INTERVIEW XVII

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INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE E. REEDY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: Allen Dulles came to the LBJ Ranch to brief LBJ late in July [1960].

R: Right.

G: Do you remember that?

R: Yes. There wasn't anything of any particular significance. I mean, the obvious things took place.

G: Just basically a foreign policy briefing?

R: Right.

G: Did he get along well with Dulles?

R: Reasonably well. You know, Allen Dulles was a rather warm, simpatico man, unlike his brother. He did not have that aloofness and that hard-shell aspect to him that John Foster did. So he and Allen got along pretty well.

G: Okay. The next day you flew with him to Hyannis Port to meet with Kennedy. Let me ask you to recall everything you can of that.

R: This is the first meeting with Kennedy after the convention, right?

G: That's right.

R: Okay.

G: You stopped on the way to see Truman in Kansas City, if that helps.

R: That's right. But at the beginning Johnson thought that he would take as many newspapermen with him as he possibly could, and actually it turned out that there were not very many that could go along. As I recall, Allen Duckworth from the *Dallas News* [and] Maggie [Margaret] Mayer, I believe, were on there. She was from the *Dallas Times-Herald*. Who else? And the rest were mostly newspapermen from weeklies. Just a free trip.

G: I see. Does that mean they couldn't go because of space or time requirements?

R: Oh, they couldn't go because they had no particular need to go. After all, Hyannis Port was being very well staffed at that particular point, and there wasn't anything terribly eventful in the visit with Harry Truman. As nearly as I can make out, it was more of a tour of the Truman Library than anything else because I can still remember how sentimental Truman was standing there alongside his reproduction of the Oval Office and listening to his own voice describe the presidency.

Then we flew from there to Hyannis Port. Now that meeting was ceremonial more than anything else. The thing that was outstanding, the thing that stands out the largest in my mind is that the Fredericksburg newspapers had dispatched a case of fine Fredericksburg peaches for Jack, and I think that's the Austin-to-Boston statement that came out, that they were going to campaign from Austin to Boston, or campaign the whole country, try to get all votes. But again, that is the kind of meeting that you hold

after a convention in order to indicate an appearance of action. Let's see now, his actual Boston campaign, that came later. I've got to be careful not to confuse the two.

G: According to my notes, the meetings were held at night after you got there.

R: Right. Don't forget, we got there fairly late in the day though.

G: And he also had a press conference at the air base in Massachusetts and apparently another one the next morning--

R: Yes.

G: --at the Kennedy home. Anything on a decision at that point on what role in the campaign LBJ would play or what states he would campaign in?

R: Not really. That was before the decision for the train trip to the South was made. At that particular point about the only decision that was made that I recall was that Johnson would open his campaign in Boston. That was decided there. Really not too much of anything else.

G: Okay. After that, you flew to Nashville to address the Young Democrats.

R: Right.

G: Anything on that trip that you recall?

R: Routine.

G: Then to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Do you remember that one?

R: Yes. The main thing that stands out in my mind, however, is not so much the address but that when he got out to the airport, on the way back he made a little speech to the farmers. He made a little speech in which he said he was sorry to have to leave so soon, but he had to go home and slop the hogs, which sent the Texas press into gales of

laughter. They all promptly sat back there and began performing parodies on Johnson slopping the hogs. Allen Duckworth wrote out an LBJ recipe for hog slop, which began with twenty bottles of Mumm's Cordon Bleu, fifteen bottles of Perrier water, twenty-two ounces of truffles, so many ounces of *pate de foie [gras]*. Again, none of this had any great significance that wouldn't be right there on the surface.

G: He did visit a farm while he was there.

R: Yes.

G: And the thrust was that he was exaggerating the similarity of the LBJ Ranch to one of these [farms]?

R: Oh, of course. And he would say, "I'm a farmer just like you folks. I've got to go home and slop the hogs."

G: He went from there to San Antonio with Price Daniel and had an affair there.

R: I don't remember that.

G: You were with him according to the [diary].

R: I know. That doesn't mean that I remember it. What was the affair, do you know? Give any indication? If I knew the occasion, I might be able to dredge something up. It certainly couldn't have been too important.

G: Yes.

R: I imagine that the purpose of the trip as far as LBJ was concerned was to be certain that Price Daniel would stay in line.

G: Was there any doubt, do you think, at this point?

R: He was always a little uneasy about Price and where Price would come down. Don't forget, Texas conservative politicians had a long tradition of supporting Republicans, and whatever else Price may have been, he certainly was conservative.

G: Okay. Then you had the post-convention session of Congress; the Congress went back--

R: Yes. That was awful.

G: Did you fly back to Washington for that?

R: Oh, of course. Oh, of course. I would have to have been there for that at that point. It was not a very well thought-through idea. I think that the general concept was they were going to put the Republicans on the spot, to bring up a lot of social legislation and have it voted down mostly by Republicans, or if it were put through by the Democrats, that'd be great, too. But it was poorly conceived because one can never really get any work out of Congress in a period between conventions and an election. Congress has to have political stability before it can operate well, and it is not going to have political stability on the eve of a convention where even then it was recognized as being close. That whole congressional session was pretty much a waste of time. It should never have been held. Nothing of any moment was accomplished. In fact, I'm not sure that anything was accomplished of moment or hours or anything else.

G: Some of the issues were raising the minimum wage--

R: Right.

G: --and a housing bill, which didn't pass, and a Medicare bill, which also didn't pass. Anything in particular on any of these?

R: No, because they all suffered from the same fate, the fact that there was no political stability. Congress does not operate unless the country is stable politically.

G: Was there an attempt on behalf of the Democrats to sort of showcase the party nominee, Jack Kennedy, and to make him look more important than perhaps he had been in the past?

R: No, there wasn't any particular effort to do that. It was too late.

G: Okay. Now, during that session, there was a surprise birthday party for LBJ.

R: Yes.

G: Everett Dirksen came and spoke. The staff, I guess, was part of the party. Do you recall anything significant about that occasion? Dirksen's speech?

R: No, it was just a birthday party. There was no great significance. It would have been held under any circumstances, and it would have been just about the same.

G: The week before that he flew to Des Moines to a farm workers' conference, then to Cincinnati to address the letter carriers. Did you go on those trips?

R: Yes, and again there was nothing--

G: Nothing that you remember?

R: No, everything was just like it looks on the record. You see, at that particular point, you have a peculiar kind of doldrums in between a convention and the opening of a campaign, and to try almost anything is foolish during that period. The candidates would be best advised just to sit down very carefully, think out their campaigns. And I think that most of those things--the letter carriers, I know--had been arranged even before the

convention if my memory serves me correctly. Most of those things were just sort of, you know, "Do something. Don't just sit there with your mouth open."

G: Then on September 8 he flew to Boston and joined in the parade and the big rally--

R: Right.

G: --at Symphony Hall. Let me ask you to describe that one.

R: Which?

G: The trip to Boston, the campaign swing.

R: The trip to Boston, of course, was very well covered by the American press because that was the opening of LBJ's [campaign]. And the principal thing that I remember is a rather amusing incident in which they brought a horse up for him to ride. When he swung up into the saddle, he split his britches.

G: Oh, did he?

R: Yes. Which Mary McGrory had quite a column on.

G: What did she write?

R: You ought to dig it out. You have to see the style of it, but it'll be available. A marvelous column. Again, it was a typical campaign rally: all enthusiasm, very little content. But he received a very good reception, which rather surprised him. It didn't surprise me. If Irish Boston can't turn out a good reception for a vice presidential candidate running with a Kennedy, it's going to be a long, cold day in hell. But the crowds were quite enthusiastic, quite cheerful. He performed very well. There was no significance to it except that it was a success.

G: Okay. Then he went to Hartford, Connecticut.

R: Oh, boy! That was really where the enthusiasm reached incredible heights. It took us hours to get through the town. It was a terribly hot day, and it was one of those things where automobiles were bursting into flames. I remember the automobile right in front of us, the hood suddenly popped open and, whoosh, out poured a lot of flame. I saw Admiral [George] Burkley, who had lost his automobile, driving up perched on the back of a motorcycle. Again, the only keynote was enthusiasm.

G: Okay. He went from there to--

R: Burlington, I think.

G: New York City.

R: No, wasn't it Burlington? I thought he went from there to Burlington and from Burlington to--or that could have been in 1964. I guess that was 1964. That was 1964. It's okay. So I'm sorry; forget the Burkley thing. I was getting mixed up with 1964 when he went to Hartford. But again, there was just enthusiastic crowds.

G: But the cars overheating and things like that, was that in 1964?

R: That was in 1964, right.

G: He went to New York City, was met by [Robert] Wagner, held a press conference at the Biltmore, and had dinner in the suite with Carmine DeSapio and Mike Pendergast, and then addressed the American Political Science Association.

R: Right.

G: Anything on that?

R: Number one, a rather amusing little sidelight. There was a proposal that he go out to a baseball game, which Wagner quickly scotched; he came down on it like a ton of bricks.

He said, "Anybody who walks late into a baseball game gets booed." That I remember. What he made to the American Political Science Association was a sort of an inspirational speech. By that time he'd picked up his favorite theme of the moment [which] was he was going to campaign from Boston to Austin, and he gave them plenty of Boston to Austin. Again, nothing of any great significance. No. And he didn't get anything in New York that was equivalent to the enthusiastic receptions he'd had in Hartford and Boston.

G: Okay. Anything else on his meetings with the New York leaders?

R: Nothing outstanding. The New York leaders at that particular point couldn't lead much, you know. Wagner was personally popular, but the New York machine had broken down pretty well.

G: Then he flew to Austin and spoke at a Stonewall centennial celebration, from there to El Paso, met by [Ralph] Yarborough and later--well, he linked up with Kennedy, too.

R: Now wait a minute. Wait one little minute. I thought he had been in Chicago before the El Paso trip. Do any of your materials show that?

G: I don't see any reference to Chicago at all. It looks like he went from Washington to Austin, then to El Paso. In any event, my note indicates that he was met at the airport by [Ralph] Yarborough, [Sam] Rayburn, J. T. Rutherford, and George Mahon, and that he met JFK at the airport where they then addressed the crowd, and the Johnson party stayed at the Hotel Cortez.

R: I'd like to be very sure about this because--

G: The note indicates that you were there also.

R: I know. Was there any other occasion that he went to El Paso in 1960 in the campaign?

G: I don't think so.

R: Well, then you did have a rather significant moment. I could have sworn that he had been in Chicago just before that, but I guess this was the first time. El Paso was one of his first bad bouts with John Barleycorn. And it was a nasty one. He got there the day before Kennedy arrived, and Kennedy's advance man--I wish I could remember his name. I have a complete picture of him in my mind--LBJ sat up all night just bawling him out unmercifully.

G: Was it Desautels or--?

R: No, it wasn't Claude Desautels.

G: Jerry Bruno?

R: No. It was a lawyer. I think a lawyer associated with--well, who was the former secretary of the interior that--

G: [Harold] Ickes?

R: No, no, no, no.

G: Chapman?

R: Chapman.

G: Oscar Chapman.

R: I think it was one of Oscar Chapman's partners. It was very nasty stuff. He was just up all night lapping up the booze and bawling the hell out of this guy for absolutely nothing, like the Schnozola [Jimmy] Durante fits of indignation, and by the time it came for Kennedy to arrive, he practically had to be steered around. I remember Jack asking, "Are

you sure you're going to be all right, Lyndon?" And he's saying [makes grunting sound]. However, strangely enough, he recovered and went through all the motions that day that he was supposed to go through. But this, I believe, was the first really bad episode that set the pattern that became fairly common during the campaign, of very, very heavy drinking.

G: He was called that day by Groucho Marx regarding an appearance on Groucho Marx' TV show. Do you recall--?

R: I know nothing about it. I think we were all too busy, worried about him. I was out there with Bill Lloyd, and we were practically leading him around by the arm.

G: He went from there to Lubbock and then to San Antonio. Do you recall--?

R: No, because you see what happened on that trip, he and Kennedy were supposed to join up somewhere else, and there was a period there in which I think I flew with the Kennedy plane, and Pierre Salinger flew with the Johnson plane just so the press could talk to him about what was happening on the other side of the campaign. So I'm not too familiar.

G: Okay. Well, LBJ gave a speech and introduced JFK at a big rally in Alamo Square in San Antonio.

R: That's probably where we got together again, then.

G: Do you remember that occasion?

R: Only that it was a big occasion. You know, you have to realize one thing: political speeches are like that. Political meetings, political speeches, political rallies are stylized. They are about the same thing as a Japanese temple dance, and when you see one, you've seen them all.

G: Did LBJ tend to give basically the same message at each location?

R: Oh, sure. Of course. And so did JFK.

G: Did he have any sort of feedback, a process whereby he would ask you or other members of the staff how he did or get suggestions for improving the speech?

R: Oh, sure.

G: When was this done? Was it done on the plane?

R: It wasn't done on a systematic basis. He was just doing it all the time. Actually, the other thing that was happening was this. There was a gallery of speech writers back in Washington that were supposed to be writing all the speeches. Well, I don't think any of them were ever used as a speech, but what would happen would be that bits and pieces of them would be picked up and incorporated into his speech. You ought to ask Ralph Huitt about that. Huitt worked with that staff of writers, and Huitt finally got a little tired of having all those speeches produced, none of which were being delivered. He traveled with us for a while, and after a few days, he said, "I can see now exactly why our speeches aren't being used." He said, "This is not the sort of an atmosphere or the time or the place for formal, prepared speeches." He said, "Everything's sort of catch as catch can."

G: Was there a way during these stops, these speeches, to have monitored what the Nixon-Lodge campaign was saying and answer their charges or their accusations?

R: They were being followed closely in Washington, and we'd get on the phone every time we had a chance and call to Washington and get the latest reports as to what was happening. In the Nixon-Lodge campaign, I really don't remember anything of any great

significance in it, except that a pattern came through to us, the campaigning being almost entirely Nixon. I found out myself, talking to some reporters that had followed Lodge around, that his campaigning was very quiet, very seemly, very gentlemanly, and not one that would tax his physical abilities.

You know, one of the things that happened in that campaign is rather interesting. Nixon really never got on the offensive. I know Nixon very well; he once said I was the first newspaperman he met in Washington. Nixon's whole tactic in a campaign was to keep hammering away until he scored a point and then to ride through on the momentum of that point. Well, he never got ahead of the game any time during the campaign. You know, he started out ahead. There was no question about that. If you'd held the election the first of September, Nixon would have won hands down. But the turning point of that campaign was the debate. There's no ifs, ands, or buts about that. And after that, Nixon was never able to catch up.

G: Now, from San Antonio, you went to Houston where LBJ addressed a rally in the coliseum and then went to the hotel suite, I guess, and listened to Kennedy's speech to the Houston Ministerial Alliance. Let me ask you to talk about that event.

R: Well, I was on the stage with Kennedy, right behind the curtain where I could watch him, and I was really very pleased with the way he handled it. He did a beautiful job of handling those ministers.

G: Tell me some of the history of this appearance. Was there any question in Kennedy's organization whether Kennedy ought to accept that invitation?

R: Oh, I think there was. Now again, this is the sort of thing I only know secondhand, of course, but I'm reasonably confident that there were two schools of thought on this matter in the Kennedy camp: one, that he should ignore it completely, that you couldn't get anywhere arguing with bigots. But the other school of thought was that nothing could advance his fortunes more at that particular point because what it would do would be to raise the specter of bigotry at a time when nobody wanted to be a bigot. And I think really that is what it did do. That a lot of people who might have voted against Kennedy because of his Catholicism, when it was presented to them the way it was presented at that meeting, said, "Hey, wait a minute, I don't want to be a bigot." And I think Nixon actually lost votes out of that, that a lot of people that would have voted for Nixon also felt they had to clear their skirts of any taint of bigotry by voting for Kennedy. It's a weird sort of a reverse jujitsu, but it worked.

G: Did LBJ have any role in that?

R: No, I never heard him mention it.

G: Did his people have any role in advising Kennedy on what to say?

R: No. Not that I know of. Certainly I didn't.

G: He went from there to Austin and spent the night in the Governor's Mansion. Kennedy went to Austin and then spoke on the steps of the Capitol and then on to Fort Worth and then to Dallas, and then LBJ introduced JFK at the Dallas auditorium. Anything on any of these particular stops?

R: No, except they were much more successful than anyone had expected. I had thought there might be some problems in Fort Worth and Dallas, but there weren't any really.

G: How was the joint campaigning in Texas by Kennedy and Johnson arranged? How was it decided what Kennedy would do and when, and who was doing the advance work on it?

R: At that particular point, it's pretty hard to tell. I wish I could remember precisely. Kennedy was pretty much calling the shots, and what I'm trying to remember is who was doing the actual working out of the schedules and various things like that. You know, I can't. Cliff Carter was in overall charge of the advance work, and in Texas the advance work was left pretty much to us. But just who actually made the decision, I don't know.

G: Was there a doubt as to the wisdom of joint campaigning, where you were taking up both of the candidates' time?

R: No.

G: Why was this?

R: No. No, not a bit of doubt of it. The feeling [was] that Kennedy and Johnson supplemented each other and that to have the two appearing in the same place gave an appearance of oneness and solidarity to the campaign. No, there was never any question of that.

G: Well, there really weren't very many joint appearances at all.

R: No, they weren't necessary, you see, but it was decided that there should be joint appearances, and those appearances should be very early so that they would be unnecessary. But the point had to be made immediately that this was not just a campaign in which Kennedy had very reluctantly accepted Johnson as his running mate, because you must realize, the Kennedy victory at the convention was not quite as impressive as it seems. Kennedy had certainly had a clear majority of the delegates but that was because

he had gone out and gotten many of those delegates at a point before there was any real contest over the delegates. And there were very important elements in the Democratic Party which Kennedy had to have but which were not too fond of him. Certainly Kennedy did not go over big anywhere in the South or in the West. Certainly Kennedy did not have really strong support from the Jewish vote. In fact, there was quite a bit of suspicion out among the Jewish vote. Then, on the other hand, of course, you had some of the stronger civil righters, people like that, who thought that Johnson might be a liability, and that had to be quashed immediately. It had to be clear that these two men were running together.

G: As the campaign wore on, did Johnson want more joint appearances?

R: Not particularly.

G: He didn't?

R: Once the point was established, that was enough.

G: Okay. You went from Texas then to Carlsbad, New Mexico, to speak at an Elks rally there at the auditorium, and then Artesia, Roswell, New Mexico, and Albuquerque. Anything on that trip?

R: All routine. Those are the sort of things that just sort of swim in your mind, you know, "If this is Tuesday, we're in Albuquerque."

G: Okay. Then on to Arizona. He was accompanied by [Stewart] Udall and Carl Hayden. Anything on Hayden's role in the campaign?

R: No, except that his appearance with Johnson was certainly potent in Arizona. Hayden practically owned that state, you know.

G: Okay. Then from Arizona you went on to Las Vegas and spent a night there. He spoke at a rally. Do you remember the evening in Las Vegas?

R: Yes, yes.

G: Tell me about that.

R: Well, there wasn't too much to tell really except I had some long conversations with Alan Bible in which he outlined the political realities of Nevada for me.

G: What did he say?

R: The largest single vote--well, the most important single organization--believe it or not, was the cooks, waiters, bartenders union, which include the croupiers in the casinos, and the second largest was some of the magnesium and aluminum workers out of the Permanente plant. I had been wondering because I had made a little tour and, by God, I couldn't find anybody from Nevada. I ran into Alan Bible and I asked him, "Where in hell are the Nevadans? Who votes?" That's where I got my real insight into it.

But again, the meetings, the appearances themselves were very routine. This was just typical campaign oratory.

G: Then you flew back to Washington for Tom Hennings' funeral.

R: Yes.

G: Senator Hennings had died. From there to Oklahoma City and then back to Austin. Anything else on that leg?

R: No. Wait. Oklahoma City.

G: There was a Midwestern Democratic Conference there.

R: Yes. Or was that--no, no, that's not it.

G: Okay. The next swing was to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Worthington, then Omaha, Nebraska.

R: Yes. That's where you had that luncheon in Bernie [Bernard] Boyles' back yard?

G: Yes.

R: All I can tell you about that, pretty much, in South Dakota one of the most interesting things that I recall was his meeting with cattlemen. It wasn't a meeting so much. It was just his talking to a group of cattlemen and I've forgotten how. Mary McGrory was trailing us at that particular point, talking to them later, and wanting to know just what they thought, and they thought he was great, of course, and it turned out because he was a cattleman, or at least to them he looked like a cattleman. I remember Mary McGrory writing a piece saying that it was almost a question of the boots, that he was wearing the same kind of boots they wore.

The meeting in Bernie Boyles' backyard, which was a typical Democratic shindig in Omaha, the main thing I remember about that was a marvelous speech that Lady Bird made, talking about she'd always wanted to see the state because down in Texas they produced all this beef, which was all range-fed. It was sent up to Nebraska and the Dakotas to be turned into the prime meat that was eaten all over America, and she was always so very anxious to see the place where they took that Texas beef and made it into an edible product. That's about the only thing worth remembering out of it. Lady Bird was damn good.

G: Was she reluctant to speak publicly on these campaign swings? She didn't have to be--?

R: No, she didn't have to be hogtied. I don't think she was too fond of it, but it didn't bother her any.

G: Did she normally speak at every stop or would she just--?

R: No, not every stop, but quite often. You know, she really was a pleasure to work with. You never had to worry about her saying anything stupid. We had to worry about him. God knows what he might say if the--he was not a very cautious man.

G: Of course, the stories are told over and over about him speaking longer than he should and putting himself behind on the schedule, and people having to slip him notes.

R: Yes. That's right.

G: Was this a common problem?

R: Very common. All the time. But that never bothered me too much. I was more bothered by the kind of gaffes the man could make, and boy, he could make them!

G: Did Mrs. Johnson also help keep him on an even keel?

R: Oh, sure.

G: Let me ask you to give some examples of this.

R: Oh, I can't think of any during the particular campaign, but that was so common over the years. I remember in the White House when he got into that business of walking the reporters around the South Lawn, sixteen laps or twenty laps, we could usually put an end to it by going and getting her, and she'd haul them in and bring them back. And quite often, if he wanted to do something very foolish, you knew it was foolish, you'd at least get him to put it off until tomorrow knowing he would probably talk to Lady Bird about it

that night, and Lady Bird may not have been brilliant, but she had a lot of sense. She was not a foolish woman.

G: Okay. Next, he had lunch with Truman--this was perhaps the second of three meetings with Truman during the campaign--before returning to Austin. Anything significant about the meeting with Truman here?

R: No. No, I was there, and I can't remember anything except that he had it.

G: Okay. He was in Austin or the Ranch at the time of the first Kennedy-Nixon debate, September 26. Do you remember that?

R: Oh, will I ever forget it? This is the make-break one?

G: The one on domestic policies, the first one.

R: Oh, no, I don't remember much about that one. The one that I remember is the one where the harpoon really went into Nixon. Although I do recall that the first one seemed to me to be a no hit, no run, no error proposition, that it didn't change anybody's thinking about anything.

G: From there to Quincy, Illinois. He spoke at a rally and again at the airport. Then Lawrenceville and on to Carbondale and the [Illinois] State Fair Grounds and places like that. Anything on that?

R: Missouri got in there somewhere.

G: Well, I think he went to Indiana and then perhaps Missouri.

R: I thought Missouri was first. Are you sure?

G: I don't see it here at all.

R: My own recollection was Missouri, Quincy, Carbondale, and then, I think, Pennsylvania. However, it's very easy to get confused about that. Unless you've ever been in a nationwide presidential campaign, it's almost impossible to realize how you lose all sense of time and distance and priority. You remember events, but you don't remember them in order. You don't necessarily remember them in terms of their relative importance. You remember them mostly in terms of your own fatigue. Every city looks alike. You know, the approaches to any city in the United States from an airport are identical. A bunch of the used car dealers on the way in, gasoline stations, roadhouses. You get about the same speech. Well, you really do lose track. But the main reason I remember it is I remember waking up in a hotel and wondering where in the hell I was and getting absolutely panicky. Nothing in the room could tell me. There wasn't any telephone book. There was a blotter which had the names of a number of local establishments on it but did not have the name of the town. And what I finally did was just sit down on the bed and just force myself to think back to the last thing I could remember coherently. I was afraid to call the desk clerk and have him walking around saying, "What do you know about those goddamned drunks with the Johnson party, didn't even know where they were." And it seemed to me the start of that was Missouri.

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R: On Missouri, the Quincy and the Carbondale speech, there was nothing unusual. This was just the typical campaign speech.

G: Okay. Went to Fort Wayne, Columbia City, Fort Wayne again, and at this point, he evidently sent a telegram to Amon Carter, whom he was trying to persuade to come out

on behalf of the Kennedy-Johnson ticket. Do you remember that, his efforts to get Carter?

R: No, but that wouldn't be at all surprising because he was trying to get everybody. I do remember that he wanted to get Amon Carter, yes, but I have no reason to--

G: All right. Then he went to Columbus, Ohio, gave a speech at Ohio State University.

R: Yes.

G: Then to Memphis with Buford Ellington, then to Jackson, Tennessee, to Memphis again, then to Chattanooga for a rally.

R: Hah! Chattanooga I remember well. That's where he almost went into a whorehouse. God, that was funny.

G: Tell me about that.

R: It was rather late in the evening when we got into Chattanooga, and we were going down the street, and there was a big bunch of people standing out in front waving and cheering, so he got out. He was going to walk in to talk to the families. Well, it turned out to be a whorehouse in Chattanooga. One of the Tennessee police tipped us off; I think it was Bill Lloyd [who] steered him out of it. God, that was funny.

G: Was Johnson amused by it later?

R: I don't think he ever knew about it.

G: He went from Chattanooga to Knoxville for a Democratic dinner, and that night he spoke with Bobby Kennedy by telephone--Kennedy was in Hyannis Port--and then flew back to Washington. Anything on--?

R: I think [it was] just routine about the campaign. The main thing I remember about that is that he had stayed in the Governor's Mansion with Bird, and most of the staff had been at a motel near the airport, and he'd gotten very threatening that night. He said anybody that was late was just going to get left, everybody had to be on time. We were all on time, and no Lyndon Johnson. We were wondering whether we ought to obey his instructions and take off. At that point the campaign had just become a grueling ordeal.

G: Well, my note for the next day said he was in bed all morning with a cold and about to lose his voice, that he was taking no phone calls and using hand signals to communicate. Does that sound familiar?

R: Yes, I heard about it from somebody. I wasn't there.

G: And the next day he went on "Face the Nation."

R: I know that he did, but I don't remember it.

G: Okay. Then to New Jersey with Bob Meyner and went to Newark, [then] Dover, Delaware, where he was met by Frear--

R: By Allen Frear, yes.

G: --Camden, [then to] Georgetown, Delaware, and then he flew to New York City late that evening. Anything on that leg of the--?

R: No, no. That's just routine. Routine campaigning. You're in a very bad time for specific memories.

G: Well, that's all right. Then he rode in a motorcade to a rally at Borough Hall in Queens. Anything on that?

R: Oh, just, again, an amusing incident.

G: Okay.

R: We were all at a point where we no longer gave a damn about the campaign; all we wanted was for the thing to be over. But obviously we had to carry on, and we had been given a credit card to use, which we all assumed was a Democratic National Committee credit card. And at this rally in Queens, there was no place from which we could make our calls except a bar and grill across the street, and we stormed that bar and grill promptly and must have run up several hundred dollars worth of telephone calls. Who was that Texas financier that started the steak pits? It turned out to have been his credit card, and the poor devil got a bill for sixty [sixteen?] thousand dollars probably on that credit card a couple of months after the election. (Laughter) It's one of the funniest things I've ever heard of. I don't know how his credit card had gotten in there. We were all using it, assuming it was the Democratic National Committee's. But the Queens bar and grill--I remember the main thing about that [rally], it seemed like such a useless thing to do. There was a very small group present, no real crowd, and everybody at that point was so tired we really couldn't put on much of a performance.

G: Then a motorcade to New Rochelle and a speech at a college there, a rally at Mount Vernon, New York, and then he returned to New York City.

R: At that point, the campaign was kind of in the doldrums. The crowds were not good. There was very little enthusiasm. Certainly no staff enthusiasm, but not much enthusiasm among the people either. I think that was the low-water mark of the campaign.

G: Early October. Then a rally in Brooklyn. He gave a speech to the Trade Union Council of the Liberal Party at the Hotel Astor and then [attended] a party in the Greenwich, Connecticut, at Tom Deegan's house.

R: No, wait. The American Labor Party?

G: Liberal Party.

R: Liberal Party rather. Oh, I sure remember that one. That was one of his real triumphs. I had written for him a very pro-Israel speech, which--of course, the American Liberal Party, basically that was the creature of Alex Rose and Dave Dubinsky. And Alex Rose ran it. Well, when we got in there, I remember passing him a quick note saying, "Why don't you say, 'I haven't studied your platform very carefully, but you're against sweatshops; I'm against sweatshops. You're for a fair break for the working man; I'm for a fair break for the working man. You're against discrimination; I'm against discrimination. On every thing that counts, we're together.'"

He picked it up, and it really inspired him and he went into one of the most moving speeches I have ever heard, which wound up with that marvelous story of Maury Maverick coming up to New York and getting ten thousand dollars, according to Johnson, from Dave Dubinsky; I don't know if it was from Dave Dubinsky or not. But he got ten thousand dollars, went on down to San Antonio, and, being Maury Maverick, he had them all changed into silver dollars and walked right down Broadway with these two big sacks of silver dollars slung over his shoulder. They opened up a storefront window on Broadway, and passed out these silver dollars to Mexicans to go down and pay their poll tax, which, you know, is clearly against Texas law.

Of course they promptly arrested Maury Maverick and threw him in jail, and he looked like he was in bad shape because he very clearly violated the law. There just wasn't any doubt about it. Johnson said he asked Everett Looney if he couldn't do something about it. So Everett Looney went to the courthouse, and Johnson imitated Everett Looney making a speech to the jury: "Folks of the jury, I'm just a country lawyer, and I don't know too much about this case. But I do know that we're meeting in the shadow of the Alamo, where Maury Maverick's grandfather fought and bled." And he said, "I know that over all the years since then, since Texas became a nation and then part of the great United States, that dollar after dollar has left Texas, boy after boy has left Texas to go East and never come back to us. And then finally, Maury Maverick--Maury Maverick went East. And what did Maury Maverick do? He got ten thousand dollars, and he brought it back to Texas. The first time in the whole history since the fall of the Alamo that somebody had gone East and brought money to Texas. And what did Maury do with that money? Did he dig a swimming pool for himself? No! Did he build himself a big mansion? No! Maury Maverick took that money so that poor, needy people could pay their poll tax and vote! Are you going to send Maury Maverick to jail for that?" And Maury got acquitted.

Well, it just brought the house down. Lord, they were standing in their chairs. They were screaming. They were yelling. They were clapping. They were waving handkerchiefs. And I remember the reporter from the *New York Post*, a very cynical guy who had been really quite nasty, talking in the press bus--Ollie Pilat, that's who it was,

Oliver Pilat--and I heard him say to somebody, "You know, I underestimated this operation."

G: Did he?

R: But that was one of Johnson's real triumphs. Then he also gave them the speech on Israel, which naturally was pretty popular with that group.

G: He gave them a speech on Israel?

R: Yes, the one I had written for him originally.

G: Was he normally inclined to favor Israel during this campaign, during 1960?

R: Oh, sure, he always had. Don't forget, his Jewish support in Texas was a hundred per cent. I can still remember Dave Dubinsky's introduction of him that day. Dave said that "This is a very young Congressman, and all through the years, we go to Washington, we've talked to many people. They promise us many things, so this man I'm going to introduce you to today, he didn't promise us as much as a lot of other people, but he always delivered what he promised, which a lot of other people didn't." I remember Dave making that speech. I think that may have been one of Johnson's major contributions to the campaign because Kennedy did not do well with the Jewish vote.

G: Johnson and staff then flew to Richmond, Virginia?

R: Yes.

G: Traveled by car to Hopewell, a speech on the courthouse steps.

R: Right.

G: And a private dinner at the Commonwealth Club.

R: Yes.

G: Then a rally in Richmond. Returned to Washington later, then on to Maryland: Cumberland, Hagerstown.

R: Yes.

G: Anything on those trips?

R: Except, again, I think the campaign was sort of not going too well at that point.

G: Then he was on "Meet the Press."

R: Yes.

G: Then the next day, on October 10, he started that train trip through the South.

R: Yes. Now, there--

G: Victory Campaign Special.

R: I don't know whose idea the train trip was. The first time I heard it proposed was [by] Bobby Baker. Bobby kept buttonholing everybody he could, including me, and saying, "Look, if he just takes that trip down to the South, it's going to be"--well, whatever Bobby would use as a synonym for magnificent. And I think it was, too. I think that that was his second major contribution of the campaign.

G: Was it patterned after the Truman train trip at all?

R: Not really. Not really. Although some of the ideas were taken from the Truman train trip. It was very well organized. Ed [Edgar, Jr.] Shelton--have you talked to him?

G: No.

R: You'd better. Ed Shelton pretty well ran the whole thing, but it really was organized extremely well. When we were coming to a town, local Democrats in that town would get on the train at the previous stop, and then the train would pull into the town and all

these people would walk off the train, shaking hands with Lyndon Johnson. Then he'd turn and make a little speech to the crowd. Then he'd take off. Well, it really was very dramatic. Of course, he pulled a couple of lines that the press dearly loved. He got into Culpeper, [Virginia], and as the train pulled out, he bellowed at the top of his voice, "What did Dick Nixon ever do for Culpeper?" which was rather amusing as far as the press was concerned.

G: Was that simply spontaneous after his speech?

R: Yes. Right.

G: And the train had literally started?

R: Yes. Of course he could be heard, though. He had an excellent loud-speaking system.

G: Did you hear that firsthand or--?

R: Oh, sure. We had loud-speakers piped into the press car, and whatever he said in the back was picked up by the sound system and was carried into the press cars as well as to the crowd, so I heard the whole thing.

G: What was the press' reaction to that?

R: Well, they just thought it was as funny as all hell. Everybody sat down and promptly began writing pieces about "What did Dick Nixon ever do for Culpeper?" He pulled a similar one at--we got to High Point, North Carolina, and he said, "And High Point is the high point of our trip through North Carolina." I winced, and I can still remember Pete Lisagor looking at me and saying, "George, if you'd been faster, you could have stopped that."

But no matter how you looked at it, that trip was a success. Well, as I said, it was a very dramatic thing to kind of see this battle for the heart and the soul of the South. He really knew how to talk to those people. We had a recording with "The Yellow Rose of Texas"--I think we used about three or four of them before the trip was over--and as the train would come in, it would start out very, very low, very quietly, and then pick up in volume as we pulled into the station. By the time we stopped, it would be absolutely roaring "The Yellow Rose of Texas." Then it would stop and he would deliver his speech, and then the train would pull out of the station, again with the loud-speaker roaring "The Yellow Rose of Texas," then diminishing as the train pulled away. Now, there was a contingent whose sole job was to inflate balloons and release them just as soon as we pulled into the station. Oh, God, it really was a marvelous trip.

We got to Florida, of course, and it was too much to cover all of Florida by train, so we left at Jacksonville and flew down to Miami. The main thing I remember about that is that airplane that was chartered for the flight. You had the impression that this private charter was used mostly for gun-running in South America. The pilot looked as though he ought to have a patch over one eye and a knife down his back that he could whip out that way. And the floorboards were loose; we suspected that was so they could put the guns in when they were flying them. But the main thing I remembered there was when you got into some of those little towns in Central Florida, you had a feeling of real menace from the crowds. Real menace. We stayed close together and were kind of happy to get out of there and get in the train again.

G: They did show up, the crowds were there, but they were not friendly?

R: The people that came close were reasonably friendly, but you'd see crowds standing just a little way back and, boy, they were nasty.

G: Well, nasty in terms of just the way they looked?

R: The Ku Klux Klan. They would like to have strung us up by the neck.

G: Did they have placards or shout anything?

R: No, but you'd hear mutters and smutterings as you'd go by, "Goddamn nigger-lovers!"

G: Well, of course, civil rights--you'd already had the 1957 Civil Rights Act and the 1960 act. Did you have any problem before you got to Florida on this, in South Carolina?

R: Yes, South Carolina. South Carolina. I remember a group showing up carrying signs about communists and socialists and all that sort of thing, and every time he would open his mouth, they would start shouting and screaming and hooting. I remember that.

G: What was Johnson's reaction to that? How did he deal with it?

R: Oh, God, you know, things like that really got to him, and I said, "Look." I remember talking and saying, "Just say, 'Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do,'" which is exactly what he did.

He went from there, when we got back to the train, of course, the rest was through Mississippi, I think Alabama, and then to New Orleans, and one of the worst parts was when he was going into New Orleans. He was just feeling great. He was on top of the world at that point. We were going to spend the night in New Orleans, which we were all really looking forward to. We all wanted a bath. You could smell any one of us fifteen feet away, and we were thinking of a nice, quiet night in town. As we were going in, he called a couple of us in and said, "Get the best restaurant in New Orleans and arrange a

big dinner for the staff," *et cetera, et cetera*. Well, we couldn't get the best restaurant in New Orleans, of course, but we did get the Vieux Carre. And by the time he had gotten there, his mood had changed completely, he'd gone from being manic to being depressive, and he suddenly decided in the middle of the dinner, goddamn, we weren't going to spend the night in New Orleans, we were going back to the Ranch. And here we were, looking forward to a good evening and, wham, we had to crowd into the airplane, and it was really tough landing that big plane--it was a Convair, you know--out at the Ranch. We just barely made it.

G: What do you think affected him?

R: This is one of the big mysteries of Lyndon Johnson. I think that if anybody could find an answer to it, one would have the answer to the basic enigma of Lyndon Johnson. He could go from the height of elation to the uttermost depths of despond just like that and for no apparent reason. He did it that night; I remember his doing it a number of years later at the funeral of Dag Hammarskjold. By the time we got to Paris, he had gone from elation to the lower depths. I remember the night that he made a great speech at the Gridiron Club dinner that he suddenly again plunged into the depths of despair. Sometimes one could find a trigger for it. I think in the case of the Gridiron speech it was because Sam Houston [Johnson] was getting into trouble, but I don't know what the trigger was at the Dag Hammarskjold funeral.

G: There was some suggestion that riding into the city he saw some [Barry] Goldwater signs that really set off his fuse.

R: If so, it wasn't immediate. It was a delayed reaction, because I went to a couple of his speeches and he was doing all right.

G: Do you think that just sheer exhaustion, the pace of the campaign had something to do with it?

R: Probably it had something to do with it, but that doesn't account for the abrupt slide from heaven to hell.

G: Was he more likely to do this when he was traveling, when he was exerting himself?

R: No, he didn't have to be traveling.

G: Now, I have a note that he went back to Washington that night, at midnight. Left the restaurant and flew back to Washington.

R: No.

G: You have him going to the Ranch.

R: Unless my memory is very badly wrong, and I don't think it is.

G: I have him going to [Washington]. Well . . .

R: Check that out, because you know, again, my memory could be wrong.

G: I have him going to Washington and just staying in bed for about three days at [his home] at 30th Place.

R: I think it was the Ranch.

G: Three straight days. And then, after that, he had a dinner for the staff at 30th Place.

R: I think--

G: Do you remember that dinner?

R: No. But, God, my memories are so vivid about flying to the [Ranch]. Obviously, we did fly to the Ranch somewhere. Maybe I'm confusing it with another occasion.

G: Well, just the--

R: Better re-check that.

G: Landing that big plane at the Ranch must have been--

R: Oh, that happened, there's no doubt about that. Maybe this happened on another occasion, but I don't think so. I remember the plane cut deep ruts into the landing strip, and the pilot just managed to get it stopped short of the fence.

G: That's the sort of thing that the FAA probably would have investigated because it was not designed to land at that airport, was it?

R: No.

G: Did the pilot want to land it there?

R: Didn't argue. He was a hell of a good pilot. It was at the lower end of the plane's permissible amount of space. I could have sworn that we flew to the Ranch.

G: Okay. Then he went to Pennsylvania: Lewisburg, Sunbury, Allentown.

R: Yes. I remember that trip well, because he went through the coal fields where there was heavy depression, and you had all these occasions where when he stopped to make a speech he'd be surrounded by miners chanting, "We want work! We want work! We want work!" And what it turned out was that the garment industry had moved into that area, and there were plenty of jobs, but they were jobs for women. So what you had were these miners, and nothing in the world can be a more male chauvinist pig than a miner

staying home taking care of the babies while their wives were out earning the family bread. And those men were just bitter. God, they were bitter!

G: Have any solutions for that problem?

R: Oh, of course, we promised them something, I've forgotten what. You know, in a campaign you don't really come up with solutions. You just bawl out the Republicans because these men are out of work.

G: Then to Huntington, West Virginia, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Anything on those trips?

R: Nothing in particular.

G: Then Kentucky.

R: Where in Kentucky?

G: London, Middlesboro, Frankfort, Owensboro--

R: I know we were there but--

G: --and then Kansas City.

R: Kansas City?

G: After that.

R: You know that--and where did he go from Kansas City?

G: To Missouri. Let's see, Chillicothe, is that it?

R: Chillicothe. Chillicothe.

G: To the National Corn Picking Contest.

R: Oh, that's the one that I thought had preceded the trip to Quincy, Illinois.

G: Anything else on that leg of the trip?

R: No.

G: He flew back to Austin that evening. You were with him. Went to the El Mat [Matt's El Rancho?] with Jesse Kellam, had Mexican food, and then from the Driskill Hotel watched the Kennedy-Nixon debate. Do you remember that?

R: In the Driskill?

G: Yes.

R: Was that the second debate? The one on foreign policy?

G: Yes. Right.

R: My God, I thought we were out at the Ranch. Because I remember we split into two parts--now, maybe we did this at the Driskill, but I thought it was at the Ranch--half of us watching it on TV and half of us listening on radio. And the important thing is that after it was over, the people that had listened on radio came in with long faces. They thought Nixon had won.

G: Had you watched it on television?

R: Yes. And I knew--I thought that was the ball game. The funny part, though, was that I got a transcript of it a couple of weeks later. Nixon did win it; any debate jury in the world would have awarded it to Nixon. For many years, I played a little game, a little bit of research I ran for myself. I would ask people did they watch it on TV or [had they] heard it on radio, and second, what did they remember. It was rather amazing. The people that watched it on TV remembered Kennedy's stabbing finger and the shock of hair, and they remembered Nixon's eyes rolling and that he needed a shave, but I never met one who knew what the debate was about. The people that heard it on radio knew

the debate was about Quemoy and Matsu. They didn't remember much about it, for which I don't blame them. That's the most overblown issue of the twentieth century. But I've made some other experiments since then, and it's rather interesting, the difference in reception in a television audience and a radio audience. The radio audience remembers substantive matters; the television audience remembers issues of personality, which I think are fully as important as the substantive, by the way. No, I very clearly remember the separation, but again I thought we were out at the Ranch.

G: What was LBJ's reaction to the Kennedy-Nixon debate?

R: He never said.

G: Really?

R: Never said. You know it was always hard to get a reaction out of him.

G: Did he feel that the train trip had been a success after he was able to settle down?

R: I don't know. He never said.

G: Did he ever talk about it in later years?

R: Never. You have to understand, he never talked about things that way. Quite often I get that question: "Did he feel this? Did he feel that?" He never told you.

G: Really?

R: Right. The only way you knew how LBJ felt was by his reactions to something, and if you couldn't read his reactions, then you didn't know. He must have known it was a success because it certainly was, and he obviously felt it was a success when he was going into New Orleans that night. It was not only a success, it was a crashing success. Kennedy would never have been president without that trip.

G: Mrs. Johnson's father was dying during this time of the campaign and ultimately did die in late October. Do you recall--?

R: Only that he was. That's all I remember. I don't remember anything else than that he was. By that point, we were all numb.

G: Well, then you went to Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento. Anything on the California swing?

R: All I remember about San Diego is that he went to see that elevator that he'd worked in when he'd run away from home.

G: Oh, yes, at San Bernardino, yes.

R: On the way from . . . Yes, I remember that.

G: Did he talk about that? He dedicated a plaque, didn't he, or maybe that's later.

R: No. That was later, I think. No, the main thing I remember about that was that the California trip was very successful, but then all of a sudden everything seemed to fall off. Did he go to Salt Lake [City] from there, or something like that?

G: Yes.

R: He went to Salt Lake, and believe me, they didn't have a corporal's guard out there for him. The campaign, just all of a sudden it began to dry up. It may be just the places we were. I don't know, but I got the same feeling from people in other parts of the country that the tide at that point had turned against Kennedy and for Nixon, and it seemed to keep on turning until--it didn't really get revived until he made that New York swing of his that wound up in New York City, that swing that included--what?--Buffalo, Syracuse.

G: Well, before we get onto that, let me ask you. Did he describe that working in the elevator or working in the law office in San Bernardino or anything of that nature?

R: Just that some vice president was coming to town, and he actually swapped with somebody else so that he could go and see the vice president, and he was just trying to give an idea of the amount of excitement that would be worked up in those days. That's about all.

G: He also, out in California, in Sacramento, met with his first teacher, Mrs. Kate [Deadrich] Loney.

R: Kate, yes. Oh, it was the sort of thing that's set up during a campaign.

G: He went to Washington, to Spokane, and was met by Warren Magnuson, do you remember that?

R: Yes, that was a very poor meeting. Very poor. There was not a really good meeting again until Buffalo. At that particular point I would have predicted we were going to lose the election.

G: Okay. He did go to Chicago, had a number of meetings there. Mayor [Richard] Daley organized some things, a motorcade, and from there he went to Erie, Pennsylvania.

R: Right.

G: Spoke to an airport rally, and then on to Buffalo.

R: Yes. Buffalo is where everything turned.

G: Okay. Let me ask you to talk about that.

R: About what?

G: Buffalo.

R: I don't know what it was, but even through Erie we were getting very poor receptions, and my talks with people traveling with Kennedy, they had the same feeling. But [in] Buffalo, something, everything seemed to click. Enthusiastic crowds, and all of a sudden, one began to get that victory feeling. Of course, the main thing I remember about it is dictating a press release in the Buffalo airport and hearing the press laugh and looking up to see what in the hell it was about, and it turned out that what I had told my girl was, "Put down whatever day this is and whatever city we're in," which I really didn't know at that point. But we went from Buffalo--I think it was to Syracuse, and then from Syracuse to I think one other stop before New York City. Was there another one?

G: No. Well. You see, the way I have it, after Syracuse he goes back to Texas, to Amarillo, and has a rally with JFK at the Amarillo airport and then to Wichita Falls and then Fort Worth.

R: Hmm. Well, my mind is playing tricks on me.

G: And then to Houston.

R: You must be right.

G: This is after the Adolphus [Hotel incident]. Well, he goes from Fort Worth to Dallas where you have the Adolphus incident, then to Houston, and then to New York. And you've talked about the Adolphus incident. Is there anything else?

R: No, you know everything about that.

G: Well, let's go on to New York, because that was an important--

R: Well, the main thing I remember about New York, we'd hardly gotten there when Cliff Carter was absolutely jubilant about it. He told me that the Kennedy advance staff had

broken down completely and that the Johnson advance staff had had to take over. That I remember.

G: Well, I think what happened, they'd gotten him lost in the motorcade, hadn't they, or something like that?

R: Something like that. But whatever it was, it was the kind of thing in which there were big crowds, everybody enthusiastic, everybody was yelling, everybody was cheering, and that's the only specific event that stands out in my mind.

G: There was a nationally-televised Democratic rally.

R: Yes.

G: How did LBJ do that night?

R: Did pretty well.

G: Did he?

R: But again, it was good campaign. It's not the sort of thing where substantive things happen that you remember.

G: Then to Harlingen, Texas.

R: Yes, and the main thing I remember there is when he landed all the shouts going up, "This is your country, Lyndon Johnson!" You know, one of the things that he had said--how did that phrase go?--well, some Republican had made the remark, "This is not Lyndon B. Johnson country" somewhere along the line. Well, after the hotel incident, oh, brother, Texas was really up in arms!

G: And Richard Russell did come to Texas and appear with LBJ.

R: Right. He got mad as hell over that thing.

G: Did you talk to Russell about the incident?

R: No, didn't have to.

G: Then to San Antonio and to Austin. Tell me where you watched the returns.

R: Driskill Hotel.

G: Driskill Hotel? Did you have a big suite of rooms? Is that where LBJ watched it?

R: No, he had a big suite, too. We had the whole Driskill Hotel that night.

G: Did you?

R: I had a big suite. Johnson had a big suite. There was a big party going on in another suite.

G: Let me ask you to tell what you remember about the election returns.

R: Well, of course, there was a bunch of press. He took Nancy Hanschman [Dickerson] and some of the other journalists driving around Austin counting bumper stickers, Nixon and Kennedy, and then that night, we were all watching at different points, and it became apparent at a certain point that Kennedy had it hands down, so it was just one wild party. My main memory, really, is waking up in the morning because I heard something bumping and looking and seeing a chair that was walking across the room and trying to climb out of a window. (Laughter) I'm not kidding.

G: A chair?

R: Which is a little bit--you know, when you wake up with a slight hangover, to see a chair walking across the room with nobody pushing it apparently and then trying to climb out the window . . . Well, what had happened, they'd had a big banner stretched across the side of the Driskill Hotel with "Vote Kennedy-Johnson" or "Welcome

Kennedy-Johnson," and they'd attached the banner at one side. But somebody had attached one of the ropes on the banner to this particular chair, and they were trying to get it down the next morning, and they were jerking at it, which is what made the chair walk.

No, it was just that kind of a night: one big furor, and every body exhausted and hung over the next morning.

G: What was Johnson's mood the next day?

R: Tired but really rather good. Now, when was it that the Secret Service came in? I could date things a little bit better if I could--when did Kennedy come down to visit the Ranch?

G: Mid-November.

R: Well, I am very confused on chronology here.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

R: But his mood was rather good after the election, rather quiet, though, as I remember. We all went back to Washington on the campaign plane, that Convair we'd been flying, and I forget now just when we did go back to the Ranch, but, really, just what it amounted to was that we took advantage of the time to try to calm down and decompress and get ready to lead civilized lives again.

G: In your book [*Lyndon B. Johnson: A Memoir*], you mentioned a note that Jim Rowe wrote to LBJ saying "lay off the booze," and that you--

R: I think that was on the train trip.

G: Really?

R: I'm not sure. He was at his worst then. As I said, this drinking problem became incredible. He was abusing everybody, and you know, everybody--you're really helpless in a case like this. If it was at any other time I think everybody on the staff would have told him to go to--and just walked out. But here in the middle of a campaign, we all had this feeling that we did not want to upset the campaign and possibly lead to a Nixon victory, so we just took it. We didn't think we could do anything else. But he wasn't--he was terrible.

G: Worse than normal? Worse than, say, when he was not campaigning?

R: Yes. Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes, much worse. He was getting absolutely plastered night after night after night, making passes at a number of women he should not have made passes at but abusing the staff and making life absolutely impossible. I remember--this may be a little difficult to explain, but we had one of those hectograph type of machines where you type it on a master, then you make corrections over the master, and then what you run off is a second sheet, the carbon sheet, which you can't read at all. The only thing you can read is the original sheet, but the original sheet is still going to read as though all the mistakes are in it. Well, we couldn't convince him that the mistakes on the original sheet were not on what was going to be run off, and our poor secretaries had to type and retype every single page five or six times because of this. He wouldn't listen to any explanation. He'd just--"You're just a bunch of goddamn, son-of-a-bitching bastards that are trying to do this, that, and the other to me! I want it done right." And we did have--a couple staff members did quit.

G: Who, for example?

R: I can't think of their names now. There was a woman--I think she was from San Antonio--she quit. And he--

G: Oh, Cason. Betty Cason [Hickman].

R: Betty Cason. She quit. I remember he said something really obnoxious to her, and she just promptly sat down unto her typewriter and began taking out some--there were some form sheets somewhere, I don't know where, and she just started to fill them out. She was out of the office in three or four days, and the rest of us wanted to follow her. He was absolutely at his vilest, worst during that campaign. Well, it was pretty bad afterwards, too, when things began to settle down but--

G: Did Mrs. Johnson do anything to control him or reduce his drinking?

R: He was just as bad to her as he was to everybody else. I remember he actually bawled her out once in Kansas City because she was late to join him. Well, the reason she was late [was that] she was flying a commercial plane and it was late. What in the hell could she do about that?

G: What did he say to her, do you remember? What did she say to him?

R: Oh, I can't remember what it was now. The whole thing was so revolting that it's the sort of thing you wanted to forget as fast as you could.

But Jim Rowe wrote him a really tough letter, which may have helped a little, I don't know. And I remember Jim Rowe saying, "You've got good men working for you, and there's not a goddamn thing they can do when you act the way you're acting. Who the hell do you think you are?" I remember that phrase: "Who the hell do you think you

are, the great mogul?" And then it wound up, "One other tip from an old friend: lay off the booze!" God, he was drinking.

G: Did he show you the letter?

R: Yes.

G: What did he say?

R: He said, "How's Jim Rowe know all this?" You know, "Who's told Jim Rowe all this?" And I said, "Mr. President [?] , he traveled with us for"--and he said, "Yes, but who told him this?" That was one of the strange things: Johnson always believed that if something was put down on paper, it was put down on paper because someone had leaked for some deliberate reason. He wouldn't credit Jim, who was an awfully shrewd man, with the ability to look at a situation and assess it for what it was.

G: Was Johnson happy with his advance team?

R: No.

G: Was it a good advance team?

R: It was a damn good. But he was constantly keeping it in an uproar over the most inconsequential matters. I'll never forget when they were all told to be on the alert, to be very careful to follow instructions, and what they all got was a massive telegram that from here on out, the podium, which had been at 49-l/2 inches, should be at 50-l/4 or something like that. You know, some idiotic [instructions]. He--

G: That seems to have been a particular concern of his, the height of the podium.

R: Right. You know, one of the doctors once told me in the White House that what was happening with him was that he was finding that he was constantly looking for something

upon which he could take out his real rage and his real frustrations, that one never knew what their real frustrations were. This particular doctor told me he thought that that was the reason Johnson was having so much trouble with his feet, that whatever his real anger was, he could vent them on his feet.

G: He also got contact lenses or tried contact lenses during this campaign. Do you remember that? Was that unsuccessful?

R: Yes, it didn't work very well. His eyeball shape was wrong. I was talking to one of the doctors about it, and he said that he had an unusually-shaped eyeball, that the contact lenses simply were not going to work.

G: Okay, he stayed at the Ranch for about a week, just resting up after the campaign, and then Kennedy came down and went hunting with him. Were you there during that--?

R: Oh, yes.

G: Okay.

R: We had some very extensive planning. Bill Lloyd and myself, the Secret Service, we had long sessions. One of the problems I remember was the State Department security officer was there, and it became very obvious that the man was lacking some of his marbles, and Bill Lloyd and I just went right to bat on it. God, the guy was nuttier than a fruitcake and the Secret Service said, "We can't do anything about it. He's not our agent; it's not our agency." And we said, "Well, look, we don't want to make a public scandal out of this, but that man has a gun and we're not going to allow him anywhere near the Ranch nor anywhere near the Vice President of the United States." The Secret Service got him taken off, and I think it was Stu [?] told me later that he was a man who had run into a lot

of marital troubles and had just cracked under them but had been a rather good security officer in the State Department at one point.

But all sorts of things went wrong in that particular visit. The Kennedy plane was late, for one thing. Well, what we had done, we had chartered a bus to take them for a tour of the Ranch, and by the time the tour started, dark clouds had formed. You couldn't see more than five feet away. I was up front trying to give commentary, which was silly as all get-out. I think the meeting overall was a rather good meeting, but I remember the screw-up of the--mostly because of the weather.

G: Let's see. Clark Clifford was delegated to handle the transition, is that--?

R: Yes, for obvious reasons. In Washington, D.C., at that point, Clark Clifford had become between the various political parties the same thing that Switzerland has become in the world scene, you know, the professional neutral.

G: Okay. Then Johnson goes to Paris for a NATO--I believe it was a NATO conference--to address a NATO conference. Do you remember that? I don't think you went on that trip, did you?

R: I don't remember it.

G: Paris and then London.

R: I don't remember it.

G: Anything else on Johnson during this post-election period?

R: No.

G: I want to take up the Senate caucus and all of the transition [?] to vice president--

R: There really is very little until the Senate caucus period.

G: Okay. Anything else on 1960 that we haven't talked about?

R: Not that I know of.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview XVII

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