INTERVIEW VIII

DATE: September 15, 1983

INTERVIEWEE: MARY RATHER

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Miss Rather's residence, Gonzales, Texas

Tape 1 of 3

C: To begin, I want to ask you to talk about something that we were discussing last time. That was the Board of Education. We didn't talk about that.

R: You didn't record what I said then? The Board of Education was just a room that was maybe like a committee room but wasn't used by a committee. It was a good-sized rectangular room, I think. After you were here the other day, I got to wondering. You asked me if I had ever been in it, and I never was in it at the time when Mr. [Sam] Rayburn and others were in there, but I think I did see it one day, just when it was empty, you know.

But it was a place where some of Speaker Rayburn's closest friends and people, members of the House mostly, often met in the late afternoon and enjoyed each other's company. I'm sure they laughed and joked and things like that, but it was also a place where legislation was discussed, I mean the strategy that they thought would be the best way to get something done or undone or not done. In the beginning, when we were in the House of Representatives, I thought it was just House members that went there, and you couldn't go unless you were a part of the group. I think, though, after Mr. Johnson

became senator, I know he went as regularly as he had in the past when he was on the House side, and I'm kind of inclined to think that maybe a few others, like Senator [Richard] Russell might have gone over there with him sometimes in the afternoon. It was a place where they were not disturbed. Very, very few people had the telephone number, and only a few had a key to open the door. It stayed locked.

Well, I don't know, now what do you want to ask me?

G: I wonder when Mr. Johnson first started going there. You've heard him tell the story of coming in right after Harry Truman had been told that Roosevelt had died. And that was in 1945.

R: And that's where Truman was, in the Board of Education. Of course, he was the vice president, but he had gone there, too, when he was on the Hill and they continued to ask him. Come to think of it, that reminds me of [John Nance] Garner. I think he was part of the group, too.

You want to know how Mr. Johnson first started going there? Is that what you were leading up to? From the beginning, when he was first elected to the House of Representatives, Speaker Rayburn sort of took Mr. Johnson under his wing. Speaker Rayburn had been in the state legislature of Texas a long time before with Mr. Johnson's father. So Mr. Rayburn was very good to Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson was pretty young when he first went there; I've forgotten what age but definitely in his twenties. That's why Mr. Johnson was invited and was part of the group that met in the Board of Education from the very beginning when he first went there. Mr. Rayburn, you know, was very fond of Mr. Johnson, and he had seen Mr. Johnson operate as [Richard]

Kleberg's secretary and [saw] how he could get things done, and I expect Johnson was the man Rayburn was looking for to help him get legislation passed in the House of Representatives. But of course, now I don't remember for sure, when Mr. Johnson first went to the House of Representatives Mr. Rayburn, I don't think--was he speaker then, do you know?

G: No, he wasn't speaker then.

R: Well, of course then it didn't all start immediately, but it started in due course.

G: Did they call it the Board of Education?

R: Well, that was just a nickname. (Laughter) I don't know how that got started, but it was what the room was called, the Board of Education.

G: Did the principals, did Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson actually use that term themselves, or was it something that other people used?

R: No, but lots of times Mr. Johnson would tell me, "I'll be at the Board of Education if you need me for anything." Or sometimes he'd just say, "I'm going over to Rayburn's office," although that wasn't his office where his desk was.

G: How often would he generally go there? Would it be every evening?

R: No, not every evening, but pretty regularly, and they wouldn't stay until late at night or anything like that, but the little group--I can't tell you who all was in it because I don't know--they all liked and respected each other. Flying around, you know, like members of Congress had to do, with so much mail and correspondence and constituents and legislation on the floor and committee meetings and everything, you weren't thrown all day or much of the time with a person that you really liked to be with, and so they just

would get together in the late afternoon.

Then many, many times, many times, Mr. Johnson would then take Mr. Rayburn on home with him to 30th Place for dinner, and Luci and Lynda would be so delighted to see Mr. Rayburn. They were just little girls. They'd just climb all over him, and he would laugh. Mr. Johnson would try to continue talking about legislation or something, and Mr. Rayburn would say he didn't want to talk about it anymore; he wanted to talk to the children. I say that because I was there, too, a lot of the time, not every time by any means. But frequently when Mr. Johnson would call back to the office to tell me that they were leaving and he was on his way home and did I want a ride and drop me off at my place, or he'd say, "Come on home with us." And then Mr. Johnson would call me, too, and he would say, "Call Bird and tell her I'm bringing the Speaker home for dinner." (Laughter) And the cook would always be prepared. I mean, when he called, it would be on very short notice, but she [Lady Bird] accustomed herself to it very, very well--to everything very, very well, because you can imagine the change in her life from the quiet way in which she was brought up.

G: Would he normally call the office and tell you if he were going to go home by himself? Would he call from the Board of Education?

R: He would always call me because we had an understanding that if I didn't know where he was I couldn't operate. If he expected me to be efficient, I had to be informed. Now, I got that from Senator [Alvin] Wirtz. He always told me where be was going if he wasn't in the office, but it was with instructions that I do not tell another living--I don't mean where he always was if he was going to get a haircut or if he was going to do something.

But he just figured that people didn't have to know his business, and he told me that he would always keep me informed where he was. And he did. So when I went to work for Mr. Johnson I told him that I couldn't do it unless he kept me informed if he was going one place or another or whatever so I'd know how to put my hands on him by telephone if I needed to. He had never done that before, but he was very good about it, and he seldom moved from one place to another that I didn't know where he was. By moving, I'm talking about if he was in committee or if he was in a full committee or a subcommittee, which might be meeting in a different place, or if he was on the floor, or if he was going by some other member's office. Of course, I made his appointments so I knew if be had to go down to the Pentagon, for example. So we got along very, very well with that system.

G: How did you know if he didn't want to be disturbed, if he didn't want you to call and interrupt what he was doing?

R: I don't know unless I just knew it by intuition, or if I called him--well, I wouldn't have called him if he didn't want to be disturbed. If I knew what he was doing and that he shouldn't be disturbed, I wouldn't have called him for anything unless one of the children broke her leg or something.

G: Did he mind your calling him while he was in the Board of Education?

R: Oh, he always acted like he did but--what does the word "sacrosanct" mean? I never called him at the Board of Education unless I had something--I never did call him anywhere unless I needed to or felt it was necessary to give him some information maybe that he didn't have, that maybe he had asked me to find out something for him, or to

remind him of something so that he wouldn't be late, you know, that he had another place to be. I'm sure I called the Board of Education more than anyone else in the world did during the time that I was there. Mr. Johnson would tell me not to call unless it was life or death, and Mr. Rayburn would tell me I could call any time I wanted to. But I don't think others called over there very much. Mr. Rayburn's staff, like John Holton or somebody, if he had to tell Mr. Rayburn something, he would probably go to the Board of Education, but he was much closer to it than I was. Mr. Rayburn's office was in the Capitol.

It was really just a place where friends, some close associates in Congress would get together, it wasn't a big crowd at all, and you couldn't go unless you were invited. Nobody could just decide they'd run by there and see Mr. Rayburn. I suppose there were people, members of Congress, who knew where the room was, knew the number on the door, if it had one, but they wouldn't have gone over there and knocked on the door and asked to come in. They would have had to be invited. That's the way I recall it.

G: You mentioned the last time that when you got word about Camp Swift in Bastrop that you called.

R: Late on a Saturday afternoon. The War Department told me that I was the only person they were able to get. I was excited beyond words and Mr. Johnson, when he answered the phone, was gruff. I said, "Oh, Mr. Johnson, wait just a minute, please! Camp Swift is going to be established at Bastrop!" And then, of course, he got as elated as I was, and we discussed real quickly to whom I would send the telegrams, to the newspapers and to individuals not just in Bastrop but in Smithville, too, which isn't very far away, and

around in that area, because everybody would be delighted, and to the weekly or daily newspapers. Most of them were weeklies except the Austin paper. And Camp Swift is still there in some capacity.

G: Can you recall any other times when you gave him important news like that?

R: I don't know. That was just one of the very first times when I had started working for him. That's why I remember Camp Swift, and it being a Saturday afternoon and not a Friday or a Thursday afternoon and me being practically the only person on Capitol Hill that was still in the office. But I called him lots of times; I just don't remember what for. I would even call him sometimes and tell him it was getting late and I thought he ought to go on home to dinner, and maybe he was already going to take Mr. Rayburn anyway, and I would just remind him that time was passing and you can keep on talking in the car. I don't remember anything else. I might think of something else that I called him about, but I don't know. I was trying to think about President Roosevelt dying, but I don't remember how I heard it. I'm sure that the phone call to Truman was received and the people in the Board of Education knew it before I knew it, but I probably learned it a few minutes later.

G: Well, let's talk about 1947.

R: All right.

C: I have noted a few things that I thought we might go over.

(Interruption)

R: He was still in the House of Representatives then. My desk was at the front door. I got all the phones and all the visitors that came in and out and took Mr. Johnson's dictation

and various other things. Sam [Houston Johnson] had a desk toward the back of the room. It was a rectangular room. Sam was a very affable fellow, and he could always think of something to talk to people about. He was a big help in talking to the constituents who came in without appointments or anything else and wanted to see the Congressman, and the Congressman was no doubt in a committee meeting, or no doubt over on the floor. Sam would make them feel at home and slap them on the back and make jokes and say, "Well, what is your problem? Maybe I can do something about it. If not, I'll tell Lyndon about it when he comes back to the office this evening." And they would have a little matter that pertained to one of the government departments, and Sam would say, "I know somebody down there. You just--" He'd either tell them to go away and come back or check with him later in the day, or he'd make a phone call right there in front of them if he really knew the exact place to call and all that and make an appointment for them. It was a big help, you know. They felt that if they couldn't see the Congressman, they had seen the next best thing, his brother. And I'm sure that was the time that--

G: How long did he work there?

R: I don't know. He worked for some months. I don't know whether he worked a whole year. I just don't remember. I just know that it worked out very well.

G: Did you sense a rivalry between the two or at least on Sam Houston's part?

R: I don't like to say because--oh, I don't know. It seems to me I was so busy I didn't have time to think about things like that. It was only natural, though, that a younger brother would . . . I don't know whether Sam envied Mr. Johnson; I think mostly he wanted to

emulate him.

G: Others have suggested that Sam Houston had pretty good political instincts of his own.

R: He did.

G: Did his brother take his advice seriously?

R: Yes, he did sometimes, and he and Sam would talk at length, not in the office because we were so busy--well, maybe in the office to some extent--but outside of office hours. A lot of the times, not all of the times but a lot of the times, when Sam would be in Washington he would stay at the Johnsons' house, and there was ample opportunity to talk in the evenings when Mr. and Mrs. Johnson didn't have an engagement or something, and over a weekend, and riding to work in the car with Mr. Johnson.

G: Was Sam Houston sort of a practical joker as well?

R: Oh, he was a great joker, the funniest fellow you ever saw in your life.

G: Give me an example of the sort of practical joke that--

R: Well, now, maybe he wasn't a practical joker. That's what you call [it] when somebody plays jokes on other people. Now, he might have done that for all I know, but when I think of him, I think of him as a great joker because he could tell the funniest stories. I'm sure they were exaggerated, but that didn't matter. They would just be hilarious, He might tell a story about something that happened to someone else, and I'm sure he would, like I said, exaggerate it, but he'd just as soon tell you a story on himself.

And he was astute politically. But there he was, you see. His big brother was a congressman so he couldn't run for congressman in the same [district]. They lived in the same district, you know, their home place, where they grew up, Johnson City. His big

brother became the senator. Well, maybe by then Sam could have run for the House, but imagine, brothers from the same state, one being the United States senator and one being the United States congressman. I guess it could happen, but it never had that I remember.

G: Did Sam Houston ever talk about a political career of his own that you recall?

R: No, I don't think he did. If he ever bad any ideas of running for office, I don't remember that he ever mentioned it to me.

G: Now, in July of that year, Luci was born. Do you have any recollections of that?

R: July 2. No. I'm trying to think. I can't remember anything specific except that she was born, and I'm sure I was there. I'm sure I was there. And since Lady Bird and Mr. Johnson and Lynda all had the same initials, Lucy is a family name in the Johnson family, so they gave the initials to her, too. I can't remember except that she was born, and we were all happy that everything went fine.

G: Shortly after that, about ten days later, Congressman [Joseph J.] Mansfield died and LBJ went to Texas as a member of the official funeral delegation. Do you recall anything?

R: No, you know who Congressman Mansfield was, from down at Columbus, Texas, and that's where the Colorado River goes, right through there. Mansfield was a very, very old man and he was in a wheelchair, as you may know, but a very sweet, gentle old man and extremely helpful with Congressman Johnson and with Senator Wirtz in the building of the dams. That's about all I know. It was customary, you know, for a delegation, when a member died, to go back to their home state or wherever they were buried; that was a natural one, a very definite one, for Mr. Johnson to attend.

G: Later that month LBJ was appointed as a member of the Joint House and Senate Atomic

Energy Committee. Do you remember that?

R: No, I just remember be was on it; I don't remember any to-do about it. It was certainly a feather in his cap, if that's the way to describe it, but it was an honor then, I'll say.

G: In the following month, the Johnsons and the Connallys took a ten-day trip around South Texas, visiting Corpus [Christi] and surrounding areas. Do you remember anything of that?

R: Now, when was that?

G: That was August 21.

R: They went around South Texas? To Corpus?

G: Yes.

R: I think at this particular time when they went down to South Texas that they did not only go to Corpus but were stopping and seeing friends in other towns down that way. I think also--I may be wrong. What I'm thinking about might have been some other year, but I believe that they spent a while, at least a week, on St. Joe Island [also called St. Joseph's Island or San Jose Island], and it was probably this time.

G: That was Sid Richardson's?

R: That was Mr. Richardson's island and kind of like Mr. Rayburn's Board of Education. Mr. Richardson would invite men to come down, and they would have a good time. There was some hunting and fishing, if you wanted to, and just talking and staying a few days and having a good time. But I believe this time--I don't know whether Mr. Richardson was there or not--I think that just the Connallys and Johnsons might have been there, and Mr. Richardson had said, "Any time you want to go, you can." I don't

know what kind of house Mr. Richardson had. I never saw it. I never was on St. Joe Island, and that's one of the reasons that my memory is to the effect that it was mostly just men that went there, not men and their wives.

(Interrupt ion)

I don't even--well, it doesn't matter. I just remember when Lynda was born better than I remember when Luci was born. It was a very cold and bitter night when Mr. Johnson took Lady Bird to the hospital. It seems to me it was late at night, and after Lynda was born, why, of course Mr. Johnson wanted to phone people in the middle of the night and tell them, and he called me and I wasn't home. He said he couldn't get anybody. He was so excited. But I don't remember much about Luci's except that everything went fine, and I can kind of remember a little--who were Luci's other godparents, do you know?

G: Well, there was Ruth Taylor, and Senator Wirtz was the godfather.

R: That's right. Lady Bird had a little party at the house on 30th Place after Luci's christening, and I don't remember who was there. It wasn't a great big crowd, but it was a pretty big crowd. Everybody had a good time, and Luci was upstairs asleep, but they brought her down.

G: Mr. Johnson was also investigating some of the oil reserves and the government's, particularly the navy's, use of those reserves. Do you remember, say, the Elk Hills investigation?

R: I was going to say--wasn't it in California? I don't remember anything except he went out there. I can't think why I was in Austin sick.

(Interruption)

G: Why don't we start with that?

R: Now we're in 1948, and that was the year that Mr. Johnson campaigned the second time for the United States Senate. If you want me to describe the campaign I will tell you in a few words, it was a nightmare. The first primary and the second primary both.

G: First of all, let me ask--my impression is that he had debated for some time whether to run for the Senate.

R: Oh, he had. It had been on his mind for seven years, since 1941, and the thing to do, though, was to sort of hold off until you found out who else would be in the race, and it turned out that nearly everybody was in the race. I've forgotten how many candidates there were, but there was a bushel of them.

G: In 1941, when he ran the first time in that special election, he'd keep his House seat, but now if he lost he was out of the Congress entirely.

R: Well, that's right.

G: Did he weigh this consideration, do you think?

R: I suppose he must have. He was being urged, of course, to run, but it's true though that if he lost, well, then he was out, he wouldn't be able to go back in the House.

G: Did some of his supporters not want him to run for that reason?

R: Not that I know of. I think everybody, his supporters, wanted him to run. No. Now let's go over it. Who all was in the race?

G: Well, the principal candidates were Coke Stevenson and George Peddy.

R: And wasn't there another one? Mr. Johnson would be the third one, but wasn't there a fourth one? Well, maybe not.

G: In 1941 you had [Martin] Dies and Gerald Mann and W. Lee O'Daniel and LBJ.

R: Oh, that made four.

Well, you know a lot about Stevenson. He was an ex-governor, a very taciturn man who believed in not saying anything, and he always had gotten by with it. George Peddy was a very nice man. He was from Houston. He was an attorney, a tall, handsome man, much younger than Coke Stevenson, a very personable man. His wife had been secretary for many years, even before she married him, I think, to Judge [James] Elkins that we were talking about the other day. She worked for Judge Elkins for a long, long time, and it naturally follows that Judge Elkins and others who had a great deal of influence politically were for George Peddy.

I have forgotten--when the election was over, I mean the first primary, Stevenson was ahead and Johnson was second and Peddy was third, I think, Of course, George Peddy wasn't real well known except in certain parts of Texas, and Mr. Johnson, even though be had run in 1941, he still wasn't real well known, but much better known, of course, than he was before. But he had to carry the state, and it's very big state and there are lot of places to go. He got around the state far more than Stevenson did, or even tried to do, and more than Peddy did. Peddy's *forte* was East Texas, I believe, and the Houston area. I believe Mr. Peddy was born over 1n East Texas, but I've forgotten which one of those places over there.

G: Well, let me ask you first of all when and how do you think LBJ made the decision to run? How did you learn about it?

R: I know he was urged by Senator Wirtz to run, and [by] John Connally and others who

were close to him. I don't remember the exact moment though that he decided to run. If my memory is correct, I had the feeling all the time that he would. I think that Mr. Johnson wanted to run for the Senate. I think it was of course a very big decision because he would either be senator or he would be out of Congress. He wouldn't be congressman anymore. But he wanted to, I know he did, and I think that he was always searching--now I'm just reading his mind; he didn't tell me any of this--for reasons why to run for the Senate, and I know that Senator Wirtz was urging him to do it. But, you know, sometimes in your life you've got to take a big chance when you just win or lose. There's no alternative if you lose. And he did [run], and he nearly killed himself though. Mr. Johnson always tried to do everything, more than most people did. He seemed to have more strength and more ability. But it was hot and [there was] the whole state to cover, from Brownsville to Amarillo, El Paso to the Louisiana border. I don't remember when we started. I guess it was what, May?

G: Well, I'll check in a second.

Had you ever heard the story that at one point Mr. Johnson was reluctant to run, and when he was leaning against it, a lot of his supporters, Jake Pickle and people like that, decided that they'd run John Connally if he wasn't going to run?

R: No, that's some tale that Pickle or [Ed] Syers or somebody made up, I think. I don't think Mr. Johnson ran because he thought they were going to run John. He really wanted to, in my opinion. He just kept searching for the best reasons to run, and, of course, he kept waiting to find out who else would be in the race. I think there was talk of not only Stevenson but O'Daniel and--was O'Daniel senator?

G: He was, yes, he was the incumbent.

R: Whether he would run for reelection and whether--who else did I have in mind? I think there was talk of Allred running and--

G: Did he talk to Jimmie Allred?

R: Probably. I don't know. He and Jimmie were friends, good friends. So he had to wait. He waited around, I remember. I don't know when be announced that he was going to run, but he waited around as long as he could to see who else would enter the race. When did it start, like in May? May and June? Or June and July?

G: LBJ announced on May 12, and at that time Miriam Ferguson announced her support of him for the Senate. Do you remember that?

R: Well, that was a feather in his cap because she wasn't for him in 1941. When he ran for the Senate in 1941, I don't think Mrs. Ferguson supported him. In 1948 she did, and she gave us her files, Jim Ferguson's files and her files, on supporters.

G: Were they card files, or were they--?

R: I think they were card files.

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R: I think Mrs. Ferguson's files were card files. Many, many of the people we did not even know, but they were people who had been interested in politics all their lives and seemed to have some followers in their areas, and they were extremely helpful to us.

G: How did you use the files?

R: By contacting those people, either writing or phoning them, and also by sending some of the staff. I mean, Everett Looney might have gone over to East Texas and talked to

various ones of them, or maybe Pickle did, or maybe somebody else did.

G: Did you work with the files yourself?

R: No.

G: Who did? Who would have worked with those Ferguson files?

R: I expect Claude Wild would have had a copy of them and probably John Connally. Claude Wild was an old-time politician in Texas. His methods weren't the same as ours, and we had a little while understanding him. And at the beginning--I hope I don't get 1941 and 1948 mixed up--we had an office in a large, old house downtown, like on 8th Street or 7th Street. Mr. Wild was the director of the campaign, and of course John Connally and Senator Wirtz were active, too, in different ways from Mr. Wild. He sat up the itinerary for one thing. He had directed other people's statewide campaigns, and he knew people in towns and counties that we had never heard of. I mean, we had heard of the towns and the counties, but we hadn't heard the names of people that he knew. So he had his contacts, and we had ours, and we had the Fergusons'. But he mapped it out, every day, every stop, everyplace Mr. Johnson would go, where he would end up at night.

G: What did John Connally do then?

R: John knew so many people that Mr. Johnson knew that he was in touch with them, and also I'm pretty sure that John was in charge of campaign funds, anybody that would contribute, and that, of course, was badly needed. And John did make some speeches, too. He was a very personable person and a good speaker.

G: What about Senator Wirtz? What was his role?

R: He was a chief adviser, I guess you'd say, and he was an old politician himself, you

know, although he had never held but one office and that was when he was state senator from over here at Seguin. But he had served in the state legislature and he knew lots of people. He knew a lot of people anyway.

G: Did Mr. Johnson have a group who advised him particularly on issues or how to articulate a respective stand on this issue or that issue?

R: I don't recall that he did. I think that he conferred with John and Senator Wirtz and Everett Looney, and I'm sure be must have talked to Ed Clark about East Texas; that's where Ed is from, San Augustine. No, I don't know about a group of advisers. I know that lots of people wrote in or phoned in with their advice.

G: Let me ask you to recall the helicopter and how that--

R: Well, tell me first now, which helicopter did we have first and which one did we have second? We had a Sikorsky--

G: First, yes.

R: All right, and then we had the Bell second. The Sikorsky was a big helicopter.

G: A lot of people don't even remember that there were two different helicopters.

R: Really?

G: What do you think gave him the idea to use the helicopter to begin with?

R: Now, I wish I could remember. I don't though. Maybe if I think of it later or even day after tomorrow, but being suddenly asked that question [I can't remember]. There are bound to have been some reasons. I can only guess right now that it was one way to get around the state. Also it was a very novel thing to do, but mainly I think it was a matter of transportation. He was determined to cover the state of Texas, and although the rest of

us covered it in a car underneath him, we got there, too. (Laughter) But campaigning in the way he campaigned was more killing, more tedious on him, although it was hard enough on the rest of us.

Now, do you want to know anything about how the campaign operates when you're using a helicopter?

G: Yes.

R: All right. You have to find out how many miles it can go on a gallon of gasoline, and you have to know what kind of gasoline it uses, which is high octane, 90, I think, but anyway it's high octane gasoline. You have to map out your traveling so that you can stop at a place where there is high octane gasoline for helicopters before you run out, and high octane wasn't available everywhere. Sometimes it had to be arranged that a huge truck was brought loaded with high octane gasoline to some certain town where Mr. Johnson would be, we'll say, at five o'clock in the afternoon and about to run out of gasoline. That happened several times. Now, the reason I happen to know about this is because that was part of Mr. Wild's job. He not only mapped out the campaign--and it wasn't mapped out from beginning to end; it was mapped out practically just a week or two weeks in advance. I worked with Mr. Wild in the beginning, and that was when he was mapping it out. I remember the phone calls we made. The press, of course, followed by car on the ground, and Mr. Johnson's newspaperman on the campaign staff came along in a car along with a secretary.

G: Was that Buck Hood or somebody else?

R: Well, I think I remember that Paul Dolton started the campaign the first week of the

helicopter, and Dorothy Plyler was with him. Dorothy Plyler lasted one week. When they got in at the end of the week, she had lost about seven pounds, and Paul was exhausted. Now, Buck Hood might have gone the first week, but I think it was Paul Bolton. So the second week, Mr. Johnson started off with Paul Bolton and Dorothy Nichols, and Dorothy came home the same way, just absolutely--I don't know how people could shed seven or eight or ten pounds in a week, but she and Dorothy Plyler both did. So the third week it became my turn, and I was plump, and sad to say I didn't lose a pound. So I went on through the first primary and the second primary, although the second primary we were traveling in a different fashion.

G: Does that mean that you actually rode on the helicopter?

R: No, no. I rode on the ground with the press man, and by the time I started, the third week, Buzz [Horace Busby] was there, and little Buzz and I traveled together from then on out. We'd be on the ground, and Mr. Johnson would be up in the air above us. You know, he couldn't say something different at every place he stopped, although he had a variety of things that he said and his speeches weren't just memorized and saying the same ones every time. But he'd be on the ground outside of the helicopter making his speech, and when he would get to a certain point, Buzz and I knew that he was winding up, and we would race and jump in our car and start off for the next town to try to get there by the time he got there. Pretty soon he'd be flying over us, and then we'd go sixty or seventy miles an hour and get there out of breath. And we'd do the same thing again, and he'd be making a similar speech, and at the right moment we would depart.

G: Well, what did you do while he was speaking? Why was it important for you to be there?

R: Well, one thing--of course, Buzz did his own typing--but sometimes I typed up a press release for him; you know, maybe it had to be rewritten real quick. Mainly, when we made our noon stop and our night stop, there would be phone calls from the headquarters in Austin either from John or Mr. Wild, mostly John, or Walter [Jenkins]. I can't remember what they were, but I would get the phone calls and talk to everybody, and then I'd give the information to Mr. Johnson. Sometimes it was maybe a good suggestion from somebody, or maybe Senator Wirtz had just thought of something, or maybe somebody else had thought of something, or maybe they would call us and tell us something significant about the towns we were going to be in the next day, like agriculture was awfully important to the people that lived in such and such a little town or like--I can't think what else there would be. And they would tell us the names of people that were friends in that town, to remind us. I mean, your head just swam; it was the wildest time I've ever had in my life. Nine towns a day, eleven or twelve sometimes, and racing across the highways and not having time to eat, because I was working all during the noon stop, just working like mad, and again as soon as we got to the night stop.

G: Well, how was it decided that you would replace Dorothy Nichols?

R: Well, I think in the beginning he had in mind that he would have to have somebody who could take dictation, who was acquainted with some of his friends and would recognize people. Nobody knew them as much as I did, but in order not to kill any one of us, we were to rotate every week. But the two Dorothys--well, they continued to work at the headquarters, but they just practically folded up. I never did see anybody lose seven pounds in a week. I can't understand how they did it.

G: Was there anyone who traveled with him on the helicopter other than the pilot?

R: I don't think so. I'm not real sure. Now, the Sikorsky was used the first two weeks, as I remember, and I believe by the time I got in on the third week and the fourth week and so forth, it was the Bell helicopter, and he loved the Bell helicopter because it was like a little bubble. The Sikorsky was more like a little, tiny airplane.

G: He didn't have the visibility in that, is that right, couldn't see as well?

R: The visibility, yes, that's right. I thought you said something else. He could see out, you know. He could look down, and sometimes it might even give him an idea about what to mention in his next stop, the fields he saw or whatever the people were doing. But he just loved it.

Two spectacular things that he did--I can't remember where we were. It was in South Texas. I don't mean way down in the Valley, but I think we were coming up from the Valley. Anyway, he was catching up with Buzz and me. We could hear it coming, and there were a half dozen or more people in the field picking cotton. One of them was their foreman, and I believe they were all Mexicans. And the helicopter came down real low and hovered over them, and from up in the air with a speaker, Mr. Johnson talked to them. Well, the press was right behind us in their cars, and Buzz and I stopped, and the press stopped, and everybody skidded their brakes and jumped out, and Mr. Johnson then took off. He didn't get out of the helicopter. He talked from up in the air but way down low, and then he waved his hat. He always waved that big Stetson hat goodbye and went on in to the next town. I don't know why I keep thinking it's Ganado, which is down here a piece from where we are, but I guess it wasn't; I don't know. But Buzz ran up to the

people working in the field, and the foreman said--I swear it seems to me it was between Ganado and El Campo--but the fellow in charge of the cotton pickers said, "I knew he was going to speak in El Campo"--or whatever the next town was--but I had to be at work, and I couldn't [go]; I wanted to go hear him." He said, "I never thought he would stop by here and talk to us." I don't know whether that was the way he said it, but it was almost like that, he couldn't go, and he never dreamed, though, that Mr. Johnson would stop and speak to them.

The other spectacular thing he did was to land on top of a building. Has anybody ever told you that? He got so carried away with that Bell helicopter and the way he could see out of it and see everything down on the ground and the way he could jump out of it so quickly and stop--I think he rode in the front seat with the pilot, with Joe Mashman. He got the idea that they ought to land on top of a building with a flat roof, which we saw as we were coming into Rosenberg. It was a brand-new filling station, if I remember, that hadn't even started operating as a filling station. And Joe, the pilot, talked to whoever our county man was on the ground with his--however you do that while the helicopter was still up in the air--and asked him if he thought that [he could land there].

You see, we always circled a town first to let everybody know that he was coming, although they could hear the helicopter. We had advance men, too--they were young men, sometimes just boys eighteen years old or something--who would, if we were supposed to land at a certain town at eleven o'clock, go all over the town at fifteen or twenty minutes to eleven saying that Mr. Johnson was on his way and due at the football field, or wherever he was going to land, at a certain time. He had a loud speaker, and he

would drum up the crowd. Then Mr. Johnson also always threw his hat out into the crowd just before he was leaving a place, and he always said--you know there were always a lot of children at these stops also, who couldn't vote--whoever brings back his hat, he would give them fifty cents, or something.

G: Did he get his hat back?

R: Yes, he got it back every time. It worried me to death. I'd always run after the hat, too, if I could, if I stayed that long--I think he usually threw it out when he first got there, not when he was ready to leave.

So up on top of this building at Rosenberg--he landed on top of it, it had a flat roof. And by that time everybody in town had been watching where the helicopter was going to land, and it was landing on top, so everybody came. It was a sight to behold. He threw his hat out, and I went running toward the hat, but some little boy got there first. I just always wanted to be sure we got the hat back, but the little boy didn't want to give it to me though. He wanted to climb--and then we didn't know how to get the hat to Mr. Johnson, but somebody ran and found a ladder and put it up the side of the building, and the little boy went up the ladder and handed the hat to Mr. Johnson. That's not very much, but I just thought that if you hadn't heard it, I would tell you.

G: Well, did he have someone who would introduce him at all these stops?

R: I think he introduced himself mostly. However, we always had somebody in every town, even if it were one of our advance men, but we had a contact in every town, and that person would be there on the ground and greeting him the minute he stepped out of the helicopter. I don't think we took time for him to be introduced. We didn't have any spare

time.

G: What about Joe Phipps? He had had some radio experience, and I thought maybe he might have done some introductions.

R: Well, you know be might have, but I don't remember. I remember Joe Phipps. I remember his name, but I don't--he probably did.

G: Were there any close calls with the helicopter?

R: It seems to me there was, but I can't remember. I know sometimes when they'd take off from a little town you'd think they were going to hit the telephone wires, but they'd miss them. It seems to me they were in a wind one time, but I've forgotten where it was, that especially in the little helicopter, the Bell, that they got kind of blown around. But none of it scared Mr. Johnson, and after landing on top of that building, he wanted to land on top of every building in every town from then on out. But he didn't get to do it anymore.

G: Why not?

R: Oh, it would have taken just so much more work for the building to have been selected in advance, and the owner to agree with it, and the people to test it to see if it would hold the helicopter. The reason they could tell about this one in Rosenberg so quickly was that it was just brand new, and they knew what it was built with and everything, how strong it was.

G: Well, why did they get the Bell to replace the Sikorsky anyway? Why didn't they keep the Sikorsky?

R: I don't remember that. I don't know how we got the Sikorsky or the Bell either one. I don't remember what the reasons were, but he would have liked to have had that Bell

helicopter the rest of his life. Has anyone else ever campaigned by helicopter since then?

G: Oh, I think they did. It was written up widely at the time, and I think it did inspire some others to--

R: I would think some other people would do it. You know, you fly low, you don't get way up in the air, and you just skim the top of the trees and it makes landing quicker.

G: *Time* magazine did a story on the helicopter.

(Interruption)

I was asking you about the imitations of Coke Stevenson that Mr. Johnson did on the campaign trail.

R: He was imitating Stevenson particularly. Stevenson was kind of a dour-looking man with a pipe in his mouth all the time. I don't know whether he ever lit it or not. He was a man of very few words. He believed that the less said the better, and he was a very difficult man for the press to talk to. There was a press interview once--I guess it took place in Washington, D.C.--and the Texas press would ask him these questions like, "How do you feel about such and such?" Well, he never ever gave them an answer. I mean, he might say something, but it didn't mean anything, and Liz and Les Carpenter wrote it up word for word. If you haven't read it, you ought to find it. Have you read it? It was printed in the newspapers. It was the most hilarious thing on earth. So Mr. Johnson, in his campaign, would imitate Stevenson by asking himself a question and then answering it the way Coke Stevenson would answer it, and it was just [hilarious]. Of course, the crowd was usually our supporters, although I guess some that didn't like us went over there, too, when we would stop somewhere, but the people would just hoot and holler. I

don't know how to tell it to you to make it sound as funny as it really was.

G: How often did he do that? Was that a--?

R: Well, for a while he just did it all the time.

G: Did he enjoy doing it?

R: Yes. He got the biggest bang out of it. I guess he finally gave it up because, you see, in the first primary the helicopter was arranged to go to small towns, and then at the very end he hit the big cities. In the second primary he was going to the bigger cities. I don't mean just Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Fort Worth, but the more--we have some other towns in Texas, you might say middle-size. He would go by plane then, and lots of times he had prepared speeches. I don't mean just canned speeches that he said everywhere, but he had a good many typewritten speeches, and he would use them. The circumstances were very different. Often you'd go into town to an auditorium or a hail or something like that.

G: Yes. Was he a better speaker than he was in 1941?

R: I don't remember. I suppose, you know, in that length of time he probably had no doubt improved, but I don't remember. He was nearly always a good speaker because he was so down to earth, and the people liked to listen to him. He could make them laugh, too, and he was very energetic. He wasn't just standing up there in his coat and his tie, reading a speech. He would wave his arms, and he would shout to them, and he would take his coat off, and he'd unloosen his tie. (Laughter) The weather was so hot, you know, he had to do that. Of course, it was a terribly, terribly close race, but I think the rank and file of people felt, you know, he was kind of like they were.

G: Well, let's go back now. Let me ask you about the trip to Mayo Clinic.

R: All right.

G: Did you have any evidence that he was ill before he left?

R: Not any personal evidence. I just know they came in to Austin. I don't remember whether Woody was traveling with him, Warren Woodward, then or not, but I know Warren Woodward went with him to Mayo's, and Mr. Johnson was in dreadful pain. A kidney stone, I am told, hurts worse than almost anything because it's a little stone with little sharp places on it, and it just is awful. It seems to me that Mr. Johnson had fever, but at the same time he was wringing wet--I don't know this personally; I guess Woody told me--with perspiration, not from the heat but just from the pain. And then he would shiver, you know; he would have chills. And this was the time that Jacqueline Cochran flew him up there, you say? And did she bring him back, or do you remember?

G: I don't know how he returned. I've never thought about that. Let me ask you. There was some doubt in the organization about whether or not he should tell the press that he had to go to the hospital at Mayo's.

R: Well, Mr. Johnson was always a person who, you know, thought you ought to keep some things to yourself if you could, and it was a very personal matter, having an illness and being in pain. But Mr. Johnson had lots of illnesses. In one of his campaigns, I think he had flu--I'm talking about early days of running for the House--and had to be put in the hospital in Austin. I think Senator Wirtz said, "We've got to just lay it all out and explain it and say it to the press and say what's the matter with you and where you're going and why." And Mr. Johnson agreed. If he felt that he shouldn't at first, he changed his mind,

but I'm not sure whether he was the one who felt they should not tell everybody what was happening or whether he was--anyway, I think Senator Wirtz was the one that said, "You can't cover it up. You've got to--"

G: Evidently John Connally felt that way, too, that--

R: I'm sure John did. Yes.

G: But some have recalled that Mr. Johnson was upset with John for releasing it to the press when he wanted to keep it confidential, and he felt like he couldn't control his staff and he--

R: That might have been what happened, but I know that John and Senator Wirtz said, "We've got to tell everybody." And they probably just took the initiative and released it themselves.

G: The story goes that he wouldn't speak to John directly for a few days after that, he would speak through intermediaries. Do you remember that?

R: (Laughter) It might have been. I don't know. I don't know. But John would just grab his hat and put it on his head and walk out, and he'd fume to himself for a while and then he'd come back.

G: It's sort of interesting that both men were working together on this common goal and yet having a personal feud.

R: Well, John had very strong views. And then John was in headquarters; he wasn't under all this pressure that Mr. Johnson was, running around all over the state. I think he could think more sanely than Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Johnson was in such dreadful pain. I know that John and Senator Wirtz were in agreement. And there might have been other times

in that campaign, too. It seems to me that it was more than once that something came up that Mr. Johnson was so tired he couldn't think, and John and Senator Wirtz would do the thinking and tell him.

G: Are you thinking of some other occasion in particular?

R: No, I'm not thinking of any particular occasion, and I don't guess I would have thought of that one if you hadn't reminded me of it. But I know there were times--I don't remember specifically what the occasions were--when John and Senator Wirtz would have to tell Mr. Johnson, "We've got to do it this way."

G: Was the Taft-Hartley issue important to the campaign, do you think?

R: Well, I don't remember how, but I think it was because, Lord, I heard that word "Taft-Hartley" so much. But I don't really remember. Was that one of the questions that Mr. Johnson kept asking Stevenson, "How do you feel about the Taft-Hartley bill?" It was most controversial, you know, and Stevenson wouldn't say yea nor nay. There were several things that they hammered at Stevenson about and never ever got an answer out of him. But he was well known, you know, he'd been in office so many years. Of course, Mr. Johnson had been in the House of Representatives all right and had been up there with Congressman Kleberg before, but it wasn't like being known right around your--being in the state all the time.

G: Sure. You know, it almost seems that the Johnson campaign had sources inside the Stevenson camp who would keep him posted on--

R: Well, in every campaign you have some people who will come and tell you things. I don't remember a specific one, but I'm sure we had people.

G: Do you think it might have been the newsmen who were traveling with Coke Stevenson but were sympathetic with you?

R: Sympathetic with Mr. Johnson? No, I don't know. I can't say for sure. I have a memory that I thought that the press was with us, although they were so exhausted. They'd never been--you know, they had followed Stevenson around at this slow, snail's pace--oh, and the Texas press rotated their [reporters]. Do you already have this information?

G: No.

R: Well say that if the big papers would rotate their press men--they would have two and they'd switch them back and forth so that one man wouldn't have to be exhausted but for one week with Mr. Johnson, and the next week he could follow Stevenson around and get rested up, and then he'd be back with us the following week. Actually I think they were glad to get back to us, although it was grueling.

G: Why do you think they were glad?

R: I think it was the most exciting thing that they ever did just about. They'd never seen anything like Mr. Johnson before, and they'd been watching Coke for years and years and years, and it was pretty dull going along with him.

I remember one time when I left the campaign for a few days, We were over in East Texas, and I got off the plane; it stopped in Houston and let me off. And about four days later I joined Mr. Johnson's campaign again, and he was in Dallas at the Baker Hotel, I guess it was, But I remember when I got there, the press people were so glad to see me. I don't mean that as being anything personal to me; I just mean that they liked us, and they thought it was a very exciting time campaigning with Mr. Johnson.

G: My impression is that the reporters were more in favor of the Johnson campaign than the publishers of the papers were. That the publishers tended to support Coke Stevenson, but that the people who were actually writing the stories were more in favor of LBJ. Is this correct?

R: I guess that's right although we did have some good, good friends who were editors of the papers, like Houston Harte, for example, the Harte-Hanks chain of papers, and the publisher in Amarillo who had a chain of papers up there, and the--oh, I can't think of his name right this minute--he was editor of one of the papers in Houston. But the *Chronicle*, of course, wasn't for us, and the *Dallas News* was not for us. I'm trying to [tbink]--I don't think Mr. Harte owned the Corpus paper then. He might have, but the Corpus paper was for us, and it seems to me--I don't know about the San Antonio papers. Was one of them for us?

G: That was a Harte-Hanks--

R: Was it already Harte-Hanks then?

G: The *Express* would have been the Harte-Hanks [paper].

R: Well, then it was. And the Fort Worth paper was generally for us, I think. Amon Carter was a stern man and a hard-to-understand man, but Mr. Johnson had some awfully good support in Fort Worth.

G: Why was this, as opposed to Dallas? He didn't seem to have much support in Dallas, but he did in Fort Worth.

R: I don't know what started Dallas to disliking Mr. Johnson, but it was hatred among certain classes of Dallas people. They were vicious. They weren't even ladies and

gentlemen although they should have been ladies and gentlemen. You would have thought they were ladies and gentlemen; they were that class of people. But they didn't act like ladies and gentlemen. I guess they weren't very Democratic in the first place and didn't usually vote Democratic.

G: Did you witness any hostility in Dallas in this campaign in 1948?

R: Well, we knew we weren't getting along very well there. Was this the time, or was it later, that that group of very angry, scary Dallas people were waiting at the hotel for Mr. Johnson to get there? [November 1960] We were tipped off by Bob Clark and others--Bob was Tom Clark's brother--and it was suggested that Mr. and Mrs. Johnson--you see, they'd been to some events in Dallas, like a morning coffee or a luncheon or something, and Mr. Johnson had spoken, but I don't know whether it was in the 1948 campaign or not. But it was suggested to let Bob and some others take them around a circuitous way and go in the hotel through the kitchen. Mr. Johnson wouldn't do it, and there was a mob at the hotel. Haven't you ever heard this?

G: Yes.

R: Oh, what are you doing having me tell it again?

G: No, I want--

Tape 3 of 3

R: I'll back up just a little bit because I don't know where we were when you took that other tape off. We were some distance from the hotel, like a block or two, and had attended another event. It was suggested that we go in the hotel from a back entrance like the kitchen, but Mr. Johnson said no, he would walk through the lobby of the hotel, even

though the sidewalks outside and the lobby were filled with a mob of people who were shouting and angry and who did not like him.

I dashed off and told them that I would meet them at the hotel, and I've forgotten how I got in. I don't know whether I came in through a side door or what, but somehow I succeeded in getting up on the balcony above the lobby, and eventually I saw Mr. and Mrs. Johnson enter the front main door of the hotel. He had her in front of him, and he had his arms around her with his hands clasped so that she couldn't get loose or get separated from him. I don't remember how long it took them, but it seemed forever, just inching forward through the lobby, and people shouting questions at Mr. Johnson, which he didn't attempt to answer, as well as I remember. It must have taken twenty or thirty minutes at least, as I said, at an inch at a time to get through the lobby. I have forgotten whether they then reached an elevator door or whether they came up the stairs. I think they got in an elevator and went on up to their room, and then I, from the balcony, ran and got an elevator and went up to their room.

It was a very frightening thing. The people were not quiet at all, saying ugly things--I don't remember what they said--but he didn't attempt to answer them. He couldn't have been heard, or he would have been booed. And they did boo.

G: Did they attempt to block his passage into the hotel?

R: The lobby was so full and they would not move out of his way. That's why he didn't want Bird to walk separately from him, and he held her, as I said, in front of him with his hands very tightly clasped and just moved like this, just barely. Every time he could gain an inch or two, he moved forward, and he was tall, you know, and he could see over her

head, and he could see over a lot of the people's heads, too. But he could tell how they were acting. I was just shaking myself from where [I was], although I was not anywhere near in the crowd. was up on the balcony all by myself. I can't remember any more about it or anything that he said afterward.

G: Was there anybody with them when he went through the crowd?

R: I guess Mr. [Albert] Jackson was with him and Bob Clark. I'm pretty sure they're the ones that were with us before we went to the hotel and who gave us the news about the mob.

G: Well now, you get two different impressions of the mob: one that it was sort of a real ugly, violent group that spat on Mrs. Johnson, and--

R: I don't know if that's true or not. I didn't see it happen.

G: --the other that it was more of a Junior League-type ladies' group that just happened to be there, or was having a meeting somewhere nearby, and was not all that ugly.

R: Well, they were that type of women, but I think there were men there, too. Maybe they were just spectators. And I don't know why they were there, whether they just happened to be there and heard we were coining or whether they were there on purpose. They could have just happened to be there, but they weren't nice. Now, I don't say they were shouting and saying ugly things to him, but they weren't willing to move and let him walk through the lobby. That was one thing, and they were all glaringly mad. You could see by their faces. There was no violence. Nobody hit anybody.

G: No shoving?

R: No, except just imagine yourself in a thick crowd with people right up at you, touching

you, and you can't move. No, nobody pushed him or her that I remember, and I'm sure nobody did.

G: What was his reaction to this? What did they say?

R: He was just astounded because he'd never heard of anything like that before happening to anybody, and it only confirmed his feelings about Dallas, that, well, definitely he wasn't going to carry the county. (Laughter)

G: Did he attribute it to Bruce Alger, do you think, the Republican Congressman?

R: I don't remember. He could have, but maybe they were Alger's followers. Maybe they were, women who had worked in Alger's campaign in Dallas.

G: What about Mrs. Johnson? What was her reaction?

R: I know she was scared to death, but she was--

G: Did you talk to her about it when you went up to the room?

R: I don't remember what we said or anything except that we were glad it was over, that it was frightening, it was a frightening thing because you didn't know what those people were going to do. I do want to say that none of them hollered anything ugly at him that I heard. They booed, I think.

G: Did they have signs?

R: I don't remember.

G: Now, how does that affect a campaign, that incident?

R: I think--but nobody ever said this to me--that it embarrassed Dallas and that they were rather ashamed of it, and I wouldn't be surprised if those people that were in the lobby of the hotel weren't ashamed of themselves afterward, but I don't know anything to confirm

that. I do think it embarrassed Dallas though.

G: Do you think it affected people like Senator [Richard] Russell that would be offended by this sort of treatment of Mrs. Johnson, let's say? Did he become more active in the campaign as a result of that?

R: Senator Russell? I don't know. I don't know anything that Senator Russell did, although he no doubt gave Mr. Johnson advice. Do you know anything? I mean he didn't have anybody of his own that he sent to Texas, or did he?

G: Well, I think Bill Jordan was doing some advance work in Texas.

R: I guess he was. Yes. I guess he was. But no, I don't know anything. (Interruption)

G: Let me ask you about the Stevenson campaign. Who were Stevenson's supporters?

R: Oh, I don't know that I remember at all. They were old-timey people that you didn't really hear about very much anymore, but on the other hand--I mean, old-timey--well, I don't know what I meant--but they just sort of came out of the woods.

G: It seems like Mr. Johnson used the term the PUP Gang. Do you remember that?

R: No. PUP, P-U-P?

C: Yes. I think it was an acronym for petroleum, utilities and power companies.

R: Oh, maybe so. Now Mr. Claude Wild did know some of those people, but they weren't the people that we knew.

G: Did big oil tend to support Stevenson as opposed to Mr. Johnson?

R: I guess they did or supported Peddy, one or the other. Big oil was for a long time suspicious of Mr. Johnson, well, because be wouldn't vote to increase the price of oil per barrel. That was one reason, and he was in some kind of a bind, I don't know what it

was, with regard to the tidelands. I've forgotten when that came up, but Texas claimed that it owned so far out into the Gulf because when Texas was a republic it did. Oh, I guess you know all about that though. And of course the oil companies wanted Texas to own out three miles or thirty miles or whatever it was, and I don't even remember how Mr. Johnson voted, but I know it was a big problem.

G: Did you have a problem on the Taft-Hartley issue? Mr. Johnson was generally considered more liberal than Stevenson, and yet he had voted in favor of the Taft-Hartley amendment.

R: What was the Taft-Hartley amendment?

G: Well, it was labor legislation and I think the sensitive issue as far as labor was concerned had to do with the open shop and the closed shop--Section 14-B--and whether states would have the power to enact legislation guaranteeing the open shop.

R: And Texas didn't want an open shop, is that correct?

G: Well--

(Interruption)

R: What's the name of the little town where George Parr lives? We either went there or we went to some town nearby and landed the helicopter, and I'm almost certain that George Parr was in the crowd around the helicopter and that that is when Mr. Johnson was introduced to him. Our local people, like Ed Lloyd might have brought him up, or somebody, and introduced him. To the best of my knowledge, that's the only time that Mr. Johnson ever in his life saw George Parr, and that, of course, was in a crowd and only for a minute.

Some years later, a good many years later, Mr. Johnson made a speech in San Antonio, and George Reedy and I went over to San Antonio with him. I did several errands, a thing or two that Mr. Johnson told me to do for him while he was making the speech, and he would meet me at a certain place at an approximate time, and Reedy went with him to the speech. I got back first and sat down; it was in the reception room of somebody's office. And across the room from me there was a little man sitting there, and every time I had a chance I looked at him. I never had seen George Parr except for a split second one time, but I'd seen his picture in the newspaper. Mr. Johnson arrived and I jumped up and we rushed off, but I thought, you see, [when] he'd stepped into that same room that I was in, he'd see the man sitting across over there. Well, when we got outside, went down in the elevator and got out of the building, I said, Mr. Johnson, wasn't that George Parr in the reception room with me?" And he said, "I don't know. Why didn't you tell me so I could have shaken hands with him?" But he didn't know him well enough to recognize him, and I didn't either.

Parr was a retiring fellow; he never pushed himself forward. Maybe he did down there in his own town or county or something. He was supposed to be a--well, his father and his grandfather before him were called the Duke of Duval. But he didn't get up and come across the room and say, "Hello, Lyndon." I think he thought that he wouldn't even call anybody's attention to himself. He wouldn't have recognized me. But Mr. Johnson was very disappointed. He would have liked just to shake hands with him and say, "How are you, George?" Of course, maybe it wasn't George Parr, but I thought it was.

G: Was Mr. Johnson or were you aware of the feud between George Parr and Coke

Stevenson?

R: You mean about after the votes were counted and Stevenson didn't get them like he did before?

G: Well, the reason that George Parr was not for Stevenson.

R: No, I don't know what it was. Do you?

G: Well, I think it had to do with an appointment Stevenson made.

R: Or didn't make.

G: Yes. Or didn't make.

R: Could be. And I don't remember in the years that I worked for Mr. Johnson of George Parr ever asking him for anything. But who will believe you?

G: Well, of course, the one thing that's mentioned is the pardon. It's alleged that Mr. Johnson intervened with President Truman to pardon George Parr.

R: I don't know. I just don't know whether he did or not. Did you ever ask George Reedy if he knew anything about that?

G: No. Well, these Valley areas were heavily Mexican-American. Did Mr. Johnson tend to do well?

R: I think he did.

G: Was it a matter of getting the support of the leaders or the bosses, or was it a matter, do you think, of getting the votes one by one, talking to large gatherings of people?

R: I guess both helped, but there were leaders down there. It's been that way forever. Maybe it isn't anymore, but it has been that way for a hundred years, and I think the people look for their leader and wanted to vote the way he voted. That's the way they'd

been brought up. I'm not just saying that, making it up, I mean. They'd been bred that way.

(Interruption)

G: LBJ was very depressed after that first primary because you were so far down, and the question was whether you could catch up.

R: That's right. I think he just had to be urged to carry on by John and Senator Wirtz, and I'm sure that Lady Bird held up well and strongly. I do remember a strategy meeting--I think it was at that time--out in the back yard one evening at Dillman Street, but I don't know whether that was the end of the first or the second primary.

G: What happened at the meeting, do you know?

R: They were just trying to talk it all over and analyze, and it was either at the end of the first primary or the second primary, and the second primary, you know, was bad with the votes going back and forth. Some little lights had been strung up, not just for that occasion but when the Johnsons wanted to be outside and maybe eat supper out there sometime. We also had a telephone out there; it was on a tree. And all I remember is that I sat on the ground kind of at Mr. Johnson's feet and at the foot of the tree, between him and the tree, so I could jump up and answer it every time it rang. It was calling around, you know, putting in calls to our people around the state and people calling back. We might have had two lines. I'm pretty sure Walter was there also, and I guess John. I think I definitely remember Senator Wirtz being there. I always remember Senator Wirtz.

G: Did Mr. Johnson ever think about dropping out that night?

R: Not to my knowledge, although he could have uttered the words, "Maybe I ought to just drop out," or something like that. But I believe he was ready to go on.

G: Was there any plan for picking up the 200,000 votes that Peddy had gotten?

R: Oh, Mr. Johnson felt that in reality a lot of people that were for Peddy would be for him and that the thing to do was to be kind to Peddy. I don't mean that we were kind to him, but we never said anything--I don't think we ever said anything against him. It was Johnson and Stevenson all the way as far as back and forth criticizing each other. But the object was that the Peddy votes would switch to Johnson in the second primary, which I'm sure they did.

G: Did you try to get Peddy to endorse him?

R: We might have. I don't know. I'm sure somebody would have tried.

G: Well, you know, Charlie Francis was an old friend of Peddy's; they'd gone to school together or something.

R: And the same law firm, too.

G: Do you know of any effort that was made or any individual that--?

R: I don't myself, but I'm fairly certain that it must have taken place. I mean it's logical that it took place. It could have been Charlie Francis; it could have been Senator Wirtz; it could have been him, or it could have been others.

G: Right after the first primary, you and Mr. Johnson went back to Washington for a special session. Do you remember that?

R: Not specifically, no. Did it last very long?

G: I think he was up there for about a week, I believe, something like that. Let's see. Yes,

just about a week.

R: No, I don't remember it.

G: And he wrote Speaker Rayburn while he was up there that there were rumors circulating in Texas that Rayburn was supporting Stevenson.

R: Oh, gosh! Really? (Laughter)

G: Well, Stevenson was trying to leave that impression because he and Rayburn had ridden on the same train, something of that nature.

R: You mean, a presidential train that went through?

G: You know, Stevenson went up to Washington for that foreign affairs briefing. Do you remember that?

R: Oh, yes, that's when the press got him up there. The Texas press had never known how to tackle him. I remember he did come up there. But who wrote that letter that you're talking about to Rayburn? Did you look at the initials on the carbon?

G: No. Was Rayburn supporting Mr. Johnson in that race?

R: Oh, I'm sure he was!

G: Any recollection of what he did to help?

R: No, but I'm sure he spoke to his friends, his cronies, back in Bonham and Honey Grove and all those areas over there that he represented. I'm sure he did; he wouldn't have not done that. He was crazy about Mr. Johnson.

G: LBJ seems to have gotten a good deal of the black vote in the state that year, particularly in cities like Houston.

R: Well, he probably did. We had to get a lot of votes down there in Houston because there

was opposition there. It wasn't as bad as Dallas but--

G: What were his contacts with the black community? Who did he--?

R: I don't remember but one person, and he lived in Austin. His name was Dr. [Everett] Givens. He was a Negro dentist and a very respectable man. He was a strong supporter for Mr. Johnson when he was a congressman, all the time, and when he ran for the Senate. I remember Dr. Givens rode on the train with us one time. I don't remember where we were going, whether it was just crossing Texas or up to Washington. But I can't remember who the contact was in Houston among the Negroes, I don't remember, but I ought to be able to.

G: Was Hobart Taylor helpful?

R: I guess he was. You know Mr. Johnson was always for the Negroes, and he didn't make any bones about it. He said he was so shocked he didn't know what to do when he drove between Texas and Washington, or else he was driving from Washington home, in a car--no, it didn't happen that way. His cook told him. Zephyr [Wright] or Helen [Williams] or Helen's husband told him this, and Mr. Johnson repeated it many times and he never forgot it. When we would shift from Washington back to Texas and bring half the staff and Lady Bird and the children and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson and me, we had to get a car down here. There were times when Lady Bird and I drove the car. One time he had Helen and Gene--and maybe Zephyr was with them--drive the car from Texas to Washington or vice versa, and I guess it was Gene that told him afterward. When Mr. Johnson said, "How was your trip?" and everything, Gene explained to him that it was just fine except for two things: you had to search a town to find a place where Negroes

could eat and, also, when it came time to stop at night, to find a motel in which you could sleep. And, really, it affected Mr. Johnson so much. It really did, and he told it a lot of times, that a Negro driving between here and Washington could hardly find a place to eat or a place to sleep.

G: Who would he tell it to, or how? Would he use it to get support?

R: I don't know if he ever told it in a speech, but he certainly told it in my presence a number of times.

G: But, say, would he do it in order to convince another senator to support some legislation?

R: I suppose so. To give them the right to vote, the right to eat, the right to sleep. I expect he did. He talked about it a lot. You see, he didn't know any Negroes growing up. I don't think there were any out around Johnson City and Fredericksburg. It was later that he really became acquainted with them and got to know them well and know that they were people and they had their feelings just as much as he did, their ambitions, the things they wanted for their children, to have a better life than they had had.

G: Now, your father died late in the campaign, and I have a note that he cancelled his schedule and came to the funeral. Do you remember that, the twenty-second [of August]?

R: Yes, we were over in Longview or somewhere, and he was making a speech--well, I don't know where it was now. I was at the hotel in the room where the press were, although most of them had gone to hear him make the speech. But anyway, I got a phone call, and so when Mr. Johnson came back, or I don't know whether he came back there, but we went to wherever the airplane was--and I can't think where he was headed for, but it must

have been Galveston or Beaumont or somewhere in that area--and one of the newspapermen told him about my phone call. He came back and sat down by me and said why didn't I tell him as soon as I met him at the airport. I told him I was going to tell him, but I was going to wait until we stopped for the night and that what I wanted to do was get a taxi and go to Sugar Land. But he told the plane to land at Houston, and the plane phoned ahead for a taxi. I went then to Sugar Land by taxi, and he went on to where be was going to be the next morning. Then he filled his schedule that day and called me on the phone, and I told him the funeral would be the next day, and he cancelled [his schedule] that day and came to the funeral, and I'm trying to think whether Lady Bird was with him or not. I don't think she was with us in Longview, but she could have come and joined him. Somehow I think she came, too.

G: She was in Marshall. No, wait a minute. I have a note that she did attend that Longview rally.

R: Well, all right then. She was then there, and she did come with him the next day, whatever day it was. I think it was on a Friday, and he went on and filled his Saturday schedule, but we had the funeral on Sunday, and he and Lady Bird came, or something like that. I don't know; it might have been Monday.

G: How long were you out of the campaign? Do you remember?

R: Not very long because my brother, of course, came; he got there right after I did that night, and his wife. And Uncle Johnny came from Huntsville, and my aunt and uncle came, and then we had to go to Huntsville. That's where Daddy was buried. That's where we're all buried. Then my brother went back to Sugar Land with me, and so did

Uncle Johnny, and we decided what to keep and what to not keep, and there were some people that wanted to buy what we didn't keep. So I did it all real quickly with their help, and Uncle Johnny arranged to ship the things we kept over to Huntsville, and somehow I got to Dallas. I don't know. That's what I was talking about earlier when I said the press liked us. When I got to the hotel in Dallas and knocked on the door, I just said the press were glad to see me, and they liked him better than they did Stevenson.

G: Well--

End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview VIII

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