INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE REEDY (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

December 12, 1968

B: This is the interview with George Reedy. Mr. Reedy, I think the starting place would be your knowledge of Congress when you were a correspondent, and I can read this into the record.

You were born in 1917 in Chicago--

R: East Chicago, Indiana--it's in a different state.

B: And became the United Press' Congressional correspondent in 1938--from '38 to '41--in Air Force service, 1942-45; and then again after the war from '46 to '51 with UP--is that essentially it?

During those days when you were covering Congress, did you have any contact with Congressman or Senator Lyndon Johnson?

R: Not until about 1949. During the years that I was covering the House of Representatives I had no assignments or no stories that ran across his path. I did see him occasionally loping around in the back of the chamber, and he was quite striking because of his size. But I didn't really get to know him until he was elected to the Senate. Then sometime early in 1949, Dave Botter, a reporter with the Dallas News who has now passed away, had a cocktail party for the then-Senator Johnson to which he invited a number of correspondents; I was one of them.

B: Is this a routine sort of thing to introduce the new Senator to the press?

R: It's fairly common. The regional press will usually give a party for an incoming Senator. It just so happened, however, that that particular year, in dividing

up the assignments for the Senate staff in the United Press, the Armed Services Committee became mine; and I really got to know Senator Johnson quite well when he became chairman of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee.

B: Did this involve you in a close day-to-day kind of relationship with him?

R: Very close. It was one of my principal stories for a number of months. And one day I called his office and was told by the secretary that he wasn't in but had left a number in case I called him. I called, and it turned out to be the Bethesda Naval Hospital; and he was out there suffering from some bronchial trouble which used to give a great deal of difficulty although it hasn't in recent years. In the course of our conversation, he said in a joking way, "I want you to get over on my side and work for me where you belong." I thought he was kidding, and I said, "Make me an offer." And my God, a few weeks later I found myself working for the committee; I'm not quite sure how I had gotten there--I guess I signed the payroll because they paid me, but I really don't remember it.

B: That's when you became the staff consultant to the--?

R: Senate Armed Services Preparedness Subcommittee--right.

B: You were fairly well acquainted with Horace Busby at that time, weren't you, who was already one of Mr. Johnson's assistants?

R: Yes, but only because of my acquaintanceship with Mr. Johnson. I got to know his office staff quite well--Warren Woodward and Walter Jenkins; and there were a number of social events out at the Senator's house which I and my wife attended.

B: There are a lot of stories told about the way Senator Johnson courted the press. Did you run into this and did it cause any trouble or conflict of interest between friendship for Mr. Johnson and your duties as a reporter?

R: Not really. Every politician courts the press. And there are things that politicians want newspapermen to do that would cause a conflict of interest; but within limits it's impossible for newspapermen to do what the average politician wants him to do. He can write an occasional puff piece or something like that, but that really isn't very helpful to a politician. And there are so many day-to-day events that newspapermen have to report, and those events are being reported by a number of newspapermen; and there's so much cross-checking that you aren't going to get any distortion of the news. The most a politician can get out of courting the press are some favorable adjectives. I long ago came to the conclusion that the average American when he reads a newspaper story--his eyes opaque every time he comes to an adjective.

B: Did Senator Johnson understand this difference between what he might want out of the press and what a newspaperman was obligated to do?

R: No. Of course, he didn't. I've met few politicians that do. I've met one or two that had some actual newspaper experience and knew what was possible and what wasn't possible. I met one or two men, very remarkable men with a philosophical turn of mind, who understood it--men like former Senator [Eugene D.] Millikin [R. Colo.]. But politicians as a general rule have no real concept of the press function or what can or cannot be done. I made a couple of speeches on it, and have written an article on it.

B: Did Mr. Johnson ever remonstrate with you about any of the stories you wrote?

R: No, for the simple reason that I was working for a press service; and the type of stories that you did for a wire service weren't subject to adjectival treatment.

B: What sort of work did you do after you joined the Preparedness Subcommittee?

R: A wide variety of things. As a general rule when you go to work for Johnson, you find yourself doing everything in the place, from writing speeches to carrying

out the trash. And after awhile, he settles in his own mind on what you can do, and you start picking up things. I rewrote all of the committee reports--the Preparedness Subcommittee reports. I mean by that that they would come to us from the technical staff, and I would convert them from bureaucratise into English. I wrote speeches for him; I advised him on various matters about the Senate.

B: This means things like how Senators were leaning on votes and so on?

R: No, not that so much, but on past history; upon possible amendments to legislation that might accomplish a purpose; analyses of some legislation--certainly analyses of Defense legislation. And also I acted as liaison--In a sense I really acted as liaison between the Senatorial office and the staff of the Preparedness Subcommittee. The staff was centered down in the Securities and Exchange Commission where it was being run by Don [Donald C.] Cook, a commissioner of the SEC; and the staff was highly technical, though it consisted by and large of accountants, of attorneys, of some experts in rubber; and with men who had very little concept of the Hill and how it operated. And there was a necessity for a certain amount of liaison between the Senatorial office and the technical staff, and I performed that function.

B: I've also seen it said that in those days--indeed, probably before that time--that Mr. Johnson had formed the fairly firm idea that the United States must be militarily prepared. Would you agree with that?

R: There's no question about that. The whole long series of speeches, all of the committee reports during the Korean War; he was thoroughly convinced that we lived in a world where the United States would have no real voice or real prestige in international affairs unless it had the necessary defense strength to back it up.

B: Did you ever hear him talk about the professional military men--the generals and the admirals? Did you ever find his attitude about them?

R: Of course, but nothing that would be unusual or out of the way.

B: I was wondering if he had formed an opinion about the professional military men as a class, whether or not he respected their views and so on.

R: I never heard him discuss military men from a philosophical standpoint--no. He would discuss them in terms of relative ability; he would discuss them in terms of their attitudes towards specific legislation, or their attitudes toward specific policies. But if you mean in terms of the old military versus civilian concepts, no. However, it's quite clear from his actions that he was rather firmly committed to the concept of civilian control over the military--so firmly committed to it that he really didn't have to discuss it. I'd say that his whole attitude toward the McArthur hearings was very much evidence of his basic concept that we must have civilian control over the military establishment.

B: Did he make any personal comments about General MacArthur in that regard?

R: No. But during that period I was on loan to Senator Russell, who was the chairman of the Investigating Committee--you know, they combined the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, and made Russell the chairman. And I did about--I guess about 80 percent of the staff work on those hearings. And I was in constant consultation with both Senator Russell and Senator Johnson on the course of the MacArthur hearings. And the public affairs handling of it, you might say, by and large followed my recommendations.

B: What was that precisely?

R: They set up a series of closed hearings at which we had the reporters who had security clearances from the Defense Department--as rapidly as the hearings were

transcribed, a censor would delete the absolute security information that had to come out; and the pages went to the press sometimes within a half-hour after the actual testimony was given. The hearings were made as open as they could possibly be made when they had to take place behind closed doors. The whole series of witnesses were heard, were heard exhaustively; great care was taken to see that all sides of the controversy had full opportunity to vent their attitudes; and I think those general attitudes paid off because at the conclusion of the hearings, a tremendous wave of emotionalism had swept the United States when MacArthur returned from Korea--or from Japan, the tremendous wave of emotionalism seemed to have subsided.

B: Was the press content with these arrangements?

R: Oh yes. In fact the press was quite surprised that it was possible to make arrangements that were so convenient. As a general rule when you have closed hearings involving security subjects, it takes several weeks for any kind of a transcript to go to the press.

B: Did it make any real difference in your work when you moved from the Preparedness Subcommittee to the Minority Policy Committee?

R: Oh, quite a bit.

B: What was the different function there?

R: Although they had been merging into each other, in the fall of '52 the Senator asked me to go down to Texas and spend the fall with him; and I took my family down and lived in Austin. And during that period I began advising him in political matters. And the following year when he became the Senate Democratic leader, the transition to the Minority Policy Committee, it was a somewhat simple one, simplified because I had been merging into such work during the fall period. I helped him with him various campaign appearances in Texas; with his speeches; with advice on the leadership--that sort of thing.

B: I thought if it were convenient with you we'd go ahead and deal with Congressional affairs here for awhile and then back up and take Texas politics straight through, and it might be a little more convenient.

R: Certainly.

B: But as you say, there in '52 you had been just sort of easing into the kind of work the Policy Committee did?

R: Right.

B: It is said too that Mr. Johnson took the Policy Committee and rejuvenated it and made it a really effective tool of leadership. Is that a correct evaluation?

R: Except for the word rejuvenated. There had never been any juvenation to rejuvenate. You see, the Policy Committee had a very peculiar history. It grew fundamentally out of the LaFollette-Monroney Act of 1947, and no one quite knew what to do with it. It had been the product of some academic political thinking, which had come to the conclusion that some way should be found to establish a leadership committee in the Senate that would state party positions for the Republicans and the Democrats. Well that is simply an impossible thing. Under our political system, you are never going to have clearcut political positions that you can call Democratic or Republican in either the Senate or the House. There are a number of reasons for that, but it would take me all afternoon to go into them. But they had set the thing up; it had seemed like an attractive idea.

Congress, at the time they passed the LaFollette-Monroney Act, was as anxious to put in every bit of reform that they possibly could so that the public wouldn't look upon it as a mere device to raise salaries. And suddenly they found themselves with this Policy Committee idea in their hands, and really didn't know what to do with it. They couldn't do what the framers

of the act had intended it to do. And therefore the Senate Democratic Policy Committee became basically a record-keeping operation which was handled by Mrs. Pauline Moore, and that was a very excellent operation in which statistical information on votes and issues was preserved in such a form that every Senator always had the data at his fingertips.

The Senate Republican Policy Committee became by and large a political propaganda device, especially since the Republicans separate the Policy Committee from the floor leadership. On the Democratic side of the aisle the Democratic leader is also the chairman of the Policy Committee; on the Republican side of the aisle, one man is selected as a floor leader, another man heads the Policy Committee.

Senator Johnson was not the kind to take over a useless organization and just let it lie there idly. And what he did with it was to use it as a nucleus for a staff that could be very helpful in shaping legislation so it could pass the Senate. And also to use it as a gathering point for the leadership of the Senate to discuss legislation; to come to some conclusions; to help with scheduling; and to work out some of the necessary compromises that you have to have if you are going to get a bill enacted.

B: But he had no intention of using it as a formulator of policy in the original intended sense?

R: There is no such thing.

B: One wonders how such a thing would possibly conflict with the Democratic National Committee; if you wouldn't get on some pretty sticky political grounds.

R: Well, Congress is always on sticky political grounds with the members of the national committees anyway--it's true of both the Democratic and the Republican committees. You see, in our political system, our political committees really have very little to do with policy; I mean by that the Democratic or the Republican

national committees. Basically they're election organizations; they're intended to supply certain machinery to the party structures--speakers, money, funds, certain amount of research to be used during a campaign. But in between campaigns the policy or whatever it may be is stated by the elected office holders. Now when a party is out of power, that means the policies of the party are stated by a weird combination of Congressional leaders and state governors with no clearcut way of determining who is speaking for the party and who isn't. And there is no way of setting up any machinery whereby anyone really speaks for the party; however, it's a pretty good rule of thumb that you will always have a certain amount of antagonism or at least a certain dichotomy between the elected leaders on the Hill who are responsible for passing legislation on a day-to-day basis and the national committee type of leadership which is thinking in terms of the next election.

B: Then as you say the policy committee became, as you described it, this kind of information and action sort of agency?

R: Yes, more action than information. We had a staff of very highly qualified people--men like Jerry Siegel and Solis Horowitz and later on Dr. Hewitt and Harry McPherson and myself, all of whom either had extensive experience with the Senate or extensive experience with legal matters. And we could analyze legislation, and we could analyze the positions that had been taken by various Senators on legislation and come up with some reasonably valid advice as to what could be done and what would have to be done to get that legislation through the Senate. After all, the Senate of the United States--nothing matters unless you've got fifty-one votes.

B: In this kind of advice that the staff gave, did you ever come up with an opinion opposite from that of Senator Johnson himself?

R: Probably, but you can't quite state it that way because the relationship was such a close one that what we'd all really do was sit down together and evolve ways and means of proceeding.

B: What I was getting at was how good was Senator Johnson in figuring this kind of thing out himself?

R: Oh extremely good. But you know, a Senator has a full-time day--it's a twenty-four-hour-a-day job. And I'd say in the modern Congress a Senator without a staff is weakened simply because he does not have enough time to sit down and analyze arguments. With the kind of a staff we had in the Policy Committee, for instance, we could go through the reports of the standing legislative committees with a fine-toothed comb; we'd be able to call individual Senators who were objecting to something in a bill, and we'd explore their thinking and determine what sort of thing would meet their objections. And we were able to come up with some positions that evoked a remarkable degree of unanimity which had been almost impossible in the past. You know, frequently a Senatorial objection to a bill is not to the essence of the bill itself; frequently the objection may be to some relatively minor part of the bill which is not very important in terms of the legislation, though which may have a tremendous impact in his own state. And if you explore this with the Senator and find out, first of all, what his real problem is, and secondly how that problem can be met without compromising the bill, you very, very frequently come to a position that will enable the passage of what otherwise would be a dead piece of legislation.

B: Can you remember a specific example of that kind of thing?

R: The most important example of all of course was the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which was made possible because a very careful examination of the position

of southern Senators disclosed that in the various areas of civil rights they had different degrees of feeling and different degrees of opposition; and their opposition to civil rights legislation was at its very weakest in the voting provisions. We also found in analyzing some parts of the civil rights bill that one section which permitted--

B: The jury trials business?

R: Yes. It's rather complicated to explain at this point, and I would really have to back up--

B: I think it's on the record; generally, it's the one about mandatory jury trials in certain kinds of cases and so on.

R: That doesn't explain the conflict. You see, the original bill as it came from the Administration had in it two sections--one was the famous Title III, which had very, very far-reaching powers. I'm quite convinced in my own mind that the Administration itself--the Eisenhower Administration--was not aware of just what they were proposing with that Title III; there were some peculiarities in the indexing of laws that made it very difficult to find out exactly what Title III meant--they weren't aware that it related back to some older statutes. Secondly, it permitted trials without a jury, and gave a judge quite broad discretionary powers. In the course of our explorations, two things became apparent. One was that Title III had to go; there was no question about it--the bill could not be passed with Title III in it.

B: This was because of southern Senators' objections or--?

R: Oh yes. They would have stood up and fought, and you would have had to have practically killed all of them to get the bill through with Title III; it evoked all the old specters of reconstruction. In reality what Title III did was to re-enact a series of reconstruction acts, or rather to reactivate

a series of reconstruction acts; and to give federal judges extremely broad powers in interpreting those acts and applying them--sections of the reconstruction acts that were otherwise dead. In the jury trial problem, the solution was even simpler, it didn't require eliminating the section. What it required was making a distinction between civil and criminal contempt, and guaranteeing jury trials for criminal contempt, but permitting judges to sentence automatically and arbitrarily for civil contempt. This is a rather subtle distinction, seeing that a judge can punish a person to any extent that he wishes under civil contempt; I'm not even certain that the Constitutional inhibitions against cruel and unusual punishment apply if a judge is invoking civil contempt. Of course under criminal contempt, the penalties are really quite mild; but because such proceedings were labeled criminal contempt, the assurance of a jury trial in that case was quite sufficient to secure not the cooperation of these Southerners, but at least--

B: Acquiescence?

R: Well, you can't even quite say that. They rolled over dead a little bit faster than they would otherwise.

B: Actually you had the same problem on the other side, didn't you? The northern liberals also had to be somewhat appeased, and some of them at least wanted the full thing.

R: Yes, but there was so much substantive strength in the voting provisions of the bill that in the last analysis northern liberals would have had a very, very difficult time voting against it. To say that I am not going to take a tremendous step forward because I can't take two steps forward, is a little bit difficult to go home and explain. You know, really the half-a-loaf theory is always discussed with pejorative words and in derogatory tones. When

you walk down the street, it's rather hard to convince Mr. John Q. Citizen that he'd rather have no loaf of bread than half-a-loaf of bread if he's hungry. Well, the Civil Rights Act of 1957 was really a pretty tremendous law. And don't forget, for eighty-seven years nothing had passed the Senate--not even a simple declaration saying that civil rights are fine. So the northern liberals could object that it didn't go far enough, which it didn't--there's no doubt about that, but you couldn't go any further. To have taken another step would have meant to take no step. So even though they could argue it didn't go far enough, they really couldn't stand up and block the passage and prevent any progress. You see, they were in a somewhat different position than the southern Democrats, because the southern Democrats would have been happy with nothing. And consequently you had to do certain things if you were going to get the bill passed at all. But you could do those things and still have a very solid, substantial forward step.

B: This may be an unfair question, but during that process was it possible for you to come to any conclusion about Senator Johnson's motives? Was he sincerely interested in civil rights? Was he aiming toward creating a record in that area, or just what was involved?

R: I think that a number of points have to be made; you know, no man's motives are that simple. I think he has always been quite sincerely--and when I say always, I mean 'way back to his days as a young man--I think that his basic attitude toward human beings has always been one characterized by an almost total lack of bias. In a sense the man grew up with fewer biases and prejudices than I did. It was rather easy for a person like me to be for civil rights for Negroes, because after all I had a great grandfather who was an abolitionist--two great grandfathers that fought on the Union side; I came from strong Abraham

Lincoln country in the North; and those things were just automatic. On the other hand, I grew up in an area where there were tremendous prejudices against eastern Europeans, much more than there were against Negroes, because you hardly ever saw Negroes, but you did see quite a few eastern Europeans; a tremendous prejudice against Finns and people of that character. Now Senator Johnson--President Johnson--never had any of those prejudices in the first place to my knowledge.

Now, secondly, I think, that above and beyond that there was his realization that the Democratic party just simply had to produce; that it could not go on forever trading on promises about what it was going to do on civil rights. There was an issue here, the issue had to be met. In order to meet that issue a bill had to be passed, and I think this was of some importance to him.

Next, the pride that Johnson had in the Senate is something that had to be seen at first hand to be credited. And he realized that the Senate could not survive as a viable institution if there was this one great big chunk of legislation that it could not touch. I said eighty-seven--actually, eighty-two years without even the potential of a half-hearted obeisance to it. I think that was part of the factor in his mind. I think quite possibly he may have felt it was a challenge to his leadership. But you have to mingle and mix all of these motives, every single one of them, I believe.

B: While we're talking about strategy in the Senate, I have read or heard of an episode in which the Senate was faced with some sort of bill to limit the powers of the Supreme Court, which Senator Humphrey was handling on the floor, and the bill got into trouble. Then there was a meeting in which Senator Johnson, Senator Humphrey, you, and Anthony Lewis of the New York Times sat in together while Mr. Johnson outlined how to pass the bill. Is that a true story? It happened about in 1958, I think.

R: I don't place it specifically, no.

B: I realize you've been in so many of that kind of thing--

R: The story is quite plausible, because--I'm trying to recall--Tony Lewis had a special interest in--it may have been the Smith Amendment.

B: I think that was the one.

R: Well, the Smith Amendment, of course, was not one that we wanted to pass; it was one that had to be blocked some way. It was a very involved thing which--oh God, I've forgotten what was in the Smith Amendment now. I know it would have messed up all of the railroad legislation for the last hundred years.

B: It was something to the effect that the federal law didn't apply to the states unless the law specifically said that it applied to the states?

R: No.

B: Well anyway, I'm not trying to put you on the spot on that one. What I was after was some more examples of Senator Johnson as a strategist in the Senate at work.

R: Oh I would say the Bricker Amendment; the Housing Bill of probably '56; the--Well, let's take the Bricker Amendment.

B: Take the one which comes to mind the easiest.

R: I'll take both the Bricker Amendment and the Housing one, although I can't recall just precisely when the Housing Bill came up. The Bricker Amendment, which now has been totally forgotten, was probably the most divisive political proposal of the mid-'50's. Nobody was quite certain what it would do except that it would prevent the United States from regulating the hunting of wild ducks and wild geese. But all the proponents of it were convinced that it would prevent American boys from having their hands chopped off in Saudi

Arabia, and being sentenced to five years in solitary confinement in France. And all the antagonists were absolutely convinced that if it were adopted it would make a complete hash out of American foreign policy. And really in all the years that I've been around the Congress, and that goes back to 1938, I don't know of any other single issue--legislative issue--that has aroused such intense emotion. And the thing became very close to being irresistible. There was a doctors' lobby behind it, and it was customary to receive sometimes several thousand letters a day on this one issue. It got to the Senate, and it became apparent from the start that it could not be defeated on a straight-out vote. No one could vote against the Bricker Amendment with impunity, and very few could vote against it and survive at all--at least, so they thought. Finally after some discussions with Senator [Walter F.] George [D. Ga.] of Georgia, who was probably the most respected conservative member of the Senate, Senator George agreed to introduce a substitute for the Bricker Amendment which stated simply that no treaty would be superior to the laws of the United States. Now this was a rather subtle distinction, but a number of legal experts looked at it and decided it was harmless. At this late date I can't recall the exact wording of the Bricker Amendment that purported to do the same thing, but it had something to do with the treaty law--I understand the Bricker Amendment, I just don't recall the wording.

Senator George introduced his amendment as a substitute for the Bricker Amendment, and it was adopted. And really if Senator George hadn't done that, I'm quite convinced that the Bricker Amendment would have been passed, and it would have been approved by the state legislatures. And God knows where we would be today. But a rather interesting thing happened. Once the George amendment had been adopted as a substitute for the Bricker Amendment, suddenly

all of the steam went out of the Bricker drive. I have seen this before. And a few votes--just one or two--were picked up; a few brave souls who voted against the adoption of the substitute, and the result was that nothing became law. If however the first vote had been head-on in the Bricker Amendment, it would have been adopted.

B: Did Senator Johnson have to do any special persuading of Senator George to get him to offer the substitution?

R: I wouldn't say special persuading--he had very long discussions about it; and the staff of the Senate Policy Committee worked long hours over the wording--to help Senator George word the substitute, and we did an awful lot of research into the laws, and made some very careful judgments as to how various Senators would react.

B: Presumably with Administration help?

R: The Administration wasn't much help when it came to legislative matters. During all the years of the Eisenhower Administration, I can only recall one instance in which the Eisenhower Administration really put heat on the Senate; and that was during a rather controversial debate over a series of social security amendments. This represents one of President Johnson's greatest landmarks as the Majority Leader, because when we finished, the bill was a tremendous bill--it provided for widows to receive pensions at age 62; it provided a disability compensation at age 50. It was the largest single revision that had been made in the Social Security Act since it was launched. In there the Administration really did put the heat on to defeat the bill. I can recall we'd wake up in the morning with about a ten vote margin on some issue, and by two or three in the afternoon it would have shrunk to about three, and then it would shrink to one, so we'd have to really put the heat on--

B: This was from the Administration calling and so on--?

R: Oh yes--Slick Persons and Jack Martin and the rest of the Administration--you know, the legislative liaison men were standing right outside the doors of the chamber and grabbing the Republicans as they came off and on. Fortunately, a few of the Republicans stood firm, like Senator [George W.] Malone [R. Nev.] from Nevada, and a Senator from North Dakota--I can't think of his name at the moment.

B: What were the circumstances of the Housing Bill you mentioned a moment ago?

R: That was very interesting. I wish I could remember the year.

B: It can be checked easily enough.

R: But we had come up with a housing bill out of the Senate Banking Committee, which was headed by Senator [Burnet R.] Maybank [D., SC] from South Carolina--the man was quite an advocate of public housing--with a tremendous increase in public housing units. At this date I can't recall whether it was 120,000 or 460,000, but it was just a tremendous increase. Now the Administration had recommended 35,000; so Senator [Homer] Capehart [R. Ind.] came up with an amendment to cut the public housing units to the 35,000. And the whole thing--it's rather funny; Capehart thought that for once he had Lyndon Johnson beaten--so much so that shortly before the vote he actually walked over to Senator Johnson and he said, "Lyndon, this is one time I've really got you. I'm going to rub your nose in it!" He'd counted the votes, and he'd figured there were enough southern Democrats that would vote against public housing that, combined with the Republicans, he'd carry the day. He didn't know that we'd been up almost every night talking to southern Democrats. When he got to the roll call--and I've forgotten the first southern Democrat on the roll call, but the first southern Democratic vote was "no" against the Capehart amendment. I was

sitting up in the gallery, and Capehart's chin almost bounced off the desk. He turned around, and sure enough they went down bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing--every southern Democrat, even the most conservative, voting for this 120- or 460,000 public housing units. And Capehart was roundly defeated; the press gallery nearly collapsed out of the sheer shock and surprise of it, because they'd all written stories that morning predicting that this would be the first major defeat that Lyndon Johnson had suffered as Democratic leader.

What we had done was quite simple. We'd explained to the southern Democrats that they might just as well vote against the Capehart amendment, because it was a public housing amendment too. And the fact that it only called for 35,000--just the same thing as saying, "Well, my daughter is only a little bit pregnant." We persuaded them the best tactic was to vote against the Capehart amendment for 35,000 public housing units, and then vote against the whole bill. We didn't mind their voting against the whole bill, because we knew that the Republicans, after this Public Housing Amendment was out of the way, we knew that virtually all of the Republicans had to turn around and vote for the whole bill, seeing that it had a lot of Fannie Mae [Federal National Mortgage Association] provisions in it, and a number of FHA provisions; and it worked exactly that way. The southern Democrats voted for the Public Housing Amendment--rather for public housing--and voted against the bill; that took care of their problems down home. The Republicans voted to cut public housing, but then when public housing was saved, they had to turn around and approve the whole bill.

B: And this strategy originated with Senator Johnson?

R: It originated, let's say, in our office.

B: Actually, did Senator Johnson as Democratic leader suffer any major defeats, or minor ones either?

R: No. There were a few areas in which we did not carry the day, but they were always areas in which we knew in advance we were not going to carry the day. And only brought the measure up at all because some of our people had some special problems. For example, we took two or three shellackings on the Hell's Canyon Bill, but we never thought we could pass the thing during those periods. We had certain western Senators, however, who said that they would rather bring up the Hell's Canyon Bill and get defeated on it, than not bring it up at all; so we brought it up in that understanding.

Then, of course, one of the first big tests of party unity on a vote was the confirmation of Albert Beeson for the National Labor Relations Board. And there we were narrowly defeated by--I forget how many votes now, four or five; but it wasn't a defeat--it was a victory, a tremendous victory. That was shortly after the 1952 defeat of the Democratic party, and the Democratic party was very much in disarray; we'd had to spend a number of months keeping Democrats apart. We didn't want Democrats to get together--we had some Democrats urging that we call a caucus; but good God, to have called a caucus would have been to set up a Roman holiday with Democrats fighting each other--everybody was mad. And we were looking around desperately for some issue that would unify the Democrats, and we found it in this nomination of Beeson to the Labor Board. Beeson was not only a very conservative man, but he was a man who had retained, when he had agreed to serve as a member of the Labor Board, he had retained certain pension rights from his company; and in his testimony before the Senate Labor Committee, he had been less than candid in describing these pension rights. And there was a rather clear case of conflict of interest involved. Now the northern Democrats wanted to vote against Beeson, of course, because he was a conservative, and they regarded him as anti-labor, which would

not have phased the southern Democrats at all; but the southern Democrats were punctilious over conflicts of interest. And when this was brought out, we succeeded in getting a nearly unified vote against Beeson, only--I forget how many Democrats voted for him, but no more than two or three. He was approved, of course, because the Republicans had a majority of the Senate at that point--a one vote margin; and they did get those two or three Democrats. But even though the nomination was approved, the cohesion of the Democratic vote was a tremendous victory.

B: Does that kind of unity and cohesion last?

R: Not if you leave it alone, no. But as a starting point, if people get in the habit of voting together and start getting confidence in their leadership, then it does have a tendency to last, and it did last--it lasted through eight years.

B: Is the right phrase "confidence in their leadership," or a fear of their leadership?

R: Confidence.

B: Again, there has been a lot of talk about the Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson as a driver.

R: Well, he was a driver. But you have to understand the Senate. The Majority Leader of the Senate has no authority, really. The rules, the customs, the traditions of the Senate, only give him one advantage over any other Senator; and that is, if two Senators stand up simultaneously and seek recognition and he is one of them, the chair will always recognize the Majority Leader. But in terms of the structure of the Senate, a Majority Leader only has the power that he can exert as an individual. The two preceding Majority Leaders had no control whatsoever over the majority--neither Senator [Ernest W.] McFarland [D. Ariz.] nor Senator [Scott W.] Lucas [D. Ill.], both of whom

are extremely fine men and both of whom were very able men, but they were never able to pull together the Senate Democrats--they were never able to get these cohesive votes. They didn't work at it the way Senator Johnson did; they didn't have his ability at politicking.

Basically a Senate Majority Leader inspires confidence by presenting positions and talking people into positions that do give them a certain cohesion; and also positions that permit them to vote the way they feel they ought to vote without being cut up at home--this is all important. Most Senate leaders run into trouble because they expect the members of the Senate to commit hara-kiri in a series of votes. Well, hara-kiri is not a popular sport in the United States; even in Japan it was restricted to a relatively limited class. You look into the history of the United States Senate, or at least the history since about 1920--up to 1920, the Senate leaders did have a certain amount of power, or a certain amount of authority over the other Senators, because Senators were selected by state legislatures rather than by the vote of the people. And since they were selected by state legislatures, there were certain party controls that you could exercise. But once the direct election of Senators was established, that was the end of any kind of authoritarian or dictatorial control over the Senate. Joe Robinson had some in the early days of the New Deal when most Senators were afraid to be known as opposing Franklin D. Roosevelt, but even then it was a limited thing.

B: Then leadership in the Senate does not necessarily involve trading off--log rolling?

R: Oh of course it involved log rolling; all legislation involves log rolling. The only thing wrong with log rolling is that has acquired a pejorative connotation, but log rolling is the essence of the Democratic process in the Senate.

After all, a Senator has one vote; that one vote has to somehow be converted into fifty-one votes. Now that doesn't mean that the man goes around and trades things that he shouldn't, but it does mean that if one Senator has a pet project in his own state, he knows that Senators from other states are not going to look upon it kindly unless he has some consideration for their problems too. You'll always have log rolling in the Senate. And there's really nothing wrong with it because otherwise you would never get a number of very worthwhile individual projects established.

B: From the leadership point of view, then, I guess the key here is knowing what interests the various Senators have.

R: Yes. The essence of leadership in the Senate is to understand the problems of the other ninety-nine men. This is the only reason for Senator Russell's tremendous influence in the Senate. There are I don't know how many generations of Senators that have had the shock of going to Senator Russell and asking for his advice and being told, "Well, if I were from your state, Senator, I would," and then hearing an analysis of their state that they wished they had been able to make during the campaign. It has been several years since I've seen Senator Russell, but Senator Russell was a man who could tell you more about New Jersey than any New Jersey Senators could; more about New York than the New York Senators could--I even heard him do that in Europe at a NATO parliamentary conference where he started describing internal politics to the various countries; and inside of about fifteen or twenty minutes, it developed that he was much more familiar with the internal politics of the European countries than the State Department specialists that were there to brief us. The man had a remarkable mind. And this knowledge of the problems is what gives power in the Senate.

B: Did Senator Johnson have that kind of facility?

R: Yes.

B: Speaking of Senator Russell--again, Mr. Johnson is also referred to as a protege of Senator Russell and a few others--is that a correct analysis of the relationship?

R: You would run into a lot of semantic problems there. It was a very close relationship between Senator Russell and Senator Johnson; and unquestionably Senator Russell's influence was major in Senator Johnson becoming the Democratic Whip in 1950. However, when you say protege, I don't know. He had Senator Russell's strong support, but he also had Senator [John O.] Pastore's [D. R.I.] strong support; he had Senator [A. S. Mike] Monroney's [D. Okla.] strong support; he had very strong support from Senator [Warren] Magnuson [D. Wash.]. No, I wouldn't really use the word protege. Of course there was a period when Senator Johnson first came into the Senate as a junior Senator; and during that period the older and senior Senators were extremely influential. But beyond a certain point, no, I don't think it's a correct statement.

B: What was the relationship between Mr. [Sam] Rayburn in the House and Senator Johnson?

R: That was virtually a father and son relationship--an extremely close relationship; and during the years that I have known Senator Johnson, I would say he had more respect--in fact, it was almost awe and reverence--for Sam Rayburn than any other man. The only other person I've ever even heard him discuss in the same terms was Alvin Wirtz. But I think Rayburn was almost a father substitute, and in some respects he treated Senator Johnson something like a son too, occasionally a wayward son. There was no doubt whatsoever in my mind that it was Speaker Rayburn who precipitated Johnson into the fight against

Shivers in 1956 when he went down and contested for the Democratic delegation to the national convention. The Senator was wavering back and forth on the proposition, and it was very obvious in my mind that the Speaker became impatient with him one day, and he just made a public announcement that he was going to back Lyndon Johnson for favorite son candidate from Texas; well that was the end of any more nonsense about it.

B: In those Senate years, if this is the right way to phrase the question, who were the Senators--the contemporary Senators whom Mr. Johnson most respected?

R: Quite a wide variety. Russell; [Walter] George [D. Ga.]; [Robert A.] Taft [R. Ohio]; [John O.] Pastore [D. R.I.]; [Hubert H.] Humphrey [D. Minn.]; [Burnet R.] Maybank [D. S.C.]; [John C.] Stennis [D. Miss.]; [H. Styles] Bridges [R. N.H.]; [Eugene D.] Millikin [R. Colo.]. There would be a number of others, but I'd say those would be the ones he most respected. When you just put it solely on the basis of respect--

B: Is there some other basis that would be more appropriate?

R: Well, Millikin, Russell, [Carl] Hayden [D. Ariz.]--I'd say Millikin, Hayden, George--there was a little awe there.

B: That's a wide enough range in party and ideology to indicate that the basis of judgment is something other than that?

R: Well, the basis of judgment would have been something other than that. The President has never been overly enamored of ideology. These were men that he respected because of their ability in some instances; because of what they wanted to do in other instances. And when I place--I think I finally got it down to Millikin, Russell, and Hayden; and there thinking of this peculiar quality, you may almost call it awesomeness--those were rather awesome men, in my own judgment Senator Millikin had absolutely the finest mind that I have

met in my entire life--the finest mind in any walk of life. He was a man who would have been completely at home teaching a graduate course of philosophy in the university; arguing a case before the Supreme Court; or cutting up votes in the first ward of Chicago. The man was really tremendous--one of the most towering but least noticed figures that have ever appeared on the American scene, simply because he was rather contemptuous of publicity--he really didn't care what other people thought of him.

Russell has very much the same quality, a man of not only a fine mind, but of an encyclopedic knowledge. And Carl Hayden was really the master craftsman of legislative political organization. Hayden's exploits on the Hill were legendary--he could get a $90,000,000 bill through the consent calendar in about one minute flat; whereas if some other poor devil came up with a bill that cost $11,000, he'd have to get up and spend twenty minutes explaining why he was $6,000 over the $5,000 limit.

B: Did Senator Johnson have any particular dislikes among the other Senators?

R: That's a hard thing to pin down.

B: Perhaps I may have phrased it--did he bother to dislike anybody, or--?

R: Oh yes, all the time. Almost all of them got disliked at one time or another. But the problem is that in stating it, he would of course single out the most cantankerous Senators for any opprobrium that he had to deliver which was frequent.

B: In that sense, does cantankerous mean those that didn't go along with the leadership?

R: Yes, or who would oppose just to raise hell. And yet I've never gotten over a subjective feeling that some of his real favorites may have been the most cantankerous. I think he was terribly fond of Wayne Morse [D. Ore.]. Now

Morse was a trouble maker in any sense of the word. Morse would frequently make trouble just for the sake of the trouble--in fact, he could be speaking for six hours and ripping up the carpets and tearing up the furniture and smashing the crockery, and you wouldn't have the faintest idea what it was all about. And Paul Douglas [D. Ill.] was another example.

I think part of this is that if the President does have an ideology. it's a populist ideology. I think that in my view he represents the culmination of the whole populist trend in the United States; and the populists were trouble makers. And most of the men were basically populists, not necessarily the same ideology a man like--It would be difficult to equate Paul Douglas with Sockless Joe Simpson, or Tom-Tom Heflin, or something like that; but nevertheless there was a certain psychological affinity. And time after time, I suspected that some of those Senators who most drew his wrath were Senators he really liked.

B: While we're still talking about the Senate years, one question that occurs and reoccurs, and I suppose will continue to, is the relationship of Bobby Baker to Senator, then later President Johnson. You of course were working with Bobby Baker in those days.

R: Oh, yes, I knew Bobby quite well.

B: Did you and he get along?

R: We got along. Strangely enough, I liked Bobby after he got into trouble more than I liked him before he got into trouble.

B: Why is that?

R: I got to like him after he got into trouble because Bobby showed some genuine guts, and really took it on the chin smiling; and I developed a certain admiration for that. Before he got into trouble though, I like almost everyone else

around the Senate, had become a little weary of his posing and of his deviousness. Bobby was very devious. Strangely enough there are some people who like to look crooked when they aren't. And Bobby was one of those characters. He would always do the simplest thing in such a way to make it look like a deep dark plot that had been hatched in a back room with thousands of dollars laid on the table, and split up a number of different ways. I think that Bobby was terribly young and had the impression that this was being a big shot. And I don't believe they should bring some of these kids into the Senate as early as they do when they're 14-15 years old, around all this rather sophisticated hard-nosed bare-knuckle talk. And Bobby's whole life had been the Senate.

B: You mean since he was a page there and so on?

R: Yes. I never knew, and I don't to this day, the extent to which Bobby was guilty of the things with which he was charged; and the extent to which a lot of it was merely Bobby talking big, as the saying goes, and Bobby always talked big. He never wanted to talk in terms of less than $100,000. And I know of my own knowledge that frequently that $100,000 wasn't there; wasn't anywhere near the place. Then Bobby became a bit arrogant.

B: The question that arises, at least from an outsider's point of view, is something like this: If Bobby Baker was doing the kind of thing that he was later charged with, how could it go on without it coming to the attention of Johnson and the Senate generally, and something being done about it there?

R: If you take a look at the charges, you'll find that all of the activities except one were activities which took place after Johnson had become Vice President; and that one was a relatively minor thing--it had something to do with that Magic Corporation. And I don't think that Bobby was engaged in any of these activities during that period. I've heard some of Bobby's closest

friends express the opinion that if Johnson had continued as Majority Leader, that Bobby would never have gotten into trouble--the theory being that Johnson kept Bobby so busy that he didn't have enough time to get into trouble. But Mike Mansfield had a somewhat different concept of the leadership than Johnson did, and Mike left Bobby with time on his hands. But if you look into those charges, you'll find that every single one of them involves activity in '61, '62, '63, along in there. And there may be some rationale to that.

B: There was no connection between Bobby Baker and Mr. Johnson during those years of the Vice Presidency?

R: Not enough that--No, there was very little. You see, the Vice President is in a very peculiar position to the Senate--he's not an officer of the Senate by the Senate's reckoning. He's somebody the Constitution has stuck there to preside. But the secretary for the majority works for the Majority Leader--there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. And the secretary for the minority works for the Minority Leader. And while I don't know if the Vice President heard the rumors--I certainly heard them and was rather disturbed about them, but nevertheless, he was not under a day-to-day supervision. Bobby was very much on his own; and during those three years he spent a lot more of his time with Senator [Robert S.] Kerr [D. Okla.] than anyone else.

B: What did Mr. Johnson think in those years in the Senate of Bobby Baker's methodology that you've just described--almost deviousness for the sake of deviousness?

R: Oh I doubt if he even noticed it because Bobby would be very careful around Senators, be quite respectful and quite polite, his hair quite well combed, and be strictly yes sir, no sir, sorry sir, type of person. This is the sort of thing you would only notice if you were a staff person and had to put up

with it. And Bobby of course--Bobby as secretary of the majority was a tremendously efficient man; Bobby could count votes better than anyone else except Johnson.

B: Is there some question of ethics involved here? If you as a staff member noticed this kind of thing either in the Senate or later on while Mr. Johnson was Vice President, would you feel that you could or should bring it to Mr. Johnson's attention?

R: I think if I'd come across any shady dealings while he was the Majority Leader, I would have brought it to his attention; but I didn't come across any--all I came across were these things that I found irritating and annoying. And during the period when the President was Vice President, my contacts were very peripheral--all I really heard was gossip, and I don't like to re-tell gossip.

B: Is there anything else about the years in the Senate that stand out before we move on to Texas politics? Anything that you think should be recorded in this kind of project?

R: Oh hundreds of things, but they'll just have to wait. Any questions that pop into your mind--I mean, a project of this kind has to have some structuring.

B: It does. I know it's unfair to say just start talking.

To move on into Texas politics where your involvement begins there in 1952, does that mean with the 1952 presidential election?

R: Yes.

B: And this question of Governor Shivers and his support--of what turned out not to be his support of the Democratic ticket--were you involved in all of that?

R: Yes.

B: Was Mr. Johnson involved in any way in that prior to the convention that year?

R: Oh yes. Well, not prior to the convention, no.

B: The deal appears to be--there seems to have been a promise extracted by Mr. Rayburn from Governor Shivers that he would go to the convention and be seated and would support the national ticket; and then this promise was reneged on.

R: That's my assumption. I really don't know, but I believe that's what actually happened. I wasn't involved in any of those particular negotiations. I do know that after the convention Shivers made this special trip to Springfield, I think it was, for his discussion with Adlai Stevenson; and at this point I come into it--I know pretty well what happened there.

B: Can you just take it from there and describe it?

R: Yes. Both Senator Johnson and Speaker Rayburn had given Stevenson a response to the question about the tidelands, a response which wouldn't have been particularly helpful to him in Texas, but it would have at least have preserved his position in Texas.

B: You mean they had given Adlai Stevenson something to tell Shivers to try to keep him in the party?

R: Not to try to keep him in the party, but to make it impossible for him to duck out on his promise; it was quite clear to all of us that Shivers was going to Springfield for one reason and one reason only. And that was to provoke Adlai Stevenson into a reaction that would make it possible for Shivers to come out for Eisenhower. And none of us were trying to talk Stevenson into taking a stand on tidelands that was contrary to whatever principal position he had, but we did want him to phrase it in such a way that Shivers would not be able to come home and say, "I just can't stand this; this man is taking away the sacred heritage of Texas. I'm for Ike!"

B: Do you recall how that phraseology was suggested?

R: No, it has been too many years. And we all thought Stevenson would do that, but apparently Shivers got tough and aroused Stevenson's combative masculine instincts; and Stevenson made what I think was a major blunder in not giving Shivers what in effect was a noncommittal answer, and that was the ball game.

B: What was Senator Johnson's reaction to the Shivers' announcement that he was going to support Eisenhower?

R: It was what he expected after Stevenson gave him that answer.

B: Did this put Senator Johnson in any kind of--Well, obviously it put him in an awkward position in relation to Texas politics, but--

R: Oh! It put him in an extremely difficult position. He was up for reelection in 1954. The emotion in Texas over the tidelands issue was incredible! It seems strange to me that--it's a strange commentary on human affairs for people to get so terribly excited over ten-and-a-half miles of salt water, but they did! It was all mixed up with Sam Houston and the Treaty Oak. And it really took tremendous courage to be for Adlai Stevenson in Texas that year, because there was just this overwhelming pro-Eisenhower sentiment.

B: Was civil rights mixed up in it too?

R: No. Civil rights wasn't--It was on the whole, I would say, if you took a plebiscite of Texas, you'd get a majority vote against civil rights; but it wasn't the burning issue in Texas that it was in Mississippi or Louisiana, except right along the Texas border in East Texas. But Stevenson could have taken any position on civil rights--that wouldn't have changed the attitude--it was the tidelands itself. The average Texan interpreted the northern position on tidelands as being one of taking money away from his schools, and the education of his children was at stake, and he reacted violently.

And consequently, it took genuine courage of a very high order to support Stevenson that year. Virtually every leading politician in Texas either came out for Eisenhower, or kept his mouth shut on it--most of the Congressional delegation kept their mouths shut. And I think about the only two top politicians that supported Stevenson were Rayburn and Johnson.

B: Is it fair to say though that even their support was not as enthusiastic as it might otherwise have been?

R: No.

(interruption)

B: This is the end of the first tape of the Reedy interview.

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE REEDY (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

December 12, 1968

B: This is the second tape with George Reedy.

R: Well, enthusiasm had nothing to do with it. There wasn't any money; there wasn't any help available.

B: This was because Shivers had taken over the machinery?

R: No. It was because of the tremendous emotional impact that the Eisenhower campaign had in Texas. It was just unbelievable, and the sources of money that were normally available just dried up completely; and they weren't dried up because of Shivers, because several of those sources were much bigger than Shivers--wouldn't care about him one way or the other. But men that had been reliable Democrats for many years just went over to Eisenhower in droves. It took courage merely for a private citizen walking down the street to remark to somebody that he was for Stevenson.

B: It was about this time that the Democratic organizing committee--later the Democratic Advisory Council--was formed as a party loyalist group in Texas. Did Mr. Johnson have anything to do with the formation of that?

R: No. I'm not certain of the exact chronology there. During the particular time there wasn't really a loyalist organization; there were individuals in certain areas who kept the flag flying--people like Adrian Spears and Bill Kittrell, and very few of the Texas officials. And the only Texas official that I'm absolutely positive supported Stevenson was Johnny White, the agriculture commissioner, and Homer Thornberry, the Congressman from the

Austin area. The other Congressmen generally kept their mouths shut; there may have been some exceptions I'm not aware of. And the actual organization of the so-called loyalist group which eventually became not just a loyalist group, but became a faction with a definite political outlook--that didn't come along until later.

B: I was thinking--there seems to be--The matter of Texas politics gets pretty baffling.

R: It's very intricate.

B: But there seems to be this organization that was formed by people like Byron Skelton, the Democratic Advisory Council, which apparently was a loyalist group; and out of that in turn there later grew the Democrats of Texas which was a liberal faction.

R: I remember the Democrats of Texas--I don't recall the Democratic advisory group or the Democratic organizational committee. Byron Skelton, of course, was one of the few fairly prominent people--I don't even know if he was an office holder at the time, I don't think he was--but he was one of the few fairly prominent people that did stand for Stevenson.

B: How long did it take Texas politics to settle down after all of that?

R: About four years. Texas politics really hasn't settled down yet.

B: I guess that's true.

R: You have to realize though that there had been quite a bit of history before 1952. You've had the old story of the Texas Regulars, and a number of extreme right wing groups becoming more and more dissatisfied with the Democratic party, which first centered to some extent around Jack [John Nance] Garner. This was a long developing process; you can't pin it all on the 1952 election.

B: What effect did all of this have on Mr. Johnson's running for re-election in 1954?

R: It could have had a very serious effect. Actually he won the 1954 election in 1953.

B: By what way?

R: Early in the fall of 1953, you had more people getting set to run against Lyndon Johnson for the Senate than you had voters in the average Texas precinct.

B: These were nominal Democrats getting ready to run in the primary against him?

R: Not only nominal Democrats, but in some cases Democrats that had kept their mouths shut in '52 and had managed to escape. There was even some speculation that Shivers might run against him. They were talking about John Ben Sheppard. There was some discussion of Ben Ramsey, who had not supported Eisenhower in '52. But there was quite a bit of thought that Johnson would be meat in '54; and what we did was to stage a whirlwind tour of Texas in 1953--it was absolutely breathtaking. In about two-and-a-half months he visited every major city. We estimated--and the estimate is not an exaggeration--we estimated that he shook about 225,000 hands; he was making two or three speeches a day; he was hitting big towns, small towns, cities, villages, hamlets; he went through East Texas cafes drinking coffee with people; he hit Amarillo; he hit Lufkin; he hit Tyler; he hit just everything you could think of. And at the end of that tour, nobody wanted to run against him.

B: Was it just plain old courthouse campaigning?

R: Yes. And very effective.

B: Was he doing anything at the time in Congress to shore up his Texas support?

R: Well of course Congress was out of session at that point.

B: Again, a question that always arises in this regard--the relationship between Mr. Johnson and where the money is, the oil and gas interests. Was this involved too?

R: Unfortunately there weren't any oil and gas issues at that time except tidelands. The natural gas bill didn't become an issue until a couple of years later. No, there were no particularly Texas issues that year, except the Tidelands Bill and he was for that anyway.

B: This took care of all the presumed opposition except Dudley Daugherty?

R: Yes.

B: And I gather from your smile that that was not much opposition?

R: It's the sort of thing you dream and pray and hope will happen. That was--well grotesque is the only word that can be applied to it.

B: That because of Mr. Daugherty's character?

R: He was a totally inexperienced man. He had absolutely no concepts of campaigning; no concept of politics. He was impelled only by an extreme right wing ideology--a rather decent man, and a member of a very good South Texas family that's highly respected. But he was immediately surrounded by a group of very inadequate hangers-on who were quite happy to have somebody of that kind with a bankroll putting them on the payroll for a few months. He did such absolutely--again, grotesque is the only word I can use, going to New York and spending an evening in a night club with Igor Cassini, and Igor Cassini interviewed him on his senatorial campaign; and the interview was broadcast all over Texas. I think he would have been better off, even being interviewed by Adlai Stevenson than Igor Cassini, because Cassini was not precisely a man guaranteed to appeal to the hearts of Texans.

Johnson didn't make a single speech in Texas during that whole campaign, with the exception of one speaking date that he made somewhere on the Gulf Coast--I've forgotten where--at a Texas bottlers' convention. And he was very careful in that speech not to mention the campaign. We never mentioned Dudley

Daugherty's name; did not put out any campaign literature, that is, anything labeled Johnson for Senate campaign; only took out one ad--an ad that in Texas the final week of the campaign, you always take out one ad in all of the weekly papers; that's expected of you. I think our total campaign expense consisted of that ad, plus a tape recorder that we bought to record one of Daugherty's talkathons--he staged a talkathon in Houston. After that talkathon, what few votes he had evaporated.

B: So the re-election then was no problem after the earlier tour you had talked about?

R: No, none whatsoever. You see, in Texas the filing date is very early in the spring. And this tour had such a tremendous impact that no one wanted to file; I really think that if the filing date had been later we might have had some formidable opposition, but the filing date was too close to this tour.

B: Whom do you think might have gotten in?

R: Very hard to tell, but I think the most ambitious man at that point was John Ben Sheppard, who since has become a very strong friend and supporter of Lyndon Johnson. He was the Attorney General of Texas.

B: That brings us up to 1956 then. You've already mentioned this briefly awhile back--something about Senator Johnson being uncertain as to which way he was going to go and Sam Rayburn--?

R: No, not uncertain as to which way he was going to go--there was no question about that as to where he would stand. The real question was whether he would lead the opposition to Shivers. There was no doubt whatsoever in anyone's mind that Shivers had the same intentions in '56 that he had in '52--he was going to try to organize the state convention, take a delegation to Chicago, stage a dramatic walkout, and go on back to Texas and campaign for Dwight D.

Eisenhower again. And the real problem was how you could combat that. And a number of people in Texas wanted Johnson to lead the opposition to Shivers; there was only one way you could do that at all, and that was to put Johnson up as a favorite son candidate, and he was uncertain as to the wisdom of that course.

B: Why?

R: Because he thought that if he got defeated that it might actually build Shivers' strength at a time when Shivers was beginning to slip. Now the Texas primary system--there have been some changes in it since then--but the Texas primary situation, not the primary election but the selection of delegates to the state convention, was--oh, God, it was a terrible thing! It almost guaranteed a governor control of the convention of the state, and really to take on a governor in one of those convention fights was almost fool-hardy.

B: This would be the convention there in the spring before the--

R: Right. The so-called presidential convention. But you see, there were actually three series of conventions: First, you had the precinct conventions; the precinct conventions selected delegates to the county conventions, which in turn selected delegates to the state convention. Consequently, the state convention was settled back in the precincts. Now the precincts were quite a set-up. In fact I think that a small group of dedicated Communists could very easily get into that thing one day and take over the whole party structure in Texas, because--again, I don't know how it is now, they've made some changes since then, but you had to find these precinct conventions to begin with--and finding them could be a real job; they might be in somebody's back kitchen; they might be in a basement; they might be in a loft. There was a requirement for publishing, but no requirement that the announcement of the precinct convention

be published anywhere the people would read it. Secondly, all votes in the precinct convention were taken by a show of hands. No matter what happened, Allan Shivers was going to be the governor of the State at least until the following January. Now the governor of Texas has some genuine economic powers; his insurance commissioner could have some heart to heart talks with insurance salesmen and insurance agents. You had to stand up in these precinct conventions and register yourself with everybody looking down your throat and with possible reprisals afterwards. There were 5,000 of these things--5,000 conventions; and a man in a central point in Austin with his fingers on the political machinery in the state anyway would be in a far better position to control those 5,000 conventions than would a Congressional-type, who after all is somewhat removed from the basic political structure of Texas.

B: Did you attempt to do anything at the precinct level?

R: Oh yes. And very effectively too. What really happened is that a rather weird alliance was formed between our people and I don't know what they called themselves at that point--the Democrats of Texas, but generally the Kathleen Voight-[Mrs.] Frankie Randolph-Jerry Holleman group--the labor-liberal coalition. Now the labor-liberal coalition had done a tremendous amount of precinct work, and had really developed a highly sophisticated machinery. They didn't have much of a popular following in Texas, but machinery they did have. And really I think the outcome was a combination of the machinery of the labor-liberal coalition and Senator Johnson's popular following.

One of the factors that had contributed to it and one which I don't think has been sufficiently acknowledged in most of the literature covering that period was the tremendous impact of a speech that Johnson made at Whitney in 1955, the fall of 1955 following the heart attack. It was the only major

speech that he made that fall in Texas; he only made two speeches--one up at Dallas introducing Sam Rayburn, and then this big speech at Whitney. And that was an experience that I'll never forget; that's where he laid down a thirteen-point program for the Democratic party, which included a number of things--they were unhappy with it in the North because he included either a resolution of the tidelands issue or the natural gas bill, I've forgotten which one now. But he also had a number of things in it like poll taxes, and it was really a very good national program. And about that point, a large number of Texans had awakened to the fact that Shivers had more or less led them into a blind alley; that it's one thing for the average citizen to go out to vote for a Republican or for a Democrat, but when your official state Democratic machinery becomes converted to a Republican vehicle, then there is something badly wrong and the state is headed for trouble. The response to that speech in Whitney was intense. The people that were there reacted--it was virtually a mass orgasm, the same type of--People walked out of that armory with their eyes glazed as though they had just seen a vision of the Coming. And this had given Johnson, I think, perhaps the strongest and most emotional popular following that he ever had in his whole career.

B: May I interrupt here to ask if by any chance you were one of the authors of that speech?

R: Oh yes, I wrote it. Well, with help. I'm not trying to plug the speech, but it is a fact that this had a--It spread through the state, and it somehow crystallized the feelings that many Texans had, who themselves had voted for Eisenhower, but who on reflection came to the conclusion that it was one thing to vote for Eisenhower, and it was another thing to convert the Democratic organization into a vehicle for the Republican campaign. And the thing hit

exactly right. Of course, there was a tremendous emotional feeling because he had so narrowly escaped death during the heart attack in the summer of 1955. But it was this combination, I think, of Johnson's really very high popularity in the state in 1956 plus this extremely careful precinct organization that had been worked out by the labor-liberal coalition, and primarily by Kathleen Voight, a woman who had immense organizational ability, that carried the spring contest.

B: You mentioned that this was a coalition between the Johnson group and the labor-liberal group. Is there an overt or covert deal involved; are there any terms to the coalition?

R: No. And the coalition broke up as soon as it was over. In fact, it broke up at the state convention.

B: I was going to say--there was the argument at the state convention over the appointment of the national committeewoman.

R: Yes.

B: That would apparently be involved in this.

R: Yes. The state convention broke up in quite a bit of bitterness. And I would have had difficulty unraveling the threads at the time. Now in retrospect and with the years that have passed, I find it even more difficult. There was a general understanding which I myself thought was rather firm that we would divide up the national committeeman and the national committeewoman. And they named Byron Skelton, who was not precisely a member of the labor-liberal coalition, but leaned much more toward them than he leaned toward us; the strange part of it is that in later years Byron Skelton became a very firm supporter of Lyndon Johnson and quite a gulf developed between him and the labor-liberal coalition.

When Skelton was selected as the committeeman, it was generally considered that we would name the committeewoman, and our plans were Mrs. [Lloyd] Bentsen. However, the convention became very messy--quite a few delegates left. You know, the Texas state convention only lasts one day.

B: The labor-liberal group objected to Mrs. Bentsen, I believe, on the grounds they said her husband had supported Eisenhower, or something to that effect?

R: They were very conservative. I don't know whether Lloyd had actually supported Eisenhower or not; perhaps he did--that I just don't know. But I know Johnson's feeling, which I think was absolutely correct, was that you had to have some balance, and that some gesture had to be made to the more conservative elements of the party. But whatever happened, whatever the rights or wrongs of that may be, there was a shift in the composition of the convention during the day, and a strong suspicion that the convention was stacked. Now whether it was or not, I long ago gave up arguing about what happened at state conventions.

B: You mean that the labor-liberal group suspected that Johnson--

R: No, the other way around.

B: The Johnson people suspected the liberal-labor group had stacked it?

R: Yes. And the credentials were issued in the convention hall. Well obviously something happened because we did lose control of the convention in the late afternoon. And it broke up with a great deal of bitterness.

B: It ended up with Mrs. Randolph being--

R: Yes, Frankie Randolph, who disliked Senator Johnson tremendously.

B: Incidentally, while we're on that, do you know what's involved there? It appears to be more than just ideological.

R: Oh no. Mrs. Randolph is a somewhat difficult woman. You'll find a whole series of breaks--she and Kathleen Voight, for instance, were at daggers points after about a year. Have you ever talked to Mrs. Randolph?

B: I haven't. She is on our list of interviewees for the project.

R: You ought to try it some time. You'll find your conversation will explain.

B: Even understanding that, you did end up at that convention with a loyal delegation?

R: Yes, which had been the basic objective of the whole thing.

B: And with Lyndon Johnson as the favorite son candidate?

R: Yes.

B: Another question arises in that connection. As you've indicated, one of the motives here--if not the motive--is to hold the state party together and hold it for the national party.

R: Right.

B: Is there any indication at that stage that Mr. Johnson has real presidential ambitions?

R: No. None whatsoever.

B: Or vice presidential ambitions?

R: None.

B: Then, as I recall, the national convention itself that year didn't involve too many difficulties with committee affairs?

R: No, there were no problems with the national convention at all. The problems were all in the spring convention and in the fall convention--the so-called Governor's Convention. In that one--I believe it was held in San Antonio that year, was it San Antonio or was it Fort Worth--the spring convention was held in Austin--I recall that. Well, it's immaterial.

B: This is the fall Governor's Convention when new state party leadership is selected?

R: Right.

B: Did anything special go on there?

R: I'm trying to remember now whether that convention was held in Fort Worth or was held in San Antonio.

B: There was a convention in Fort Worth which ended up with kicking out a few delegations, and the Fort Worth delegation turning off the lights. I have a vague idea that was earlier than this.

R: Well, it's immaterial. But the Fort Worth convention developed a genuine split--an irreparable split between the labor-liberal coalition and the rest of the party.

B: This is when the DOT sort of went off on their own for awhile then?

R: Yes. And it was followed by tremendous recriminations. And if it were held in Fort Worth, it became the subject of tremendous mystique--a labor-liberal mythology that to this day holds. The famous story of Frankie Randolph and the cowbarn, and meeting under the armed guns of guards and that sort of nonsense, all of which--

B: Which story is that? I don't believe I've heard that.

R: They both refer to the Fort Worth convention. What I can't recall is whether the Fort Worth convention is the one in the fall of '56, or whether it was held at a later date. But because it was held in Fort Worth, it was held out in the stockyards. And one of the exhibition halls had been set up as a soft drink, coffee, sandwich place, as you do normally in that situation. Now Frankie Randolph refused to come into the convention unless she could come in as a member of the Houston delegation, and there was a fight over the seating of the Houston delegation. And she was told she could come in as national committeewoman, but not as a member of the delegation--the delegation hadn't been seated. And so she stayed in this coffee shop place, and refused to enter the convention hall.

And then at the same time, they did something that was customary at Texas conventions which is to have these sheriff posses--you know, the sheriff possee in Mineral Wells--there are two or three of them around the state. What they are primarily is a sentimental gesture to the past. Usually, they're middle-aged businessmen who buy a very fine horse--they like to have their horses all palominos, or all black horses, or all white horses--and they dress up in cowboy costumes--

B: They appear in parades and things like that.

R: They appear in parades and things like that, and usually have big toy pistols at their hips. And it's rather customary at Texas state conventions to use some sheriffs' posse for ushering and what have you. And after the convention was over, part of the labor-liberal myth was that Frankie Randolph had been forced to stay in this cowbarn, and you had the picture of this rather gentle woman up to her hips in cow dung and what have you. And all of these dentists and doctors and lawyers and what have you as a Texas Gestapo intimidating the delegates. I said it was part of mythology, it's rather an interesting thing to trace back. The only thing that's really important though is that in the fall a very deep gulf between the Texas loyalists and the rest of the party became quite apparent, and wasn't at all helpful in the election following.

B: I've heard a story--I hope this doesn't embarrass you--

R: Nothing embarrasses me.

B: About an altercation that you got into with Judge [Jim] Sewell of Corsicana that--

R: That was in Dallas. The famous ear-biting story?

B: The ear-biting story.

R: It happened. I've forgotten when--it was at a convention in Dallas. I don't

know what got into the old judge. All of a sudden he got up and started to beat me over the head with a cane--

B: Was this at a large meeting or just a small--

R: No, there were four or five people in the room.

B: Was this somehow or other based on the Loyalist-DOT split?

R: Yes.

B: The judge, I believe, is associated with the labor group?

R: With the liberal-labor group.

B: Did he just up and start hitting at you with a cane?

R: Yes. It was obvious that everybody had had too much to drink, and he had had more to drink than anybody else. The first thing I knew he had his teeth in my ear that far. There was no real reason for it, because I hadn't even been arguing with him at that point.

B: Did somebody have to break it up?

R: I broke it up myself.

B: Actually Judge Sewell is a fairly elderly man, and he's blind, isn't he?

R: Yes. Not totally blind, but quite blind. And I didn't quite know how to handle it. You know, I didn't want to do any damage to a gentleman that age whom I rather liked. But he just all of a sudden went berserk.

B: What was Mr. Johnson's reaction to this?

R: I didn't let him know about it until the next evening because we had some speaking he had to do in Fort Worth the next day; so at the end of the day, I just slipped him a note; and he was rather amused by it, as I was for that matter by then. I mean, after all how many people have been bitten in the ear?

B: Did you have to have a rabies shot or anything?

R: No, they gave me a tetanus shot.

B: Tetanus, that's it. Did you and Judge Sewell get back on friendly terms afterwards?

R: I haven't seen him since then.

B: Anything else in Texas politics there in the late '50's that ought to be recorded before we get up to the events of 1960?

R: Not really. After '56, the thing began to simmer down. Because the one thing that had happened even though the state was carried by Eisenhower in '56, it was rather obviously not the result of the efforts of Allan Shivers and the conservatives--they were just riding the tide. Shivers himself was decisively defeated, and the ultra-conservatives were decisively defeated. The liberal-loyalists started getting into what has always been the curse of liberal politics--a continual splitting and splitting and splitting--and it became more and more fractionalized. And Texas politics assumed somewhat more middle-of-the-road atmosphere.

B: Actually, the DOT group seems to have died out by now; you don't hear much of it--

R: Oh as a group, it has. About all that's really left is the Texas Observer and Frankie Randolph. She became sort of a king of the mountain, the last one left standing.

B: Does Lyndon Johnson take the kind of treatment he gets from the Texas Observer with some equanimity, or does it bother him?

R: No, it has always been very bothersome to him and very annoying, because I think he feels this shouldn't be. He understands the criticism from the extreme right wing conservatives, and I don't think that bothers him too much because he feels that they have a proper basis for criticizing him; but I think criticism from the liberals has always hurt him.

B: You mean he feels that he is a liberal who can get things done, and that they should not be criticizing him for--

R: Right. He feels that he has done more for liberalism than anyone else in the history of Texas. And to him it has always been a little incomprehensible.

B: Does that still exist, that feeling on his part?

R: I think so.

B: This brings us up then to the events leading up to 1960. Do you recall when it first became apparent that Mr. Johnson was going to try for the presidential nomination?

R: It didn't become apparent until he left for the Los Angeles convention. That was a very confused period, extremely confused, in which I believe he was a man badly torn. A narration of the actual events is of little help, because they're so terribly contradictory. My very strong impression--my intuitive judgment--is that he really did not want to make the race; but that the events of all of the preceding years had led him to a position where he really couldn't say no. There was a very large Lyndon Johnson following throughout the country; most of the strength in the South, but also Congressional strength which doesn't mean too much perhaps in the state party conventions or in state primaries, but which nevertheless was the atmosphere in which he moved.

B: It has been said that he overemphasized his popular strength by overemphasizing the strength in Congress.

R: No, I think he was rather realistic about it. I think that this is one of the reasons that he was so reluctant to enter the thing at all. And I don't believe that he ever had any real illusions about his strength at the national conventions. Really in retrospect I believe that if in 1958 and 1959 he had gone out into the country and made a vigorous determined effort to build up a following,

I think he could have entered the Los Angeles convention really as a formidable contender and quite possibly have gotten the nomination.

B: That brings up the question of the primaries that spring. Did your staff group ever discuss the question of his answering the presidential primaries?

R: Yes. We discussed it. But he would never discuss it, and it was quite obvious that he wasn't going to do it.

B: You mean that it was obvious there was no use recommending that he do it?

R: Yes, it would have been a total waste of time. And his mood was very changeable. There was a sort of a pattern of strong opposition on his part to making any presidential moves whatsoever, but then interspersed with acquiescence in other people making the moves. But it was never more than acquiescence in other people making the moves.

B: Would Mr. Rayburn be one of the major other people?

R: Yes, but there were a number of factors. The whole thing goes through my mind now in a kaleidoscopic fashion. I can recall one discussion that he had, and I don't even remember who was in on the discussion except Irv Hoff (former assistant to Senator Ferguson); there were two or three other people people there, and at this late date I cannot recall who they were. This was probably the closest that we came to an actual overt move in which it was finally decided that it would be worthwhile to send Irv Hoff on a swing through the West to determine whether there was any strength or any basis for a campaign. And this was obviously a move in which the Senator acquiesced.

B: Mr. Johnson was in on these discussions?

R: No, he was not in on the discussion.

B: He just acquiesced--

R: But a recommendation was made to him--I was one of those that made the recommendation--that Irv Hoff would go on this trip and come back and report to us as to whether there was a real possibility. Irv did make the trip.

B: This was to canvass delegate strength?

R: Yes. Well, there wasn't any delegate strength to canvass at that particular point, because the delegates had not been selected. It was to test whether there was sufficient strength to give us a fighting chance for the delegates. Hoff made the swing, and Hoff came back and reported that there was a possibility of assembling some genuine support from the Western states. I think that's the one clearcut thing that I can recall in which he permitted a move to be made that had no objective other than to devise some convention strategy.

B: There's a general point that arises here composed of the two related factors of the old shibboleth that a SoutSoutherneld not be elected president, and the question of whether or not Lyndon Johnson was a Westerner or a Southerner. Was there any deliberate attempt on the part of the staff or Mr. Johnson prior to this time to create a Western image for him?

R: Not on the part of the staff, and not on his part. There was far less pattern to it and far less purposeful activity than there appeared from the outside. You know, I believe that Vance Hartke [D. Ind.] was the author of this Western thing.

B: You mean the author of that idea?

R: Yes. Because I can recall Vance saying to me one day, he said, "By God, we've just got to bring out the fact that this man is Western rather than Southern." And of course there's a certain basic truth to that. But in my judgment it was a basic truth that could never be sold to the American people. His part of Texas is not the "magnolia honey child," and "God bless Marse Lee."

That's over in East Texas. But on the other hand, to convince the average Northerner that a Texan is not a Southerner is just a plain impossibility. And you look silly when you try it. And I think it was Vance Hartke who was one of his strongest presidential supporters at that point that launched that idea.

B: What was the attitude on the part of Mr. Johnson and you people on the staff toward the Kennedy organization that was going on at this time?

R: It looked to us like an extremely effective organization. I didn't think from a political standpoint it was the best I have ever seen, but from an organizational standpoint it was certainly superb. And most of us really wanted to get out and counter, and we thought it could be countered--not on the basis that Johnson was a Westerner, but despite the fact that he was a Southerner. After all, Kennedy was--That was the year that could test a number of things. Kennedy was testing the old saw that a Catholic could not be president of the United States; and we saw no reason why we couldn't test the old saw that a Southerner couldn't be president of the United States, especially since this was a Southerner who had actually managed to pass the first civil rights bill through the Congress in eighty-two years.

B: You mean you wanted to get out in the states in the primaries and work right from the delegates--

R: Oh yes. We wanted to get out and really fight at it. But he would not permit us to do it.

B: Did anybody think of just going ahead and doing it?

R: Well, what finally happened of course is this organization was set up under John Connally and Oscar Chapman [D. Colo.] and various other people. But because, and I have no doubt in retrospect that he acquiesced in this, but

it was not possible to really bring our best people aside from Connally and Chapman into that kind of an organization, because they were the people most closely associated with him.

B: You were afraid that if they got in it he'd put a stop to it?

R: No question he would have put a stop to it. He had not really made a full commitment, certainly not a public one, and I don't think in his own mind he'd made a commitment to actually make the race. And the organization that was set up was not a very effective organization.

B: This seems strange, because one so often thinks of Mr. Johnson as being a decisive man.

R: On most issues he is. On this one he was not. He did not make a genuine announcement until either the day before or the day that he went out to Los Angeles. We had John Connally and India Edwards and Oscar Chapman actually out in Los Angeles running a Lyndon Johnson campaign when Lyndon Johnson himself had not declared. Now this lack of firm declaration had many, many facets to it. I can recall at one point when they were trying to get together a committee for Lyndon Johnson and Dean Acheson was approached; and Dean was quite horrified. He would have been very, very pleased to have backed Lyndon Johnson, but unfortunately he had already made a commitment to someone else, Stuart Symington. And this happened in many instances.

B: Mr. Johnson was just too late to--

R: Right. I can recall during one period we talked him into making quick weekend trips to various places which was not a satisfactory substitute for actual campaigning, but it was the only thing we could get him to do. And I remember we landed in Wyoming--I've forgotten now whether it was Cheyenne or Laramie--and the state chairman--what was his name, he later became a Congressman--This has some relevance. Let me take a fast look and see if I can recall his name.*

*Teno Roncallio

The state chairman was there to meet us when we landed at the airport, and a number of newspapermen piled into the car with him; and I got into the same car with the newspapermen--he didn't know who I was. And when the newspapermen asked him who they were for in Wyoming, he said, "Oh Kennedy." And they said, "Why?" And he said, "He's the only one that has been out here and asked us for his vote." Now Wyoming was a state that Lyndon Johnson should have had; and we would have had if we had merely done some organizational work in it a few weeks earlier.

B: Then with all of this, you must have--Mr. Johnson himself and you and the staff must have approached the convention itself somewhat fatalistically.

R: I had no illusions about it, but I think some of our other people did. But it was obvious to me that the best that could be made was a respectable showing.

B: Do you think Mr. Johnson felt that way too?

R: I would assume so. He's a realist.

B: There were also stories told in the convention of what--in the heat of the convention itself--were tactics that attracted some criticism--the allegations that Johnson or the Johnson staff spread stories about Joe Kennedy's--the elder Joe Kennedy's--isolationist or pro-Hitler views. Are these stories correct?

R: It probably happened--not as a deliberate policy, but you know, you don't really control the people that are working for you at conventions. And when you get to a convention, you'll find that it's a hot bed of rumors. It's constantly seething with stories, most of which will have a foundation in that somebody somewhere will have said it. And people become tremendously emotional. They have a tendency to believe things that they would never believe in their calmer moments; they have a tendency to say things they would never say in their calmer moments. My own judgment is that as far as Johnson was concerned he

really wanted to go to the convention and get it over with. But you know, quite a tremendous complex had been built up around him because he was the only conceivable opposition to Kennedy. Senator Symington obviously did not have enough votes; Adlai Stevenson at that point had run twice, and had been licked both times. There simply--and for the anti-Kennedy people at the convention, there was quite a large group, and there was no place else to go; plus the fact that the Congressional people were very strongly pro-Johnson. And in a swirling atmosphere like that, all sorts of things can happen--individuals can tell stories. But I don't think Johnson himself wanted anything other than to get it over with.

B: Then such tactics so far as you know did not originate with Johnson himself?

R: No, nor do I think they originated with John Connally or anybody in a responsible position.

B: What was Mr. Johnson's opinion of John Kennedy in these days?

R: Rather good. I can recall in 1954 when we were making a tour through the Pacific Northwest, stumping for various Democratic candidates, a long conversation with him in an airplane, in which he remarked that he had come to like Jack Kennedy quite a bit and was going to see that he got on the Foreign Relations Committee; and that he did in 1955. Of course we'd won the Congress by then.

B: Later on was there any hint to the kind of feeling that "Well, I've helped along Jack Kennedy, and here he is opposing me?"

R: No. He and Jack Kennedy always got along very well. I never detected any of the bitterness between him and Jack that was obviously there between him and Bobby Kennedy, or between other members of the Kennedy following.

B: Did this bitterness with the other Kennedys and their adherents exist before 1960?

R: Not to my knowledge. But then what you might call the Kennedy machine, the overall thing was really assembled in 1960.

B: Then this brings us up to the acceptance of the vice presidential position, about which a good deal has been written. Have you any light to shed?

R: Not really.

B: Were you involved in any of those hectic negotiations there?

R: No. I think that that was a highly personal matter in which the only realistic negotiations went on between Lyndon Johnson and Jack Kennedy. I know the only part I played in it at all--I made a rather strong recommendation that he accept the vice presidency. I was one of the very few that did right from the beginning because it seemed to me that there was no other way of winning the election.

B: The party beating Mr. Nixon?

R: Right. I did not believe that Nixon could be beaten unless Lyndon Johnson was on the ticket. And while I did not think this would be advantageous to him, I did think that from the party standpoint he just had to accept.

B: It's said that that's the same line of reasoning that would eventually change Mr. Rayburn's mind. Did you talk to Mr. Rayburn?

R: No, I did not. I merely put in a written recommendation and let it go at that; put in a memo--did not follow up on it--and made it as strong as I could, explaining my reasoning that a divided party could not possibly win an election. And obviously the word was around Los Angeles already that he had been offered the vice presidency, and for him to reject it at this point would have split the party and made it virtually impossible to win the election in the fall.

B: Do you suppose that the subsequent bitterness between Mr. Johnson and Robert Kennedy began to originate there in this episode?

R: I'm not certain. I don't know just where the origins of that were.

B: After the convention you went with Mr. Johnson to that stay in Acapulco for awhile before the campaign.

R: Right.

B: What did he talk about in that period?

R: Talked very little politics. We were all exhausted; that convention was a very exhausting thing. He only stayed there a couple of days, and we really just enjoyed ourselves.

B: No hint of regret on second thought of taking the vice presidential position?

R: No, I really don't recall any discussion of politics except some that was precipitated by Bob Hill coming in with a bunch of newspapermen. He phoned down from Mexico City and this irritated the President quite a bit.

B: You mean the fact that the newspapermen came?

R: Yes, and that Bob Hill had brought them in. In the first place, he did not want to be discussing politics before he had a genuine session with Kennedy, which he hadn't--You know really at the end of the convention in Los Angeles everybody was too exhausted to discuss campaign plans; and he would have been put in a very bad spot. He couldn't talk about his plans because his plans weren't clear yet, and couldn't be clear until after a later meeting he had at Hyannis Port. Secondly, he didn't think that it would be very good for American-Mexican relations to have this kind of a discussion going on on Mexican soil. He was just generally irritated by the whole thing.

B: A sort of tangential issue that comes up here--was there any difficulty involved in arranging in Texas for Mr. Johnson to run simultaneously on the national ticket and for re-election as Senator?

R: No. You know, that's a funny thing. I've never been clear in my own mind. I really believe that this was one of those deals that was cooked up primarily

by the Texas legislature where you have--You know, you have an awful lot of people that would run for the Texas legislature--college students have a tendency to do it because they're there in Austin anyway; and it's no great sweat off of their backs to attend sessions of the legislature for a few months, but basically I have a very strong suspicion that that whole bill was a way in which the members of the Texas legislature would be able to run for a couple of jobs at the same time, to say that they were doing it for the very patriotic Texas reason and that was to back Lyndon Johnson and to help him with some of his problems.

B: You mean the idea didn't originate with Mr. Johnson?

R: No. The idea originated in the Texas legislature.

B: What would he have done had not such a bill been passed and he would have been forced to choose--?

R: He would have been forced to make a choice, yes.

B: It might have had an effect on whether or not he decided to take the vice presidential nomination--

R: It could have. But I really don't think at the time that bill passed in the Texas legislature that he had made any firm decision to run for the presidency, because I think that his inclinations were against it.

B: At the time the bill was passed in the legislature?

R: Yes, although I think his inclinations were against running all the way through.

B: During the campaign how did you and Mr. Johnson's staff get along with Mr. Kennedy's staff? Did you work fairly well together?

R: Reasonably well. Our paths only crossed a couple of times. Of course the only person I was dealing with was Pierre Salinger, and Pierre and I always got along very well.

B: This was by virtue of you both having press responsibilities?

R: Yes. The morning after the nomination of Lyndon Johnson in Los Angeles, Pierre and I had breakfast. We came to a pretty good understanding.

B: Was that the first time you had met Mr. Salinger?

R: I believe so. It was the first time I had ever had a lengthy conversation with him. And we had another long session in Hyannis Port.

B: Anything about the campaign stand out in your mind particularly?

R: It was a nightmare. The only thing I can say about it is--oh God, let me finish up this one thought, because I have this party I have to go to--The only thing I would say about it is the campaign definitely bore out the thesis in my mind that Kennedy would not have won if Johnson hadn't been on the ticket. I think that the most important event of that entire campaign was the southern train trip.

B: You think this held the South--?

R: No doubt about it. It not only held the South, it recovered the South. When we started out on that trip, there was no doubt whatsoever that virtually the whole South was gone. I don't think there was a single state where we even had a chance except Arkansas and Texas.

B: Were you involved in the meeting with the Houston Ministerial Association?

R: I was there and watched it--I wasn't involved in it, no.

B: You weren't involved in setting up the thing?

R: Had nothing to do with it.

B: We're at a stopping place now, and I know you've got to go.

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By George Reedy

to the

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