INTERVIEW II

DATE: September 16, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: JAMES H. ROWE, JR.

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Rowe's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

F: We were talking last time about the election of 1956, and I thought today we would go on forward chronologically for a while. By this time you are getting ready to go to work, or have gone to work for the Senator, and I thought you might tell us a little bit about what you did over in the Senate.

R: Well, it was a variety of things, really, no particular set job. In fact, it seemed to me then and I think looking back that in a sense he had his work pretty well organized. I always felt that his staff was very good, both his what I would call state of Texas staff and his leader's staff. So I was rather a floating pebble--I don't know that pebbles float, but floating around doing whatever came to hand. I think mostly making comments on legislation that was coming up and that sort of thing.

F: Now, he had an outside staff, one for each sort of position he held. Did he manage to keep these staffs from getting tangled up in each other's feet? Was he able to sort of compartmentalize?

R: It seemed to me very strongly that he did this, yes. The people that were working on the problems of the state of Texas, the

constituents and whatever other problems there were there, stayed to their knitting pretty much, and the other people were working just on the problems of the Senate. I can't think of anybody who floated back and forth between the two staffs. I would guess probably Walter Jenkins a little bit and possibly George Reedy. But in general I would say Jenkins was running the Texas staff and Reedy was confining himself to the Senate staff.

F: By "running," what did George Reedy do?

R: George, I think, was in on practically everything. I found quite early, and I think it was true in 1956, I don't know whether it always has been true, that in many ways George was a mirror of the Senator's thinking. I had trouble deciding which was which. I know on some of the things I proposed to the Senator, I learned--and it was quite a conscious act--to try them on George first. I found that the Senator's reactions were often those of George. So I had the advantage of trying them on George, and I got George's reaction, so I could then tailor my ideas.

F: Do you think they ever compared notes, or was it just like instinct?

R: No, I think George had been around him so much he knew exactly how he thought, and knew how he would react. I remember the Senator saying to me--after I had left, he was comparing people on the staff, and the man who really had control of the bills and seemed to me the sparkplug of the Senate staff was Gerry Siegel, now general counsel at the Washington Post. Johnson said to me one day, "You really have a much higher opinion of Gerry Siegel than

you have of George Reedy, haven't you?" I said, "No, I don't think that is correct. It is just that Siegel is a lawyer and we think more alike. George is a newspaperman, and I don't think like a newspaperman. Gerry and I can pretty much think [alike], we came up the same way." Johnson's comment was interesting. He said, "Well, you know, Gerry is not the best political man I have ever had. You can always count on George. He is always protecting your flank." I have always remembered that distinction. He did rely on George. I think I often thought George was too cautious, but the President had a sense of security about him.

F: Was Senator Johnson as security-conscious then as he was as a president, or is this something that developed as he advanced up the ladder?

R: I don't know. I think the jobs, in a sense, are not comparable, because it was much easier to have security in the Senate. He was dealing with a handful of people, senators, and I think he could more or less do all of this out of his vest pocket. I certainly wasn't as conscious of his being so sensitive to security as I was again from the outside watching him in the White House. I think he overdid it.

F: Yes. He had quite a reputation in these days, of course, as a wheeler-dealer. This is where the real charge came. Was he a wheeler-dealer in the sort of flamboyant sense, or was it just the fact he was a man who stayed after things?

R: Well, certainly it was the latter. I think mostly the real answer is that he was about, face to face, as persuasive a man as you ever met. More persuasive than anybody I ever met. And he was a dangerous man in that sense. He could convince you black is white if you gave him enough time. If you are interested enough, he would convince you black is white. I think this is what they really meant by a wheeler-dealer is Johnson with his energy and his drive would put in the time to talk to every individual senator, and he shaped himself to the senator. I mean he knew all his weaknesses and all his strengths, and he knew just how to approach each one. I think that is true with most people, that he knew how to get them. I remember Hubert Humphrey once saying that if there were anything he hated, it was to have a face to face encounter with Johnson, and he used to make a habit when he felt Johnson was persuading him against something, to do something he didn't want to do, he would insist on going outside and smoking a cigarette. He knew if he stayed that he would be persuaded. I think it was that quality. Johnson was a very persuasive fellow.

F: Was this just a matter of logic or persistence or--?

R: It was logic, charm, resort to, I think, anything that he thought would move a man.

F: Did he stay in communication with all the other senators?

R: As far as I can see, very much, yes.

F: There weren't some group of untouchables?

R: He did have dislikes. He didn't ever really trust Joe Clark very much. He was skeptical about Paul Douglas.

F: Did it seem to you sometimes he was more suspicious of fellow Democrats than he was of Republicans?

R: I think in a way, yes. I hate to use such a word as insecure, but he never really had a foundation with the northern liberals. I think part of this was that he didn't trust them and thought they didn't like him. In many ways I think this was his own fault, but he was not comfortable with them, as he was with the middle westerners, or the westerners, the southerners, and a lot of the Republicans.

F: Was your northern liberal in those Senate days as cohesive a group as that would imply, or was this just a sort of Johnson labeling?

R: No, they were a group who think pretty much alike, but they were never able to act together. This is, I suppose, the old fault of all liberals or all intellectuals. They were not cohesive, in the sense of action. They were often quite cohesive in what they thought, but each one would want to amend the other fellow's thoughts, and if he didn't get his own amendment he wouldn't play. Johnson I think had contempt for this point of view. He always knew that he could run right around them. They would never give him a solid balance. I think that's the reason that he usually had his way.

F: This was a period when Strom Thurmond had begun to deteriorate as a Democrat. Did Johnson make any motions towards trying to

keep him within the party? Or did he let him go his own way?

R: I think there are two different periods with Johnson as leader. The first period, and I have forgotten the exact breakdown, is when he only had a one-vote margin, and later he had quite a few. When he had that one-vote margin, which in many ways if you look back, he had his great victories in which he voted in every one of them, or if he lost one, he had some Republicans somewhere. I think he would do anything to get a vote, including keep Thurmond in the party. He needed him.

F: Were there any great blandishments to get Wayne Morse over to the Democratic column, or did they just let that develop naturally?

R: Well, he raised money for Wayne Morse. First time, they do it all the time now, but he set up a committee composed of Ganson Purcell and myself and a few others to raise District of Columbia money for Morse. Morse had said he was a liberal and he was running and he couldn't get any money any place. As a matter of fact, I think Morse spent more money in that particular election than any other senator. Johnson made quite an effort and set up a lunch for him, and Johnson spoke at the lunch and made one of his famous statements, "I'll campaign for you or against you, whichever will help you more." He spent a lot of time working on Morse. It seems to me it never did him any good. But, oh, yes, he worked on everybody.

F: Was he looking over his shoulder after 1956 at young Senator Kennedy?

R: I wouldn't think immediately, no. Kennedy made an impressive run on television, but of course it is very confusing as to what I thought and what he thought, as I look back in memory. I think he probably thought the way I did. Senator Kennedy was a very promising young man, had fine caliber for vice president, which I think most of us thought in 1956, 1957, 1958.

F: Did you get the feeling in these days that Johnson had ambitions beyond the Senate majority leadership?

R: I think he always had ambitions. But I think he was ambivalent. I remember once, I think it was 1956, he just made a flat statement that he had better recognize that Texans and also the South, their base for power was in the Senate. That was all they were going to have, but they better pay attention to that and control that and not worry about these other things. He was an ambivalent man. He'd believe that one day and want to be president the next.

F: When he moved into this era of Senate sponsorship of space development, was this pretty much a Johnson initiative? Did others come to him and suggest this? Do you have any idea how that got under way?

R: I don't know how that got started. I was not with him when he started it. I did do one thing. I went to Boston, I think with Siegel and talked to Vannevar Bush and George Kistiakowsky at Harvard, who were two of the witnesses that Johnson began with. I think it was dramatic, and I think he was always looking for a vehicle for public relations is really why he got into it. Who

spurred him into it, or whether it was his own motion, I don't know. But he had been active in the Preparedness Committee and so forth, so he was fairly well aware of what was going on. My guess is that it was his own idea or one of the staff's idea, but I'm not sure.

F: Did you work with him at all in these days on that 1957 civil rights law?

R: No. I talked with him about it several times, but he had Dean Acheson working with him, Ben Cohen, and I have forgotten who else. Even Joe Rauh got down. But I didn't. I have never been an expert in that field. I stayed out of it.

F: In talking with him, did you get the idea that his commitment was real, or that he just thought the time had come to do something and that he had to use civil rights as a vehicle to diminish that southern touch?

R: Well, I think that latter might well have been a part of it, but in a curious way, you know, this is a man who has never had any prejudices. It was a curious thing about Johnson. I don't mean he was a completely civilized human being that didn't have them, it was just left out of his makeup. A curious thing I have always noticed about him more than other people was that he had no prejudices that I could see about Negroes, Mexicans, women, anything of the sort.

F: Maybe eastern liberals, but--

R: Maybe. Well, yes. I mean I think he had that because he thought he was being persecuted.

F: Yes.

R: He always had the feeling that Texans were a persecuted group, that the South was a minority region. He articulated this through the years. But in terms of this kind of prejudice, curiously it was left out of his makeup. It was not something he was educated to. It always impressed me. Although he saw it in other people. He would even use it as a technique if he had to get a vote some way. I think he believed pretty much in what he was doing and thought the time had come. I think he also thought, which I had thought, that this was the man to do it. He lived in both worlds and he could go back and forth. If it ever were going to be done effectively, in a way a fellow with southern antecedents would have to do it, which I thought was his great strength.

F: You had not unique but peculiar qualifications as a westerner by way of Harvard. Did President, or the Senator, ever talk with you about the possibility of using you as a bridge to the northern liberal establishment?

R: No, but he talked about and did use someone like Hubert Humphrey. I think he always felt that--well, he did try to get New Dealers that he had known in effect to talk to the other senators and say, "This fellow is a good fellow," that kind of thing. He used everybody within range. In fact, one of his weaknesses was he would get ten people to do the same thing, and when you found out that there were four or five others doing it you stopped and everybody stopped. This is the kind of failing a lot of people have. I always thought he overdid that.

F: When he needed votes for something, did he waste effort in the sense of getting more votes than he needed, or did he just get a sufficient cushion and quit? In other words, did he try to roll up majorities?

R: No, I think my feeling, and this is a pretty casual look at it, when he had the one-vote margin he really worked to get every one. Once he had--I remember him saying once, was it in the 1958 election he got a number more senators?

F: Yes.

R: I think he almost phrased it this way, "Now I don't have to kiss the ass of every damn fool in the Senate." I think he eased up some. He had more to play with, I think.

F: But if your Montana representation, your senator from Montana, say, if it had been better for you to not have voted the Johnson way on an issue and he didn't need you, he would let you go ahead and vote for your constituency?

R: When he was down to one vote he wouldn't. You know, he would never listen to your troubles, he would tell you about his troubles. They said that was the difference between Kennedy and Johnson. Kennedy would always listen to your troubles and be sympathetic and let you off the hook. This was when they were presidents. Johnson never did let you get to the point of telling about your problems back home. He would tell you about his problems and why you had to vote for the country. That's why he got a better result than Kennedy.

F: Why did you leave Johnson?

R: I only went for the agreed time. I said I would go down for the rest of the session. This was not for me. I was practicing law. I didn't want to go at all.

F: Did he make any effort to hold you?

R: No, not that I could see.

F: Then you are back and resume a reasonably private life. Did you have a continued relationship with him in a semi-official capacity?

R: Let's see, this was 1957, 1958, 1959. Yes, I used to see him occasionally. Since I had been so vehement about his not really running in 1956 and saying he couldn't make it and Stevenson couldn't, I did urge him a number of times to get organized for 1960.

F: What was his reaction to that?

R: He didn't do anything. Said he wasn't going to do anything. This went on for a long time.

F: Did he ever give any reasons?

R: Just that he couldn't make it. My argument of course was that you certainly can't make it if you do nothing. You are going to be pushed into this by your own people, you might as well do it right.

F: Now he had a fairly strong push from people like John Connally, for instance, didn't he?

R: Yes. John and I both talked with him at different times, but I was pushing long before--well, I guess John was, too. I never quite understood what this period was, except it's again the ambivalence. He wanted the thing. I think he wanted it so much his tongue was

hanging out. Then this other part of him said, "This is impossible. Why get my hopes up? I'm not going to try. If I don't try, I won't fail." This is pretty subjective talk I'm using, and how accurate it is I don't know. But we had a long talk back and forth, and I finally said, "I want to get into the campaign, and if you are going to go, let's go. If you aren't, I'm going over and join Humphrey." And we talked; I talked this way to him for two or three months and he said, "I am not going. You can count on it. I am not going to run." My argument always was he would. The pressures would get on him. And I said, "It won't do you any good. You will be doing it too late."

F: He didn't see Humphrey as a sort of stalking horse in West Virginia, did he?

R: No, this was a lot of talk. The mere fact that I switched from Johnson to Humphrey, a lot of people insisted it was a plot, a Johnson-Humphrey plot that they were going to use Humphrey and then move in.

F: You were working strictly independent.

R: Yes, I went to Humphrey, I signed up for Humphrey and gave him a commitment I would not leave even if Johnson ran. That's what he wanted and he was entitled to it. Johnson fooled with it back and forth. He never really got organized. He had a bunch of, to be perfectly blunt, incompetent Texans who were fouling things up around the country and never helped him any.

F: They were more cheerleaders, I think, than professionals anyway. At least that was my impression.

R: That's true. Until John Connally got up here himself and started to organize, and he got people from other states. But there were a lot of people tramping around. Johnson let them go. I don't think he was encouraging them, but--

F: Now after West Virginia, what did you do?

R: After West Virginia, I didn't do anything for a month.

F: Didn't make any difference in your relationship with Johnson, the fact that you were helping Humphrey.

R: Not as far as I could see. May have been, but I never saw it. Johnson I remember calling me and saying, "What happens now?" I had taken a pretty consistent position that if Kennedy won in Wisconsin and/or West Virginia, everybody else was through. I was really trying to get the Johnson people and the Symington people to put some money in for Humphrey because we were broke. I said, "If Kennedy beats Humphrey in West Virginia, this race is all over." And there were signs relatively early, to the Humphrey people, that we were going to be licked in there. We were broke and the Kennedy people were spending a lot of money.

F: Humphrey had a consistent history of running broke.

R: That's right. And I told the Johnson people, "You are not even going to be in the horse race." I think that was a correct judgment. I took it that Johnson was getting a little started then, not much, and some of his people were operating in West Virginia, trying to

get delegates. They weren't helping Humphrey which is what they should have been doing. And they were operating not very competently, in my opinion.

F: You don't think, with any direction from Johnson? You think they were just doing this on their own?

R: I think Johnson knew about it, in my opinion.

F: But not doing a typical Johnson job of "see him, go there."

R: No, not the way he usually ran the campaigns in which he was running everything. His mood was very strange all through this business of being a realist one moment and hopeful the next. After the West Virginia campaign he called me once and said, "What happens now? What does it look like?" I said then, and I think I was right, "Kennedy has got this. There is only one way to stop him that I can see. That's for Adlai to give a signal and for you to get behind Adlai." I said, "If you two get together, you might stop him. I don't think you can, but nobody else can." He said, "Well, Adlai is coming to see me next week. I will talk to him about it." And Adlai, after he had seen Johnson, called me. I had worked for him in 1952 and 1956. I made the same speech, and Adlai said, "Well, I can't do that." I said, "Well, the horse race is over." But at the end of the month I went down and said, "If you want some help, I will be delighted to help you," and he said, "Fine. I need all the help I can get."

F: This is to Johnson?

R: Johnson, yes. By that time Connally had the thing fairly well organized. He had people around the country and so forth. I remember going out--the last state convention was in my state, Montana. Kennedy came, and Symington came in, and Johnson, as usual, wouldn't make up his mind whether to come or not. Finally the morning he was due to make a speech he called and said he was coming out, and I said, "Don't come. We are going to get badly licked." So he didn't come, and Kennedy did get the delegation. We fouled it up a little bit in the press, but he got it. Then I went out to Los Angeles for the convention. That's about it.

F: You didn't go to Los Angeles, though, with any hopes?

R: No. The ball game was over. I could count.

F: Did you think you'd get past a first ballot?

R: No, I couldn't see how.

F: So you didn't nurse that kind of forlorn hope that some people had: if we can block Kennedy on the first ballot, then we can get them to pick a second choice.

R: Kennedy had the votes well before the convention. He had damn good people and he had them counted. For instance, that big demonstration that Adlai's people put on all through the hall, I was on the floor walking as a matter of fact with Kenny O'Donnell who was Kennedy's man. We were both watching delegates, and hardly any delegate moved out of his chair. I think the vote count was very accurate on both sides. Who was going for Johnson and who was going to vote for Kennedy, and the few that Stevenson pulled off.

F: Except then for man's basic belief in miracles, Johnson was resigned to the fact that he wasn't going to get it?

R: Yes. Johnson said to me--we had dinner together, just the two of us, in his hotel suite the night of the speech of the, what do you call them, temporary chairman.

F: Yes. The keynote.

R: The keynote speech, which I think Frank Church was giving. We were sitting in there just watching it, and Johnson quietly said, "I don't see how we can stop this fellow, do you?" And I said, "No," just as quietly as that. I don't think Johnson for a moment had any--some of his people did. And he kept fighting, you know, he went through the motions of going down and having a debate with Kennedy and doing all that sort of thing. But I think he had no illusions.

F: Did you have any intimations he would be offered the vice presidency?

R: None at all. The only one I had was--have you read that account, the Graham memorandum?

F: Yes.

R: Teddy White. I think that is pretty accurate, as I remember, because Graham sat--

F: I have a copy of that. I got it from Kay Graham.

R: No, this was Phil Graham.

F: Yes, but I got it from Kay, who sent me a copy.

R: Phil sent it to me right at the convention. I went over it then and made notes and I think I thought it was pretty accurate. I

do remember Phil saying to me once that Kennedy was talking Johnson, and I said, "Oh, horseshit, Phil, he's been handing that one out to everybody in the country." But as a matter of good reporting I mentioned it. I knew Graham had been seeing Kennedy and I mentioned it to Johnson. I can't remember his language, but it was pretty rugged, you know, "For Christ's sake," worse than that, he said, "Don't bother me with that kind of claptrap." So I don't think he had any either.

F: How did you first learn about it?

R: I went home the night Kennedy was nominated.

F: By home you mean your hotel?

R: I mean hotel. Kennedy was nominated. I went back to see Johnson, just to say goodnight. Then I went back to my hotel to get a good night's sleep, and he woke me up on the telephone and said, "Kennedy is coming down here in a few minutes," or ten or whatever it was, "and I have some reason to believe he is going to offer me the vice presidency. What do you think?" And you know, I was just half asleep and I sort of mumbled around that I didn't really think it was as much power as majority leader. I remember I said, "You have got the power," and he said, "Power goes where power is," or something like that, a phrase I have seen quoted somewhere. The way he said it, all of a sudden a bell rang in my head, as sleepy as I was: "This guy is really thinking about it." It surprised me. So I said, "Well, I will get dressed and come over,"

which I did. The rest of the day followed pretty much the Graham memorandum, as I remember it.

F: What was the situation like when you got over there? Did you get to see Mr. Johnson alone?

R: I talked with him and Lady Bird. It was sort of confusing. There were all sorts of people in different rooms. I couldn't figure out which side Lady Bird was on. I don't think she really knew. He was getting conflicting advice all day. Finally I think--I was pressed into taking part again--I said, "Well, on balance I would take it."

F: Kennedy didn't pressure him for an immediate answer.

R: I don't really know. It never has been clear in my head what happened between Kennedy and Johnson. You read all sorts of stories about whether Kennedy just offered it to him because he thought he had to or whether he wanted him. It seems, looking back, that it was a hell of a brilliant political stroke.

F: Yes.

R: That is what it was. And Kennedy, who I watched all over the country, I came to admire as a great national politician. He understood the country in terms of where the pressures were far better than anybody I had seen since Roosevelt.

F: Were you there then when the decision was finally and irrevocably made?

R: Now, this is a hard question. I have been over this a number of times. My final account of what I think happened is in Arthur

Schlesinger's book on Kennedy, because Arthur had written something. I finally concluded that where everybody misses what actually happened was that there were three periods of conversation between Johnson and Kennedy, and most people got them down to two. This is why I think all the confusion exists. I think the first one was face to face when Kennedy came down to see Johnson. What happened I don't know except Johnson certainly took it seriously and then everybody started piling in saying you should or you shouldn't. There was a later conversation during which I happened to be there; it was a phone conversation. This was before Bobby appeared, the famous time Bobby appeared.

And this was one of Graham's great contributions. I don't think Johnson would have been vice president without Phil Graham. The reason is not the usual reason given which is that he was running back and forth. But it was that Graham had a sense of communications which was incredible. He would walk in a room, first thing you would notice was that he was around writing down the [numbers of] the extensions. The Johnson phones had all broken down. The first thing you always learn at conventions is that phones break down. So if Kennedy had tried to communicate with Johnson on the phone he just probably would not have been able to make it. There were all the pressures on Johnson not to run, there were all the pressures on Kennedy not to pick him. And my feeling always has been that if it were not that Graham had called Kennedy and said, "Johnson hasn't heard from you"--now, I was in

the room with Graham at the time--"and you better call him." And Kennedy saying to Graham, "Well, I'm under terrific pressure here." Graham's comment, "You ought to be another Adlai Stevenson and wobble all over. Here are Johnson's extensions." He gave him the regular hotel phone extensions. Kennedy said to Graham, "I will call him right away."

Well, I went down to tell Johnson, "Just don't go wandering. I think Kennedy is going to call you." And he did in a few minutes. I think Lady Bird and I and Johnson were in the room. Johnson took the call sitting on one bed and I was on the other. And what Kennedy was doing then, because I could hear Kennedy talking, he read to Johnson, he began by saying, "This is the press release I'm about to put out," or "This is the statement." Johnson's only comment, as I remember, was, "Do you really want me?" And Kennedy said, "Yes." Johnson said, "Well, if you really want me, I'll do it." That was the end of that.

Now a little later Graham and I--we had a room down the hall--were back talking to Adlai to get him organized, and he was being a little difficult in his usual way. Bill Moyers, whom I had never seen before, who was watching the door, came up yelling, "Graham, my God, Bobby is in the room," so we went down to the Johnson suite. My own theory, which explains the whole thing, is that Bobby had left the suite, Jack Kennedy's suite, probably with an order just to let Johnson know that there was a hell of a lot of pressure against him. I think Johnson believes that Bobby was even then

out to do him in, and Bobby certainly was not for him. But I think the great confusion occurred because Bobby did not realize that Kennedy, Jack Kennedy--by the time Bobby got to the suite and started talking with Johnson I don't think Bobby ever knew that Jack Kennedy had already called him and read the press release to him. So Johnson thought he had had a flat commitment, which he did, from Jack Kennedy, but Bobby didn't know he had one. It was at that stage with Bobby when Johnson--Bill Moyers put Phil and me in the room, I can't remember who else, I think John Connally, and it was a back bedroom--came in. Then all this Hawaiian delegation came pouring in with [inaudible] on their shirts.

Johnson said, "I've got Bobby out in the other room, and he is saying that there is just too much room for me to run," or "too much heat against me." Somebody, oh, Rayburn was in there and I can't remember if it was Rayburn or me, said, "Phil," who had as usual the numbers, "Get Jack Kennedy, never mind about Bobby." So Phil got Jack Kennedy and I think whatever Kennedy said to Phil, it was that "Bobby does not know what I have done," or something, "Get him and get him on the phone." Then Johnson talked briefly to Jack Kennedy again. This was the third phone conversation. And Jack said, "It's all done, I've already done it."

F: A reaffirmation.

R: "I have already done it," and I think he had already put the statement out and just Bobby didn't know. He got Bobby, and Bobby came in and talked to his brother and said, "Well, what is done is done."

Everybody went out except Bobby, and he said to me, "Jim, don't you think it is a terrible mistake? It should have been Symington or Jackson." I said, "You can't win with either Symington or Jackson. Your brother has not been"--which was true at the convention--"too popular in great areas of this country. The only two fellows that can help you are either Johnson or Humphrey. Johnson will help you in the South and part of the West, and Humphrey would help you in the Middle West." And Bobby was saying, "Well, if we weren't so tired, this wouldn't have happened."

F: Trial by fatigue.

R: That's right. He said, "If we weren't all so tired."

F: I see. What did you do then, come on back home?

R: I came back to Washington and Johnson went back to Texas.

F: Have you ever heard Jack Kennedy discuss Johnson back in his senatorial days?

R: No. You've got to remember Kennedy was a pretty unimportant senator.

F: Yes. Was there any congeniality between Johnson and Stevenson, or did they just recognize each other as two fairly important people?

R: That's about it. I would think, of course Johnson got along much better with Jack Kennedy than he did with Adlai. Adlai just grated him the wrong way, and he showed it. Well, he never showed it to Adlai, but he showed it to other people. I don't really know what Adlai thought of Johnson. He knew I was a Johnson man, and he was a relatively cautious fellow.

F: What did you do then during the campaign?

R: Well, the first thing pretty soon thereafter I got a call from Bobby--would I come up to Hyannis Port to help him with the schedule? I had done all the scheduling and run the advance men for Stevenson, so I was kind of the great expert. With their usual attention to detail, the Kennedy people had come by and gotten my files well before the convention, as to how to run the thing. So I went up there for, oh, a day or two, just working on the Kennedy schedule.

Then I came back, and then I went up again when Johnson was going up. I remember I got there--I must have come from here--and there was a terrible rainstorm. Johnson was hours late, and we were all supposed to have dinner. I went out and spent some time with Jack Kennedy. He was talking about the transition and a few general problems. Johnson finally turned up. And what should have been a strategy session really for the campaign--there was some of that, but it really turned into how they were going to handle that rump session in the Congress, which Johnson and Rayburn had called: what they could push for and what they couldn't push for. Johnson stayed overnight. The next day there was a lot of picture-taking, and I flew out with Johnson. Where did I go? Oh, I got off someplace, in St. Louis, I think, I don't know how I got there. But I wanted to come back into Washington and he was on his way down to Texas.

F: Did Johnson run somewhat his own end of the campaign, other than just loose coordination with the Kennedy campaign, or were all the shots called by the Kennedys?

R: No, it was a pretty separate business, too much so in my opinion. I remember having an argument with Jack Kennedy and Bobby and his people during the scheduling. They felt, and said they thought, Johnson should campaign in the South and the Far West. This was Kennedy's idea, that they should concentrate on the industrial East and, somewhat, California. My argument was--and I was overruled--because I didn't think this was correct, I thought Johnson should get up in the industrial East as much as possible. And I made the point to Kennedy that although he thought he was well known in the South and West, he wasn't. The only people he knew were politicians. Therefore I objected to his point of view on scheduling. Kennedy's theory was, and it was stated at this meeting, that he could win the election by bringing back the Catholics in the suburbs who had defected to the Republican Party. Because he said, with great accuracy, there would be a lot of bigotry and feeling and this is going to react against him in some areas, but it would so antagonize the Catholics that one of their own was being treated so badly they'd vote for Kennedy anyway. My counter argument was, yes, but you have got to get out West and let them see you don't have horns. He didn't do this. He won the industrial East, but he lost the West and the South, except for Texas, almost completely. So in that sense we were both right, and he was more right.

But he did give Johnson, as far as I could see, freedom of action. The first campaign trip Johnson made I set up, which, I think, he started in Boston and ran down through New Jersey, well,

Boston, Connecticut, New Jersey and New York. It was fairly good, but Johnson is such a tinker, as I told him one night, I quit him after one week of scheduling. I told him, "I've scheduled Stevenson, Kefauver, and I've done Kennedy's," and I said, "You've given me more trouble in one week than they did the whole campaign," because he was uncertain. I remember once Kennedy had said he would begin his campaign in Hawaii and somebody reminded him that he was committed to begin in Alaska, so he cancelled out Hawaii, and he asked Johnson to go. Johnson said he would go, and I had some advance men on the way. Johnson the next day said, no, he didn't say he'd go. He looked me right in the eye, and I said, "You told me sitting here yesterday you'd go." He said, "I said no such thing, did I, Walter?" Walter had been in the room, and Walter said, "No." So Johnson finally--he had been talking to senators, for some reason, I never did know why he didn't want to go. I said, "Well, go in and talk to Jack Kennedy." He went in, thrashed it out. Jack had a little office right down the hall; they were still in the Senate. And Kennedy said, "Well, I think you ought to go." Johnson said, "Well, I may go later." Kennedy said, "What do you mean?" Johnson said, "I might go late October." I remember Kennedy's remark, "Late October? Lyndon? Hawaii, three votes? October?" Absolutely incredulous. Kennedy thought that way; he had his eye on the votes. Johnson never did go.

So then I gave that up and I said, "Well, I will run your speech writing." He had a hell of a good team. He got the real

people to put it together, with Charlie Murphy and Dave Lloyd, who were Truman's top people. He had a lot of good speech writers on the Hill. It never worked, and I never could find out why it didn't work. My theory--I went traveling with Johnson several times to see what happened to our product. Our product was good, I think much better than the Kennedy product. But what seemed to be happening, I think, was the plane was going fast, and the only speech writers were George Reedy and Busby and a bright young fellow from North Carolina who was the page of Senator Jordan. He has since died. He was a newspaperman and a very good writer. But these fellows got so exhausted writing and rewriting speeches that they couldn't see anything new, nothing got through, and I think this was true of Johnson, too. He didn't take what was really boilerplate and use it. That's about all.

Clements and I had an office over in the main headquarters. We didn't do much that I could see. What happens, once you get to that stage, the command post is really on the plane, the campaign plane. I don't think, and I may be wrong, Kennedy and Johnson were talking very much. Kennedy people had announced I was to be the liaison, and they never consulted either Johnson or me about that. And I never acted as liaison--somewhat on scheduling. You had to make sure they weren't both in the same state. But I felt it wasn't a very well-run campaign.

F: It was or it wasn't?

R: It was not--the Johnson campaign. I think I said so, and he got awful mad at me.

F: Are all campaigns badly run? Is this just part of the system?

R: The only well-run campaigns that I have ever seen were Roosevelt's in 1940, which he ran himself, and the campaign Jim Finnegan ran for Adlai in 1956, which was beautiful, and we got our brains kicked out. But I think momentum takes you, and I think it is the kind of an operation that men really can't handle too well. Nixon ran a good campaign this last time. I watched that. It was very well run, mechanically and strategically.

F: Yes, I thought it had some thought in it.

R: Yes, there wasn't any substance, but in terms of the mechanics which is the important thing, it is as well run a campaign--at least it looks like it from the outside. You never can tell how a campaign is running unless you are in it. Speaking generally, you are right. They all are badly run because there isn't enough time to do it right.

F: All right, it is 1960. It is November now. I presume you knew it was going to be close. Did you think you were going to win?

R: Yes. In fact, if I made any error I thought we were going to win more easily than we did. I made the error that I think most people did, that I didn't realize how strong this Catholic thing was. It's the only explanation I can find, not only in the South but in large parts of the West. For instance in my state, Montana, we had at the time two Catholic senators. The last Democratic governor we

had was a Catholic. Nonetheless, that state, I am convinced, voted against Kennedy because he was a Catholic.

F: I don't think you notice religion in statewide races as a general rule.

R: It must be. But it was certainly important. Lee Metcalf, our junior senator who is an appointee, was then a congressman. He pointed out areas that he had carried five to one, rural Protestant areas that just turned against him and voted against him about three to one next time. He was Episcopalian, but he said he'd get all this stuff where they'd say he was part of the Catholic party. So that's why it was close, in my opinion. And the other way, too. I think the Catholics in the industrial areas pulled Kennedy through.

F: What did you do then during the vice presidential years?

R: Very little. To be perfectly frank, we had a quarrel on the campaign. I thought Johnson was running a bad one, and I told him in very unpleasant terms.

F: Did he answer in unpleasant terms, or did he just ignore you?

R: No, he looked hurt, he looked hurt. I think he was. So we just more or less drifted apart. It was a very unhappy period for him, too.

F: You didn't get any firsthand glimpses of his relationship either with Jack or Bobby in that period?

R: No, other than the talk I heard. My own opinion was--I saw him, you know, occasionally someplace at a party, and I think the general consensus is he had a very good relationship with Jack, and his relationship with Bobby was bad from the beginning.

F: But he was making, or trying to make, a satisfactory vice president and understood the limitations of the office?

R: I think he, better than anyone else, understood and had what I regard as an iron discipline. I never really regarded him as a personally disciplined man, an ambitious man. I thought his conduct was exemplary all through that period. The provocations of Bobby and some of them were really pretty outrageous, and this new Kennedy crowd were always running him down. As you know, he is a very sensitive man and he usually knows what is happening. I think it must have been an agonizing period. I never heard any kind of comment that might be disloyal or anything else.

F: When did you and Johnson more or less reunite?

R: About three days after he became president he called me down to the White House and said he apologized. I said I apologized, and he said, by God, I wouldn't apologize, I was the first fellow this president had apologized to, and he didn't want me getting into the act; it was his apology.

So from then on we renewed acquaintances pretty much. What I think he was doing, and it is curious, he was touching all his old bases as soon as he became president. I don't quite understand the psychological reason for this, but he was doing it. He was seeing all his old friends that he had known from the beginning of the New Deal. Not so much he wanted their help which he did want, but it's almost like a superstition, coming back and touching all these things. I remember I think the day after he saw me he saw

two people, old New Dealers, who were dying. I don't doubt he had seen them for some time. He went to call on them.

F: Who were they?

R: Well, one was that publisher from Texas he knew.

F: Sam Fore?

R: No, a fellow who lived up here.

F: Oh, Charles Marsh, probably.

R: Charles Marsh.

F: He had a place down here at--

R: And Aubrey Williams, he went by to see. There were people he hadn't seen in some years.

F: When you say he called you down, where was down?

R: Down at the White House.

F: He was down there.

R: Yes. No, I guess Mrs. Kennedy was still in the White House, but he was using the office. I remember Bird was there, and Harry McPherson. I think it was a Sunday. He was touching all of his bases, it seems to me.

F: Did he have anything to say about the job ahead, or the events of the moment?

R: No, just that he had lots of problems, wanted all the help he could get, and that kind of comment.

F: Did he use you?

R: From time to time, yes, mostly on ideas.

F: What, just try out ideas on you?

R: Try out ideas. I have always thought--this is a formula I have used about him--he had sort of a sounding board, and I think this is true when he was president as well as when he was a senator. He had sort of a spectrum of people that he would talk to over the years. This is a pure Rowe idea, and there is no evidence that it is true, but I think it is true. When he wanted to do something, he would call a fellow, and he had a picture of exactly what this fellow was going to say to him in reply on any particular idea. When he got the response that he expected, he didn't pay much attention. But if he hit one of these fellows that responded differently, he sort of stopped and wondered what the hell was going on, why did this fellow say this. I think he just had a list of people. But he always did this. And he had people in categories. He always had Corcoran as a pragmatic conservative, and he always saw me for some reason as a relatively dangerous liberal which I wasn't. But he expected certain responses from people and when he got them, fine, this checked out, but when he started getting something from this line of people that he called that was different, I think he would pause and try to figure that out. It was a very, very careful political technique I think he used. My feeling is that he did a great deal of this in the presidency, and as he became better acquainted with people that worked on a lot of problems, I think he probably would call people that he knew were knowledgeable in the field.

But he was a great man for touching all these bases, a very cautious man. You know, with these flamboyant qualities, almost swashbuckler qualities, people would not think of him as a very cautious man. He was the most cautious politician I ever ran into.

F: Did he have a somewhat limited acquaintance of idea people?

R: I think he thought he did.

F: At times I vary like him on that. There are times when I think he must know everybody in the United States and other times I feel that he must be circumscribed.

R: Well, I think a little of both. I think he got himself in a box, just something like the security conscious business. He had an idea the intellectuals were against him and they weren't going to trust him, they didn't like him. I think he got so he would not trust them. I remember him saying once to me on some phone call, "You and Bird are the only two I trust." I can't even remember when it was. But I knew that really meant, "Bird is the only one I can trust." Once quite later when he was president he commented on something and he said, "Well, hell," something about, "he's just that Harvard fellow." And I said, "Mr. President, you forget I went to Harvard," and he said, "I don't trust you all the time." He had this complex about Harvard, and in some ways he was entitled to have it.

F: Yes.

R: The intellectuals are pretty difficult people, ridiculous. But I think because of that he never made as much use of them as he could

have made. And most of them, they loved power more than Johnson did. They were perfectly willing to help him. But in general I think he relied mostly on the New Dealers he had known.

F: The intellectuals fairly well believed in his domestic programs, did they not?

R: That's right, yes.

F: There was no problem there?

R: I think he could have--I just don't understand it. Of course, he could recruit, he did recruit pretty much whom he wanted to, I think, in the government and what I call the middle level jobs, a lot of them from the intellectual world. No, I wouldn't think he was particularly circumscribed. He had a way of getting all the information he wanted. I think he was circumscribed in the sense of his own trust, who he would trust. I think he was a deeply hurt man by all this Georgetown talk. I think he let it get to him more than he should have.

F: Did anyone ever talk to him about the fact that he didn't have to listen to all the newscasts and read all the tickers and--?

R: I think everybody.

F: But he was going to do it.

R: They couldn't stop him. I remember Abe Fortas saying one day, "My God, you know, I convinced Harold Ickes, who was just as thin-skinned--we convinced Ickes just not to read the papers and not to read the magazines. If we could convince Lyndon Johnson to do the same thing, it would be fine." And people pointed out Eisenhower

didn't read them, it didn't bother him any. But, no, he had to keep his hand on everything, read everything, have the tickers in the office, all that sort of business.

F: Did he offer you any jobs?

R: He offered me a couple, one which didn't interest me, which I won't mention. By this time I had had a heart attack in 1953 and I was not too ambitious. I had been in the government for ten years. He offered me one fairly well towards the end. It was budget director. He knew I had once wanted that. This I guess was when Kermit Gordon was leaving. "Well," I said, "Mr. President, ten years ago I would have given my left arm for that job, but I don't want it now." The real reason is that it is a killer, almost worse than the presidency. I said, "I don't want one." And there we were.

F: He didn't insist?

R: I sent word to him on the first one that he offered to me--John Macy came over and talked with me--I said, "Tell the President that the only job he has got--I don't want this one--that I would take would be secretary of state if I could have it three hours a day and didn't have to travel." He called me the next day and said, "I got your message."

F: He didn't insist that you take the budget directorship?

R: No. He knew it was something I wanted once and thought he was going to give me again.

F: Did he ever talk to you about either roadblocks along the road to being president, that is being an effective president, or some

of the opportunities of being president? I am thinking particularly of such things as the fact that the Bureau of Budget kind of stands as an independent agency. The Federal Reserve Board--

R: Gives problems.

F: --has its own policy that it follows. Sometimes it is not the president's policy, and so on.

R: I don't know. He never did. I think one reason was that he just didn't really recognize obstacles when he was president. He used the same techniques he used in the Senate. I think he put the lash on everybody in the Executive Branch, just get on the telephone and call everybody. He may have felt there were obstacles on the Hill.

He was much more of a man going through channels than was Kennedy, for instance, or than Roosevelt. Roosevelt and Kennedy didn't go through channels, but I think Johnson had been in government so long it was natural. He'd start with the secretary and when the secretary wasn't around, the under secretary. I think it went against his grain, for instance, to call some fellow he knew, under the line of command, which I think is a good thing in a president. He got much more cohesion and so forth.

F: I notice Johnson, which has surprised me in the Nixon Administration, was always very careful to see that his subordinates touch base with the right people who ought to know these things.

R: That's right. I just happened, for instance, to have had lunch today with a couple of newspapermen who covered Johnson. They're

covering Nixon, and they were all complaining about Nixon, about how he was surrounded. One of them pointed out that Johnson at least made an effort to find out what was going on, he made all his staff go and sleep in the ghettos. He sent McPherson and Cliff Alexander to Harlem, and Bill Moyers had to go some place, and Califano had to go into a ghetto and spend a weekend, and he sent some fellow named Sherwin Markman into Chicago. They say he wrote a brilliant report. They said at least Johnson was booting his staff out to find out what was happening. If he didn't find out, he at least tried. I think Johnson just thought everybody ought to be like Johnson: get a telephone and talk to everybody all day and find out what is going on.

F: One of his long-time assistants told me about being up here when he'd first come to join the Congressman's staff. [He said] that Johnson came in the Dodge House dining room one time and saw him eating with John Connally and just chewed both of them out. "There are too many people that you ought to be having lunch with to eat with each other."

R: "With each other," that sounds like him, yes.

F: "Get around. Don't ever eat alone. Don't ever eat with anybody that you work with."

R: Well, I think he did that with his White House staff. "Get out, get out to dinner, see people."

F: Right.

R: It was interesting, these newspapermen today were saying that the Nixon staff doesn't do any of this. They amuse me because they were saying, "Talk about credibility gap, there is all this talk of the open administration, we know much less of what is going on in the Nixon White House than we ever did in the Johnson White House."

F: Did you ever take any temporary assignments under President Johnson?

R: No, well, let me see. I did this Puerto Rico job as chairman, part-time chairman, on the status of Puerto Rico, and did two or three minor commissions. Occasionally I did something. He sent me to Europe once on something that I guess I still can't talk about until he does. Just to go over there and talk to some people, quietly went and quietly came back, that kind of thing. Or he would ask me to go and talk with somebody he thought I had influence with.

F: For future reference, should I query him on this European assignment?

R: Yes, it is all right with me. I am perfectly willing to talk if he is. But it's his business.

F: All right. Did you have any intimations that he wasn't going to run again?

R: Not the slightest. You see, I got cured of his statements when he was a young congressman. He ran for the Senate and said, "I will never run for office again." I never really believed him, even when I was sure he believed what he was saying himself. I didn't have the slightest--I think it was always clear that it was going to be a rough campaign, and I think I had been critical again that

he wouldn't organize and he didn't believe in the Democratic Party, which I did. I did some nagging about times marching on. Part of this again is he didn't really trust anybody too much. I pushed very hard, for instance, for him to put Larry O'Brien in. Well, O'Brien was a Kennedy man. He still had his pep squad and so forth, and he wouldn't give me the command, and time was running out. Finally I said, "Let Larry and me both do it." "All right," he agreed to that. So we started some committees, and then Watson was in the act. But it was again this business of not really letting anybody run the show except himself. It became fairly apparent to me fairly early that I was right about New Hampshire. I said we'd lose 40 per cent of that vote, something was going on there that just didn't ring right. So I was in effect in the point of view, "You've got to go like hell if you want this thing. The political pressure, the Vietnam thing and political pressure, is going to be tough. I think we're getting to them." But I saw no indication of this, never heard of it.

I had always thought he could win. I thought it would be a bloody, rough, nasty convention. Then I thought it would be just about as unpleasant an election as this country had ever seen. And I thought probably he could win both of them. That judgment may have been right or may have been wrong. I think the country would have been torn to bits, even if he had won. I think he probably saw this.

F: Were you active in the 1964 campaign?

R: Yes, I ran the Citizens for Johnson. Active on various committees.

F: Did you have any foreordination that it was going to be Humphrey? Did he talk with you about it?

R: I had been pushing Humphrey for a year. I was hoping it was going to be Humphrey.

F: He and Humphrey had had a very good relationship as senators, hadn't they?

R: Yes, they are very much alike in some ways and very much not alike. But I think almost immediately they liked each other, which makes a big difference. I think Humphrey again was unhappy as vice president. I think this is part of the job, you are an unhappy man. He chafed a great deal under Johnson, and I was always a little surprised that Johnson had been so unhappy under Kennedy that he wasn't more aware of this. His excuse was always that Humphrey talked too much, he couldn't tell him what was going on because he would tell everybody. But I think this is just the way presidents treat vice presidents. That's the conclusion I reached. I pushed very hard for Humphrey, and I was always for Humphrey quite openly, and was arguing all the way that he was the best man. Johnson sent me a number of times to see Humphrey. When he kicked out Bobby, he told me to go down and tell Humphrey he thought it would be Humphrey and so forth, and maybe he made it pretty clear to me it was always going to be Humphrey.

F: You didn't take the McCarthy threat seriously?

R: No, I didn't. He played games with it.

F: Yes.

R: And he was getting pressure from the Texans, the Texans were for McCarthy. They were for McCarthy for two valid reasons. One was that he, Johnson, had been so much against the Kennedys or against Bobby it looked like he was anti-Catholic, so he wanted to cure this by pointing out it wasn't a religious problem. And the Texans' objection--and when I say Texans I think I mean people like Connally and Walter Jenkins, they were saying, "Look, Humphrey is a red flag in the South. McCarthy has the same record, voting record, the same civil rights records, but our people don't know it, the man in the street." These are the two arguments that were pressed on Johnson by the Texans.

But all the Kennedy people left, who were still there, let's see, O'Donnell, O'Brien, and I was not a Kennedy man, but all the rest of us were solidly for Humphrey. Now I think part of the O'Brien-O'Donnell group was that they didn't like McCarthy and they felt that he had always been against the Kennedys. I was fairly objective. I liked Humphrey; I supported him. I thought he was the best man for Johnson. It became pretty apparent very early, just as soon as it looked like Goldwater had it, the problems are all over, but Johnson's real problem was to pick the best man in case he died. The argument I constantly made at him was that none of these people help, but Humphrey will, you know, if you die you've left somebody there that you have confidence in. I think this was always Johnson's idea, and I think he told Humphrey fairly early,

with his usual hookers of escape, that if other things are equal, you are the man I want, and that is not a commitment. I can hear Johnson say it, that you are the fellow I want. They were a logical matching pair.

F: I suppose Thomas Dodd was just a diversion.

R: Yes, well, the one Johnson pulled. He pulled another one about Mike Mansfield, you know, about going up to Philadelphia and all the communication was through Walter who took notes and would read them, and I got a call from him, we had a system there. I was dealing with Humphrey there all the time on Johnson's orders.

F: Now, as a Montanan, how come you are working for Humphrey instead of Mansfield?

R: Well, I never took Mansfield seriously, and this is what I think was the Johnson game. He still, I think, overplayed the thing. He started getting the delegates mad as hell, you know, the Dodd thing and the rumors. The McCarthy thing. The convention was solidly lined up for Humphrey by then. Johnson had told me to tell Humphrey at one stage, right after Bobby, if you have got any strength, show it. The company people had been out quietly organizing, and we showed them pretty damn hard that we had all the delegates. Johnson could have vetoed Humphrey with no problem, but if he had done it at the convention that late, he would have had a lot of resentment because people were getting fed up. I got a message from Jenkins that the President wanted me to take a reading on who would be better, Mansfield or Humphrey. I had

been Mansfield's campaign manager, and we were great friends. I said, "Oh, come on, Walter, I am too old to be playing these games." He said, "No, he means it," and I said, "Oh, the hell he does." I went from there to a place where I knew Mansfield was and said, "Are you interested in this? Would you take it if it was offered to you?' And Mansfield said, "I certainly would not. No possible chance I would have the slightest interest in it." So I reported this back, and he pulled the same thing with O'Donnell, who was a great friend of Mansfield. But neither of us took him seriously. How much more he did of this I don't know. And I think he was [inaudible] all the way. The Dodd thing, I think, was just to keep the excitement going.

F: Not to let the show get over too soon.

R: In fact when I heard about it, I called Walter and said, "What the hell is going on?" Walter said, "Relax, this is just a game." This was right at the end. Because I had already carried the message to Humphrey, "You're it," and he was supposed to fly down the night before but got fogged in.

F: That charge that Johnson intended to continue to be Senate majority leader after he became vice president, and went over to the Senate fully expecting to be received in his old status, does that hold water?

R: I'm not sure about that. Johnson, what he was really thinking about, I think he still probably thought he would be the power he was. He

had a good relationship then with Mansfield. Mansfield was not an activist the way Johnson was.

F: Did he approve the choice of Mansfield?

R: He picked him. Well, you mean when he picked him as whip?

F: Yes.

R: And my guess is--I don't know whether Kennedy talked with him or not. Mansfield told me Kennedy called him and I think, I have some reason to believe, and I don't know if it is correct or not, that Kennedy and Johnson had talked about picking Mansfield. My guess is he did.

F: Were you in any way implicated in that?

R: I was implicated in getting him to be whip. Johnson talked to me about it. He wanted Smathers. And I said, "Goddamn it, you just can't put in another southerner." He said, "Well, who do I put in?" I said, "Put in Mansfield." And he said, "I have asked Mansfield, and he won't take it. Go down and talk with him." I went down, worked on Mansfield, and said, "He'll take it." And he did.

I think their relationship was very good until Johnson became vice president. And I think Johnson was shocked again when he went into that meeting. Mansfield had arranged that he would sit with the senators, and they just jumped him. From that time on, he pulled right back. I missed that completely. I thought he would run the Senate. I remember saying this to Herman what-was-his-name one day, the only fellow who ever contradicted me. He said, "I don't think Johnson will run it at all." I said,

"Why not? You know the people involved." "Well," he said, "all the machinery falls to Mansfield. No matter what Johnson wants or what Mansfield wants, the machinery is so set up that Mansfield is going to have to make the decision."

F: The institution prevails rather than the man.

R: This was his point. I had missed it. He said machinery, you say institution, that was what happened. They got a cool relationship. I remember Bobby Baker at one stage told me that Johnson was blaming me. This is when we weren't really seeing each other. "Jim Rowe has told Mansfield to keep away from me." This is the kind of remark he has always made, you know. I don't pay much attention to it. And their relationship was all right, I think, until Johnson became president. Mansfield is a stubborn fellow, and he didn't do as leader what the President wants. Mr. Johnson is not the first president that has this problem. Roosevelt had a little, too, occasionally. Then the Vietnam thing Mansfield was a real dove and Johnson sort of never forgave him. But at the convention I never thought he was a bit serious about Mansfield.

F: Do you think Goldwater was the opponent he wanted?

R: Yes, who wouldn't? If Johnson had had a free choice, that's the fellow he would have picked. That was a fairly well-run campaign in the sense--well, Johnson ran it. He ran his end. I ran the Citizens because he wasn't interested in the Citizens until the end, and then he started running that, but I had it running all right then.

F: What do you think happened to the party machinery under--

R: Johnson?

F: Under Johnson?

R: He just let it go to hell. He didn't believe in it.

F: Just looked on this as sort of a big personal feat.

R. This is a complicated question. I have often wondered. I have had arguments with him about it. One argument he said, for instance, "Oh, the Democratic Committee isn't important. I remember Roosevelt telling me whenever he wanted to talk with Flynn or Farley, they were always in New York, no good to him." I think in a curious way it was a reflection of his own background. In Texas, you had only one party. Your fights were inside the party, and if you could work them out within a small group, why, everything ran well. If you couldn't, you got licked. But it was one faction against the other.

F: The idea of precinct organization and so forth didn't appeal to him?

R: No, and he always basically had, he got over this a little bit, but he always basically had a feeling as a senator and I think this went on as president, that those bosses up North are a bunch of damn crooks. He really had a contempt for the bosses in his own way, was even stronger than the liberals felt toward the bosses. He got to like them after a while. He thought Daley was fine, and the bosses all swung behind him, as they do, and supported the hell out of him.

F: Both the bosses and also the labor bosses.

R: And the labor bosses.

F: That's another group he had to cater to.

R: Another group he didn't like much. He said, "They are a bunch of racketeers," I remember, when he was a senator. But he got them, they supported him.

Now when he was president, I think--this is what presidents do again--he was thinking of Lyndon Johnson in the history books, and he thought, "I am going to get the most competent people." His definition of competent was to get very competent people and to hell with whether they were party people or not. I think he overdid it.

I used to do the personnel job for Roosevelt, the same job Macy did, and I was always in trouble with the leaders, Farley and Flynn. But I just raised hell about Macy. I said, "Honest to God, he is killing us. He does not know anything but the civil service people, and they are not that good." I said, "I can always find you better politicians more competent than your civil servants." I remember sending a memo to Macy one day about it. John and I had been old friends and we are still old friends, but we didn't agree on this. I ended up by saying, "All right, you can pick the organization to run the election in 1968, because there won't be anything except your people." I sent a copy of that to the President. Never heard from John. The President was on the phone the next day giving me hell. "Well," I said, "it does worry me." He made a very interesting comment, and although he didn't say this, I think

part of it came out of his experience with Bobby Baker and Walter Jenkins. What he said was, "You know, I only can feel safe if I pick civil servants or military men, because their whole life has been under such complete scrutiny, they won't surprise me." And he gave the example, as I may have mentioned last time we talked, that "You lawyers, you are not trustworthy, you have always got a client some way or other that's embarrassing." And he told us of this great search for this Federal Power Commission fellow, whom he picked. Everybody had said he was superb and he had no connections with oil and gas or against oil and gas which was what he'd been looking for; experienced in the regulatory business. He said, "So I nominated him, and the first thing I find out, he ran a segregationist meeting out in Illinois." And there is some validity, but in general I think he had such an easy election in 1964 that it didn't matter whether there was a party or not, everybody was going for him.

F: Did you take a hand in trying to get dates for him in the northern areas?

R: In 1964?

F: 1964.

R: No, I stayed out of all of that. I really ran just the Citizens, which is a money-raising and really a Republican thing which was his own idea. There were so many Republicans that were nervous about Goldwater, and we had to create a home for them. So we had lawyers and bankers and doctors and so forth, and were very careful--

at least I was--to put Republicans in charge of all of this. He gave me a free hand, which is unusual. I think he was so involved in his own campaigning. I know I talked to Walter Jenkins a couple of times and said, "I want to put in so-and-so. How much clearance do I have?" Walter said, "Go ahead." I said, "Is the man going to yell?" He said, "Well, he may." But he never did. I picked practically anybody I wanted and would take them over and have a big show in the White House and so forth. And I think he came to appreciate that, really in many ways, this was the crowd that was getting him the publicity. These were the renegades leading the Republicans' votes from Goldwater for Johnson. Until about the last week he was perfectly happy, then he had everything so well organized, he started to come over and organize me. That is the way he does, telling me, buy these billboards in this state and buy those billboards in that state, and why haven't you got so-and-so. Typical Johnson.

F: Could you argue with him fairly successfully?

R: Usually, yes.

F: Aren't you the man who pretty well set up these fund-raising committees in which the candidate does not have to report his expenses?

R: I started this invention, the so-called District of Columbia invention, yes.

F: Where did you get that idea?

R: The first one we set up was Johnson raising money for Wayne Morse. And the theory was--and it is perfectly legal, too, which is its great virtue--that if you send in contributions to the district,

you'll only have to report from the district to the state. All those people out there get is a check from this committee, so you don't really find out where the money is coming from. I did it for Mansfield when he first ran for the Senate in 1952, because a lot of his money was labor money, and Montana was not then, nor is it now, a labor state, and we didn't want to just give any angles to the opposition. Since then everybody had done it. They have overdone it, too much. I have always been in favor of reform, but I never could get anybody interested. I had drafted the statute for Johnson; Phil Graham and I and Butch Fisher drafted one that he got when he was in the Senate. He got eighty-seven senators on it, but nothing ever happened to it. In 1964 my own committee, some of them functioned that way. Mostly if you do two or more states you have to report, so we were pretty meticulous in reporting.

F: Your wife was quite active in civil rights. Did the President utilize her at all in--

R: Not civil rights, no, she was never that much of a civil rights girl.

F: Well, working with Negroes then?

R: No.

F: No? Am I wrong there?

R: Yes. She's not anti-Negro, but--what you might be thinking of, she was very active in this highway thing.

F: Yes.

R: Preventing highways, because she likes the city and does not want any highways. And the allies turned out to be Negroes, because the

roads are built through their place. So she did a lot of that. It wasn't because so much of civil rights as the highways.

F: Did she work with Mrs. Johnson at all in any of the beautification projects?

R: Yes, in fact she claims she is responsible. I am sure everybody claims they are responsible for beautification. But she wrote a letter to Lady Bird. She showed it to me. I think it was after 1964, but it may have been 1963.

F: Do you think I ought to make a date with her?

R: I think it would be an interesting story on the business. What she was saying to Lady Bird--

(Interruption)

F: We were talking about Lady Bird.

R: Oh, yes. She wrote Lady Bird and talked with her and said, in effect, it was an idea that after all, I don't think she put it this explicitly, Jackie had done a great job in the White House, but Lady Bird really knew something about making Washington beautiful. Not the country, she was not talking about the country. She wrote this letter to Lady Bird, and then Lady Bird got going. She was on that committee of Lady Bird's.

They used to go walking through the town, the two of them. They'd get in the car and so forth. Actually she tells a wonderful story, I have forgotten when it was, but they were down along the mall and they got out of the car and the Secret Service men were some ways behind, and an old workman had been putting in a lot of

new bushes which they went over to look at. They were watching him, and so the old workman got to explaining it to them. When they were all through, he said, "Are you girls from out of town?" Lady Bird quietly said, "No, we live here." I always thought it was a lovely story.

I think she might have some good comments to make.

F: One last question. You were an administrative assistant under Franklin Roosevelt, which goes back some years, and so you observed closely the administrations down through the line. How do you think Johnson's staff work compared with other staffs that you have seen?

R: It is awfully hard to judge, really. First of all, Johnson is such an overpowering man. He is a hard man to argue against, face to face. I think, not really wanting to do it, he intimidated his staff a little too much, just with the force of his personality. When he wanted information, he was the best listener I've ever run into. When he was in the mood to find out what you knew, I think he was much more superb than Roosevelt or anyone else. When he didn't want information, I don't think much happened. If I am trying to sell him something that does not interest him, I might as well be talking to a wall. I always thought, in a curious way, the best staff I have seen was the Truman staff. I'm just talking about efficiency. I am not talking really about talent. The Roosevelt staff was in and out. Roosevelt used them when he wanted, and when he didn't want, he did what Johnson often did. He'd have two or three people working on the same problem. The Kennedy staff was

quite good, I think. It was awfully hard to judge. Communication has changed so much, there is so much more public emphasis on staff and so much more of a public relations job.

F: So much more exposed now than they used to be.

R: That's right. Johnson staff was good, now. I think my impression was that Califano was very good, for instance, and he did a brilliant organizational job on the domestic stuff. I was never an admirer of Walt Rostow. I thought he got us into a lot more trouble than he should. I did admire Mac Bundy. I thought Harry McPherson was quite good. I think in and out.

F: What about Jenkins?

R: Well, I think Walter was a great loss. I thought Walter was superb, mostly because Johnson did trust him. I mean, to that list of Lady Bird, I think I would add Walter Jenkins. And he also knew that Walter knew everybody he did, I think all the old friends of Johnson's. I always had the feeling with Walter, I said, "Walter, you know, I have always--I know when I ask you to tell the President something, you will tell him. You may then say, 'Rowe's wrong.' But I know your reporting is there." And I think everybody felt this way about Walter, that there was communication. I always felt talking to Walter was like talking to Johnson. I never felt that with any other staff, although some of them were friends of mine. I think this is what ruined Walter, is that it just worked him to death, ran him right into the ground. And it was a changed ball game from the time Walter left. The President I think, himself,

has said this, that without Walter he can't communicate anymore. And he had been doing this, you know, for, what, thirty years through Walter. But I don't think Walter--physically something would have happened to him if this incident hadn't. No man can keep up with the pressures.

F: Right.

R: So when I think of the Johnson staff, I always had Walter out of it.

F: Right. Thank you, Mr. Rowe.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of James Rowe

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, James Rowe of Washington, D.C. do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of personal interviews conducted on September 9, September 16, and December 16, 1969 in Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcripts.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.

(4) Copies of the transcripts and the tape recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

James H. Rowe, Jr.
Donor

4/5/83
Date

Archivist of the United States

July 11, 1983
Date