INTERVIEWEE: SENATOR JOHN SPARKMAN (Democrat/Alabama)

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

October 5, 1968

M: The machine is now on. You can lean back and it will pick you up from the back of your chair.

Your career, as you have no doubt realized from time to time, is in many ways parallel to Mr. Johnson's. You came to the House, I think, just before he did, and then went to the Senate also just before he did. Do you recall, by any chance, the first meeting or the first acquaintanceship you had with the President?

S: I suppose it was when he came to the House of Representatives. I entered the House of Representatives on January 3, 1937, and Lyndon came, I think, about the middle of April, maybe April 11--

M: You have an awfully good memory if you can remember that.

S: I think that it was April 11, 1937. And, of course, I knew him from that time on.

M: Did he make as a Congressman any particular impression on you during the years he served with you in the House?

S: Well, I must say that I cannot recall his ever making what you'd call a real speech in the House. I don't recall that he participated very much in the debates. He apparently was a very steady worker. He was on the Naval Affairs Committee.

M: Were you on that committee too?

S: No, I was on the Military Affairs Committee which handled the Army.

It handled general military matters, even including the Navy, where legislation or where the action we were taking pertained to all the services. But if there was something that pertained just to the Navy, then the Naval Affairs Committee handled it. And, of course, the Marine Corps was under the Naval committee. If it pertained to the Army or to military generally, the Military Affairs Committee handled it, and I was on that committee.

M: Did it seem to you then, looking back on it now, that some of the big men--leaders in the House, perhaps were pushing Mr. Johnson's career?

S: I won't say, necessarily, they were pushing. Lyndon was a fellow who made contacts easily, and made friends. He always knew how to take care of himself. And I think he made an impression upon people when he met them. And then when the War came on in 1942--1941 is when it started-Lyndon entered the Navy--. Did not resign his seat in Congress, but he was commissioned in the Navy, I believe, as a Lieutenant Commander. And he went to the Pacific and served there--served some six months. He served with distinction in the Pacific, in the Navy Air Force. After about six months, President Roosevelt issued an order, ordering all members of Congress who were in the active service to come back to Congress.

M: There were others who had done the same thing?

S: Yes, there were several. And if they did not want to do that, then to resign their seat in Congress. In other words, he felt that it was probably contrary to the Constitution to serve in both capacities--I don't know--but he ordered them back anyhow.

Incidentally, I might say that I was a reserve officer in the Army.

M: I believe you've maintained your connection in the reserve.

S: That's correct. Of course, I'm retired now, but I'm a full Colonel in the Army Reserve, retired. I think I was a Major in the Reserves at the outbreak of the war, and on the day that we declared war, an officer from the War Department came to my office and said that the Secretary of War did not want me to apply for active duty. [He] needed me to stay there on the Military Affairs Committee because [there was] lots of legislation to be handled, and I'd been on there then for about five years. He said they were asking--there were four or five reserve officers on the committee--said they were asking all of them to do that, and [he] said that, "There'll be plenty of time for you to get in your service after we finish the legislation." Well, we finished the legislation along about May, and I immediately started my application. And it was being processed at the time that the Presdient issued his executive order. And that not only brought back the Congressmen, but it denied to members of Congress the right to enter the service. I appealed to the Secretary of War, explaining to him that I had wanted to get into service at the beginning, that I had complied with his request to stay there and help put the legislation through. Now, it was through, and I felt that I ought to be able to get into active service.

M: In more modern times in that same connection, there has been some criticism by people who talk about something they call a military-industrial complex about reserve officers who are Congressmen serving on the Armed Services Committee, and things of this nature. Would you like to comment on that?

S: Well, I don't think there's anything inconsistent there. I think it's

perfectly logical for a person who--. Now, you take, in my case, I got my reserve commission in 1921.

M: Before you were a Congressman?

S: Long before I was a Congressman, and there was nothing ever said about a reserve officer serving on the Military Affairs Committee where I served, for instance. And I have never felt any conflict of interest. I will say this, that after I became a Congressman, I attended reserve camp several times and did some correspondence work, but I was not able to keep up with the program that was proposed in order to get to a promotion to a general officer. I just didn't take it at all, but I did become a full Colonel and was retired as a full Colonel.

M: Once Mr. Johnson went to the Senate in 1948 and then in 1952 got elected, I believe, Democratic Whip, there has been a suggestion that perhaps there was a small boom for you as Democratic Whip that year. How far did that go? Did it go very far?

S: Yes, I was just trying to remember if that was 1952--. Well, it wouldn't have been '52. Of course, it would be an odd year. I think it was January of '51 that he was made Whip. Yes, some friends put my name in the nomination without consulting with me, without talking to me. But I asked that it not be--. In fact, I asked that it be withdrawn and they complied.

M: I see. In 1952, then when you were nominated for the Vice Presidency with Mr. Stevenson, apparently there had been some hope that your position on the ticket might appease some of the Southerners who were at least on the fence regarding the Democratic party. Allan Shivers from Texas then broke away from the party. Do you recall what Lyndon Johnson--

S: Because of the tide oil question.

M: Was that the reason Mr. Shivers left?

S: Yes.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson play a positive role for the Stevenson-Sparkman ticket in Texas that year?

S: I can't say. As a matter of fact, I did not go to Texas.

M: You didn't campaign in Texas?

S: In Texas, I did not. It was accidental that I didn't. I was campaigning up in Western Pennsylvania in cold, damp, cloudy weather. I was in an open car going from town to town making speeches, you know, and riding with the top down. [I] spent three days in that campaigning and by the last day, I had a very rough throat, got to where I could hardly speak, and I came home on Saturday night, went to bed. The next morning I was no better; in fact, if anything, I was worse. So my wife and my campaign aides decided that I needed treatment, and they had me sent out to the Naval Hospital. The doctors put me on my back, gave me a pad and pencil, and told me not to say a word. If I wanted anything or anybody asked me a question, [he told me] to write it out.

M: That's a kind of bad position for a politician, isn't it?

S: I stayed there for practically a week. Well, I went on Sunday morning, and I think they released me on Friday. And it was right at the time that Texas was included in my itinerary.

M: I've read your tribute to Mr. Stevenson that's been published in THE (MILITARY AFFAIRS REVIEW).

S: Oh, yes.

M: Did you maintain a close personal relationship with Mr. Stevenson for the

rest of his career?

S: Yes, I was in touch with him quite often.

M: Can you make some comment, perhaps, about any relationship that he had with Mr. Johnson during the '50's? Was there any?

S: I don't know. I should think there would have been since Lyndon became Majority Leader during that time.

M: What about later, after he became President? Do you have any insights to the situation between Stevenson and President Johnson after that?

S: Let me see. Did he die while President Johnson was in office, or while President Kennedy--

M: He died in August of '65.

S: Well, of course, then, that was a year-and-a-half, nearly two years after President Johnson--

M: He was serving as UN Ambassador for President Johnson.

S: I was not in on any of their conferences I don't believe. I may have been in some of them. Yes, Ambassador Stevenson, I believe, came down nearly every week to attend the Cabinet meeting.

M: I think it was Mr. Johnson who had him elevated to Cabinet status.

S: Yes, and he came down practically every week. Now, of course, those were Cabinet meetings. Then there were various conferences. I can't put my finger on a single one, but I'm sure that there must have been some conferences when he was called down from New York and I was present in the conference.

M: After Mr. Johnson became first, Minority Leader, and then Majority Leader, what about his methods? How did he work?

S: Well, he was vigorous.

M: That's a good word to--

S: I would apply that to it. He was vigorous, and he still is. He was a worker. He didn't necessarily close up his work when he closed up his office. I've had calls from home almost before daylight, at least quite early. And he didn't quit it when he became President. I got a call at home just-- Well, way up in the night just two nights ago--three nights ago.

M: Regarding current problems?

S: Regarding problems. And I've had calls here, and he has called me from Texas when I was home. I'll tell you, that man works all hours of the day and night.

M: Is this what they call the famous Johnson treatment?

S: Yes, I suppose it is. And not only that, but he watched things on the floor. When a bill was up, and a vote was being had, if somebody in the back of the room, on our side, voted the way he shouldn't have voted, Lyndon--. If he felt he should have voted the other way, he'd jump up and run to him, or maybe call out across the room to him. He watched those things, and that's what a leader has to do.

M: In other words, he was thorough in addition to being active.

S: He was on top of it. Now, I'm not saying that this Senator may have voted the way he shouldn't have voted. I don't mean by that Lyndon tried to interfere with conscientious voting, but perhaps a count had been made and this fellow had indicated that he was going to vote the other way, or perhaps it was something that he knew that he should have voted a certain way. I don't think he ever checked with me on any spending vote, because I think he knew--, Well, I think he generally knew how I was going

to vote. He knew that I'd vote along with practically all of the Southerners.

M: Well, that's an interesting point. There has been the claim made from time to time that there was a so-called conservative coalition in both Houses in Congress. Is this how Mr. Johnson worked? Did he base his strength on the so-called conservative coalition as Senate leader?

S: No, I wouldn't say that. And, furthermore, I rather discount this Southern coalition. It's a term that's easily used, but my thought of a coalition just doesn't fit in with the manner and words.

It may be that [if] loosely used it would be proper. I want to say this, and I served in both Houses in the Congress, and I say this about members of the House and members of the Senate. I believe the average member of Congress votes his convictions, and they're not pressured around this way or that way.

M: There's no organized coalition--

S: I don't-- No, not at all. Certainly, there isn't in the Senate. Now, certain people you know are going to vote certain ways. You take almost any issue that comes up. You can go down the list of Senators and pick out how most of them will vote.

M: Particularly a careful, thorough man like Lyndon Johnson was, as a rule.

S: That's right.

M: What about his relationship with President Eisenhower?

S: That's probably one of the most remarkable relationships we've ever seen. As a matter of fact, Lyndon Johnson could very well have been dubbed Ike's leader in the Senate.

M: Well, you know, some of the Democratic opponents came very close to

dubbing him that.

S: Well, I'll tell you, I talked with him-- I was on the Foreign Relations Committee and I would talk with him at times, certainly in the beginning about what I thought we ought to do. And he always took the line, "No, he was President of the United States. If he thinks this is for the good of the country, we ought to back him up in it. We ought to help him up in it." Lyndon would often suggest certain changes or he'd work it out, and he'd talk with the President and they'd work out the changes. Most of the legislation that the Eisenhower Administration can be credited with having thrown in the books is due largely to the work of Lyndon Johnson, in cooperation with the President.

By the way, that brings to my mind something. Do you see the cartoon just below the right of the clock?

M: Merry Christmas?

S: Yes. You see who the two persons are? Who are they?

M: President Eisenhower and you.

S: That's right. I'm giving him a Christmas present, see? You see what that says--"Mr. President--

M: "_____ of Democratic backing on foreign policy."

S: There you are.

M: And Mr. Johnson shared this view with you?

S: That's right. When Ike was elected, he wanted to know from me--. I suppose he came to me first because I had been on the Democratic ticket for Vice President and because I was on the Armed Services Committee.

M: The Foreign Relations Committee.

S: I mean the Foreign Relations Committee. What did I say?

M: The Armed Services Committee.

S: Oh, no, the Foreign Relations Committee. And asked me what my attitude would be on foreign relations. And I said I certainly intend to cooperate with him, because under the Constitution, the President is given the responsibility of charting our course in Foreign Relations. And that cartoon came out in the paper, and the cartoonist--I don't know just which cartoonist it was--sent that to me, and I had it framed and hung up there. And that was the attitude that Lyndon Johnson took.

M: Do you remember any specific positions he took on particular issues in the Eisenhower years, on foreign relations particularly, such as perhaps the Dien Bien Phu crisis in early 1954?

S: Well, of course, there was no Congressional action on Dien Bien Phu. That was--

M: Perhaps private conferences or briefings in which he expressed himself.

S: I'm not sure that conferences were held on that. I've always understood that the Chiefs of Staff--certainly some of them-- and Secretary of State Dulles, recommended that we intervene at Dien Bien Phu. I remember quite well a newspaper man one time asked Secretary Dulles--. This was about the time that Secretary Dulles made that famous speech about choosing our own targets and our own weapons, you know. Let's see, what did he call it?

M: Instant retaliation?

S: Instant retaliation. That's right. This was just after that. And the newspaperman asked Mr. Dulles that if the Chinese interference with the Dien Bien Phu operation--I mean, the French-Viet Nam operations at that time, and it was centered about Dien Bien Phu--if that constituted

such interference as to call for instant retaliation. And his answer was, "Well, it certainly is almost that." And then not long after that, it was my understanding that the Chiefs of Staff--certainly a majority of them--and Secretary Dulles recommended that we intervene in Dien Bien Phu and President Eisenhower vetoed the idea. Now, whether he held any conferences or not, I don't know. I was not in attendance anyway.

M: There was some claim, I believe, on one occasion that the Democratic portion of the Senate and Mr. Johnson, being the leader, crippled what became known as the Eisenhower doctrine during its passage. Would you agree with that?

S: No, I don't think so. Was that the--

M: The Middle East.

S: The Middle East crisis. I don't remember any way that we crippled it. We passed the resolution.

M: You passed the resolution, amended in some ways--

S: Do you remember what? I don't.

M: Oh, I think the critics claimed that you added limiting amendments to eliminate, for example, the confrontation involving the Canal, the confrontation involving Israel from the application of this doctrine. You don't recall any opposition Johnson might have made?

S: No, I don't--

M: That's one of those cases that was publicly magnified.

S: Yes. You know, the first proposition the first resolution that we were confronted with, I believe, relating to confrontation and so forth was in 1955. That was before the Mid-East.

M: Quemoy-Matsu?

S: Yes, the Formosa Straits. You may be interested in this. Just the morning after election, I was at my home in Huntsville, Alabama, when Secretary Dulles called me. And he said, "When are you coming back up here?" And I told him when I planned to come back. "Well, I was hoping you could come back within the next few days." He said, "It seems certain now that the Democrats are going to control the Senate." And I was Chairman of the Far Eastern Subcommittee. And he said, "We're going to want to pass a resolution on the Formosa Straits, and I want to talk to you about it." So I said, "Well, why don't you talk to me on the telephone?" And we had a conversation on the telephone.

I did come back not long after that. And I was in a conference with Secretary Dulles on the Formosa Straits. I supported the Eisenhower Administration in Congress. I don't recall--. It seems like there was some language changed with reference to make a distinction between Quemoy and Matsu--

M: Yes, I believe there was an attempt to make it a little more specific than that.

S: My recollection is that that was acceptable. The thing that always struck me as rather interesting in that was that in the 1952 campaign the Republicans had a plank in their platform that said they would unleash the forces of Chang Kai-Shek. They would remove the Seventh Fleet and unleash the forces that were holding back Chang Kai-Shek. Well, as a matter of fact, this resolution--. We always said it wasn't a case of unleashing Chiang Kai-Shek--. That fleet was there to protect Chang Kai-Shek, to keep the Chinese Communists off of Formosa.

M: I think that was fairly clear.

S: And this resolution carried out that thought of leashing. Well, releash--if you consider that. Anyhow, in connection with it was the announcement that the Seventh Fleet would be kept there. I think probably it served to maintain peace and order, and so forth.

M: Did Mr. Johnson have a close relationship with Secretary Dulles that you know of?

S: I can't say. I'm sure he did. However, I would say that Lyndon Johnson serving as--now, was he Majority Leader?--he was Majority Leader by then--I would say that he dealt primarily with the President and the President's advisers, although he may have taken it up with Mr. Dulles himself. Mr. Dulles dealt largely with me because we had a very active Far Eastern Subcommittee, and he had worked with me back even during the Truman Administration on the Japanese Peace Treaty. I was chairman of the Far Eastern Subcommittee and we'd meet just any time of day. He'd go off, you know--President Truman gave him the commission of promulgating the Treaty. Well, some forty countries were concerned with it, and he visited all these countries trying to bring them together.

M: He was a great traveler.

S: Oh, gee, it kept him on the go all the time. And any time he'd come in, he'd call me and say, "Can you get your subcommittee together," and we'd get it together for breakfast or lunch or in the afternoon or at night, just any time.

M: You were chairman of that subcommittee then, I suppose, when the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Treaty was both signed and consented to?

S: Yes. But on the Japanese Peace Treaty--I can show you another picture over there on the wall--it's over in the middle, that dark picture.

I'm signing a paper there. That's the Japanese Peace Treaty. I was one of four representing the United States who signed that--there were four who signed it, and I was one of the four, and I'm signing it there.

M: So, your relationship with Mr. Dulles went back quite a way?

S: And then after the treaty was signed, I can show you another picture. Look up above right by that cartoon. You see the three fellows there with leis on? Well, that's Secretary Dulles, Senator Alexander Smith of New Jersey--the ranking Republican member of the Far Eastern Subcommittee--and the other one is I. That was in Hawaii on our return from Tokyo. We went over into--. Well, the Peace Treaty Conference was in San Francisco, but afterward we went over to Japan and spent several weeks trying to pull up the loose ends and get things worked out so we'd be sure the Japanese would ratify the treaty, and get fixed it up so that we could count on our Senate ratifying the treaty.

M: _____ When you did get on in later with Mr. Dulles as the Secretary of State and was passing the various alliance treaties, do you remember that Mr. Johnson played a major role in such things, let's say, as SEATO?

S: Yes. In all of the treaties that were submitted he always took an active part. He was not on the Foreign Relations Committee. We would handle it in the Foreign Relations Committee and report it out. And he always took a very active part in making certain that the treaties were ratified.

M: What about when he became Vice-President? You were still, of course, the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee. Did Mr. Johnson play a major foreign policy role as Kennedy's Vice-President?

S: He continued his interest. Of course, he didn't have the authority to really work in the Senate.

M: He made a number of trips.

S: He made trips at the request of President Kennedy, yes.

M: You've done that too. Just a little aside here. At least, some well known trips to Asia and the Middle East in the last several years. What do you think about the value of these travels?

S: I think they're invaluable. As a matter of fact, I've often said that I think it would be a wise thing if every member of Congress, both House and Senate, should be required to travel, both in the United States and in foreign countries. When I was in the House, particularly, on The Military Affairs Committee, I traveled extensively in this country and in areas where we had military installations, including Panama. And in going to Panama, I visited every group--. Our group, by the way, contained a man who was in the Senate at the time, by the name of Harry S. Truman. We went down together to visit Panama, and, in fact, he and I roomed together on that trip. On our way down and back, we visited Mexico and every single one of the Central American countries.

M: You think this both benefits you, as a Congressman, and also maybe the country by your presence there.

S: It did, and this happened to be just before the outbreak of World War II, and I think it was most helpful. It was a friendship visit, that's what it was. And I believe that every member of Congress ought to be--. I have profited greatly from my travels. There was a time when I could say that I had visited most of the nations in the world, but since all these new African nations have come in, I can't say that.

M: There are too many of them now. The percentage is going down.

S: That's right.

M: I believe Mr. Kennedy's, perhaps, greatest accomplishment in foreign relations, might be called the Nuclear Test Ban, as far as he was concerned--. Did Mr. Johnson, as Vice-President, help him get that through the Senate, as you recall?

S: I don't know. I can't say. We had no difficulty with the treaty. The vote, I'm sure, was quite one-sided. I don't remember just what it was.

M: The reason that I get off on this line was that Mr. Johnson had a record as Senator of opposing Lewis Strauss' confirmation in Congress and I believe you joined him. Was that opposition based on some kind of policy differences in connection with banning nuclear tests?

S: Not so far as I was concerned. I can tell you very simply why I voted against Admiral Strauss. I liked the man, but he had a way about him that I simply thought would not be suitable for the Secretary of Commerce. The Secretary of Commerce needs to work with Congress, and Admiral Strauss was very strong in his individual opinions, and he didn't have much yield to him. And I just didn't think that that would fit a man who would be required to work with Congress to the extent that he would.

M: So it's not his alleged opposition to [The Nuclear Test Ban].

S: Not at all. That had nothing to do with [it].

M: Since Mr. Johnson has been President now, and this is particularly in connection with the Foreign Relations Committee and in connection with the leadership that's involved, have the briefings that he has conducted on the various foreign crises that have arisen been adequate?

S: Yes, I think so. As a matter of fact, sometimes some of us thought he was overworking us in those conferences.

M: What is the procedure if an emergency arises?

S: Well, he will just call and says he'd like to see you and a few others at 5 o'clock this afternoon, at 6:30, at 8 o'clock tonight or 9 o'clock tonight, or whenever it might be. Come to the Southwest gate, sometimes he said "don't say anything about it."

M: Were you there, for example, at these briefings prior to the introduction of the Tonkin Gulf resolution?

S: I'm sure I was, but I can't remember. I can't remember just any particular one, but I've been there at numerous briefings throughout the Viet Nam war.

M: Did his briefings amount to consultation, or, as some of his critics have sometimes said, simply telling the Congressmen what's going to be done?

S: Let me say here--Yes, I will say I was down there before he presented this Tonkin Gulf resolution. I think I remember distinctly he had charts showing us exactly where those ships were and the whole outlay there.

M: They made a convincing case that there was no provocative action?

S: That's right. Yes, I was there. He and Secretary McNamara, the Chief of Naval Operations, I'm quite sure, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff--they were all there.

M: Do you remember anybody opposing what became the Tonkin Bay Resolution?

S: Well, of course, when it came up on the Senate floor--

M: I meant during the briefings.

S: No, I don't recall during the briefings. And, as a matter of fact, the heaviest critic of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution afterwards was Senator Fulbright, I suppose, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. And he has often said that if he had known certain things, which he understood

to be true later on, he would have been against--. As a matter of fact, he supported it and led the fight for it on the Senate floor. I believe there were only two against it.

M: Gruening and Morse _____

S: Yes, that's right. Now, that's where some of the controversy came up relating to both the Tonkin Gulf and, also, the conduct of the war. We passed this resolution, and it was construed more or less--and I suppose correctly-- that it was a wide-open resolution for the power of the President to use such force as he saw fit, and as he saw necessary, in repelling the Communists. You remember, later on the complaint was made that--well, some of the stuff came out indicated that probably the ship wasn't fired upon, it was only a minor incident. Of course, here's the strange thing about it. And I suppose it's not strange--it's human nature. I listened to every bit of that testimony, the same testimony that Senator Fulbright listened to, and I did not come to the same conclusion that he did.

M: Honest men can disagree on the same things they hear?

S: Certainly. And it's so seldom that you can find two persons who can tell the story exactly the same.

M: Did the Administration during these months, that is, August 1964 through the balance of that year--did they make a case that convinced you of the genuine extent of infiltration from the North?

S: Oh, yes.

M. How early would you say they made this clear?

S: I don't know. When did we authorize the escalation, I mean when did the escalation take place?

M: In February of 1965. I believe the first air attacks took place in February of 1965. And then the troop movements were authorized in the summer of '65.

S: Yes. Well, I would say that it was not long before that first escalation. I believe at the time we had probably just, I think, 75,000 [22,500] troops there.

M: Yes, sir. And it went up to 120,000.

S: Yes, I think that's right. Well, it was some time before that. And he held more than one conference. In fact, I can remember two or three conferences regarding that. And I remember the last he held. He had a group of us down there in the morning. I think he had us at 10 o'clock, maybe we came in at 9:30 in the morning. He was going to have a news conference at 11:00. He had to make his decision before that time. And if I ever saw a man literally torn to pieces, it was he that morning.

M: You're talking about President Johnson?

S: Yes. He asked each one-- He went around, out of the probably fifteen or twenty of us were there, and said, "What would you advise? What would you advise?" And practically everybody that was there--I'm not sure everybody-- I don't remember whether Bill Fulbright was there or not--. But practically everybody there said, "I'd put more troops in there. I'd put in whatever is necessary to hold them back."

M: So that was more or less a unanimous opinion of these [men].

S: Yes, it was.

M: That's interesting--you mention the way Mr. Johnson looked that morning. You know, like entertainers, sometimes they say describe the real Johnny Carson, the real Jack Parr-- What would you say is the real Lyndon Johnson

regarding Viet Nam?

S: I think he has been severely torn inwardly by the grief and worry relating to Viet Nam. Now, on that morning he started off by saying, "I can do any one of five different things." He named them. It all amounted to continuing as we were or putting in enough to close it off. I think he said at that time it would take about 200,000. Or we could put in a lesser number that would be able to hold down the level of infiltration. Things like that. "Which one of these shall I do?"

M: Do you think he listened to all the sides--

S: Yes, I think he listened, and I don't think his mind was made up at the time. He said, and he kept saying, "Listen, I've got to make up my mind." After all, you know that's one thing about the Presidency that I think people sometimes overlook. He can get all the advice in the world that he wants, but the decision--that hard decision-- in these things is his. And nobody else can make it.

M: What was it Harry Truman had said--

S: "The buck stops here." It still does, and we ought to remember that about the Presidency of the United States. And I imagine he has some pretty lonely and grievous times making some of these hard decisions.

M: The Foreign Relations Committee, which is his advice committee, in the Senate part of government (?), has been dominated--or if not dominated, at least has contained a number of his opposers--has the presence of these bills, so-called, on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, have they been effective in their opposition?

S: Well, yes, they've made it quite difficult for us in getting some of our legislation out. However, I want to be sure to differ with your

use of the word dominated. It's true the communications media have often referred to the dissident Foreign Relations Committee, or that the Foreign Relations Committee is against the President, or against this or against that, when such is not the case at all. It happened that the chairman was in that group, and when he spoke they took that to be speaking for the full Committee; when actually the overwhelming majority of the committee may have looked at the matter differently.

M: Do you think that things such as the famous televised hearings in 1966 and later, are an effective activity for the Foreign Relations Committee?

S: I think they are to an extent. I thought the first televised hearings we had were very good and very informative to the country. Now, let me say this with reference to others. The temptation to a Senator is very great to utilize that free TV time to make a speech.

M: I noticed that. I went to the hearings.

S: So it gets to be a series of speech-makings more than it does really searching in with questions and answers. For that reason I have rather cooled off toward the idea of public hearings.

M: Has the well-known coolness, as it's called, between President Johnson and Senator Fulbright hindered the effectiveness of the Foreign Relations Committee?

S: I don't know that it has. I think that--. I want to be sure that we don't get this mixed up. I think Senator Fulbright's attitude has certainly hindered some of the things before the Foreign Relations Committee, although not necessarily controlling it. In other words, it might slow it up or get in a lot of good strong discussion, but when it comes to a vote, usually the vote has gone the way the President wanted it.

M: Has this coolness between the chairman and President Johnson enhanced your position as number two ranking Democrat?

S: Well, I wouldn't say it has enhanced it. It has made it rather difficult for me. You may not know, but on the Foreign Relations Committee I sit between Bill Fulbright and Wayne Morse. Actually, Mansfield's supposed to sit on my left, but in a great part of the time he's not able to be there--attending to Senate business, and so Morse sits there. I've often said that I was really caught between--. No, it hasn't--. I wouldn't say it has enhanced my position. It has made my position difficult in more ways than one. I admire and respect Senator Fulbright and Senator Morse, both. I respect their views, and I hate very much to be in a position of differing with them. But I've had that to do.

M: The Administration has not gone around Chairman Fulbright to you, perhaps in an effort to get their measures through the committee?

S: I don't think there has been any willful going around. They've talked with me a good many times when they knew that I was friendly to a proposition. And, also, throughout this year because Senator Fulbright has been home in Arkansas most of the time campaigning.

M: And you've been acting chairman.

S: And I've been acting chairman.

M: For instance, the Nonproliferation Treaty, you guided that through?

S: That's right.

M: Is it true, as is sometimes claimed, that those who opposed the President consistently on important matters get the word is probably too strong, but I can't think of another one--punished politically?

S: Oh, I don't think so. As a matter of fact, there used to be a saying

over in the House of Representatives--. I don't think I've heard much of it in the Senate--that those fellows who opposed the Administration in their legislation really get the best treatment in the hope that they can pull them around.

M: It would be a good idea to oppose every once in awhile then?

S: I doubt that that's true, but nevertheless they say it looked that way.

M: Well, let's change the subject a little bit here. You're chairman of the Subcommittee on European Affairs currently.

S: That's right.

M: How would you characterize Mr. Johnson's policy toward the Atlantic Alliance and toward, what we like to call, building bridges? Has he displayed new initiative, in your opinion, in this area?

S: Yes, he has. Of course, when you speak of the European Alliance, I presume you mean NATO. He has maintained a very strong position toward NATO, and I'm sure it will continue and I'm sure whoever becomes President will be the same. Now, with reference to the building of bridges, I think he was quite hopeful sometime ago, but the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia has just about killed any chance of his building bridges making any progress.

M: You mean in Congress?

S: Yes. Not only in Congress, but I think in the diplomatic field.

M: Throughout the government then?

S: Yes.

M: What about foreign aid? Has President Johnson had throughout his career a consistent position regarding foreign aid?

S: I believe so. I think he's a realist and recognizes the great need.

M: And is there a significant difference between the way his foreign aid program has been designed, and his predecessor, Presidents Eisenhower's and Kennedy's?

S: I don't know that you can say that. The best way to compare foreign aid programs, I presume, would be the amount provided. And foreign aid program has been declining in amount over the years.

M: Why is that?

S: Well, for one thing, because the need became less. You take, for instance--. Foreign aid was really, I guess you could say, an outgrowth of the Marshall Plan aid. The Marshall Plan aid was so effective that it rebuilt Europe. While some of the European countries continued to get aid after the Marshall Plan was over, that all soon went out. We don't extend any aid through the Marshall Plan concept. Well, I take it back. Greece and Turkey still get some.

M: In other words, it accomplished its purpose--

S: It accomplished its purpose.

Now take a country like Taiwan-Formosa. It's out from under the economic aid--foreign aid.

M: You think then this is the chief reason why the amount has tended to decrease--

S: Yes. And a great many countries I could name have really grown out from under it.

M: So it's not a matter of opposition so much in Congress as--

S: Well, there has been opposition--no question about that--but even the requests made by the President, have been less. And this year, of course, as you know, it's the smallest of any during the twenty

years it has been operating. We handled it very carefully in the Foreign Relations Committee. I think we did a good job with it and there's one thing quite noticeable. There were amendments proposed in the Senate when the bill was up, but not a single one of them was agreed to.

M: The bill passed just like the Committee reported it?

S: Right. So far as dollar amounts were concerned. Actually, in the--. Oh, you may be interested in this. Right after it passed--I handled it, you know, since Senator Fulbright was gone--I had a note from Senator Fulbright saying, "Congratulations, this is the first time in foreign aid history that the Senate has passed a bill without reducing it."

And, by the way, the final appropriations from the Senate which was agreed to just yesterday--that built it up pretty close to what the Senate had passed.

M: Then, as far as foreign aid is concerned, for example, what about things like the Asian Development Bank? I understand the Senate is withholding advance approval of the funds for that.

S: That's special. That is a special fund that is part of the Asian Development Bank. That is not a part of foreign aid as we think of it; it's more an operation of the World Bank. I mean, like the operation of the World Bank.

M: Right. But the committee has been reluctant to pass on things of this nature?

S: Well, only--the special fund is not ready to go into operation yet. True, that some of the countries have promised a good bit of money, and this accounts for some of the letdown in foreign aid. This special fund

is on a unilateral basis whereas foreign aid has been bilateral--we are the ones putting up the money. Now, for years, our committee has been urging that more and more of it be done multilaterally. Now you take the World Bank, the Asian Bank, the special funds for the Asian Bank and all of those things--. The beauty of it is we put up, say, a hundred million dollars where other nations may come in and build that up to five or six hundred million dollars.

M: So, everybody gets involved.

S: That's right. And another thing I was going to say about foreign aid. One reason that accounts for its being cut down, we do that with other things. Take, for instance, the International Development, and you take various funds that are set up--. We ask the developed nations who are able to come in, and they do. In fact, this may be surprising, but I think it's true, we don't give as big a percentage of our gross national product to foreign aid as some of the other countries do.

M: I've read that, yes sir. What you're saying, I think, is--if I understand you correctly, is that to the extent our participation in these multilateral projects goes up, that would cut down--restrict foreign aid?

S: That is right. There's another feature about foreign aid, too. Formerly we spent a lot of foreign aid on grants. Grants are practically a thing of the past except for technical assistance--the old Point Four Programs, for feeds and grains and health and agriculture and things of that kind. Practically all the aid we give now is in the form of loans on rather generous terms, but nevertheless, loans that have to be repaid with interest. And I'll say this. The countries on foreign

aid since the end of World War II, have a very good record of repaying their loans.

M: Which indicates that they're doing the jobs that the loans were intended to do.

S: That's right.

M: You're also chairman of the Committee on Banking and Currency and I just have a few comments that I'd like to hear from you on that, if you don't mind. One is the connection of public housing; you've been a big champion of public housing; I believe you managed the 1965 Housing Act on the floor of the Senate. What would you say [about that]?

S: Well, I first managed in 1949 Act. That's when I started.

M: I was referring to President Johnson's career here, and I was going to ask you what your perception of his housing policy was?

S: He has been very good in his support of housing, and we have passed some very good housing legislation. This year we've passed the most comprehensive, the most massive, housing legislation we've ever passed. And, of course, it was with his approval. I want to say though that we started out last year, in the first year of the 90th Congress, working on housing, and particularly trying to get housing at a cost that people of lower incomes could afford to buy or to rent. And so we hit upon a plan of subsidizing the interest rates. I think we reported out a bill subsidizing it down to 3%, in other words, making it possible for the loan to be made in private industry, building and loan associations, FHA, VA, whoever it was, at the standard rate of interest, but then have the government help out with that by paying all interest over 3%. Now that did not have government approval.

M: You mean Administration approval?

S: Yes. We reported it out, but then when we came back this year, the Administration came in with a housing program which followed our pattern except they went us some better and reduced the interest rate to as low as 1%.

M: That has been passed now?

S: Yes, it's law--signed into law on August 1st.

M: The Senate took initiative and then the Administration picked it up.

S: That's right. So, I cite that as an instance of cooperation. And then he went on further than we did and with many more things, and we cooperated with him and passed the bill, virtually as it was presented to us.

M: Another activity of that committee is balance of payments, I think.

S: That's right.

M: Do you think President Johnson has presented an adequate program to solve the crisis in our balance of payments?

S: I don't know that I can say that it's adequate yet, because it's a long drawn-out proposition. This is not something that you just heal overnight. But during this year, our committee--. During this Congress--our committee has reported out and passed--and most of it was this year--legislation relating to the gold cover, for instance, and changing the authority of the Federal Reserve Board and the various financial institutions. And several other things that we have passed, to steady the international monetary situation and thereby firm up the American dollar, by which, in the long run coupled with favorable export business, as against import business, we should be able to reach a better position in our balance of payments.

M: "Without" refers [reference] to compulsory investment limitations abroad? Has there been any sentiment among the committee for that--compulsory limitations?

S: Well, I believe the Treasury Department has put certain restrictions on investments abroad. I can't give you the details just now, but I believe we have some restrictions, more in the way of sending money back to this country than anything else.

M: In line with that too, has there been anything, since we are in what is now a rather busy world, to limit--to put a ceiling on prices and rents?

S: No, no, no, and I hope we'll never have to do that.

M: The Administration has never suggested the possibility of that?

S: No.

M: Now, just a few last questions about politics here, and I'll let you get to your other obligations.

What was your reaction to the news that Lyndon Johnson had joined John F. Kennedy_____

S: I was not greatly surprised.

M: You expected that he might be willing to change his power in the Senate for power somewhere else?

S: Yes.

M: Of course, you had some experience with that--

S: That's right. Well, it's a challenge that a person could hardly turn down. Now, of course, Lyndon Johnson was an opponent to Jack Kennedy in the race for the Presidential nomination, and a statement had been made--and perhaps he had made it--that he would not accept the Vice-Presidency. But I said all the time that if Kennedy should be nominated

and should offer the Vice-Presidency to Lyndon Johnson, he would accept it, because it seems to me to be a challenge for a man like Lyndon Johnson.

M: Do you think he made a significant contribution to the ticket's success in the election that followed?

S: I'm sure he did.

M: As Vice-President, did Lyndon Johnson continue to play the kind of role of leadership at the Senate that he had as Senate leader?

S: No. As a matter of fact, the Office of Vice-President doesn't allow that. The Vice-President--in his relation to the Senate--. It's a peculiar relation. In fact, I suppose this is maybe the only country in the world that has such a relationship. He's the President of the Senate, but he is not in any way connected with the Senate. The only two functions that he can perform in the Senate are to preside over its sessions, and second, to vote in case of a tie vote. Those are the two sole functions of the Vice-President.

M: He didn't try to exercise informal leadership throughout?

S: Oh, to some extent. Naturally, he'd visit with the Democrats, but--there's another thing--as Vice-President, he was kept pretty busy by the President, running missions, doing missions for him.

M: Which took him away from the Senate.

S: That's right.

M: After the assassination, did you have personally any early talks with the new President Johnson at that time?

S: Yes, I went down to see him very soon actually. It was a strange situation. I had made an appointment with Jack Kennedy for some of the people down

in my area--the States of Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky, --to have a conference with President Kennedy on, I think it was December 3rd.

M: That was right after the assassination.

S: I made it some time before, December 2d or December 3d, I don't know exactly. And, of course, it was cancelled out. But I went down to see President Johnson either just before or after--. I'm inclined to think it was after that period. I went down to see him about resetting the date, and we did have a meeting. It had to do with the so-called Tennessee-Tombigbee Canal.

M: That was a power project, wasn't it.

S: No, it's really navigation connecting the Tennessee and the Tombigbee Rivers. Their tributaries almost join now-just with a short canal they can be joined.

M: The flood of legislation that the 89th Congress particularly passed because of Johnson. How did he operate to get that through?

S: I can only testify to my own committees. As I say, he'd call you any time of day or night if he has got something he wants to do right quick. Or he would want to know what might happen to it and so forth. And even as Subcommittee chairman--. I'm chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing, anything on housing, he'd just call me up and being chairman of that subcommittee, he'd just call me up and say "you're chairman of that subcommittee and I want you to do so-and-so. What's the situation, or can you do so-and-so?"

M: Could John Kennedy have passed this amount of legislation had he lived?

S: Oh, I think so.

M: Oh, you don't think, then, that there was any legislative magic that Johnson had?

S: Not after he left the Senate. Now, Jack Kennedy could never have performed in the Senate as Lyndon Johnson did.

M: Oh, no, I meant--

S: --as Majority Leader. No, I think Jack Kennedy would probably have followed the same pattern. I don't know that he would have been as frequent as President Johnson. I think he would have followed the same pattern and could have had the same [success].

M: Sometimes, writers have commented that Lyndon Johnson's career is divided into first, a conservative phase, when he was in the Senate, and later, a liberal stage, as Vice-President, and the as President. Do you think that is accurate?

S: Well, I think undoubtedly--I think he would say that his position has changed. He was sitting on a different side of the table, and he saw things that--. I don't think there's any question about that.

M: This may have a lot more to do with John Sparkman than it does with Lyndon Johnson, but I think it's important for people to know come generations far away (?)--. You have been a consistent supporter of the Great Society measures, as you were of the Fair Deal and [similar measures] before that--

S: And the New Deal.

M: And the New Deal before that, right. How does an Alabama Senator get away with this in light of the public stereotype of Alabama politics?

S: Well, you know, when you say that I supported most of the--. What did you call it?

M: Well, the various Great Society measures--

S: The Great Society. I don't know whether that's true or not. I'd have to check. I know that there are programs that I did not support.

M: I can tell you you supported the Secondary Education Act, the Appalachia Program.

S: Yes. But not the so-called poverty program and some of the others--some phases of the Education Program that I did not support. Other times, I'm sure. But, here is the thing about it. I have always supported programs that might be called liberal so far as the South is concerned--economics programs, because I realized from the very first--as did practically everybody from the South--that we had to have help down there. We had been made virtually a colony for a hundred years, and we had to have help to rebuild. And I'll point this out to you, going back to the New Deal. You'll find that practically every New Deal measure that was enacted into law under President Roosevelt was sponsored by a Southerner, and never could have passed without the support of Southerners. The Southerners generally supported him. The South has been liberal in economic measures--

M: To your support of these measures hasn't affected your political career in Alabama?

S: No. Well, what I said to my Alabamians always that I always asked myself the question: What was best for Alabama, and that's the way I vote.

M: And that's what they want too, so that makes everything all right. What about Lyndon Johnson's Presidency as its effect on the Democratic Party in the South? Could you comment on that?

S: Well-- you know, it's real hard to answer at this time. Had he run for

the Presidency, I think it would have been easy to answer. But since he has been out since March, was it?

M: March, yes, sir.

S: Yes. I don't think there has been much consideration given to it since that time. I think the thing that has more influence on politics than anything else in the South is George Wallace's campaign, cutting into both the major party candidates.

M: You think Mr. Johnson's lack of popularity may have contributed to Governor Wallace's growing popularity?

S: Yes, undoubtedly it did.

M: What factors do you think influenced President Johnson to decide not to run again?

S: I think it was in order to enable him to dedicate himself completely to the task of bringing peace in Viet Nam.

M: You think the Viet Nam issue was overriding--?

S: Yes. I talked with him that night. And I feel certain that was it.

M: Did he indicate to you that he was going--?

S: No.

M: You had no intimation that--?

S: No, it was afterwards I talked to him.

M: Oh, I see. Then, of course you knew that he could relax and [level with you]? If you had to make a general estimate of Mr. Johnson's Presidency--

S: I may say I was in Huntsville when that speech was given, and I called him over the long distance to ask if he really meant it and to say I hoped he would reconsider.

M: _____ You served under Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower,

Kennedy, and then Johnson.

S: Five of them.

M: That's a long time--

S: Let me say. Speaker Rayburn used to get after us for saying "served under." He said "served with." I served with the five of them--. There are their pictures on the wall.

M: How would you estimate, as a historical perspective, Mr. Johnson's Presidency?

S: You know, that's hard to tell now. You've got to get on with the future. I think you've got to wait until we get through this Viet Nam war.

M: To see how things come out--

S: That's right.

M: Do you think you could indicate, as a man, specific strengths and weaknesses of his nature that might be of some value?

S: I think he'll always be recognized as a very strong leader.

M: You've been very cooperative and most helpful and before stopping I feel constrained to say, is there anything you'd like to say?

S: No, I'm about "said out."

M: Anything that I haven't asked, or haven't recalled, or haven't known about, any comments you'd like to set down for posterity?

S: I'm about "said out."

M: Okay, Senator Sparkman, I certainly thank you for your time.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Senator John Sparkman

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I John Sparkman hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed John Sparkman

Date Feb. 11, 1971

Accepted Harry J. Kaiser for
Archivist of the United States

Date Oct 6 1973