INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 29, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: GRAHAM PURCELL

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

PLACE: Congressman Purcell's office in the Cannon Building, Washington, D. C.

Tape 1 of 1

M: First of all, let's get some background about you. Where were you born and when, and where did you get your education?

P: Well, Mr. McComb, I was born in Archer City, Texas, which is south of Wichita Falls. I went through public school there, graduated from high school in 1937, and went to Texas A & M, where I took a degree in animal husbandry and agriculture, but majoring in animal husbandry.

M: You planned to farm, ranch?

P: If I had any ambition at that time it was probably to be the manager of a ranch. I learned not long before I was sent to college--and I was sent, I didn't go--that managers of ranches made two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and that sounded like a tremendous amount of money in 1936, or so to me. So my ambition, if any, was to do that. Well, then, when I got out of school--I didn't really get my degree in 1941 which is when I should have. The war was coming on. I went to the Army in 1941 and stayed until 1946. I came back to Texas A & M and took the opportunity I had had on more than one occasion before to pass an organic chemistry course and got my degree from A & M in 1946 actually because I took this chemistry course. Then I went to law school.

M: This is at Baylor?

P: I finished at Baylor. I actually went to Texas University Law School in the summer of 1946 and started the fall term. I withdrew and went to the University of South Dakota. I didn't think I was passing law school, and I was very concerned about it. So I went to South Dakota a year and came back to Baylor in 1948 and finished in 1949, really. So I have my law degree from Baylor. I practiced law in Big Spring, West Texas, for two years, from 1949-51, and came to Wichita Falls in 1951 and practiced law until 1955. I went on the bench as a district judge and remained in that position from 1955 until January of 1962, when I was elected to Congress. And I came to Washington in January of 1962, which was in January, all right, but it was the "off" January.

M: When you were a judge, is that an appointed position?

P: No, it's an elected position. Actually, I was appointed to fill a vacancy because of a death, appointed by Governor Shivers. But it is an elected position, except interim appointments are made by the governor. So it's a court of general jurisdiction in Texas. In that position I had jurisdiction of juvenile matters, so I became very active in, not just juvenile delinquency matters, but youth work of all kinds and I dealt with that for seven or eight years.

M: When did you first meet Lyndon Johnson?

P: I had met Mr. Johnson, and it was purely a meeting just in a group to shake hands, probably back in the early or before mid-fifties. I don't know. Fifty-two or 1953, probably. Oh, I guess I had shaken

his hand [before]. Well, the first time I had really shook hands was in his senatorial race in 1948, but that was all it was. I became very superficially acquainted with him probably in the early fifties. It was 1959 or 1960 before I would consider myself being at all well acquainted, and not then not like some of the old-time friends were.

M: Yes. Did you ever campaign for him?

P: The only time I really ever campaigned for him was in the 1960 election. I was in law school in 1948. And so, yes, in the 1960 campaign as he and Mr. Kennedy were running, I did do some rather modest [campaigning], and all in Texas, nothing outside of Texas or on a national level of any kind.

M: Did you happen to go to the convention in 1960?

P: I went to the convention in 1960. I was not an official delegate, I was there working in Mr. Johnson's behalf. I primarily worked with some of the western state delegations with some of John Connally's family members, whom I've known for a long, long time. Really we worked with Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, some of the Western states, with only modest progress.

M: Your job, then, was to contact these people to try to persuade them to support Johnson?

P: And at the convention; I had not done any preliminary work prior to the convention. But at the convention, really, this was what I did, and then during the campaign and only, again, in the Texas area.

M: At that 1960 convention, were you impressed with the power of the Kennedy delegation and its work?

P: Well, I certainly was. In fact, I would say I was overwhelmed. It was the first time I had seen a national convention, and I had the feeling that if you had the money you could hire the rest of it. It was the impression I had, and I still maintain that attitude, if you're willing to do it that way.

M: Yes.

P: I saw many examples [of this] where we were working for Mr. Johnson. I think Mr. Johnson's philosophy, along with Mr. Rayburn's, was to deal through the traditional political established people and their delegations. And in incident after incident I think that I saw where prior work and prior planning and a lot of prior money spending--I don't say that meaning anything unsavory about the whole thing, but such a high degree of organization by professional organizers, not professional politicians--[had] the Johnson effort for nomination running so far behind that we had no chance to catch up.

M: Were you surprised when Lyndon Johnson accepted the vice presidential nomination?

P: At that time, yes, sir, very much. It's sometimes difficult to look far back with all the things that've happened since then and really appreciate how surprised I think all of us were, I guess. I was very definitely surprised.

M: Why? Can you give me a reason about that?

P: From my standpoint, and at that time I'm sure [I was] quite naive in my knowledge of overall national politics, I had considered Mr. Johnson the advocate upon whose side I was on. Mr. Kennedy was an

advocate for the position, and he had his people. And I had not stopped to analyze who or what kind of a person, if Mr. Kennedy got the nomination, he would want for vice president. Upon reflection, and I guess rationalization, it seemed very logical. But at the moment, I can tell you, I was sitting in whatever hotel the Texas delegation was assigned to, and it was a miserable one. I was getting a haircut, and I will always remember precisely when I first learned. It was soon after noon, in Los Angeles, on the day of the nomination for the vice presidency. So I was surprised or shocked. But upon reflection and analyzation of it, I can see Mr. Kennedy's point, and I can also see Mr. Johnson's point. I mean, in trying to set aside what happened later.

But I think that, not just for political reasons, to me this was indicative of the kind of men that both Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Johnson were. Not only in the interest of winning, this was important, too, but in the interest of having a balanced team for the sake of the country I think both of the men used less ego than they did judgment, and tried to do what they thought was good for the political party, politically speaking, but for the country also. And I have nothing but respect for both of them in this area.

M: Well, then, did you campaign for the ticket back in Wichita Falls?

P: Yes, I did everything that I could. I was an officeholder, I was on the bench, and certainly tried to conduct myself commensurate with the position I had, but I did everything that I thought I could.

M: Then in 1962 you ran for Congress, is that right?

P: Yes, I ran in a special election. Really the race was all in 1961, the latter part of it, but it turned out that, with the special election, the runoff and final election was in January. So I took office in January of 1962, which of course was one year after the Kennedy-Johnson Administration started.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson happen to help you any in that race?

P: Yes. He helped me some financially. In a special election, you do not run as party, but it was handled pretty much as a primary. The first one, this was December 19, he did help me. I was asked to come down to the Ranch, as I remember, during the Christmas recess. This was the first time that I had ever been there. Two or three other friends of his and friends of mine from the Wichita Falls area were asked to go down. I had a very nice visit. I had really kind of a graduate seminar in politics, getting off into minute details about how to run a campaign. And he, at that visit, gave me some money, not a great deal.

M: Is he the one who gave you some instructions on how to run the campaign?

P: Yes, he himself did. It was rather interesting in that--not that I was any experienced man, but I had dealt in politics--this included how to shake hands, how to look people in the eye, how to conduct yourself even in these mechanical ways, as well as, and I can't remember the details, how to handle issue discussions. Of course, it was a matter of listening to some of his stories and some of his

early experiences in his campaigns, from which I drew, I think, good ideas.

M: Then you applied his ideas to your own campaign, is that right?

P: I suppose I did. Basically, the mechanics of campaigning in Texas is about the same for all of us, I think. Not that I had thought of them, but my way of campaigning was parallel enough with his that I can't point out anything that I did differently. But I was sort of reassured to realize that he would think my system was generally all right.

M: Is it still important to go out and shake hands with people on the streets?

P: It is in Texas, yes sir.

M: Now this is Lyndon Johnson's style of campaigning, isn't it?

P: Yes, it is.

M: And you found this also necessary?

P: I did then, almost eight years prior to the time we are making this recording, and I still find it to be that way now. I don't mean that you don't make use of all the media.

M: Right.

P: But at least the people of Texas and from the areas that I represent, basically a rather expansive area, not thickly populated, although I have a part of the city of Dallas and Wichita Falls, which is a good size town, a hundred odd thousand, appreciate and expect to see a candidate. I don't think that they hold it against a person in the national scene for not having seen each individual like they

might for some local office, but they appreciate and expect you to be there when you can.

M: The reason I asked that is there has been some talk about Lyndon Johnson's style of campaigning, as he called it, "pressing the flesh", sort of barnstorming and going from town to town, that this is out of style, and it's no longer necessary to campaign like that. And so I was interested in your reaction.

P: If it's out of style--and it may be in the purely metropolitan areas, where everyone almost lives in apartment houses where you can't very well see them. People do not come to meetings, a political speaking like they used to, but I have found that smaller meetings, coffees in homes and going to whatever meetings you are asked to attend that are ongoing, I mean civic clubs or study clubs or anything else, they appreciate it. I know that I derive a benefit, both from being able to better know what people are thinking as well as feeling that I get results better if I have been seen and can personally talk to people. Because I think, and I believe this is what Mr. Johnson would have basically been thinking, that when you see a person and you do look them in the eye and you do sit down and hear a person talk and project his own personality in something other than a mass stadium or a mass media, that you have a different concept of that man's character and personality, even though the meeting may be rather large. But today in running for Congress, when you're sure not an international figure, I feel that a meeting of thirty or forty or fifty or twenty is worthwhile, if I have the time to do it.

M: Well, then after you came to Washington, did you have much contact with Vice President Johnson?

P: It happened that I had a very interesting kind of contact immediately. It happened that his daughter Luci was going at that moment, and she had many boyfriends at that stage, but her current boyfriend was a young man from Wichita Falls who was the son of a friend of mine, and also we were friends of this boy. I think that has something to do with it. At any rate, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and Luci met my wife and myself and our three older children that we brought to Washington in January at the airport. They insisted that we go to their house to stay.

M: This is to The Elms?

P: As is a part of his personality, on something of that kind it's very difficult not to follow his suggestion. I had just been elected the day before. I was elected on Saturday, came to Washington on Sunday, and was sworn in on Monday, before the votes were officially counted, but I was far enough ahead that under the law and the custom they allowed this to be done. So we stayed at The Elms for about three weeks, and my wife and I went to many of the social functions that the Vice President and Mrs. Johnson at that time were being asked to go to. I didn't have a tuxedo, didn't own one, so I wore his, and it fit pretty well except for the waist--I was not quite as large in circumference as he was. So we had many interesting experiences there. And as a result of that initial acquaintanceship, I know that we had a very warm personal feeling toward them.

We got to know the children, and in particular Luci. She later on, or began quickly after that, to visit us at our home. She stayed with our youngest child when we needed a baby sitter on many occasions. I remember the first instance. I don't remember how the arrangements had been made, but Luci stayed overnight, to be there the next morning when we left quite early. Then we came back later Saturday afternoon, after we had left on Friday night. So we didn't know what to pay Luci, but Luci asked my wife what we paid teenagers in our neighborhood: "Well, we only pay them fifty cents." Luci's response was, "I would hope that's what you'd say, because that's what my friends get." But not knowing how many hours had been involved, we gave her five dollars," because she stayed overnight and all day, and that wasn't even fifty cents an hour.

So the next Wednesday at the Texas delegation luncheon Mr. Johnson saw me and said, "Now, don't you ruin that girl, paying her too much money when she stays out there with your child, or children." I think it's indicative of the frugal attitude that he had toward running his household. I learned from Luci on that [babysitting] occasion, and many of these, that the turning out of lights was not just a public image; it was a private image, and just automatically she was thrifty. For instance, on lights, she would not leave a room if she didn't need the light in there without turning it off, and this was evident through many occasions.

M: While you were staying at The Elms, when you went to these social functions did Lyndon Johnson introduce you to people in Washington?

P: Yes. Yes, at all occasions. In fact, I would come to work with him in the morning, ride home with him in the evening, and he took what I considered a great amount of pains to see that I met people and was given every opportunity to see and learn everything that I could.

M: Did he ever reflect on the position of vice president in your presence? Did he ever talk about that?

P: Well, he talked about being vice president in my presence in sort of a broad sense. If you mean by your question, did he ever express regret or anything not positive in the way of his thinking toward the job that he had agreed to take, he did not. I never heard him say anything that indicated regret. I thought I could see that it was frustrating, like so many vice presidents have expressed, that compared with the position that he had had or that he had made out of the majority leadership in the Senate, I think that he felt circumvented or fenced in. But he certainly never expressed any regret or criticism to me or in my presence, and I was at least with him in that short period of time of about three weeks when he was talking to many other people and would have had opportunity, in my judgment, to say whatever he wanted to. I heard nothing that indicated this.

M: Yes. There has been, of course, a great deal of talk about difficulty between Lyndon Johnson and the Kennedys, not necessarily Jack Kennedy but the other Kennedy clan. Do you have any insight into that?

P: Well, only briefly. I think that there is no question but what Bobby Kennedy was a gadfly to Mr. Johnson, if not all the time, in the latter part of President Jack Kennedy's period of holding the presidency. I think I was with him when he was quite concerned and

frankly aggravated by some of the things that Bobby Kennedy was doing as attorney general and as chief advisor to his brother, or whatever he was. But I cannot say that I personally heard or saw anything even there that was anything except a very genteel, I don't mean gentle, but a very real feeling of responsibility to work with these people, and I think he did.

I know, for example, that Mr. Johnson, or Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were called on to entertain large groups of important people all at their own expense, and never once did he fail to carry out the suggestions of the President to the very best of his ability. They used their large home, The Elms, extensively for things that related to the President's Office, or President and Vice President, I suppose, but not connected with anything that Mr. Johnson was doing at that period as vice president that connected with these people. So I know that he made really significant sacrifices financially to do whatever President Kennedy suggested in every way, but including social ways that relieved, I think, the President from having to do and take up time.

M: Do you happen to have any insight into President Kennedy's trip to Texas in which he was assassinated in Dallas? Do you know why he went to Texas? There's a lot of speculation about that.

P: At that time, now, I was on the trip. I was in the caravan, or parade. I was four cars behind . . . Well, I was in the number four car, it was really about the sixth car behind the President's limousine. I did not at that time have any firsthand knowledge other

than the general talk that the President was going to Texas to try to, well, mend political fences, both for himself and also to try to bridge the gap between what appeared to be a gaping hole between Governor Connally and Senator Yarborough. I had none of these things discussed with me. I wasn't asked any questions, and I didn't hear any firsthand knowledge. I do know what has been reported in the press in regard to Senator Yarborough not wanting to ride with Governor Connally, or even Vice President Johnson, early in that trip. And I saw that.

M: Is that true then?

P: That is true. I did not hear discussions that went on. So I have no more knowledge than just what I have said.

M: Yes. Then after the assassination, did you have any immediate contact with President Johnson?

P: No, sir. I had considerably less contact after the assassination and after the Johnson family moved to the White House than I had before, and I thought it was very natural. But I wasn't any old friend.

M: Did you go out to the airport in Dallas and see Johnson?

P: Yes. I went out to the airport, as did all the other congressmen except one or two. The press has reported correctly that Congressman Jack Brooks and Congressman Homer Thornberry went with Mr. Johnson to the airport before the rest of us. The rest of us didn't know what we were to do, and we really just felt like we were just in the way. So a few minutes after we knew that Mr. Johnson and these gentlemen I just mentioned had gone to the airport, and after the

Kennedy entourage went to the airport, we then went to the airport just to see what we were to do. Well, when we got there we were informed to get in the second airplane, which we did. I did not see Mr. Johnson other than at the hospital, and I did not go in the hospital; I saw him come out and get in the car.

M: Yes.

P: And then I came--

M: You did not have a chance to talk to him?

P: No, no. And then I did not see him for some time. Well, I saw him, but I didn't have any personal conversation for, oh, I guess a few months. I'm sure it was quite a long time. During that period, why, again Luci would come out to our house some.

M: She continued to babysit?

P: She babysat once or twice. I remember one time specifically that we had two Secret Service people and Luci. We were still paying Luci fifty cents an hour, and we had quite adequate security for our child. This was some few months after Mr. Johnson became President.

M: Well then, what contact did you have with the new President Johnson? Did he enlist your help, for example, for a legislative program?

P: Oh, really not. I had not more than a total of, I'd say, two or maybe three telephone conversations with him regarding legislation. I was chairman of a subcommittee on agriculture, and these were usually conversations, very brief, dealing with bills that would come up. Of course, he wanted to know what I thought about the vote situation on a given bill. These were very controversial bills, very difficult

bills to pass. We had brief conversations in that regard, and that was the extent of that. As far as his requesting me on legislation, it seems to me like maybe he called one time very early in his Administration, I don't remember the bill, telling what bill was coming up, and I knew that, and saying, "If you can go with us, I'd appreciate it." After that, really, there were many times when I talked to people in the White House, whether I initiated the conversation or someone in the White House did. But really, the only thing that was ever said to me was that, "We'd appreciate your helping us" on a given bill, "if you can."

M: And this was true for the whole of his presidential years?

P: Yes, the entire period. I never felt like I had any pressure. I felt it perfectly proper for any administration to ask the members of Congress to first ascertain if the congressmen knew what they were going to do on a given bill. After all, this isn't a closed-door operation, and if I knew I would tell them. Many times I had not made up my mind, and I so stated. The only response to that was, "Well, if you could we'd appreciate your going along." And sometimes, if it was a week before the bill was to come up, I would suggest, "I will study this matter some more or learn more about some detail of it. If you'd like, well, call me back," which they would do. If I had made up my mind,I would tell them. If I hadn't, I would still tell them. And again, the only thing that was ever said to me was, "We would appreciate it."

A few occasions the comment was made, "Well, the President asked me to ask you particularly." And I don't think it was just politics, I don't think it was just a term used, I think on those few occasions it probably was true. Sometimes I voted with him, so to speak, and sometimes I did not. I did vote, because I think of my own philosophy being parallel with that, for more things than I voted against. When I voted against I never felt that I was being chastised or threatened or pressured.

M: They never called you up and said anything about that?

P: No, sir, not one time.

M: I would assume that you were contacted mainly by White House staff people.

P: Yes, sir.

M: I suppose people like Larry O'Brien, Barefoot Sanders, and others.

P: Of course by Larry O'Brien early. Oh, everyone, Walter Jenkins, Cliff Carter, Barefoot Sanders a great deal because I've known Barefoot for a long time. Those are the main ones. I suppose there were others that did, I don't remember right now.

M: Were you favorably impressed with the work of the White House staff?

P: Very much so.

M: As far as you had contact with them.

P: Yes, sir. In fact, I feel that I've never been around a group of people that worked as hard as the staff of people that Mr. Johnson always had, and of course particularly during the time that he was in the White House. Many times I would have initiated a phone call

to find out something, and quite late at night at my house I would have the call returned, which means that they had been working until ten, eleven o'clock. This was rather routine, not some rare experience.

M: I see. Did they ever contact you to consult you about appointments? Did they ever call you up and say, "Can you give us information on this, or do you recommend someone?"

P: There were a few times, and I can't tell you who they were talking about now. But there were a few times, when there was an appointment [involving] someone I might know about who came from my part of the state, that I was asked general questions. But I would say I was being asked whether or not I would approve of the appointment to a given position of a named individual. I don't know whether my recommendation had any weight or not, but I was asked. But I'm talking about less than half a dozen times.

M: The people who have written about Lyndon Johnson say that he was a master of politics, he knew the ins and outs of how to get bills through, a good tactician, in other words. Is this true?

P: I have always felt that it was true, but I feel like those who are saying that were in Washington when Mr. Johnson was in the Senate. I think that he must have used a masterful technique in getting things done, and he certainly did as president. Now I would hope, or at least I feel, that the circumstances existing at the time he first went in office, I think, is one of the reasons that he moved as fast as he did. The circumstances were so different because of

the assassination of President Kennedy that it's very difficult at this short period of time to reflect back and analyze the true feeling of the country. The congressmen, I think, the members of Congress, reflected this feeling of whatever it was. It's a feeling of, well, we were drawn closer together as a group in the Congress. I think the country was. This was such a deep tragedy to everyone, and this was true, I think, for people whether they were for President Kennedy or not, that they were upset and deeply concerned and hurt that a President of the United States would be assassinated in any means, but particularly shot down on the street.

So I think that it was easier for Mr. Johnson to pass things at that moment in history than it would have been for him or anyone else to pass things at another time. But whatever the reasons were, it is a fact that within thirty days under the Johnson Administration the Congress were passing Kennedy programs that had been either not even brought up because of the realization that they couldn't be passed, or they had been attempted in part or in fragments to be passed and they wouldn't pass. The Congress literally, in my judgment, went from a very slow moving, almost sullen body toward Mr. Kennedy, to quite a cooperative, aggressive, or at least progressive entity under Mr. Johnson's leadership. I think there are rationalizations that do belong there, but not all [can be] rationalized away: his ability and his understanding of the Congress, having served here so long, and in knowing so many people personally. They felt different toward voting for a bill that they knew he wanted, whether he had

talked to them individually or not, I think, than they did President Kennedy, who at least not as many people knew personally as they did Mr. Johnson.

M: Are you generally favorably impressed with his domestic legislation?

P: Yes, I am in retrospect. I did not vote for all the social type things as they came along, and I didn't question his desire or intent. I felt in some instances that the mechanics of a given bill which was drawn up in the Congress went too far. I felt that some of them had questionable constitutional characteristics, and therefore I did not vote for all of them. I think, though, as we look back, that he did what other people had been talking about, in some instances for twenty years, maybe more. In a very sincere and conscientious way he moved forward with things that he knew, or that he felt deeply needed to be done. And in most instances, for those first several, well, first few years, he was successful.

M: Do you have any opinion about his position on Vietnam versus or in relation to the congressional position on Vietnam? I mean, should he have consulted about the War? Did he consult enough?

P: Well, the circumstances had already been developed before he was in. This is my judgment of course.

M: Yes.

P: The commitment had already been made. I know that he said, I don't think to me privately but to small groups of us, that one of the first things that he did was call in General Eisenhower and had a very detailed discussion with him of General Eisenhower's judgment

on how to handle the Vietnam War situation. Because I remember Mr. Johnson telling us that one of the main things he said was, "Just don't telegraph your blows. Don't let them know everything you're going to do." But I cannot say that he consulted with the Congress. Of course, we passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which was kind of an ongoing stamp of approval of our commitment.

M: But he never called in, say, a group of congressmen and--

P: He did not. I was never in a group. I understand that he discussed with the congressional leadership, like all presidents do. I don't know whether he was discussing or telling them, but at any rate, the leadership on both sides were kept informed, and I assume that he sought their counsel to some degree.

M: In regard to agriculture, agricultural legislation, in which you're an expert, apparently you helped push through the Wholesome Poultry Act.

P: I was the author, so-called. I introduced the Wholesome Meat Inspection Act and the Wholesome Poultry Inspection Act, and then sponsored or had the responsibility of carrying it through, yes.

M: And you worked with the White House staff on this, or what?

P: Well, yes, I worked with the White House staff, with primarily the people in the Department of Agriculture, but to whatever degree I needed to with people at the White House. This was quite late in Mr. Johnson's Administration, and of course it was not--it was very important, and I think everybody recognized it, but it was not a matter of international import, was not somethingthat the general

public prior to this being brought up had long standing opinions [about]. So it wasn't one of the romantic bills or real sexy ones that came along.

M: Did the President ever discuss these acts with you, or say anything to you about them?

P: Yes, again very briefly. Usually at a time when I would be at the White House on either a social function or be there with a group in regard to a briefing on whatever it might be. But during that period I remember a time or two or maybe three that he made a comment that showed me he was aware of what progress was being made, and he was nice and complimentary of the work that was being done.

M: Yes. I noticed that in your outer office you have one of the pens--

P: Yes.

M: --from the Meat Inspection Act. Did he say anything to you when that was signed?

P: Again, only briefly. "I appreciate the hard work you did on this," or something of that kind.

M: Just out of curiosity, did Betty Furness help in the passage of those Acts?

P: No. I'd say that, well, maybe . . . I started to say that she not only didn't help but maybe hurt, but that's not true. Yes, in the final stages she did. Of course, the bill had been changed rather significantly from the time I introduced it, and even the bill that passed my subcommittee was different than the one we finally passed. So I should not say that she wasn't helpful in the final version.

She was somewhat critical of the one that I had really fathered and the one we passed, really passed the Senate more in the version that we finally approved than the one that I had really worked specifically on. But yes, she, along with the White House in general, was helpful in the final analysis.

M: I was just curious as to whether these consumer experts, such as Betty Furness or Ralph Nader, for example, are of much aid in the legislation process.

P: Ralph Nader is of no aid at all, as far as I'm concerned. But again, I don't mean that he's not effective. He wasn't any aid to me. But I think that Ralph Nader is almost like those who lead civil disobedience for a point, that when done the way that the technique has been developed in the mid-sixties, it is done in such a way that they create a situation that you cannot ignore, either by people lying down in the hall of a building or a Ralph Nader, who purely is an opportunist and peddles his wares as a professional. But it will always be in seeking out something that he thinks is wrong.

Well, probably in no instance will we find where things are as wrong as he says they are, but, by the same token, something is wrong. Therefore, the job of the responsible people in the Congress is to try to take notice of what these people are saying, and by the same token not run off with them and damage an industry. Because as in all societies, there may be one percent of undesirable ways of running a business, but that doesn't mean that the whole industry ought to be overburdened with regulations and requirements based on one or two. Get those few out, or out in the open at least, where they can be corrected,

but don't use that as the real example, because I don't know of any instances where things are as bad as the worst say they are. But they never are as good as the softest ones claim they are either, and somewhere in between is where responsible legislation must be brought.

M: Did you generally consider the agricultural program of the government sufficient?

P: I have never considered the agricultural programs of the period we are talking about "sufficient," in the sense that they accomplish what we set out to accomplish. But by the same token, I think we have to look at them as we do almost all government function and try to visualize what the given situation would be without having done what we did. And this to me is true in international affairs, as well as domestic affairs. I don't think that anyone can accurately say that our agricultural programs have done the two or three things that we want: [we want] a decent return for farmers; we want fair prices for consumers.

With the blessings that the Good Lord has given us on a lot of productive land, and in these few basic commodities that are basic to the existence of mankind, the wheat and feed grain that feed our animals that we eat, and then cotton that has always been a basic fiber but is not now as basic as it has been, we can just overproduce. [This creates] a situation that prevents us from selling this produce, because of the competition from everybody, at a price that gives the producer the kind of return on his invest-

ment in substance, where there is labor or money or land or management or whatever it is, that is commensurate with other kinds of business. Because there are just so many people, there are millions of farmers. Where other of our basic commodities, steel, automobiles, rubber, electronics or whatever it might be, are produced by few enough entities that they can better judge what the demand is going to be and only manufacture a supply that tends to satisfy that demand. Where with millions of farmers it would be like if there were thousands of car manufacturers; it would be more difficult for the car industry to do what they do now.

M: Then the so-called "farm problem" the historians talk about is still with us?

P: Yes, sir. And it will be, in my judgment, in one way or another until we literally have so many people, either in this country and/or in the world, that just the sheer demand for every produced mouthful of food will bring a price that justifies the producer of our food doing all he knows how to do.

M: Yes.

P: Right now we can't justify. We're not farming as well as we know how, but the return does not justify the input. But even the input we have that we are using produces more than we know how to use reasonably.

M: In your work with agricultural legislation, did you ever run across a conflict, say, between the Department of Interior, which might not want to use DDT, and the Department of Agriculture, which would;

any sort of conflict of that kind?

P: Well--

M: Not necessarily DDT.

P: I understand what you mean. When you say, "run into it," I've been very aware in many instances of a conflict of judgment between, say, the public health people and the industry people in the food producing or processing area. As is usually the case, the ones specifically assigned the health of a people are going to be overly cautious. Industry, which I think is going to be reasonable, is going to require specific proof that a use of a good product, a product that produces a good result, is specifically harmful, or they're going to want to use it. Now, when they have specific findings that DDT or some chemical is harmful, I don't think that anyone wants to deliberately use a product that is going to cause human harm. But we stay in the grey area. These arguments always come up over things that are not specifically proven.

M: I see.

P: In fact, the evidence tends to show, in my judgment, that there is no harm, but there is a possibility of harm. So those that have nothing but the health problem to work with are going to always fall on the cautious side. Industry, whether it is manufacturing an automobile [or whatever], they know how to make one safer than they're making it now. But is it practical, and is it required and is it proven that not doing a given thing is going to save a given number of lives? And it never is. So again, somewhere between the claims

of the two groups is where reason lies, most of the time.

M: As president, do you see any great faults in Lyndon Johnson? I'm going to ask you the other side of the question after this, so you will be able to get both sides of it.

P: I think that Mr. Johnson, like all humans, had significant faults. I think that he in the final analysis did not have the ability, did not or could not develop the ability to communicate with the mass of the American people, by the use particularly of the mass media, to the extent that he would have liked to have that ability. To me, most people in public life who came up in the era that Mr. Johnson came up in, when he started off making talks or speeches or appearing before live audiences, developed an ability to communicate in person with people. The newer ones on the scene either were taught themselves, in some instances commercially, or developed the technique because of the new use of it, before they had established a method that was more adaptable to television and maybe even radio.

So I think that Mr. Johnson did not have the ability to communicate on television that he had in a live audience. I think other current politically prominent people of his age bracket have the same problem, whereas the younger ones [don't]--President Jack Kennedy, I don't know about McCarthy, but any of the younger ones, including Teddy Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, maybe even someone like Senator Muskie. I think that Mr. Nixon learned how to do this, but while between government jobs. He had a long way to go, but he had nothing but time and money, so he used both and was better trained when he

came back on the scene. So I think that is the main fault that Mr. Johnson had.

I do think, and I regret that this is apparently fact, that as the aura of the assassination wore off and the expense of the proposed program became more evident, and as it became more difficult to get things passed through Congress, someway, somehow it became to some degree a feeling that Mr. Johnson was not telling everything that should have been told or was failing to communicate all the necessary information. I know of no instance where I think he failed to do that, but in public life you have to accept the judgment of the masses, and I think that there was this feeling.

Then I think we have to say that his judgment, which I totally agreed with at the time he used it in Vietnam, didn't work the way he wanted it to. Of course, it's always easy to look back and be critical. But apparently, even with the added input of American activity he stopped short of what would have been required to bring a military victory. Therefore, if there was not ever any thought of an all-out effort against North Vietnam, I suppose we have to say that something short of what he did do would have been more effective. But I feel that South Vietnam would have been lost to the Free World if he had done any less than he did. I don't think there's any question, well, I know we could have quite quickly, could now, win the war if we are just fighting North Vietnam. But the judgment must be used as to what effect would it have on China and Russia if we made an all-out effort against North Vietnam. But I

think that the judgment and the activity in connection with Vietnam brought Mr. Johnson more into disfavor with the American public than any other one judgment that he ever made.

M: Now the other side of the coin, what are his virtues as Chief executive?

P: Of course, I think he has many. I think [one was] his deep desire and proven willingness to do for the less fortunate people of this country the things that have been talked about from the thirties up to the time that the laws were passed. I know just passing a law doesn't necessarily cure every ill that that law is directed to work on, but Mr. Johnson showed complete faith in wanting to do those things for people that need to be done. I think he dedicated himself to that proposition to a fault, as far as his own political ongoing was concerned. He was willing to do it. He knew what he was doing and made that effort and that deliberate judgment, knowing that it might be very difficult for him in the long pull.

M: Did he try to do too much?

P: I think as we look back it can be said that he tried to do too much, but as I said earlier in this interview, I think he realized that public opinion would allow things to be done that needed to be done early in his administration that they would not allow later on. And I think that's exactly what happened. Had he not tried to do this much, just a lot less would have gotten done. He ran out of opportunity, if you want to put it that way. But the time would have been about the same factor, and so the more he got done in that

time frame the more things would have been accomplished that he felt needed accomplished. And I think the society accepts them. They may not accept every mechanical detail of some of the programs, but we don't hear arguments about the basic rights of human beings any more; we don't hear among the interested public any criticism of the fact that Medicare is existing. The doctors may fuss about it, but they fuss as they carry their money to the bank. So I think that he did those things that needed to be done, in his judgment. At the time they came up I didn't agree with all of them.

M: To wind up, I'd like to know if you have any impressions about how Mrs. Johnson played her role as first lady.

P: I sincerely believe that Mrs. Johnson, to use your words, played her role as the first lady in the most superb way that any one in my adult lifehood has ever played it. I think that she represented more of the, I want to use the word "typical" but I don't mean the every-day, I mean the more genuine American lady than anyone during the last, let's say, thirty years. I just don't know about them before then. I think that her deep human interest in people and in the good things of beauty of our country, the well-being, and I don't mean welfare in the sense of paying out money, but the well-being of children, of neglected people was genuine, is genuine. I think that her influence on these things will be long-lasting, and think that she's gracious.

I think that she's totally dedicated to doing the things that she can do and that she's called on to do more than anyone. Not that I've known any of the rest of them, but I know enough about some

of the rest of them so far that I think none of them compare with her. And I think that history will reflect this, I think it will just have to. Regardless of what Mr. Johnson's ultimate position in history viewed from a historian's viewpoint after the fact, her influence and her genuineness will be recognized and long remembered. Her interest in her family, I know, was real. With all of her responsibilities and the little amount of time she had left over to care for her family, she felt close to her children, close to her husband, dedicated herself totally to doing the things that a mother would do, a wife would do. Then [she did] the job that a first lady, the President's wife, could do to the utmost. And I don't mean just to the utmost of her ability, her ability is endless. But she used every talent that she has for the good of the country, and I'll always believe that.

M: Now is there anything I should have asked you that I didn't?

P: Not that I know of.

M: Let me thank you for your time.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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