INTERVIEW I

DATE: December 29, 1974

INTERVIEWEE: ROMAN PUCINSKI

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Chicago, Illinois

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

F: You're now an alderman for Chicago.

P: That's correct.

F: Let's establish a few facts about yourself. When did you first become a congressman?

P: I was elected in 1958 and I remained in Congress for fourteen years, and then I ran for the Senate. I ran against Chuck Percy in 1972. I gave up a [House seat].

F: Which wasn't a good year for Democrats.

P: No, it wasn't a good year. It was a great year for the Republicans. President Johnson, had he not suffered his stroke, had indicated that he would have come into Illinois to help me campaign because he had a personal dislike for Senator Percy. As a matter of fact, it's very interesting. When I was at the dedication of the Library, at that part where they dedicated the education papers, and since I was chairman of the General Subcommittee on Education, I'd handled most of the President's legislation on those matters, I was invited and I was very pleased and I went there. Congressman [Jake] Pickle was hosting the visit. After the ceremony, we had lunch with the President and Mrs. Johnson. I told

him that I was running against Percy, and he said, "Oh, that's great. But you know, down here in Texas, we have a famous saying. 'We have two kinds of horses. We have show horses, and we have work horses.' Now, you're going to win, Roman, because you're a work horse, not a show horse. Percy is the show horse." And that became the theme of our campaign. I notice that others are now using it. As I travel around the country--

F: Now that you popularized it for them.

P: --I see more and more candidates using a slogan coined by President Johnson at a very simple little luncheon, but the President said he would come in and help me, as he used to say, "he'p me." "Come in there and he'p you, Roman."

F: Did you know the Senator before you went to Washington?

P: Johnson as a senator?

F: Yes.

P: No.

F: You met him after you got there.

P: Yes, I met him after I got there. Oh, I'd seen him at the conventions and things, but I got to know him better as a congressman.

F: Do you know when you first met him?

P: I think that we met shortly after I became a congressman. I believe he was in the Senate, and I don't recall the incident, but there was some occasion that I had to go over and talk to him about something. We met and I liked him very much.

F: Did you get to know Mr. Sam [Rayburn] pretty well?

P: Yes.

F: Those were in his latter days.

P: Oh, yes. Mr. Sam.

F: Quite a man.

P: A beautiful story about Mr. Sam: Mr. Sam never called me Pucinski; he had some sort of a mental block. Every time I was in the well seeking recognition he would say, "The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Puccini." He did that for, oh, a number of months. So finally one day I went to Mr. Sam and I said, "Mr. Speaker, you do me great honor in calling me Puccini, but my name is Pucinski." He said [makes harumph noises]--he used to grump, you know--"Polish. Polish, isn't it?" And I said, "Yes, yes, I'm of Polish background." "Oh, fine people, fine people." Then he proceeded for half an hour to tell me what great people the Poles are, and how the largest ethnic group in his largest county in his district in Texas were the Poles, and how they always supported him, and how they organized. See, my grandmother settled down in Texas when she first came to America. Down in Panna Maria, which is south of San Antonio.

F: Yes, it's got the oldest Polish Catholic Church that's being continuously used in Texas.

P: So Rayburn was telling me all about this, and so I figured, oh, I've got it made. I thanked him very nicely and left, had a very lovely chat with the Speaker. Next morning I'm in the well again and Mr. Rayburn--the ball came around to me--said, "The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Puccini." So I gave up.

But Sam was a great guy. I tell you, we said many, many times that fate kind of played a nasty trick on us when it took Mr. Sam away because he had a way of controlling the legislative process and he was a very patriotic man. But the President

spoke of Mr. Sam very affectionately many times.

I was telling you about the luncheon. The reason that Johnson had such a personal dislike for Percy is--and he told me this, that's why he said he was going to come in and campaign. Mrs. Johnson was equally irate about Percy. When the My Lai massacre was at its height--remember Lieutenant [William] Calley and the whole disclosure there and the whole country was just reeling under these charges--it seems that somebody had written to Chuck Percy and said that President Johnson's son-in-law, Captain Robb, had been in charge of a platoon that staged an even bigger massacre in Vietnam. I was not familiar with this story myself, but Johnson said that Percy, instead of calling the Defense Department and saying, "Look, I've got this report. Is there any truth to it? Check it out," he was, Mr. Johnson said, so anxious to grab the headlines that he hurriedly called a press conference and made the announcement. Well, of course, this hit the headlines all over the country, "Johnson Kin Involved in a My Lai-type Massacre," and all. It was a horrible story.

Well, the President said that he saw it on the ticker, immediately got a report on it, and the Secretary [of Defense] went out of his way. Now, the Secretary was Mel Laird, I believe, at that time. This was after the President left. And he said Mel Laird called the President personally and apologized to him for the story, said there's just no truth to it, no semblance of truth to it. Robb was not even in command of a platoon. He had an administrative job in Vietnam at that time. And Laird said there's just no possible way that this could have happened.

Well, the President, of course, issued a very strong denial at the time, but, you

know, Johnson loved his family fiercely; no man ever had a greater love for his kinfolk than Johnson. And this report by Percy just infuriated him, and Mrs. Johnson was deeply touched, too. So Lyndon had a particular dislike for Percy for pulling that stunt. Now, I don't recall whether Percy retracted the story or what he did.

F: I don't either.

P: But this is something that depressed Johnson very much and angered him even more.

F: Yes.

P: And this is why he was going to come in.

But you were asking me how I got into politics. I was a newspaperman for twenty years before I went to Congress, and I was covering Mayor [Richard] Daley's press conferences every day in the City Hall. One day he asked me if I'd like to run for Congress out here on the northwest side, which was really strong Republican territory at the time. And I told the Mayor, I said, "Christ himself couldn't win out there as a Democrat." And he said, "Well, he couldn't, but maybe you can."

Well, I'd been in Congress, as I say, fourteen years, and then I ran for the Senate, and after I lost my Senate race, there was a vacancy here in my ward. We have fifty wards in Chicago, fifty councilmen. There was a vacancy here. So I ran to fill that vacancy and won handily. So now I'm involved in local matters.

F: Did you have fairly good access to Johnson as a senator and then when he was vice president?

P: Not so much as a senator, more as a vice president. When he was vice president I was with him very often, and whenever he traveled out to the Midwest I'd get a ride with him.

I remember one time in particular when he was vice president, he was coming to Chicago for the big Polish constitution. He was the main speaker. And he had to stop off in Milwaukee first. So I flew out with him to Milwaukee. I remember he was very angry on the flight out to Milwaukee, because the *New York Times* had written some story which was just totally fallacious--there was no basis for it--about the Vice President. I know that this just irritated the daylight out of him, flying out to Milwaukee. But he made a series of speeches in Milwaukee, spent the whole day there, and that was during Saturday. Then we flew into Chicago Saturday night. He stayed at the Sherman House, and the next morning, Sunday morning, he went to the Humble Park. There were a hundred thousand people. They always used to attract big crowds there, and he was just dumbfounded with this enormous crowd. It was one of the biggest crowds. Johnson had a big following in the Polish community, you know. They liked him.

F: You hadn't worked out the crowd so much as it just came.

P: Oh, yes, it just came. They knew he was going to be the main speaker.

F: Right.

P: He spoke, and then we went to the Chicago Society, which is a kind of club of Polish businessmen, lawyers, professionals, engineers. God, we couldn't get Johnson out of there, he was enjoying himself so much. He was supposed to go to Denver, I believe, and they just couldn't get him out of there. The Secret Service guys kept trying to prod him out, and he said, "No, I'm just having too much fun over here." He had some Polish sausage, a couple of drinks.

F: He would have loved that Polish sausage. It's his kind of food.

P: But he also loved people. You know, when he was with people, he loved close body contact with people. I think that that was an opiate for him. He had to have contact with the people. And I noticed wherever he went--

F: Would always stand very close to you.

P: Yes. But he seemed like he needed to have that close contact with people.

But when we were in Milwaukee, it was really funny. You know, I don't know whether you know this, but the President told me that in his travels across America, he insisted on having a painting by an indigenous local artist in each state that he visited. He wanted some painting by some local artist from that state. When we were in Wisconsin, he wanted to visit an art gallery and they had to find the owners, because it was closed on Saturday afternoon. The owner was just thrilled to come down and open the gallery, and the President bought a painting. He didn't buy very expensive paintings, but he bought good paintings.

F: Something that was representative.

P: So he wanted something representative of that state. So he said to me, "Roman, tomorrow morning I want to see some Chicago artists. I want to see some paintings. You make arrangements to have some Chicago artist come down and show me some of his works, because I want a picture from Chicago. I want to get a painting there." So I called the only one I could think of on a Saturday afternoon, who's a good friend of mine, Walter Krawiec, K-R-A-W-I-E-C, who was the editorial cartoonist for the *Polish Daily News*, but who is a very talented artist in his own right and did a lot of fine work. I called Walter and I said, "Walter, the Vice President would like to have a showing tomorrow

morning at the Sherman House in his suite. Bring along six or seven of your paintings. He'd like to pick one out. He wants a painting by a local artist."

Well, Walter Krawiec brought a group of paintings the next morning. The President was having a rubdown in his suite. So when he got through with the rubdown, in his pajamas he sat there viewing these paintings and there was one in particular he liked. This depicted the Chicago stockyards and all the cattle that were being brought in. The President spent about half an hour with Walter, telling him about some of the things that were wrong with his cattle, the shape of the head and the coloring. Lyndon was a great expert, you know.

F: "Get out and see a few cows."

P: So Walter and he had an interesting chat and he finally said, "Okay, I want this one. How much is it?" Well, Walter Krawiec was a very old man; he must have been in his upper seventies at that time. He said, "Six hundred dollars," and Lyndon said, "Oh, that's just too much money." Krawiec said, "Now, listen, you're a wealthy man and I'm very proud of my work. This painting is six hundred dollars, not a penny less." And Lyndon said, "Well, I just can't go six hundred dollars." Well, they haggled back and forth, back and forth, and, by golly, Lyndon didn't buy the painting because Krawiec would not yield one nickel and Lyndon wouldn't yield one nickel. So Walter left. They were very polite. They were very nice. But Lyndon said, "I sure want that painting. It would look great back in Texas. You know, Chicago is my favorite city; I love this city, and the stockyards are symbolic of this city. Walter, I really need this painting. I really want [it]." You know, Lyndon was a great arm twister.

F: Oh, yes.

P: And I suspect he had a lot of money, because he knew how to save money.

F: Right, right.

P: He just couldn't budge. He said to me later, "You know, this is the first guy I've never been able to persuade or convince."

Well, what happened, Walter took his painting home. The President got dressed, went to make his speech and everything. Several months later Walter was attending the Editorial Cartoonists Convention in Washington, D.C., and he brought the painting with him. He called me up and said, "You know, I feel very badly. The President said he wanted that painting, and I insisted on getting my price. Roman, I still insist that that painting is worth six hundred dollars, and I wouldn't sell it for a penny less. But I want to give it as a present to the President. Could you arrange that?" So I called Mr. Johnson and I told him, "You know that artist that you couldn't budge? Well, he won't go down on his price, Mr. President, but he wants to give it to you as a gift. The man's a very honorable man. He won't take less than six hundred if he sells it, but he wants to give it to you as a present." Well, Lyndon said, "Tell him to come over." So Walter came to the Vice President's office in the Senate. We had some pictures taken. Oh, he was very proud. And to this day, as Krawiec still is alive, he has the picture of he and the Vice President accepting this painting.

Now, I don't know what happened to that painting. I don't know what happened to all those paintings the President had been buying. I understood that he did have a room--

F: Yes, divided up according to themes and so on.

P: --at the Ranch where they . . . Yes. But this is an interesting incident where the one time that Lyndon Johnson got rolled back.

F: Right.

P: He couldn't just convince that old Polish artist who said, "No, I'll give it to you for nothing, but I won't sell it for less than six hundred dollars."

F: "The price is six hundred dollars."

P: But Lyndon had a lot of fun. He was a marvelous--he was just so at ease.

Of course, you know, the thing that we talked about most often was the war. He honestly believed that he had to stick it out.

F: Yes.

P: And I have here--I'd like to show it to you. I won't give it to you, but I'll show it to you. We were flying into Chicago in 1967, I think, or somewhere in through there, I don't recall. He was coming here to address a hundred dollar a plate luncheon in Chicago. And the whole Illinois/Chicago delegation flew in with him: Danny Rostenkowski and John Kluczynski and myself and Sidney Yates and all the other fellows.

The President had us back there in his private quarters on *Air Force One* on that big table that he had out there and we were talking about the war. Some of our fellows were saying we really ought to get out. And Lyndon said, "I've got--" He took his pencil and you know, he was a great doodler. When Lyndon talked, he always wanted to illustrate things. Did you ever notice that? So he took this little *Air Force One* pad, and he said, "Now, here are my options. I've got a number of options which I've got to look

at. Now, my number one option is to just pull all the stops and invade North Vietnam and just expand this war all over the place. They tell me that we would suffer a minimum of ten per cent losses on something like that and perhaps higher. Well," he said, "you're talking about fifty thousand American soldiers that would be killed. I just don't think that's the thing to do." He said, "My second option"--and he wrote on here--"is to just tuck tail and run. Now, that's what a lot of you fellows would like for me to do. You just want me . . ."

Now, you know, the interesting thing about Lyndon Johnson, this was his war. Whenever he talked about Vietnam, he talked in terms of this being his war. He's got to make the decisions; he's got to suffer the consequences; he's got to win it. Now, he never--he took the full blame for it, and that's of course what to a great extent, I think, destroyed him politically. He felt that, as commander in chief and as president, everything revolves around him. He'll take the accolades when we win, and he'll have to take the brickbats if we lose.

F: Yes.

P: And so he said I, not we, or the United States, or we Americans. He said, "My second choice is that I can tuck tail and run." Now, that must be a Texas expression. It was colorful, "tuck tail and run." He said, "Now, we're not going to do that. If we did that, every country in Southeast Asia would tumble and the rest of the world would fall into communist hands." He said, "The third theory, the third option I've got is"--I forget the name of the general, but it was some retired general that was advocating it--"the enclave doctrine where we'll just seal off the Communists in certain communist enclaves, just

hold them there. With that doctrine, we could stay there for the next fifty years. I don't want to stay in this war that long. I want out. I want to get this thing over with. The enclave would not be a workable idea. I know it sounds good, but it would just prolong this thing. The enclave doctrine would just drain us dry financially. This war is already costing too damn much." So he said, "The only thing, my fourth move, and that's the one that we're pursuing, is to just stay in there and continue hitting them wherever we can and just convince them that they can't win this war, and convince them that we mean business, we're going to stay there until we win it, the victory is ours." And so he drew these things out.

He said, "Our philosophy to the whole world has to be that we will repel aggression wherever it occurs." He wrote out the words: repel aggression. He said, "That's our national policy. If we're going to have any respect in this world from friend and foe, they've got to know that the United States will not tolerate war. It will not tolerate aggression, and that if aggression occurs, we will react. We've just got to continue to support our allies and"--I forget what this was now--"support and approve"--I forget what that was, but you know, his whole philosophy.

So he got all through with this doodling, you see. He said, "I've got no choice, fellows. I've got no choice. You've got no choice. You've just got to stay with me. We're going to win this war. I know we're going to win it. I've got a timetable. We're going to start pulling our troops back. We're already starting to convince the Communists that they haven't got a chance." And he said, "For us to walk away from this thing now, before we have given them the time to develop their own resources . . . Well,

every indication that we have shows that they are developing their own capability." And he said, "I just want you to know, the moment I feel they can go this alone, we'll be out of there. I have no intention of staying there the rest of my life."

So the consensus on the airplane was that in view of his explanation there really wasn't anything for him to do but stay in. Of course you know I was one of Johnson's strongest defenders on Vietnam, darn near lost an election myself, but I felt that he--

F: By and large, your constituency here stayed with you on this thing?

P: Oh, yes, yes. The people in this area realized. Just east of us here is a much more liberal wing and there of course was strong opposition to the war. But here in my constituency, I guess it wouldn't be much.

F: How far east does your district line up?

P: Well, the Congressional District used to go all the way down to Clark Street. The ward lines, of course, don't go anywhere near that far.

But Lyndon was deeply--you know, nothing, nothing, nothing took more of his time. Wherever he went, it got to a point where he was so thoroughly defensive that it really kind of began affecting his concern about all the other problems. Of course, one thing that was fortunate for Lyndon, and for which he was to a great extent partially responsible obviously, the decade of the sixties is the only decade in the history of the United States that we had ten years of uninterrupted economic growth.

F: Right.

P: You remember there were labor shortages. They were stealing workers; pirating of workers was a common practice because you couldn't find good workers. You know,

huge shortages, labor shortages.

Of course, one thing that Lyndon had that no other president has had for a long time--the last time anyone had that was Roosevelt back in 1938, I believe it was--for two leading years Lyndon had his own Camelot, if you want to call it that. He had enough votes in Congress that he could tell the coalition to go to hell. Now, that's when we got through Medicare, aid to education, oh, a whole series of landmark bills that nobody would think of repealing today. I think that if one were to look very carefully at the record of the American presidency, I don't think that there is any precedent to the two years that Lyndon had the votes in Congress and he ran through [so many bills]. Mr. McCormack was telling me--I think we once sat down and we just kind of reviewed [the record]. In his office McCormack used to have a kind of a case, a glass case, with the pens of sixty major social welfare bills passed by Johnson in those fleeting two years when he had the ecstasy of a Congress that would ram through his legislation without the coalition. The last time that happened in this country was, I believe, back in 1938. If we had a Democratic president now with this new Congress you have a coalition-free Congress now.

F: Yes, you could move now.

P: But I don't know to what extent that coalition-free Congress is going to work with President [Gerald] Ford.

But Lyndon, you see, had the great capacity for recognizing an opportunity. That's not easy.

F: No.

P: Lots of us in life, opportunities pass us right by. We're not smart enough to see them. He had that great capacity for recognizing opportunity and then he had the second ingredient, and that is the guts, the courage, to take advantage of it. You see, a lot of guys, they see an opportunity, but they don't have the courage to take advantage of it. Well, Lyndon Johnson's key to success, I think, was that he had these two important ingredients. One, he had the savvy to know when there was a good opportunity; he knew how to distinguish between a bad opportunity and a good opportunity, and he knew how to pick them. And then he had that typical Texas bullheadedness; he had the guts to do something about it.

So when he found himself with a veto-proof Congress in 1964, he just ran through like gangbusters, just one bill after the other, you know, just kept piling them up. Matter of fact, towards the end of the last session, the congressmen were getting weary and said, "My God, we've never had so much legislation in the history of the Republic!" But, you see, that was where Johnson's great skill came, because he knew--you know, he had a great sense of history--that presidents don't get coalition-free Congresses very often. So as long as he had it, he ran them through.

F: Give it everything you've got.

P: I tell you, I've often wondered, had we not got involved in Vietnam and Johnson became president of the United States and could have devoted all of his effort to domestic problems, what a fantastic county this would have been. Because Johnson had an insight into the needs of our country that most of our presidents don't have. And after being a schoolteacher, he had great compassion for human beings. So I wish I could turn the

clock back and see what America--we had a preview of what kind of America he wanted during those two years of a coalition-proof Congress.

F: I always thought he made the utmost out of Kennedy's assassination. As far as all those things that had hung, he realized that here you've got a change of mood and you pushed it for all it was worth.

P: Well, yes, and of course, and this is understandable, like all presidents Lyndon Johnson wanted his own image, he wanted his own brand. Jerry Ford is now doing the same thing. Nixon did the same thing. Truman did the same thing after Roosevelt died.

I remember we were in that 1964 campaign, and it was very difficult to get the President out from under the Kennedy image. He was a very polite man; privately, you know, he was real rough, tough, almost crude at times. But publicly his public image was one of good tact, and I was never really too dissuaded by that one moment when he showed his operation [scar]. A lot of the pundits made fun of that, but I can see where it got carried away. Or pulling the beagle by the two ears. Those were some of the things. But basically Johnson was a real gentleman.

He was in a very difficult position in that 1964 campaign. You know, he couldn't do anything to disengage himself from Kennedy because, of course, all the Kennedy loyalists would just accuse him of being happy about the assassination. So he had to be very discreet, but he had to find some way to disengage himself from the Kennedy image.

It was interesting how they ran through the poverty program in early October. Now, this was six or eight weeks before the election, and you'll notice Lyndon decided to declare war on poverty, and he was going to be the first president in the history of the

United States that would stamp out poverty. So they wrote the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and to show you of his intense interest in that bill, every single member of the cabinet except the Secretary of State testified on that bill. Everybody! Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Defense, HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare], Labor, Treasury, and so on. And this did give Lyndon an image. Unfortunately, the program came into great disrepute and severe criticism is what happened, and this infuriated the President.

You know, as happens so frequently in Washington when the bureaucrats take over, any similarity between what the President wants, or what the Congress has enacted, and what the guidelines spell out is purely coincidental. I know that he was furious, for instance, when he learned that the language, which was kind of an innocent thing in the bill, the passage in that bill which calls for "maximum feasible participation of the poor in formulating policy". . . Now, as a goal, that's a very beautiful goal, but as a practical proposition, it's unworkable. Well, the OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] people decided that that language meant just what it said, that you can't move unless you've got maximum feasible participation of the poor in the policy-making. And how do you determine who are the representative poor? They decided to have elections in Philadelphia and in San Francisco which meant that if you were poor, you were going to stand in line to vote and you're distinguishing poor people from normal people. There was a great deal of criticism around the country, and the President was just absolutely livid that some idiot ordered elections held to elect a representative of the poor.

But that bill passed and that bill did give him his own brand, his own image.

F: Did the civil rights bills and particularly the Fair Housing Bill give you trouble back here?

P: Sure, they always did. The 1968 amendment, which [Everett] Dirksen wrote in the Senate, nobody understood; nobody knew what was in it. And it carried criminal sanctions. And there was no debate on that. See, the House sent the Civil Rights Act to the Senate without that amendment. There was a great deal of pressure for some kind of a federal housing amendment, and so finally Everett Dirksen decided to come through with that one. There was no debate in the House.

When this thing was accepted in conference by Manny [Emanuel] Celler, there was not one word of debate in the House on that amendment. The debate was purely procedural amendment on whether or not a conference report is amendable. And if you'll look at the record, you'll find there was no debate in the House on the substantive nature of the amendment itself. Oh, yes, it gave lots of guys trouble.

F: How do you explain Dirksen's first switch on these votes? Just a matter of seeing that the time had come, or do you think it was trade-outs with Johnson?

P: Well, the President, yes, I think that Lyndon Johnson was a great civil libertarian. I don't think that history has given him quite enough credit. He really felt very keenly about it. And I think that Johnson talked him into it. Johnson was telling me, when I was at the Library, in the replica of the Oval Room there, he has that Big Ben clock. Ever see that Big Ben? There's a clock in the Library. Next time you go by there, it's one of those old-time what they called the Big Ben; you crank them up, big bell in there. He said he got that from Everett Dirksen, because I believe the clock was made in Elgin. I think the Big

Ben Clock Company was in Elgin.

And so the President was telling us how he had a good relationship with Everett. He said, "I could work with him, and he was approachable. Frankly, if I couldn't persuade him on the merits of the thing, we'd always bring out a little bourbon and branch water, and that would always make the conversation a little easier." He was telling us how he got Dirksen to go along on the consular treaty. You remember, we had the President propose a treaty to permit the Soviet Union to open up some consulates here if we could open up consulates in Russia. And Dirksen was just absolutely adamant. He wanted no part of it. And there were strong feelings, you see. One of those consulates would be opening here in Chicago, and Dirksen was getting just tons of mail in protest, "We don't want those Communists here. We don't want those spies here."

F: A spy center.

P: And so Dirksen was just having all heck. Well, Johnson was telling us how he got him in the Oval Room one day and told him about why we had to have a consulate in Leningrad. He said, "Hell, if we can't watch those communist spies in the United States, we might as well fold up and shut down shop. Everett, we've got the FBI and we've got everything else. You don't have to worry about any spies in this country. We'll take care of that. But there's only one way that we can get information out of Russia. We just can't get information any other way. Half the information we get out of Russia is worthless. It was given to us by double agents and whatnot. We've got to have a physical facility in Leningrad." He called in the Director of the CIA. And the Director of the CIA told Dirksen what the Russians were doing up there in Leningrad, and to this day, Leningrad

is off limits. When Ford was there recently, they never took him into the city. Remember that? And so Lyndon said, "Everett, this is in the highest--"

F: You mean, in Leningrad, or Vladivostok?

P: Vladivostok. I'm sorry. Vladivostok. "And that's where we've got to have a consulate." Johnson said, "We've just got to have this." And he said, "I just kept pouring a little bit more of that bourbon and branch water. Before that night was through, Dirksen said, 'Okay, you've persuaded me and convinced me. I will support the treaty.'" Well, that's the kind of working arrangement he had with Dirksen. And I suspect that the Open Occupancy Amendment was worked out pretty much the same way.

As for that clock, Dirksen sent him the clock as a token of appreciation.

F: Johnson was almost irresistible in a one-on-one situation, and I'm sure even an old pro like Dirksen, if you got him in and talked to him all evening . . .

P: Well, he had the CIA people, also. He had the CIA come in and brief Dirksen on why it was more important for us. Dirksen said, "What the hell! They're not going to steal anything from us, Lyndon. First of all, they know everything we've got. We've had some pretty bad leaks in our own armor, but we're the ones who need the information." And that was Johnson's [approach]. That's what persuaded him.

F: I never knew whether they liked each other, but I always thought that Johnson and Adam Clayton Powell respected each other as a couple of professionals.

P: Yes, they did, and Adam Clayton Powell never turned the President down. Now, Adam Clayton Powell had an access to the President. The President realized how important the Education and Labor Committee was to him. So he did a lot of romancing around

Powell, too. And if Adam Powell had not gotten involved in that lawsuit--what broke him was that libel suite. And the President was very sympathetic. But I know that Powell frequently talked to the President on the telephone and Powell had a great respect for Lyndon Johnson.

F: That was a busy committee in those years.

P: Oh, heck, yes.

F: Must have worked y'all's tail off.

P: We did. As I say, especially during that two-year period when he had the votes. We got the library services bill through, manpower bill, just a whole constellation of landmark legislation that was passed, and most of it came out of our committee. The President was very close to our committee.

F: Pretty well laid to rest the old myth about federal aid to education being a commie plot.

P: Oh, yes. Johnson was a strong supporter of that. You know, we passed Title I under his administration.

It's interesting, with all due respect to Kennedy, that in the two years that he was president, he really didn't get any legislation through. He got the Peace Corps bill through and he got the Foreign Trade Expansion Act, couple of other minor bills, but Jack did not have the rapport with the Congress. There was a strong coalition in Congress that worked against Kennedy. Johnson had greater access to that coalition. He knew how to bring those guys around, and he did.

F: How did he do it?

P: Well, first of all, there was a personal charm about the man. But secondly, he was the

most gutsy guy that I've ever met. He just would look you right in the eye and say, "I need this. The country needs this. And I need your he'p. You've got to he'p me." And that was all, see, everything that Johnson did, he did on a very personal basis. When you did something, you felt that you were doing it for him, because he reduced everything to one-to-one, you know. He'd look you right in the eye, and he'd say, "This country needs this. You can't walk away from this. I need your help." It was just that sheer strength of force, almost intimidating, but you never felt that you were being intimidated. He made you feel like your decision to help him, you had the key. You see, he made everybody feel important.

F: Jake Pickle told me one time that one of the votes went against his long-standing principles and that he stayed awake nights thinking about it. Because Johnson used the approach, "Now, Jake, I just want you to think about this in the terms of thirty years from now, because this is going to go, and which side do you want to be remembered as having been on?"

F: Yes. Oh, yes, listen, but Johnson's success I think was his--he was like a truck driver in heavy traffic, he just plowed right on through, like a fullback on the [Green Bay] Packers, just charge right through. Before you had a chance to say no, he had you saying yes. He had guts. I think that much of it, he'd talk to you privately and say, "I didn't think I could persuade this guy." And he used to be surprised at his own successes. But it was just the sheer courage to plow forward.

F: He did a great deal, of course, for the blacks in this country, and more, I think, than any other president, but they got to be terribly militant. Do you think he understood that in a

sense he gave them new expectations; that in other words to a certain extent that the more they got, the more they could see that they could have and wanted. Or do you think he soured on the whole thing? "Here I've tried to help, and . . .?"

P: No, I don't think you could blame the President for expectations. I think that he obviously with the civil rights bill that he sponsored and got through the House opened up opportunities. But there were so many forces at play at that time. You know, we went through [so much]. The decade of the sixties and the horrors of Vietnam brutalized America. I think that if President Johnson were here now, and he could turn back the clock, and saw what this . . . This is the first war that we saw in its full gory detail at the evening dinner table.

F: Every night.

P: We learned how to eat dinner watching hundreds of people die: civilians, children, soldiers. I think it did change our national culture and our national values.

So the rioting, the black uprisings were part of that brutality. I don't think it would be fair to say that the President had raised their expectations too high. As a matter of fact, I sometimes wonder what would have happened to this country had he not provided the leadership. There was a huge army of blacks who were contented to follow the system and make their gains within the framework of the system; open up the federal government, for instance, the Post Office, all these things, you know. I've always wondered what would have happened to our country had he not done that, had there not been these opportunities, had there not been these rising expectations. How many more blacks would have engaged in the mayhem and the violence and the destruction and the

rioting? History, I think, will have to recognize the extent to which he helped stem a tide that I think could have led to an overthrow.

I was in Greece in 1967 when the *junta* took over there. The situation was so bad in Greece, there were wildcat strikes, and the whole country was just falling apart. When the *junta* came in, I went out and talked to a number of people on the street on how they felt about the *junta*. Their reaction, to my consternation, was, "What kept them so long in coming?"

So you see, we Americans take our freedoms for granted. We think it's always going to be here, but great republics have fallen. I've often asked myself as we went through this violent decade of the sixties whether we could have survived if Johnson had not been plugging the holes wherever he could with the manpower act, aid to education, veterans benefits, civil rights--the whole gamut of civil rights--Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. What side would the blacks have been on if you had not come up with those programs and how much more violence would have occurred in this country? And, frankly, could we have survived? I don't know. Well, it's easy enough to point to the rioting, but what about all the rioting that never did occur? And there were new hopes. So my feeling is that the trouble with history is that you never know what would have happened if certain events didn't occur.

F: Did you get involved in that dispute between Francis Keppel, Office of Education, and Mayor Daley?

P: Yes.

F: You want to give me a little run-down on it.

P: Well, sure, that's when they tried to shoot down our [appropriation]. It was an arbitrary decision to cut all our money off, just cut the money off. And I helped write the bill so I knew something about the administrative procedures that had to go through. We were entitled to a hearing; we were entitled to a review; we were entitled to all sorts of measures before they cut that money off. So I called Daley, and I told him that they can't do this; it's illegal. And of course, Daley, you know, had an open line.

F: You didn't get any sort of a warning? You just got cut off?

P: That's right. They just notified us they were cutting us off. And Daley called Lyndon Johnson and Lyndon Johnson called Keppel, and the next day, or two days later, whatever it was, they rescinded that order. There was no question that Daley went right to the President. It was interesting though; there were occasions when the President went to Daley.

When we were writing the Title I, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act--that was a big federal aid program to underprivileged children, the supplemental money that we'd provide compensatory education--the department insisted that the money would be allocated on the basis of children on public aid, children whose families were under three thousand dollars. At that time, they started at two thousand dollars, then it goes to three thousand dollars. So we were going to take the census figures for 1960 on the families in a census tract area that had an income of less than two thousand dollars, and then they were going to allocate the money on that basis. I said, "Well, hell, in Chicago we have black families with six, seven, eight, ten, twelve children. Their welfare check is bigger than two thousand dollars, but you're not going to count them.

Now, these children are poor; they're on public aid. But because there are six or seven or eight children in the family, that family income is in excess of two thousand dollars, and you're not going to count these kids." Well, this was to a certain extent that the South wanted it that way, because they had the statistics. We had the welfare cases, you see. So the South would have gotten more money.

I said, "Hell, no. I'm not going to budge on this." I had my committee tied up. I knew how Lyndon operates. Everybody knew how he operated. He was a great guy on the telephone. And I knew he'd be calling Daley, because he called Daley frequently. So I called Daley, and I said, "Look, you're going to be getting a call from the White House. Now, before you make any commitments, I just want you to know what you're talking about. This is what I'm fighting for here, and this is what we're trying to do. We're trying to get a hell of a lot more money for Chicago if we use the double formula, either the under two thousand dollars or public aid. And our public aid figures are current. Every thirty days we have public aid figures." Well, census tract figures at that time were four years old, four and a half years old. So I said, "Dick, don't make any commitments, because it's going to cost us money." He said, "Well, I think you're right, Roman. I think you're absolutely right. Stick with your guns. Don't budge." And I said, "Well, I won't, but don't you budge when Lyndon starts working on you."

And sure enough, the President did call Daley. He said, "Dick, would you get that Pucinski off our back, with the committee?" And he'd say a word to me. I forget who the [Commissioner of the Office of Education was]--Keppel, I think it was, and Cohen, Wilbur Cohen, was, I believe the deputy [assistant] secretary [for legislation of HEW

then]. They all worked on me, and I wouldn't budge. So when the President called Daley, Daley said, "Mr. President, on this one, I think that Roman is right. I don't think that your guys have given you all the facts. This is what Roman tells me, and this is why he's fighting against this formula. He wants to have the children on public aid counted in. You know, we've got a lot of kids, 167,000 children in this city, that are on public aid, and they're not going to be counted in your formula, Mr. President." Well, Lyndon said, "My God, I didn't realize that." So Daley repeated the thing to him. He said, "Well, forget about this call, Dick." Well, the next morning the administration people came and said, "Congressman, we'll take your amendment." Apparently, somebody had been keeping things away from him, see, and he saw that we had a point.

Of course, one thing that Lyndon did, coming from Texas, coming from a small town, he showed uncanny awareness of the problems of the big cities. You'd think he came from a big city, you know.

F: He always seemed to me to be particularly fond of Chicago. You noticed a while ago when he spoke to this Polish group, he said Chicago is his favorite city, I think maybe there was truth in that.

P: Oh, yes. He said that many, many times. He said he loved to come here. Well, you see, whenever he came here, remember he was always well received.

F: Yes.

P: No, personally, I imagine his biggest disappointment . . . You know, we got into trouble with the whole, goddarned 1968 convention. All that turmoil could have been avoided. We wanted to give those hippies Soldier's Field. "Yeah, go out and have your convention

at Soldier's Field. We'll give you the whole damn place." But, you see, we couldn't commit ourselves to Soldier's Field, because we were under the impression that the President was going to come in here and have a big birthday party at Soldier's Field. We were going to get a hundred thousand people out there. We were going to have a birthday party for Lyndon, and we were going to have a hundred thousand people in that darn Soldier's Field, one hell of a party! But the situation was so unstable here, so chaotic, so really turbulent, that we had to--well, I think the President said he would not come in.

F: He didn't give you any notice. I think as usual he kept his options open.

P: Listen, we had the helicopters standing by there right up until the gavel came down closing the convention. We were hopeful that he would change his mind and come. And I'm sorry he didn't. Because, you see, what they didn't tell the President, the turbulence was outside the convention hall far removed; it was at the Hilton Hotel.

One reason why that darn convention was so turbulent and how Lyndon's own fate had been changed, we had a telephone strike over here and the installers were on strike. So the installers worked out a deal with Daley that they would install certain fixed lines and that's all, nothing else. So TV and radio were very limited in what they could do. They didn't have the mobility. And they were angry with Daley. Now the other thing that hurt this thing--and this is where these guys really stuck it to everybody--they wanted the convention to be held in Miami where the Republicans had their convention, because it would have saved them a million dollars in transferring gear and all that. When we insisted on having our convention here in Chicago, we already had a state of

cold war with the media. Now when they came here, they already were mad they had to come here. When they came and found there were no telephone services because of the strike, they were doubly mad. So they were going to take it out on Daley and Johnson and everybody else. You know what a bunch of goofy kids do when they see cameras; they go berserk. But the rioting was all out there on Michigan Avenue in front of the Conrad Hilton in Lincoln Park.

At the arena itself, at the armory--if somebody were today to take the videotape, and I'm sure it must be available someplace--of the whole proceedings, the record will show that that was one of the best darn conventions we ever had. First of all, we had a very scholarly debate.

F: I thought the debate on the war resolutions was--

P: Certainly.

F: --in the best traditions, you know.

P: You've never see that before. Tell me, give me a convention where that's ever happened before. Now, we adopted rules. People forget that the turmoil in the party today--the miniconvention, the whole business of 1972, the [George] McGovern nomination, all that jazz--all that came from a minority report that was adopted by the Democratic convention in 1968 in Chicago at the amphitheater. And so if that convention was so bad, how come that the ultra-liberals were able to arrange through that convention their reform package. People have not been fair, and history's not been fair. You know, history tried to create all kinds of problems.

Lyndon Johnson ordered a tight security at the amphitheater and properly so,

because we had irrefutable information that the plan was to invade the amphitheater and disrupt the convention, and not let the convention proceed with the nomination of a presidential candidate. That's what they wanted. They wanted to physically destroy that convention. So we had the information. Our undercover people had the information. Secret Service people had the information. FBI had the information. So the President quite properly ordered absolute security. I don't know whether you know this or not, but--

F: I came up, incidentally, to the 1968 convention.

P: --at twelve o'clock midnight Saturday that building was totally vacated, completely, everybody. The Secret Service then took over the building, and they cleared everybody to go back in: the catering people, the janitors, the electricians, you know, all. And in a sense, the Secret Service people had complete control. That's when we had the things, you know, to get in and out the floor.

But, you see, the press tried to create the impression that the convention itself was turbulent. You had Mike Wallace being evicted. You had another altercation there, and they played these things up to create the impression. Now, you remember that tribute they paid to Bobby Kennedy? Hell, that was a very stirring thing, and there was no rioting. The inside of that convention, in my judgment, the only bad thing about it was that Carl Albert kind of lost his grip, but there were a lot of reasons for that.

But I thought that Johnson was very badly treated in this whole convention process. And then, of course, I think that he wanted to come here, and had he come here, I guarantee you he would have electrified, he really would have electrified that

convention and the country. But I don't blame him for not coming.

F: You know, the charge was made that he was sitting down there in Johnson City pulling all the strings. I never could quite see that, but I wondered if you had any . . .

P: Well, you mean--

F: At the convention. That he ran the convention out of Johnson City.

P: Oh, he was very active, sure. Danny Rostenkowski can tell you more about that. I presume you'll be talking to him.

F: You should.

P: You should, if you have time, because Dan was on the podium. You know, Dan, a number of times . . . As a matter of fact, Lyndon called and said, "For Christ's sakes, get Albert the hell out of there and give it to Danny." Because Danny's a big guy, husky guy, and it's my understanding that the President barked out the orders to get rid of Albert and let Danny run the convention, because . . . Yes, the President was deeply involved in that convention.

F: But he wasn't dictating nominees?

P: Oh, no, I don't think he was dictating nominees. No, I thought you meant . . . That's who he wanted. No, I think that Hubert was way out in front right along. Was there any doubt about it? I just kind of thought that . . .

F: I always thought when Bob Kennedy was shot that removed any real possibility of stopping Humphrey. But that would have been interesting.

Did Johnson encourage you to run for the Senate?

P: Oh, I made the decision before he knew about it, and he was very helpful. He gave me

the encouragement to the extent that he said, "If you run, Roman, I'll come in and help you." And he was enthusiastic about my running. But he was not instrumental in the initial decision. No, I didn't have any opportunity to talk to him about that.

F: I rather gathered he and Mayor Daley understood each other, worked as equals and partners, and so on.

P: Oh, yes, yes.

F: And could say no to each other if necessary.

P: Well, Daley liked Johnson, and Johnson, being a dispenser of power himself, liked Daley, because Daley is a powerful man. They have something in common. They both were power brokers. They both had to maintain a certain degree of discipline to make the electoral process and the political process work. You know, our good friends keep talking about consensus government and people participation, so-called participatory democracy, whatever that means. Hell's bells! Somebody's got to make decisions. And I think what Lyndon Johnson had learned and Daley had learned, both of these men have learned, that you've got to have power to get things done. If you don't have power, you're just not going to get things done.

We used to have a great mayor here, Martin Kennelly, before Daley was elected--wonderful man, decent, honest, a bachelor, a lovable guy. You'd wish he was your father. He was just that kind of a nice guy, but that was the trouble with him. He was a nice guy and, as a result, the city was wide open. Prostitution, gambling, anything was going here, because he was just too nice to lay down some conditions. You know, Daley runs the city with a much more firm grip, as did Johnson. You know, Johnson wanted

one thing, sometimes almost to a fault. You always got the feeling he [Johnson] was very insecure, because he extracted this absolute loyalty. You know, you felt that he demanded absolute, total, unequivocal loyalty. And this is where Daley has the same qualities. I think that that has made them effective leaders. They both learned how to work with the legislatures, but, of course, it has also brought them their share of criticisms and denouncements.

F: "Can do" people.

P: "Can do" people.

F: You used to hear that expression. Well, can you think of anything else we ought to talk about right now?

P: No, I think it's just unfortunate that a guy who had so much practical ability, knew the system well. Very few Americans knew democracy as well as Lyndon did.

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

P: As I say, it's unfortunate that a man who had so many opportunities had to be blackmailed by fate with the Vietnam War. I felt sorry for the President because in retrospect there's no question that he was very badly misled by his generals. Johnson was enough of a disciplinarian to know that you've got to work with your team; good or bad, it's the best team you've got. And the military kept telling him that victory was around the corner if we could have another hundred thousand guys. That's how we got ourselves escalated there to a tune of a half a million people.

When he got that Tonkin Bay [Gulf] Resolution through, it went through

unanimously: in the House, unanimously; in the Senate, one dissenting vote. Now, they accused Johnson of deliberately planting language in that resolution. That's not true. They had ample time to discuss it and debate it. But we asked these questions and then, of course, when we gave him the authority in Tonkin Bay Resolution to send troops in, then when they realized what they did five years later, they began screaming.

But I think that had fate not played this cruel trick on him, had he had an era of peace . . . I know for a fact, because he said it many times, he was absolutely convinced that the war was a drag on our economy. You know, he was accused by many people of prolonging the war to sustain that economic growth. That's not true. Johnson had all kinds of figures to show that the war really was holding back economic expansion in housing and lots of other things, critical shortages. And so it would have been great if you could turn back the clock, give Lyndon Johnson the country, as we did in 1964, without a Vietnam War; I think that that fellow would have undoubtedly created a quality of life in this country that would have been really the model for the world. As it is now, the Third World powers don't trust us, dislike us. We're in trouble. I don't know how much more years the U.N. can survive. I don't think it'll survive very long.

Well, had Lyndon Johnson been able to use his resources for a Johnson plan for Africa, or a Johnson plan for South America . . . I think one of the great disappointments of his life was that he never could address himself to the South American problem, because he liked South America; he liked it very much. So it's unfortunate that he never had the opportunity. But the record--if someone will just look at the bills he did pass, all of those bills now are being improved. I have yet to see anybody say, "Let's repeal

them." You know?

F: Yes.

P: He used to say, "That's the test. That's the test. Why do these fellows want to repeal these bills? If they're no good, kill them." They're not going to kill them.

He was a great man. I liked him; lots of other people liked him. One of the nice things about him is that he had such a great compassion. He was brutal. He was ruthless at times. At times, he gave you the impression that he was an egomaniac. You know, he couldn't stand criticism. Having been a senator, see, he was very sensitive to the headlines. Well, all those things are an occupational disease, particularly to senators, to congressmen, also. But, you know, senators become very PR conscious. So many of the traits that Lyndon had as a senator he carried into the White House, and he became very irksome. But the difficulty with history is that it becomes beguiled with these things that got most attention, and this myriad of good that this man did as president gets lost in the shuffle. It's going to take a long time to cut through the headlines and get down to the real Lyndon Johnson.

Now, when you get down to the real Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird, I think that a lot of Lyndon's great strength came from Lady Bird. I remember when, after we dedicated the Library, we went out to the Ranch, and he took us for a tour of the Ranch. He took some of us and Lady Bird took the others. He was out there in that big white Lincoln of his, that convertible, and Mrs. Johnson was in their Chrysler station wagon; they were flitting all over the darned place chasing each other like two young kids in love, with the radio and they had the telephone in their cars, talking to each other, where

they are. You could see the closeness of those two people. And while it's true that Lyndon is always accused of having an eye for pretty women--and maybe he did, I don't know--but even if he did, I don't think he ever permitted anything to interfere with his great feeling for Lady Bird. And she was a big help to him.

But, as I say, it's going to take some time to separate the wheat from the chaff on the real Lyndon Johnson. When you look at his programs, you'll find . . . You know, if there were tapes of the Johnson era in the White House, they'd be fascinating. Because I think that Johnson had a severe impatience with mediocrity. You know, he just didn't want people wasting his time with nothing. And he feared he was going to run out of time.

But I still think he made a mistake in not running. I think he made a mistake.

F: Yes, I think he would have made it and he would've gotten a vote of confidence. But that's only if.

P: You know, really, the greatest single irony of life is, by golly, that the pull-out came just about the time he said it was going to come. I mean, it's uncanny how close they were to his timetable, you know. And he could have finished that thing out there.

Well, I've got to go to a concert.

F: Okay.

[End of Tape 1 of 1, Side 2, and Interview I]

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