural problems.

F: You can't feed a certain amount of capital into farm land and expect to get it back the way you would into a business? I'm speaking of commercial enterprise.

P: That's the point. And until you can do that, you don't have a sound agriculture.

F: Do you think that Mr. Johnson has any particular understanding of the agricultural problem beyond his feeling for the social needs? I do know that he feels strongly on that.

P: I agree with that. He does, and he wants to do for agriculture. But, now, I don't think that Mr. Johnson has any special understanding of agriculture. I don't mean that he's totally ignorant of it; he couldn't be with the background that he has had. I suppose he has been in the position that all the rest get in and that's one of the reasons that we're in the bad shape that we are--no President can devote very much time to agriculture because 6 percent of the people is all that is involved. So he has got to allocate his time to something else. And with all due respect to the folks that he

has had around him, I don't think he has had any--he has had some advice from some able people, but he hasn't had anybody who has been really knowledgeable on agriculture around him; I mean in the White House.

I think Freeman has been an able Secretary of Agriculture; I think he has been knowledgeable and vigorous and articulate, but you take the folks up there at the White House--there hasn't been anybody--Of course, Charlie Murphy is knowledgeable of agriculture, but he hasn't been a position where he would exercise any influence on agriculture. For instance, the President held up the signing of this recent one-year farm bill extension just as long as he could and threatened to veto it, had a message written to veto it. He also wanted to approve it. I think that that all came about just because he didn't understnad the agricultural problems at all, and there was no one around there working on it. Of course, it was at a time when he had a thousand and fifty other things pushing him, but he didn't have anybody there among his close advisers who were working on it at all, who could understand it.

And all the commentators--all the news media--just grabbed at the obvious; so did the Congress, for that matter. We do the same thing. But this failure of the Congress to put a limit on the amount that any one man can get is grabbed upon by any politician who is seeking votes because it's the obvious thing, and the thing that will get you supported. Say, "Why, Jim Eastland doesn't need that $130,000, why give it to him?" Well, the reason for giving it to him is not because he needs it, not because you're trying to give Jim Eastland a social assistance or welfare help, but because you're

paying to get something done that will help our whole economy--to bring about a better balance between supply and demand. And it's better to take a large cut from Jim Eastland, or anybody else in a similar situation, than it is to take that same amount of land from a hundred small farmers. Because if you don't take it from Jim Eastland, you've got to take it from a whole lot of small farmers and you've got to make the cut on them so big that it becomes extremely hurtufl to them if you're going to balance supply and demand.

Whereas, if you will take it from a few of these larger farmers--take the whole cut, or as much of it as you can, from the larger farmers, then you don't have to cut these small men nearly so much. That's what we've been trying to do--the very people that the critics say they want to protect. And I don't question but what they do want to protect them, but they don't offer any way of protecting them. You've got to get the land out of production if you use our present system, you've got to get the land out of production some way or another. And you've either got to get Jim Eastland's land out of production and a whole lot of Jim Eastland's land out of production, or you've got to take some land out of production from a whole lot of small farmers. And by the time you add that small farmer's own share and Jim Eastland's share to the small farmer, you've just ruined that small farmer and he can't operate. So we think it's much better to take it from the large operators. We don't pay those large operators enough to build them up a profit on that stuff; Mr. Eastland couldn't stay in business if he had to put his whole farm in. If he had to put his whole farm in, he'd get no more on

the government payments are only about 60 percent of what we estimate that he'd get by growing cotton on it.

Now, it's perfectly true that if nobody took any reduction, then I don't think that they could make 60 percent--I don't think they could make as much as they're getting from the government payment if nobody had taken any reduction. But if they all take a reduction that brings us up to a 35 percent cut, which was what we were shooting at in cotton--if they all take the 35 percent cut, then they're all going to make more on the land that they put in cotton than they are on the land that they turn over to the government. And Mr. Eastland wasn't getting any bonanza by turning that over to the government because he could have probably--if he had been the only man involved, he could unquestionably have made more by planting all his land in cotton. So he wasn't making anything by giving it to the government, but it didn't put him out of business. If the big farmers just didn't take cuts, you'd have to take cuts from the small farmers. And if you put all of that reduction load on the small farmers, and they're out of business. Of course, to get all the small farmers, you've got to take a fantastic amount from them, probably 75 percent of their total acreage has got to come out. So, I'm just saying that there was apparently nobody down at the White House that was really familiar with these things, and Mr. Johnson just hasn't had much agricultural advice.

F: Not expert.

P: That's what I mean.

F: What did you think of Mr Johnson as a President?

P: I thought he made a good President. I thought Mr. Johnson has made a very able President.

F: Do you think history is going to sort of raise his reputation?

P: Yes, I think so. Of course, it does for almost every President. There are a few, like Warren Harding who, of course suffered--

F: Can't overcome it.

P: But with the exception of the very few, I think most Presidents are appreciated a great deal more later on than they are at the time they go out of office, and I think that Mr. Johnson will be judged the same way.

F: Can you think of anything else we ought to cover?

P: No, I don't know that we should.

F: It has been a good session for me.

P: I would just say this about Lyndon Johnson, speaking harshly of him as well as favorably. Lyndon Johnson was, in my opinion, one of the hardest workers that I ever knew. He was willing to pay the price. I think I told him one time that I wasn't willing to pay the price that he was for political advancement. And I think I told him that I agree with the philosophy that in a democracy a man can reach almost any goal that he wants to reach if he's willing to pay the price to reach it, but to do it he has got to give up so many things and he has got to forego so many things that we hold of value that I think that I just wasn't willing to pay the price. Lyndon talked to me one day in Austin, I was down there--I've forgotten what I was on, but I was walking down the street and he came along in his car and pointed to me to get in. It was while Pappy O'Daniel was still Senator. And he suggested that there was an opportunity to

beat Mr. O'Daniel which most any of us knew was true, and he suggested that I could do it. And I told him I wasn't willing to pay the price to do it. I always appreciated his evident confidence in me in that respect, and I'm sure he told the same thing to other people. Probably two hundred people in Texas that you could honestly tell them the same thing--I'm sure I wasn't the only one that he told that I could win that race if I wanted to run it and he'd like to have me working with him; I'm sure he told others the same thing. I told him I didn't want to pay the price, but I appreciated what he said. My wife, on the other hand, always more or less felt that he was disparaging my ability. Well he said if I was--energetic wasn't the word, but if I was as determined as he was that I could do these things. Of course, I agree that I could have, but I wasn't that determined and I didn't want to be.

F: You've had a good career.

P: It pleased me more doing what I have done than trying to do what he did. I've been pleased with what I was doing--I'm like Sam Rayburn, I like the House of Representatives. I'll never be Speaker of the House, but I have been pleased that I became chairman of this committee, and I've been pleased with it. And I haven't had to sacrifice my community ties and my home ties, those things that meant a great deal. They meant a lot to Lyndon, a lot to any of us. It's a question of what you're willing to sacrifice, what price you're willing to pay. My wife took it that he was disparaging me; I took it as a compliment. When he said, "Why, you could do this too if you would just have the determination that I have." I agree, and I think I could have. I don't think that I could have been President--

F: Well, you don't know.

P: By the time you get there, you get to a matter of chance, but most of these things you can do if you are really willing to pay the price. Preston Smith is going to be governor of Texas simply because he spent two years campaigning.

F: You've seen it coming for a long time now, and finally there didn't seem to be much else to do but elect him.

P: That's right. He has worked at it; he has paid the price, and I think he deserves it. I'm willing for a man to get the fruits of what he works for, and I'm pleased that Lyndon got it. I only wish that he could have gone on again.

F: I do too.

P: I just feel that the tragedy of this was that in an effort to do something that apparently is not going to be achieved, to achieve a peace which I don't think the Communists want, that he has given up the opportunity to continue to serve his country. I am not blaming him, but I am sorry.

F: Well, thank you very much.

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By W.R. (Bob) Poage

to the

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Signed _____

Date November 19, 1971

Accepted _____ for
Archivist of the United States

Date September 12, 1974