

## INTERVIEW II

DATE: July 15, 1983  
INTERVIEWEE: JOHN V. SINGLETON, JR.  
INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette  
PLACE: Judge Singleton's office, U.S. Courthouse, Houston,  
Texas

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G: Let's talk about the 1948 Senate race. Were you aware of any reluctance on the part of LBJ's supporters here in Houston to have him risk a House seat to run for the Senate?

S: No. I think I was what you would call an old-time or loyal supporter. I thought he ought to make the race.

G: Is that right?

S: It's my recollection.

G: Even though if he lost he'd be out completely?

S: Right. He'd come so close in 1941. Then of course most of the LBJ supporters were really anti-Coke Stevenson. I mean, they really didn't like Coke Stevenson and didn't believe he would make a very good senator for Texas.

G: George Peddy was also in that race.

S: Right.

G: Did he have a lot of support here in Houston?

S: Not that I can recall. With reference to the 1948 campaign, I got out of the service February of 1946 and I became employed with Fulbright, Crooker November 1, 1946. So I was a young lawyer working for

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Fulbright, Crooker. My involvement in the 1948 campaign was not extensive and certainly not in any type of a policy-making position. Mr. Crooker, Sr. was active in the campaign, and I did what I was asked to do. The best way to describe my activities in that campaign was a gofer.

G: Is that right?

S: Yes.

G: Who headed his campaign here in Harris County?

S: I knew you were going to ask me that. I believe, I may be wrong, it seems like to me Roy Hofheinz headed his campaign here.

G: Was Sam Low active as well?

S: Yes, Sam was active.

G: LBJ in that campaign seems to have really dominated the black vote in Houston.

S: I'm sure that's correct.

G: Do you have any idea how he was able to secure that kind of a turn-out?

S: My only memory about that is that the black vote--W. Lee O'Daniel was never very popular with the minorities, and Coke Stevenson likewise. Their support came from the so-called Dixiecrat, states' righters, and the minorities were not a part of that movement.

G: Did the Johnson campaign forces campaign in, say, the black areas through leaders?

S: Yes.

G: Do you recall who they were?

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- S: Hobart Taylor was one. The editor of the Forward Times--
- G: It would have been Richardson I think on Forward Times and Carter Wesley on The Informer.
- S: Carter Wesley. Carter Wesley. I guess it was The Informer rather than the Forward Times. Carter Wesley. I remember very well Hobart and Carter Wesley and several others, and for the life of me, it seems like to me there was a black lawyer, Francis Williams, might have been, and Henry Doyle, who was a black lawyer. But the leadership of the black community was active for Johnson. I guess Hobart owned the taxicabs. That's right.
- G: Let me ask you about the newspapers in Houston during that election, the Post and the Chronicle in particular.
- S: I'm not sure but what they both endorsed Coke. I'm not sure. I can't remember. I'm not sure we got either one of the newspaper endorsements.
- G: I'm sure the Chronicle did; I'd forgotten about the Post.
- S: Endorsed Coke you mean?
- G: Yes.
- S: The Post could possibly--and the Press was an active newspaper at that time, and I'm rather certain the Press did not endorse Johnson.
- G: Do you recall Johnson's relationship with Jesse Jones during that period?
- S: No, I do not. I forget when Mr. Jones died, but certainly Mr. Jones did not occupy the same position with Mr. Johnson as George and Herman Brown and Gus Wortham and Jim Elkins, people like that.

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G: Why did some of the business community of Houston, such as those that you've just named, and Wesley West I guess about 1948 was another one, why did they support Johnson and others oppose him?

S: I don't know that. He had a very good relationship with them. Of course, his relationship with George and Herman Brown dated back to the--

G: Thirties.

S: --middle thirties.

G: Do you think it was because they were more liberal than other Houston businessmen?

S: Certainly George and Herman could not be described as liberal, at least in my relationships with them, which later on in middle and late fifties became rather, I won't say intimate, but I at least was, insofar as Johnson was concerned and other affairs relating to the city, in on a lot of policy-making decisions. I had a good relationship with those people. But Mr. Jones, I don't know whether he actually supported Johnson or not. I do not know. It wouldn't surprise me if he did not.

G: I guess what I'm trying to explain or ask you to explain is why he was able to get support from some Houston big businessmen and not others.

S: It would just be a guess on my part. I would imagine that the support was first generated through George and Herman Brown.

G: They recruited the others?

S: I would guess that would be true. Now Mr. Wortham and Mr. Johnson had such a good and close relationship--

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G: Oh, did they?

S: I do not know when it started, but I do know that it was very close.

G: How was this evident to you?

S: Well, Mr. Wortham sort of took a liking to me in the fifties. I was rather close to Mr. Wortham. He certainly was a loyal and avid Johnson supporter.

G: Are you thinking of anything particular that he did to help LBJ?

S: Well, I know he contributed substantially in money. He was always in on the policy-making decisions at least as they related to Houston and Harris County and the business community, as well as George and Herman.

G: Let me ask you about the Houston law firms. Did, say, Fulbright and Crooker tend to be more liberal than, say, Vinson, Elkins or Baker and Botts? Did they tend to align themselves behind one candidate or another because of philosophical differences or did they all seem partial to one? I realize that Peddy had some support among the law firms.

S: Well, of course at that time the most conservative law firm and the most substantial big law firm was Baker and Botts. Fulbright, Crooker was just growing. Vinson, Elkins was just growing. Butler, Binion was kind of on the fringe. Andrews, Kurth was a medium-sized, good, very, very conservative law firm, ultraconservative law firm. I don't know how you would characterize Fulbright, Crooker as a firm. I would guess it was probably more liberal than the others. Fulbright, Crooker had resulted from the merger of two firms: Wood, Gresham, McCorquodale, Martin and Buck, and Fulbright, Crooker and Bates,

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during the war. It was growing very rapidly and eagerly seeking new business. The Wood, Gresham part of the firm, McCorquodale, Gresham, they represented a lot of insurance companies.

G: Insurance defense sort of--?

S: Insurance defense. And then the Crooker, Freeman part of the firm represented some old Houston families. Colonel Bates represented the Hermann estate and the M. D. Anderson estate. I don't think they ever went out as a firm--I don't believe they ever did--or any firm here and actively endorsed any candidate.

G: Is that right? Did you feel that the sentiment in Fulbright, Crooker though was more pro-Johnson than either pro-Stevenson or Peddy?

S: Well, certainly it wasn't very much Peddy support as I recall it. If I had to guess right now, if you had secretly polled that law firm and all the members, young and old, Johnson would not have won.

G: Is that right?

S: No.

G: But [John H.] Crooker did help him in the race?

S: Crooker helped him very much in the legal fight. Crooker was a Johnson supporter. Why I do not know. I never did know where that relationship started. Because Mr. Crooker, I believe I'm correct, was very strong in the states' rights movement in the war, and as I recall it, was not a Roosevelt supporter. Judge [James] Elkins was a Johnson supporter, and where that relationship started I do not know. He wasn't an avid Johnson supporter. I can tell you a funny later story about Judge Elkins.

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G: Do, please.

S: In 1960--I've told this story publicly. Somewhere around I've still got the promissory note. In 1960 in the fall, as you will recall, as everyone will recall, the Kennedy-Johnson, Nixon--who was Nixon's running mate?

G: Lodge.

S: Lodge, [Henry] Cabot Lodge. It was a very close race. Sometime in October Mr. Johnson called me and said that--if you will recall he was running both, he got the legislature to pass a law where he could run for the Senate as well as vice president.

G: On the ballot twice.

S: On the ballot twice. I believe I'm correct about that. And he called and said that he didn't want to lose Texas, but he needed some money, and he needed a hundred thousand dollars. And he was asking five of his closest friends to go borrow twenty thousand dollars each on a thirty-day note basis. And he wanted me to be one of them. I was in charge of the Johnson movement down here, Johnson forces, and so I said fine. So I went over to Judge Elkins, who was a good friend of my father's, and I said, "Judge, I want to borrow twenty thousand dollars." He said, "What the hell for, John?" I told him. He said, "You have to be crazy. They're not going to win. Johnson is going to drop you in the grease. They're going to lose the election. Then you're going to have to pay the twenty thousand dollars back, because the son of a bitch ain't going to help you." Those were his exact words.

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I said, "Well, Judge, if you won't lend it to me I'll have to go someplace else, because he's asked me to do it and that's what I'm going to do." So first he buzzed Jim, who had some sort of a throat problem and couldn't talk at that time. And he buzzed Jim and he told Jim what I wanted, and Jim carried around a little blackboard with him, one of those little things that had a plastic [sheet] where you could erase what you wrote down. And he told Jim what I wanted and he said, "Isn't that the biggest fool thing you ever heard of?" and Jim wrote on this little blackboard "yes."

G: This is Jim Elkins, his son?

S: Yes, his son. So he said that's all for Jim, so Jim left. He said, "Now John, look. I'm serious. I'm going to make you pay back this twenty thousand dollars. It's going to be hard for you to do. But if you just insist on it I'll go ahead and make you out a note." So he buzzes his secretary and wrote out one of these form promissory notes in his own handwriting, twenty thousand dollars, thirty days. I signed it. He gave me the twenty, and I mailed it to Mr. Johnson.

So after the election--of course, they won--and on the due date of the note, which was sometime after the election, I hadn't heard from Mr. Johnson because he had been busy and I hadn't tried to bother him about it. I just walked over to the bank to try to renew the note for another thirty days. I went in to see the Judge, and I said, "Judge, I'm here to ask you if you will renew that note for thirty days. I have been unable to get hold of Mr. Johnson, he's been busy." He said, "What note?" I said, "That note that I signed for thirty



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days for twenty thousand dollars." He said, "Oh, me and Herman [?] took care of that." And he handed me the note marked paid. That's a true story.

G: That's a great story. Do you know if he got the other four friends to--?

S: I never asked him who they were or anything about it. But we did carry Texas. It seems like to me we maybe only carried Texas by about three thousand votes. Three thousand and thirty, isn't that right?

G: I think something like that.

S: Yes.

G: Now back to the 1948 campaign. There you had a big issue in the Taft-Hartley Act.

S: Right. That was the big issue, right-to-work.

G: Do you recall how that came into play in Harris County in that election?

S: No, as I told you while we were talking last time, I was present when Johnson had a meeting down here which some of the labor leaders, it seems like to me it was Hank Brown, where they were very--Johnson supported the Taft-Hartley and labor was adamantly against it. He just had a frank, earthy conversation with those labor leaders.

G: Let me ask you to recount as much of that occasion as you can remember.

S: All I remember is it was in some hotel room. He took a chair and turned it around backwards so that the back of the chair was facing the labor [leaders] and was in front of him. My recollection is he

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was just sitting there and it was a heated conversation. He told them he was going to support the Taft-Hartley, he thought it was best for the country. It wasn't an acrimonious type debate, but it was heated.

G: Did Johnson tend to do most of the talking in that?

S: Yes. Yes.

G: Was he talking directly to Brown or to the group as a whole?

S: It seemed like to me it was Hank Brown. I don't know whether you've interviewed Hank Brown or not, whether he remembers it. There were some other labor leaders there. I don't know whether Ed Ball was there. It seems like to me Chris Dixie might have been there, a lawyer. There were several people there.

G: Much of labor, I guess, endorsed Stevenson in this race.

S: Yes.

G: Was this an issue as far as Johnson was concerned?

S: Yes. He couldn't understand it. He was really hot with them, hot with labor for endorsing Stevenson.

G: Is that right?

S: Because he didn't think Stevenson was really their friend.

G: Johnson seems to have had more allies among the national labor organizations than he did labor in Texas in that period.

S: No question about that.

G: Did he use that argument with them, do you think?

S: I do not remember that particular argument coming up, but there's no question about the fact that in 1948 he had more support from the national labor leaders than the local leaders in Houston, in Texas.

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- G: Did you see him during any other trips to Houston during that campaign?
- S: Yes. I have no vivid recollection of them. I'm sure I did.
- G: I wonder where he would normally meet with his Harris County people when he would come here.
- S: Well, they had a headquarters. I've forgotten where it was in 1948. Well, let's see, 1948. For the life of me I can't remember where it was. I'm sure Crooker, Jr. would know.
- G: Now, let me ask you how you became involved in the court challenge after the election.
- S: I was not involved.
- G: Oh, you didn't do any work for--?
- S: I did a little briefing work, but I didn't go to Fort Worth. I never appeared. But I remember doing a little briefing work for Mr. Crooker.
- G: Was this voluntary or was this more or less--were you detailed by the firm to do this?
- S: Yes, Mr. Crooker asked me to do it, to do some briefing work.
- G: Anything else on the 1948 campaign?
- S: No, not that I can think of.
- G: Now you gradually I think took over from Sam Low in being Mr. Johnson's district man.
- S: Yes, I did. I did.
- G: Let me ask you to recount how that developed.
- S: It developed in the middle fifties and late fifties. It was because Sam--I loved Sam, but he had the reputation of being an old-time

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liberal politician, and I thought Johnson needed a broader-based support and particularly among young people. I gradually worked my way into a closer relationship I think with Mr. Johnson. He tended to, I think--I know he did--look to me more than Sam to be what he would call his boy in Harris County.

G: Was the Johnson organization that included people like you and other district men also a Connally organization?

S: Well, it was a Johnson organization first, and the Johnson organization is what we used to elect Connally governor in 1962 I guess it was. John Connally had no organization as Connally until after he became governor.

G: There has been some suggestion that it was perhaps a Connally organization as well because so many of these people had been friends of John Connally in school and he had recruited them into the Johnson organization.

S: True, no question but what I'm sure that's true, but my feeling has always been that up until John became governor there was no Connally organization as such.

G: Would you say then that the primary loyalty would be to Johnson?

S: Yes. I don't think there's any question about that.

G: Were there ever any instances during this period where you had to demonstrate that primary loyalty, where, say, John Connally favored one approach to something?

S: Not during this period. It happened in the sixties.

G: When Connally was governor?

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S: Right. But not during this period. In fact, after the 1948 campaign, John went and became Johnson's first administrative assistant when he was senator. I think John left about 1950 or 1951, something like that, went to work for Sid Richardson. Politically my contacts with John were--my personal contacts with John were practically nil until 1956 and then 1960.

G: Now, let me ask you to describe how Johnson's district man organization worked. Did you actually represent a congressional district for Johnson or was it basically a county-wide--?

S: Basically it was a Houston-Harris County situation. I've always thought it was very unusual. The general consensus was that Johnson had a powerful on-going organization. If he did, I never saw it.

G: Really?

S: We had me and Sam Low and then the monied interests, George and Herman Brown, Gus Wortham, Jim Abercrombie, Wesley West, Warren Bellows, people like that. But every time a new election came, at least in Harris County, Sam and I had to go out and start all over again. It was a non-organization. We didn't have one. We just met every emergency as they arose.

G: I see. Well, did Warren Cunningham also play a role here?

S: Warren played a role, but it was not, at least insofar as I'm concerned, a major role. Then of course Lloyd had moved down here in the middle fifties. And Bentsen was a Johnson supporter, but not down in the arena. Every time we had to go around and put up signs or do something on a precinct by precinct basis, Sam and I would just have

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to recruit whoever we could recruit to do that. Crooker, Jr. was always very helpful, and Warren Woodward was down here at that time working for Rex Baker. And of course Warren was always very close to Mr. Johnson and particularly Mrs. Johnson. And we'd help him. Rex Baker was always helpful to us. We didn't have an organization that met all the time. That used to always bother me, and that's what I was trying, tried desperately to do after 1956, to build some type of an organization by recruiting some younger people.

G: Well, let me ask you about your--

S: Martha Bevis was down here. She was married. We always used to call on Martha.

G: [She] had worked in his Washington office?

S: Right, had worked in his Washington office.

G: Let me ask you about your meetings with LBJ and other district men, the people from Dallas, San Antonio. How often did you get together?

S: We always met up at the Ranch.

G: Is that right?

S: I think. We might have met in Austin once or twice. We always got together when there was a campaign of some kind. It was not a regular meeting.

G: I showed you last time the notes from a meeting in 1956.

S: Yes. Right.

G: Was that fairly typical of the sort of interchange that would--?

S: That's what always happened. I would assume they were all recorded; I know that one was. I remember very vividly that one was.

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G: It seems to me at least in that meeting you--you, meaning all of the district men--would give counsel not only specifically about how things were going in Harris County or Dallas County, but your advice also on whether or not he should run or change on a larger scale. Is that pretty correct?

S: He always did that. I never did know whether that was cosmetic, to make us all feel good and he had already made up his mind what he was going to do anyway, or whether he really took that advice and digested it. I always kind of had the feeling he already knew what he was going to do. He just sort of called us all together to keep us revved up.

G: Yes. Did he ask you to come to these meetings with anything prepared or with any--?

S: No, not that I recall.

G: Anything else on your role as a district man for Johnson?

S: Well, no, except the fight in 1956, the precinct fight, the Johnson for President, to head the delegation to Chicago.

G: I want to get you to go into that in some detail.

S: It was very bitter.

G: Yes. Let me ask you first about one or two other things. One, he came down here in 1953 to speak to the--well, he made several swings to Houston I guess in the fifth year [of his term]. He was up [for re-election] again the following year and toured the state in 1953. He spoke to the Mid-Continental Oil and Gas Association. Were you there? Do you recall that speech?

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- S: I was there. I do not recall the speech except. . . . Most of those oil people you had to just force them to come to a Johnson meeting. But once they got there, of course if it was a small group, he just captivated them.
- G: Others who remember this speech have indicated that he threw away his text and really gave them sort of a gloves-off civics lesson about how he really ran. . . .
- S: There's no question about it, and particularly about the depletion allowance. The tidelands I believe was hot at that time. And how the Congress worked, and how he and Sam Rayburn and others had saved the oil industry. It was a constant fight to cut the depletion allowance, a constant fight over the tidelands.
- G: Was this particular speech anything extraordinary? Do you feel that he was better--?
- S: It was one of the better speeches I ever heard him make.
- G: Is that right? Do you think it made an impression on the oil men?
- S: Yes, I do.
- G: How could you tell?
- S: Well, later on we were able to get some more money from them. And we got money from unexpected sources.
- G: Is that right?
- S: Yes, later on.
- G: You mean very conservative people?
- S: Yes.
- G: Do you think that may have also influenced who ran against him the



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next year, the fact that Dudley Dougherty [ran] instead of Allan Shivers or someone like that?

S: Probably. Probably. I never did know, although I've known him very well--I never was intimate with him--why Governor Shivers never took on Lyndon, because they were not good friends. I think they were amiable enemies, political enemies.

G: There was also a lot of suggestion in the press and reports back to LBJ that John Ben Shepperd was thinking about challenging him in 1954.

S: I never knew that. I knew John Ben very well. In fact, I've just run across a letter I wrote John Ben I guess it was in 1953. He wrote me thanking me for my support for him in the past and to tell me he's going to again run for attorney general, asking me to help him.

G: Back to this speech, though. One other person remembered it and said you could hear a pin drop when Johnson finished.

S: Yes, I think that's accurate.

G: Do you remember that?

S: Yes. It was a moving speech.

G: Was it?

S: Not moving in an emotional way, but moving to those men, the people in attendance I'm talking about.

G: Did Johnson hit them pretty directly with the fact that they had opposed him so often, and Sam Rayburn as well?

S: I don't recall him saying that. My recollection of that event, as well as other conversations, was how he never could understand why it was that he didn't get broader-based support from the oil companies,

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how they just loved Albert Thomas, who according to him never did anything in his life, although they were good friends. But every time anything needed to be done, they always turned to Lyndon or Sam, but they always supported Albert. And he never could understand how Albert could get all that broad-based support in Houston, from the labor, from the conservative business interests, from the oil people, from everybody, and he, Albert Thomas, never did anything and he, Lyndon, was the man that they all--pulled their ox out of the ditch every time, he and Sam, and it just galled him, always did gall him.

G: Now, some of the correspondence reflects his effort to help secure I think a contract for Stewart and Stevenson here in the middle fifties.

S: Yes, I've got some correspondence about that.

G: I want to ask you how you feel he was helpful in that regard.

S: I'd forgotten all about it. At that time I had left--I left Fulbright, Crooker in 1954, March 1 if I'm not [mistaken], and formed a partnership with Garth Bates and Ted Riggs. Garth was married to Ross Stewart's daughter, so we had the Stewart and Stevenson account. They paid us two hundred and fifty dollars a month retainer and then we billed them. I'd forgotten about having them get that contract until I ran across some correspondence the other day. I think I was helpful.

G: It sounds like it from the [correspondence]. But would Johnson simply call the attention to someone in, say, a department or agency to look at this other contract offer or--?

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S: It wasn't until later that I found out a little bit how he operated. My view of why Mr. Johnson was so successful as a legislator is that he personally, and his staff, cultivated the everyday worker, the kind of the underlings in those departments. Because he knew, and I later learned, that that's the way you get things done in the bureaus, the agencies in Washington. The top man doesn't really do anything, it's the civil servant workers and the deputy chiefs or whatever that really do the work. That's who you have to go to. I doubt that Mr. Johnson himself did anything about that particular contract, but I would imagine whoever was--Cliff Carter, I don't know whether Cliff was up there at that time or was still United States marshal here, or who was--I cannot recall. Walter Jenkins I guess was probably running his office at that time. They would do that type of work.

G: Did that sort of success influence how much support he got, say, in Harris County or wherever?

S: I'm sure it did.

G: Did it make your job easier as a district man?

S: Yes.

G: Did it?

S: That type of situation would give me or anyone else an inroad into a possible support of some kind, money or otherwise that otherwise [we] wouldn't have gotten.

G: Yes. How far did, say, constituents expect a congressman or senator to go in helping to secure projects for firms in their district or state?

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S: As far as they could.

G: Is that right?

S: Yes. See, my view of politics, and I think Mr. Johnson's and others', [is] if you have three people that can equally well do a job, you might as well try to get it for your friend. You're sure not going to give it to your enemy. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that approach to politics. Now, it is wrong to try to get somebody a job that can't do it, or to accept money if you will get me that job. That's wrong. But if somebody is a contributor or supporter of yours and they can do a job, that's what a good politician is supposed to do, help that person get the job as long as they can do it as well as anybody else can do it.

G: Were the Houston firms ever disappointed that Johnson didn't do any more than he did to, say, intervene in a situation or use his influence?

S: Not that I know of.

G: Really? Okay.

Now let me ask you about the 1956 precinct fight.

S: Bitter, bitter fight.

G: You indicated that Johnson and Shivers were not friends.

S: That was my recollection.

G: Do you have any specifics to indicate--?

S: I have no specifics of their relationship on a private, social basis, no. But certainly on a political basis, Governor Shivers was Democrats-for-Eisenhower, he was a states' rights person, he was a

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conservative in every respect and certainly looked upon Lyndon it seemed to me as being the liberal candidate.

G: Did Johnson resent the fact that Shivers had taken the Texas delegation out of the Democratic Party at the 1952 [convention]?

S: Yes, I think so.

G: Did he ever talk about that?

S: I'm sure he did. I remember nothing specifically. All I remember, my memory of that precinct fight was how hard it was in Harris County, how bitter it was, how we just had to work our tail off to try to get any support for the Johnson movement here. We won, but it was sure a bitter fight.

G: Well, let me ask you first, you attended that meeting at the Ranch and I'm sure other meetings.

S: Right.

G: How did Johnson react to Rayburn's initiative in more or less drafting him to head the delegation and be favorite son for president?

S: What do you mean, how did he react?

G: Well, do you think he objected to having his hat tossed into the ring by someone else?

S: No. Like I said a while ago, I always had the feeling that the die had already been cast before the so-called Johnson boys ever went to the Ranch. I always had the feeling that the so-called deal had been cut, and this was just an effort to get the team revved up.

G: You say the meeting took place around the pool, is that right?

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- S: Yes. That's my memory anyway. But in Harris County things like at the county convention here, we controlled it but just by a hair. I never will forget meeting in a room at Delmar Stadium where we had the convention to kind of work out the details when Stone Red Wells, who was bitter anti-Johnson, brought the local high school--we were meeting in the locker room, and all of a sudden here comes Red Wells leading the team that had been out practicing into the locker room and just upset our meeting and just did everything to destroy the Johnson movement.
- G: You also had the liberal organization in the field, is that [correct]?
- S: It was a marriage of convenience. Never any real love lost between Mrs. [Frankie] Randolph, who was the leader of the Harris County organization, and that lady from San Antonio who I can't [remember].
- G: Kathleen Voigt.
- S: Kathleen Voigt. They never liked Johnson.
- G: Let me ask you to go back and recall how you and Mrs. Randolph, your groups, got together to work against Shivers in that election.
- S: They had no other place to go.
- G: But were there a series of meetings?
- S: Yes, we had some meetings with those people here, Mrs. Randolph and Chris Dixie and Ed Ball and Hank Brown, Woodrow [Seals] and others, and got them to help us.
- G: Did Johnson come down and meet with them, too?
- S: I don't believe he did. If Mr. Johnson ever met with Frankie Randolph,

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for example--I know they met; they met in Dallas--but during the fight, I was not aware of it.

G: Others have suggested that the labor-liberal group was the primary organization in the field.

S: No question about it.

G: That they did most of the work.

S: No question.

G: Is that right?

S: We had no organization. They did it all insofar as the work in the precincts was concerned, particularly in the east end and the north end and the southeast. Whatever I was able to do was in the southwest area.

G: I see. Did you have an indication of who was supporting Shivers in that race, what his base was?

S: Well, his base was practically all of the business community, the southwest and the River Oaks area, the Tanglewood area, the Memorial Drive area, all of the businessmen, practically all of them. At that time I used to joke, for a young person like myself to be a real success in Harris County at that time you had to have three attributes: one, you had to have voted for Eisenhower; two, you had to be a member of St. John's Episcopal Church; and three, you had to drive a station wagon. Those were the attributes to be a success. All of my friends, close friends, were bitter anti-Johnson, almost without exception, except for Warren Bellows and Crooker, Jr. and a few other exceptions. At social events my wife used to complain that we were

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ostracized because we voted for Johnson and Truman. Shivers' support was practically all of the business community, all of the young lawyers with rare exception.

G: Let me ask you about the race issue in that campaign? You had a number of elements, the Brown decision, the Southern Manifesto which Johnson had not signed. There was a referendum on the ballot that summer that had some pretty incendiary racial issues, the NAACP was on the defensive, the Supreme Court was on the defensive. Did Shivers use this against Johnson?

S: His people did. I never recalled Shivers making a speech publicly raising the race issue, but no question about the fact that his supporters did.

G: Tell me how they did it.

S: At that time it was just bitter. It was just a prejudice.

G: But did they do it through a whisper campaign or the press or how--?

S: No, they didn't do it through the press. Nobody ever talks about prejudice in the press. They just did it through word of mouth. It was not a pleasant time in Harris County to be for Johnson, [Adlai] Stevenson, Truman.

G: Well, during that meeting at the LBJ Ranch, that issue of how Shivers will use the race question against Johnson keeps coming up. Was Johnson afraid, do you think, that he'd be tarred with the--?

S: I'm sure he was. He had to walk a pretty tight rope.

G: Let me ask you also about anti-communism in that election.



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- S: Martin Dies. Of course anti-communism at that time was just rampant. If you were a Johnson supporter you were a communist sympathizer, it's just that simple. Anything that touched on political liberalism was immediately associated with communism and the Negroes.
- G: Now, let me ask you about the three conventions. The first state convention that you had was to, I guess, select the delegates.
- S: It was in Dallas.
- G: Yes. What do you remember about that?
- S: I remember how we almost lost control of it. I remember that because of our naivete in managing that type of a--it's not like a political campaign where you're running for office. That's a maneuverable situation. Precinct conventions and county conventions, they're all pretty tightly controlled. Like I was telling you, we had a big fight on, it seemed to me, the Tyler or Longview delegation, and we were just desperate, we were about to lose them. They called me and sent me in there to arbitrate the dispute. That's all I knew about it. Nobody briefed me about anything.
- G: Connally and Johnson sent you in there?
- S: Yes. Nobody briefed me about anything. I didn't even know what was going on. So I listened and I went the wrong way and got my fanny eaten out. And then of course, as you know, we had to select the national committeeman and committeewoman, I guess.
- G: One of each.
- S: We wanted--who was the national committeeman?
- G: Byron Skelton.

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- S: Byron Skelton, Byron Skelton. And we wanted--we had a big meeting to decide who to go with for the national [committeewoman]. Of course, the other side wanted Mrs. Randolph. The liberals wanted Mrs. Randolph. Johnson didn't want Mrs. Randolph. I never will forget meeting with Connally and Bentsen and several of us--I forget who all was there--Woody [Warren Woodward]. And we decided, well, they just could not be against B. A. Bentsen. She was too pretty and Lloyd was non-controversial, so we decided to go with B. A. and we got our fanny beat.
- G: (Laughter) There was some suggestion that she had voted for Eisenhower in 1952.
- S: Yes. Right. Probably had, I don't know. I went to school with Lloyd and B. A. and it wouldn't have surprised me if she voted for Eisenhower.
- G: Was there an attempt to make some deal with the liberal-labor group that, say, you would select the committewoman and they would select the committeeman or something like that, some sort of balance? That you would select both and they would have the--?
- S: I believe that that was originally the deal, and they'd--I can't recall it. John would be the real person to ask about this, but there was a feeling that some way we had double-crossed them. We had reneged on going with Mrs. Randolph, that the deal had been cut that they wouldn't fight Byron Skelton if we'd go with Frankie Randolph, and we double-crossed them. Was it in--yes, it was at the Adolphus Hotel. I recall some--Mr. Rayburn was there--bitter meeting at the

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Adolphus Hotel. I can't recall the details of it. It was just shouting and the double-cross idea was rampant. Even though we had won the precinct and Johnson was going to lead the delegation, it looked like the liberal-labor group was going to walk out and support somebody else in Chicago. We ended up making some sort of compromise with them, and for the life of me I can't remember what it was.

G: On that vote on the committeewoman, it seems that perhaps the Johnson forces made an attempt to get Kathleen Voigt nominated to run against Frankie Randolph, perhaps to split the vote or at least take the lesser of what they regarded as two evils.

S: I think that's true, because I was in the hotel room at the Adolphus when Kathleen Voigt came in to talk to John Connally.

G: Do you recall the results of that meeting?

S: The only thing I recall vividly about the meeting was that it was the only time I saw Connally sort of act like Johnson. He was in the bathroom naked, shaving, and I was in the room when the knock came on the door. It was Kathleen Voigt to come in to talk to John. John said, "Bring her on in," so I brought her on in to the bathroom. They sat there and talked while John shaved in the nude. It just kind of shocked me. Because it was John. It wouldn't have shocked me if it had been Mr. Johnson.

But now that you have refreshed my memory, that was what we tried to do.

G: Well, why did you do it? Was it to split the liberal vote or was it because you really preferred Kathleen Voigt to Frankie Randolph?

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S: The Johnson-Mrs. Randolph situation was pretty bitter. For whatever the reason, I do not know. It was just bitter; they just did not like each other. I had always thought that was the real reason. I just figured he could get along better with Kathleen Voigt than he could get along with Frankie. And it was also probably a little bit of showing a muscle, you know, so he wouldn't have to kowtow to the liberal-labor group so much. Flexing of the muscle.

G: Right. There was also the issue of the State Democratic Executive Committee. The liberals wanted to have that committee replaced. It was a Shivers-appointed committee. They were people who had supported Eisenhower. And Johnson wanted to wait until the fall. He didn't want to replace that--

S: At that time.

G: --at that time, in May.

S: Right.

G: Why was that?

S: I don't know. I can't remember. I'm sure I knew at the time, but I cannot remember. But I do remember that that was a fact and that was a very bitter issue. But he wanted to wait until the September convention in Dallas [Fort Worth].

G: Now, was there after that first convention a realignment of the forces? Did Johnson's people become more closely allied with Shivers, the defeated Shivers' people?

S: I don't think so. You mean after the May convention?

G: Yes.

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S: I don't think so. I don't recall any such.

G: Did Johnson exact any sort of concession from the state executive committee members in return for keeping them--?

S: I do not know.

G: Okay. Now, did you go to the national convention?

S: Yes, I did.

G: Let me ask you to recall everything you can about that convention from the standpoint of the Texas delegation.

S: Well, of course, Johnson had firm control of it by that time. The only thing I recall is going with Kennedy as opposed to [Estes] Kefauver for vice president. The only other recollection I have of that Chicago convention, and I'll never forget it, is that--and as I said, my role was never one in the policy-making, not at that time. I was more like a gofer. But I was in the hotel room--and I'll never forget it--with Truman and Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson and Senator [Bob] Kerr. There were others there. And the discussion was about Nixon. I'll never forget how strongly those people felt about Nixon.

G: Is that right?

S: I remember vividly Mr. Rayburn saying that he wouldn't trust the son of a bitch around the corner, that he was a no good little prick. That was just the feeling about Nixon.

G: Did Johnson share that feeling?

S: Yes, I don't think there's any question about it. Everybody distrusted him. I've told that story many times. Everybody distrusted

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him, at least of that group, had no confidence in him whatsoever, no confidence in his integrity, anything.

G: Was Johnson really a favorite son, or do you think he wanted to be drafted for president in 1956 in that convention?

S: Well, knowing Mr. Johnson he certainly wouldn't have turned down a draft. I think that he thought probably that it was a little early for him. I think his plans really at that time centered around 1960, because my feeling was as a young, inexperienced politician, never ran for office in my life, that they didn't really think they could beat Eisenhower.

G: And they were right, I guess.

S: I just had that feeling. That Stevenson was kind of what I would describe as a throw-away candidate, that they were all making the plans for the 1960 election. Now, that was just the impression I got.

G: There was a question in the balloting either for president or vice president, I forget which, in which Rayburn was chairing the convention I think and John Connally sought recognition presumably to have Texas make the nomination unanimous and Rayburn did not recognize Connally, would not let him do that. Do you recall that?

S: No, I don't know why; I remember the event, but I don't remember why. I do not know why.

G: Do you think Connally did?

S: Do I think it was a pre-staged event?

G: Yes.

S: And John knew he wasn't going to get recognized?

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- G: Yes.
- S: And it was done for cosmetic purposes?
- G: Yes.
- S: I don't know.
- G: Did Johnson want to be vice president in 1956 or did he want to be the nominee?
- S: I doubt it. I doubt it. I had no indication from where my vantage point [was].
- G: Were you aware of any conflict between Rayburn and Johnson during that convention over the nominations?
- S: I have always thought that Rayburn was surprised that Johnson went with Kennedy.
- G: Do you think he preferred Kefauver?
- S: Yes. Yes. That's just an impression that I had, nothing concrete.
- G: Did the Texas delegation as a whole favor Kennedy to Kefauver?
- S: Oh, I think had they been left alone they would have gone with Kefauver.
- G: Really?
- S: Yes. I never have known. I've thought about it many, many times. I have never known why Mr. Johnson went with Kennedy at that convention. Obviously there was a reason. He never did anything on the spur of the moment that I ever saw. So there was some plan, there was some predetermined motive, there was some reason, and I never did know what it was.
- G: Well, you said if they had been left alone--

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S: To vote, just the people there.

G: Well, tell me how they did vote. Tell me how Johnson influenced the vote or at least encouraged them to vote presumably for Kennedy.

S: If I had to, under oath, I'd have to say I do not remember, but for the life of me I can never remember an actual vote. I know there wasn't a vote for Kennedy or Kefauver. I don't believe there was. I think the vote was that Mr. Johnson, as the leader of the delegation, would choose which one he wanted to go for. I don't recall a vote for Kennedy or Kefauver. I was a delegate-at-large.

G: My impression was that there was a very quick poll or something first.

S: There was a very quick poll. I don't know, I don't even know what the results of the poll were. I don't ever recall any show of hands.

G: Do you recall any internal conflict within the delegation among the liberals and the more conservative people at that convention?

S: Yes, sir, constant conflict.

G: Really? At the convention, the national convention?

S: Yes. Although we had it stacked pretty well with Johnson people. I used to have a list of who the delegates were, but I don't have it. I can't find it.

G: Now, then in September you had I guess it's the governor's convention, isn't it?

S: Well, I forget what they call it. It's the presidential convention, isn't it? They have it every time there's a presidential election.

G: Maybe so.

S: I've been on the bench seventeen years.



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- G: In any event, this was the one that evidently created so much animosity.
- S: Yes. That's the one where we almost lost control.
- G: And several delegations were thrown out, the liberal delegations.
- S: Right. Right.
- G: Let me ask you to recall as much about that as you remember.
- S: Well, that happened in the Tyler [delegation] I was telling you about. That was part of it. The Johnson people were constantly fighting to keep that convention under control. It looked like it was going to get out of control and the liberals were going to run it. It was a hectic time.
- G: Well, do you remember the El Paso delegation, for example, and Woodrow Bean?
- S: Yes, I remember something about it. I don't remember the details about it.
- G: Yes.
- S: My role at that convention was to do what I was told to do. I was there. I wasn't a policy maker.
- G: Was there a fear among the Johnson people that Ralph Yarborough might get control of the party?
- S: No question about it. No question but that was a part of it.
- G: There was a very close race between Price Daniel and Yarborough for governor, I guess.
- S: Right.
- G: Did you think that if the liberals got control of the party machinery

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that they might overturn that election or challenge the election and keep Price Daniel from going on the November ballot?

S: I have no memory about that at all.

(Interruption)

G: We were talking about the 1956 convention and how Ralph Yarborough figured in all of this.

S: Of course, Senator Yarborough and Mr. Johnson were never very close. I remember Senator Yarborough telling me one time--and I never was close to Senator Yarborough either--that he always hated to go into a meeting with President Johnson because he knew he was going to get screwed and he wouldn't even know it.

G: Is that right?

S: That's the way he felt about it.

G: How did LBJ feel about Yarborough?

S: Well, you know, I never heard Mr. Johnson make any disparaging remarks about Senator Yarborough. I never did.

G: How did the Johnson forces become aware that they were about to lose control of that convention?

S: It was just kind of a panic feeling among all of us, I believe I'm correct.

G: Was there any particular vote that took place?

S: I don't know whether there was or not. I just know my memory of that convention is just scrambling around, just grabbing at anything we could grab at, and just "thank God it's over" when it was over. Kind

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of like bailing out a sinking ship and just hope like hell you can get to land before it goes under.

G: Did Johnson make any attempt after that convention to make peace with the other side?

S: I'm sure he did. He was constantly--everybody knows he spent more time trying to convert an enemy to a friend than he ever spent on his friends.

G: Is that right?

S: He never liked to accept the fact that people did not like him, a very sensitive man, extremely sensitive.

G: Do you think that the liberals became more embittered as a result of this convention? Did it make it more difficult for him to win their support?

S: I think so. Yes. We never got any real support from the liberal-labor people in Harris County until the 1964 convention, insofar as Johnson was concerned. Of course, they were--in the 1960 campaign--heavily in favor of Kennedy.

G: Anything else on the 1956 [election]?

S: No.

G: Shall we move on to 1960?

S: Yes.

G: Is there anything in between?

S: Nothing between except I've got correspondence and you've got correspondence--I've got some of it--of my efforts to get a broader base support for Johnson. We had some meetings with some young people,

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young lawyers and other people. We had a reception at River Oaks, which I told you about, for young women. We were successful in broadening his support among young people, thirty-five up group.

G: He seems to have had a good deal more support in Houston than he did in Dallas.

S: Oh, yes.

G: Why is that?

S: I don't know. Well, Dallas is so much more conservative.

G: You think that's it?

S: Yes. Than Houston. It still today is. No, he never had any, as I recall it, he never had any real solid support in Dallas County.

G: Was he a reluctant candidate in 1960?

S: No. Absolutely not.

G: Really?

S: I think he had laid all of his plans to make the race in 1960. I think that's the reason--in the back of his mind, if I had to guess at what his reasons were, why he went for Kennedy in 1956, that he envisioned a Johnson-Kennedy ticket, not a Kennedy-Johnson ticket, a Johnson-Kennedy ticket. Kennedy was handsome, he was young and articulate.

G: There is the incident where the Johnson-for-President headquarters were opened with I guess John Connally and one or two other people heading it, and a sign went up one day and went down the next.

S: Where, in Austin?

G: Washington.

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S: Oh, that's right, in Washington, right.

G: It seemed that Johnson entered the race at the absolute last moment. Why didn't he launch a more vigorous campaign? Why did he seem so reluctant if he was not?

S: My reaction is that Mr. Johnson really honestly believed he could maneuver the convention as he maneuvered the Senate. He really thought that by having the support of the major senators and congressmen, which he did, that they controlled the convention. And the truth of the matter, that's not the way it works. That's not the way it works in Texas, not the way it works in any place that I've ever come in contact with. Those elected officials are not the people who run the precincts and the counties. There are other local politicians and local forces, and the national people do not run those local elections. I really have always thought that Mr. Johnson really believed that he didn't need to get in, didn't need to get bloodied ahead of time, that he had that convention sewed up.

G: Therefore the indications that he seemed to be reluctant were not really that valid, because he was just using a different strategy?

S: That was my reaction then; it's been my reaction ever since.

G: Did he ever talk to you during 1960 about his desire to become president?

S: Not to me just individually, but I can recall--and I can't recall the details when he would come to Houston. In the meantime I just had the feeling, I can't recall any specifics, that everything he was doing at

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that period of time between 1956 and 1960 was leading up to making the race for the presidency in 1960.

G: Yes. Did you attend the 1960 convention?

S: I took off three weeks from my law practice and went to Los Angeles.

G: Let me ask you first if you had anything to do with the bill that was passed in the Texas Legislature.

S: No.

G: Well, let me ask you to recall the Los Angeles convention and anything that you were privy to at that?

S: I worked for John. That was my job. That's what I did, and I went around with Eugene Locke and Crooker, Jr., it seems to me, and other people to various meetings all the time of the various states to try to line up support for Johnson. I know my reaction after I had been there a little while was that we were getting outmaneuvered pretty badly by the Kennedys.

G: Can you recall any examples of this maneuvering?

S: I recall one very vividly. The Arizona delegation, where we thought we had it sewed up, and at the last minute we learned that--I forget who the guy's name was--one of the leaders of the Arizona delegation, he had a ten thousand dollar note at the bank that was suddenly paid. When it came down to the nut-cutting, Arizona voted for Kennedy.

G: Now, you had presumably Carl Hayden and maybe--

S: Right, had all those. [Ernest] McFarland, wasn't it? Was it McFarland?

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- S: Well, he was not senator then. He had been defeated by [Barry] Goldwater.
- S: He was defeated by Goldwater, that's right. But anyway, we had all the so-called bigwigs except Goldwater, of course, from Arizona, but we lost it. And that happened time and time again.
- G: What was Johnson's reaction to that, do you recall? Arizona in particular.
- S: I know John was very upset about it, and I assume Mr. Johnson was, too. I really was not in with Mr. Johnson in Los Angeles except when I'd go with John. All the work I did almost was with John.
- G: You've mentioned this ten thousand dollar note. To what extent do you think money was a factor in the Kennedy victory?
- S: We all thought it was the major factor.
- G: Did you really? Do you recall any other examples?
- S: There were several other of the West, Far West states that we thought we had that we lost. It seems like to me we even lost Alaska. I don't know whether we--and that was a great shock. I forget why it was we thought we had Alaska sewed up. Alaska and Arizona, Washington. Of course [Warren] Magnuson was his close friend.
- Of course, I had to set up for the debate; that was one job I had, getting the room and the microphones and everything ready for the Kennedy-Johnson debate.
- G: Well now, was that debate a result of Kennedy being invited inadvertently?
- S: No. My reaction was that was a desperate last minute attempt to take

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defeat out of the jaws of victory. I think Johnson by then knew--I think we all knew that we were beaten unless something dramatic happened. And in fact I know that, because I was in on the discussions about whether to have the debate and so on. And it was a last minute sort of desperate maneuver to get the nomination. But I think everybody pretty well by that time knew it was gone.

G: I guess the debate was really one of the highlights of the convention. What do you remember about it?

S: I remember scrounging around to get the television cameras and the microphones and all that together, because that was my job, and hoping like hell nothing went wrong.

G: Were you impressed with Kennedy during the debate? Or did Johnson get the better of him, do you think?

S: No, I don't believe he did.

G: Let me ask you how you would assess the outcome of the debate.

S: I don't think it gained us anything.

G: Really? Well, you didn't lose the Texas delegation, did you?  
(Laughter)

S: No. Nothing to do with the debate, a funny thing happened. We had all this elaborate walkie-talkie system on the floor of the convention. I know Warren Woodward was assigned New York and I forget what I was assigned right off the bat. But we all talked on these walkie-talkies because we had a little frequency. And gosh, it was so funny. I forget what my code name was and what Woody's name was, but whatever they were, I was on the floor of the convention when this ABC man came



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up with all this equipment on the back of his head and said, "Who in the hell is"--whoever it is. And I said, "That's me." He said, "Well, get your ass off the damn [air]." Our frequency had gotten in on the ABC television and we were coming in over some morning ABC program, on the air. (Laughter) He was just absolutely beside himself. "Get your ass off the air. You're ruining"--whatever program it was, it was some program, some soap opera I think. I'll never forget that. It's been one of the funnier things that ever happened to me.

But we knew we were beat.

G: What was Johnson's reaction to the debate?

S: Well, I think his reaction to the debate was probably his reaction--one thing that Mr. Johnson always hated was television. He hated television. He never could get relaxed. He always thought he came over bad on television, and he came over bad because he was nervous and he was uptight. He just never could, he never came over television well. He was just great in a room, but he was not a great speaker.

G: Did he talk about this? Did he try to get help?

S: Tried everything in the world. He tried to get help. You know, he made friends with various people in the movie industry. What's the man's name that's trustee of the LBJ Foundation?

G: Oh, Arthur Krim?

S: Arthur Krim, and just various people. He got schooled and he got makeup and he got everything.

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G: Any other reaction to the debate at all that you recall?

S: No, except I think that the general feeling was it was not a good idea.

G: Now, I want to ask you about the vice presidential nomination.

S: Okay.

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G: How did you become aware that LBJ would have been asked?

S: Not till the next morning. I didn't know anything about it till. . . .

G: Is that right? You weren't there?

S: I was not in on any of the discussion. I knew they were going on, because John was [involved], but I was waiting back in John's suite during that time. I knew the question had arisen, and there were frantic telephone calls and discussions that night.

G: Was John Connally involved in these?

S: Yes. Yes.

G: What was his attitude, do you recall? Did he want Johnson to take it?

S: I don't think so.

G: Really? Was he disappointed that Johnson did take it?

S: I think so.

G: Why? Why do you think he felt that? What was his--?

S: I don't know that any Johnson person--we were so upset at losing, and at that moment of time we were--I'm talking about my reaction and it seemed to me the reaction of other people--so anti-Kennedy because of their high-handedness and the way they threw money around out there and the way they went about getting the nomination, which we thought

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we richly deserved. We weren't Kennedy lovers, and so the idea of Johnson running on the ticket, which we thought Kennedy didn't have a chance in the world at that moment of time [of winning], because he was young, he was Catholic, we were just bitterly disappointed.

G: Did this create a rift between Johnson and Connally?

S: I've always been told that it did. I know it created one rift. I don't know that Mr. Herman Brown ever spoke to Mr. Johnson after that until he died. I do know he was bitterly disappointed.

G: Is that right? How did you know that, were you there?

S: Just the meetings that I had after I came back and we formed the Kennedy-Johnson organization here and we had to raise money and so on and so forth. I met with those people rather regularly.

G: Well, did Herman Brown help the Kennedy-Johnson ticket?

S: I'm not sure he did. I know George did, but I'm not sure Herman did.

G: Wasn't Herman Brown a Republican?

S: He was a Johnson man. Now whether he was a Republican, whether he ever voted for a Republican, I don't know.

G: I'd always assumed that he was an official in the Republican Party.

S: No. It created a lot of problems. It seems like to me Major [J. R.] Parten, Marlin Sandlin, I know the other people in the business group here. You see, they just couldn't understand it because--just one example. We had sold the monied interests down here in Houston that it was not to their advantage for Kennedy to get the nomination. I'll never forget Connally coming down here. We had a fund-raising deal I believe at the Ramada Club, the old Ramada Club before it moved to

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First City. John standing up and making this big speech about Kennedy and how much the oil industry had to fear from Kennedy, that he was not a friend of theirs. So we raised a lot of money. I took a lot of money with me when I went to Los Angeles that we had raised. In fact, I tried to get insured, I was carrying so much money when I went out there.

G: Is that right? Was this money for delegations or what?

S: No, just to help finance our efforts in Los Angeles.

G: Oh, I see. Okay.

S: We were wining and dining delegates, and had that money. I took a lot of money out there.

Then when I came back after Johnson went on the ticket, and you'd go around to these people to try to get them to support [the ticket], man, they were almost derisive in their remarks about what a chameleon you are. Here you told us what a bad guy Kennedy is, and here you are running with him. You're trying to get us to help them. You've got to be crazy. It really hurt us. Because we had been very outspoken about our opposition to Kennedy.

G: I see. That certainly explains it, yes. Anything in particular on Herman Brown that made it hard for you?

S: No, wasn't anything hard for me. I just know he was bitter, and Judge Elkins was, too. Practically all of those people at that time thought Lyndon was absolutely crazy to give up the position of power he had as majority leader. They thought it was a sellout. Because as vice president, even if he won he wouldn't have any power, and he had all

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the power in the world as majority leader of the Senate. In fact, next to Eisenhower before then he was the most powerful man in the United States.

G: Why do you think he did that? Why do you think he accepted the nomination?

S: I've never known, except he was talked into it on the basis that--in some book Johnson got, he'd made a statement years ago, he was first an American, second a Democrat, and third a Texan, or something.

G: Free man, an American.

S: Right. But a Democrat, and he was very loyal to the Democratic Party. I just always thought he was just sold, they hit him on the loyalty issue, that he owed it to the Democratic Party, that they couldn't get elected, they had to have Johnson on the ticket to win.

G: Do you think the fact that he did not like Nixon also--?

S: Probably had something to do--I'm sure it had something to do with it, because he did not like Nixon.

G: Do you think he had illusions about how powerful he would be as vice president?

S: I don't see how he could, having lived in the political arena in the way in which he did live it.

G: Did he, do you think, in accepting the nomination exact any assurances from Jack Kennedy about--

S: Appointments.

G: --appointments?

S: I know he did that.

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G: Tell me what you know about that.

S: The only thing I know is that he had an absolute assurance that he would control the appointments out of Texas.

G: Which is I guess what [John Nance] Garner had done.

S: Right. But he had that absolute assurance, I do know that as a fact. And of course the entire period of time that I was connected with, associated with, or knew Mr. Johnson, the years after the election and before the assassination, he was the most frustrated person I ever saw. He was miserable.

G: Was this a political frustration, do you think, or was it a personal frustration?

S: Well, I guess it was both. He, all of a sudden, became politically really a nothing. Kennedy, of course, was immensely popular. I mean, I can't say that, immensely popular. Such a charming person. Kennedy was not a good political maneuverer. People forget that before the assassination Kennedy had been unable to pass one single major piece of legislation. He had been a failure as a president except his charm. He'd been almost a failure as a president. The reason for the Texas visit and other visits was I think there was serious doubt in his mind and other minds that he could get re-elected. But Johnson was the most frustrated person. He had just gone from a position of great power to a position of nothing.

G: How was this frustration manifest to you?

S: Just in his manner, everything he did.

G: Was he less buoyant, was he depressed?

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- S: He was very subdued, not the tremendously overpowering, captivating person that he was. Almost diffident.
- G: My impression is that he must have had to give up a lot of his staff, too, as vice president, because as majority leader he'd had the Policy Committee and the Steering Committee and all of these other--
- S: I assume that he did.
- G: Did he talk about the vice presidency to you at all?
- S: No.
- G: Had there not been an assassination, would he have remained on the ticket in 1964?
- S: I don't know that. The Kennedy people so disliked him. An interesting story that might have some historical significance. You know the depletion allowance was a hot issue, and the oil people were very fearful of Kennedy. So when [we arranged] Kennedy's visit to Texas in September of 1960 during the election, we wanted Kennedy to say something about the depletion allowance. And we thought that the most we could get him to say, if he said anything, would be something to the effect--and in fact somewhere in all my files I've got it written out. We wrote a letter, not a letter, but a couple of paragraphs, Crooker and I composed it, that when Kennedy came here in September of 1960 he was going to say that "on the matter of the oil and gas industry I luckily have the advice and counsel of two men that know more about that than any other two men in the world, and that's Speaker of the House Mr. Rayburn and my own running mate for vice president, Lyndon Johnson. And on any issue involving the oil and gas industry, of

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course I'll counsel with them." Words to that effect. That's not an exact quotation. I have it somewhere.

So, Bobby was coming down here. Kennedy was in Oregon, as I recall it. Bobby was coming down through here to talk about the plans, and I was assigned to meet Bobby at the airport and to give him this little statement, is one thing. And I did, I met Bobby. He was the most arrogant person I had ever met in my life. In any event, I introduced myself. He knew who I was. And I was taking him, walking into the airport, and I said, "Now, Bobby, you know this oil and gas issue is very hot in this area, and here's what we'd like for your brother to say when he comes down here." He read it, tore it up and threw it on the ground and said, "We're not going to say anything like that. We put that son of a bitch on the ticket to carry Texas, and if you can't carry Texas, that's y'all's problem." And that's an exact quotation. I never will forget, after the assassination, after Mr. Johnson became president, I was at the White House one time and Bobby was there. He said, "Oh, hello, John, I remember you. I remember when we met at the airport." I said, "Yes. I don't think I'll ever forget that."

But he detested Johnson. The greatest political mistake Mr. Johnson ever made, in my judgment, was, true enough, you had to leave the Kennedy people in right after the assassination for a brief period of time, but after six months he should have cleaned house. He didn't do it. They were cutting his throat everywhere.

G: Did Johnson himself feel that he made a mistake there leaving them in?



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S: I think so.

G: Did he ever say that to you?

S: I remember we talked about it one time and he knew that he had made a mistake. See, the Kennedy people were all over in the Justice Department. Bobby we kept on and then [Nicholas] Katzenbach. But the underlings, everybody that was up there was cutting Johnson's throat.

G: Do you have examples of this you could cite to show--?

S: Well, I do know that in the 1964 campaign when I took off four months and was a regional coordinator, went to Washington, the convention was at Atlantic City. Johnson had to send Marvin [Watson] to Atlantic City. I think he sent Marvin to Atlantic City in March of that year, because the Kennedy people had booked up all of the meeting places, all of everything, and it readily became apparent what they were going to do. They were going to try to steal that convention from Johnson. They were going to have Bobby come in. They were going to have a very dramatic appearance with Jackie. Marvin and the others had to work like hell to undo what the Kennedy people had already done. They were prepared to take over that convention, and that was their plan.

G: Let's go back to that meeting at the airport. You mentioned the one thing, the statement on the depletion allowance. Did you also have other things to discuss with Bobby Kennedy? You seemed to indicate that this was one among other things.

S: Well, just what was going to happen. Then later it came up about the meeting with the preachers.

G: The Baptist Ministerial Alliance.

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S: That was Woodrow's brainchild, and it was brilliant.

G: Oh, really? He was the one?

S: I know insofar as I'm concerned, insofar as we're concerned, it was Woodrow's idea. And it went off beautifully.

G: Was Kennedy at all reluctant?

S: Very reluctant.

G: Was he really?

S: Yes. That was my impression. Bobby was very reluctant about it. They were not at all comfortable with that.

G: Did you talk about that when you met Bobby Kennedy at the airport?

S: Yes. Yes.

G: What did he say about that?

S: Well, that was something they had under consideration. They had not decided at that particular point in time. This was well in advance of the September--when Bobby came through here was in July, if I'm not mistaken. It could have been August. I guess it was August.

G: Do you feel that the animosity between Bobby Kennedy and LBJ related to the 1960 convention and the fact that--?

S: Probably. Lyndon just did not fit the mold that the Kennedys had in mind for a president or a possible president. He was tall, he was gangling, he didn't talk particularly well. I mean he talked well, but he didn't have a great speaking voice and wasn't an intellectual.

G: Yes. The Kennedy people might say that perhaps the animosity began as

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a result of the Texas delegation's attack on Jack Kennedy and his health and his father's career.

S: Right. That would be absolutely legitimate.

G: Why do you say it would be legitimate?

S: Because that's the way that people felt. That's the song that we sang before the convention and at the convention.

G: Basically that Jack Kennedy was a very sick man?

S: Right.

G: And that his father had been an isolationist or pro-German at that stage in time?

S: Right. All of that. Yes.

G: Did you have any indication that the Kennedy forces really resented this? That they, number one, knew about it, and number two--?

S: I'm sure they knew about it. I would imagine they resented it. I would imagine, like you suggested, that that was the basis of the beginning of the animosity toward Mr. Johnson. I've always been told that Bobby was bitterly opposed to putting Johnson on the ticket.

G: Anything else on the relationship between Robert Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson during this period?

S: No, except it was just pretty well generally known that the relationship was not a friendly one or a good one.

G: Do you think that Kennedy slighted Johnson while LBJ was vice president?

S: I don't know whether he slighted him. I think there was a general

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feeling--I never talked to Mr. Johnson about this--that Kennedy really didn't put him to the forefront like Johnson thought he was going to.

G: Anything else on LBJ as vice president that you remember?

S: No.

G: Let me ask you about the space center coming to Houston. Do you have any insight as to how--?

S: I have none.

G: Really?

S: No. I've heard a lot, but I did not know about it until after it happened. I was not consulted personally. I know nothing about it.

G: Now, you worked on the Kennedy trip to Texas in 1963.

S: Yes. Right. I was in charge of his visit to Houston, in full charge, arranged everything.

G: Let me ask you what you remember about that, and we have this document that I'd like to append to your oral history. Let me ask you to recall how you first learned about the prospect of a visit to Texas, that Kennedy was considering coming.

S: Well, of course, after the 1960 campaign, when John ran for governor, I became closely aligned with John, and I had to walk a tremendous tightrope because there had developed--the closeness was not there anymore between John and Lyndon. And of course each of them was very jealous of the other's friends and supporters. So I was in charge of John's business in Houston. He called me--I forget the date. Some-time in late September or early October, John called me and asked me if I could come up to Austin, and I went up there, had a meeting at

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the [Governor's] Mansion with me and Warren Woodward. I think Warren was there. I guess Eugene Locke. And John informed all of us that Kennedy was coming to Texas for a fund-raising event and a political barnstorming tour. He was opposed to it. But there's one thing that he wanted to make very clear, that he and his forces were going to be in charge of the visit, not Ralph Yarborough, not Johnson. He, John, was governor, the man was coming to his state, and we were going to control. I was going to be in charge absolutely in Houston. John Peace was going to be in charge in San Antonio, and I guess Woody in Dallas. I've forgotten, I believe it was Woody. We were going to arrange everything. Everything had to be cleared through us. And that's the way it was. I arranged the receiving line, had a heck of a time getting together a receiving line, the composition of it, who should be there and so on and so forth.

G: Did Johnson resent this? Was he, number one, aware that it was Connally's show, and number two, did he resent not having more input into the planning of the visit?

S: No, I don't think so. I didn't get that impression. But in any event an interesting sideline that will indicate the true rift between Yarborough and the liberals and Johnson, two events that happened here. I had arranged the parade and the order of the parade. John was going to ride with Kennedy. Then Yarborough and Johnson were going to ride together, and Albert Thomas and Lewis Cutrer, who was mayor, in the next car. I'd asked Mrs. Wortham to give a dozen yellow roses to Mrs. Kennedy as she stepped off the plane.

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We had all this worked out. I'm at the airport and we're getting all the cars lined up. I'm looking around trying to get the people in the receiving line, because I'm in contact with Air Force One, it's taken off from San Antonio, it's on the way here. I'm just a nervous wreck trying to get everything just in apple pie order. Johnson's plane was about to land. I need the receiving line first to meet him, then the receiving line to meet the President. I couldn't get Woodrow-- Woodrow and Crooker, Jr. as co-chairmen of the Kennedy-Johnson ticket were in the receiving line. Hank Brown, labor union. Bill Kilgarlin, the new Democratic county chairman. I couldn't get them to get in the receiving line. They just wouldn't go, they said, "We're not going. We're not going to be in the receiving line." I finally got one of them, I forget which one of them, to tell me why. Because I had slighted Mrs. Yarborough in asking Mrs. Wortham to give the roses. So I went running over to Mrs. Wortham, who I knew. I said, "Mrs. Wortham, would you mind if Mrs. Yarborough gave these roses?" She said, "Certainly not." So I went to Mrs. Yarborough, she was sitting over there, I said, "Now, Mrs. Yarborough, would you please give these?" So after that, finally got the receiving line to going, and then Ralph comes up objecting to the seating. He was not going to ride in the car with Lyndon Johnson.

G: Did he say why?

S: Well, I knew why, he didn't say why. He said, "I'm not going to ride in the car with the Vice President. I should be riding in the car with Kennedy." I said, "No, Senator, the Governor is going to ride in

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that car. If you don't want to ride with Mr. Johnson, then we'll rearrange it." So I had to suddenly rearrange the pecking order. I had to go up and ask Albert Thomas if he would ride with Mr. Johnson. I had to get Cutrer to ride with Yarborough. And the whole thing was just an absolute--because the planes were about to land, and I'm sitting here at the last minute having to fool with all this dispute that I didn't know anything about.

G: Well, it left somebody without a ride, didn't it?

S: I'm forgetting--I wish I could remember who--oh, yes, left Cutrer riding by himself. I remember now. And Lewis was upset. Lewis was a very good friend of mine, and he was very upset that he had to ride in a car by himself. I think Johnson rode by himself, too. I'm not sure. No, Johnson and Albert Thomas, then Yarborough. I wish I could find that. Is that in this?

G: Yes. It is. You do talk about it in there, that's right.

S: Do I talk about the organization?

G: Right.

S: I forget how I finally worked it out. But anyway, it was very difficult because they were about to land and here I was not having a receiving line or a parade. And I had to get all of this approved on the airplane, too, talking with Air Force One.

G: Approved by Connally or Kennedy?

S: Kennedy and Connally. Yes. There's no one riding with Vice President Johnson.

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- G: He did ride by himself or with Mrs. Johnson I guess at that leg, didn't he?
- S: Yes. Johnson rode by himself and Cutrer rode by himself.
- G: What was Johnson's reaction to this? Did he consider it a slight? Was he offended by it?
- S: I think so. After we got to the Rice Hotel and got out, and President Kennedy shook hands with everybody and went into the Rice Hotel, I went with Cliff Carter up to Mr. Johnson's room. He was in what I would call one of his pouts, very contrite, felt slighted.
- G: Did he ever accuse you of being more loyal to Connally than himself?
- S: Yes. Yes.
- G: How did you deal with this? It must have not been easy.
- S: It wasn't. I never will forget one time after this, I was in Washington, and I was eating with somebody in the Congressional Dining Room, and Warren Woodward came running up to me. He said, "You'd better get your fanny out of town." I said, "Why?" This was at a time when the [Joe] Kilgore-Yarborough dispute, who was going to run for senator.
- G: Kilgore was going to run against Yarborough.
- S: Right. Kilgore was running. John was supporting Kilgore, and the rift between John and Johnson had become really almost out in the open. I said, "Why?" He said, "John's having a meeting tomorrow night in Austin, wants you there, and he'd better not find out you're up here in Washington." So I had some meetings--I was up there on



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business. So I cancelled, got on the airplane and flew back to Texas and went to Austin.

G: Well, then Johnson supported Yarborough in that and discouraged Kilgore from running against him.

S: Right.

G: How did he do that?

S: I don't know. I know it was very bitter. I do not know the details. I know what transpired. I know that we had a meeting in Austin among John's men, and we were going to support Kilgore. All of a sudden the rug was pulled out from under us. I don't know how it happened or what.

G: Well, Kilgore backed out, didn't he?

S: Yes, he backed out. I say I don't know how it happened. I know what--

G: Why did Johnson support Yarborough over Kilgore in that race?

S: That's always been a mystery to me. I do not know.

G: He never talked about it?

S: No, not to me.

G: Oh, okay. Let me back up and ask you a question in an earlier time here. Did Johnson encourage Connally to run for governor in 1962 when he ran?

S: I always thought that he did. I always thought that John--he was secretary of the navy. I've never really discussed this with John in any detail, but I just thought that both Kennedy and Johnson urged him

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to come back to Texas to run for governor so that he would have control of Texas.

G: Now, you've mentioned that Connally did not want Kennedy to come to Texas in November of 1963. Why not?

S: He just thought the timing was poor and that it would look like they were just coming down here trying to rob the state of a lot of money at an inopportune time, well in advance of the 1964 campaign. And Kennedy was not too popular in Texas.

G: Did he feel that Kennedy's presence would be a burden on him, that it would detract from his appeal?

S: Not detract from him, but I think it would add--you know, John didn't win that first race by a lot of votes.

G: Tight race.

S: Tight. And we were going to have to run again in two more years. We were going to have to run in 1964. I don't think he wanted the burden of having to support Kennedy in the fall of 1963, because as I say, Kennedy was not very popular in Texas. I don't believe they would have carried Texas. I don't believe Kennedy-Johnson would have carried Texas in 1964. I don't know what John would have done. I've never put that question to him. I've thought about it a hundred times and almost have just directly put the question to him, had there been no assassination would he have supported the Kennedy-Johnson ticket? And there is serious question in my mind as to whether he would or not.

G: Really? Is there anything in particular that leads you to think that?

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- S: I think that the rift between John and Johnson at that time had become, I thought, pretty serious.
- G: Were there any other elements besides the Kilgore-Yarborough incident?
- S: Other than taking the vice presidential spot on the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, [not] that I know of.
- G: Now, back to the Dallas trip, one more question. Of course one suggestion has been that Kennedy came to Texas to attempt to arbitrate this split among Johnson, Connally and Yarborough.
- S: I've heard that.
- G: Did you ever have any evidence that this was a factor in Kennedy's trip to Texas?
- S: No. John didn't mention it before the trip. John had been called to Washington by Kennedy to discuss the trip, and as I understood what John said, he had advised against it, and he had been outvoted. Not outvoted, but they had decided to do it anyway.
- G: Anything on the Albert Thomas dinner?
- S: Nothing except it was a big success. There's nothing to do with anything except I had a squad car of my own, and I had John and Nellie. My responsibility was John and Nellie, and the President and Mrs. Kennedy were Albert Thomas' sort of responsibility, and [Jack] Valenti's. At the dinner, after the dinner was over, John and Nellie and I got separated from Kennedy and Jackie and those people, and we were all supposed to go out to the airport together, and John got very nervous, upset about the fact that we couldn't find them. So we got in our own squad car and we went to the airport. He was afraid that

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Kennedy would get there before he would. That's the wildest trip I ever took in my life.

G: Is that right?

S: We went the wrong way on one way streets. We drove through filling stations. We did everything getting to the airport. We must have been going ninety miles an hour to get out to the airport ahead of Kennedy, because we couldn't find Kennedy. We didn't know whether he had already left or not. After the banquet it was just bedlam, a mass of people. But no event transpired at that banquet. Valenti was in charge of the banquet.

(Interruption)

While Kennedy was addressing the ministers, the ministerial alliance, the Houston LULAC group was meeting at the Rice Hotel at a dinner. I took Mrs. Kennedy into that LULAC meeting to appease them because the President, Jack Kennedy, was not going to come. So I took Mrs. Kennedy in there, and she was a huge success.

G: Was she?

S: Yes. A very gracious person.

G: Of course that was in 1960.

S: Right.

G: Okay. We're going back to 1960.

S: That was in the 1960 campaign.

G: Let me go back to a question that I asked earlier about Johnson and the vice presidency. Do you think he would have wanted to run again as vice president?

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S: I don't know. I think probably he would have because of his feeling of intense loyalty to the Democratic Party. I think for him to step down at that particular time in the history of this country would have insured Kennedy's defeat.

G: He never gave you an indication one way or another?

S: No.

G: Other than you knew he was unhappy or restless?

S: Yes. Very restless. And I thought very unhappy.

G: Yes. Okay.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II]

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