INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 29, 1974

INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT STOREY

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Dean Storey's office in Dallas, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

F: When did you first get acquainted with Lyndon Johnson?

S: I got acquainted with him before World War II. I had met him and I saw him a number of times in Washington while he was a congressman.

F: You were on the Civil Rights Commission. Of course that started under Eisenhower and continued under Kennedy, but Johnson as vice president had some concern with that. Did you work with him on the civil rights legislation that was passed in 1957?

S: The first that was said about legislation on civil rights was when President Eisenhower was in office. Senator Johnson was very much interested in it, but he had some reservations like a good many of us. The first time I brought it up with President Eisenhower, when I was going over to see him regarding civil rights, I never shall forget Senator Johnson said, "You be sure to tell the President that I will back up anything that he is trying to put through the Congress."

I well remember that that finally went into legislation, and over in the Senate Johnson did a great deal to further the legislation. President Eisenhower appreciated it.

F: Did the commission meet regularly, or did you meet on call?

S: Generally, we had agreed to meet about once every month. Sometimes we'd skip a meeting, and then maybe we'd have three or four days there together. I was vice chairman of the commission.

F: Did you ever hear President Johnson express himself about the legislation?

S: He just reiterated several times his admiration for President Eisenhower and said that in this matter he would certainly go ahead and do what the President wanted done. I think he was very sincere in that.

F: Did Senator Johnson ever express to you what this might do to his southern backing?

S: I don't believe so. I don't believe we talked about it from a political standpoint.

F: When Johnson became vice president, he was chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity program. Did that get together with the Civil Rights Commission at all, or did you stay completely separate? Was there an overlap or an adjoining of some of the work of the Civil Rights Commission on the one hand and the Equal Employment Opportunity program that the Vice President was chairing on the other hand?

S: I don't remember any overlapping on that.

F: When President Kennedy was killed, you were named to a state committee to look into the assassination.

S: Yes. What happened was that as soon as the murder was committed, the attorney general of Texas, Waggoner Carr, called me and then he called Leon Jaworski in Houston, who is a very eminent lawyer and now is up in Washington on the Watergate business. He suggested that he wanted the two of us to be with him as a small commission to investigate the

assassination from a state standpoint. He wanted to get on with the work. He was always ready to do a job if he had to do it, and he'd push it. Waggoner soon suggested that we, just the three of us, arrange for a court of inquiry. There was a good deal of talk about it.

In the meantime the Warren Commission had been created in Washington to investigate the death of the President and all the events before, after, and during.

In any event, it finally resulted in Chief Justice Earl Warren telling us at a meeting with their commission that he thought it would be a good thing if the groups worked together. The President had already appointed the Warren Commission to investigate the assassination. The final decision was that if we--the three of us in Texas--could get information here, the groups would work together. We all agreed to that. There was some reluctance in the beginning, especially with the Chief Justice. But it worked out that whenever any of the members of the Warren Commission--whether one, two or three, I think one time four came down--wanted to come down here to go over it, there wasn't any controversy at all between us. We had some interesting things that happened as it went along.

F: I'd be very interested in that. There weren't any problems of jurisdiction, though?

S: No, we didn't have any problems of jurisdiction at all. Waggoner Carr was the state attorney general and an honorable fellow. The two of us got with him, and we worked together very amicably.

F: Did Earl Warren come down here himself?

S: Oh, yes. Now that's kind of the end of this thing. That's a pretty long story.

F: Good. Let's hear the story.

S: A preface to it was that the first thing that happened after we were working together was that it was suggested that we all meet together down in Dallas to see where it had all happened, the Ruby case and the assassination and everything. It was agreed between the commission, with the Chief Justice's sanction, that any of the members of the commission were free to come down here and look into the facts. They generally came in pairs; I remember one group, there were three of them altogether. Once several came at the same time, including Ford, and this was before the Warren visit. Of course, the FBI was here, and they assisted us a great deal. We examined various items and questioned where certain things happened and all that sort of thing.

I'll get to Warren now. He had a very brilliant lawyer from New York that he was fond of, and he made him his assistant, more or less. He handled a lot of things for the Chief Justice while the Chief was directing it. This general counsel [J. Lee Rankin], who was a member of the commission, phoned me one Saturday afternoon saying that "our friend wants to come down tomorrow morning with two FBI men," or something like that. He wanted to see and do certain things and then go back that afternoon. That was a Sunday.

So one or two of us went out and met Warren and had to brief him. This visit was super-secret. The first thing he wanted to do was go to the site where the tragedy occurred. He wanted to go up to the School-book Depository Building and look out the window and take a gun, just a

repetition of the physical thing. I went up there with him in that corner where there were lots of school supply boxes. Lee Harvey Oswald had gotten a lot of those boxes and put them up in that corner so he could rest his gun right. On this particular Sunday, Chief Justice Warren wanted to see and do all he could. He was greatly concerned about people identifying him, and I told him he was going to have trouble not being identified. I remember when he was sighting up there, you could see people down there gathering around and looking up. I said, "Mr. Chief Justice, they've already found you." He said, "That doesn't matter." After we had looked and sighted with the gun up there in the corner, he wanted to walk down the stairs from the sixth floor, presumably following Oswald's tracks, you see.

In the meantime, the men who were looking after the cars got them around to the rear of the building, so that we could go to the jail that day. It wasn't far away, about two blocks or something like that. When we got downstairs to get in the cars to scoot over there, there was a big crowd of people there. I told the Chief Justice before we got down there that there was a crowd of people and we'd have to be careful. He said, "That'll be all right. We can just go over."

F: You didn't have any trouble getting out, though?

S: No, we didn't have any trouble getting out.

Jack Ruby was the main one that Warren wanted to interview. And speaking of Ruby, I was in church the Sunday after the assassination when he shot Oswald, and they brought the message to me there. But by this time, Jack Ruby had a lawyer from East Texas, and he advised him.

F: Tonahill. A big man.

S: Yes, Joe Tonahill represented him.

We went over there to the cell, and Ruby wanted to be interviewed. He would ask strange questions and didn't talk rationally.

Then, because we had to get a stenographer and on Sunday it's hard to do, we had a recess. We finally got one, but in the meantime when the four of us were together away from Ruby, the Chief Justice said that he wasn't going anywhere to eat where he'd be seen. He turned to me--I'd known him a long time--and said, "Bob, where can we eat privately?" My wife and son had died not long before, and at that time I had an apartment in a high-rise apartment. So I said, "That's easy. I have a cook. It's a small apartment, but we can fix you up in the dining room. And I don't believe you'll be identified if we just go in two at a time.

We arranged that, in order to avoid creating a scene, there would just be two or three cars going to my place. I said, "I'll drive home and get the cook lined up, and I think I can tell the guards down there at the building that you live there now." So that was done. But after we sat down at the table, somebody knocked on the door. We went to the door and the hallway was just packed and jammed with people. Of course, we had the Sheriff and a deputy with us, and they tried to get them out, but it has a hard job. I learned later that Ted Dealey got a tip on it as we came in the reception room of the apartment building. All he did was get on the telephone and say, Come on out here," and that's how the ***Dallas News*** scooped the ***Times-Herald*** on that story.

F: Did you do a lot of interviewing in this investigation, or did you mainly take the facts that the police and the FBI had dredged up and try to evaluate them?

S: We tried to interrogate not important but key people who knew something about some phase of the case.

F: Did President Johnson ever talk to you or to the state group?

S: I don't believe he did collectively, but he seemed to be very interested in it.

F: I presume he'd call you once in a while and ask you how you were doing.

S: Yes, or I would get in touch with him.

To get back to the Ruby business, the Sunday the Chief Justice was here, we finally got back into the cell. There were only three of us, the Chief Justice, his assistant and I. Of course, Joe Tonahill was there with Jack. Ruby just went on and on; he said, "Can't you keep them from killing me?" He'd want the Chief Justice to go over in the corner with him, and he'd talk low. He had his mind on one thing and nothing else. He thought he was a big shot and all that sort of thing. The question came up rather pointedly as to whether or not he was rational, or if he had lost his mind. Of course, he had these weird things he was talking about.

It took me back to a similar situation I had gone through over at Nuremburg years before with Rudolph Hess. We really had experts in on that. When we got Hess back over there, every one of the lawyers, even the British ones, thought he was crazy because of his maneuvers in talking with them. We couldn't get Hess to say anything that was solid and firm. He'd just ramble about how "those people are going to get me."

Finally Justice Jackson had the idea that he would ask the four cooperating nations who were prosecuting to send two psychiatrists, top

people, and that was done. The doctors finally came. There were eight of them, of course, two from our country and two from each of the other countries involved. We got them together and briefed them. I was Justice Jackson's assistant, so I was the one to brief them on Rudolph Hess and his actions prior to that for several weeks. The psychiatrists were to watch him and his habits, eccentricities, whatever they were, and make notes of them for not over ten days.

So they put Hess in the front row there, with the doctors observing film. He would sit up there and pretend to be reading a book and wouldn't talk to Ribbentrop or Göring or anybody. All the other defendants would talk with one another during recess, except Rudolph Hess. He'd just stare and stare and stare.

Up to this time, Hess had fooled everybody who had a responsibility there except Justice Jackson and myself. Justice Jackson said, "Bob, you and I have been in the bullpen and we know when a fellow's acting like he's crazy." Literally, out of this big staff of lawyers there, Jackson and I were the only ones who really thought he was feigning insanity. We had watched him very closely.

The psychiatrists went into it rather fully. Within just four or five days of watching him in detail, they were able to see how he lived in jail. As I said, he had gotten to where he wouldn't talk to his fellow prisoners; he was a soloist. But after the doctors had watched him for the necessary period, their diagnosis was that he was not a man who had lost his mentality; he was an eccentric man, but it was not in the category of anything that might cause him to lose his mind.

So we were called into court one day and told that we would have a hearing on the matter in the next day or so. The court recessed at three-thirty or four one afternoon and we, the prosecutors, were to be there. The justice wanted the German lawyers who were assigned to defend Hess to be there, and they were. So they all testified--all these people that could and would testify--in advance. Meanwhile, Hess just sat there with a kind of frozen face and wouldn't say or do anything. But he had been assigned two good German lawyers. After we all--Jackson and I and the two German lawyers--had argued the legal points, Hess' demeanor and all that, Hess pretended he didn't understand what we were talking about. Then one of the great brilliant judges of England who was the chief justice there--there were seventeen judges, I believe--I'll never forget, took off his glasses and looked straight at Hess who was still sitting there. Then the chief justice said, "I wonder if the defendant would like to make a statement to the court." Hess' eyes brightened and he got up and said, "*Jawohl*! Yes, sir." Then he went on to say how this shadow had been over him for two or three years, and he said, "I am not insane." The next morning when he came in there to his seat, he went to talking to Ribbentrop on one side and one of the others on the other side; he'd drink coffee and talk to his friends. But he had convinced the world that he was crazy.

But coming back to that Sunday in Dallas with Warren, we talked about this issue a great deal as it applied to Jack Ruby. He was just going over and over things, but he wasn't as smart as Rudolph Hess. Hess was one of the big men in the German hierarchy.

F: Do you think Ruby was sane?

S: Just as sane as he could be. Well, I wouldn't say as sane as he could be, but he was not insane.

F: He apparently wasn't just a terribly bright person to start with.

S: No, he wasn't a bright person. During dinner that Sunday, we talked a good while and although most of the others there hadn't kept up with the Rudolph Hess sanity issue, they seemed interested and ultimately seemed to feel that Ruby was just feigning insanity for sympathy.

F: As far as the Texas group was concerned, when did you decide that you'd done enough? How did you decide? Did you just kind of run out of people and evidence to sift?

S: You mean on the general investigation?

F: Yes.

S: Oh, no, there was something coming up all the time, somebody coming and going. Of course, the press played it up pretty pointedly.

F: You must have had a lot of trouble, as so many people did, in their wanting to blame Texas and Dallas for it.

S: Oh, yes. Dallas was first and the people of Texas next. People can act in some crazy ways when they're not crazy, as you know.

F: Shortly after Johnson became president, he named you vice chairman of the Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Route. Was that a pretty active group?

S: Yes, there were some excellent men on it.

F: Did President Johnson give you all a charge to come up with something? Did he meet with you at the beginning? How big an interest did the President show in it?

S: He was very interested in it. While he was in the White House, I believe it was in 1964, he was anxious to get on with that project. He put out a statement and in general wanted to get on with the canal.

F: He felt then, in effect, that we had too much dependence on one route?

S: Yes. It wasn't big enough, of course. But for the sake of the United States, he was very anxious for something to be done.

F: Did the President seem satisfied with the way the Canal Commission was going?

S: Yes, he seemed to be. I think he was very sincere in wanting the canal widened so that it could be truly a sea-level canal. You'd come out of one ocean and go through there and go on to the other ocean. He was very concerned about it.

F: He didn't favor Panama over any other country then?

S: No. In 1964, he issued quite a statement, I believe you've seen that one.

F: When you went to examine sites, did you feel any hostility from the Panamanians? Or were they cooperative?

S: Yes, we felt some hostility. Of course, the Panamanians wanted to get the canal back. That's what they've been after all these many, many years. Generally, they were noncooperative. But of course the United States always had the Governor of the Canal Zone, and he had quite a staff and operated the canal and lots of people were on the payroll. The main thing was that people were concerned about where it would be and if it would be about 250 feet wide. They went into all the details.

F: Did either the Mexicans or the Nicaraguans make much of a pitch for a canal in their areas?

S: In Nicaragua, they wanted us by all means to come and make use of that great lake they had. It was very deep and it would be a great asset, they said. But because of the elevation, they could not, without spending multimillions of dollars, drain that big lake which was somewhere around 375 feet deep. It was wholly impractical.

F: Just wouldn't work.

S: Just wouldn't work, because it was too high. You had to be on level ground. That's what we recommended. Also it was only twenty-five miles long. I don't know whether they're actually doing any dredging or not, but I get these little progress reports all along.

F: You were also on a President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice.

S: Yes.

F: Was the President wanting some concrete recommendations? Was he wanting some reorganization? What was the purpose there? I know you made a report to the President, but what's your feeling?

S: Of course, crime was pretty bad at that time, as you realize, and people here and yonder were writing on it. They were scared. There was lots of violence in the city of Washington which has now scattered everywhere, as you and I know. But the whole effort was to see if we could do something to minimize crime. Of course, when you have to go in--through the legislative side with the pros and cons, it's difficult. We think it did some good, but there wasn't enough work done on it.

F: Did this get mixed up at all with the gun control problem?

S: Oh, yes, indeed. Of course, particularly in our state, you and I know that almost everybody down here believes he has got a right to carry

arms, that that's what the whole Constitution says. But the violence was so bad, particularly in and around the city of Washington, and of course it's bad here now. The whole idea was for the commission to work toward improving criminal justice because it just wasn't effective, it wasn't prompt; they dilly-dallied along.

F: Did the President ever try to implement any of the report, or was this too near the end of his administration?

S: Yes, he did. Of course, several cities ordered a freeze, but so far as that eliminating violence, it didn't get that far.

F: On a number of occasions you went to the White House and met with the President.

S: Yes, I saw the President a good many times in the White House. He'd been my personal friend for a long time. I saw a lot of him in Texas.

F: Did he lean on you some for advice over and above what you were doing in the way of commissions? Would he call you about some problems he had from time to time?

S: Every once in a while he would ask me something about things that were going on. You know how he was. When he wanted something, he wanted it done right now or day before yesterday. Of course, my connection with him was not very frequent, but I saw him in the White House a good many times.

I don't know whether you're interested in this or not, but your mentioning various commissions reminds me of a couple of incidents that occurred when I was on the Hoover Commission. I knew President Kennedy's father very well in connection with that, and you may remember that his brother, Bobby, the one that was killed, also worked with that

commission. We used to have little snack lunches up there on the Hoover Commission, and Joseph Kennedy and I enjoyed talking with one another. One day we got to talking about finances. Papa Kennedy said that a long time ago as his children reached eighteen or twenty-one years of age--I've forgotten which--they'd come into these million-dollar trust funds he'd set up for each of them, hoping that they would go into public life and they wouldn't be tempted to try to grasp and all that sort of thing. He was very proud of setting up those million-dollar trust funds. Another day we were talking about finances, and one of the commission members asked President Hoover, "How did you accumulate your estate? Did you find some gold or what?" He said, "Fortunately, I made my money before the income tax law was submitted and became a law." In other words, he didn't have to pay any income tax, which would have been in the 85 and 90 per cent bracket. We all sort of quoted that. Hoover was a great statesman and a great humanitarian.

F: You've had a pretty considerable career. Did you ever think about doing an autobiography?

S: I haven't done exactly that. I wrote another book on Nuremburg.

F: I've just about gone through what I wanted to see you about. I wanted to get your opinion on several of these things. I certainly appreciate it, Dean.

S: I was glad to do it.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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