

Interviewee: Allan Shivers

Interviewer: Joe B. Frantz

Date: May 29, 1970

F: This is an interview with former Governor Allan Shivers in his office in Austin, Texas on May 29, 1970. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz. Governor, let's establish first a few facts about you. You are a native Texan, and you are a University of Texas graduate. In fact, I came in right behind you. I don't know whether you remember Afton Winn or not, but before I knew who you were she said "The fellow who just finished, he's going to be Governor some day." That stuck in my mind, you ran not too long after that and I started watching.

S: Yes, I ran right after I finished law school.

F: And you practiced law in Port Arthur and then served in the state Senate?

S: That's correct.

F: And became lieutenant governor in '49--is that right? No, no, it was before that, wasn't it?

S: '47. I served as lieutenant governor from '47 to '49 and governor from '49 to '57.

F: Now, when did you first become aware of Lyndon Johnson?

S: I knew Lyndon, I guess, about the time he became NYA director. That's my first recollection of him.

F: Did you see much of him in those days?

S: Not a lot, not a lot.

F: He was just a name that was beginning to emerge?

S: Oh, I would see him. I was in Austin quite a lot, of course, and would see his name in the paper and would run onto him occasionally at various types of affairs--but not so often.

F: Did you have anything to do at all with any of his early congressional campaigns?

S: No, except to observe them. I was in the Senate when he ran his first race for Congress, and of course being Austin district why--as I recall the Texas Legislature was in session when that campaign took place.

F: It was in the spring of '37 which would have been one of your biennial sessions.

S: Everyone was commenting on the fact that all the billboards had LBJ and FDR shaking hands together. As I remember, Roosevelt came to Texas. Allred was Governor at that time, and Allred arranged for Lyndon to have an appointment with him, somewhere down on the Texas coast.

F: Yes. In fact, Roosevelt came in by boat to Galveston and then took a train across Texas and on out. Did you have anything to do at all with the campaign in '41 when he ran for Senator against Pappy O'Daniel in the special election?

S: Yes, I supported him in that race. But I wasn't active in the campaign, other than to visit with him occasionally, and he called me on some occasions to ask about various matters.

F: Were you any direct assistance to him down in your senatorial district?

S: Yes, yes, and in some other places in Texas, as a matter of fact wherever I could be.

F: What, just sort of suggesting names to see?

S: Yes, and in the Rio Grande Valley as well, because my wife comes from that section of the state. I remember on the night of the election-- I think probably the legislature was in session at that time also--he thought he had won the election. My wife and I were living in the Stephen F. Austin Hotel, and Lyndon and his group were headquartered in the hotel at the time, too. They thought they had won the race,

and I think most other people did also. They were very jubilant, of course, but by the next morning sufficient additional votes had come in and been counted to where he lost by, I think, about 1300 votes, wasn't it?

F: Yes. As I recall it, with 4000 votes out, he had a thousand vote margin, which looked plenty safe. But Pappy O'Daniel took the big majority of what was left.

S: I don't recall where the votes came from, or what section of the state.

F: They came largely I think from the forks of the creek out in the Big Bend area.

S: Is that right? I didn't remember.

F: They were remote boxes that hadn't come in and I gather, were somewhat scattered at that time.

Did you ever discuss with him the possibility of a recount, or a contest in this?

S: No, no I didn't.

F: Okay, then he goes back to Congress; you go on with your career. Do you see him more than just casually through the next several years?

S: Yes, probably more often during that period of time, with increasing frequency I would say.

F: Just as political friends?

S: Yes, and personal friends. We had become personal friends over the years.

F: You come now to '48, you are lieutenant governor, and he's running for the Senate. Before that, was he any assistance to you in your own race for lieutenant governor, which was your big first state-wide offering?

S: Yes, he didn't take any active part in that race, but he did tell me that he was supporting me. And I thought that he did and still feel

that way.

F: [He] passed the word quietly.

S: He was helpful, not only with advice, but with contacts. And he was helpful in a lot of other ways, not in political races but he was always able to get things done. I mean, if you needed to know something about anything going on in Washington, you'd contact Lyndon and find out about it.

F: You'd get pretty good quick information?

S: Yes, and fairly reliable. He did that not only for people in his own district but for people all over the state--and not only for people such as I was holding state public office, but almost anyone. I think that was really the secret of his future success.

F: Now, by '48 when he offers again for the Senate--and this time it's more crucial in a way than '41 because he's going to have to give up his congressional seat if he loses the Senate race--you have the statewide base, and he is still a local congressman. Did he lean on you for assistance in that?

S: Oh, I wouldn't say that he leaned on me for assistance. He did consult with me quite often about it, and I supported him in that race. I frankly didn't think he was going to win it up until, oh, just very shortly before the second primary. As you'll recall the difference in the vote between him and Stevenson in the first primary, Stevenson had such an enormous lead that it looked like an almost impossibility. But he did win it.

F: Did the two of you discuss strategy as how to trim down that lead?

S: No.

F: I realize that's a long time ago.

S: Yes, but there's been a lot of conversation about it. I don't know.

I wouldn't say that he depended on me for any strategy. I wasn't a part of the campaign hierarchy. I was, as you say, in the lieutenant governor's office at that time and did see him quite a bit during the campaign, both the first and second. Also, I would telephone him occasionally or he would telephone me.

That was a very interesting race, I think, from the standpoint of political philosophies. Stevenson barely campaigned, as you'll recall. As I remember, Booth Mooney was traveling with him, writing his speeches and driving the car and arranging the whole schedule, and about the only campaign organization that Governor Stevenson had, except his reputation as having been a long-time Speaker of the House of Representatives, Lieutenant Governor, and Governor of Texas--and a very popular Governor. I thought a lot of times, in trying to analyze the race, how it was that Lyndon was able to win the race and the accusations about the race having been stolen and so forth.

If you remember the Taft-Hartley Law had just been passed, and Johnson had voted for it as a congressman and to override Truman's veto. In that particular race, as distinguished from some of his other races, he had a more conservative approach there in that Senate race than he had had in his other races. On the other hand Stevenson, who's reputation was one of almost the ultimate in conservatism, refused to take a stand on the Taft-Hartley Act at all. Labor people were trying to get it repealed. As I recall, Governor Stevenson never did take a stand on the Taft-Hartley Bill one way or the other.

F: He was in the fortunate position from a strictly political standpoint of never having to declare himself publicly.

S: That's right. Johnson was indelibly on the record, having voted not only for the bill but to override President Truman's veto of it. I

think that one thing alone enabled Johnson to get close enough in votes to where the Jim Wells box could make the difference. If it hadn't been for that and the fact that Johnson worked--he always worked in his campaigns, and he did in that one. I remember on election day--most candidates in those days figured if you hadn't won the race by election day--that you might as well forget it. But on election day in that particular race he left Austin early in the morning and went over to San Antonio and made the rounds of the boxes in South San Antonio--some of the very crucial boxes where he thought he could pick up a lot of votes, and did. He just continued to work right on through the day.

F: Yes, I can remember when Saturday or election day, whenever it was, was a very quiet day, really. You finally got surcease from all the candidates speaking. I was struck by that again in this recent senatorial race. You could turn on your car radio as late as 5 o'clock and Yarborough and Bentsen were still suggesting that in the next hour you could put them in.

S: It's interesting by comparison. I'm sure that's where Yarborough got the idea. Yarborough did that same thing in this recent race, went over to San Antonio to work those boxes during election day. It didn't do him as much good as it did Lyndon. He still lost the race, fortunately.

F: Okay, so we've got a Senator on our hands now in Lyndon Johnson, and you shortly become Governor. Then the next year you get elected in your own right as Governor in the first of three terms. So that gives us Governor Shivers, Senator Johnson, as two young men very definitely on the move and both, of course, in key positions as far as Texas is concerned. Did you work closely with him on Texas matters then or did there seem to be a separation between the state interest of Texas and the national interest of Texas?

S: No, we continued to work fairly close together. Of course, he very soon became a national figure because he became--

F: Minority Leader.

S: Minority Leader and then Whip of the Senate, and then the outstanding job that he did as the Majority Leader in the Senate.

F: In '52 you are up to run again and do run again and win. This is the year, of course, that [Adlai] Stevenson is nominated; and I'm sure you are on record on your opposition to Stevenson. But I'd be very interested in any relationship you had with regard to 1952 as it affected the Johnson-Rayburn leadership, because they did announce for Stevenson-- which gave us then a split between more or less your delegation and one that Johnson and Rayburn would have liked to have had. They would liked to have had the Texas group pledged to Stevenson, if I recall correctly, at the convention. But you dominated the delegation.

S: Well, Maury Maverick, who was then I believe Mayor of San Antonio, or had been--

F: He had been.

S: recently, was the leader of the competing delegation. I led the official delegation--

F: And yours was uncommitted?

S: That's right. We did announce that we were going to support Russell, Senator Russell from Georgia, for the nomination and voted for him on, oh, I think three, maybe four, ballots, whatever there were. But our delegation was seated. It was contested by the Maverick delegation.

F: You and Price Daniel were working very closely on this?

S: Not at that time. Price was not a delegate--I don't believe he was-- to that convention.

F: This is when Price was running for Tom Connally's seat.

S: That's right, he was candidate for the United States Senate.

F: Did you ever seriously consider running for that seat?

S: Yes and no.

F: Did Johnson talk to you about it?

S: Yes, yes, quite a lot. And a lot of other people did, too. I really-- and this is not what it may sound like--I never did really have any ambition to go to Washington in any capacity. I'll tell you this. There's evidence of that, I think, probably in November of '51. We were talking about campaigns. Price Daniel was Attorney General, and I was in the Governor's office. I think possibly it was '51--it must have been in November--he and I were standing out in front of the Capital late one afternoon, going home, and met out there. He asked me if I was going to run for the Senate. I said, "No, I don't think so." He said, "Well, I wish you would and let me run for Governor." I said, "Well, we're going to have this Tideland question up. You have followed that in all of the legal ramifications of it. I'd like to see you go to the Senate and finish the work up because you know the legal history. It's very important to have a man with your background and experience with that in the Senate to pass this bill. I think you ought to run for the Senate." He said, "I don't believe I can beat Tom Connally, and I think you can." I said, "I've already made a survey on it, and I think anybody can beat him. He hasn't kept his fences up, hasn't kept up with things that are going on in the State. Any good strong candidate can defeat him." We discussed it a good while there and when he left he said, "Well, when you make up your mind, let me know." I decided then that I was going to run for Governor again and encouraged him to run for the Senate. Then later on--he was elected as you know; I was re-elected Governor--and later on--what year was Lyndon up?

F: '54. That was the year the Democrats took the majority in the Senate.

S: Yes.

F: And kept it.

S: He talked to me during the Stevenson campaign about his position and what he was going to do in it and what effect it might have on his '54 race. He knew that a lot of people had been urging me to run for the Senate. I told him I was not going to run. Then I got some more publicity about running--I think it was closer to the election--and I telephoned him and told him I was not going to run. Then when he was elected Vice President and when Senator John Tower was elected to replace him, Tower came to me before that special election and told me that if I would run for the Senate then he would not run. As a matter of fact, all of the candidates in that race except Blakley--that was '60--

F: '61.

S: That was '61. All of the candidates in that race, except Senator Blakley, told me that if I would run they wouldn't. I mention that just to prove my point that I really didn't want to go. I could have gone, I think, at either time--certainly have gone in the '52 race, without any question. I often wonder what would have happened if I had done those things.

F: It would have turned your career around a little.

S: But Lyndon and I never had any real conflict over the '52 convention or my support of Eisenhower and his support of Stevenson until the '56 state convention.

F: He and Rayburn stumped the state in '52 for Stevenson. There was some feeling that they were half-hearted about it. Was that your impression--I mean that they were going through the motions?

- S: Rayburn stumped the state a good bit, but Johnson didn't. He introduced Stevenson at Fort Worth, maybe some other place--maybe San Antonio. I know he introduced him at Fort Worth and maybe some other place, but I don't think he made any other speeches.
- F: Did Johnson or Rayburn at this time make any particular effort to get the delegation away from your control?
- S: No.
- F: At the national convention?
- S: No. I think Mr. Rayburn would have sided with the Maverick group.
- F: At this stage, he was much more the party politician in a sense.
- S: Right, exactly. And he controlled it without any question. He could have had us kicked out of the convention, or kept us from getting into the convention, if he'd wanted to. I talked to Mr. Rayburn on several occasions about it, before and after we got to Chicago, and told him that we could not pledge that we would vote for whoever the nominee was--and would not!--that as of that time we had no intention of not supporting the nominee--always had and hoped we always could. And the events which caused us not to support Stevenson occurred after the convention, not during the convention.
- F: You made that famous trip up to Illinois to see Governor Stevenson.
- S: That's right, about the middle of August of '52.
- F: In which you announced you would not support him as a result of his stand on the tidelands. Did that bring you to any sort of either conflict or agreement with Senator Johnson?
- S: I think he understood the situation. Mine was the position as Governor of Texas and what I had to do as governor, and because of the crucial issue of the tidelands and the fact that Stevenson had said that he would veto the bill if it were passed again.

On the other hand of course Johnson was in the position of a national figure in supporting Stevenson. But we had no personal conflict over it at all.

F: You were faced with a situation here in Texas of the George Parr kingdom. Without getting into the particular rights or wrongs of it, you were more or less credited with having cleaned it up to a great extent. Did this bring you into any sort of relationship with Senator Johnson because of course that's where he got his eighty-seven vote margin.

S: That's right. No. George Parr always supported him and always did not support me. My conflict with Parr came--

F: And ran a fairly tight control.

S: Oh, you bet. My conflict came with George Parr within months after I became governor. In a court vacancy in South Texas he demanded that I appoint his hand-picked lawyer for it. I refused to do it. And he supported this Baylor law professor that ran against me in--

F: Yes. March, I haven't thought of him in years.

S: Caso March--in 1950. Then he supported Yarborough in '52 and again in '54 against me. If you had his support, you got 3500 votes or 3600; and if you didn't have it, you got 200. He could switch them around from one to the other just as easily. When Price Daniel ran for governor and Yarborough ran against him in '56--Parr had always supported Yarborough against me, but in '56 he switched and supported Daniel against Yarborough. And if you'll recall, Daniel was only elected by about a 3500-vote majority, which was the Parr majority. I don't know how many of you political history people have ever thought of that, but it's in the record.

I never did have any real trouble with--

F: In a sense, he made two senators. He made a senator out of Yarborough

by not letting him be governor.

S: Somebody said the other day after Bentsen beat Yarborough that it took us thirteen years to undo what Daniel did in getting Yarborough elected in the first place.

What we did in trying to clean up Parr's district down there, we had an investigation, as you know, and had him indicted and a lot of his people indicted, and did clean it up to some extent. But we never could destroy his control. I understand now that he and his family are back in absolute control in several counties down there.

F: You had a very close fight with Yarborough in '54.

S: '54. Had a runoff. There was a third candidate in the first primary that got about 25,000 votes which caused the runoff. Then I beat him about 90,000 votes in the second primary.

F: Did Mr. Johnson, who had his own campaign that year, get at all involved in this?

S: As far as I know, he didn't.

F: That brings us somewhat down to 1956, which is where you and the Johnson-Rayburn factions really locked up for the first time. And I'm going to pretty well let you tell that in your own way.

S: My group in Texas had supported Eisenhower in '52.

F: And had carried him for President.

S: Right. Then there wasn't any question but what we were going to support him again in '56.

F: And to get the record straight, very early in the year you had renounced any intentions to run for another term for governor.

S: That is correct. I was going out of office.

F: So you're not a candidate for anything.

S: I was not a candidate for anything, and had announced my support of

Eisenhower. I didn't really intend to participate in the campaign very much because I thought I wasn't needed. I took my boys up to Alaska on a bear hunt and came back from that hunt and found out that Senator Johnson and Mr. Rayburn both were going around all over the state making speeches, again for Adlai Stevenson, and jumping on me with both feet and saying, "Well, Shivers is dead. He's going out of office. Now we're going to carry Texas for Stevenson over Eisenhower."

So when I got back and found out that was going on, a lot of my friends said they thought Eisenhower was going to need some help. So I hit the campaign trail and not only spoke all over Texas, but spoke all over the South in that campaign. And we did carry Texas again in '56 for Eisenhower.

F: You had Johnson wanting to be a favorite son candidate in '56.

S: Right.

F: Did you work with him or oppose him on this? What was the situation? Did you want to stay uncommitted again?

S: No. We were opposed to him on that--not to him being favorite son, but to Mr. Rayburn's proposal that he control the delegation and be favorite son. I talked to Lyndon about that on two or three occasions and told him we would support him as favorite son. But if he would join with us instead of joining with the liberals, as distinguished from our group--what they were then called--that we could keep the control, and we'd go along with him. But his long ties with Mr. Rayburn were so much stronger than his ties with me.

F: In general, doesn't a favorite son then pitch his delegation the way that he wants it to go when he removes himself, or is that a political fact?

S: No, I don't think so. I don't think that at all. Very often in this

state, or other states, a delegation may be controlled by one group and whoever is in control picks the favorite son and not the reverse, I think, is generally true.

F: Johnson has said some time in '56 that the reason that he was insisting on controlling the delegation was that he was trying to hold the party together in Texas.

S: I'm sure that's true--

F: Does that stand up on examination?

S: I think so. I think that was legitimate. My point to him was that the people he joined up with in that particular fight against me were never for Johnson. They'd always fought Johnson. That's the same group that organized the DOT--wasn't it called, something like that?

F: That's right. Democrats of Texas.

S: Yes, as opposed to the national organization. They were going outside the Texas and the national organizations. They were almost as opposed to Johnson as they were to me. But he joined up with them in that fight against me, and of course beat the socks off of us. They won handily.

F: Was this just good field work?

S: Oh, yes, and actually--and I've said this before--my group should never have been in that fight, and it was a mistake to have ever gotten in it. We were supporting Eisenhower and had no business trying to control the Democratic faction because we were going to control the Eisenhower faction.

F: They were wanting, I presume, more or less a loyalty pledge, that whoever was chosen--and it looked like Stevenson--the Texas delegation would support him.

S: Right. And they knew we wouldn't do that. But that campaign for the

control of the delegation was the only real serious crossing that Lyndon and I ever had. And it was a mistake on my part. I shouldn't have been in there in the first place.

F: Did it at that time ever get sort of jaw-to-jaw, or were you both working at arms length?

S: No, it was more at an arms length. We were both speaking all over the state, organizing, and we had a lot of support. But of course in a precinct and county campaign of that kind, it's just like the Electoral College--you get 50-percent plus one, and you get them all.

F: Now you controlled the State Democratic Executive Committee.

S: That's correct.

F: It couldn't feed its lines out enough to hold the precincts in line?

S: No. Actually going out of office, as I was, and supporting Eisenhower, as I was--and Johnson and Rayburn both staying in office with the power that they had--it's a political reality that a lame duck office holder loses a tremendous amount of the power that he has. People are going to move on to someone who is going to be in office. Actually I felt complimented that we had as much support as we did.

F: Did you get the feeling since the '52 campaign that Speaker Rayburn had been working pretty steadily toward '56 to get control and in a sense had been thrusting Johnson forward as something of an antidote to you?

S: I'm sure that was part of his strategy- and it worked. At least he could take credit for it. It's an interesting thing about that situation. I mentioned a moment ago, when they went into state convention in September of that year, if you'll recall, the Johnson-Daniel people lost control of the convention. I don't want to say, "I told you so," but just as I had told Lyndon earlier, that if he'd join forces with us instead of joining forces with the people who didn't like him or me

either one, we could control the September convention and would go along with him. But, of course, Mr. Rayburn would have no part of that. And Lyndon's ties to Mr. Rayburn, as I said while ago, were much stronger than his ties with me, and he went along with Mr. Rayburn on it. And they lost control of the September convention. Mrs. Randolph and her crowd took control of that convention away from Price Daniel who had been elected governor, and Lyndon Johnson, who was a candidate for President.

F: I always thought that Frankie made a particularly unusual Democratic committeewoman at that time in history.

You and Johnson called each other names in the heat of battle. Did this leave any kind of permanent scars, or was this considered just a part of political rhetoric?

S: I think eventually both of us considered it as just another political campaign. It did get pretty rough at times. Each of us referred to the other in uncomplimentary terms. But since that time, we've gotten to be good friends again.

I called him about a year later--I was in Washington on business--and he was Majority Leader. I was down at the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel with some friends and called him up at his office and asked him to come down and have a drink with us on his way home. He wanted to know who was with me and so forth. I told him. He knew all of them. I said, "Well, I've called Bill Francis (who was then working for Eisenhower over at the White House; I think maybe on the National Security Council or some position) from Houston, and he's coming over here also. Why don't you come on by here?"

He said, "No, you all come up to the Majority Leader's office and have a drink with me."

Anyway, it finally wound up he came on by the hotel. We had talked on the telephone on an occasion or two prior to that. But he came by there and not only had a drink, he spent the evening and had dinner with us. He has been a real good and very generous friend since then.

F: He must have been in a somewhat uncomfortable position, even an amorphous position at that time, because he's anti-conservative because he's opposing you, and he's certainly anti-liberal simply because the liberals won't accept him.

S: That's right.

F: It leaves him kind of nowhere, in a sense, doesn't it? In a crossfire.

S: Let me say this for him in defense of that kind of a charge. People all over the United States have always asked me, knowing that I knew him--you know, a lot of political office holders are called wind riders--and they said, "Is Johnson a wind rider?"

I said, "No, he isn't. He can smell the wind changing, and he changes before the wind does. He's ahead of it." And that was generally true.

When he went into the House [of Representatives] in his first race that you mentioned earlier, he ran on FDR's coattails--

F: Down the line.

S: And was FDR's fair-haired boy, even to packing the Supreme Court when a member of the House has absolutely nothing to do, and could have nothing to do, with Roosevelt's attempt to pack the Supreme Court. But he supported him and became famous as FDR's fair-haired boy. And it helped him immeasurably, of course.

Then in his Senate race against [Coke] Stevenson, he began to take that turn toward the more conservative because he saw that shift in power from the Roosevelt era on down to a more conservative approach to

politics. His votes in the House, I think, take that in--study his votes and a lot of the measures, I mentioned Taft-Hartley; there are a lot of others. But he began to cast a lot of what would be considered conservative votes and the fact that he was always supporting me and I was supporting him. But when it was necessary to make a change for his good, he lined up with the liberals. But he always managed to win.

F: He has a strong sense of drift, doesn't he?

S: Exactly. I call it being ahead of the wind. He could smell the change, and he'd change very easily.

F: Just before you went out of office, you named W.A. Blakley as interim senator.

S: Right.

F: Did this bring you into communication at all with the now senior senator from Texas? Did Johnson talk with you about Blakley, the utility of Blakley, the non-utility of Blakley? Did he show any interest at all in your--I'm sure he was interested in whom you were going to name to fill in.

S: He was very much interested in it. For one reason, he was Majority Leader by only one vote. And if I had appointed a Republican, he would have lost his position as Majority Leader.

F: They'd reorganize the Senate right out from under him.

S: Immediately. But I called him and told him--I didn't tell him I was going to appoint Blakley. I knew he and Blakley were good friends--and I called him and told him.

F: He did know Blakley fairly well.

S: Oh, yes, he knew Blakley real well. I didn't tell him I was going to appoint Blakley, but I told him that I was not going to appoint someone

who would disturb his position as Majority Leader. And he said he appreciated it very much.

F: Did he make any recommendations as to whom he would like appointed?

S: No, he didn't.

F: He left that up to you.

S: I called him the morning I announced Blakley's appointment and told him that I had appointed Blakley. He said, "That's fine." He and several others met Blakley in Washington that night.

An interesting thing about that appointment also that involves Eisenhower. Eisenhower came to Texas in the fall of '56. I believe it was out at San Angelo, and it was during the drought. They were holding these drought meetings around over the Southwestern states. This was after the election, and he figured we'd have an appointment coming up. He asked me if I had thought much about it, and I told him, yes, quite a bit. If you'll remember, Governor Daniel's resignation was sort of an "iffy" type of thing. He really wasn't resigning; he was resigning; and he wasn't resigning.

F: Kind of like Earl Warren's from the Supreme Court.

S: About the same.

F: I mean, you didn't know whether he had or hadn't.

S: Ike asked me what I was going to do about it. I said, "Well, we've been debating it and discussing it with lawyers to see what the situation is. I think I'm going to consider it as a resignation and appoint someone."

He said, "Well, I'm sure you're going to get a lot of pressure to appoint a Republican, with the situation in Washington like it is."

I said, "Well, I don't think I can do that."

He said, "Well, I'm glad to hear you say that. Actually, I know

you can't afford to do it."

I never did even give any thought to doing it.

F: You, incidentally, always found Eisenhower a very straightforward man to work with, I presume.

S: Oh, yes, extremely. Incidentally, I think Johnson was one of the main contributors to Ike's effectiveness. As Majority Leader of the opposite party, Lyndon was certainly of tremendous help to Eisenhower during his terms. I asked him while he [Johnson] was in office if he didn't wish he had a Majority Leader that was as strongly supporting him as Ike had. He said, "It would be a blessing."

F: Yes, I've often thought about that. He could have used a Rayburn-Johnson team while he was in there.

S: Oh, gosh, couldn't he though! Of course his remarkable success with the legislation--he knew the Congress backwards and forwards.

F: Do you know whether Senator Johnson ever expressed himself on the proposed resignation of Senator Daniel to run for governor? Did he think that this was a good move or [that it was] not?

S: Yes, I think he thought so. He told me one time out at the ranch that he thought Daniel was the only one who could defeat Yarborough in that race. Bentsen was threatening to run for governor then [and] several others. I don't remember who all had been mentioned at that time. But Lyndon told me himself that he thought Daniel was the only one who could actually beat Yarborough.

F: Did you get the feeling that Senator Johnson had the same concern as so many other Texans that Senator Yarborough was a divisive influence in the party?

S: Oh, I think very definitely so. He recognized him just as all of us did. He never was any help to Johnson while he was President.

F: This is skipping ahead on this subject, but he surprised everyone by, tacitly at least, endorsing Yarborough in '64, and in effect keeping Joe Kilgore out of the race.

S: It wasn't very tacit.

F: Was this just a matter of kind of good, clean politics, that he didn't want a dogfight in Texas at this time?

S: I think because of his own race he didn't want a race against Yarborough going on because of knowing that it would be a very heated contest and would divide up the state again.

F: He didn't want a lot of wounds reopened. But it wasn't a kind of innate enthusiasm for Yarborough?

S: He told me that he had promised George Meany that he would protect Yarborough, and that he was going to do it. I tried to tell him, and Connally did too, that he didn't need George Meany--George Meany needed him--and that Kilgore would make a much better United States Senator than Yarborough, and that he could depend on Kilgore to really be of help to him, and he knew he couldn't trust Yarborough. He just kept saying, "I told George Meany that I was going to help him, and I'm going to help him."

I think now what he was planning for--and he accomplished it--he wanted to get a tremendous vote for himself, and he did.

F: Blakley, of course, was interim. Then you had the special election to replace Daniel on a permanent basis, and Yarborough won. Did Senator Johnson take any part in this at all? Did he quietly support anyone--do you know?

S: I don't recall that he did. As far as I know, he didn't. That was a plurality race, you know--high man wins.

F: Yes.

S: Yarborough, I think, got around 38-percent of the votes.

F: If you can have about 30-percent in your pocket on something like that, you've got it made, because you don't know who to vote for, particularly with our multiple candidacies.

S: Right.

F: As far as you know, did the two work reasonably harmoniously? I know the stories of friction on appointments and so forth. Johnson was the senior senator and, more than just another senior senator, he was majority leader. But when the two were senators alongside each other, did you get any--?

S: So far as I know, their philosophies are entirely different. Yarborough is intelligent in a lot of things, but he's a babe in the woods in political maneuvering, and Johnson of course is a master at it. I think they got along fairly well, except Yarborough did want some appointments, and Johnson wouldn't let him have them. Actually, he was entitled to some. Johnson finally yielded and gave him some minor appointments.

F: Did you confer with Johnson at all about his possibilities in 1960 to get the nomination?

S: Yes. I talked to him considerably about it. I wasn't working in the campaign or anything, but just by way of conversation.

F: His supporters have criticized him for making himself publicly available too late. By the time that they could get a Johnson headquarters set up and an organization going and so forth, Kennedy had the thing too well sewed up, and they always felt they started too late. Was he thinking about it far enough in advance. Could he not bring himself to stick his neck out? Was he too busy with government business? What do you think was the problem here?

S: I think he was depending upon members of the Senate, and maybe to some extent members of the House, to carry his campaign rather than putting out a campaign organization that could effectively control the delegate votes. And, as you say, he did wait too late to try to put an effective organization in the field.

F: From your experience on conventions, was Johnson off-base in thinking Congress could outweigh the gubernatorial apparatus at a convention? I mean, did he overestimate the strength of congressional support?

S: If he did think that the members of the Congress could control the state delegations, it was a mistake--definitely a mistake.

F: I've always felt that by-and-large the governor prevailed here.

S: He generally would.

F: That he's closer.

S: I can give you an example of that. Mrs. Shivers and I were at a party that Bob Anderson gave--he was then Secretary of Treasury. He and his wife gave a party for us when we were in Washington. This was during that quest for votes. I remember Tom Clark and his wife were along, and one other couple. They also invited Lyndon and Lady Bird. It was on Sunday, and we were on one of the Treasury boats on the Potomac. And Lyndon was just as mad as he could be because the Arizona delegation the day before had--Udall had turned the six or seven or eight votes over to Kennedy. Johnson had thought that McFarland and some of the rest were going to be able to control it for him which is good evidence of--

F: I've seen both McFarland and Udall on that, incidentally, as to what happened.

S: It was local control.

F: Yes. A man who is a little closer to the voters, in a sense.

S: Who had the organization and the money.

F: In one sense, you have a natural conflict between the governor and the senator, it seems to me. The senator in a sense is the foreign affairs officer; that is, he's interested in outside-of-the-state relationships of the state, and the governor is working for what concerns the state within its own borders. So that brings you as governor, and Johnson as senator, into a natural conflict on things like civil rights, interposition, oil, etc., etc. Were these issues between the two of you, or did he pretty much--In other words, what I'm driving at, did he interfere in state matters?

S: Not at all.

F: So far as you know he never pressured members of the legislature to vote certain ways?

S: Not while I was in office.

F: You didn't go to the '60 convention?

S: No.

F: Did you have any intimation at all that Johnson would accept the vice presidency?

S: No. He told me before that that he was not going to, and wouldn't; that he thought his position as majority leader was more effective and more important. And I agreed with him. But I also told him that if he were offered it, he couldn't refuse. He had asked me before if I would support him if he got nominated for President, and I said, "I certainly will." I mentioned at that time, kidding each other, I said, "Aren't you really running for Vice President?"

That's when he said, "No, and I wouldn't accept it."

I said, "To be perfectly frank with you, if you're not nominated for President, and you are offered the vice presidency, you can't turn

it down--can't afford to."

And he just laughed. I told a lot of people and a lot of people, as you will recall, when Johnson accepted the vice presidency, got mighty mad about it.

F: Yes. There was a real sense of outrage in this state.

S: I told everyone of them that there wasn't any question in my mind. He had to accept it! He would have been in a very embarrassing position later. There's no question in my mind but what Johnson on the ticket was responsible for the Kennedy-Johnson election. You'll get lots of agreement on that. If he had not been on the ticket and Kennedy had been defeated--the nominee of the party had been defeated--then the party people would have blamed him for it, for not taking the vice presidency.

F: It's awfully difficult to turn down the President of the United States, or potential President, on anything really.

S: And that shows how smart the Kennedys were in selecting him, over strong opposition from their own people. But I think he had to accept it.

F: Did you ever talk with him afterwards about the decision?

S: Yes. He called me from California.

F: Before he left, huh?

S: Yes. About supporting him--supporting the ticket.

F: What did he say?

S: He just said he wanted me to support the ticket.

F: Did he sound a little embarrassed about the situation?

S: No, not at all. He never was embarrassed about asking for support, you know. I said, "Well, I don't know."

He said, "Well, you promised."

I said, "I promised to support you for President; I didn't promise

to support Kennedy! And I'll have to think about that."

Then after he got back to Washington, he had Earl Clements call me. You know who Earl is.

F: Yes.

S: Earl used to be a senator from Kentucky and a close Johnson friend. Johnson had him as secretary of the Policy Committee then. He had been defeated. Earl called me--Earl and I had always been good friends--and asked me about supporting the ticket. I said, "I don't think I can support Kennedy. No. I've got to research him a little more, but I don't think so. I'd like to have Lyndon, but I don't think I can support Kennedy." And Earl tried to get me to promise him that I would call him back before I made any decision. I said, "No, I'm not going to do that. I don't have to call you to tell you. You call me any time you want to and relay any messages that Lyndon has, or he can call me." I was over at my farm at Woodville. I said, "I'll be glad to come up there and talk to you about it, but I am not going to promise that I'll call you."

F: Was this pretty soon after the convention?

S: Yes, almost immediately.

F: Did he have anyone else call you?

S: No.

F: There wasn't any long-range pressure campaign?

S: No.

F: Okay, when you finish your research and make your decision, do you get any reaction out of candidate Johnson?

S: Not that I recall.

F: Did the Kennedys ever contact you on this, or did they leave that up to Johnson?

S: No, they didn't contact me. Some of their people did who were mutual friends of mine, but I don't think it was at their suggestion.

F: Just a casual sort of affair. In 1960, that same year, you became the president of the United States Chamber of Commerce.

S: No, that was a good bit later.

F: A good bit later than that.

S: Yes, I became president of the United States Chamber of Commerce in '67.

F: I've got a bad date here, but it doesn't matter. All right. You have then a Vice President from Texas; and you in a sense are very much a private citizen, except you can't escape political involvement. Do you have any relationship with the Vice President during this period of his vice presidency?

S: Not particularly. I saw him on a good many occasions during the time when he was Vice President, but I had no official contact of course.

F: He never called on you for any particular duties, or you called on him for anything in particular--just an ordinary friendship?

S: That's right.

F: Where were you on that November day when Kennedy was shot in Dallas?

S: I was in Washington.

F: Tell me a little bit about what happened.

S: I was there attending a board meeting of the United States Chamber of Commerce. That was '63, wasn't it!

F: Yes.

S: I had gone back to the hotel for lunch, I believe, and was in my room at the hotel. A business associate of mine here in Austin called me on the telephone to tell me about it. I didn't believe it. I said, "You have to be kidding!" He said, "No, turn your television on, and see

it." And I did.

F: You lost that afternoon, didn't you!

S: It was a horrible thing to happen anywhere and of course a dreadful thing for it to happen in Texas, so far as we were concerned.

F: When did you get in touch then with now-President Johnson?

S: I sent him a wire the next day. I returned home that evening.

F: What was Washington like? People standing around in little knots on the street?

S: People were in such shock they couldn't really decide what to do. No one knew enough about the facts, what had actually occurred. A lot of them were saying, "Blame it on Texas entirely," you see. That continued, as you know, for some time, until the facts were actually established. To some extent I'm sure a lot of people still think that it was the fault of Texas.

F: Although there has been enough since in Los Angeles and Memphis and so forth to take some of the sting out of it.

S: To take a lot of it out. And time of course. But it was of course a most unfortunate and awful thing to happen. The Kennedy family--fortunately I was watching on the Today Show this morning and Barbara Walters was interviewing Teddy Kennedy, talking about all the tragedies in the family--the only one she didn't ask him about was the Chappaquidick event--and she at the close of the interview--she had two fifteen-minute interviews, one in each hour--at the close of the second interview she remarked that she supposed that some people in the audience would wonder why she didn't ask Senator Kennedy about Chappaquidick. She said she had no intention to when she arranged the interview, and even if people did criticize her for it she wasn't sorry because his family had had enough tragedy, and she didn't want to bring that up. And of course they had

so much more than their share!

F: When did you have any real contact with the President?

S: I don't remember exactly. Some time after this he telephoned me, I think, was the first time. I don't remember exactly how long it was. He telephoned me one night at my home and just talked, just chatted. I believe he said, "I'm sitting here with an old friend of yours, and we just thought we'd call you up and say hello." It was Jake Pickle, the congressman from this district, who is an old friend of mine, and of course a very close friend of Johnson. He said, "I know you're in Washington a lot, and I want you to come by whenever you're up here. If you start coming up here and don't come over to see me, I'm going to send the FBI after you!" You know, things like that.

Whenever he'd find out I was in Washington he'd have Marvin Watson call me, which I appreciated. It's very flattering to have the President of the United States call you himself, or have someone else call you.

I supported him in his race in '64, and told him at the time--I announced my support early--that if there was anything he wanted me to do in particular, I'd be glad to do it. I didn't know whether I could help him or hurt him, but if there was anything he wanted me to do, I'd be glad to. Of course, he didn't need any help. He thanked me for announcing my support of him.

I began to get letters from old Johnson haters who had been supporters of mine--I believe more bitter letters than I had received during all of the turmoil and strife that I had in my own campaigns. But I wouldn't have not supported Johnson for anything. As a matter of fact, I think he made a good President.

F: Did you ever do any jobs for him?

S: No, I can't say that I ever did. He did several for me--I mean social things. I never did call on him to do anything.

F: Did you attend any White House functions?

S: Yes.

F: What kind?

S: Dinners, and luncheons. And on several occasions, Mrs. Shivers and I would be in Washington, if he found out about it, he'd have Marvin get in touch with us, and we'd go over and just have dinner with him and Mrs. Johnson.

F: Up there on the second floor.

S: That small dining room up there down the hall. I was always amazed. He kept those telephones right under the table, and that swivel chair that he'd rear back in while he was telephoning. Some time there were one or two other couples there.

He was having a congressional briefing one time. I was having dinner with some people from Austin at one of the cafes in town. I don't know how he found out where I was, but they found me and telephoned me over there and said they'd have a car there to pick me up in a few minutes; that he wanted to see me. All he wanted was, he wanted me to sit in on a congressional briefing he was having. You know, the President always invites the Congress over. He hit upon what I thought was a great idea, not inviting them over for a white tie function or something like that all at one time, but inviting them over in groups and having the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State and the Secretary (sic) [Director] of Budget and so forth talk to them, and explain some things to them. And he also gave them a drink, a punch which they liked.

F: It relaxed them a little bit.

S: I thought it was a very fine affair, and I'm sure it was successful.

F: Did you ever consider an appointment?

S: No.

F: Okay. When you became the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in '67, it makes you a spokesman for at least one major element in American life. Did that throw you in a semi-official relationship with the White House? You're a little different from most presidents of chambers of commerce because you've known this man who is the President of the United States. You've known him now for thirty years. I wondered if it brought the U.S. Chamber of Commerce a little more closely in tune with the White House.

S: I think it did--in this respect, certainly. When I knew that I was going to become president of the U.S. Chamber [of Commerce], the announcement was to be made in June, in the early part of that year I called the President and told him I'd like to see him on a personal matter for just a few minutes. He asked me to come over that evening around 6 or 6:30. I did, and what I went over there for was to tell him that I was going to become president. I wanted him to know it. I wanted to tell him myself because the organizations like the U.S. Chamber are often very critical of government. I said that I thought I would probably understand government better than any former presidents of the U.S. Chamber, and I would like to have a closer working relationship with him and with the government.

He was very helpful. He arranged to have some briefings for the directors which were extremely helpful. He had on one occasion the--

F: This hadn't been done previously?

S: No, it had never been done before--the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, the budget--

F: This must have given them a few insights that you don't get--

S: And they went into great detail. Of course they were off-the-record conferences. But all of us considered them very, very helpful, and I was very grateful to the President for arranging them.

And on many other occasions, if he had a group of business people in for a conference or luncheon or something, he would always invite me to be a part of that group, such as the group that Nixon had at the White House night before last to discuss the current condition of the economy. I don't know whether the current president of the United States Chamber of Commerce was included in that group, but if Johnson had anything like that when he was President, at least when I was president of the U.S. Chamber, he included me in on it. And I appreciated that very much.

F: Did you have any inkling that he wasn't going to run again?

S: No, I really didn't. I can appreciate his decision, but I certainly had no indication.

F: To go back a little ways, John Connally quit as Secretary of the Navy to come home and run for governor. Was that discussed at all between you and Johnson? How heavy a hand did Johnson take in that?

S: No.

F: That was pretty much Connally's decision.

S: Connally discussed it with me quite a number of times. But as far as I recall I don't believe Johnson ever discussed it with me.

F: You think to a great extent this was John's initiative?

S: As far as I know, it was. On one occasion--I'm not sure about this but I think that he told me that he had not discussed it, as of that time, with Johnson or Kennedy either one. He and President Johnson have always been extremely close, as you know, and I always felt that they

had discussed it. If he told me that--and I'm reasonably sure that he did--it probably meant that he hadn't discussed it with him recently. But close as they had been, they were always discussing things.

F: Yes, I'm sure he didn't let him read it in the paper!

S: I'm sure he did discuss it with him initially, too, but I'm sure what Connally meant was that he hadn't discussed it with him maybe that week, that month or something.

F: Have you seen the President much since he came home?

S: I see him occasionally, usually at some function here in town. He and Mrs. Johnson came to our daughter's wedding the early part of this year and out to the reception, which we appreciated very much.

F: Did you all talk politics?

S: No. Let me see. I saw him somewhere recently at some function here in town. I don't remember exactly where it was. This was before his visit with Nixon recently. I said, "I guess you have a stronger feeling of sympathy for President Nixon than anyone else in the United States, don't you?" And he said, "I surely do." And I noticed that he went to Washington shortly after that and after his conference with Nixon he announced full support.

I think he has been commendably quiet and refrained from engaging in--

F: Yes. I think he has picked up a lot of new admiration for not second-guessing on everything.

S: Oh, yes. He has gained a lot of stature. Definitely. And as you and I know, he has had countless opportunities to do that.

F: Right. Did his being President, and his known long relationship with you, put you in any particularly difficult position with the other directors and the general, I suppose you'd say, establishment, for

want of a better word, in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who normally look at the government with some suspicion?

S: I don't really think so.

F: You weren't put in the position of defending in a sense?

S: No. I made it perfectly plain my support for President Johnson. They understood that. They understood also that we were going to have as close a relationship between the U.S. Chamber and the President, the White House, as was possible without embarrassing anybody.

F: Is there anything else we ought to talk about, Governor?

S: One incident that I think might be of interest. Just before Senator Johnson was to become Majority Leader, he had just returned to Washington. And the position of course was open, and the natural thing would have been for Senator Russell of Georgia to become the Majority Leader.

Lyndon called me on the telephone one night and asked me what I thought about him becoming [majority leader]. He said that Dick Russell had told him that he didn't want it, and that he would support Johnson for it. He said, "What do you think about it?"

I said, "I think it's great. You ought to do it. Do you think you can get enough votes?"

He said, "I think I can. The only thing that bothers me--this position is open because the last Majority Leader, McFarland from Arizona, has just been defeated. And the one before him, who was Earle Clements from Kentucky, was defeated while he was Majority Leader. And I don't want to take this position and then get defeated in my next election!"

I said, "Well, I don't think you run that risk. I think you ought to take it because you know how to do the job, and you'll do a

great job and be a great service to the country and certainly to Texas to have its own senator in that position."

I don't know how many other people he called; I'm sure there were quite a number. You know his desire for telephoning. And it's always nice to have somebody like that seek your opinion, and he does a great job of it. But he did call on that occasion about it, and went on, and I think made without a doubt one of the greatest--probably the greatest Majority Leader in the history of the United States Senate.

F: I rather think, as Senate Majority Leader and as President, that he did a great deal to erode at least, if not destroy, that sectional prejudice that the man from the South--he wasn't truly South, but he was fringe--cannot be a President. And it seems to me, particularly '64 with Goldwater and Johnson, one from Arizona and one from Texas running, you came about as close in just picking a man regardless of where he came from rather than trying to pick him sectionally, as you have in the past.

S: I would agree with that. I hope we can make some further progress in it. Some needs to be made.

F: Yes. I've always thought that was one of the civil rights--could be called.

S: It ought to be.

F: Thank you, Governor.

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By Allan Shivers

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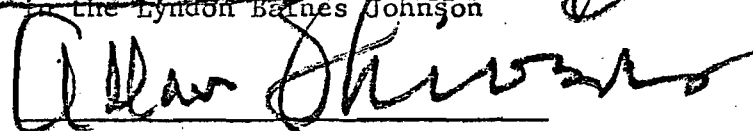
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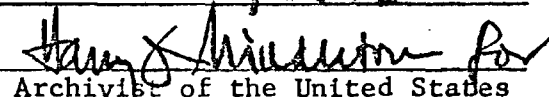
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