INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM REYNOLDS

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Colonel Reynolds' office in Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: Colonel Reynolds, let's start briefly with your background and how you came to know Lyndon Johnson.

R; All right. It all started back in 1955 when, leaving Okinawa headed for McGuire Air Force Base, my name was selected by the Secretary of the Air Force to be responsible for liaison with the Senate and White House. I wasn't sure what this actually would result in as far as work, having had no knowledge of this particular assignment prior to this change in assignment orders which I had received. The purpose of this job was to work on constituent problems which the senators or the White House may have with regard to Air Force personnel, and to follow legislative as well as regulatory matters and their effect upon the Congress and the White House. Budgets was another area for which I was responsible, to find out and keep the office of the Secretary advised as to what was going on with regard to this area. That specifically was my assignment. My first day of operation on the Hill was to go to the different offices and make myself known, that I was there to serve and to be helpful in any way I could as a representative of the Air Force. It wasn't long before I realized that Senator Johnson, then majority leader,

was the key to legislative action on the Hill.

G: Do you know why you were selected for this assignment? Had you had experience in working [in this area]?

R: I had no experience in this area at that time. However, I did graduate in personnel management and later went to the advanced business school at Harvard as pertains to finance and political problems that come in the advanced management program. So I assume that they just felt that my background was such that it would be good for this particular job.

G: Can you recall the first time you met Lyndon Johnson?

R: I certainly can. I was in visiting the office, I believe talking to Mildred Stegall, Walter Jenkins' secretary, in hopes of seeing Mr. Jenkins when Mr. Johnson arrived in the office. I believe that was my first introduction to the Senator. But I think it was an important meeting in this respect: right off the bat he invited me to come in and sit down and become better acquainted. As busy as he was, he seemed to always find just a few minutes to make you feel at home when you were trying to do a job. So I felt that this experience alone, although it was an accidental meeting at that point in time, turned out to relax me somewhat as pertains to my meetings and work with him.

G: Did you sense when you first met him that he was a pretty formidable leader there?

R: Well, before this occurred I had had a few days on the Hill, and it was obvious from the comments on the Hill that if you wanted something

done you had to get to Lyndon Johnson, to get to know him, because he was sort of the key leader in Congress.

G: Can you remember anyone who phrased it in those terms, or a particular way that his colleagues viewed him, their comments in particular?

R: Senator Russell, whom I consider a truly great American, did make the statement--however, this is probably a year later when I got to know him better--that Mr. Johnson was truly one of the great leaders that arrived on the Hill during his tenure in the Senate, and that had been for quite a period of time. So I thought that in itself was a great statement. Senator Kerr from Oklahoma had tremendous admiration for his ability and had said so on many occasions in my presence. Senator [Sam] Ervin of [North] Carolina also had spoken very favorably and highly of his capability to get things done.

G: How long did it take him to get to know you well?

R: I tried to go by his office almost daily, and I found that the best time to catch him was somewhere around five-thirty or six o'clock at night. That was about the time they would break from the floor, and he would come back to his office to go through his constituent problems and/or other committee problems. Being the Senate majority leader, it was obvious that he would get more problems thrown to him by constituents than almost any other single senator. Although a great share of his constituent work was done by Lloyd Hand, Mildred Stegall, and others on the staff, he did take quite a personal interest in mail [from] some of his particular constituents from Texas.

G: Did he ever call you about a constituent?

R: Yes, he did. He would call me directly, and I can assure you when he called we responded rather rapidly. He would merely call and say, "Reynolds?" I would say, "Yes, Senator?" "Can I see you?" I said, "When?" "Well, I wouldn't call you if I didn't want to see you now." So immediately we would move to his office and try to solve the problem that was confronting him.

G: Would he generally prefer to do these things in person rather than over the telephone?

R: My work with him, generally speaking, was on a personal basis rather than over the phone, but I think that was because I made an effort to be there during the time he was available to look into the particular constituent work.

G: Can you recall any particular cases that he sought help from you in?

R: No, not a particular case, but generally speaking it might be that there had been some question on some contracts that had been let, and he wanted the full facts with regard to the matter, which we would have to get from the Pentagon. A great share of his problems that he considered very important to him were letters that had been written by the individuals themselves, members of the service who felt that they had not been treated properly. He wanted to make sure that everything had been done in a proper way.

G: What about air bases in Texas? Did he work with you on any of [those]?

R: Yes, he did. On air bases, we had just finished closing up bases after the end of World War II. We had opened up several as a result of Korea, and when Korea started to wind down we were trying to find

out what bases needed to be closed again. So there was a tremendous amount of total political concern, I mean the entire Hill, as pertains to whose bases were being closed and whose weren't. Again, he presented the facts which had been presented to him as the reasons why it should or should not be closed, and of course it was up to the Defense Department to finalize which bases were considered to be the least productive or least costly to operate, one or the other. If it was the least costly to operate, they would try to maintain that base.

G: He seems to have done pretty well in protecting the bases in Texas. Is that your estimation of it?

R: A side issue on that subject occurred between Mr. Russell and Mr. Johnson. In a rather joking fashion they were needling each other about political problems. Senator Johnson commented that if the enemy really knew what they were doing, they would target somewhere between Winder, Georgia, and Carl Vinson's home town, Milledgeville [Georgia], and that would probably destroy more of our armed forces than any other place in the United States. Mr. [Russell's] comment was, "I certainly hate to hear you complain about the agricultural conditions in Texas. After all, you've paved it with nothing but airfields." It was in a joking fashion, but true, there were a tremendous number of airfields in Texas. However, they had the space, they had the terrain, and they had the weather, which was all in their favor.

G: Were these the arguments that he would use?

R: And the price of land was reasonable, because it was not productive

farmland like Iowa or Kansas, as far as crops were concerned. It was more of a cattle country.

G: Was he hard to turn down on something like this?

R: When he put his mind to wanting something, there was nothing that deterred him. No question about it, he was a man of great determination, and as a debater, or for arguing one side or the other of a question, he was absolutely a top expert.

G: Did you ever have the unpleasant task of informing him that the Air Force simply couldn't go along with [what he had planned]?

R: Yes, on several occasions, and one of his remarks would be, "Reynolds, you haven't even tried." I would go through the entire program of all I had done to try to find the proper response to his question. But it would still result in: "You really haven't give this much thought," or, "You haven't really tried. Go try again. I think you can do better."

G: Would he ask who he should talk to to get it, what has to be done?

R: No, very seldom, because he knew who to see to get what done. This is one of the uncanny things about this man. For some reason or other, he was able to put the finger on the person or the department which was responsible for a given subject or to accomplish a given task. He knew exactly where to go to get his answers.

G: You were describing his insistence on this. Can you think of any specific occasions here when he said, "You haven't even tried"? Do you remember?

R: It's difficult to sort out at this late date a specific [occasion].

I can think of one; I cannot remember the details too well, however. But I know that he was most anxious that Randolph Field become the Air Force Academy because of the historic site of aviation in the San Antonio area. As a result there was constant inquiry as to how the study group was coming along on their study. As best I can recollect, it was one of the six they finally agreed about to do a detailed study on. I know that he was throughly disappointed when it was not the final selection and that Colorado had been selected in lieu thereof. I can't remember the details except that I do know that he had a very strong interest in seeing that the Air Force Academy be in Texas, because he felt that's where aviation was started in World War I to some degree. As a result Texas had grown to be known as the center of the flight training and aviation in general. He felt that that historic background was sufficient in itself to make it a particularly good site.

G: Why was Colorado chosen?

R: I cannot recall the final agreement except for one thing. There was one major item, and that was that I believe the land was provided to them by the state, and that, two, they felt it would become the center part of the United States. In other words, both the Army and Navy academies being on the East Coast, they felt it should be more in a central part of the United States. I think that had a great deal to do with it.

G: Do you think Ed Johnson's political strength was a factor there, too?

R: It very well could have been. But this study group really did go

into great depths in their study. In fact, the War College at Montgomery, Alabama, made every class going through the War College make their own survey of what they felt the best sites in the United States were. Each class, I believe, came up with different positions on each occasion. So you can see that the final decision was difficult, no question about it.

G: I don't mean to get you off the subject, but with regard to Ed Johnson, I've heard that he was immensely capable of getting things that he was interested in through the Senate, that he had enormous influence there.

R: I don't have a feel for that one, I really don't.

G: Was political influence, political power in the Senate that important in terms of getting the bases and things that were needed for various states? Like, for example, Carl Hayden or Richard Russell seemed--

R: I believe that you've got to admit that [through] their seniority and their positions they were able to bring about greater activity in given areas within their state. For instance, Senator [Dennis] Chavez was a very powerful man during his time, and [with his] being on the Military Appropriations [Committee], you can see that a tremendous amount of military facilties and expenditures were made throughout New Mexico during his tenure on that particular committee. I think it's similar to Senator Kerr's capabilities within the committees which he headed up, wherein they established dams and lakes throughout Oklahoma. It was rightfully a very needed thing, because they were short water and had gone through the thirties as the dust

storm areas, and they needed all the water they could have if they were going to be an agricultural area. I think it's been very beneficial to his state, but I believe that he certainly got his share of that type of money for projects.

G: You mentioned the relationship between Senator Johnson and Senator Russell. What else can you tell us about their friendship?

R: It was one of true admiration on the part of both people. Senator Johnson always spoke very highly of Senator Russell, and certainly Senator Russell spoke highly of Senator Johnson. They did not always agree, but they could amicably work out their problems, I'm sure.

G: Did you ever encounter Senator Johnson saying, "Check this out with Senator Russell first " or "Clear this with Senator Russell"?

R: He would not exactly say it in that line. If he had a problem with the Defense Department or with legislation, he might say, "Have you discussed it with Senator Russell?" I would say, "No." He'd say, "Well, I would suggest that he would be the man that could handle that problem better than anyone else," or something like that. Which was the same as, "Why don't you check it out with Mr. Russell?" But he would refer you to Mr. Russell if that's where the problem could be better handled.

G: I suppose he was probably right.

R: I don't know when he was ever wrong. He had the ability to just strip you of your arguments and leave you standing

there thinking, "Why did I mention it in the first place?" But he would also give you good guidance. He was rather fatherly in that respect. After he had already torn you apart in showing you where your argument was bad, he would then suggest how you could probably go about solving your problem very nice in that manner.

G: Do you recall occasions where, let's say, you were having problems with a particular senator and he would run interference for you in that respect?

R: Yes, there have been times when I could not make contact with a given senator. He would ask me if I had touched base with him. I said, "No, Senator, I've tried, but I can't get an appointment." He'd say, "Well, let me see what I can do," and he would actually have one of his staff contact the senator and ask that he see me. That was very helpful. I can see why, because these senators are very busy, and they haven't got time to just take an appointment from anybody at any time. He's often done that with Senator Symington when he was so busy and working so hard at the time. On occasions he would call and make an appointment for me to talk with Mr. Symington on some Air Force matter.

G: Before we started taping, you were discussing a trip to Paris in which Senator Johnson and Senator Russell were--

R: That was a very interesting trip to me. This was my first trip--actually I ended up making two of these NATO trips--as escort officer for the senatorial group. Senator Johnson insured that he was prepared for the meeting. Weeks before he'd been asking for

certain material and certain things that were necessary, that would be discussed over there. He would brief himself very thoroughly on these areas. He was a great detail man for being there and being proper and showing up, and he was very good at his protocol. So immediately when we would arrive at NATO he would make sure that he called on the embassy and that he called on the key people that were necessary according to the protocol. But he would usually arrive a day or two early so that he would be over the jet lag and rested before the meeting started, which I think was very smart on his part, because it gave him an opportunity to collect his thoughts on the subject matter. I was not privy to the meeting itself so I can't tell you how the meeting itself went; however, I gathered from the follow-on conversation that he got his points across rather favorably, and that he felt rather pleased that they had accepted his thinking.

Senator Russell had been going to these meetings on several occasions prior to Mr. Johnson's going. The two worked very closely together on the NATO conferences. They did take time, however, when the meeting was not in progress to see the city, see the people, which I think was good. The people enjoyed seeing him. Everywhere you went they did recognize Senator Johnson. It was amazing how quick the French especially would recognize the Senator. He was a very gracious man in this respect. He disappeared one day for about an hour, then returned. He advised the ladies who were in the party that he had a present for them and that it was

over at such and such a place. They went over there, and he had actually purchased a personal gift for each of the ladies just as a personal thing on his own. Of course, they would pick out the size or the color if there was a question. But he was very generous in that respect, always coming up with some sort of a little surprise for people to try and make them feel comfortable. He was just basically a generous individual, in my estimation.

G: Was this the occasion in which there was a surprise birthday party?

R: Yes. On this one NATO trip we arrived a couple of days in advance as planned. However, they had a Suez crisis which had cut the oil supply to Paris, and they were keeping the rooms at about 55 to 60 degrees. This was October, and everyone was freezing. Mr. Johnson wasn't in the strongest condition at that time, because he had been through a heart attack previously. So they called and asked me to see if we could get Mr. Norstad's airplane and make arrangements to spend the two days down in Nice, where it was much warmer, in southern France. Which I did. This was my first knowledge, en route to Nice, that his birthday was coming up the following day.

So after we got the entire contingent down to Nice and everyone in their hotels, I made arrangements to get a Volkswagen bus that would handle all twelve of us in a thirteen-passenger bus. We drove them on a proposed sightseeing tour, which ended up in a surprise birthday party for Senator Johnson at the casino in Monaco. Of course the people there knocked themselves out to make

it a very nice affair, including a cake and everything else. Senator Johnson, Senator Russell, Congressman Thornberry, and the whole group thoroughly did enjoy themselves. It was a real delightful thing, and at the same time we enjoyed the warmer weather. Of course, that was cut short rather quickly as we had to return to the start of the meeting up in Paris, but it did give him an opportunity to see a little bit of France at the same time.

G: Can you recall any more exchanges between LBJ and Senator Russell on these occasions?

R: Are you interested in the--?

G: Yes.

R: On our second trip to NATO the Senator upon arrival was rather tired, and rightfully so, so he went to bed rather early that night. Mrs. Johnson, who I think is one of the finest women I have ever met, also a very brilliant woman, had never seen the Lido Club. She had heard that it was quite a show and that it was a nice place to eat and wanted to go. So Senator Russell, being a bachelor, offered to escort her to the Lido Club, along with the rest of the group. We did arrive, we enjoyed ourselves, and we returned home rather early.

But the next morning, upon figuring out the costs, which was my responsibility, I had to determine who owed whom what kind of money. It turned out that Senator Johnson owed Mr. Russell six dollars, which was a portion of her costs that he had incurred. Mr. Johnson said, "Well, I think that my authorizing you to escort my wife would be sufficient and that I should not have to reimburse a bachelor

for taking my wife to dinner." He refused to talk to the Senator personally, because he felt that any gentleman of the South such as the Senator was certainly out of line bringing the matter up in the first place. It was up to me to pass this word back to Senator Russell, who in turn said that he felt that as a bachelor that it was only right that when Senator [Johnson] asked him to escort his wife that he had no alternative, but certainly to pay her entire costs was out of line. This went on for a couple of days in complete jest, but through me as the interpreter to both. Neither would speak to the other, supposedly. But it was done in great jest.

G: Who ended up paying, do you know?

R: Senator Johnson ended up paying the six dollars, and with great disgust, at least supposed disgust.

G: Can you recall anything else in the Johnson-Russell relationship?

R: Not particularly at this time. Now as pertains to the NATO affair, of course, Mr. Russell was involved, but not on a personal basis like we were talking about.

G: As long as we are on NATO, I was going to ask you about Lyndon Johnson's impression of world leaders, such as De Gaulle. Do you recall how he felt about De Gaulle?

R: I am trying to remember. He did have some reaction on that. I think it was one more of concern with regard to Mr. De Gaulle, as to whether or not he would carry through, but I really can't say with true honesty. I do know that Senator and Mrs. Fulbright, who also attended these meetings, both spoke French rather fluently, and

they did meet and were with De Gaulle more often than the Johnsons. I believe that's because of his foreign relations activity, and he probably visited there more often and knew him more personally.

G: I have always heard that LBJ and De Gaulle didn't like each other.

R: Well, he was concerned.

G: Perhaps they were both strong men, strong willed.

R: They were both very strong men, very tall, very formidable looking when they wanted to be formidable looking. In my estimation there was some concern for whether he would follow up on what he said he would do. I think that is the best way I can put it.

G: Did you ever see them together over there?

R: No, I didn't. I really didn't. On this particular trip I did not.

G: I just wonder how the Johnson treatment worked on De Gaulle.

R: Again, I was not privy to the meetings, and it's pretty hard to guess.

G: What about Adenauer?

R: Now he would have attended the meetings, again, and I would not have.

G: You don't recall him talking about Adenauer then?

R: No. I do know of a personal thing at the embassy which I thought was tremendous. There was a lady there--I cannot recall her name right now. He worked awfully close with the embassy. He made sure that the ambassador and he were seeing eye to eye, that he was not trying to overshadow or take away from [the ambassador's role], or they were in coordination and harmony on

what they were discussing, and I'm sure gathered a lot of background information on the people he was working with at the meeting through the ambassador. In doing so, we did go to the embassy quite often. I met this lady there who was a Frenchwoman, an American citizen, who had worked for the embassy for about fifteen years at this point. She had an American citizenship; however, she had never set foot in America. The reason was that she had worked in the embassy there for the previous ambassadors for so long that they had passed a special law. He [Johnson] had put this special legislation in when he was a member of the House, and she remembered this, and there was nothing she could do good enough for Senator Johnson. He had submitted the legislation making her a citizen many years before. I think it was the only case at that time that I had ever heard of.

G: I guess it was on this trip also that you established a good reputation with him by getting a case of Cutty Sark.

R: My job as escort was to try and provide transportion, hotel rooms, make sure people got up and got their baggage together and that there was nothing lost or left. My job was to take care of everybody's desires as best possible. When we left to go south on that trip to Nice, there had been no Cutty Sark Scotch anywhere. Somebody had requested some Cutty Sark, and I told them, "I can't get it. There is none here." At which point in time the Senator looked at me and said, "Reynolds, for a can-do man I'm going to have to rename you Can't, because obviously you haven't tried." Fortunately a friend

of mine was en route to Europe, and I was able to encourage him to bring along sufficient Cutty Sark to take care of the problem. Thereafter I was known as Cutty Sark Bill. It was one of the lighter moments of the trip. Some of the things you remember because it's enjoyable to think about.

G: Did he emphasize the fact that he was a Texan when he was over there then?

R: Yes, it would come out occasionally.

G: How so?

R: He would just remind people that although he was the Senate majority leader he was still the senator from Texas. He wanted people to know that's the biggest state in the Union and the finest people of the land. He would give them a little short, one-sentence speech on that occasionally. I think that he truly admired Texas and the Texans themselves. He really did. That's where his heart really belonged.

G: Did he and Senator Russell ever compare notes on which state was better, or anything like this, Texas or Georgia?

R: Oh, they would, but I can't remember the conversations. There would be little jibes about the peanuts in Georgia, or something along that line. "If it weren't for the peanuts in Georgia, you wouldn't have anything to feed the cattle," or something like this. It would just be little jibes occasionally, in good humor.

G: What else do you remember about those conferences? Do you remember anything else about the Mideast during that time, his concern about that?

R: I believe that subject at the NATO meeting was one of the major concerns at that time, but the results of it again I would not know. I was not involved in that. They held those meetings rather close. There would be the congressmen or senators themselves. Usually there was a group of about twenty involved, about that number. There would be the group I had plus one of the other officers of the Army or Navy would be taking care of another group. When the time [came] for the meeting, they would all disappear, and then we would take care of the other folks until such time as the meeting was over. It was a very serious concern. They took the meeting seriously, I know that.

G: Let's talk about the space program now and his--

R: I think that's one of the most interesting things that ever occurred to me in my life. My job at that time was to try and make it known that missiles were important in the future of our strategic arms and that we were behind the Russians at that time. It was obvious as a result of Sputnik, for instance, that we had not caught up and we were behind in our development. In fact, even prior to Sputnik the intelligence indicated that we were considerably behind in the development of that type of weapon. Of course the three services involved, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, all felt that this particular weapon should be a part of their arsenal: the Army saying, "Well, it's launched from the ground;" the Navy saying, "We launch them from our ships and we'll launch them from the air, and we're responsible for this particular area;" the Air Force felt

that it was nothing more than an additive weapon to the strategic systems such as our bombers, just an added weapon that belonged under Air Force supervision.

So, of course, my being an Air Force officer my job was to try and convince Congress that this was a mission for the Air Force. Mr. Johnson called me in on several occasions to discuss the matter, why I felt it should belong to the Air Force and not the Navy or not the Army or something else. I'm sure he was doing this with the Army and the Navy representatives at the same time. But in each case he would say, "How come we don't make a civilian organization out of it similar to the Manhattan Project, or something like that?" I said, "Oh, we can do it much better." During the course of his arguments, and as the strong debater that he was, he proved that as far as history was concerned it was better to have been placed in a civilian organization. His basic reasons were that he felt it could be done more rapidly and with the support of all three services to be called upon for any efforts they could produce. At the same time, from a budgetary standpoint it would avoid the problem of an unbalanced budget between the three services.

At that point in time there was maybe a billion dollars difference between the three services, and he felt that this program would probably start at about two to three billion dollars and would probably magnify its requirements to somewhere in the six to ten billion dollar area within a few years. If you added that to any one of the services, then they would want to try and chop down some of

their basic units such as a fighter squadron, fighter wing, bomb wings, et cetera, which would actually weaken that service, or cut out Navy ships in order to keep the budgets balanced. So by setting it up as a civilian agency they were able to expedite the program and not get in the controversial budget fight between services, which historically I think has proven to be very correct. It certainly was not the desire of the armed services at that time, but I think he has been proven correct on it. He was very farsighted in that one.

G: You attempted to persuade him, though, that the Air Force wanted it.

R: Oh, I tried my very best, but he would strip me very quickly of all my arguments and proceed accordingly without a question.

G: Was this pretty much the consensus of senators on the Hill, that a civilian agency would be [best]?

R: I think in that particular case once it came to the floor there was very little question. There was a lot of internal infighting trying to get certain people to go a given way, but when he laid the whole program out it came out just like he felt it should.

G: Do you think that was more his doing than another senator's. Did he take the lead?

R: I think it was. I think it was his idea, because he was actually trying to come up with a name for it, such as National Rocket Agency, national this, national that. He finally came up with National Space Agency, and that's the name that pretty well stuck with it all the way through.

G: They decided to call it an administration rather an agency or something like that, National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

R: That's right, yes.

G: There has been some question as to whether he used that nomenclature to give it more prestige. Did he ever talk to you about that?

R: Not on the prestige. He talked mainly on the budget and the fact that the Manhattan Project had been so successful as a civilian program, with military involvement of course, but not under any one particular service.

G: There again, do you recall any discussion with regard to the location of the agency and how Houston [was chosen]?

R: Yes, there was quite a lot of discussion on that, but Houston won out.

G: Was that more Lyndon Johnson, do you think, than Albert Thomas? Albert Thomas has generally been given credit for that. Why was it located in Houston? Let me ask you that first.

R: I'm trying to think. I'm trying to remember what reasons they did give finally, and I just can't recall. It seemed to happen rather quickly. Once they passed this, then all of a sudden the site was selected, they started construction, and they started moving. Thinking back now, it seemed like it all happened rather rapidly, and there wasn't a whole lot of time to get in an argument like they did on the Air Force Academy and for years go back and forth and study it back and forth. The agency was set up, the funding was made available, the site was selected, and they went to work.

There was a sense of urgency that I think overcame a lot of political or other reasons. The sense of urgency, I think, was the main reason for it.

G: One of the stories that goes around is simply that Albert Thomas refused to let the appropriation out unless it was located in Texas.

R: That could be possible because I'm sure this happens.

G: If this is the case, where did Lyndon Johnson come in? Why was he instrumental in locating the thing in Houston if Albert Thomas exercised this much influence?

R: Well, he would need the Senate support, because Congressman Thomas was from the House side.

G: If there is anything on this that you remember, let us know.

R: I'm trying to.

G: I mean, if you want to seal it up or something go ahead, but tell as much as you know about it.

R: No. I really can't remember. That's the problem. It happened so rapidly. They got through the National Space Agency, made the appropriations for it, and the next thing you know the site was selected and there was a lot of, "Well, how come in Texas?" Of course they blamed Lyndon Johnson because he was a strong leader. Then Albert's name came up. I recall something about the appropriations, but it occured so fast it just seemed to move right through Congress. Again, I think it was a sense of

urgency because there was such a need for it. We felt that we were so far behind, and it is sort of proven now that we were behind. The Congress just went along with it to get the program moving.

G: He perhaps felt also he could look after it better if it were in his own state.

R: Yes, and I think he felt that the agency was just like a child of his. It was his brainchild: "We've got to get this thing moving." He called it what he wanted, he set it up as a special thing, and he felt like a father to the whole program. I think he did from the very beginning.

G: Do you think he saw the space program as a form of military preparedness and technological innovation rather than a civilian exploration-type thing?

R: Oh, I think he started with the thought in the back of his mind of it being the need from a military standpoint. But the fallout and the knowledge and the future problems that would be available to communications networks and things of this nature were so great might have been another reason.

G: He was a great believer in gadgets, I understand.

R: Oh, yes. He had all kinds of little gadgets. He liked gadgets. I'll tell you what he did like, he liked that ranch of his, where he would go down and kind of lean back in the sun and think. He liked to have people around him, not particularly talking to him and bothering him, but just around enjoying themselves. And then he would use them as

a sounding board. He would do a lot of thinking, and then he would try these different thoughts on them. Right in the middle of maybe a weekend vacation down there he would think of something. He would then get on the horn and ask somebody to fly down that was a key to that particular issue and sit there and talk for two or three hours with him, sounding him out on that particular idea. He tested people. He tested his thoughts on people.

G: You mentioned General [Curtis] LeMay going down. Do you recall the circumstances of that?

R: Yes. There was a definite meeting set up with General LeMay to meet him at the Ranch, and he brought with him a couple of his younger general officers. The subject was a need for a cutback in the numbers of wings of TAC or SAC, et cetera, and at the same time the use of Bergstrom as either a SAC or TAC base. It was then, I believe, a TAC base. He felt that maybe it would be better [for it] to be a strategic base. But the beginning of the conversation didn't start until about two hours before the scheduled departure time of General LeMay. They both would say, "What would you like to do?" "Well, what would you like to do?" Then they got in a little car and they went around the Ranch, and [Johnson] showed him everything. He showed him where the little Pedernales River comes through, all these little things like that, but never getting to the issue.

So just before he was getting rather anxious to get moving, then he asked him the questions, and that's when the discussion started. It all took place in about an hour and a half before departure

time. They did come up with an agreement on it. They felt that there were certain weapons because of their age would have to be put into storage, but that there was a need for a follow-on or an update of some of the later versions of the particular plane--it was a B-52 at the time. I think they agreed that Bergstrom was an ideal site for dispersal. At this time they were talking in terms of breaking down the large wings and putting them into almost squadron-size wings on these bases, because we could disperse our major bombers around the country a little better to make them less vulnerable to attack. I think the decision was made that Bergstrom probably would be a good place for a dispersal base for B-52's.

G: How did he regard generals?

R: I think he thought very highly of them. At least I know he had great respect for General LeMay, and I think he had great respect for General Power. I think he felt that they were limited in their thinking because they could only think in terms of their particular areas. Of course, his job was to think politically and everything else, but he did respect <u>their</u> knowledge of <u>their</u> business. As far as their political knowledge, he felt they did not really have that. Does that add up to what you're thinking?

G: Yes. You said earlier that he was also very enthusiastic about the use of solid propellants as opposed to liquid.

R: Yes. He saw the handwriting on the wall there and assisted and supported Mr. Chavez, who had put money into the appropriations without the Secretary of Defense's request for solid-propelled

weapons, which is the later Minuteman, as we call it today. That was the Minuteman that they were working on. Senator Chavez felt that a need existed for this, and I believe that came from an officer of the Development Command who was from New Mexico and had actually encouraged Senator Chavez in the follow-up action to get monies for solid propellant. Mr. Chavez, I think, convinced Mr. Johnson of the need to explore this area, and he was a backer of that particular plan. And this was without the Secretary of Defense's request for it. That money was put in the defense budget without request, went through the budget, came out of the budget, and when Sputnik hit the Secretary of Defense released the money to the Air Force and expected them to get going on the program rapidly. It was in a matter of months that occurred, so you can see that they had inside intelligence information on what was going on, probably, and that's why they took the actions they did. The Defense Department briefed these key senators, especially on the Armed Services Committee and Appropriations [Committee], pretty well as pertains to the enemy's offensive and defensive capabilities, so they had good insight.

G: I was going to ask you some more about the man. It's always been said that he used the telephone a great deal.

R: He did.

G: Did he call you much?

R: Not that often. [As] I said, he would call and tell me that he wanted to talk to me, and I would come on down immediately whenever he did. But he worked with his staff night and day. He would wake

up in the middle of the night, at two o'clock in the morning, and call Walter and give him a whole list of things that he wanted done, needed done or that should be looked into.

G: Did he ever call you late in the evening?

R: I have had only one or two calls late, and they were usually around eleven o'clock, something like that. That's about all. In each case they pertained to a change in schedule or a change in people who were going to be going with him on a particular mission, but not anything on a legislative or a budgetary item. He could just lay down and rest and kind of close his eyes and sleep just any time, but then he'd get right back up and be at full charge. I think he was one of these men that can totally relax momentarily, rest, and then come back fresh and keep going. He put in tremendous hours. I've just never seen a man put in any more hours than he did. I know Lady Bird was always worrying about him. I think she was a tremendous asset to him.

G: She tried to get him to slow down a bit, didn't she?

R: Always did, yes. Always trying to get him to slow down and relax.

G: Did it have any effect on him at all?

R: Yes, he wanted to, but then he would get interested in something. He had such a strong interest in things. Once he got his interest into it he would just keep driving and driving till he accomplished what he was after. He just couldn't put it down. He had to finish it; he had to get it done. Everything was something that had to be done right away. If he thought of something, he

wanted to get it done, complete, and out of the road. Then he would take up something else and go on again. But even then he had lots of balls in the air at one time. He would have several things going, but he'd still try to get them done quickly. Everything was kind of an emergency.

He did love his constituents. When they'd come in the office he did like to see them, he really did, and he wished he had more time to sit and talk with them. But of course Texas is a big area. There are a lot of people there, and there are a number of wealthy people. By that I mean they were able to travel to Washington, see Washington, and so they always came by to see Senator Johnson. So that left him with a number of constituents all the time sitting in his office wanting to see him. But he tried to make time as best he could.

G: Are there any other incidents or anything about him that you remember?

R: I just remember him [from the] beginning as a formidable man to know. Then I learned that he was a very warm, very pleasant person, very genuine person. [There is] certainly no question about his leadership: he was a strong leader. He would plot and plan what he wanted to do and how he was going to get it done. After he did that, he went right to work to accomplish it. As I said, he used people for sounding boards. He would try things out on people. He would test it until he developed the best way to go about doing something, and then that's the way he'd go.

G: You saw him briefly before his death, I think.

R: That was one of the happiest moments, I guess, as I look back. I had been told that he was going to be given an award at a meeting of the press at the Fairmont Hotel in January of 1973. It just so happened that my wife and I were both going to be in the area, and they asked if I could drop by and see him at the hotel. Well, he was late arriving, but Warren Woodward, a very close friend of the Senator's, came in first when they did arrive. I spoke to him, and Warren said, "Oh, the President wants to see you." So when he came in I did get a chance to say hello. He remembered the old "can do" business. He said, "Well, Can Do, how are you?" I told him I was fine. But at this time he was failing a little. She looked very good; she was just as charming as ever. I guess it was only a matter of weeks later he did pass on, and I think it was a tremendous loss. I'm sorry that he couldn't have stayed to see the end of that Vietnam War. That was something he wanted to see--the end of the War. That's about it, I think.

G: I certainly thank you, Colonel Reynolds.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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