INTERVIEW VIII

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R: --successful leader.

G: Let's start with that.

R: Okay.

G: 1955 you were talking about.

R: Right. 1955 was the year that Johnson really surged forward. Up to that point he had been engaged in an endeavor to prove that he was a successful leader, something that took some proving simply because everybody was skeptical, not only of him but of any Democratic leader. The disorganization in the Democratic Party, which resulted in the defeat in 1952, was so extreme that it was generally thought that nobody could pull the Democrats together at any point. And Johnson was especially suspect because he was from an ex-Confederate state, and at that moment the strains between the southerners and the liberals had reached very extreme proportions.

But by 1955 everybody had reached the conclusion that Johnson could run the Senate; there was no question about that. What was in their minds I think more than anything else was the question of what he would do with it. And 1955 and 1956 were the two years in which he began to lay down some sort of a coherent program, largely a populist

program, really, which gave a positive expression to his leadership. It was largely based upon various social values and was not really in accord with the overall trend of liberalism at that time, because liberalism had gotten quite far away from populism. Unfortunately for the liberals, they were incapable of finding very many of their own issues, and so they had to hop aboard the populist bandwagon because there was really no other place for them to go. Their hearts were much more in civil rights, in immigration, in various types of legislation which they thought spread, let's say, civil liberties rather than civil rights. But again, there was only so far they could go with that, and what Johnson did was to start breaking through with a modernized populist program.

G: Did the fact that the Democrats were now in a majority affect the way Johnson worked?

R: Not really. Not really, because the majority wasn't that great. One of the realities, as we'll see when we get to the next two years, is that as the majority got bigger, part of the degree of his control faded. You see, one of the virtues of having a slim majority is that it tends to drive people together. When the majority is slim, people think twice before going against their colleagues. When there is a very large majority, there's a tendency on the part of many senators to forget any type of identification they have with political parties and to just go every which way. There was no essential difference between the way he acted when he was in the minority and the way he

acted when he was in the majority, and I'm not even sure that it made too much difference in terms of the votes.

Johnson did not count the votes in terms of Democratic and Republican, which really is a reflection of his rather profound although somewhat inarticulate grasp of the workings of Congress. The ratio of Republicans to Democrats in either house of Congress is a matter of very little significance. It has a certain symbolic significance, it decides who will control the formal instruments of power. But as everyone discovered very early, the formal instruments of power are not necessarily the instruments that run Congress. For a long period of time, Congress was run in a coalition of Democrats and Republicans, and the formal Democratic leadership, which was always rather liberal, was completely helpless to do anything about it. About all it could do was it maintained some dignity, and at times it couldn't even do that.

G: Johnson himself moved from the Commerce Committee to the Finance Committee that year.

R: Right.

G: Why did he do that?

R: There were a number of reasons. One, he discovered a certain amount of embarrassment being on the Commerce Committee because it has jurisdiction over the federal communications system. That immediately raised some suspicions of hanky-panky with the Federal Communications Commission in regard to his wife's radio station.

G: Let me ask you here, did you ever see any influence that he brought to bear in that?

R: No. No, and I don't believe he ever did. But for a man in his position, bringing influence to bear would be utterly and completely irrelevant. But to think that the members of the Federal Communications Commission would be unaware when they were dealing with KTBC that the husband of the woman who owned it was one of the most powerful figures in Washington, anyone that would believe that will believe twenty-two impossible things before breakfast. And of course, what is much more important than governmental influence, there is no doubt whatsoever that the people that controlled the networks were well aware of the status that Johnson had in the political scene in Washington, D.C. That's something that nothing can be done about. I do not know and rather doubt whether he ever consciously--well, he may have--but I'm confident that he never made any direct use of his position with either the Federal Communications Commission or with the top people in the networks. But I think that he would have had to have been very naive not to be aware of the fact that his position alone was something that would carry a tremendous amount of weight, no matter what he did. Then, by the way, we had a direct rule in the office that under no circumstances were we to intervene for constituents or anyone else with the Federal Communications Commission.

G: Oh, really?

R: Yes. We had that same rule on tax matters with the Internal Revenue Service. If a constituent would write us a letter complaining about

the Federal Communications Commission or something of that nature, we would not even turn that letter over to the agency as we would with any other letter.

G: Why were those two singled out?

R: Well, Federal Communications Commission for the obvious reason of Lady Bird's holdings in radio, KTBC. The tax, the Internal Revenue Service, because most of the major scandals of the preceding few years had been efforts to intervene with the Internal Revenue Service. You may remember [John] Williams of Delaware, for instance, who found some absolutely horrific scams going on inside the Internal Revenue Service. So those two were off limits.

G: Well, do you think that the move from a Commerce Committee to the Finance Committee also had to do with legislation that was going to be before the Senate?

R: Not particularly, because I think he would have had the same influence regardless of what committee he was on. But nevertheless, there was considerably more prestige to the Finance Committee than there is to the Commerce Committee. One thing you have to realize is that the primary leverage for any type of revenue legislation is with the Congress rather than with the President. This is something of which Congress is very, very keenly aware. Of course the basic leverage is with the House of Representatives. But nevertheless, the Senate Finance Committee is still one of the most prestigious committees of the Senate. And I think you have to realize something else, and that is that it didn't matter whether he was on the committee or wasn't on

it, the committee was going to be run primarily by people like Bob Kerr and Eugene Millikin and Russell Long. If you had the Majority Leader on it they'd run it; if you had the Majority Leader off it they would run it.

G: Did he also want to be on the Appropriations Committee?

R: Yes. Yes. He very much wanted to be on the Appropriations Committee, and of course he finally succeeded.

G: Yes. Why didn't he go on this year, for example, in 1955?

R: I'm not sure. Looking back upon it, I have an impression that it would have upset too many of his relationships with senior Democrats to have gone on the Appropriations Committee in that particular year. One must always be careful about one thing, and that is in assessing what happens to the Senate, frequently things happen that appear to have political significance that do not have political significance but happened because of the peculiar mathematics of the Senate. You know, this business of only one-third of them coming up at each election, it tilts the Senate in very peculiar ways. Doesn't affect the House of Representatives naturally. But quite often one will see a member transfer from one committee to another and say, "Ah, hah. Here is deep political significance." What it may be is simply that that member has wanted to transfer to that committee for a number of years, and all of a sudden there's an opening. I have a feeling there was just an opening in Finance and there wasn't on Appropriations. I'd have to go back and reconstruct the whole thing to be certain about it.

G: Did Johnson use committee assignments to advance legislation?

R: Oh, of course.

G: For example, if one senator were blocking a piece of legislation in his committee, would Johnson offer him a better committee assignment in order to get rid of him?

R: Oh, I don't know of any specific interest, but I'd be terribly surprised if he wouldn't. He would use any hoe to kill a snake.

G: Now, early in January of that year, 1955, Drew Pearson wrote a column criticizing LBJ's one-man rule. Some of the specifics that he referred to were that Johnson never called a meeting of the Steering Committee, but just did it over the phone.

R: That's foolish.

G: The other thing had to do with [Herbert] Lehman not being appointed to the Judiciary Committee.

R: Well, let me review a couple of things. In the first place, Steering Committee meetings are much more scarce than hens' teeth. The Steering Committee is a very weird organization. It was formed, I think, in 1903 and it was supposed to give the Senate Democrats some coherence. And for a while it did have some coherence because 1903 was before the amendment to the Constitution that led to the direct election of senators, and as long as senators were elected by state legislatures they were somewhat controllable. After the Senate shifted to a direct election proposition, the Steering Committee really became rather useless, something like a vermiform appendix.

And over a period of time, what the Democrats did was to convert it into a committee assignment function.

Now, there were limits to what you could do with committee assignments because of the seniority rule. And in the Senate no one wanted to interfere with the seniority rule, for very good reasons. You know, there's a lot of misunderstanding about the seniority rule. What the seniority rule really is, it's a protection against boss control of the Senate. Before the seniority rule came in, anybody that could establish a really strong position in the Senate was quite capable of strengthening that position merely by handling the committee assignments. That was the main reason that the committee assignments were turned over to a steering committee, so the leadership wouldn't have that much power. But even there, with the Steering Committee most of the assignments were somewhat mechanical.

The only time the Steering Committee would ever meet, really, was at the beginning of a session, when they would meet to go over the committee assignments. And even there the Steering Committee was a little bit too large to handle that efficiently. There were, if I remember correctly, thirteen or fourteen members, possibly more than that, much, much too big to take care of the committee assignments, which is a rather detailed and nit-picking job. It's a very difficult thing to do. Try going through the exercise yourself sometime and you'll find it's an exhausting procedure.

What really happened, as a rule, is there be some conferences between Carl Hayden, who was chairman of the Steering Committee, and

Johnson and a few other influential members. They would sort of work up a draft of what should be done. Actually I think most of it came out of Skeeter [Felton] Johnston's head, he was secretary of the Senate then. That would be submitted to the Steering Committee, and the Steering Committee would usually approve it. There was no reason not to. Then it would go on to the Senate, where it would be approved almost automatically.

Now, there are a couple of things to remember. I think it's it's probably true that Johnson did not just turn the task of handling the assignments over to the Steering Committee, because if he had, he would never have been able to get freshmen senators such as Kennedy and the others some of the positions that he got for them on major committees. That was one thing which Drew Pearson neglected to mention. If you had really left it up to a decision of the Steering Committee, it would have just gone by strict seniority rules and people like Kennedy would have wound up on the committee on capitol roofs, domes and skylights, or the disposition of useless executive papers, something of that nature.

That's pretty well true I think of many of the Senate institutions. You simply cannot be too democratic in that sense, because if you do, instead of democracy producing debate that will actually improve the operation of the Senate, what will happen is that the members will fall back aghast and resort to some automatic arbitrary rules to do something. In other words, if you really sat the Steering Committee down and said, "Look, you start from scratch. Here are

ninety-six members"--at that particular point, a hundred today--"Now start from nothing, ground zero, and make out their assignments." My God, what they would do after about two weeks is just throw up their hands in despair and say, "To hell with this nonsense, we're going back to seniority."

As for Lehman, I don't know. Frankly I can't imagine why he wanted on the Judiciary Committee.

G: He wasn't a lawyer.

R: He wasn't a lawyer, if I remember correctly. He didn't have the temperament for it. I'm afraid that he would have taken a very bad bruising. The Judiciary Committee is a tough committee. It had been headed by Pat McCarran for many years, and boy, oh boy, Pat McCarran had ways of running things that could have taught lessons to Joe Stalin. Pat had the most absolute iron-fisted rule over that committee that was ever established within my memory of any senatorial committee. What Pat wanted, went. But of course there were also some very tough people on that committee to challenge him. That committee was very rough and tumble, not the place for Herbert Lehman, who was a very nice fellow. He was very kind-hearted, very tender, very gentle, and at times reminded me of Little Lord Fauntleroy walking up a back alley down in North Clark Street where I lived when I was a kid. But he didn't belong on that committee.

G: Grace Tully joined the staff. What was the significance of that?

R: I think that that was Johnson strengthening his position with the New Deal liberals. That was part of it, and part of it I think was a

genuine--you know, Johnson could get very warm about some things, and Grace had been very, very useful to him when he was a young congressman, at least that's what he told me. That he would quite often pick up Grace and take her down to the White House on his way down to work in the morning. If he had a little memorandum or something like that that he wanted Roosevelt to see, he'd slip it to Grace, and Grace would see to it that Roosevelt got it. So I think there was a mixture--there always was a mixture of motives with Johnson. As I said, it gave him quite a bit of yardage with the New Deal and it paid off some old debts, and at the same time he kind of liked Grace. You couldn't help but like Grace, she was one of the most likeable women I've ever known.

G: Johnson had health problems right away. He went to Mayo Clinic to have a kidney stone removed.

R: He always had problems. This was 1955 now. Yes. That was in January, as I recall. That kidney stone was a very, very bad one. He always had bad troubles with them. Many years later when he was vice president, that was one of the deals that so loused up his trip to Scandinavia, which was a disaster. He'd had one during the 1948 campaign that elected him to the Senate, too, although that one I think they took out by catheterization. This one they had to remove by surgery.

During the two weeks he was gone of course Earle Clements handled the leadership. There really wasn't too much to do. It was early in the session, and the Senate never really cranks up as a

Senate until February, sometimes even March. The first two months are very, very dull in the Senate. The main thing I remember is he came back full of stories about the kidney stone and also wearing a corset, which he would show to everyone at any provocation whatsoever or no provocation whatsoever. He was something of an exhibitionist, you know.

G: The SEATO treaty did come up--

R: Yes.

G: --during that time when he was gone. Do you recall the debate surrounding it?

R: Not much, because it wasn't worth recalling. Almost everybody that looked at the SEATO treaty recognized very quickly that there was very little in it other than language. It was not like NATO. It was a little big stronger possibly than CENTO [?] but not much. I remember the terms of it quite clearly. What it really amounted to was an agreement that they'd talk to each other if anything happened. It did not have the binding force of NATO. I myself believe that it was something that was done by John Foster Dulles and some of those people because they wanted to put together the outline of a coherent foreign policy. They probably thought if we can get this outline of a coherent foreign policy together, we'll put some substance in it later on. But there really wasn't enough substance to the damn thing for anybody to recall anything. It didn't commit us to anything very--other than consultation.

R: Another Drew Pearson account--Drew Pearson was really down on LBJ.

R: Oh, and how! And how!

G: This particular charge was that LBJ prevented Alben Barkley from giving a speech at Dallas.

R: Oh, what nonsense.

G: You don't recall anything?

R: I don't recall that one at all, but it's just such utter, complete, absolute nonsense. Alben might have asked him and Lyndon might have said, "Look, Alben, that's no place for you." That could have happened, but to say he prevented him--and Dallas was no place for Barkley. During that particular period there was a psychological climate in Dallas which was about, I'd say, fifty-five degrees to the right of the Rumanian iron guard, certainly about a hundred degrees to the right of McKinley. Dallas was about the most conservative city in the United States, a conservatism ranging from sensible routine conservatism to some very, very extreme stuff. I think that Alben might have had a very bad reception in Dallas, but to say that Johnson prevented him, no.

There was a real feud between Johnson and Drew Pearson, and I'm trying to think of the name of the man that had started it. It was an appointment to TVA. This is before I went to work for Johnson, which is why I don't remember it too clearly. But apparently Johnson managed to get an adverse report on a nomination of some very important public power man, I think it was to TVA.

G: Are you sure it wasn't the Leland Olds case?

R: That's it, the Leland Olds case. The FPC, not [TVA]. Leland Olds and Drew Pearson were very close friends, and Johnson's work in blocking that nomination enraged Pearson to a point that it hung over for many, many years. Johnson finally decided that it wasn't worth while to have Pearson yapping at his heels all the time, and he kept him fairly well out of Texas. Almost all of Johnson's newspaper friends refused to publish Pearson, and one of them continued to get the Pearson column simply so he could notify Johnson of any bad columns that were coming up. Well, we always knew when a bad Drew Pearson column was coming up, because we saw it before it was printed in the Washington Post.

But Johnson finally put an end to that. It was really rather interesting. You know, Tyler Abell was Pearson's son-in-law [stepson], and Drew really doted on Tyler. And Johnson threw a great big reception for Tyler and for Bess Abell, who was Bess Clements before she was married. It really produced a miraculous change in Drew Pearson, really miraculous. But up to that point, Drew was writing some articles that--well, some of them were just incredible, they were so bad. He would take very, very tiny things and--normally when somebody says that a newspaper reporter, even a columnist, is distorting something, what they mean is that he's telling the truth. But this is one of the few instances in which the hatchet was being swung at every opportunity.

G: Do you think that had a counterproductive effect?

R: You mean counterproductive where Pearson was concerned? It was somewhat helpful to Johnson. I can remember one occasion when Senator Spessard Holland of Florida--at least Johnson told me this, I wasn't there when it happened. Spessard Holland, who was very conservative, not a racist conservative, but just a very, very conservative man, told Johnson that he quite often would start walking over to the Senate to get up and denounce Johnson for something that he'd done that he thought was overly liberal, only to run into a Drew Pearson column. And he said, "Drew Pearson gets me so damn mad with what he's writing about you that I wind up voting for your bills." And I think that happened.

You know, one of the conclusions I came to, I do not believe that those columnists actually influence public opinion. I think what they do is act as a banner for certain groups in our society who have already formed public opinions. Because I had to handle all the mail that was generated by the Drew Pearson columns, and it didn't take me very long to realize that all of the mail was coming from the same people, that we rarely got a letter from somebody that had never written us a nasty letter at an earlier period of time. Pearson in effect was giving these people ammunition. Now, of course he would have some influence in that if he didn't feed them ammunition about Johnson they would direct their fire somewhere else. But nevertheless, they were still a specific group. It wasn't that they weren't being influenced by Drew Pearson, it was that he was supplying them with the means of political combat for which they were looking.

G: There were some other instances, problems with the press. There was a Marshall McNeil story about Admiral [Robert] Carney that enraged Johnson. I guess that was something that was either leaked or misquoted. Do you remember that?

R: I don't remember the specific story, but you have to understand something here. Marshall was really rather fond of Johnson, but he was also a very tough man who wanted to make it absolutely clear that Johnson did not own him. And every time Johnson would do something that Marshall didn't like, or every time Johnson would sort of step on Marshall's toes, wham, out would come a story that was a real solar plexus punch.

I can remember one occasion when Marshall had suggested to Johnson a resolution that would lead to a solution of the Chamizal problem down in El Paso, of course one of Marshall's papers. It consisted--Johnson had introduced a resolution, and Johnson had made the mistake here of not letting me know what was up. All that happened is he called me one day and said, "Tell Marshall McNeil that I have introduced the Chamizal resolution and that it's in the hopper right now." Well, I called Marshall and he exploded. I don't blame him. I think that he knew that it wasn't my fault. The point was that Marshall worked for an afternoon paper, and it was too late for him to get the story in the paper. Sarah McClendon, on the other hand, worked for the morning paper, and Sarah, who had had absolutely nothing to do with this resolution, just walked by the bill clerk's office, picked it up out of the file and had a real exclusive story

for El Paso, for her morning paper. Oh, Marshall was mad! God, he was mad! And he, about two or three days later, wrote some sort of a story, and I've forgotten what it was, but it was a real solar plexus punch, that one was right in the stomach. The Carney story may have been it, I don't know. But this relationship went on between the two men for a number of years. Marshall felt that Johnson had to be punched in the nose every so often just in order to keep him cooperative.

G: Another column that attracted a lot of attention was a piece by Elizabeth Donahue in the New Republic. She charged that Johnson evidently believed that the public was tired of investigations after the McCarthy era and he blocked three investigations. One was [Warren] Magnuson's dealing with the monopoly in the television industry. Let's see. Another one had to do with Dixon Yates, [Estes] Kefauver wanting to investigate the Dixon-Yates contract. Also an investigation of the administration's security firings, that Olin Johnston was--

R: I remember that story somewhat. It did not really make very much splash, very little. It probably looks bigger in the record than it did at the time. You know, many things are like that, they loom very large in the record, whereas at the time very little attention was paid to them. I don't know whether anybody except me and Johnson and Kefauver ever saw the goddamn thing.

G: Was there any substance to the charge?

R: Yes and no. You see, the difficulty is there are always hundreds of proposals for investigations floating around Congress, and Johnson

did not block anything that would have gone through normally. It may well have been that he was against all three investigations. I've forgotten the details of the Magnuson investigation, but I do know that Dixon-Yates had been investigated to death. If that thing were investigated any further they would have been going back to 1789 and the use of smoke signals by Indians out on the western plains. You know, there is a certain time where people get punch-drunk in these things. They investigate, then they investigate the investigation, and they investigate the investigation. It goes on and on and on.

It was not a very impressive charge. As I can say, it may well be that he did not. He wasn't terribly fond of investigations, no, because they had a habit of leaving behind them a body of problems. You know, if you investigate something, you've got to find something. You can't just investigate and say, "Well, I looked into it throughly and there was nothing there." You can be sure of one thing, an investigation is <u>always</u> going to find something. And the result of the investigation will always be a report and will always be a proposal to do something that has some respectability, even though the proposal may be rather silly.

As for the security firings, my God, that would have been an awful mare's nest to have gotten into. It probably would have hurt an awful lot of people who at least had been dropped quietly, and it was a thing that was breaking down under its own weight anyway. As I recall, what it amounted to is, yes, there had been some selection between various types of investigations, and only a very few had been

approved. But I don't think that he blocked anything that normally would have gone through the Senate.

G: One of the big legislative issues to come up early that year was the tax cut.

R: Yes.

G: The Democrats proposed a twenty dollar tax cut across the board.

R: Right.

G: This was ultimately a legislative defeat for Johnson. Do you recall what happened here and why?

R: Oh, yes, I recall it very well. It was not really a legislative defeat. The bill was not approved. But that's a different thing altogether from a legislative defeat. See, the major thing that it did was to serve as a unifying force for the Democrats. Johnson was constantly looking for unifying factors. He had to. There were not very many during that period of time. But one thing upon which you could get a reasonably cohesive Democratic vote was on a tax bill. To the extent that there have ever been ideological differences between the Democrats and the Republicans in the United States, that is after the Civil War, most of them involved fiscal and economic questions. Even though the bill itself did not get passed, it served a purpose in that it gave Johnson a uniting vehicle between North and South and West.

G: Is there anything in Johnson's tactics in the effort legislatively, his parliamentary efforts, that was noteworthy to you?

R: On that particular bill?

G: Yes.

R: No. Nothing particularly noteworthy. He displayed his customary skill at getting people together. But you simply could not ultimately get a majority out, because there were going to be a few Democratic defectors. You had three or four Democrats that were really just as-- I'm not now talking about southern Democrats and the civil rights issue, but you had a few Democrats like [Frank] Lausche of Ohio and two or three others that on fiscal matters were really much more Republican than they were Democratic.

G: [Harry] Byrd I suppose was one.

R: Well, Byrd was just against government. The Byrd position was very peculiar. He was chairman of a committee, and he had absolutely nothing to do with running that committee. Whenever I had a problem that involved the Senate Finance Committee, I would go over and see Harry Byrd. I was always very careful to pay that courtesy call. But after the courtesy call I'd trot right down to see Bob Kerr. And Byrd knew what was going on; he was no fool.

G: Now, the reciprocal trade bill was a major issue that year, also with the effort to have a limitation on oil imports.

R: Right.

G: There must have been a lot of support for that in Texas.

R: Yes.

G: And there was a [Matthew] Neely amendment, remember, for proposed--

R: I've forgotten the Neely amendment, but I remember the bill and I remember the circumstances of it fairly well. At that particular time

TIPRO and the various Texas producers were becoming very, very much concerned about the imports. But, you see, their concern was a bit difficult to translate into any action, because as I recall--I may be wrong about this--at that particular point the imports really were not eating into them. That came later. I'm pretty sure of that.

But there was another factor there that must be taken into account, and that is that the oil industry is not and was not the unified entity that most people think it is. There is a very distinct difference between the independent producers and the huge combines that import oil from overseas. Standard Oil is a big importing company, Shell is a big importing company--it's no longer Royal Dutch Shell--Texaco, all of them. You have another factor, and that is the battle between the huge integrated outfits such as Standard Oil, which does everything from produce oil to pump it into your automobile, and the independents and various other groups that only produce oil. And there were no easy choices for a Texas senator when it came to any kind of oil legislation, because if you played ball directly with the Texas independent producers, what that was going to do was bring down on your head the wrath of all the big integrated firms and vice versa. That plus the fact that oil was a rather emotional issue in Texas in those days.

G: Did Johnson tend to support the independents as opposed to the majors?

R: Not particularly. Actually, most of the independents were anti-Johnson. In fact, most oil men were anti-Johnson. I can only think of one or two that really supported him. Wesley West really supported

him. Marlin Sandlin would generally support him, as would Colonel J. R. Parten, but they were the two maverick liberals of the oil industry.

G: Sid Richardson supported him, didn't he?

R: Yes. But not with the same zeal that a Wesley West did. Well, for that matter, a couple of times he was even capable of conning some--it was a con game--of conning some support out of H. L. Hunt and Roy Cullen. But if you took a look at the Texas oil industry as a whole, it was anti-Johnson. Later on when Johnson fought [Allan] Shivers for control of the delegation to the 1956 convention, the only counties in Texas that Shivers was able to carry were the oil counties and some of the counties where there was an extremely heavy black population. But Shivers had the oil producers in his hip pocket.

You know, the oil producers of Texas were an amazingly conservative outfit. My God, they were conservative! They weren't Bob Taft conservative; in fact, I think they regarded Bob Taft with a bit of suspicion as being too liberal. One of the things that they did, the oil industry in Texas really undermined its own strength. What one discovers in dealing with legislators is that if you insist on getting one hundred per cent of everything that you want without crossing any T or dotting any I, sooner or later the legislator is going to say to himself, "Look, I can't satisfy this son of a bitch, to hell with him." And that's precisely what happened to the Texas oil industry.

G: Truman criticized the Democrats who he claimed were kissing the administration, Eisenhower, on both cheeks.

R: Yes, he did.

G: Was this directed at Johnson?

R: I don't think so. It may have included Johnson. I don't think it was directed at Johnson. Now, Harry Truman was very scrappy, and he loved to fight. He was a little banty rooster as my mother would have said. And I don't think that he was very understanding of the Johnson problem or of the Johnson strategy. Johnson, by the way, did succeed in making a very close friend, warm friend out of Harry Truman, which was not hard to do at all, because Harry Truman was a very masculine man. He was exaggeratedly masculine. You know, his conversation was loaded with words that were so damn blue that even Johnson would blush occasionally. Johnson would always play this old game of contrasting Harry Truman to some of the more effeminate--he wouldn't use words like that, but effete, let's say, he wouldn't use that word either, but that's what he'd mean--some of the more effete liberals and intellectuals in the party. And Harry Truman wound up being a very strong Johnson supporter. But I think at that particular point he wanted people to go on out and start slinging away at Eisenhower, which would have been a terrible mistake. One of the things that many of the Democratic strategists did not understand was that the American people had become very tired of partisan fighting, and to give the impression that one was fighting Eisenhower because one was a Democrat would have been the worst thing that could have happened, the worst thing. The public had to be convinced that when Democrats opposed Eisenhower it wasn't because he was a Republican but because they had misgivings about what he was proposing.

G: One thing that seemed to unite the Democrats was the administration's release or leaking of the Yalta papers, that report on the Yalta Agreement. Do you remember that?

R: Oh, yes, but by that time the whole Yalta thing had become so terribly confused and so much a matter of discussion that it didn't have too much significance.

G: Johnson seemed to be charging that the administration was using it as a political [tool].

R: Of course, and they were. I don't think the administration was, but I think the Republicans had been using it for many years as a political issue. I don't think Eisenhower would have used it as a political issue, because one of Eisenhower's real problems as president was that he had spent too many years administering foreign policy under Democrats and administering foreign policy with which he agreed. You know, this whole Yalta mythology that the conservative Republicans were proposing was really rather ridiculous. They had the feeling that the United States went over to Yalta and gave Joe Stalin Eastern Europe. For the love of God, they couldn't give Joe Stalin Eastern Europe, he already had it. You know, the Russian troops were occupying everything beyond Berlin. This was the old post hoc, ergo propter hoc syndrome. Yalta took place and then the world got into a lot of trouble; ergo, the world got into trouble because of Yalta. Well, the world would have been in trouble with or without Yalta, that was irrelevant. But the Yalta agreements weren't bad agreements. I myself think that they were about the best that could have been

negotiated under the circumstances of the times. And I think that the leak of the papers actually would have proved that to almost anybody. Almost anybody rereading the Yalta Papers with a reasonably skeptical and reasonably detached perspective would have come to the conclusion that Yalta merely recognized the realities of the world power at the time.

G: You did a memo about this time for LBJ on foreign aid, and you raised a lot of important questions in that memo, one of them being are we trying to win friends with foreign aid or simply maintain the status quo.

R: Right.

G: Do you recall Johnson's feeling about foreign aid at the time?

R: I can only guess. He accepted my memo and I heard him talking to other senators along some of the lines that I had raised. I think basically that Johnson would have been a very strong proponent of foreign aid under any circumstances. For one thing, you must realize that he had grown up in a Texas which was export-minded. Some of the figures are really rather amazing. As much as somewhere between 60 and 90 per cent of the Texas [cotton]--

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R: As I said, I started to say 60 to 90 per cent--I've forgotten the exact figure but it was amazingly high, I think closer to 90--was exported to China. The Chinese were very heavy consumers of cotton because of all that padded clothing that they wear. And of course Texas produced many other things that were exported, all kinds of

agricultural crops. Therefore Johnson I think would have been attracted to foreign aid simply because it was a stimulus to exports. That's something a lot of people have never realized. If you take a look at the people who voted for things like the Marshall Plan and what have you, you'll discover that almost all of them came from export states. One of the strongest groups was the North Carolina group; they were thinking in terms of exporting that North Carolina tobacco.

But I don't think--you know, one of Johnson's difficulties is that he was never capable of refining terms to a point where he could avoid trouble. One of the reasons that I wrote that memo is that I could see an awful lot of trouble arising out of the concept that foreign aid was going to make friends for us. That was a very popular concept. I'm afraid that foreign aid was originally sold to the American people on that basis, that it would make friends and allies. Well, of course it's not going to make friends and allies. Anybody with the sense God gave little apples would know that. And therefore what could very easily happen would be an American revulsion against foreign aid on the grounds that "my God, those ungrateful s.o.b.'s, we did all this to make friends out of them and look what they're doing now, they're playing footsie with the Soviet Union, they're insulting us." I felt that even though it was more difficult to sell foreign aid on the basis of maintaining the independence of these other nations, on the basis of maintaining their capacity to stand up without succumbing to the Soviet Union, that even though it was more

difficult, in the long run it was a better way to do it. Because then when those countries started to hit back at us, the support of foreign aid wouldn't be undermined. I think one of the worst things you can do in politics is to sell a program on the basis of wrong principles just because they're attractive.

G: After the memo, did Johnson understand this distinction?

R: I'm not sure he understood it altogether, but he at least repeated what I had to say. Again, Johnson was not very good at distinctions. This got him into a lot of trouble quite often. Johnson was a terrific salesman, one of the best salesmen that ever existed in politics. You know, a salesman doesn't particularly care what the tactics are that he uses to sell you, he wants to sell you right on the spot. And Johnson was like that. Well, salesmen themselves can get into trouble on that when they come back for a repeat order, but in politics it's even deadlier because in politics if you sell something on the wrong basis, when that wrong basis becomes apparent, not only do you look like a fool but you quite often have to abandon programs that were very good. Now, I'm not sure that he ever fully understood that, because I often had trouble with him in trying to explain some of these distinctions. He did not like finespun distinctions. It wasn't that he was incapable of understanding them. He was very capable of understanding them if once he could be convinced that it was important to understand them. But he had so much resistance to it that he'd often skip it.

G: The highway bill was a big issue in--

R: See, this is 1955, was that during the recession?

G: This was the legislation that the Republican version wanted to abolish the state formulas and more or less turn over the decision of where the funds would be spent to a commission that would serve at the pleasure of the President. There was also the question of financing the highways, and the administration proposed to do it by bonds, whereas Senator [Albert] Gore and others proposed to do it by tax revenues.

R: That was a good populist issue which I think Johnson liked very much because it was a unifying issue. I really don't think it was of too much importance aside from that factor, that it was one way of pitting the Democrats against the Republicans, and pitting them on an issue where there was quite likely to be a victory.

G: This was the occasion on which Senator [Walter] George insisted that an amendment be added that would allow the states to retain the advertising rights along the highways rather than yield that to federal control. Do you remember that? He went out and made a speech.

R: I remember that. I wouldn't attach too much significance to it. The liberals did at the time. But I think that was just George with his very conservative states' rights position. One of the problems that northerners had was a failure to realize that the South really was sincere about the states' rights program. Most northerners were under the impression that the southerners were only talking states' rights as a means of blocking civil rights. That's not true. The southerners

did use states' rights as a means of blocking civil rights, but also they really believed in it.

G: Well, there was some speculation that this was because of George's closeness with Coca-Cola.

R: I know. That's a little ridiculous. Coca-Cola is not going to put all of that heat on a senator merely to put billboards along the highways. You know, Coca-Cola's got plenty of places to put billboards.

G: Anything else on George's speech? It seemed like he took a lot of the other senators on in debate.

R: He was always doing things like that. Again, that's one of those things that looks much more important now than it did then.

G: Nothing on the tactics of LBJ in getting the Democratic version passed?

R: No. It was just customary. As I said, it was a very good populist issue.

G: LBJ went to New York and spoke at a dinner for General [David] Sarnoff.

R: Yes.

G: And the press account of that indicated that he was very successful in impressing a northern or eastern audience.

R: Yes.

G: Do you remember that? Was there any significance to that occasion?

R: No great significance. I remember the occasion. No great significance, except that it represented to some extent the breakthrough. Up

to that point Johnson had had I think almost concerted opposition from members of the northern establishment, not just the liberals but from everybody else. Now that didn't help too much with the liberals, but it did give the business community and the communications community a look at him under circumstances where they formed a favorable impression, and it cracked what up to that point had been an almost solid facade. I don't even remember what he said now, I may have written the speech.

G: Did you go to that?

R: No.

G: The distribution of the Salk polio vaccine was another issue.

R: Oh, yes.

G: Did Johnson have anything to do with the policy of how it was to be distributed?

R: Not particularly. I mean, it was just another good liberal issue, that was all. I mean, not liberal issue but populist issue.

G: Did the conservatives oppose a general free distribution?

R: I've forgotten precisely what the items were, but I merely know that it made a good issue between conservative Republicans and--again, an issue that would unite Democrats both north and south. Unless there was something unusual about those issues, I really don't remember too much about them, and there's nothing unusual about that.

G: There was a deadlock over the military reserve bill because of an anti-segregation rider that was attached.

R: Yes.

G: Do you remember that issue?

R: Not particularly, because there was nothing unusual about it, and it wasn't too important either. I think this is one of those issues that looks more important on the record than it actually was.

G: The minimum wage was raised to a dollar that year.

R: Right.

G: Let me ask you to recall that vote.

R: Well, the vote itself wasn't of too much importance. The interesting thing there though is Johnson always felt a special affinity to the minimum wage act. He was fond of telling this story of his first vote being that of raising the minimum wage I think to twenty-five cents or something like that because of those Mexican pecan-shellers, and how of the three members from Texas--he was from Texas--he was the only one that voted for that increase that was re-elected the next time.

I think there are two things that have to be said about it. First of all, this was one of the things that did maintain his standing with the Mexican community, which was rather high. But secondly, and this is much more interesting, it brought him rather close to Dave Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. And that was one of Johnson's real forays into the ranks of organized labor. Dave Dubinsky thought he was great. You see, the Garment Workers Union finds that its principal problem is the policing of sweatshops, which is terribly difficult to do, because what's a sweatshop after all. I could set up a sweatshop in my next office, and what are you going to do, picket the school? Nonsense, of course you aren't. But

the minimum wage act has always been terribly important to Dave Dubinsky, to the Garment Workers, because they can use it as a club against sweatshop operators. They are probably the only segment of organized labor that has much interest in it. Other segments of organized labor really don't care. Because even the most inefficient and the weakest of unions have managed to get contracts that take them above the minimum wage level. It's only somebody like the Garment Workers who have this policing problem, or only people who have some piecework. I imagine the fur workers union might have a similar interest.

I think that that is of major importance, the fact that it did give Johnson that very important foothold in organized labor. After all, Dave Dubinsky had considerably more influence than the size of his union would indicate with organized labor. You know, the union is relatively small; I don't know how many members the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, not nearly as big as the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, certainly not as big as the huge mass unions like the Mine Workers--Mine Workers were mass then--or the Teamsters or the Machinists or the big boys, Steelworkers.

G: Did the employers in Texas give Johnson a hard time about supporting that legislation?

R: I don't think business employers did. The major opposition to it in Texas came from people that employed workers in agricultural industries. Now just where the line is drawn I've forgotten, because most farm workers were not covered by minimum wage in those days. But I

know people in pecan-shelling factories were covered. Processing workers, that's where most of the static came from. Of course, the other thing was that Texas was in kind of a conservative swing at that particular point, and just to be for minimum wage or anything else that was liberal led one to be suspect.

G: The vote itself was a situation where I think Spessard Holland was leading the opposition to it.

R: Yes. Sure.

G: Holland was in the Senate dining room when Johnson brought the vote up and ran it through, and complained later that Johnson had hurriedly passed the legislation so he wouldn't be there.

R: Could be.

G: You don't recall that particular occasion?

R: No, I don't particularly recall it, but--

G: Was this one of Johnson's standard tactics?

R: Not standard, but if Johnson had to get something done he would do anything to get it done. I'll never forget that time when that very startled airport controller out at the Washington National Airport picked up the telephone and there's the Senate Democratic Leader on the phone saying, "Goddamn it, you've got to get that plane from Minneapolis down. I'm having to filibuster a whole bill here, and I've got a senator up there that will break the tie. For the love of Christ, get it down!" They brought it down. They rushed Hubert Humphrey into the Senate.

G: What bill did that relate to, do you know?

R: I've forgotten now, but it was probably housing or something of that nature. But it really was amusing. He literally just picked up the phone and got the airport controller right in the tower and told him to get that goddamned plane from Minneapolis down.

G: Do you know of any other instances where Johnson managed to bring senators back in time for a vote, people who were absent?

R: I can't recall any. It wasn't an everyday occurrence because as a general rule he would know well enough in advance that people could schedule, but I think there were some other instances. That's the only one I recall.

G: Did he ever try to detain somebody else or create attractive diversions for other senators who might have been opposed to a piece of legislation?

R: No, I don't think he would do a thing like that. What he would quite often do would be to talk a senator into not being there, but only when the senator had to cast a vote against a bill but didn't feel terribly strongly about it, would like to do Johnson a favor. I don't think he would ever have deliberately ran something through when a senator wasn't there, because there would have been too many kickbacks. If you look at Holland's complaint pretty carefully, I think what you're going to find that he was complaining about [is] the rushing. Well, what is rushing? Certainly he had a chance to vote on the bill.

G: Paul Butler made a tour of Texas. There was a lot of give and take between Butler and Shivers; Shivers came to Washington, Butler came to Texas. Johnson seems to have been in a position of trying to mediate.

R: Well, you couldn't mediate between those two men, between Butler and Shivers. I think what Johnson was trying to do was not get caught in a crossfire. Paul Butler was a rather strange Democratic chairman. Up to that point there had been a tradition in the Democratic Party that the chairman, the national chairman, would be reasonably neutral between various candidates for the presidency. Of course, that neutrality was mythical when you had Roosevelt in office, and obviously Roosevelt was going to run again. And Butler made very, very few pretenses of being neutral, practically none. He was for Kennedy right from the beginning.

Also, Butler was trying to promote the concept of the Democratic National Committee as a group that could exercise some control over the Democrats in Congress. What I'm saying here may be something of an overstatement. It's rather difficult to put it into precise terminology. But he certainly wanted a situation in which the Democratic National Committee would have some influence in determining the votes of Democratic legislators. And there are very, very few, in fact possibly none of the legislators that would ever stand for a thing like that.

Butler was a man with very strong beliefs in such things as party policy and also in programs to sell the party. I can still recall 1956 when he had a--no, it was 1960 when he had a proposal early in the year to have a pre-convention public relations program to sell the Democratic Party. He had it discussed. They called in me and Ted Sorensen and Herb Waters from Humphrey's office, and I forget, some

congressman from Missouri representing Stu Symington. They had a public relations firm from California that came up with a program that was absolutely ludicrous. They had the standard concept of the battle between the Democrats and the Republicans as a kind of a rah-rah proposition, with the elephants leading charges against the donkey and the donkey kicking the stuffings out of the elephants. Oh! Among other things, the program was so ridiculous that it was not very difficult to kill. But Johnson and Butler, and for that matter I think it's fair to say that Butler and the entire congressional Democratic leadership were mutually antipathetic.

G: Anything in particular on Johnson's relationship with Butler?

R: No, not in particular. It was at arm's length. It was very cool. Butler was constantly trying to get Johnson to get tangled up into some of his various plans for a Democratic advisory council and that sort of thing. Both Johnson and Rayburn were saying no, no, a thousand times no. So he had to bring in people like Kefauver and I forget who else.

G: Anything on Shivers' visit to Washington?

R: I don't recall the visit. I can tell you a lot about Shivers, but I don't recall the visit. Do you know what it was about?

G: I think it was a governors conference. And there is the occasion on which Shivers attended the Texas State Society or maybe it was the Texas congressional delegation breakfast and was maneuvered into the position of presenting a plaque to LBJ, widely photographed.

R: I don't recall it. I don't recall it, but that was the sort of thing that could very likely happen. Johnson and Shivers were I think antagonistic from the very start.

G: Really?

R: Although in some ways I think Johnson kind of admired Shivers because of his speaking ability. Johnson had a tendency to admire anyone that could deliver a dramatic speech, and that Shivers could do.

G: [Joseph] McCarthy introduced a resolution that you referred to as pointing a loaded gun to the head of the President with regard to Geneva.

R: Is that the one where McCarthy moved to have it taken up on the floor immediately without referring to a committee?

G: I know that [William] Knowland wanted to have it killed summarily and Johnson played along with McCarthy and dragged it out.

R: Do you recall the date on that?

G: Let's see. It's on page twenty-eight and twenty-nine in that outline.

R: Do you have a copy of it there? [looking at outline] That's it. That's it. I'm pretty sure that that is the occasion in which an effort was made to bring it directly to the floor. At that particular point McCarthy still had considerable strength. LBJ wasn't helping McCarthy at all, quite the contrary. He got it sent to the committee. It was one of those things, sometimes you can bring up a resolution under circumstances in which it is going to be passed almost right away without any consideration or debate whatsoever, and this was one of those occasions. I have forgotten just why. There was some

concatenation of events that gave it that extra power. And what Johnson really did was to get it sent to the Foreign Relations Committee, where it could be considered, because it was the kind of resolution that definitely was not going to be passed if it could be considered.

G: But then it was brought to the floor.

R: Of course it was brought to the floor, but that was after committee consideration, you see.

G: But the indication was that Knowland wanted to have it quietly killed in committee or something and Johnson wanted it out to get the Republican--

R: Well, of course. Johnson wanted it publicly killed and Knowland wanted it privately killed, you see. Because what Knowland was trying to do--Bill Knowland still had a certain amount of sympathy for McCarthy, which was very strange because the two men were absolutely incompatible, Knowland with that very rugged honesty and Joe only had a nodding acquaintance with honesty. But what Knowland was trying to do was to smooth over the fact that there was still this very strong isolationist wing in the Republican Party, and what Johnson was trying to do was to dramatize it.

Now you must realize that Knowland himself was a member of what might be termed the isolationist wing, but by that time the definition of an isolationist had become very complex. You've got to go back to one of the realities. Before World War II a great part of the opposition to entering the war sprung solely out of the old-fashioned

American isolationism. Consequently, once we got into the war and were fighting the Nazis, isolationism became associated with Naziism, and after the war was over isolationism became a disreputable word. It was a pejorative word if you applied it to anybody. Now there were a hell of a lot more isolationists than there were people who would admit it, and one of the results is that the isolationists converted themselves into internationalists, but internationalists in a cause that they knew couldn't possibly succeed, mostly the support of Chiang Kai-shek, which was a losing proposition any way anybody looked at it. And Knowland was one of those who very strongly supported Chiang Kai-shek. Knowland was in the isolationist wing of the party all right, but at least he had the kind of a record where he could say, "Who, me? I'm not an isolationist. I've been voting for foreign aid, for China, for all sorts of places." But you still had within the Republican Party the older-fashioned type of isolationist that was just against anybody. Dan Kidney once writing about Bill Jenner said, "Bill Jenner arrived at the Indianapolis airport after a globe-girdling tour today and invited the rest of the world to get out," which was a pretty good description. I think Knowland was trying to gloss that over, and Johnson was trying to bring it out.

G: This would also force the Republicans, the conservative Republicans, to take a stand on something McCarthy was in favor of.

R: Of course. That was Johnson's whole point. He was dramatizing some of the inherent weaknesses in the Republican Party. Johnson was very good at that.

G: Another issue that appears to have been partisan was Eisenhower's atomic peace ship proposal.

R: Oh, lord. Is this in the outline here?

G: Yes. It's [page] twenty-nine.

R: That was one of those sort of good works proposals. Everybody comes up with them every once in a while, sort of like sending the Salvation Army team out, the girl with the big bass drum and that kind of thing. I could never figure why Eisenhower came out for the thing. It was basically foolish.

G: Eisenhower accused LBJ of maneuvering behind the scenes to kill that proposal.

R: It didn't take much maneuvering.

G: Really?

R: It didn't take much maneuvering. The thing was too ridiculous. It was silly.

G: That very close vote was the Marine Corps appropriation. This was evidently a Symington amendment to add forty-six million dollars to the defense budget to keep the Marine Corps strength level where it had been, and it was opposed by the administration. The amendment was adopted by one vote, 40 to 39. Can you recall that vote?

R: Yes. You have to realize that there were deeper issues behind it. What the administration was doing was going along to a great extent with John Foster Dulles' massive retaliation theory in which the peace of the world was supposed to be secured by atomic weaponry. The whole theory being that the only thing that really threatened the world was

the Soviet Union, and as long as we could keep the Soviet Union in a state of terror and they could keep us in a state of terror nothing would happen. The Marine Corps suffered from it as a result, because whatever else the Marine Corps is, it certainly is a tactical arm. There is no way in the world that anyone can make the marines into a strategic arm. And consequently, you had here a really legitimate issue, not just whether the Marine Corps should be increased in strength, but whether all of America's eggs should be dumped into the massive retaliation basket or whether there should not be an equal build-up of tactical forces. I myself believe that you should have an equal build-up of tactical forces because you have a balance of terror. Obviously that's going to keep the Soviet Union from shooting at us or us from shooting at the Soviet Union. But what good does it do you if the Soviet Union has got troops to send into some small country and you don't?

I'm not going to refight the argument. But here was one case where you did really get--I'm not sure just whether that divided the Democrats from the Republicans, but it was one issue upon which there could be some reasoned opposition to the administration. But you have to realize it was a deeper issue that counted; not whether the marines would get money, but whether you would put everything into massive retaliation or if you would also insist on maintaining a conventional capability.

G: Let me ask you a little bit about the legislative tactics involved in getting that amendment passed. There's some indication that Johnson

parlayed one vote into three or four on that, that he would go to one senator and say, "Would you vote with me if so and so will?" and go back to the first--

R: Oh, sure.

G: Do you recall that at all in this--?

R: Oh, yes. He did that all the time though. That was so common, I don't recall that particularly with this bill. He was terribly good at getting votes that way. As I said, Johnson was a great salesman and he knew how to get contingency votes. He knew quite often if he just went directly to somebody and asked them for a vote, they would say no. But if you went to somebody and offered them a contingency, that they'd quite likely to say yes.

G: You mean "don't vote for me unless I need your vote" or something like that?

R: "Don't vote for me unless I need your vote, but are you willing to vote for me if so-and-so"--suppose for example you have Senator A who is having a lot of trouble--two senators from one state. Senator A is under heavy attack from Senator B. Along comes a vote. You might get Senator A's vote if you can assure him that Senator B is going to vote the same way and is not going to be attacking him in the next election. But if Senator A does not know that Senator B is going to vote the same way, Senator A is not going to take a chance of being attacked. Do you see the point? This is ordinary floor strategy at which Johnson was very good.

G: Sam Shaffer came out with a piece that--I think it was Newsweek--that said--

R: It was Newsweek.

G: --that Johnson had rescued Rayburn on the reciprocal trade bill, that Rayburn had gotten into trouble and almost lost the vote in the House, and that Johnson had bailed him out. This angered Johnson, the story--

R: Oh, of course.

G: Do you remember anything about that?

R: I think it was true. I think Sam was absolutely right, but of course that would cause Johnson an awful lot of trouble. After all, Rayburn considered himself to be the senior man, and to have junior acting up is never a very good feeling. But Rayburn was not the greatest legislative tactician I ever came across. He was really somewhat poor at it. He was a great legislative strategist, there's no doubt about that. Rayburn was a very good long-range thinker, but not too good in the immediate present. And I think there were a number of occasions in which Johnson actually got on the telephone and started calling all over the House and digging up votes for Rayburn that Rayburn couldn't dig up for himself.

G: Do you remember his doing so on this reciprocal trade bill?

R: I don't particularly remember it, no. but it wouldn't surprise me. You know, Rayburn was not the kind of man who kept in his head all of the tiny tactical details that Johnson did. If Johnson needed a vote, he had a sort of a mental filing system which would start producing all the little facts on all of his colleagues that might be used to

get that colleague's vote. Boy, could he remember things! Could he remember things! I remember one labor bill in which Strom Thurmond had a very, very heavy interest. We had a lawyer on our staff who had been born in South Carolina. Actually he'd lived most of his life in Texas and still does. But he wrote a memorandum pointing out that this bill that Strom was so interested in was actually an FEPC, which Strom hadn't realized. And boy, Johnson walked over and handed him that memo and Strom looked at it. You could just see his hair go up, and he said, "Who says it's an FEPC?" Johnson said, "That South Carolina boy over there." I don't think he'd seen South Carolina since he was six months old, but that didn't matter.

G: That's great. Well, was the objective there to get Thurmond's support on something else?

R: No, to call Thurmond off, that's all, not to push it too hard.

G: Oh, I see.

Okay, we are getting to a situation here where Johnson seems to be squaring off more with Eisenhower. He has trotted out Eisenhower's 1954 comment that if the Democrats control Congress there would be a cold war of partisan politics. And Johnson staking out the position that the Democrats have passed more of the Eisenhower program than the Republicans would have done if they had controlled the Congress. Do you remember that?

R: Sure I do. The whole thing was something like the famous feud between Jack Benny and Fred Allen. The two men had to oppose each other, Eisenhower and Johnson. Eisenhower, after all, had certain obligations

to the Republican Party and Johnson certainly had obligations to the Democratic Party. And there was a certain point at which Johnson's tactic of supporting Eisenhower against the Republicans was becoming damn embarrassing with an election coming up. Now understand me, I do not mean that Johnson and Eisenhower ever sat together in a closed room and over some coffee cups said, "Well look, Lyndon," "Well look, Ike, we've got to do something if we're in the act." That's not what I mean. But what I do mean is that the forces working on both men required a display of antagonism at that certain point. And if you'll look at it, however, you'll find there was a certain amount of restraint on both sides. The strength of Johnson's position in that particular year was that it was valid. We really had done much more to advance Eisenhower proposals than had the Republicans. Because most of the Eisenhower proposals were in foreign policy fields, where he and the Democrats were much more sympathetic than he and the Republicans. The isolationist wing in the Republican Party was still a very strong wing. It was virtually nonexistent in the Democratic Party.

Now, it was true that on domestic legislation the situation was quite different. Eisenhower had, oh, the [Ezra Taft] Benson agricultural act for instance, the flexible price supports and parity. Those had been things that had been accomplished against the opposition of the Democratic leadership. But in those particular years, foreign policy occupied much more of the attention of both the President and the Congress than did domestic policy. For one thing, I think I

mentioned previously to you that one of the most important factors in the 1952 election was the fact that the American people had become sick and tired of partisan fighting. I think that the principal factor in Eisenhower's overwhelming triumph was the factor of reconciliation. The American people were looking for somebody that would take stands on the basis of issues rather than on the basis of party affiliation, [unlike] somebody like Harry Truman that wasn't always trying to bait the opposition with a long string of impossible proposals. To just come out with an all-out anti-Eisenhower thing would have merely solidified the feeling of the American people that the Democrats were nothing but a bunch of boodle boys that were trying to get jobs in government because they couldn't get jobs anywhere else.

But at any rate, the Johnson position was that--I'm saying that's the reason you did not have too much in terms of foreign policy, because there really wasn't--and in domestic policy--very much that the American people wanted done in domestic policy. They wanted things kept in kind of an even keel.

G: Did this have anything to do at all with Johnson's own political ambitions, possibly running for president?

R: I don't think he had them at that time. There's a very peculiar factor involved here. I mentioned it in my book. I'm never quite certain whether he ever really was bitten by the presidential bug, or if he was bitten by the presidential bug, I'm not at all certain of the point where it bit him. But I am certain of the fact that he took advantage of the fact that he might be a presidential candidate in

order to hold many of the southern legislators in line. There were an awful lot of southern senators and southern House members who would keep quiet about things Johnson was doing that they didn't like simply because in their minds it would be worth it to get one southerner from a Confederate state into the White House. And I'm convinced--to me it's not even an arguable proposition--that Johnson deliberately used that as a tactic. Now your problem here, of course, is that you're never quite certain whether the tactic became a desire or not. It was not a first. I don't think it was.

G: Why do you think that? Did he ever articulate that?

R: Oh, he articulated it all the time, but that I don't take seriously. But Johnson did have something of an inferiority complex. I hate to get into psychological jargon but there are times when it's unavoidable and this is one of them. I think that that psychological complex, I think that inferiority complex did inhibit any serious drive on his part for the presidency.

G: Let me ask you to describe the events preceding the heart attack. First of all, did you have any indication that he was a sick man before?

R: No. None whatsoever.

G: He hadn't been complaining of chest pains or anything like that?

R: No. Oh, good God, no. No. In fact, the first I ever heard it was after the heart attack when he was talking about some of the preliminary--he hadn't had very many preliminary things. I had recalled a press conference either that day or the day before--I think it was

that day--at which he had been a little bit unusually sharp and had snapped at an AP reporter--Chadwick, John Chadwick, the AP reporter. But really nothing terribly unusual. He was going on down to Huntlands and I was going fishing that particular day when he got hit with this thing.

G: Were you at the press conference?

R: I think I--yes, I was.

G: Evidently Chadwick kept asking him a question that he didn't want to answer.

R: You know, one of Johnson's problems was a very strange one, Johnson was convinced that everybody that had a job worked at that job twenty-four hours a day. That a lawyer was always looking for a case to try, a doctor was always looking for a patient, an accountant was always looking for a tax schedule, and a newspaperman was always looking for a story. He did not realize that quite often questions asked by reporters weren't really questions at all. They were merely a form of social communication. I recall very well that what John Chadwick was asking was not really a question, it was just some sort of a kidding reference, the sort of thing that men will do back and forth. You've probably done it yourself thousands of times when you're talking to somebody that's had some problems. Just to sort of relieve the tension, you'll say, "Well, how are things going in Glocca Morra?" knowing damn well Glocca Morra was where he got picked up for speeding or something like that. That's all there was to it. Yet he had no sense of that. This later became terrible when he became president and

tried to abolish the press pools. He could not believe for a minute that all those men wanted to do is sit there and have a quiet drink and rest up from the vicissitudes of following him around to the previous stop.

Now, later on in a conversation with some people he'd said, and it was rather embarrassing, that on one occasion after having had sexual relations with Lady Bird he'd felt a flutter in his chest. He was very, very crude about such things. And that seems to have been the only indication I ever heard from him that he had had any problems.

G: This was after the heart attack, is that right?

R: He was talking about what had happened before, yes. After the heart attack. That was the only indication I have ever had.

G: How did you learn about it?

R: The heart attack?

G: Yes.

R: I was at home, I remember that. I think that I was just getting set to go down to Occoquan for some fishing when the phone rang. It was July, it was the July 4 weekend I believe. It was July 5 or July 2.

G: I think it was the second.

R: July 2. I was just getting set to go on down to Occoquan to go fishing when the phone rang. Who in the devil was it? Somebody called. I think it may have been Walter Jenkins, but I'm not sure. Somebody called me and said, "For the love of God, get out to Bethesda."

I remember getting out there and his expressing some concern that I hadn't been able to go on my fishing trip, and I said, "Don't worry about that." So he gave me some instructions. I was to call Earle Clements and tell him to take over the--

Tape 3 of 6

R: He asked me to call Earle Clements first, which I did. I think I was the one who notified Earle, to tell him to take over the Senate. Then he said call in the press and tell them he'd had a heart attack, a real bellybuster as he put it--don't try to make it less than it is--and that Clements was going to take over the Senate and that he was going to resign as the Democratic leader.

Well, I had a little conference with the doctors so I could at least get my terms straight. Then what I did, I got a conference call up with the various wire services, AP, UPI, INS, and I told them, but I did not tell them about the resignation. I took it upon myself to let him think that one over, because I had a feeling that he would change his mind on it. As a matter of fact, he never mentioned it again. He never asked me why I hadn't told the press that he was resigning as the Democratic leader. I can recall that after I got in touch with the wire services, I called some of his personal newspaper friends, like Marshall McNeil and Dave Botter and Bill White. I did that as a personal thing rather than giving out news.

G: He was conscious when you saw him?

R: Oh, sure, he was conscious all along, completely conscious.

G: When you talked to the doctors, did they seem to give you an indication that he might not make it?

R: No. No, but it was inherent in what they were saying. In effect they assessed his chances of being about 50-50. But they told me he had had a moderately severe--I believe that was the exact phrase--a moderately severe, what do you call it, coronary occlusion. And that at the moment there was no way of really assessing the future. I later discovered that they had a series of statistics. That your chances are 50-50 for the first hour. Then if you get through the first hour, it goes 60-40. Then you get through the first day, it's 70-30, something like that. Then there's a great big jump to. . . . But at any rate, I spent my time with them mostly to get the technical terms straight. I forget, he may have had me call Jim Cain. I don't know. I really don't know. I know Jim Cain was contacted though, and he came in with [Harold] Burchell, who was the heart specialist at Mayo's. Willis Hurst was already there. Willis Hurst was on active duty as a naval reservist.

G: Did you see Mrs. Johnson during this interval?

R: Oh, sure, I saw her a lot.

G: But just during the immediate time when you first got there and talked to him.

R: I think so, but I've forgotten. I had too much in my mind at that particular moment.

G: So was there just a gradual assumption that he was going to survive and be healthy again?

R: No, there was not a gradual assumption. What happened is rather interesting. For two or three days he lay there in sort of a hopeless state, just sort of resigned, this is the end. He was always great about that. He was always resigning to something. Then one day he got up and he hollered to have somebody come up and give him a shave, and just in a matter of minutes that whole damned hospital started to click. He took over the corridor, installed a couple of typewriters there, he was dictating letters, he was just going full speed. It was a very sudden, quick thing.

G: What do you think motivated him?

R: I don't know. I don't know. I wasn't there at the time. The first I heard about it Walter [Jenkins] called me and said, "For the love of God, do you know what's happening?" and I said no, and he told me about all this. But when I got out to the hospital I couldn't believe it! He had two or three stenographers, at least two and I think three stenographers out there with those typewriters going full blast.

G: Did he ever reach a point really of great despair before that though?

R: You mean before the heart attack?

G: No, before the--

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He was great in despair anyway.

G: But tell me about that, elaborate on it.

R: I really don't know, it was just the sort of thing--he didn't do much. When Johnson was in great despair he'd just sort of lie there and sulk. There was one peculiar factor that he had. Quite often you'd be with Johnson and all of a sudden you'd feel that he wasn't there at

all, that there was some representation of Johnson alongside of you, something mechanical, something--that he was a doppleganger, as the old German phrase goes. I had that feeling for the first two or three days in the hospital, that he wasn't there. That what was lying in that bed was a plaster cast or something like that. But he was in despair, yes. I don't know what snapped him out of it but something did.

G: Was there a story or two that might have caused his despair, saying that his career was ended or something like that?

R: No. No.

G: Was there an effort on your part or other staff members to encourage news stories that would indicate that he would make a comeback?

R: No. No. What I wanted to do, I was very much in charge of all news operations on that thing. My own theory of it was to play it right down the middle, because if I played it down the middle and then he started to go up again and take part again, I would be a credible person to tell him about it. Whereas if I had been putting out some optimistic stories in advance, then I would not have credibility when the genuine evidence was there, and I wasn't going to say one damned thing to the press that couldn't be backed up by genuine evidence. In fact at one point I went way out of my way, I brought in I think Cain and Hurst--I don't think Burchell was there at the time--for a long conference with the press where they really laid it on the line precisely as it was. No, that always goes back to my theory that when you're in trouble you play it right down the line. Because if you can

salvage your credibility, then when you start getting out of trouble you can promote it.

G: I think Sam Houston Johnson in his book seems to indicate that he, at least, tended to generate some optimistic press stories.

R: Well, he would. Sam Houston would do that. Fortunately Sam would operate with the right people on it. Holmes Alexander, for instance. Sam was very good with a few of the ultra-right wing--not ultra-ultra, not nutty, but a few of the very right wing people who would write the right kind of stories. I wasn't particularly worried about them because I didn't think they counted. What I wanted, what I was shooting for was the major press, the wire services, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and I wanted to be in a position where when he did get around to going up again they were going to take every word that I said as gospel, which they did, because they had absolutely no reason to doubt me.

(Interruption)

Well, of course, there were quite a few medical events involved insofar as his getting better and his capability of flying down to Texas, all of which are reasonably routine. I think you could get a better picture of that from Willis Hurst than anybody else, or maybe from Mrs. Johnson.

G: Well, you were one of his most frequent visitors at the hospital.

R: Oh, sure. Oh, every day.

G: Tell me about that.

R: I was mostly his liaison with the Senate. I would tell him what was happening. I would get things from him to bring back to Earle Clements and to Dick Russell and various other senators. And even though he left the running of the Senate to Clements, he really kept his oar in in the sense of being certain that he understood what was going on. Then one of the things that happened was that I think that he sort of needed reassurance, because what he wanted were expressions from people. There was one day in which one senator got up to eulogize him, then another senator, then another senator, then another senator. They were all vying with each other and writing letters to him. The page boys wanted to buy him something, and they chipped in and got a shaving stand with a mirror on it, a magnifying mirror on one side and an ordinary mirror on the other. And an awful lot of that was simply that kind of activity. As I said, I think he needed reassurance.

There are a number of amusing episodes. Did Sam Johnson ever tell you the story of his walking in to see him when he and Willis Hurst were talking to each other, and as Sam Houston said, there the two of them were practicing psychology on each other. You know, a heart specialist you discover is more of a psychologist than anything else. He wanted that room just chilly air-conditioned, and Willis didn't want it chilly air-conditioned, and Willis was constantly tinkering with the machine to try to get it so it wouldn't kick out so much cold air, and Johnson was constantly getting people in there to tinker with it so it would pump out more cold air. And he was playing

all kinds of games. You unquestionably have heard the story about his groaning and moaning and telling Lady Bird that he knew the doctors were saying he didn't have a chance, and she loses her head and snaps out, "That's not true, they say it's 50-50." And the famous story about the suits he'd ordered, and Bird said, "Which one?" and he said, "Well, keep the blue one, we'll use that no matter--" I'm not sure whether those things ever happened or not. They were morale builders, though, there's no doubt about that.

Now, the more interesting part was when we got back to Texas.

G: Well, before you get to that, though, I want to ask you about leaving the hospital. He spent a good deal of time at their home before that.

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Recuperating.

G: Was there any pattern to the official visitors?

R: No.

G: I think Nixon came at one point, and Eisenhower came to see him in the hospital.

R: Yes. There was no pattern. It was catch-as-catch-can. Nobody directed it that I know of, and I think I would have known.

G: Did he feel that Clements was doing a good job of running the Senate in his absence?

R: I'm not sure. Obviously what happened in his absence were things were sort of suspended, because it is terribly difficult to make that kind of a transition. No matter how able a man is--and Clements was very able--he still wasn't Lyndon Johnson. By that time the Lyndon Johnson legend had become so overpowering that I pity anybody that had to step

into his shoes, because they could have had ten times his ability and nobody would have believed it. You know, at a certain point a man establishes a reputation and the reputation becomes legendary. Well, he was legendary at that point.

G: Did he attempt in any way to run the Senate from the hospital room?

R: No, because he would not have been very good at it. He needed personal face-to-face contact. I think that he fretted about it. But I think that his mind was more occupied with all of the letters that he was receiving and that sort of thing. He became absolutely obsessive about it.

G: Really? How so? What do you mean?

R: Oh, he was just basking in those letters. He'd read them over and over and over again. It finally got to a point where we couldn't let them all in his room; there wouldn't have been enough room for him. I don't know, there was sort of an unspoken yearning of his that could be felt all the way down to the Senate for that kind of reassurance, and he got it. Just literally thousands of letters, which continued, by the way, when he went home, and which continued when he went down to Texas. He actually brought Mary Rather in to help with many of the letters at that point. There really isn't too much to say about the activity otherwise.

G: The natural gas bill I think was brought up in his absence, wasn't it?

R: I don't remember, because I know it was brought up when he was there later on and all kinds of troubles developed with it, primarily because of Frank Case and that idiot from the oil company. I don't

really remember what was brought up. It wasn't too important. The important thing where he was concerned was that that was a period of reassurance for him of re-establishing his own life.

There are a number of rather interesting things, most of which were worked out after he got back to the Ranch. The doctors had told him, for example, that he had to walk a mile every night. So what he did was to get into his automobile and measure off a half mile from the gatepost to the Ranch house. He discovered that kept him just about a hundred yards short of Cousin Oriole's. So he figured that if he walked there, saw Cousin Oriole and went back, it would be a mile plus a couple of hundred yards. The doctors I think wanted him down to one seventy-five, so he went to one sixty-five. He became the goddamndest diet fanatic that ever lived. I remember his raising hell one day because he was being served some watermelon and he wanted to know how many calories, and Bird incautiously said sixty-five and he insisted they look it up. It turns out sixty-five was the number of calories in cantaloupe, that watermelon had eighty-five or something. You would have thought that the world had come to an end or he'd been betrayed.

G: Was he normally more sensitive after his heart attack? Did he tend to be more irritable?

R: No, not more irritable. He tended to be more obsessive I think. He tended to be more obsessive. He developed a tremendous interest in young people. I think he was trying to relive his life again. Young

people could virtually twist him around their finger. But human contact was the main thing that he wanted.

Now, this leads to what I think is one of the important things, the Whitney speech, which was kind of amazing. We'd had a rather heavy schedule planned that fall for Texas. Obviously he could not have carried it out after having had that heart attack. In fact, it's amazing that he could have carried it out even if he hadn't had the heart attack, because I don't think he would have slept in the same place two nights running had he followed it through. Well, we cancelled most of it, but we ran into this absolute stone wall with Whitney where Dr. Si--what in the hell is Dr. Si's last name, Si--? [Silas Grant] Well, the doctor at Whitney that had organized this thing. Johnson had incautiously agreed to speak at Whitney, and Si, he just refused to cut it down.

So we finally agreed that could be the one speech of the fall, the doctors had said one speech. So Jake Pickle and I went up to take a look at Whitney, and my God, it was awful! Whitney was a little town about the size of this building that only existed because of Lake Whitney which only existed because of Whitney Dam. I don't think there were six hundred people in the whole town. The nearest city was Hillsboro, which was just far enough away to be awkward. There was absolutely no transportation of any kind into Whitney other than automobile. The most illogical spot in the world, the most illogical place in the world to have a major speech. And here was his only speech in the fall and had to be major.

So Jake Pickle and I went to work on the damn thing, and Jake really was a genius at organizing something of that nature. He got on the telephone, he was calling all over Texas and we got all kinds of pledges. And people flew in. There was plenty of flat land there, you could land and it would land an airplane. I think they had more airplanes at Whitney than we did in Guam when we were bombing Japan every night.

Meanwhile, however, there was one slightly amusing incident. He was allowed to fly up to Dallas to make a speech for Rayburn Day. There wasn't much to it. That was shortly after Eisenhower had had the heart attack, by the way. Two sidelights: one is that when I first went to work for him, one of my first jobs was to get out of the newspaper morgue a really horrible picture. It was terrible. It was taken I think the night that he thought he had won the Senate seat in 1941, and I have a hunch he'd had a couple of Scotches, because he had an idiotic grin on his face, really looked like something out of a lampoon, Mortimer Snerd or something of that nature. And at that time so many of the Texas newspapers were against him that they were all quite careful to file it. Well, for years after that whenever there was anything involving him where they needed a stock shot, they'd pull that picture out. One of my tasks was to talk newspaper editors into getting that goddamned thing out of their morgues, which I did. I think I finally got it to a point where there was not a single morgue in Texas that still had that shot. So what happened, I believe this meeting was at the Adolphus Hotel. I'm not clear on that. There are

two, they're right across the street from each other, the Adolphus and what was then the other principal hotel in Dallas.

G: The Baker, I guess.

R: That's it, the Baker. The shock that I had when I walked in to check the preparations, to see that accursed picture blown up six feet tall and hanging on the wall right where he couldn't miss it. I thought, oh my God, here goes another heart attack. I tried to get it taken down but it was too late. That was the meeting at which what he did in effect was to get up and have everybody stand and bow their head in a minute of silence for President Eisenhower, which was actually a very smart stunt. I think it was fairly unpopular with most of the people at that banquet who were very partisan Democrats, and in Dallas if you were a partisan Democrat you really got a little neurotic about it because the city was so overwhelmingly conservative Republican that you felt like a Jew in Nazi Germany to be a liberal Democrat.

But then came Lake Whitney. That turned out to be a tremendous meeting. I had written a speech for him, which he did deliver as I wrote it, except that a couple of days before the speech Bob Oliver dropped by. Bob Oliver was the lobbyist for the United Automobile Workers, and Bob Oliver had a twelve-point program. Now, Johnson was great for programs in a speech. It didn't matter to him if it was just to build a shack four by four by four by eight along the river bank, anything. And here he had twelve whole points. Now, they were all rather liberal points, and he knew that he was going to have an awful lot of trouble in Texas if his one speech for the fall was a

very liberal speech. And so he added a natural gas bill to it. And of course it really was superb protection from Texas conservatives. Nobody could be against a natural gas bill in Texas.

The speech itself was a helter-skelter sort of thing which turned out to be an absolute complete, thorough-going triumph. I think in terms of a speech that was one of the high points of his career. I had never before seen him take such complete command of an audience. It was virtually a mass orgasm. People walked out of that speech dazed. The amount of emotion that he put into it and the fire. He would take words that were very ordinary really, almost banal, and yet he could deliver them in such a way that it sounded like Joshua ordering the trumpets blown at Jericho. Of course, the liberals were unhappy with the natural gas line in his speech, but they couldn't be too unhappy because there were the other twelve points. I think it was Hubert Humphrey who said "twelve home runs and one strike out," something like that. And it really did add up to a very satisfactory round of activity for the fall.

G: Was he apprehensive about the speech?

R: Of course, terribly apprehensive. He always was. Getting him into a speech was--it really was traumatic.

G: Really? Describe the process of this one.

R: Oh, he was calling me every three minutes to change "and" to "the" or "the" to "and," to put quotation marks here, to make it a fine day or a fine day in Texas, just the most incredible nit-picking stuff. It had to be retyped each time. My poor secretary retyped that goddamned

speech so much that I think she went to bed that night, her fingers still flying, and all for very minor changes. He would insist on having the whole speech retyped. We had quite some time with the organization of it. I just barely managed to get there in time myself, as did my staff.

Of course, to walk in to see all of those airplanes, there must have been forty or fifty airplanes. I don't think there was even a flying field there, I think they just landed in the pastures. And some of them were pretty good-sized planes, too, C-42s, that kind of thing.

G: It was in an armory, wasn't it, National Guard armory?

R: Yes. That's all there was. There was an armory and about eight houses I think in the whole town of Whitney. The only thing that made it at all was that Si--whose last name I cannot remember and I wish I could, I kind of liked him--Si had about four hundred old-age pensioners that he was taking care of, and he just herded them into the place. But it was unnecessary. They were hanging from the rafters.

But the main thing about the speech, what it did, it established him without any question whatsoever as the leading Democrat that year. That was a very important step in his career. Because it not only indicated that he was coming back to lead the Senate, but it also gave him a national position. This was the first time he had ever stated a program that sounded presidential.

G: How did you translate a speech at an armory in a town of six hundred people to a national--?

R: That's what the press is for.

G: Well, describe the machinery of publicizing--

R: Well, it didn't take much machinery. After all, his heart attack had been one of the most thoroughly described events of 1955. By that time he had become such a legendary figure, second only to Eisenhower, that when a man like that had a heart attack it focused national attention upon him. That meant it focused national attention on all the things that went along with it, and that in turn meant that his one speech was going to get a tremendous focus of attention. I believe we had more reporters in Whitney that night than we would have had if he had made a major speech up in Dallas, under other circumstances. Practically the whole national press was there.

G: Really?

R: Oh, sure. I distributed copies of--actually it would have had the same impact if we had only distributed it to the wire services. That would have been enough, though I started getting immediate reactions to it. Another thing is that was one of the first national statements by a Democratic leader that really had a cohesive effect. Up to that point the so-called Democratic national leaders had been making national speeches all right, but they had no appeal to anything other than their own individual followings. The twelve points, which came from Bob Oliver--and I don't know where Bob got them; Bob may have thought them up himself--but they were perfect for coalescing almost

all of the elements in the Democratic Party. I've forgotten what he did about civil rights, but he had some reference in there that was less offensive to southerners than most of the civil rights legislation. Put all together, it really put him in the center of the entire Democratic movement in the United States. If he had made a hundred speeches like that that fall, they all would have been diluted. But just to have this one speech, which had within it a program and which was also very carefully calculated and put together, as a unifying speech, that plus his emotional delivery, which affected every newspaperman that was there. Nobody could walk out of that speech; it was one of the most moving things I've ever heard.

G: Did newsmen express this feeling to you afterward? How did you know that they were moved by it?

R: Well, in the first place I'm a newsman myself and what moves me is going to move them. But secondly, just in the ordinary force of conversation it came through. Also I could see what they were writing. The speech got tremendous play.

G: Did he consult with other Democratic senators and maybe some of the leading senators about the thirteen points before the speech?

R: Not to my knowledge.

G: He never talked to Russell about it?

R: He may have talked to Russell, I don't know. But I don't think so. I think he just got up and did it, because it came as quite a surprise to a number of them.

G: Was he pleased with the speech?

R: Oh and how! He was walking on air when he came out of there.

G: Describe his--

R: It's kind of difficult to describe. When he was pleased with himself, the phrase "walking on air" really applied to him. There would be kind of a glow, and he wouldn't see anything or anybody. He would just see his dreams. But you would get the feeling of a man whose feet were not touching the earth. I saw this several times. It always worried me, because I knew it was going to be followed by a fit of depression. I've talked to some doctors since then and described the process precisely to them, and they've all told me there's no question that he was a manic depressive. Whenever he had a manic phase, you could be certain it would be followed by extreme depression, as this was. The same thing happened, by the way, the night that he made the Gridiron Club speech that drew so much favorable attention in Washington. He was walking on air when he came out of the chamber and the next morning he was really all set to slash his wrists.

He came out of the thing and he was really walking on air. I don't think he could see me. I don't think he could see the crowd. He was sort of like somebody that had been just drunk in the sheer adulation. I sometimes wonder if he couldn't get a bigger high on from an approving crowd than he could from Scotch.

Now one thing I have forgotten is whether the Adlai Stevenson visit was before or after the speech. Is that in your--

G: Before, yes.

R: That was one of the worst bits of a depression.

G: Let me ask you some more about the Whitney speech though first.

R: Yes.

G: Let's look at those elements in it and get you to simply react to them and anything that you recall about the inclusion of these points in the speech.

R: Frankly I've forgotten what was in it, even though I wrote it. Everything in that speech is mine except the thirteen points.

G: One is a social security bill.

R: Yes.

G: Tax revision benefitting lower income groups.

R: Right.

G: Health program to aid medical research and larger grants for hospital construction.

R: Right.

G: School construction program.

R: Right.

G: Farm program of 90 per cent parity.

R: Yes.

G: Soil rental program. Public roads bill.

R: Soil rental?

G: That's what I have.

R: There's something wrong with that.

G: Yes.

R: Probably soil conservation.

G: Public roads bill, natural gas bill--right in the middle--housing program, water resources, depressed areas program, amendments to the immigration--

R: I don't think they called it depressed areas then but it's all right.

G: --amendments to the immigration-naturalization law.

R: Yes.

G: And a constitutional amendment eliminating the poll tax.

R: Yes.

G: Was this the origin of his opposition to the poll tax?

R: Oh, no. Oh, no. He made a speech very early in his career when he was still a very young congressman in which he called for an end to the poll tax in Texas. Now he always overbuilt that speech. I don't think he did it deliberately, but he himself was convinced he had made an entire speech just calling for the end of the poll tax. He once asked us to look up that speech, and by very, very careful search, the archives section finally located a speech that he had made about the time he said he made it, in which there was one reference to eliminating the Texas poll tax. But no, nevertheless he had been against the poll tax ever since he had been in the Congress.

G: And disaster insurance. Is there anything about any of these points that merits special discussion that we haven't talked about?

R: Not about the points individually, no, but about the context of the times. You must remember that 1954 was a very bad year, and 1955 wasn't any better. There was something of a recession. 1954 I think was the only year that Eisenhower's popularity dipped at all. Most of

those, if you examine them carefully, most of them were really intended to pump new blood into the economy and to bring back jobs. A roads program for instance. The roads program makes more jobs more quickly than anything else the government can do. Most of that money goes directly into salaries. You have no trouble with it because all the preliminary work has been done. There's not a single place in the United States where a road is possible that hasn't been surveyed. All you've got to do is let contracts and get a contractor out to do it.

The natural gas bill was insurance. And the poll tax bill was very carefully worded, because the southerners could not object. I mean, they would be against it but they couldn't object to a call for a constitutional amendment. But the overall significance of that speech is its unifying quality. God, it was marvelous. There was nobody in the Democratic Party that could really object to those points as a whole. It was one of the most careful balancing of opposing forces that I have ever seen.

G: Did he see the speech in advance as being something that would really catapult him to the--?

R: No, I don't think so, because I don't think he saw any speech that way. One of his great weaknesses was he considered speeches a form of entertainment. I think that this really got him into an awful lot of trouble. I don't believe that he ever saw the relationship between the speech and politics, except insofar as a speech might make people feel good and therefore would get him some more votes at the next

election. But he had no strategic sense at all when it came to speeches.

G: Did he think of including anything else in the speech that was ultimately scrapped for one reason or another?

R: Nothing that I can remember. Possibly language but no points. I really hadn't intended--and I was wrong about this--to make a substantive speech. I had thought that the role of this speech should be to pave the way for his coming back, and I just wanted to stress his sort of overall philosophy in things of that nature. But I was wrong about that, and I realized I was wrong as soon as I saw Bob Oliver's twelve points. I think I rephrased them somewhat, because Bob had them in somewhat technical language. But I didn't monkey with them otherwise. I think that I myself was the one that wrote out the actual wording of the natural gas thing, because I recognized the need for that.

G: Anything on the depression after the glow after the speech?

R: No, because what he did was hole up on the Ranch. I don't think anybody saw him for a few days. I don't know what your records show, but. . . . Of course, we were all so exhausted I think most of us went back to Austin and collapsed.

G: Well, Kefauver arrived the next day, I guess, at the Ranch.

R: He did?

G: Yes. Spent the night.

R: God, I don't remember that.

G: That probably depressed him right there.

R: It could have. I knew Estes well and I kind of liked him, but he and Estes did not get along. It was rather peculiar. Some people could fight him and he could still like them. He always liked Wayne Morse, for example. But not Estes. I think that Estes was much more unpopular with southerners than, say, Hubert Humphrey was. Any one of those southerners would take Hubert over Estes. They thought--and I think it was very unfair of them--but they sort of regarded Estes as a traitor. They were all wrong about that. Anybody that knows Tennessee knows that Tennessee wasn't much of a Confederate state. The only way it was voted into the Confederacy was because the legislature managed to get a meeting on a day when nobody was there from Eastern Tennessee. There were three states like that: Tennessee, North Carolina and Texas. Estes was a mountain boy. He wasn't from the cotton-producing areas around Memphis, which is your real Confederate part of Tennessee.

But that grated on them. And then Kefauver had a very standard tactic, which got them all pretty mad. Any time you had any kind of a liberal bill before Congress, Kefauver would always double the amount. In other words, you've got a two billion dollar housing bill, he'd come up with a four billion dollar amendment. This put everybody on the spot of having to vote against something that was good. You really can't play fast and loose with the budget like that.

G: Then shortly after Kefauver, Styles Bridges came down.

R: Oh, Styles Bridges would have been very [welcome]. That was marvelous. In fact, that I do know, that I remember very clearly. I think it kind of brought him out of his mood of depression. He and Styles

were very good friends. I can still recall Styles landing in Texas, landing out at Fredericksburg near the Ranch, and he was told this is Republican territory, which it is, you know. Fredericksburg is much more Republican than anything in New Hampshire. Styles was very pleased with that. I think that that was one of the best things that happened to him. He and Styles kind of understood each other.

G: Why was this?

R: Have you heard the story about Johnson going down to see Truman when he became chairman of the Preparedness Committee?

G: And asking Truman's advice?

R: Well, sort of as a courtesy call primarily. But Johnson and the whole committee went on down to see Truman because of Truman's old war investigating committee. And after it was over, Harry said, "Wait just a minute, Lyndon, I got a couple of private things I want to talk to you about." I got this from Johnson now, by the way. I didn't hear it myself because I didn't even know Johnson then; I didn't know him well then. Truman said, "You know, Lyndon, you're going to discover that in a committee like this you're going to be a success or a failure according to your relations with the ranking Republican. You're pretty lucky. You've got Styles Bridges as your ranking Republican. You're going to notice something rather peculiar about Styles. He's going to spend the first couple of weeks just looking at you real close. It might worry you at first. But what he's doing is sizing you up. He wants to know whether you deal off the top or if you deal off the bottom or if you deal off the middle. You know,

Lyndon, he really doesn't care because he can handle it any way you deal. He just wants to know which way. And if he discovers you're going to deal off the top, he'll deal off the top."

Well, Johnson took the advice seriously. It turned out to be very good advice. I think that he was--you know, it's always a little bit difficult to know which of Johnson's stories were apocryphal. There was a grain of truth to all of them. But he did have a tendency to exaggerate. But nevertheless, I believe that Truman did steer him in that direction. And what he discovered was that Bridges was a primary exponent of the politician's major virtue: Bridges' word is good. This is one of the things that distinguishes the professional politician from anybody else. You can always rely upon the word of a professional politician providing he's really giving it. They become awfully good at making you think they've said things that they haven't. But Bridges was a consummate politician, much more of a partisan than Johnson. Bridges was a very strong Republican partisan.

G: Did Johnson use Bridges as a go-between between himself and the Republican administration?

R: Oh, no. Bridges and the Republican administration were not very compatible.

G: Really?

R: No. Bridges was much closer to the [Robert] Taft wing.

G: Well, for example, I think there was one situation where Charlie Herring was going to be replaced and perhaps Johnson persuaded Bridges

to use leverage with Brownell or whomever to keep Herring in office for another term.

R: I can't believe it. I don't think Bridges would have had much clout with Brownell, because Brownell was with the [Thomas] Dewey wing. It's possible. It's possible. Bridges was sufficiently formidable that he was able to get quite a bit out of the administration. He got Scotty McLeod on the State Department, for instance. But Charlie Herring, I doubt if Bridges would have done it for Johnson.

G: Well, let's talk about the Stevenson visit, which I think was in September.

R: Yes. Boy, that was a bad one. And a very strange thing. It represented one of the major Lyndon Johnson paradoxes. Stevenson was coming to Texas, not to visit Johnson, but to make a speech I think at the University of Texas. He was making a speech somewhere and I assume it was the University. So he merely thought that since he was there he should pay a courtesy call on Johnson. That's all he was after. And the word got out to the press. I think that Stevenson himself mentioned it; no reason why he shouldn't. So the press immediately became very curious about it.

Well, Johnson went into one of the most outrageous--somebody should have kicked him in the--he just acted like a baby. It was the sort of thing where you couldn't even feel sorry for him, except that he was capable of generating such tremendous heat that you started being afraid that he was going to bring on another heart attack and die. That was one of his real strengths here. He was perfectly

willing to see Stevenson, but he didn't want the press out there. Well, how in the hell could you keep the press off a public highway? I remember Lady Bird calling me about midnight the night before and just begging with me to keep the press from going out to Fredericksburg. And I said, "Mrs. Johnson, I'm pretty good with the press, but I can't keep them off a public highway. You can keep them off the Ranch, of course, that's private property. But there's no way in the world that anybody can prevent the press from standing at the gates and talking to people going in and out. If you can possibly let them on the Ranch, I think you're going to wind up a lot better. Don't let them use their own imaginations as to what happened."

Well, the word leaked out to the press, what was going on, and I remember at one point talking to Adlai about it and Adlai being just outraged about the snoopy press, et cetera, et cetera, and how they were making life miserable for Johnson. He said, "I'll cancel the visit if it will help the Leader any," and I said, "No, Mr. Stevenson." We weren't on a first name basis. I later got to know Adlai very well, but I didn't then. I said, "No, that would only make things worse. Then you'd really have some problems."

So everybody went to bed that night. The tension that he had managed to create could be felt all the way to Austin. As I said, it was at midnight when Lady Bird called me. She was just crying, just crying. Apparently the people out at the Ranch were like a family would be during the Black Death in Europe, during the late Renaissance. Of course, what happened, one of the early reporters out to the Ranch

was that little short man from the Associated Press, the Austin bureau chief. He later told me about it. He was just about bursting with laughter. I can't think of his name. [Dave Cheavens] He later went to teach journalism at Baylor University. And he said that he was there at the gate--

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R: As I said, I don't remember the name of this AP reporter, but Johnson drove by the gate in his car and stopped, and he said, "Are you going to throw me off, Senator?" Johnson laughed and said, "Of course not. Hop in. Have you got any friends around?" and wham, all of a sudden he had the car loaded with newspapermen. He took them for a tour around the Ranch. When Stevenson came, he and Stevenson had a very relaxed conversation and an extraordinarily relaxed press conference afterwards with Adlai looking at me like, "What the hell have you been drinking?"

G: Well, Rayburn was there also, wasn't he?

R: I think he was, yes.

G: What was the significance of that?

R: I don't think there was any particular significance to it. I think Johnson just wanted Rayburn there as extra protection in case. . . . There had been a very bad reaction to Stevenson in Texas, very bad. He'd allowed himself to get baited by Shivers into that very, very incautious statement on tidelands [in 1952]. Johnson and Rayburn had worked out one for him that left them with no troubles whatsoever, but

Shivers was up there deliberately trying to get an anti-tidelands statement out of Stevenson, succeeded in doing it.

Secondly, some of Stevenson's mannerisms irritated Texans. I'll never forget in San Antonio where a crowd gathered, some of whom were rather threatening, and Stevenson remarked, "Do you suppose they might throw 'tomaatoes', Lyndon?" Well, umph, in Texas you don't say 'tomaatoes.' It reminds me of the time Liz Carpenter, right in the middle of Polish Day in Chicago, asked me in a loud voice that could be heard all the way down to the lakefront, "Are most of these Jewish, George?" Umph!

And I think that he probably had Rayburn along just as some special insurance. But the interesting thing was this just absolute mood of despair, despond the night before, and the relaxed, easy manner in which he handled the visit itself. I must say that this characterized Johnson in most of the things that he did. He would walk into almost any new project with all of the apprehensions that anyone could think of. He would imagine everything that could possibly go wrong, he convinced themselves they could go wrong. But once he was actually plunged into action, he would suddenly take over. He was awfully good once the shooting started.

G: Amazing. Pearson came out with a column shortly thereafter that taking LBJ to task for his lack of participation in the 1952 campaign, saying that had it not been for [William] Fulbright that LBJ would have gotten off the Stevenson campaign train when it was going through Texas.

R: No, I don't think that's true.

G: Do you remember the story though?

R: I remember the story, and I'm pretty sure it's not true although I was not on that train. The reality is he did not do much in the 1952 campaign. He did just about a minimum. He introduced Barkley, as I recall, for a speech in Austin, I guess. He went with Stevenson on the campaign train through Texas. He made one radio address, and that was about it. And it was a very disappointing performance to almost everybody on his staff. We were all madly for Adlai.

But nevertheless, I think that he was right, that there was not a chance for Stevenson to carry Texas that year. And it wasn't just because Stevenson was liberal and Eisenhower was conservative. I think it was, again, the factor that I mentioned earlier, this question of reconciliation, that the people of Texas, as most of the people of the United States, were tired of all of the continual bickering and the air of partisan maneuvering and sniping that constantly surrounded Harry Truman. It's funny, I've never in my life known a more straightforward man than Harry Truman, but he did get interpreted by the public as being indirect and somewhat sly, which he certainly wasn't. Harry Truman always told you precisely what was on his mind. That was one of his problems, he was constantly getting into fights because he wouldn't modify any of his language. In that particular year it's almost surprising that any state went Democratic, but certainly not Texas. And what little chance Adlai had to carry Texas, which wasn't much, he lost with the tidelands bill.

G: Shortly after the Stevenson visit, Hubert Humphrey came to the Ranch. Do you remember that?

R: Yes. There isn't much to tell about it. The funny thing is that Johnson and Hubert were pretty good friends. They had both known each other back in the days of the National Youth Administration, when both of them had been officials of the National Youth Administration. And furthermore, Johnson envied Hubert's ability to stand up and make a speech any time he felt like it. Hubert actually relaxed him.

G: Tommy Corcoran and Jim Rowe came shortly thereafter.

R: Yes. Again, don't attach any deep significance in terms of long range presidential plans or anything of that nature to that. I've forgotten now precisely why they did come down. I'm not even sure there was any reason for their coming down, I think they may have just been in the area. But they were both very good friends of Johnson's. Don't forget they had all been young New Dealers back in the Roosevelt era.

G: I'm just wondering if these occasions trigger any specific memories?

R: None in particular. I remember them all, but you see there's just no great significance to them.

G: Okay. Now there was a Bill White story at the time that was very controversial. It was one that LBJ denied. Let's see, it was something to the effect that when Gerald Griffin and Bill White went to the Ranch and left saying that LBJ, or wrote something saying that LBJ was trying to build a conservative coalition.

R: No. It was a--not a conservative coalition really. That what was going on at the Ranch was the start of one of the most tremendous

presidential campaigns in history, which would center around a conservative coalition. And to this day I don't know where Bill got it, because I was with him every minute he was on the Ranch. It's one of those things. It's rather difficult to explain to somebody that's never been a reporter, but every once in a while even the very best of us will see something that isn't there. I did it myself.

I can remember shortly after World War II, when I was back working for the United Press, covering a hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee at which Sumner Wells, then under secretary of state, was speaking, and I very clearly and distinctly heard Sumner Wells say, "a communist-dominated government anywhere in the world is a menace to the security of the United States." I thought, oh boy! I went on down and I wrapped that out as a bulletin real quick. It made headlines this big all over the United States. And along about three o'clock in the afternoon, when the story had penetrated to the State Department, Wells called and said, "I don't believe I said anything like that." Lyle Wilson, the bureau man, said, "If Reedy says you said it, you said it. I'll go get the transcript."

Well, they got a transcript and damn it, it wasn't in the transcript. Well, Wilson decided--Lyle Wilson, my boss--decided they must have jimmied the transcript. Lyle was always very loyal to his reporters, but I had a sinking feeling at that moment. Unfortunately that turned out to be one of the first congressional hearings that had ever been taped, and NBC or CBS, I've forgotten which, had a tape and Lyle and I went over and listened to the tape, and it wasn't there. Whew!

The words were there all right, but there were words in between, and somehow the only words that I heard came out that way. I was walking back thinking the first words I'm going to hear when I get in the office are "Reedy, you're fired. Reedy, here's a fifty pound rock, go jump off the bridge. Reedy, forget it." I was thinking I've got a wife, I've got kids, how in the hell am I going to support them. I'll never forget, going back Wilson kind of grinned and he said, "Look, George, if anybody says anything, including Mert Akers [?], remind Mert of the time he bought four German paratroopers down on the coast of North Carolina, and also remind him of the time that Roy Howard flashed the armistice a week before the Allies got around to it." And thank God the thing passed over. But this happens to you. It happens. There is no explanation for it. Every journalist that's honest will tell you, if you can get him to own up, that he has at one time or another done something like that in his life.

Now, there was not one single thing going on at the Ranch that gave any justification whatsoever for the Bill White story. And not only that, there were two other people there. There was Gerry Griffin, that was his name, from the Baltimore Sun, and there was Scoop Russell from NBC. The story in my book about his talking about his mother and how that rough--that's the time that it happened.

Well, there was a hell of a lot of activity going on. Yes, he was digging a swimming pool. He took them all over the Ranch. He always used those automobiles like cutting horses, drive them right across the field. But politics, there was absolutely--even Bill White

admitted to me later that he didn't know why--oh, what he told me later was that he had made some reference to Johnson about "well, you're really serious now about going ahead with the presidential campaign?" And he said Johnson grunted, which he interpreted as an affirmation. That's what that whole story was based on. But Gerry Griffin didn't write anything like that, and Gerry was right there and Gerry was a very perceptive reporter. I talked to Scoop later on. He didn't have anything like that. It was just one of those aberrations.

G: What was Johnson's reaction to the story?

R: Well, hard to tell. He was really outraged. He had me call Bill White, then he called Bill White. Poor Bill, who was very fond of Johnson, kind of got the feeling that--of course Bill became somewhat defensive and tried to insist that when Johnson had grunted that way he regarded it as confirmation. But it all blew over in a couple of weeks. The thing was absolutely ridiculous. I know of no better example in my life of something being reported which had absolutely no foundation. There wasn't any foundation to it.

G: Did Johnson feel that this would hurt him because of his thin margin in the Senate?

R: I don't think it was that. I can only theorize, because the story really didn't hurt him. If anything, I think it helped him some. But I think that at that particular time he was beginning to flirt a little bit with the presidential bug. I don't believe that he had bought it yet, I don't believe that he was infected with it, but I think it was one of the things that was spinning around in his mind.

And when Johnson was considering a course of action, or even when he was on the verge of considering a course of action, he would invariably try to wrap it around so that nobody else would know he was thinking about it. This again was another very important characteristic of his. He did not want people to know what he was thinking until he had made up his mind. Well, I think that he was just at the beginnings then of the thought that a presidential campaign was possible, and again, that's only a guess on my part. He may never even have gone that far. But I think what happened is that he was outraged by the thought that somebody else was revealing his thoughts.

G: [John] Stennis had also written to Johnson saying that he wanted to make a speech supporting LBJ for president. LBJ wrote him back asking him not to do that.

R: Oh, of course. He would have in the first place. No matter what LBJ was thinking, he would have been opposed to such a speech anyway, because suppose Johnson was a presidential candidate, to have your campaign kicked off by a representative from the most Confederate of all the Confederate states is not an auspicious launching pad.

G: Now, you were in Austin during this period, is that right?

R: Yes. Oh, sure.

G: Sort of heading his office there?

R: No, Walter was heading the office. I never headed anything, in terms of actually administering anything. I was there as an adviser, speechwriter.

G: And Grace Tully was in Austin, too.

R: Oh, yes. You know, I think that one overall comment that should be made about that fall, I think one of the things that he was trying to do, he'd been so badly shaken by the heart attack that I believe he wanted external evidence that there was a Lyndon Johnson, because he became overly fond of seeing his name in the papers, became a real obsession with him, something that normally didn't matter. Of course, Grace Tully, when Grace Tully arrived in Austin, my God, the Austin American-Statesman had virtually nothing else on the front page. And an awful lot of the things that he did that fall which have since been interpreted as indicating the desire to forge ahead in politics, I doubt it. I think an awful lot of that was just so he could have external evidence that somewhere in the world there was a Lyndon Johnson. In other words, if other people saw Lyndon Johnson then Lyndon Johnson must exist. I'm no psychiatrist and I hate to indulge in Freudian interpretations, but it's the only logical answer that I can see to some of the things that he did.

G: One thing that he did do in terms of substance was to work to prevent the army from moving a bunch of troops out of Fort Polk, Louisiana. He made some calls and worked on that. Do you remember that? Do you know why--?

R: Not particularly. Probably doing a favor for Russell Long, I would guess.

G: Tell me about building the swimming pool.

R: That swimming pool became one of the great construction projects of history. Just one day he wanted a swimming pool, and like everything

else that Lyndon Johnson did, within a matter of hours a shovel was there, a big steam shovel, to dig out the ground. He had it heated. He had it completely surrounded with all kinds of fancy accoutrements. Of course, one of the servants, one of the yard boys had to keep it clean every morning, which meant skimming the stuff off the top and vacuuming out the bottom. Over the years that swimming pool had quite a metamorphosis. He liked them warm, he did not like cold water. I myself hated that damn pool. I didn't go into it unless he absolutely forced me into it, because I want water to be cold. I'm a northern boy and if I don't feel the shock when I jump in, I just feel like I'm taking a bath. I don't feel like I'm swimming. He finally got one of those great big balloon things put over it to take out the chill of the winds.

What he dearly loved to do was to either lie alongside of the swimming pool in a huge recliner, or actually float around in the swimming pool in sort of a reclining chair that was made to float in swimming pools. I'll never forget one day when I saw Stewart Alsop floating around in one of those, and I couldn't help myself. I looked out and here was Stewart Alsop in the middle of the pool. I don't know if he had a mint julep in his hand, but I think it was a mint julep. I looked and I said, "Stewart, right now I'd sure as hell like to have a picture of this to go with your next Christ-how-the-wind-blew-column." He was always predicting doom.

Later on when they put that bubble on, one of the funniest things

I ever saw--I saw this from an airplane--was when the peacocks that he had on the Ranch attacked the bubble.

G: Oh, really?

R: Yes. There was a colonel and a lieutenant and about four sergeants out trying to chase the peacocks away, and it was so big they'd chase the peacocks away from one side of this big bubble and the peacocks would just fly over and start attacking the other, you know, slashing open all of this fabric with their beaks.

G: Well, did LBJ supervise the construction of the pool?

R: And how! Every shovelful. He did, he engaged in an awful lot of activity that fall, but very little of it can really be placed in the category of purposeful political activity. If I had to rate those things, I'm not even sure these were purposeful in the ordinary sense, but they turned out to be very important. There was the Rayburn meeting in Dallas, and there was the Lake Whitney speech, and that was really about it. Everything else was the kind of thing that generated quite a bit of newspaper attention, which was what he wanted. And I think it did help him in sort of an overall sense. It kept people aware of his presence. But there was nothing there that really indicated any long range planning.

G: Several other things. He did go to San Antonio and address some banquet honoring Harry Jersig.

R: Jersig. Harry Jersig. That was almost toward Christmas if I remember right.

G: Late, late November.

R: Yes. By that time the doctors pretty well let him do anything he wanted to. Yes, but that was just an old friend, Harry Jersig. I wouldn't attack any significance to that at all.

G: And then he flew to Los Angeles and took the family to Disneyland and spoke to a hotel group, I guess.

R: No particular [significance]. I think he just wanted to go out to Los Angeles and Lynda Bird wanted to see Disneyland is about it.

G: While he was out there he met with Noah Deitrich. Why would he do that?

R: I don't know. I wasn't there on that trip. In fact, I think I'd gotten back to Washington by then.

G: But did he have any contact with Howard Hughes that would have--?

R: I know that he knew him. That's about all I know. I think that if there had been--you know, when Johnson had some significant relationships with people, sooner or later something would happen whereby they'd get referred to me, and this never happened with Howard Hughes.

G: He went to Las Vegas also in December.

R: He liked Las Vegas. There was plenty of action. But again, don't attach any significance to it. No reason. Again, let me add this, I think both Los Angeles and Las Vegas could be attributed to this desire to have objective proof that there was a Lyndon Johnson. One bit of proof could be that he was enjoying himself at both places. You know, dubito ergo sum, if I doubt therefore I am, maybe if I enjoy therefore I am.

G: He returned to Washington about mid-December.

R: Yes.

G: And met with a number of people at the Capitol and held a large press conference, standing room only; a hundred and twenty-five reporters were there. Do you recall anything there of significance?

R: Nothing specific. The purpose of the conference, of course, was to reassure everybody that he was coming back and was going to take over the Senate.

G: Well, he said at the time that it would be up to his doctor.

R: That was just playing it cautious. This was all groundwork.

G: Yes. Then he attended some meetings at the White House. And then you and Wesley West and his wife and Juanita Roberts, Olaf Anderson and Senator Russell all flew to Atlanta.

R: Yes.

G: I think he had his checkup at Emory.

R: Yes, with Willis Hurst, that's right.

G: Tell me about that.

R: There isn't much to tell you. In fact, about the only thing I can really remember is the hotel in Atlanta where Wesley West had discovered that roast beef was served that thick. I think that at that particular point it was all fairly well cut and dried. I think the trip to Atlanta was largely ritual. He wanted somebody to certify that he was okay and Willis Hurst certified that he was okay. Willis Hurst, after all, had been the doctor in charge of his case at Bethesda.

Oh, I can remember a lot of individual conversations with Wesley West, and I can remember one thing on the airplane where he wanted everybody to start thinking of things to do once he got back to Washington. Of course, that's one of those requests that would be much better left in the breech than honored. That's when Wesley West came up with the idea of having a telephone where he wouldn't have to lift it so it would cut down on the strain.

G: A speakerphone sort of thing.

R: Yes. And Wesley had also arranged to get him some really top-notch suits, cost about four hundred dollars apiece, which in those days was about as high as you could get for a suit.

G: Now, West seems to have been much more conservative than Johnson.

R: Oh, sure. Good God, yes! Wesley West was way to the right of McKinley. But he was very, very enamored of Johnson, and not for any specific reason that I could ever see. I don't think he ever got anything from Johnson. Wesley West is a very good-hearted man, very good-hearted. I like both him and Neva very much. Wesley was one of those generous men. He had made an awful lot of money. He was one of the fabulous types of Texas oil operators that really struck it rich, and he put his money into a number of things. He had a Pepsi-Cola franchise in Georgia, for instance, and various other odds and ends, and he had his own private airplane with a pilot known as Big Deal, and they flew us everywhere. I think it just gave Wesley a satisfaction to be associated with Lyndon Johnson. I know everybody liked Wesley. Whenever Wesley would visit the Ranch the servants were

always pleased as heck because he would always leave them with very generous tips. They liked Wesley, and you couldn't help but like Wesley. He is one of the most even-minded sort of gentle men that I have ever known.

G: Good dry humor, too.

R: Not exactly, no. But he was a gentle man, put it that way.

G: There's another relationship that I want to ask you about, and that's the friendship between LBJ and August Busch.

R: Gussie?

G: Tony Buford.

R: I don't know where that originated. I know that I wrote more letters to Gussie and Tony. I've often wondered about that collection of letters they have. It must be about that thick, and I think I wrote every goddamned one of them. I don't know where he first met Gussie and Tony, but I do know that part of it included a relationship with a public relations man in St. Louis whose name I cannot now remember, but who worked for Gussie. I never met Gussie. I got to know Tony fairly well. Also, in 1960, when he really did begin to do some serious things about the campaign, through the Buschs he was able to secure the support of that black newspaper editor in St. Louis.

I remember the first time I had to answer a Tony and Gussie letter--or Gussie and Tony--I had to go in and ask him who in the hell they were, because there wasn't a name, just Gussie and Tony, and I never heard of either one of them.

G: Did the heart attack slow down Johnson?

R: It speeded him up if anything.

G: He didn't cut back on his schedule?

R: No. Well, he did for that fall, yes, and he talked about cutting back in his schedule, but he didn't really do it. I had some interesting conversations with the doctors and they all agreed--Burchell, Cain and Hurst--that to cut down his schedule would probably be worse than adding to it. They said that his psychology was such that if you forced him into complete idleness the frustrations would almost certainly bring on another heart attack. What they were trying to do was to strike a happy mean, reach a point whereby there would be enough activity that he wouldn't be frustrated for lack of something to do, but without pushing it too hard.

G: Did he talk about death after the heart attack? Did he seem more preoccupied?

R: No. No, but he wouldn't anyway, he wouldn't anyway.

G: Why not?

R: I think in a certain sense he was kind of superstitious. That's one of the things that happens to you when you lose religion, you become very superstitious. About the closest he would ever come to it, I remember one meeting we were at somewhere in Central Texas, a small town, where some elderly man, he must have been in his late eighties, stood up and asked one of those totally unexpected questions for which nobody can ever prepare you. He said, "Lyndon, are we aware of the presence of God?" which is a hell of a thing to be confronted with in a room with about a hundred people in it and you having had a heart

attack a little earlier. I remember a long, very effective answer he gave about he didn't know how most people felt, but he knew he was aware of the presence of God. In the first place, there was a prayer delivered in the Senate every day, and in the second place, he had had an experience which had led him to an appreciation of what it meant to be close to God. But I don't think he could talk about it. I think that he would boggle at it. It simply wasn't possible.

G: Did the heart attack make him more inclined to practice religion?

R: Not precisely. He had a habit of going around all the churches, but I'm not sure how much of that wasn't sort of to spread the favors. I don't think he realized that that was quite annoying to many people. You know, if you go to a different church every Sunday, people of each church are going to decide you weren't very serious about any one of them. I think that he--and he was--his knowledge of religion was really very, very fragmentary. He knew something about the fundamentalist evangelical sects, the Baptists and the Christians, in which he had been baptized. That hurt his mother very much, the fact that he wasn't baptized in the Baptist Church. But he had no concept of Catholicism, no concept of Anglicanism or Lutheranism. He loved the mysteries and the rituals of the church. You know, there's a famous story about Luci getting him to go out at midnight to see her little monks up the street. Probably happened, because that sort of thing would impress him, but would impress him as show. I don't think he ever realized the connection of the rituals to one's inner life.

You've either read or I think I've told you the story of the time the two of us were kneeling at the altar rail.

G: It's in your book.

R: Yes. And he suddenly hands me a poll. By the way, his knowledge was so poor that he did not even know what a priest was, really. He thought the priest was there to preach, which of course is what a preacher is there for. There is no such thing as a priest in the Baptist Church or in the Christian Church.

G: There was a time I think when he started going to church regularly after not having done so.

R: Yes.

G: Was this in the vice presidential period?

R: Yes.

G: Why did he do that?

R: I'm not sure. I think part of it may have been that he thought it was obligatory upon himself as a national character. Not that he was trying to confer favors or anything, just that he thought that this was one of the obligations of the office. Part of it may have been a very sincere search for some kind of certainties, for some ultimates. You know, he lacked ultimates. There were very few things in Johnson's life that were ultimate. I don't believe he even understood that he liked them. That horrible bit of nonsense of which he was so very fond, "I'm a free man, an American, I'm this, I'm that." If you really read that carefully and analyze it for its meaning, it's egregious

blather. What it really comes out to is "I'm anything, I'm nothing, I'm everything."

G: What was Mrs. Johnson's role that summer and fall in the recovery from the heart attack?

R: A rather important one, because I never saw a woman more obviously in love with a man and more obviously grateful that he had been rescued.

G: How was this manifest?

R: Just in her face, you could see it. I remember once when we were walking down the path, she just reached over and gave him a quick hug. You could almost feel the joy bubbling in her vein that he was still alive. I think she forgot and forgave all the times that he'd made life miserable for her, which he did very often. But she was there, she was sensible, she was solid. I think that was her main attraction for him, the fact that she was solid, she was sensible, she was there. And of course what happened, it deprived the girls even more of her presence and her motherhood. I think they spent almost all of that time with Willie Day [Taylor]. I believe Willie Day moved into the house out on 49th Street or wherever it was. You know, I don't think the girls came down to the Ranch until late that fall now that I think of it. Well, I may be wrong there, it doesn't matter.

G: They stayed in Washington?

R: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. You can ask Willie Day. She would know.

G: Anything else on Johnson's recovery from the heart attack?

R: I think that the most important single manifestation was his sudden obsession with young people. He would sit up late at night with the

[Harry] McPhersons--they were very young then--with the [Bill] Brammers, with all of the very young people on the staff, sometimes forget to come home for supper, leaving Mrs. Johnson in quite a little dilemma.

G: But hadn't he always been that way with L. E. Jones and Gene Latimer when he was with [Richard] Kleberg, and John Connally?

R: No. No. That was different. Those were all obvious proteges whom he was grooming for positions. All of those were men of some very obvious ability, whom he was building up as part of an organization. This was not that at all. This was purely, absolutely, completely, entirely social.

G: He was told to stop smoking.

R: Yes.

G: Did he stop smoking?

R: As far as I know. Walter tells me that he once smoked a cigarette at a race track, which probably meant the Fredericksburg fair grounds or something like that. But for all practical purposes he did stop. Boy, it was terrible at first.

G: Did you smoke at the time?

R: Oh, sure.

G: Did he try to get you to stop smoking?

R: No. But I didn't smoke in his presence. I was a very heavy pipe smoker then. It was easy enough for me just not to smoke when he was around. I know one of the things that he did, he'd have huge jars of sour balls all over the place in order to have something to suck on,

and he used them so often that he actually started to develop ulcers in his mouth. Sour balls will do that. They're rather acidic, you know.

G: The veterans land scandal took place during that period. Bascom Giles was tried and sent to jail. Did this have any association at all with Johnson?

R: No. Not at the time. Of course he later used it very effectively in the campaign against Shivers. He knew Bascom Giles. I knew Bascom very slightly, and I think he only knew him slightly. Bascom, as I recall, had the Cadillac agency in--I think he had the Cadillac agency in Austin, and Johnson much preferred Lincolns. But there was no connection whatsoever between Johnson and Bascom Giles.

G: Okay. Another thing, Secretary [Harold] Talbott resigned--

R: Air force, you mean?

G: Yes. Conflict of interest.

R: And how!

G: That was pretty blatant, wasn't it?

R: Oh! It was so blatant it almost wasn't blatant. He was using air force stationery, for the love of God, to drum up clients! And I think the man had no realization whatsoever of what he was doing. I think to him the business world was so normal, to him--I think that in Talbott's eyes business was normal and everything else was a peripheral activity. Therefore why shouldn't he use air force stationery?

No, there were a number of scandals that hit the Republican Party about that time, and they were all rather peculiar scandals.

You know, there is a difference between Democratic scandals and Republican scandals. Democrats that get into scandals usually reach in somewhere and pull out a handful of money. Republicans that get into trouble usually get into trouble because they're using their official position to promote projects that otherwise would be legitimate. I've noticed for years that difference in the pattern. You tell me what a scandal is and I can tell you almost immediately whether it was committed by a Democrat or a Republican.

G: Anything on Johnson's reaction to that, to the Talbott thing?

R: Oh, he didn't have much reaction to it really. It was useful because Eisenhower had been talking about cleaning up the mess in Washington. Here he had the Dixon-Yates contract, and he had Talbott, he had four or five other things all hit in a row. I think I wrote him a memo on that in which I summarized them all at one time.

G: That's in the 1956 material, or 1957.

R: 1956 probably.

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G: See, 1956 was a year in which he was certainly striving to build a national position. I still do not know whether he was building that because he had ambitions for the presidency, but for whatever reason, he was building a national position. I think you'll discover in going through the memos that there was a lot more press activity involved, considerably more. And also there was--whether conscious or not--a reshaping of a number of things to definitely place him on the national scene rather than to be on the local scene. The Southern Manifesto

was an excellent example of that, the fact that he walked out and didn't sign it. And yet at the same time set it up in such a way that nobody urged him to sign it either.

G: Can you give me the background of that and explain how he set it up?

R: Well, I know how he did it, he did it through Dick Russell. See, Russell was the unchallenged leader of the southern bloc. If there was any person that had a dominant position over a large number of senators in the United States Senate, it was Russell. Because the southerners had learned that Russell was not going to get any of them in trouble, that as long as they went along with Russell and played fair and square, he would play fair and square with them.

Now, the pressures upon the southerners really began to pile up in 1956. What was really happening, of course, it was the preliminary to the overwhelming force which finally put the civil rights bill through in 1957. I don't know why it is, but there is a rhythm to the development of an issue, and by 1956 it became apparent, to me anyway, that we'd reached a position where a civil rights act was inevitable. When was another question; it might be five years, it might be six years, it might be seven years. But obviously there was going to be a civil rights act. And I think the southerners were conscious of that, and that therefore they began to fight a number of rear guard battles, battles either to postpone the dreaded day as long as they could or at least to convince their constituents that they were going down fighting. And one aspect of that was the Southern Manifesto. Now, of course, it was couched in all that Aesopian language of which people

are capable when they're in their spot. But nevertheless, it was a very difficult proposition. There was no question whatsoever that anybody that signed that manifesto could never become president of the United States. It was solely and simply a cry of defiance from one region. It was really cutting off the South from the rest of the nation.

G: Whose idea was it, do you know?

R: No, I don't. I suspect that it may actually have been generated by Russell, but generated by Russell because he was trying to head off something even worse. Strom Thurmond at that point was not an influence, but he was capable of creating a considerable amount of trouble with his fellow southerners. He was becoming more southern than--we talk about somebody being more Catholic than the Pope. Well, at that particular point Strom had become more Confederate than Robert E. Lee. He had the power that so often resides in someone who has cut himself off from all political organization, which Strom had really done. He'd cut himself off from everybody. He was so deeply involved in the Confederacy that he really had no organizational obligations. And a person like that is capable of coming up with all kinds of weird things that really put people on the spot. And I sometimes have the feeling that Russell may have sensed that, and in order to head off something really ferocious, came up with the Southern Manifesto, which at least was couched in respectable language. It didn't refer to niggers and it didn't reblow the calls that summoned Pickett's charge at Gettysburg or anything like that. That's quite possible. I am not

certain what went on within that southern bloc. I do know that nothing could stop that manifesto.

However, Russell at the same time was conscious of the fact that if he put Lyndon Johnson on a spot with that manifesto, that it would wreck one of Russell's major plans. Russell was very determined to elect Johnson president of the United States. Obviously Russell knew that this would end it. Now just how he timed that maneuver I do not know, and I had my heart in my mouth because I was confident that people were going to be very pointed about that, that we were going to get heavy mail from Texas, "Why didn't you sign it?" and some of the other southern senators might kick over the traces. Now I don't know how Russell handled that, but I know he handled it.

G: Didn't he say that Johnson, because he was in a leadership position, was not asked to sign it?

R: Of course that's what he said. But I'm not talking about what he said publicly. I'm talking about what he did. That's a rationale. It's as good as any other rationale. I suspect that what he sold them on was "hey, look, we might get a southerner in the White House, don't queer it." He wouldn't use that kind of language, but I believe that's what he probably told them privately. But the public rationale was you would not ask the leadership to sign something like this. I think it was Kefauver that didn't sign it.

G: Yes, those two. Did Johnson ever consider signing it?

R: Oh, good God, no. He had more sense than that. It would have made his position impossible in Texas, because no matter what the language

was, no matter how respectable it was, it was very obviously aimed solely and simply at civil rights. Now, you have to realize that Johnson's most consistent constituency in Texas consisted of the Mexicans and the blacks, and he could not kick them in the face. He couldn't play the kind of game that Olin Johnston did, of South Carolina, which was to be openly and very blatantly racist, but would slip all the aid that he could to the blacks out the side door when people weren't looking. You couldn't play that game in Texas.

G: Well, Johnson had certainly opposed the blacks on a number of issues, the civil rights bill.

R: Not really. What Johnson did, and it may not have been very heroic, if you look at the record very carefully he ducked the issue, for which I don't blame him, because there was no way of winning on it. But if you go over his record with a fine-tooth comb, what you will find is that he just simply managed to be standing somewhere else whenever the thing came up. Most of his voting--and of course this wasn't too hard to do. No civil rights bill had gotten much further than a series of procedural motions, until he finally brought the 1957 act to the floor. So consequently it was not too hard for him just to vote procedurally. I'm not sure that he ever--he may have cast a couple of votes on some civil rights issue early, but I'm not sure he ever had the chance. Very few civil rights bills hit the floor.

G: Well, that maiden speech in the Senate in 1949, one of the civil rights measures. Of course, there he was speaking on cloture rather than. . . .

R: Of course. That's the point, you see. The northern liberals insisted on hooking cloture directly to civil rights. Now of course there was a hookup, but at that particular time everybody had forgotten that cloture was originally a liberal weapon; that's what it was, you know. If you look at the history of filibustering, you're going to be very surprised. The southern bloc never participated in more than five or six filibusters. Your big filibusters were the Sons of the Wild Jackass, people like Bob LaFollette, old man LaFollette, Phil LaFollette from this state, George Norris, Senator Gore--the one from Oklahoma, not Tennessee--people like that. The filibuster was, generally speaking, evolved as a method of stopping the huge land grant steals that the railroads were getting away with.

G: LBJ did attend a meeting for southern senators in Senator George's office in early February I guess, and they did discuss the issues of segregation and interposition. Do you recall any significant--?

R: Yes. I don't remember it at all.

G: What were his relations like with, say, Clarence Mitchell or Roy Wilkins at the time?

R: Some with Clarence Mitchell, not much with Roy Wilkins. I knew Roy very well and I knew Clarence, and most of his contacts with them were through me.

G: Did he ever help, say, the NAACP on the Hill indirectly before the 1957 Civil Rights Act?

R: I don't see how he could have. There wouldn't have been any way that--

G: I mean, any kind of legislation that they were interested in?

R: They were only interested in the civil rights; they weren't interested in anything else. By the way, Wilkins later became a very strong, almost adoring admirer of Johnson's. After Johnson died, he wrote the finest column about him that I've ever read.

G: Any other aspects of Johnson's relations with black leaders, let's say, Thurgood Marshall, during this period?

R: No, I don't think he knew Thurgood.

G: How about the Texas leaders, people like W. J. Durham--?

R: Oh, he was very close to most of the Texas people.

G: Who in particular?

R: Well, you've got to have sort of a couple of divisions here. In the first place, there weren't too many blacks in Texas as compared to other southern states. You only had thirteen counties with black majorities, and that's not many out of two hundred and fifty-two [four]. But most of his contacts in Texas were with the black preachers, and he had quite a few of those, and then with people like Hobart Taylor, the man--I'm not talking about the son now, I'm talking about the father. Most of the people at the various black colleges, they were all giving Johnson very quiet support, because they realized that to support him publicly would hurt him. This is one of those deals where they'd actually drive out to his house sometimes at night and talk to him. But they sort of got along with Johnson in a peculiar way. They really got along with Johnson much better than they did with the northern liberals, because they felt that he at least shared

with them the feeling of economic deprivation and of being forced to sit below the salt.

He really never had any trouble with the blacks in Texas, or with the Mexicans, although he had more trouble with the Mexican leadership, people like Hector Garcia and Ed Idar. I knew Ed Idar fairly well; I knew him quite well actually. And I knew Hector Garcia somewhat. But the Mexicans as a whole really didn't follow those people. They were much more likely to follow the Kazens. Johnson always got that Mexican vote one thousand solid per cent, and it's a mistake to think that that was just because the ballot boxes were being stuffed. They weren't. Johnson had a real empathetic relationship with the Mexicans in Texas, which I think arose out of his days as a teacher at Cotulla.

G: He seems to have used or had as a chief liaison with the blacks Everett Givens, a dentist in Austin.

R: Yes. He was very close to Everett. And Everett was probably more solidly in the leadership structure of blacks in Texas than were the NAACP people. The NAACP, and I'm not decrying the organization in the slightest. This is not one of those talks that you'll get out of so many people, how the leaders don't follow the masses. I think that in most states in the Union the NAACP was a central organization that had the allegiance of blacks. In Texas that wasn't quite true, for all kinds of complex reasons. I think that in Texas what you had was a leadership structure that was based to a considerable degree upon the economic success of a number of blacks in Texas. Blacks did somewhat better in Texas than they did in the rest of the country. I don't

mean by that that it was paradise for them or anything like that, but you did have Hobart Taylor, whom some people speculate may have been the first black millionaire. I don't know. I know young Hobart once told me that actually none of his ancestors had been slaves since the eighteenth century, that the first Taylor that was brought over to this country got so good in managing the affairs of a plantation that the plantation owner set him free and set him up as a boss of the plantation.

G: Mack Hannah was well off.

R: Yes.

G: Probably more so than Hobart Taylor.

R: That could be. But I think that fundamentally what happened here is that there was the development of a genuine [black] middle class in Texas. And young Hobart has told me that when he went to Prairie View [A & M] there were lots of sort of underground relations between the black students at Prairie View and the white students at Texas A & M. That it was one of those things that nobody ever admitted in broad daylight, but that the relationships were rather close.

G: Let me ask you now about the natural gas bill. That came up early in the session, and of course you had Francis Case's announcement.

R: Yes. God, that was incredible.

G: First of all, let me ask you to go into the background. You've talked about natural gas and the issue in earlier years. But it was really

on the front burner this time. Why was that? Why was it a top priority?

R: Because some of the problems of regulation had begun to appear, and there were real problems involved in the regulation of natural gas. I'm not here trying to tell you that the people that produce natural gas are all saints who are motivated by Peter and Paul. But there are real problems in regulating the production and the sale of it, and those problems have never been satisfactorily met. The main reason for the problem being the fact that there are so few ways you can transport it. If you strike natural gas you've got to build a pipeline to wherever you're going to transport it. Now suppose that everybody on that pipeline, they adjust, they become accustomed to getting natural gas, and all of a sudden it runs dry. What in the devil are you going to do? And you have this peculiar situation where people are not going to drill for natural gas, which is just as hard to find as oil, unless they're assured of some sort of a profit. And on the other hand, they can't be assured of the profit unless there are customers, and there can't be customers unless you've got a pipeline, and you can't have a pipeline unless you've got some gas supplies. It's not like oil. If worse comes to worse you can pick oil up and transport it in tank cars or any one of a number of other ways. There are no alternative supplies. Well, I have seen some proposals to liquify it, but I think that's kind of pie in the sky stuff.

Now what was happening here is that they were reaching a point where some very obvious problems were just over the horizon, and

everybody really wanted those problems solved. Now, the difficulty was that that is the kind of an issue which becomes emotional so rapidly that it becomes virtually unsolvable, and this was that kind of an issue. The real battle was between the northern utilities and the southwest gas producers. The southwest gas producers wanted the regulation to be at the receiving end, on the utilities. The utility companies, on the other hand, wanted the regulation at the producing end, and the home consumer was going to pay just about the same no matter what happened. This is one of the weird anomalies of it. It made no real difference to the home consumer whether the bill was passed or not. But it wasn't presented that way to the public. To the public it looked like an outrageous effort to gouge, and what was going to happen is if the bill was passed, just overnight prices of gas would shoot sky high.

Now, the thing was compounded again by the very heavy-handed--and it was terrible--lobbying of the oil industry. The oil industry, as an industry, really had become arrogant. It's usually terribly difficult to talk about an industry becoming something, because obviously there are an awful lot of oil producers, there are an awful lot of companies. But nevertheless they had become arrogant as a whole. There were only a few of them, like Colonel Parten, Marlin Sandlin, that had any realization of just what they were running into. They were accustomed to dealing with state legislatures and their experience with most of the state legislatures they'd dealt with was that

state legislatures are easily corruptible. Now that's not true of every state legislature, but reasonably true where they were. Furthermore, they had the added fact that in Texas there was an emotional identification of most Texans with oil and ergo with gas, simply because it was paying for the education of their children. And out of all those things, the oil industry just began to swarm in Washington. All the accusations that they were trying to buy up votes I think were probably true. Most of them, of course, were much more sophisticated than that fellow that called on Frank Case and left him with, what, fifteen hundred dollars. God, isn't that pathetic? But the oil industry, I have never seen so many lobbyists concentrated in anything in my life.

G: Did they tend to represent the majors as opposed to the independents, or the independents as well as the majors?

R: No, they were all representing everybody in that one. There was no division in the industry on the natural gas bill. It was really a field day for a lot of lobbyists. I don't know who used Horace Busby, but he drew up sort of a briefing book. I remember he came in and gave me one which I put up on my shelf and forgot all about, because if there was one thing I did not need it was facts. As far as I was concerned the facts were totally irrelevant, which they were. Nobody is going to be swayed by facts.

G: Well, John Connally was working the Hill, also, I understand.

R: I think he actually set up an office. I'm not sure. However, I think at that point he was some sort of an executive and did not have to

register as a lobbyist. You know, if you're there lobbying for your own company you don't have to register under the lobbying act.

G: But didn't Johnson urge him to register?

R: Probably. And of course it didn't make too much difference, everybody knew why he was there. But the bill would have had a much better chance if all those lobbyists hadn't swarmed in Washington, because it was rather blatant. You almost had to kick them out of the way to get into your office in the morning. And they were ham-fisted, there's no doubt about that.

G: Did Johnson make any effort to subdue the lobbying?

R: He tried to tell them that you couldn't. You see, it wasn't in their experience. They'd had plenty of experience lobbying state legislatures because--see, one of the features of the oil industry is that it really had very little to do with the federal government. There was very little federal regulation of anything other than natural gas at that particular point, and the oil industry itself was not under any kind of federal regulation then. The regulation was all state regulation. So most of their lobbying efforts had been concentrated in the states. They tried to bring the same tactics to Washington. Foolish.

G: Johnson's first Senate speech after his heart attack was in favor of the natural gas bill, and he attacked the Supreme Court for trying to write the laws of the nation.

R: Yes.

G: Do you remember that speech?

R: Oh, yes. It was a very indifferent thing. He had to make it because he had to protect his Texas flank, but it was not one of the glories of Lyndon Johnson's life. It was an intellectually defensible speech because the truth of all those issues is that either side was right. That was true of tidelands, it was true of the natural gas bill. It depended on your point of view. I don't believe any honest person analyzing either the natural gas issue or the tidelands issue could come up and honestly say that after having looked carefully at both sides I find that this is right and this is wrong. I don't think you could do it.

G: Kerr seems to have led the support for the gas bill.

R: Oh, of course, because Kerr--you see Johnson was somewhat inhibited. Johnson couldn't really get out and lead a fight for the natural gas act. In the gas-producing states that left Bob Kerr as the single most important individual and most effective individual. Bob Kerr was very, very effective in floor debate, you know. I once saw him tie Paul Douglas up into little knots. I started to say Eugene Millikin, because Eugene Millikin did the same thing a couple of days earlier. Paul Douglas was a great economist and one of my former professors, and I loved him dearly, but he was so convinced of his own righteousness on both the tidelands and the natural gas act that he hadn't bothered to take a look at the other side, and oh, did they catch him flat-footed.

G: Well, let me ask you to describe the Case incident now. I think it was twenty-five hundred dollars.

R: Yes. It doesn't particularly matter. Johnson was having some kind of a luncheon at the time that Case got up to make the speech. I know Russell was involved in the luncheon and I think some other Democratic senators, but it was strictly senators. And I was in the Gallery when Case made the speech and I listened [?] and I said, "Oh, my God!" I quickly ran out and I typed a memo to Johnson. In the memo I suggested, and I still think I was probably right, that they pull the damn thing off the floor until after the investigation, because as far as I was concerned, regardless of the merits, this was going to taint the legislation to a point that to pass it without first making an effort to investigate the charges would just make life impossible. I sent in a memo to Johnson telling him what happened and suggested he get to the floor and move to delay further consideration. Well, that was rejected immediately, but the idea of holding an investigation was not. And they set up, as I recall--I'm trying to remember the exact sequence up here. I have a feeling there were two committees that looked into it. Walter George headed one of them. And of course all the investigation disclosed was that Frank Case was absolutely correct. This oil lobbyist came in to talk to him and discovered he was going to vote for the bill, and so he said he had some funds that were the private funds of the president of his company--what was it, Gulf?

G: I thought it was Sunoco.

R: It doesn't matter. I thought it was Gulf, but it doesn't matter. So what he had done was just go in and put in this fifteen hundred dollars in Case's campaign kitty. Well, of course, out in South

Dakota fifteen hundred dollars would buy you about three campaigns. I think Case would go through a complete campaign on less than ten thousand dollars in those days. There was no television. There were just a few centers where you could see people.

G: Was Case's reaction to this characteristic of Case?

R: Yes. He was a rather prim, rather precise man. Very careful in his selection of words, the kind of man that one would expect to get up and make a horrified and shocked speech, in fact, too damn horrified and too damn shocked. I think he realized that this was going to cause some trouble, and for him to say that he had--and of course he said he was reversing his vote because of it, which strikes me as being very, very strange. I mean, if I make up my mind that a bill is meritorious and somebody comes along and does something that I don't like, what happened to my thinking when I thought the bill was meritorious? But the trouble I saw in it was that after that incident it really didn't matter whether the bill was passed or not, that either way Johnson was going to be tainted with a bribe, even though he had absolutely nothing to do with it. But you couldn't help that because Texas and oil were regarded as being synonymous. Oklahoma and oil are just as synonymous but for some reason everybody thinks of Oklahoma as wheat, probably because of the musical. And people don't think of Louisiana in terms of oil and they don't think of California in terms of oil or Wyoming or any of the other oil states.

G: There were charges that LBJ picked a committee to just simply white-wash the--

R: Well, of course there were such charges. There were bound to be. I don't think that was true. I think what he tried to do, he tried to pick a very dignified committee that would--I remember now why I thought there were two investigations. Of course there was the George investigation and later there was a grand jury investigation. And he picked Walter George because he thought George was reasonably sensible, but at the same time commanded enough respect in the Senate that it would quiet people who were skeptical. It didn't work.

G: Do you think he protected John Connally in that, kept him from getting into trouble?

R: No, he couldn't have. John didn't get into trouble for the simple reason that John hadn't done anything illegal. In fact, I doubt whether very many of those oil company people did anything illegal. That was not the most intelligent step that I've ever heard of being taken, to go down and slip fifteen hundred dollars into a man's campaign fund just because you want to learn [something] from his secretary. I don't think he'd even seen Case. I think he talked to Case's secretary, as I remember.

G: The bill passed 53 to 38.

R: Yes. Of course.

G: But then it was vetoed.

R: Naturally.

G: Were you surprised? Was LBJ surprised at the Eisenhower veto?

R: No. We had no advance information or anything like that, but I had a

feeling that Eisenhower was going to veto it because he couldn't lose by vetoing it, couldn't possibly lose.

G: Of course, he had supported that, hadn't he, before?

R: I don't know. He hadn't supported that particular bill.

G: Did this strengthen LBJ's hand in Texas, the fact that Eisenhower vetoed the legislation?

R: I rather doubt whether it made much difference. I'm trying to [remember].

G: Shivers, for example. This was bound to have been unpopular in Texas.

R: Oh, yes.

G: And Shivers had supported Eisenhower.

R: I know. But you see, you have to take something else into account. Shivers, of course, had supported Eisenhower, and Shivers tried in 1956 to take the state once more into the Eisenhower camp and failed. Now the failure occurred after the Eisenhower veto of the natural gas bill. Therefore one can say that it failed because of the veto. However, the reason Shivers lost that state was totally different. The reason he lost that state was because he had decided not to run for governor, for re-election, and what this meant was that in January Shivers was going to cease to have any political influence whatsoever. So here the people of Texas had to select between a man who was going out of public office within a few months and would never have any influence, and another man who had a very powerful position in public life. I can still remember John Connally on that telephone talking to

Texans and saying, "What do you want, a live senator or a dead governor?" That was really the decisive thing.

Now, you see when you have something decisive like that, it's terribly difficult to judge what would have happened if Eisenhower hadn't vetoed the bill. My own impression, but it's strictly an impression, is that the impact of Shivers' resignation was so overpowering, especially when it was taken into conjunction with both the land grant and the insurance scandals--I don't know how carefully you've studied the Texas Constitution. It's a very strange constitution. It's the longest of the whole fifty, you know, and it's just loaded with all kinds of amendments. And one of the things that the Texas Constitution does is to put the governor on every goddamned board that the state has set up except the Railroad Commission, but put him on in such a way that he gets the onus for anything that goes wrong but has no control over them whatsoever. Now, Shivers had no real control over the land grant thing nor the insurance commission nor anything else. But nevertheless he was associated with all of them because he was attached to the various boards and commissions. I think that was the second thing that defeated Shivers. And I think that the Eisenhower veto of the bill, in comparison to those other two points, was so trivial that I don't think it had an effect.

G: We might as well talk some about the fight between Johnson and Shivers now, set the background.

R: Johnson got precipitated into that in my judgment. I think Sam Rayburn did it. Rayburn was not nearly as effective tactically as

Johnson. He was not fast on his feet. He didn't know how to swing a lot of votes, but he was a better long-range thinker. Now about that time, by 1956, some very effective opposition was building to Shivers, mostly in the labor-liberal coalition. But it very badly needed a coalescing force. It very badly needed some sort of a head. There were proposals from all over the state that Johnson run for control of the delegation. Now, again that caused problems because Frankie Randolph was just bitterly anti-Johnson.

G: What do you think was the genesis of that?

R: I haven't the faintest idea. I haven't the faintest idea. I really don't know. I can trace some of the other antipathies to Johnson, but I don't know about her. She was a very wealthy woman, and of course she was the angel financially for the whole liberal movement--not the labor movement, but the liberal movement. I think it was just one of those things where--she may have been just a crotchet on her part. I'm not even sure--Johnson only met her once. I only saw her once. She was a very disagreeable person.

But nevertheless, the labor-liberal coalition put together had a considerable amount of organizational ability and capacity, but lacked leadership. Johnson, on the other hand, only had minimal organizational capacity to fight Shivers because so many people in his organization were also part of the Shivers organization.

G: Really?

R: Yes. Well, if you'd go into a lot of those counties in West Texas especially--you know about our county system, don't you?--you'd have

found that an awful lot of our county people were also working for Shivers. And as a matter of fact, Johnson running against Shivers split his organization just about right down the middle, and it definitely was not an organization that was geared to that kind of a fight anyway.

So what happened, the alliance between Johnson and the labor-liberal coalition was a natural one. It almost had to be, regardless of what the two sides thought of each other, because neither one could get along without the other. But Johnson was terribly reluctant. I think this is one of those sort of a do-or-die choice. He was tempted by it, but at the same time he felt it was too much risk. And Sam Rayburn finally got up and just sort of kicked him in the slats and made him do it. You know, Sam Rayburn just said openly that there had to be a Johnson favorite son candidacy. I remember hearing about it and running right over to Johnson. I drew up a statement for him to make, and the statement could only be one way. He certainly couldn't repudiate Rayburn.

I remember it was amusing watching him when he made that statement. He began to relax as soon as he began to talk. There were a number of reporters in the room. Doris Fleeson was one. At first Johnson was very stiff, and he refused to comment one way or another. He was ducking all the questions. You could see that it was still churning around in his mind, should he or should he not take up the gauntlet which had been thrown to him by Rayburn. And all of a sudden he plunged into it. I remember he made some kind of a statement that

"I suppose every man has got to be a damn fool." Then he began. By the time it was over he had completely captured everybody in that room. There was a warmth to it. Here was a man that all of a sudden had made a resolution and was ready to go out and fight.

G: Did he wonder why Rayburn did it?

R: No, he knew why Rayburn did it.

G: Rayburn hated Shivers, didn't he?

R: Oh, yes. Oh! Good God, if Rayburn had ever had a chance to be alone in a room with Shivers he would have cut his throat. "From Santa Anna to Sam Rayburn," don't you know about that? Holy mother of mercy! Shivers made a speech somewhere in which he said "from Santa Anna to Sam Rayburn." That's the sort of thing that you cannot be forgiven in Texas. Santa Anna, the man who had massacred all those Texans, and to compare him to Sam Rayburn.

G: Did Rayburn also feel that Shivers had lied to him about the 1952 convention?

R: No, not particularly.

G: No party loyalty--?

R: Not particularly. He wouldn't have minded that so much. He felt that Shivers was a very bad influence. For one thing, Rayburn, for a man from a rural area, had a surprising amount of partisanship in him. You know, you don't play games like that with the Democratic Party. When it came to legislation or something like that, he'd cooperate with a Republican just as well as any other legislator. But he would not countenance taking the Democratic Party and using it to elect a

Republican. To him that would just be wrong. He would have been against Shivers under any circumstances, but the reason for the bitterness is the story that I just told you, "from Santa Anna to Sam Rayburn."

G: Well, after Johnson announced to the press that he would do that, how then did he tie into the labor-liberal coalition?

R: Well, it was easy enough. There wasn't much else the labor-liberal coalition could do. They had to come out for him because the Texas scene is such that you cannot actually oppose a dominant political element unless you have a distinctive symbol, somebody that is running for something. You're aware of the Texas precinct conventions, aren't you, and the county conventions and the state conventions? I don't know how they're conducted now, but they were very simple affairs. Somebody would say, "All you Johnson people stand over here, all you Shivers people stand over there," and they'd count. You couldn't do that unless you had a Johnson and a Shivers running against each other. There was no way in the world that you could put before those precinct conventions the question of should the Texas delegation be unequivocally committed to the Democratic Party nominee or something like that. That just wasn't feasible. I've forgotten the exact mechanics, but they don't matter. They really don't matter. What happened was inevitable, and if the particular set of mechanics that were used to bring it together hadn't happened, there would have been another set. I know, I had lots--it meant a lot of conferring between me and Kathleen Voigt and Jerry Holleman and people like that.

G: Did you spend a lot of time in Texas that spring?

R: Only when Johnson was there.

G: Did he use his own organization as well, the county men, district men?

R: Not much. No, he couldn't, because we didn't know which were reliable and which weren't. I mean, we knew some were reliable, of course, but we couldn't rely on it as an organization. But we really didn't need to very much. The main thing that Johnson did was that tour right through the center of Texas, the one which wound up with a speech in Houston, which I think was one of the most effective political speeches he ever made. Not in terms of winning over an audience, but in terms of winning an election. I remember after that we flew up to the Ranch with a New York Herald Tribune reporter that just sort of attached himself to us. What in the devil was his name? [Earl Mazo] And the returns began to come in, and the returns were just overwhelming right at the first. I don't think Shivers was prepared for the kind of repudiation that confronted him.

G: What was Johnson's mood that--?

R: He couldn't believe it at first, because it just sounded like too much. As I remember, he carried the precincts about four to one; he carried the county conventions about sixteen to one, and of course the state convention. The big fight there was between some of the labor-liberal coalitions that wanted to walk out, but the real fight was in the fall in what they call the governor's convention. I wrote out a quick statement for him, said the voice of the demagogue was heard

throughout the land, the people listened and rejected it. I shouldn't have written that.

G: Looked pretty strident.

R: Oh, yes. That was a rough campaign. I'll never forget the description of it in Time Magazine. They opened it by saying "even for Texas the battle was savage," and it was. Boy!

G: Well, tell me how it was savage.

R: The Shivers people kept putting out stories about bus loads of blacks were going to come in and swamp the polls in East Texas. You can just imagine what would have happened if bus loads of blacks from outside the state had driven into those small white supremacy towns in East Texas. They would have had everybody out with shotguns. Shivers was throwing around phrases like socialism. Walter Reuther was a very controversial figure in Texas, and I'm being polite when I use the word controversial. We, on the other hand, took all of those scandals and we wrapped them around Shivers just as tight as we could.

The campaign itself, Lord, that thing was rough! Shivers had the commissioner of insurance touring the state, just laying down the law to those insurance companies. They were supposed to get out and vote for Shivers against Johnson. Well, even though Shivers was going to be out of the governorship in January, just the same, that insurance commissioner could have done an awful lot to those insurance companies. You know, insurance is big business in Texas; there are a lot of them. It came very close to fist fights in the various organizations. The issue was terribly emotional. The openness of it, that's

the main thing. The secret ballot has never been very secret in Texas. People usually sit at a table and fill them out and you can just look over and see what the guy next to you is writing. But there's not even a secret ballot at these precinct conventions. You just sit there, and everybody knows who you're for. Obviously if you're for Johnson and vote for him and Shivers wins, you can expect an awful rough time in Texas for a long time to come. I remember I think it was in El Paso where a couple of the big companies just dismissed their employees and in effect told them to go out and vote for Shivers. Lord, that was just a tough, bare-knuckle battle.

G: Well now, did Shivers use other executive powers like the banking commission or anything like that?

R: I have no doubt that he did. The conservative vote in Texas was just overwhelmingly anti-Johnson. But again, when you speak about the conservatives being overwhelmingly--

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R: See, the conservative vote was overwhelmingly anti-Johnson, but the truth of politics is that neither the conservatives nor the liberals ever really have a majority of the votes. A better way to look at it is that occasionally the conservatives happen to be on the same side of the majority of the people, and occasionally the liberals happen to be on the same side with the majority of the people. Well, at this particular election, even though the conservatives were a hundred per cent anti-Johnson--Wesley West was probably the only exception--they just didn't have any popular following. I think the scandals had hurt

Shivers very badly, but the overall thing was the feeling that after all, this man is going to leave us in January and Johnson is going to be around for quite some time and Johnson might be president some day. That is really what carried that election.

Of course, there was very effective organization on the part of the labor-liberal coalition, especially in San Antonio where Kathleen Voigt--Kathleen Voigt is one of the most competent organizers I ever came across. She really knew how to do it. And while Texas labor is not very strong, not very numerous, it was still a reasonably well disciplined organization. Jerry Holleman was a pretty good organizer, too. I think Fred Schmidt may have been an even better organizer, but the CIO did not have the same strength as the AFL, and Fred Schmidt was primarily representing the CIO. You put all those things together and I was pretty sure Shivers was going to be defeated from the start. But I also knew that there was going to be an awful lot of trouble afterward, which there was.

G: Was Johnson afraid early on in that fight that Shivers was going to do some race-baiting?

R: He wasn't afraid, he knew he was going to. There was just no question about it.

G: Was this what led to Johnson's primary reluctance, do you think?

R: No, I don't think so. I think what led to it basically, there's an old tradition, you know Texas politicians usually leave each other alone. There are four or five states like that where there is a history of politicians staying out of each other's business. In Texas

especially there is another tradition, which is that you have kind of a national organization, that's the congressmen and the senators, and sort of a state organization, that's the governor and his people, and never the twain shall meet. I think what Johnson was afraid of was that he was going to get into the thing and that he might get beaten because people would regard him as a carpetbagger stepping across the line into areas where he had no business being.

G: Did he ever express that--?

R: No, he never expressed it to me, or to anybody else. You always had to guess what Johnson was thinking, always.

G: How did the Yarborough-Price Daniel governor's race affect--?

R: Well, he stayed out of it. Kind of interesting. I think almost the entire Johnson staff was for Yarborough, although we all got along all right with Price Daniel. But the Johnson staff was very, very liberal. Johnson himself, I'm not quite sure where he stood on that. I never heard an expression from him. But it didn't have much impact one way or the other.

G: Now let me ask you to go back to that Houston speech and describe that in some detail.

R: I'd have to see the speech now. I wrote it. I can remember getting into Houston that night, and oh Lord, I was exhausted. First of all, he was going to have an interview with--no, that was up in Dallas, that's right--Allan Duckworth. But we had a hotel room. I was so groggy I could hardly see the keys. But by that time I had a real feel of the thing. I had written speeches for him in Dallas and in

San Antonio, and I don't think they were very good speeches. Oh, they were all right, but I hadn't had the feel. But by Houston I had come to the realization that what Johnson had to do was look very big and treat Shivers in terms of sort of a minor Peck's bad boy who was throwing a lot of mud and fighting desperately for a cause which had no real basis. As I recall the speech, the most effective part of it was that where he spoke in rather pitying tones as to the fact that Shivers was becoming so terribly neurotic that he was beginning to see things that weren't there, that he was beginning to see hordes of black voters coming into East Texas that nobody else could see, that he felt that he was besieged. And of course we said he was besieged, that he had the land grant scandal and he had the insurance scandal, and there was some other scandal that I've forgotten now. But what it was, it was a somewhat lofty speech in tone, not kindly but a speech which in effect was saying, "Look, let's get this nonsense over with. We have this man that's leading you into a blind alley. Let's get this thing over with and get him out of the picture so we can go forward and do something."

G: During this occasion I think he received a death threat or something he announced at the time.

R: I don't remember it.

G: An anonymous telephone caller. This was I think after his speech in San Antonio.

R: Oh, yes. I remember something like that. I don't think anybody took it very seriously. That stuff is always flying around during a campaign.

G: Then he also indicated that when he arrived in Houston there was a telegram signed by twenty-three prominent men dealing with the racial issue.

R: I don't remember that.

G: As segregation, asking him to--

R: I don't remember that.

G: I think the columnist was Earl Mazo.

R: Earl Mazo from the New York Herald Tribune, that's it. He wasn't a columnist; he was a reporter. The main thing I remember about Houston was a walk that we took down the street that morning, and for some reason he looked like the most confident man I'd ever seen in my life. He'd gotten himself all dressed up. He was walking down the street stopping people, shaking hands, just full of vibrancy and full of life. It was a very effective stroll.

G: Who went with him, do you know?

R: Me.

G: Just the two of you?

R: Yes.

G: Where was he going?

R: Oh, no place. Just taking a walk.

G: Now shortly after that, Fred Schmidt, Jerry Holleman and Kathleen Voigt went out to the Ranch to meet with him. Do you remember that?

R: I sure do remember. John Connally was there, I was there, also, some young lawyer that was with the labor-liberal coalition. Johnson was at his absolute worst, absolute worst; Connally was almost apologizing

for him. He was surly. I remember that lawyer had to leave a little early and he tried to say goodbye to Johnson, and Johnson just sat there like a lump in his chair pretending he didn't know him, was just looking right through him. This was the sort of thing--Johnson would do things like this every once in a while that would make permanent enemies. The man was--I wonder if he ever knew how many enemies that he made just with that kind of conduct. The thing that I remember chiefly is they were talking in terms of the forthcoming state convention. And at one point Johnson said, "Well, do you have a candidate for such and such?" and of course Jerry Holleman had a candidate. I think he had Frankie Randolph, he was proposing her for something.

G: State committeewoman?

R: No. Maybe state committeewoman, national committee, I don't know. It's irrelevant. But naturally Jerry Holleman had a proposal for every job that we passed out. So Johnson began to berate him for being greedy and wanting to hog all the jobs. And John Connally, I remember that was too much for John. John stepped in and said, "Now wait a minute." What obviously happened, he said, "We'll get to the convention. Mr. Holleman will have a slate of candidates. I'll have a slate of candidates, and we'll talk about them and come to some agreement." It was a very bad night.

G: Why do you think he was in that kind of a mood?

R: I don't know. I don't know. But I don't think that the problems at the forthcoming convention would have been nearly as bad if he had shown some graciousness there. He really piled up troubles for himself

that night. I wouldn't have blamed Jerry Holleman if he had gone out and cut some of the telephone wires supplying power to the Ranch. Don't forget, Jerry Holleman was a lineman, a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. And I was ashamed of him [LBJ]. I think John Connally was, too.

G: Do you think that the victory had gone to his head?

R: No. No. The victory hadn't gone to his head. In fact, he didn't like it at all.

G: Why didn't he like it?

R: Because at that particular point I think he was suddenly beginning to realize the problems that would come after it, that it wasn't a bed of roses. But he was overexaggerating the problems. And frankly, he would have gotten through most of the problems all right if he hadn't precipitated it himself by that dog in the manger conduct. Really, there are many members of the labor-liberal coalition who certainly were obstreperous and who would--I think it would irritate anybody. They could irritate me, and I'm very easy to get along with. They would even irritate me, let alone Lyndon Johnson. But I would say on balance that the way they started to lash back at him, at both the--the state convention was San Antonio, wasn't it?

G: No, I think it was Dallas, wasn't it?

R: No. There was one in Fort Worth.

G: One was Dallas, one was Fort Worth.

R: I guess you're right, Dallas. That's right, San Antonio was later on in 1960. But no matter how you sliced it, I think that he certainly

supplied the labor-liberal coalition that night out at the Ranch with enough reasons to be bitterly anti-Johnson.

G: Well, was the purpose of the meeting that night to decide on some sort of compromise?

R: Not particularly. It was just sort of a general meeting of where are we now and where do we go from here. There were no specifics, as John Connally himself pointed out. John was obviously going to handle the Lyndon Johnson strategy at the convention, and as John himself pointed out in his question of who was going to get what jobs, "I'll have a slate and Jerry will have a slate, and we'll get together on it." That was about as detailed as they got.

G: Well, there's some indication that there was a formula to the effect that Johnson would let the labor-liberal group name the state executive committee members and he would name the national--

R: No.

G: That he was more interested in the national committeeman and committeewoman.

R: No. No.

G: There was also a degree of compromise suggested that one would name the committeeman and one would name the committeewoman.

R: That's what actually developed, but it was not a suggestion that night. That night there was just general conversation, and the closest they got to anything specific was that occasion that I've already mentioned to you. They could not have gotten anything

specific. He was just sitting there like a bear doing nothing but growling. You can't talk under those circumstances.

G: Why didn't Johnson's forces depose the Shivers executive committee in that May convention?

R: Oh, because you never do that. That's always saved for the convention that follows the national convention. No. That would be just all out of line with Texas tradition.

G: But was it because of tradition or was it because of a desire to keep the labor people from getting the upper hand, to keep some avenues open to the Shivers wing of the party?

R: No. It had nothing to do with it. It was just simply that you do not mess around with the state committee at the May convention. You see, what happened practically, though--it was rather interesting, it's very easy to get the interpretation out that you have just put on to it, because in effect, when we got to the convention after the national convention, at that one what Johnson found himself with was an alignment with the conservative forces at the convention rather than the labor-liberal coalition, which by then had broken with him almost completely. But you see what had happened there is that, as I've already explained to you, the normal Johnson organization was not useable for the campaign against Shivers. Therefore you had a coalition which had to be formed for that campaign but politically was an unnatural coalition, Johnson and the labor-liberal group. So once a rift develops between him and the labor-liberal coalition, there really wasn't any place else for him to go except to the conservative

elements within the party, and there he had a very difficult tightrope to walk because he had to use the conservative elements without being co-opted by them. And I think he did fairly reasonably well, but you couldn't possibly perform that feat of legerdemain then without getting somewhat tired. Oh, Lord, that was a mess, and I still think an awful lot of it developed that night at the Ranch.

G: Well, when the liberals talk about it they see it more as a betrayal.

R: Of course they do.

G: That they helped Johnson get elected to head the [delegation], defeat Shivers, and then he turned around and cleaned them out and went back to Shivers.

R: Is the glass half full or half empty? It depends upon how you're looking at it. From Johnson's standpoint he rescued the labor-liberal group from a complete, absolute defeat, which is true, he did, just as they rescued him in a sense. You see, what happened here, both sides had a contribution to make, therefore it depends on how you're looking at it. Well, to the labor-liberal group this was a betrayal. To Johnson it was a betrayal. Both sides considered the others as betraying them.

G: Now on the convention in May--it was in Dallas--you had to vote on the national committeeman and committeewoman.

R: Right.

G: What happened there? How did that end up with Frankie Randolph being a committeewoman?

R: Let's see. Who was the national committeman now? I forgot.

G: Byron Skelton.

R: Byron Skelton. That was a rather peculiar deal. The real negotiation was between John Connally and all of the other people involved. And I remember at one point running into Kathleen Voigt, who asked me to go to talk to John Connally, and I think she had a proposition whereby she proposed that he and she take the two top jobs in the state, which John wasn't going to do as long as Kathleen was in there. He said, "Go back and tell that woman that dog won't hunt." But most of the negotiation was between John and I think Jerry Holleman there. Well, the labor-liberal coalition had very little alternative; they had to put Frankie Randolph into an important position. She was just too important to them. And I think what John did--Byron Skelton was actually a very good choice because he was a liberal at heart and considered a part of the liberal coalition. But at the same time he was a man who had a great deal of sympathy and admiration for Johnson. It wound up I think as well as it could possibly have wound up for Johnson, but Johnson wasn't happy with it at the time. I think he would have preferred somebody like Lloyd Bentsen as his national committeeman, which would have been a bad mistake on his part.

G: It seems that the Johnson forces at the eleventh hour even suggested Kathleen Voigt as a way of possibly splitting--as an alternative to Frankie Randolph.

R: That wasn't the Johnson forces; that was somebody's idea. You see, there weren't any Johnson forces per se at that convention. Johnson forces, hell, they were me and John Connally. That was about it.

G: Well, Jake Pickle must have--

R: Well, Jake Pickle, yes, but Jake's kind of a gun for hire. Jake would go with anybody; he'd work for Shivers. I like Jake, but I'm just saying that he was not real troops. But what Johnson had to do at that convention was take advantage of whatever was available, and at that particular point there wasn't very much available to him except the conservatives.

G: Well, do you think that part of the vote on that committeeman and committeewoman, particularly the committeewoman, was the result of the more conservative people leaving the convention early that night and leaving the liberals with a numerical majority?

R: That may well have been, but in my mind it still came out the best way it could possibly come out anyway, which means that I don't particularly care. Because Byron Skelton, that was really one of the most helpful things that hit Johnson, to have somebody as a Texas national committeeman who had a liberal reputation yet was not anti-Johnson.

G: How did Johnson react to the election of Frankie Randolph, though?

R: I didn't hear any specific words but obviously he'd be very unhappy with it as would anybody else. She was so bitterly anti-Johnson. If you can imagine the worst enemy you have in the world and suddenly be told the next day that you have to work with that worst enemy, you know how Johnson felt. Not necessarily Johnson. You probably aren't as passionate about such things as Johnson was.

G: Then we go to the national convention. Of course, Johnson did lead the Texas delegation there.

R: Yes. Why don't we adjourn for a while?

[End of Tape 6 of 6 and Interview VIII]

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