INTERVIEW XI

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INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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Tape 1 of 2

G: Several of the columnists early in 1957 wrote that LBJ was becoming increasingly involved in foreign policy, and that he was assuming the role that had once been played by Senator [Walter] George.

R: That's not altogether accurate. Senator George played a very unusual role in the Senate in that he actually formed opinion in the Senate. Johnson never actually formed opinion in that sense, but what he did do was a considerable amount of negotiating with the administration on foreign policy and was rather effective at a number of points. I'm trying to recall now the exact year of the Suez Crisis. Was that 1956 or 1957? It doesn't matter. But I think it was either in 1957 or 1958 he wrote a letter to [John Foster] Dulles on the whole Middle Eastern question and the Israeli question, which had considerable impact. I'm a bit mixed up on dates at this point, but--

G: The letter was 1957.

R: It was 1957? The letter itself was actually written by Jim Rowe, but the concepts were Johnson's. I think that the letter leaked out to the [New York] Herald Tribune somehow. We didn't leak it. I suspect that it was leaked by someone in the State Department who was sympathetic

to Johnson's position, but I don't know. I know that once it appeared in the Herald Tribune, it really made an impact upon the administration, and of course it had a very long-range effect upon Johnson's political fortunes, too. He had always had a strong following in the Jewish section of the United States, but I think this solidified it.

Then he also played quite a role during the era when Eisenhower decided to land some troops in Lebanon. Again, I'm not certain of the dates. Do you have them?

G: It was what, 1958? 1957?

R: 1957, 1958, along in there. What he succeeded in doing was getting virtually unanimous backing of the President on that particular move. Now the strange part was Johnson himself was a little bit uneasy about the wisdom of the move, but when he weighed everything, what he decided was that the appearance of division in the United States on something of that nature was much more mischievous to the country than anything that could happen from the landing of the troops. We certainly were not going to get in any major war at that point.

And there were a number of things like that. His influence, as I said, was not quite so much with the Senate itself, although he always knew when he had backing and when he didn't, but he really became a very important factor in the foreign policy-making of the administration.

G: Why did he assume this position?

R: I'm not sure.

G: Do you think it was political?

R: No, I don't believe it was that. I think what was happening is that the focus of government was shifting toward international affairs. You must realize that when Eisenhower first came in, the nation was in something of a state of turmoil domestically. That's a bit strong. I would prefer a somewhat milder word. But there was a real necessity for calming down all of the passions that had been aroused during the McCarthy era and the very bad feelings that were generated out of Korea. During the first part of the Eisenhower Administration I think the efforts of both Eisenhower and Johnson for that matter were bent toward trying to calm things down. The nation needed a rest. It had been living at much too high a level for much too long a time. Now, at a certain point, however, a degree of tranquility set in, and just about that time it was rather obvious that the country had to turn to the consideration of some foreign policy questions that had really been rather neglected during that period. I don't think it was political per se, although he was probably aware that there would be political advantages to it. I think it was just Johnson's instincts as to where the government should be going at any given time. He was very good at that.

G: Most of these issues seem to center on the Mideast. How much did Johnson know about the Middle East?

R: Not too much, but that really didn't matter because Johnson was very good when it came to mastering the facts on any problem that was before him. And if the Middle East was a problem that was set before him, he could pick up the necessary material very, very quickly. His

attention would have to be directed to it. He'd spent very little time in the Middle East, of course. In fact, I think the only time he was ever in the Middle East was on that tour that he made as vice president, the one that I was on.

Also you have to realize something else. He would think of it primarily in terms of the United States, what was necessarily advantageous to the United States. Now I doubt whether Johnson ever read [Karl] Haushofer, but I believe that he had an instinctive recognition of the validity of Haushofer's doctrine of the heartland, which was, in effect, the Middle East. Are you familiar with Haushofer? Haushofer was a German geopolitician; in fact, he practically invented geopolitics. His whole concept was that there was an area in the world known as the heartland which was absolutely vital to anyone that sought to control the world, and it was the area at the point where Europe and Asia and Africa joined. Hitler was quite a student of Haushofer. I don't know if he actually understood Haushofer, but at least he did understand that doctrine. That's why you had the famous German brand noch Osten [?], the surge to the East concept, because if they were going to control the world they had to control the heartland. I believe that Johnson had an instinctive feeling, not that he wanted to control the heartland, but that to have control of the heartland in the hands of an unfriendly power would be inimical to the interests of the United States.

G: Later that year the administration was quite concerned over Syria and Syria's attitude toward more pro-Western Arab states. I think that

Dulles sent some generals to the LBJ Ranch to brief Johnson on the situation, and you were there. Do you recall that?

R: I don't recall it, but I recall the situation quite well. The Baath Party, which was the ruling party in Syria, was very, very pro-Soviet. At that time Syria was so very weak that it didn't matter very much, but obviously Syria was not going to remain weak. It was a matter of considerable concern. At that particular point Middle Eastern politics had become terribly complicated. Almost every nation in the Middle East was sort of a client state either of the United States or of the Soviet Union. The older powers that had had so much influence in the Middle East, mostly England and France, were losing out very rapidly. England, of course, had had considerable amount of influence in Jordan. The British had trained the Jordanese army, which was about the only army in reasonably good shape in the Middle East at that point. The French, of course, had influence with the Druses and a considerable amount of influence in Lebanon, and they had had considerable influence in Syria at one point. But both France and England were no longer capable of meeting their colonial commitments. They had withdrawn rapidly, leaving the Middle East in something of a mess. I believe the Baath Party had just about taken over at that particular time, a year or so earlier, and it was quite a shock to our State Department and to our foreign policy people in general to realize that Syria was in that key position.

Syria is a rather unusual state in the Middle East; it doesn't have enough oil to be a major power economically, but the Syrians have

a capacity for unity, which means that if they're properly armed they can be one of the greatest powers in that part of the world. Saudi Arabia is awfully big on a map, but the number of people in Saudi Arabia could meet in our student union here at Marquette. The Lebanese have never been a militant, martial people. It seems so strange when you know Lebanese, and I know quite a few of them, to see the kind of fighting that's going on right now. It's incredible. The Jordanians had a first-class army, but it was very small. So what you had in that area was Israel as a major power and the Syrians with a potential to become a major power. I don't think Johnson understood that until it was explained to him, but I think that he instinctively grasped the explanation as soon as it was offered.

G: Those who came down to the Ranch were General [Joe W.] Kelly, Major Swindell and Senator Paul Douglas.

R: I know them all, but I don't remember the incident.

G: You don't remember the occasion? Okay.

R: It's strange I wouldn't--I wonder when that happened. You say I was there?

G: The indication was that you were, yes. This was in the fall, in September.

R: I almost certainly was, but I just don't remember Paul Douglas being down there. Now, I knew Douglas rather well. He was one of my professors when I went to college; I studied labor economics under him. Naturally you have a tendency to remember people like that.

G: Now another foreign policy involvement was a speech that LBJ made in New York in which he unveiled his open curtain proposal. Do you remember that?

R: Yes, I wrote it. That's an easy one for me to remember, I wrote it.

G: Let me ask you to describe how that developed and tell as much about that as you remember.

R: Refresh my recollection. Where was the speech? I remember the open curtain.

G: The speech was at the annual conference of the United Jewish Appeal in New York.

R: Oh.

G: There were five objectives of disarmament: controlled reduction of forces by all countries; open skies inspection; a search for a method of suspending nuclear testing, and reduction of nuclear stockpiles. Also he wanted the Soviets to allow American broadcasts into the Soviet Union.

R: I remember now. He had accepted the speech, and I'm trying to remember now where the original invitation came from, whether it came from Eddie Weisl, or that may have been done through Eddie Joseph, I'm not quite sure.

G: Well now, Eddie Joseph is Lebanese. In Texas?

R: Joseph is Lebanese? I always thought he was a member of the Jewish community, I didn't know he was Lebanese. That's strange. Because any time I had dealings with the Jewish community, they went through Eddie Joseph. The Lebanese get around.

G: Maybe he wanted you to think he was Jewish.

R: I wonder about that. You know, the Kazens were Lebanese, which I discovered quite by accident. I thought they must have some Mexican descent. They're Lebanese. Lebanese are greatly adaptable, you know, to any climate.

That one wouldn't have come through--yes, by God, you know, it could still have come through Eddie Joseph though. It doesn't matter. The invitation came from somebody that was rather important to Johnson, and he accepted the invitation, then put me to work trying to figure out what he was going to say. It was really like that. I really can't tell you too much about it except that I wrote the speech and he accepted it. It got quite a reception, because at that particular point everybody was becoming greatly concerned. The Russian surge into outer space--the Russians had been belligerent over a number of things during that particular year, and most of the proposals that had been made to try to effect some kind of detente had fallen through. So Johnson put this forward. It was a rather dramatic proposal at the time. I can't tell you much more than that about it, because it didn't get anywhere.

G: Do you recall how the audience reacted to it?

R: I wasn't there.

G: Was Johnson an earnest proponent of disarmament or at least scaling down nuclear weapons at this time?

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I wouldn't say that he was obsessed with it, but it was one of the things that he honestly believed should be done.

However, it had to be bilateral on his part. He was not going to accept any type of unilateral disarmament. Don't forget his original reputation had been made on the grounds of a strong national defense. At all times he was a strong national defense man.

G: Well, how did you reconcile the two?

R: Oh, it wasn't hard to reconcile at all, because this was a bilateral proposal. In other words, the main point of the open skies was that we'd take their broadcasts and they'd take our broadcasts. We'd send people over there to talk to them; they could send people over to talk to us. That was entirely bilateral; there was no unilateral proposal in there.

G: How did Dulles react to the proposal? I notice that LBJ did talk to Dulles about it.

R: He was cool. But I think the reason that he was cool is because it hadn't come from him. Dulles had a rather high degree of vanity. Also he was rather rigid in his thinking. He was a very intelligent man, but he had great difficulty getting outside of his own concepts. Anything new presented to John Foster Dulles would almost certainly be rejected.

(Interruption)

[What it] did do--I think this was important--it gave Johnson a degree of credibility in the field of foreign policy, which was rather fortunate. One of the great myths about Lyndon Baines Johnson was that he had no understanding of foreign policy and, my God, that was a myth. He was really quite a bit better at it I thought than many of the people

who claimed expertise. What he lacked, however, was the foreign policy jargon; he couldn't talk like a foreign policy expert. I'm rather afraid that that led to the belief on the part of the foreign policy community that he didn't understand foreign policy.

G: During this period Great Britain announced that it was easing its trade restrictions with Communist China, and LBJ came out with a statement afterward that we should re-evaluate our own trade policies toward China.

R: Right.

G: Can you give me the background of that?

R: No, I really don't recall it. Those were very peculiar times. Actually, that would be a fairly courageous thing for him to do, because the front against Mainland China was absolutely solid in the United States, and it ran all the way from rather extreme liberals like Paul Douglas to ultraconservatives like Styles Bridges in New Hampshire. Madame Chiang--all the Soong sisters for that matter--had done a marvelous job in the United States of making converts to their cause.

And you see, there was another aspect of it, too. One of the things that has never been sufficiently explored is the fact that after World War II it became unfashionable to be an isolationist. Nobody wanted to be an isolationist because the isolationists were associated with Hitler. Yet ideologically there were large numbers of people in the United States who were isolationists. It was just that simple. They were isolationists but didn't want to say so. And what

many of them did, they put themselves in a posture of opposition to the foreign policies of both Democratic presidents and Eisenhower, but they did it on the grounds that they had to block the foreign policy moves that were being made by the Democratic presidents and Eisenhower until something was done about the Nationalist Chinese and Chiang Kai-shek. And in a peculiar sort of way, the support of Chiang Kai-shek really became an isolationist cause. See, it was obvious nobody was going to break their neck supporting Chiang Kai-shek. If ever there was a losing cause, that was it. I'll never forget old Senator Tom Connally saying "The trouble with Generalissimo is he didn't generalissimo enough," which is true, he didn't generalissimo enough. But it really is, in retrospect, looking at it from a safe standpoint of some thirty years later, amazing how that cause caught on. When they could bring Paul Douglas in on it--after all, that man was pretty liberal. Here all of a sudden he found himself associated with every conservative isolationist John Bircher within miles. You know, there was a Committee of One Million. I really think that was quite an act of courage on Johnson's part, to suggest we re-evaluate our policy in light of what the British had done.

G: Did he get flak for doing this?

R: Oh, sure he did, plenty from Texas.

G: Do you recall--?

R: Oh, I only recall it in terms of individual letters. There was a very strong isolationist trend in Texas, mostly in West Texas fortunately. The factors that had made Texas an internationalist state were pretty

well gone. You know, for a long period of time something like 60 to 70 per cent of the Texas cotton crop was exported to China. When the Chinese Communists took over the mainland those exports were cut off. After a while the Texans forgot just how important foreign trade was to them. They started to think in terms of oil, where they were very much concerned about the competition of the Middle Eastern oil and Venezuelan oil. Also they started to think in terms of Argentina and the possibility of competition in beef. So therefore there was very strong isolationist sentiment in Texas. The isolationist sentiment in Texas, as everywhere else, became pro-Chiang Kai-shek and anti-Mainland China, so he got quite a bit of flak from his home state.

G: What about from people like Henry Luce? Would he pressure Johnson on an issue like this?

R: Not directly, no. He knew Johnson, but I don't think he knew Johnson that well, and he had never been too favorable toward Johnson anyway. There was quite a strong anti-Johnson clique on Time magazine. Not in the Washington bureau, I think the Washington bureau by and large got along very well with him--Jim McConaughy and John Steele, who was a personal friend of mine. But in New York we got Otto Fuerbringer. They were not very happy with Johnson, and so as a result almost all of Johnson's dealings with Luce and with Time were at arm's length. Luce, of course, was one of the very strong pro-Chiang Kai-shek types.

G: Eisenhower at the time announced a proposal to establish an international

atomic energy agency, more or less pooling nuclear or atomic data and materials I guess for peacetime use.

R: Yes. Atoms for Peace. That was one of those strange things that never got off the ground. The timing of it was wrong. It was the kind of proposal that sat very well with the Washington Post but not very well with the Chicago Tribune. It was just sort of talked about. I realized at the time that while it was probably a rather good idea, that there was simply no prospect of getting any action on it in light of the climate. At that particular point there had been something of a resurgence of isolationism. Oh, all kinds of weird things had popped up, the polar treaty, the South Pole, the--oh, what else--the enabling act that brought Alaska into the Union, in the minds of ultraconservatives it was supposed to be a means of rounding them up and shipping them to concentration camps in Alaska. God, there was some nuttiness there. I'll never forget getting the letter from Texas which had over it "Stamp Out Mental Health." But I wouldn't pay too much attention to the Atoms for Peace unless you're interested in the Atoms for Peace itself. That was the beginning of the whole drive, but it never got off the ground.

G: Johnson did support the Eisenhower position.

R: Oh, yes. Oh, sure.

G: One other question I wanted to ask on the open curtain proposal was Drew Pearson seems to have been favorably inclined toward it.

R: Yes. Drew Pearson liked it.

G: You recommended to Johnson that he give an interview to Pearson or discuss it with him in the hopes of getting a positive policy.

R: Yes, there had been quite a running feud between Pearson and Johnson, which arose out of the--oh, it began before I went to work for Johnson. What was the name of that man who was up--?

G: Leland Olds.

R: Leland Olds. Leland Olds was a personal friend of Drew Pearson's and Pearson was just outraged, and for years Pearson went way out of his way to wallop Johnson every single chance that he could. Sometimes some of those stories were just made up. Actually it was something of an asset, because many of the conservatives would read the Drew Pearson column and be so outraged by the unfairness of it that they wouldn't attack Johnson at times that you'd [expect]. I remember Spessard Holland once said that. He told Johnson, he said, "Lyndon, I get up quite often in the morning, I'm so goddamned mad at you I'm going to go on the Senate floor and make a speech. Then I see a Drew Pearson column and I can't do it."

G: Did Johnson or Pearson, either one, ever say anything to tie that feud to the Leland Olds nomination?

R: No. No.

G: Could it have predated that, do you think?

R: The feud?

G: Yes.

R: No. No, because Johnson got along fairly well with Drew Pearson before that. Incidentally, however, the thing that brought Pearson

and Johnson back together again was not the open curtain speech. What really happened is that Pearson and Johnson had a rapprochement just about that time. Pearson was quite happy to give Johnson some fairly good columns, and I thought the open curtain speech would be one thing that he would be happy to plug.

G: Do you know what was responsible for getting them back together?

R: To a great extent when Drew Pearson's son-in-law, Tyler Abell, married Bess Clements, Senator [Earle] Clements' daughter, Johnson gave a reception for the young couple and was very, very generous to them, just melted Drew Pearson's heart. Now there may have been some other things, too, that I don't know about, but I know that that did make a very distinct change in Drew Pearson's attitude toward Johnson. At least it coincided with a very distinct change in Drew Pearson's attitude toward Johnson. After that Johnson and Pearson were able to get along pretty well. Also there were so many things that Pearson simply could not overlook, such as the ultimate censure of [Joseph] McCarthy, which was largely due to Johnson planning, the fact that Johnson did get a civil rights bill through, maybe not the kind of civil rights bill that a lot of people wanted, but the first one in some eighty years, things of that nature.

G: Yes. Now LBJ cut back or led the move by Democrats to cut back on the USIA appropriation.

R: Oh, and how!

G: Arthur Larson was called on the carpet for some of the statements he'd made abroad about the Democrats and the New Dealers.

R: I really felt sorry for Arthur Larson. Like dressing a kid in a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit and sending him up the back alley in the neighborhood where I grew up. Ooh! He really stepped in with his chin wide open. It was rather merciless. In retrospect that was something of a hatchet job which was performed on the agency, but Democrats were pretty damn mad at Larson.

G: What had happened? Had Larson been using the USIA for partisan--?

R: No, he had just taken over the USIA. It was before he became head of the USIA. Frankly I've forgotten what it was, but Democrats were very, very mad at Arthur Larson. It was during a period when Democrats also had to take a very strong economy stance, and again I've forgotten why. My recollection would have to be refreshed. But Johnson was on an economy kick; he cut something out of every administration request. This is one of the agencies where cutting was easiest.

G: He also--the committee in the Senate as a whole, I guess, cut the FBI appropriation for the first time.

R: J. Edgar Hoover agreed to it. He called J. Edgar and got--

G: Oh?

R: Yes.

G: Let me ask you about Johnson's relationship with Hoover during this period.

R: Very difficult to define. He was always very, very careful about Hoover, as everybody else was in Washington. Washington was afraid of J. Edgar Hoover, literally afraid. He had files which included material on everybody. There were not very many heroes that were willing

to get a Victoria Cross by standing up to him. I don't know what they would have done anyway, because Hoover was deeply entrenched. Hoover was a master at getting the public on his side, also a master at making very, very careful use of his files. There's no question in my mind whatsoever that all of the material on Alger Hiss came from J. Edgar Hoover, because I knew all of the committee members and the only committee member that had enough intelligence to direct that kind of an investigation was Dick Nixon. That was a very poor committee, very poor committee, and the staff was even worse. They could never have found Alger Hiss. In fact, I don't think that committee could have located a communist in Red Square in Moscow on May Day in front of Lenin's Tomb. But the evidence they had was far too solid, that committee could never have gathered such solid evidence. I suspect that Hoover was doing quite a few things like that, but I don't know.

G: Hoover and Johnson were neighbors, is that right?

R: Sort of, it was a meaningless thing though. They lived in the same neighborhood but they were in separate houses and there was no running back and forth to borrow a cup of sugar or anything like that.

G: Did Johnson ever talk about Hoover during this period?

R: Very, very little. He was very close-mouthed about it. He was always very careful with Hoover. As I said, during that particular period, if you'll check you'll discover that every single appropriation bill was cut somewhere. And the Hoover thing, he called Hoover and Hoover voluntarily gave up something. I've forgotten what it was. I suspect Hoover put it in there to give it up.

G: Johnson developed a link with Deke [Cartha D.] DeLoach at the FBI.

R: Oh, everybody had a link with Deke DeLoach. I had a link with Deke DeLoach. Deke DeLoach was J. Edgar's contact man, so to speak. There was always somebody in the bureau that had that status. Before Deke there was a man who had been a football player and later went to Schenley [?] Industries as a president. What the devil was his name? But anybody that had political dealings with Hoover, or newspapermen for that matter, would contact Deke DeLoach.

G: So he was not a Johnson loyalist at all?

R: No. No, he was--Walter Jenkins had a link with Deke DeLoach, I had a link with Deke DeLoach, everybody that was anybody could talk to Deke. He was a very shrewd operator.

G: Okay. Johnson spent some time that spring in Texas meeting with Curtis LeMay and General [John P.] McConnell about Bergstrom Air Force Base. Do you recall that?

R: Oh, I recall it. There's nothing of any great significance to it; it's just what appears on the surface, which is that Bergstrom was right in the middle of Johnson's home grounds. He had to save it somehow. But that was just a Texas senator tending to home affairs.

G: You had a number of insurance company failures in Texas that year.

R: Yes. Very bad ones.

G: Did this affect Johnson at all politically or Johnson's rivals?

R: No, the person that it affected the most was Allan Shivers. You see, Texas has a very peculiar constitution. I don't think there's a constitution like it in any other state in the Union. What it does,

it gives the governor all kinds of responsibility but virtually no authority. He serves on all of these commissions that have authority, but he really does not control any of the commissions. Most of the control of the state is in the hands of people other than the governor, but nevertheless, he has to take the gaff. The insurance commissioner of Texas had been very, very lax. That's the understandment of 1983. The Texas insurance companies had been allowed to indulge in some practices that were absolutely disgraceful. So when the thing blew up, it was Shivers' insurance commissioner that got the heat, which meant the heat went to Shivers. It was a very major scandal. That was one of the things that eventually led to the overthrow of Shivers.

G: Did Johnson see the need for any legislation to correct this?

R: Not that I can recall. It was a state question.

G: You wrote a memo to LBJ that spring reporting that a lot of the Texas labor leaders were trying to involve him in petty politics, mainly I think the [Ralph] Yarborough campaign in that special Senate election.

R: I'd have to take a look at the memo. Do you have it?

G: No, I don't think I have it.

R: Because that was such a routine matter. I was the major contact with the labor people in Texas. That would be rather routine. I'd really have to look at it to refresh my memory. I wrote memos like that all the time.

G: Okay. There was also a proposal that spring to set up some task

forces that would provide LBJ with policy positions. Experts such as Dean Acheson would sit down together and hammer out. . . .

R: Yes. Where did that come from? I only have a vague recollection of it, and it did not work out very well. LBJ was not very good at working with groups of that type. Somebody had the bright idea--it may have come from Jim Rowe, I'm not sure. I think maybe one or two were actually set up, and they just sort of fell by the wayside. Johnson was a man who had to have a problem specifically in front of him before he'd grab on to something like a task force or a committee. What this proposal was, as I recall it, was one to do some long-range thinking, to set up [task forces], not just [to] help him with the problems currently before the American people, but to try to give him a stronger position.

You know, one of Johnson's problems, and it is a problem of the man, he was probably the most gifted political tactician that the country has ever had, but he was not a strategist. His great weakness was that he really could not look down the road. He could not put things in historical perspective. As I said, I believe this [proposal] came from Jim Rowe, but the major idea of the task force was to try to provide him with some historical perspective, and that was just a waste of time. I can recall once when Horace Busby wrote Johnson a really superb memo--this was after he became vice president--a memorandum which was intended primarily to give him some historical perspective on the vice presidency, so that he would know how to act in office. It gave him a few specific things that could be done. I'll never

forget, Johnson read it a few times and said, "Buzz, you and George take this and work it out." Of course, that wasn't the point at all. The point was to try to give him a strategic sense of what it meant to be vice president. You know, when he got a memo he assumed the memo was something that he was supposed to take out and talk to somebody or that--action memos were all he was really interested in, and that's why those task forces went by the board.

G: One of the reservations about it was that it might be in conflict with the Senate committee staffs.

R: Oh, yes, but I think that was a secondary reason why the task forces were junked. Basically Johnson could just never have gotten along with them.

G: Ralph Huitt did come on board temporarily.

R: Yes, but that was because--what's the name of the political science professor down in Texas that was from Johnson City?

G: Emmette Redford.

R: Emmette Redford. Emmette Redford wrote to Johnson recommending Ralph Huitt very highly. Huitt had one of those fellowships from the American Political Science Association in which the fellow was supposed to spend half the time in the House and half the time in the Senate. But the fellow was also supposed to locate his own job. Ralph had spotted the Policy Committee as a good place to work, and Emmette Redford wrote to Johnson. That's how Ralph got there.

G: Was he useful?

R: Oh, and how! One of the most useful people we ever had in the committee. It was a very useful thing for both us and for Ralph, because Ralph had been brought up in the traditional school of political science on the Senate. You know, Woodrow Wilson warped the academic thinking on the United States Senate for almost a century with that incredibly bad book that he wrote on the American Congress. Wilson did not understand the American Congress. What he did was to look at it and determine how it differed from the British Parliament, and then to criticize the American Congress because it differed from the British Parliament. It never occurred to Wilson that it differed because the whole American society was different and the whole concept of government was different.

But I remember Ralph, after a few weeks, over lunch one day said to me, "You know, George, I came here with all kinds of concepts as to why things were wrong, but I now realize that these men are doing what they have got to do." Ralph eventually wound up writing some very first-rate, really first-rate stuff on the Senate. He was the first to recognize that the Senate as an institution existed the way it existed because it had to exist that way.

G: What did he do on the staff?

R: Well, you see, he was on the staff of the Policy Committee, which meant that he did all kinds of research. He was very good at coming up with material that we needed for speeches, for argumentation, for--well, generally for shaping bills. Ralph has a very good nose for the place where you can find the information that you need. He just retired, by the way, last year.

G: Oh, did he?

R: Yes.

G: Now, you have written at length about the 1957 civil rights bill.

R: Right.

G: I don't want to ask you to repeat what you've already put down on paper, but there are a couple of questions that I want to ask you about the bill.

R: Shoot.

G: One question deals with the [Strom] Thurmond filibuster, twenty-four hour filibuster.

(Interruption)

Did the other southerners expect the Thurmond filibuster?

R: No, and they were awfully mad about it, because he was putting them on the spot for no good reason. Did I send you a copy of that letter that I wrote to Crown Publishing?

G: No, I don't think so.

R: The essence of the situation was once the Senate moved to eliminate Title III from the bill and to amend the jury trial provision, then the southerners were put on a real spot. They had no problem filibustering as long as their opponents stood for everything and refused to compromise on anything. But a filibuster becomes impossible any time the Senate really starts to amend a bill. A bill that is being amended cannot be filibustered unless the amendments are away from the wishes of the filibusters. Therefore every southern senator understood that he had an obligation to just roll over and play dead, because Johnson

had tossed them a real olive branch, the sort of thing where they could go home and say, "Yes, they rolled over us, but we fought and at least we fixed it up so that them goddamn Yankee carpetbaggers couldn't come back and also they couldn't brand you a criminal without a trial by a jury." The understanding here was very, very strong.

Now at that particular point Thurmond was really not a senator. I mean by that he had a Senate seat, he'd been elected and all that sort of thing, but he really had not captured the spirit of the Senate. I don't know whether he has yet or not, I haven't seen the gentlemen for quite a few years. But he was still a fire-breathing rebel and, by God, he was going to filibuster regardless of what happened. Well, my God, you should have seen the cold fury in the eyes of his southern colleagues because he was just putting them on a spot for no good reason. They all interpreted it as being a sheer grandstand play on his part. Now whether that interpretation was justified or not, I don't know, but he may have really thought that he was doing something.

G: Did Johnson attempt to stop him from filibustering?

R: Oh, no. Outside of that it would have been the most foolish thing Johnson could have done. You simply couldn't stop him at that particular point.

G: During the civil rights bill debate, Johnson seems to have gone to Texas periodically, made quick trips.

R: Oh, yes.

G: What was he doing on those trips, do you know? Did it have anything to do with the bill itself?

R: Oh, sure. He was really shoring up the home base, because that was going to be quite a shocker. Texas is not nearly as Confederate, of course, as Alabama or Mississippi or South Carolina or northern Florida. But there were some nasty spots in Deep East Texas, which is the Confederate part of the state. It's about the most populist part of the state also. And so he really had to do an awful lot of base-touching down in Texas.

G: Another thing he did quite a bit during the course of the legislation was he was in contact with Noah Dietrich and Howard Hughes. I wonder if that had anything to do with the legislation.

R: No, I wasn't even particularly aware of the fact that he was in touch with Dietrich and Hughes.

G: But the timing is so close that it would lead one to at least speculate that it did have something to do with [the bill]. Could Hughes have influenced [William] Knowland on some of the amendments?

R: No. I don't think that had anything to do with it. I think that was totally irrelevant. I believe that that is one of the chapters of Johnson's history where I know just about everything there is to know, because I was central to that thing.

G: Now after the bill was passed, can you recall Johnson's reaction to it?

R: In what sense?

G: Well, was there a celebration, was there any--?

R: No, there wasn't a celebration. His immediate reaction was that of--although the first thing he did, of course, was to call in every chip that he had in Texas in order to prevent any rear back. But he was--

G: Now who did he call, do you remember?

R: Mostly newspaper editors, publishers. He was pleased with it, but he wasn't walking on air or anything like that, because it was still too dicey. After all, it's difficult in the present age to realize just how much crockery was being smashed with the passage of that bill. After all, since 1875 they hadn't been able to even get a simple resolution through the Senate saying civil rights are nice. I don't think a bill ever even got to the floor, did it? They did in the House of Representatives, the Gavagan Act got to the floor of the House in the early twenties, but I don't think a bill even got to the floor in the Senate. And yet finally, my God, they got a bill through. The bill was not everything the civil rights people wanted by a hell of a long shot, but it had meaning to it.

G: Did the Little Rock crisis take the luster off that civil rights bill?

R: Oh, no. Not a bit, because the Little Rock crisis was something that could have been handled with or without a bill. That could have happened at almost any time. But the bill was such an epic-making achievement that nothing could take the luster off it, absolutely nothing.

G: Now, you were with LBJ a lot at the time of the Little Rock crisis.

R: Oh, yes.

G: Let me ask you to recount his reaction to it.

R: I don't know how to put it. He had no strong overt reaction to it. He recognized it as one in which the people that were fomenting the crisis down in Little Rock obviously were going to lose. You can't defy the United States, that's all there is to it. And he also recognized it as one that was very harmful to the South, especially because Arkansas was regarded as a state of some moderation on that question. You notice most of the big battles did break out in places that were regarded as places of moderation: Texas where you had the Mansfield crisis, and Little Rock where you had the school crisis. You didn't have troubles like that in South Carolina and Mississippi. They had some in Mississippi, of course, but nothing of that magnitude. I don't recall anything out of the ordinary in his reaction to it. It was just sort of a cold-blooded assessment of what was happening.

G: He did issue a statement saying something to the effect that these matters had to be decided by the courts.

R: Of course. Of course, at that point he was in a position of national leadership where he couldn't just ignore it. As an ordinary senator he might have, but by that time Johnson was a major figure in the American political scene. He had to do something.

G: Now during the struggle to get the civil rights bill passed, that summer Eisenhower had issued a statement saying that it was inconceivable that he would use federal troops to enforce a court [decision].

R: That was in conjunction with Title III.

G: Well, in any event, [Richard] Russell called Eisenhower to task on that--

R: Right.

G: --and reminded him of that statement.

R: Yes, but you see, Russell was being a little bit disingenuous there. That statement, I'd have to go back and check it to be absolutely positive, but I'm quite certain that that was in connection with Title III. You know, Title III was a very strange thing. It didn't have too much meaning unless you read it in conjunction with an old Reconstruction statute that had been forgotten. For some reason, I've forgotten exactly what it was now, the normal methods of codifying the law did not put the two together, which gave Russell the opportunity to charge that there was a deliberate plot to sneak Reconstruction over. But part of Title III did, when taken in conjunction with the Reconstruction act, give the president authority to send troops into the state to enforce civil rights acts. I believe that that was the Eisenhower reference.

G: Okay. I think it was Drew Pearson who reported that Johnson had rewarded some of the senators for their cooperation on the civil rights bill, and he singled out [Frank] Church, who although a very junior member of the Senate was appointed a member of the delegation to the Pan American Economic Conference in Buenos Aires, and Senators [Andrew F.] Schoeppel from Kansas and [John Marshall] Butler [from] Maryland.

R: I don't know about Butler, but it certainly was true of the others. Yes, Pearson was right, except that's such a normal operation of the Senate that it always seems to me a little bit strange that anybody makes anything out of it. I don't mean that their votes were bought that way. You don't buy votes that way. But it's understood in the Senate that you do things for people that do things.

G: Well, Pearson pointed out that three days after the vote, bills that they [Butler and Schoeppel] were interested in were reported out by the Judiciary Committee where they had been stalled for [months].

R: Of course. Sure.

G: So there was some quid pro quo.

R: Well, of course, there always is. That's the way the Senate operates. (Interruption)

I can recall Truman taking us through [the Truman Library]. There was one point where they had Truman's voice, they'd recorded it, explaining the replica they had there of the Oval Office and tears almost in Truman's eyes as he listened to it. I remember that. That's about all I remember.

G: Was he impressed with the Library, LBJ?

R: Johnson? I don't think so particularly. I mean, he oh'd and ah'd over it for Truman, but I think that was more to make Truman feel good. By LBJ's standards it was a very modest library.

G: You had an immigration bill that Senator [Allen J.] Ellender seemed to be sitting on, stalling, and I'm just wondering if there was any significance to that, if he was holding out for some reason.

R: That would be the kind of bill Ellender would be against. I doubt it. I think that Ellender was very, very tough when it came to immigration, very tough.

G: Senator George died.

R: Yes.

G: LBJ did go to his funeral, I think.

R: Oh, sure. Almost certainly. I didn't go to that one though.

G: Did his death have any impact on Johnson's--?

R: No. You see, by that time George had left the Senate. He'd been replaced by Talmadge, by Herman. The impact was in George leaving the Senate, which was something of an impact because George by his sheer dignity was a factor in the Senate. I'll never forget one day when Johnson heard that Ellender was on a rampage and was going to come in to yell and scream at him about something. He quick sent Bobby Baker out to get hold of Walter George, and Bobby planted George in the front office with a bourbon and water. Ellender came in just breathing fire, and as soon as he saw George all of the steam went out of him. George had that kind of an impact upon the Senate. Yes.

G: Were he and Russell close?

R: George and Russell?

G: Yes.

R: No, not particularly.

G: Why not?

R: They were colleagues. There was no enmity between them, that's not the point. It was a question of age. George was much older than

Russell. There was just--different age and also different temperaments, different outlooks on life.

G: Was George more conservative than Russell?

R: Oh, yes. Oh, much more. And don't forget, George had been the target of the FDR purge campaign.

G: It was once said that George was one of the few senators that could actually change votes by his speeches, his speeches were so powerful.

R: Oh, he could. It wasn't that the speeches were so powerful, it was George himself. The man exuded dignity and it was terribly difficult to go against him. I'll never forget reading one column where the writer expressed doubt that George's wife ever referred to him as Walter. She didn't to other people, she always called him Mr. George. Every time I saw George I'd immediately start thinking of the old mansion with the white pillars and the black slave there handing him his mint julep. You know, the minute he would walk into the Senate, he'd just drop his hat like that. It would never hit the floor, a page boy would always get it.

G: [William] Proxmire was sworn in.

R: Oh, Lord, yes. Proxmire was sworn in, he was trouble from the start.

G: Really?

R: Johnson thought he would take him into camp and he put him on a good committee--well, it was a good committee for Wisconsin. I forget now whether it was Interstate [and Foreign Commerce] or Agriculture, but one of the things that normally a Wisconsin senator would fight for. He got him all lined up with a trip to Germany. Then a few months

later Proxmire was in there hammering away at Johnson on the so-called caucus issue, which, my God, I just can't think of a sillier issue than that caucus issue. But Proxmire loves to make trouble. Proxmire is very, very combative. You know about his Golden Fleece Awards and all that sort of thing. But he was just determined he was going to show Lyndon Johnson the day he walked into the Senate.

G: Johnson had helped him get elected, hadn't he, with campaign money or something like that?

R: Oh, yes, but that wasn't anything unusual. I think that what Proxmire got was out of the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee.

G: John Kenneth Galbraith visited the Ranch that fall. Any significance to that?

R: No great significance, no. I remember the visit. I think he was down there giving a lecture at the University of Texas and just dropped by the Ranch.

G: Did you attend the dedication of the Rayburn Library in Bonham?

R: No. It's one of the few places in Texas I haven't been.

G: LBJ was down in Texas I guess when the Sputnik shot was launched.

R: He sure was.

G: Were you there?

R: Yes.

G: Let me ask you to just recall as much as you can of that from [inaudible].

R: I can recall it quite well. I'm just trying to think of one name and then I can give you a coherent story. Charlie Bruten, Bruten [?]. Sputnik went up and there was the usual kind of sort of dinner table conversation about it. But Charlie Bruten, who worked for Lister Hill from Alabama, he was a man crippled with infantile paralysis, a rather brilliant man. He called up, he got Walter Jenkins, said he sure wanted to talk to Johnson about Sputnik because he thought that this was the sort of thing that could make Johnson president. I'm not sure of his exact words because I'm relaying Walter's. Walter said, well, he couldn't see Johnson because Johnson was out of town, would he talk to me, George Reedy. Charlie said sure, he was very happy to talk to me about it. So Charlie made a special trip down there and I can remember it, because Charlie asked me if we could drive out in the country. He said he could always think better when he was in wide open space. We drove to some place outside of Austin, I forget where it was, but it was a high point where we could sit on a couple of rocks and look around, and he started to talk about Sputnik and the tremendous impact it was going to have on people.

As he talked I began to see it myself. I hadn't really seen it up to that time, because I hadn't been overly impressed with it as an achievement. You know, Eisenhower had talked about it a number of years earlier, you may recall, that is, not about Sputnik but about putting an object in outer space. I decided that Charlie was right, not necessarily [about] making Lyndon Johnson president, but that this was going to become one of the major events of all time and that the

government should start looking into it. I forget now, I must have written Johnson a memorandum because--or maybe I just talked to him, but that's unlikely. You rarely talked things to Johnson, you were much better off writing memoranda. Eventually I convinced him of enough that he went up to Washington, he took me with him up to Washington, and we had a session with Dick Russell and arranged for some briefings from the Defense Department.

I remember it was rather amusing to sit there in the briefing. The army, the navy and the air force were all presenting what they were doing with outer space and missiles, et cetera. They were all jealous as hell of each other. I remember at times the army would get up and take exception to something the air force said or something of that nature. Admiral [William F.] Raborn was there, and he thought he'd make a play to Johnson by saying that he was from Texas, and "by God, in Texas we believe in really doing things right, and I can assure you that the navy is going to come through with Polaris because we're from Texas," not realizing that the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee named Richard Brevard Russell from Georgia was sitting right there. Russell snorted that he hoped those Texans could produce as well as they blew, and all of a sudden Raborn realized that he had blown it and he shut up. (Laughter) God, that was [funny]. Raborn was not a very subtle man, as I discovered over the years.

So we went on back and had a very long discussion over it and finally came to the conclusion that the Senate Preparedness [Sub]committee, which had been defunct for a number of years by then--

we revived it. It was still there and was used as a place for some staff and that was about all, you know, an extra payroll. It was decided that we would really go into it in a big way. What we did, we got a formal commission from Russell, formal request from Russell, for the Preparedness Committee to do it. And of course we didn't have much of a staff by then because the committee hadn't been doing anything for--what year was that, 1957. The committee really hadn't done much of anything since 1953. About that time what we really did is most of the Johnson staff transferred over. I spent full time on it, Solis Horwitz spent full time on it. Johnson decided he had to bring in somebody with a tremendous amount of prestige, so he got Eddie Weisl to come down from New York. Eddie came down from New York, took leave from his law firm and came down with Cy Vance and also with Eddie's son, and the whole thing started.

G: Did he just want Weisl for the prestige or did Weisl have some expertise?

R: No, not in outer space, but he had a lot of respect for Weisl's political judgment, among other things. But prestige was an important part. After all, Weisl's law firm was one of the largest in the United States, if not the largest. It may have been the largest for all I know. And Weisl had some very, very potent clients, Hearst, the Lehman Brothers, the movie industry. You name it, Weisl had it. So that's really how the whole thing got started.

G: When do you think Johnson became aware of the political value of having the space issue?

R: I think the reaction to the opening testimony with a statement by--oh, what's the name, the atomic scientist that produced the hydrogen bomb?

G: [Edward] Teller?

R: Yes, Teller. I was against putting Teller on. I'm very sorry they did, to this day. I'm even sorrier now. Eddie Weisl wanted to though, and of course from a public relations standpoint it was really a master stroke, because Teller is very, very dramatic. My God, Teller could make you see outer space as the ultimate position, with the Russians controlling it and bombarding us with death rays and everything else, which I still wish to hell we hadn't gotten into.

But the impact of Teller's testimony--no, I think maybe even a little bit before that. I remember he had one press conference and I have never before or since sensed such a complete mastery of the press as Lyndon Johnson had. It was held in his office, the majority leader's office. I remember he had Doris Fleeson literally sitting at his feet and looking at him as though he were God. At that point people had suddenly awakened to the fact that the Russians had outdone us in something. Here was Johnson, the only man that seemed to be doing anything about it. Eisenhower and the administration were taking it quite calmly, which in retrospect may have been the proper way to take it, I don't know. Here was a man who seemed to realize that this was the need of the hour and was moving. I think the reaction of the press at that particular conference gave him the first inkling of just how important this outer space deal was.

Then, of course, the reaction to Teller's testimony. God, that dominated the headlines, it really took over for a number of days. Some marvelous newspaper cartoons came out of it. The best I thought was [Richard Q.] Yardley's in the Baltimore Sun showing Johnson and a number of other characters dressed like astronauts landing on something in outer space, kind of a take-me-to-your-leader sort of thing. The thing just began to grow.

G: It seems that in planning the hearings there was a conscious effort not to re-enact the Symington hearings the year before. In 1956 Symington had chaired some hearings on missiles that had been regarded as very partisan and primarily to highlight the generals that Symington favored. Russell seems to have been very opposed to that. Do you recall that decision?

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I remember it quite well. Symington was a very partisan man. He was almost a rah-rah type when it came to his politics. You couldn't cut him out of it or anything like that. In the first place, the man probably knew more than any other member of the committee when it came to this outer space stuff. He really was very well informed. In the second place, of course, he was very well known. But there was a deliberate effort made to keep those hearings on a non-partisan basis. For one thing, we wanted to get Eisenhower's support of whatever legislation came out, and obviously we weren't going to do that if we made them a partisan hunting ground. And also, Johnson thought, and I believe he was quite right, that whatever the

committee did, it would be much more powerful if it were unanimous. It was a little difficult to keep Symington quiet, but we did.

G: Was there any fear also that Symington might use it as a presidential boost for himself?

R: Not fear. Obviously he was going to try to use it as a presidential boost for himself, but if you ever use that as a criteria for holding or not holding hearings, Congress would never hold hearings.

G: Yes. Johnson had reportedly described walking out on his ranch and looking up at the sky when the Soviet Sputnik was flying overhead. Can you give me the background of that?

R: I think that came out of something I wrote.

G: Really?

R: I think so.

G: There was not a particular occasion that you remember where--?

R: No, and I don't believe it. He lost interest in outer space rather quickly as a matter of fact.

G: Was it simply a publicity vehicle for him?

R: No, it wasn't simply a publicity vehicle. But sometimes Johnson would do things just to do them. I think that he was startled by the tremendous publicity boost that he got. In fact, I think those hearings made a president out of him, really. Not immediately apparent, but what they did, they led people to regard him in some terms other than that of a Texas Democratic senator. He had national status already, but this gave him national stature, which is a somewhat different thing.

But at a certain period of time it began to get a little bit dull and Johnson just plain lost interest. I remember it became rather embarrassing, both Gerry Siegel and I recognized the fact that there was a real danger here, that if we just held those spectacular hearings and then forgot about them, instead of building Johnson's image with the public, what it would do would be to confirm a suspicion that many people had that all he was really interested in was publicity. Gerry and I actually cooked up a little bit of a plot. Gerry got a bill drafted talking to a number of technicians in that field. I wrote speeches. We'd shove the bills into Johnson's hands and get him to introduce them, and shove the speeches in his hands and get him to make them and that's the way the act emerged. But he'd really lost interest; Gerry and I had one devil of a time talking him into it.

G: Was there something else pressing?

R: Yes. I think what had happened is that large-scale unemployment had begun to develop that winter. As far as Johnson was concerned, the number-one issue was always employment. I think that just displaced anything else with him. That's when he started his recovery program. He got more money in for housing, more for highway funds, things of that nature. I'm trying to remember now, I do recall he was very lucky about one thing. Buzz had written the speech that he'd made to the Democratic caucus that year, and I'd insisted on putting a line in saying that we can't forget the problems of X millions of people unemployed. Thank God that was in there, because later when he became interested in the unemployment picture they started to hit him on how

long he'd been interested and he was able to pull that speech out and there it was, even before the session had started.

But actually I don't think he ever fully understood the outer space problem, because he wasn't that interested. I think that he looked upon it in the same category as another weapon, a better artillery piece or a better airplane or something of that nature.

G: What was Cy Vance's role in the hearings?

R: He assisted Weisl. He helped put the thing together.

G: Did he himself make any significant contribution to the [hearings]?

R: Oh, yes, very much so. I can't tell you precisely what it is, but I think he was fully as important as Weisl. And of course he made a very strong impression on Johnson, very favorable.

G: Did he?

R: Oh, very favorable. Right on the spot.

G: How did Johnson characterize him?

R: Johnson later talking to me started to talk about I'd sure like to get Cy to write a speech for him. Of course, Cy was no speechwriter, but that didn't mean anything. If Johnson saw a very able person, his first thought for some reason was "I want that person to write a speech for me." Any time he said that he was very, very--it was one of his key phrases indicating that a man had really come across with him.

G: Now, early on Symington wrote to LBJ and Bridges concerning some news reports that Symington would not be permitted to question witnesses in the hearings. Do you remember that?

R: No, I don't remember that at all, and I don't know what in the devil those reports were based upon. You can't prevent a senator from questioning witnesses, as long as he's a member of the committee, which Symington sure was.

G: Okay now, you discussed the Teller testimony.

R: Yes.

G: You also had Bush testify, Vannevar Bush, and James Doolittle, General Doolittle.

R: Yes. Jimmy Doolittle.

G: John P. Hagen.

R: I don't remember him, but it's okay.

G: Allen Dulles.

R: Yes.

G: And Herbert Scoville. Do you remember anything particular about these witnesses?

R: No. Because--you can get plenty out of the papers, just take a look at the papers at that particular period, it was all rather spectacular.

G: Dulles testified in secret session, I guess, that the Soviets were designing nuclear warheads to fit their missiles. Do you remember that?

R: I sure do. Worse than that, what he did was to give the testimony that eventually led to the concept of the missile gap, which was one of the worst things I think that ever happened to us. We weren't very sophisticated at that point in the terminology of the new breed of military expert. We didn't realize a very simple thing, that what

they were doing was extrapolating on the basis of Russian capabilities, but using actual figures for what the United States was doing. Now their assumption was that the Soviet Union was producing missiles to capacity, and so when they extrapolated on that from the standpoint of what they knew the Soviet Union produced at one point, they were able to get such a tremendous imbalance between the Soviet Union and the United States. Now the imbalance really didn't exist. The missile gap was also a mythical gap. But we didn't know that, and I'm not sure whether they were trying to fool us or not. One never really knows. But certainly I think that almost any unsophisticated person sitting in the room that day would have come to the conclusion that we came to, that the Soviets had an overpowering lead over us in the production of missiles, when the truth was that the Soviets were acting as sensibly as we would act and were only putting out a minimum number of missiles because they were waiting for a new generation to come along. You see the point there, that the assumption in the figures that were given to us was that the Soviets were producing every missile that they could. Well, of course they weren't, because they were proceeding to develop new generations of missiles.

G: Why spend your money on--?

R: Why spend your money on inferior products when you're going to have much better ones coming off? And the truth was they were in about the same spot we were in, I think to some extent behind because they didn't have anything like the Polaris.

G: It seems that this sort of parity, nuclear parity, always ratchets up rather than down.

R: Yes. And it's a totally meaningless thing anyway, because there is no way that one can truly determine parity. You know, the Russians do not have a bad argument when they insist that on any kind of an arms control deal that something must be done about the British and the French missiles as well as ours. On the other hand, the Soviets are making some rather phony arguments about the intermediate range missiles, because there they do have a rather heavy imbalance in their favor. All of those statistical analyses are highly questionable, highly questionable.

G: Did Johnson understand this, do you think?

R: I don't think he did at the time. I don't think he did at the time.

G: Let me just ask you to describe his conduct of the hearings and interrogation of the witnesses.

R: Most of the interrogation was actually done by Eddie Weisl and by Cy Vance. The committee members, of course, asked questions.

G: Would Johnson be supplied with possible questions to ask if the--?

R: Oh, sure. Oh, sure, the legal staff would give him questions and I'd sit behind him and slip questions to him.

G: Did he suggest people that ought to testify, or did the staff put those lists together?

R: I'd say the principal person doing that was Eddie Weisl. You know, it wasn't too hard to do. But Johnson always conducted very fair hearings. The only time I've ever known him to really get highly partisan

and highly nasty were the hearings on Arthur Larson and the USIA. There he really beat that poor miserable fellow over the head, ripped off his arm and then beat him over the head with it. It was almost shameful, except somehow Larson was not a very likeable man, I think everybody enjoyed it. But as a general rule Johnson was very, very fair as a committee chairman, very fair.

Of course, the hearings had their humorous side, too. Ken Belieu had a talent for quick sketches, and he once sketched a series of little drawings--this was when the navy was testifying--he says, "Our navy has the finest of ships," and he drew an old-time Spanish galleon under it, "The finest of weaponry," drew a blunderbuss, a few things like that and passed it up to the table. The committee members almost broke up.

G: (Laughter) That's great. Well, did the hearings have an affect on Johnson?

R: How do you mean?

G: Well, did he himself alter any of his views or did he tend to stress views he already held on this subject?

R: No, because I don't think he had any views really on the particular subject of outer space and missiles. I think that to the extent he had views they developed in the course of the hearings. There wasn't anything to alter. Again though, I must stress I do not think that this was a field in which Johnson's understanding ever developed in depth. He was a peculiar man. There were times when his mind could grasp the most subtle, complex, intricate issues, and at other times

when relatively simple things would elude him. I'll never forget his mastery of the whole question of judicial contempt during the debate over the civil rights bill. Lord, he understood! He could have argued that before the Supreme Court. He really did get it; it was much more complex than anything involved in outer space. But I think in outer space he thought that this was like a superior telephone or a superior fountain pen or something of that nature.

G: Do you think you could trace his interest in the lunar program, let's say, the Apollo program, to these hearings at all?

R: No, not really. I trace that to the period when he was vice president and was chairman of the President's Advisory Commission on Outer Space. I think what happened there is that there was something to do, and he didn't have much to do. Well, it was during that period when the President's Advisory Commission set up landing on the moon within ten years as a goal for the space program. I believe that's where his interests really began.

G: Would you say then that these hearings in 1957 were designed more toward defense rather than space exploration?

R: Yes. I think in his mind they were. I don't think he ever really saw the larger issues. This was one field in which he was rather deficient.

G: Okay. Anything else on the hearings that we haven't discussed?

R: Not really. Gerry drew up a bill for him and I wrote some speeches for him and he put the bill through. It established a joint congressional committee--no, a joint congressional committee was set up to write a bill, that's right--and then it set up a Senate committee and

a House committee on outer space, and we put the bill through and that was that.

G: Wernher von Braun, when he testified, complained about the lack of a central missile authority.

R: Yes.

G: Do you think this sort of testimony was important to the ultimate development of NASA?

R: I think so. See, the thing had really become rather ridiculous, and anybody who could find the difference between Thor and Atlas would have to be a doctor of canon law in a college of cardinals. The army claimed that its missile was mobile. Well, it was mobile in the same sense that a house is mobile, you know, you can jack it up and put wheels under it and cart it a few blocks and set it down again. But it didn't have mobility in the sense of real mobility. And an awful lot of the work that was being done--very expensive work--was unnecessary and they certainly were duplicating each other. The navy, however, had some special problems, of course. Its development of Polaris was rather masterly, but then Polaris was being developed under one man.

I think though that the von Braun testimony and that of various other people made it clear that there had to be some central point, that this was simply too expensive, too big, to have every agency running off in every different direction. Now, that's always something of a worrisome thing though. You know, one of your problems in government is once people become locked in in something, they aren't

going to desert it even if a better path comes along. You always do things like that at a great deal of considerable risk.

G: The Gaither Report was a document that was much studied and discussed.

R: I'm trying to remember it now. You know, it's funny. I must have read the type off of that damn thing, and now I can't even remember what it was about. What was it about?

G: Well, basically it indicated that there was a missile gap, didn't it?

R: I don't think--

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R: It indicated there was a missile gap, though it sure was off.

G: Now, during this period LBJ brought--well, I don't suppose it was LBJ, but John F. Kennedy came to Austin to speak to the State Teachers Association, LBJ introduced him. Do you recall that, and any significance to their later relationship?

R: No. I remember its happening, but it was in the same class as any other senator coming in.

G: Did you feel Kennedy was running for president at the time?

R: Oh, sure. There wasn't any doubt about that, been running for president since 1956. I'll never forget the look in his face when Texas swung behind him for vice president at the 1956 convention. I said to myself, "That young man is going to be running the next time," and I was right.

G: LBJ gave a speech in Tyler and was introduced by Ronald Reagan.

R: He was? I'd forgotten that. I don't remember that at all, when was that?

G: That was in October of 1957.

R: October of 1957. That's not the speech where he invited the United Nations to get out, was it?

G: I don't know. It could be.

R: If it was I would have forgotten about Reagan and anything else. I have a hunch that's it. He went up to Tyler. I've forgotten the date, but this may well be it. I had written a speech for him. He was having a lot of trouble with the isolationists in Texas at that point, and I had written one about if the United Nations doesn't do this and doesn't do that and doesn't do something else, then we're going to have to reassess. Boy, I had more ifs in that speech. But reading it on the way up, he got so excited about it he dropped all of the ifs, and what came out was an invitation for the United Nations to go some place and sink or swim. I spent weeks trying to knock that one down. If that's the speech, then I would not have remembered Ronald Reagan, no. I had plenty of troubles in my hands.

G: There's a phrase in a speech that he gave in Houston about the space program I guess, and he referred to the new frontier, used the term. Was that one that you coined for the speech?

R: No. I didn't like the term frontier. That was Busby's. The term frontier bothered me because I knew that this was going to get into the international realm one way or another. You know, in Europe frontier is a very, very unwholesome term, because that's the way war starts, somebody crosses a frontier. The difficulty with it, it's a word that gets a very warm reception in the United States because we

think of it as settling the unknown and taming the untamed and that kind of thing, but in world discourse it's a very bad word to use. I wanted it knocked out of his speeches altogether; I tried to knock it out every time I could.

G: Stewart Alsop and Rowland Evans spent some time at the LBJ Ranch that fall, do you remember that?

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I remember it. I'll never forget one day that heated swimming pool of Johnson's. Stewart was sitting there in one of those floating chairs. Here you had this heated pool and a floating chair and Stewart sitting there with Scotch and soda in his hands. I said, "Stewart, I wish to hell I had one of those Christ-how-the wind-blew columns of yours right now." Stewart was always writing doom, the Russians were coming, the Russians were coming, and all of a sudden to see him relaxed in that pool, just looking like the perfect image of an aesthete. However, Stewart got one of the finest columns that I have ever read about Lyndon Johnson out of that. Johnson had given him the full treatment and Stewart went back to his room that night and just sort of typed it out, you know, one of those stream-of-consciousness things.

G: Well, describe the full treatment here. What did he do?

R: Oh, God, nobody can describe it. Mary McGrory once said that it was an incredibly potent blend of badgering, cajolery, promises of favors, implied threats, and she said everybody is left absolutely helpless. I remember she came out to me later and said, "You know, I've had the full treatment," and I kept saying, "Well, shall I type some letters?

Can I bake some cookies?" It really was a bewildering experience. Stewart Alsop had asked him a question and Johnson began to turn it on, and Stewart, writing the column, put at the end "and I suddenly realized after it was all over that he hadn't answered my question." But it was just all of a sudden this stream would come out, it would be like standing under Niagara Falls, and people would get absolutely bewildered. I've seen him work it on so many people. I saw him work it on Ronnie Dugger. I saw him work it on Doris Fleeson once. I saw him work it on, of course, Mary McGrory. It was just unbelievably potent.

G: Was it basically a defense of his position?

R: Oh, no, no, it could be on anything. It could be a question of salesmanship. He might be trying to sell you something, he might be trying to defend something. Sometimes I think he did it just for practice.

G: Really? Did he have anything in particular that he wanted from Evans and Alsop on this?

R: Oh, just good will. After all, that was the period in which Stu and Joe Alsop were probably the two most important think columnists in Washington. Stu for some reason looked upon Rowlie as a protege. I think Johnson just wanted to impress Stewart Alsop, which he did.

G: One other thing we had was Eisenhower's appointments to the Civil Rights Commission: Stanley Reed, John Hannah, John Battle, Father [Theodore] Hesburgh, Robert Storey, and Ernest Wilkins. Adlai Stevenson and Allan Shivers had been mentioned as possibilities.

R: I have no particular recollection of it. I don't think there was anything unusual.

G: Did Johnson have any interest in any of these appointments or did he--?

R: I don't think so.

G: Well, I think we've covered everything I have on 1957 unless you think of anything that we haven't discussed.

R: I really can't, because the year ended with the outer space program.

G: Okay.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview XI

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