

INTERVIEW I

INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT S. STRAUSS

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

DATE: May 22, 1969

PLACE: 2800 Republic National Bank Building, Dallas, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

M: Let me identify this tape first of all. This is an interview with Mr. Robert S. Strauss--S-T-R-A-U-S-S.

First of all, I'd like to know something about your background: Where were you born, when, where did you get your education?

S: I was born in Lockhart, Texas in October, 1918. My family moved to West Texas when I was a baby and I grew up in the town of Stamford, Texas. I obtained my law degree from The University of Texas where I attended six years and graduated in 1941.

M: I have some information here that you are a former FBI agent. Is that right?

S: That's right.

M: How long did you work for the FBI?

S: Oh, I went in about the time of the beginning of World War II and stayed in till the end of the war.

I returned to Dallas then to practice law.

M: Did you join this firm that you're now in at that point?

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- S: No, this firm really is a firm that I put together, David. I started with Dick Gump at that time, and it's grown.
- M: Mr. Gump is still [with you]?
- S: Mr. Gump is still my partner.
- M: When did you get interested in politics?
- S: I think I always wanted to practice law and I always was interested in politics as far back as I can remember. I think my mother who was interested in politics thought I would make a great politician and she always encouraged my interest.
- M: Did you and John Connally have some connection in school?
- S: Yes, I guess I became active in real politics at The University of Texas. I was one of a number of fellows that were active in campus politics, and rather a remarkable group. Most of them have gone on with their political interest and most of them have had a measure of success: John Connally, Congressman Jake Pickle, former Congressman Joe Kilgore, and Frank Erwin--that whole crowd.
- M: You were a member of that group?
- S: I was a member of that group. We've all stayed friends, and we've all stayed interested in politics and I feel like we've all had an impact on Texas politics.
- M: I know Connally had some connection with Lyndon Johnson and working in campaigns and so forth. Did you?
- S: Yes, my first recollection of Lyndon Johnson was in his first congressional race. I was in school in The University of Texas;

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of course, Austin was in that district. I was an admirer of Franklin Roosevelt. Johnson, when he came down and ran as a supporter of President Roosevelt, captured my imagination and has had it ever since.

M: Did you work in that campaign?

S: Yes, I did. It's funny, when I was thinking about this interview, I was trying to think of what I did. I well recall I was in school in the University and I recall going to Lockhart, Texas. I had an aunt who lived in Lockhart, Texas, and that was in that congressional district. I recall going over to see my aunt and passing out circulars around the square for Johnson. Where I got those circulars, I don't remember. One time I thought John Connally gave them to me, but I'm not sure he was active then. I don't think he was with Johnson. There was a fellow named John Singleton who was then from Waxahachie, now is a federal judge. I believe John Singleton might have gotten those circulars for me, but I can remember handing them around the square and I don't know where I got them.

M: Did you ever meet Congressman Johnson at that time?

S: In that campaign, I may have for one minute--I mean, just a handshake. I was with a group of young people who were for him, and I recall going by an office somewhere downtown picking up those circulars. I just don't know who told me to do it or anything about it.

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M: Yes, they had, as I recall, a headquarters in Austin.

S: They had a headquarters there. But Johnson captured the imagination of a lot of young people. The NYA, he'd been active in, and NYA was very meaningful. Twenty-five cents an hour doesn't seem like much now, but it did then. And a lot of us worked, we were all working then. And he'd been in the [National] Youth Administration and then was running for Congress. As I say, he captured my imagination in 1937. Thirty-two years later, he still has it.

M: Did you follow his career after that?

S: I moved to Dallas when I graduated from law school. Of course, I followed his career, and then I was in Dallas and became active in his statewide races in Dallas.

Dallas was never a good town for Mr. Johnson. He never did well here. I remember he came here and made a speech while he was United States senator. There was a large crowd in that room, five or six hundred people, that day and he said how much he enjoyed being back here. And he said, "I look out over the crowd there and there's Bob Strauss who was working for me when I didn't have three friends in Dallas County, I guess." So he knew. Dallas has never been really a good town for him, and I went to work here.

M: Why was Dallas not ever a good town for him?

S: I don't know. I think in the Coke Stevenson campaign that Dallas was more conservatively oriented than Mr. Johnson was. But I

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can recall a number of people including the president of a railroad and one of the leading railroad lawyers and one of the leading insurance company lawyers that I called on for Mr. Johnson and got their support, but this was rare. Number one, I remember they were concerned about his labor record and I went over the facts to show them that his labor record really on balance was pretty good, as far as they were concerned. He was neither pro- or anti-labor, and he had a record that they, as members of the business community, could live with. So I like to think that I was helpful to him then; I think I was.

M: So you had worked in the campaign of 1941 against Coke Stevenson? Then again in 1948 when he ran, I suppose, and this is the Senate race?

S: Yes, yes, that's correct.

M: Which he finally won.

S: Which he finally won, that's right. I was in the O'Daniel race and the other.

M: Yes, the O'Daniel race being the earlier one. Now, I suppose you met him on these occasions and talked to him and conferred with him.

S: Oh, yes, in the Coke Stevenson race, I saw him any number of times. Matter of fact, I think there's a picture taken of him throwing his hat into a ring of people. I remember seeing an old picture and I remember my being in that picture.

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M: That was the campaign where he used the helicopter.

S: That's the campaign where he used the helicopter very effectively.  
And of course I met him then any number of times.

More of my contact then was probably with John Connally. I really was part of a Connally crowd. You have to remember John Connally played a unique role. We were all John Connally contemporaries, but yet John Connally was always sort of chairman of the board.

M: I see.

S: He had the unique quality of having leadership without getting resentment from it. We never resented Connally for being chairman of the board; everyone just assumed that he was in charge.

M: Then in his successive senatorial campaigns, did you also help?

S: Oh, yes, whatever they asked us to do, we did. It's just that simple. And it wasn't a great deal really; after the Coke Stevenson race, it really was not.

M: It wasn't that difficult?

S: We really did very little. Everyone wanted to get on the bandwagon then.

M: Do you remember celebrating after the Coke Stevenson victory?

S: I remember, yes, I certainly do, but I didn't go to a formal celebration. Keep in mind that we didn't have any one night we decided we were big winners; we were still--I can remember being in touch with John Connally over a period of days, night

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and day we'd talk about different things. I remember I went out to a couple of places and one of my law partners did to be sure the votes were counted correctly and that we got these ballots in and the boxes in.

M: This is when you found the election was going to be so close.

S: So close and lot of these boxes weren't in. For example, one of my partners then was a fellow named Irving Goldberg who was a very close friend of Mr. Johnson's. The truth of the matter is Irving Goldberg was a closer personal friend of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson than I was. I was more active possibly politically because I worked through Connally, but Irving now is a federal judge; he's in the federal judiciary as a circuit court judge, having been appointed by Mr. Johnson.

M: Well, when the call came out to check the boxes, what did you do in that 1948 campaign?

S: Well, it seems to me we went out and checked some boxes.

M: I mean, what do you do when you check boxes?

S: We got on the phone and called in, "Where are those boxes? Bring those boxes in, and why aren't you getting in your votes, and how are you doing?" I think we went to Breckinridge and told them to be sure that that old judge out there got his business tended to. See, it's hard to get these fellows to move. Some of them bring them in a week late. But we knew this was too close; every vote counted. We wanted to get those votes in.

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M: Did you have to watch the polls to be sure there was no stuffing of ballot boxes and things like that?

S: I didn't do any of that; I didn't have any responsibility for it. But there are poll watchers of course.

M: Then, did you have anything to do with Lyndon Johnson's presidential bid in 1960?

S: I was very active in that, yes.

M: What was your role there?

S: When we first got into the thing, even before the President [Lyndon Johnson] gave his permission, we were interested in trying to get this campaign started. I was one of those who felt that he couldn't afford to wait and I was one of those who felt that he should move early. I never had occasion to talk to Mr. Johnson, I only talked to people who did talk to him. But I went to Florida, I was responsible for the state of Florida. I went to New York and saw people in New Jersey and was in Washington some. So I worked around all [inaudible].

M: That must have been difficult for you. As I recall, Johnson wanted to spend most of his time in the Senate.

S: He would refuse to get out of the Senate; that's what made it difficult. People don't like to get on the presidential bandwagon of a man they think might not be a candidate and get shut out on one who is a known candidate, and, as a matter of fact, a leading candidate at that time. By the time we got in, it was Jack Kennedy.



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M: So you had to overcome that.

S: That's right.

M: What kind of argument could you use?

S: Well, we had a lot of arguments. One is that we'd get him in, that once the session was over and Mr. Johnson had completed his duties as majority leader that he was going to get in and once he got in that he was going to win. We misjudged it badly. We thought the Senate was still the base of power in America. The truth of the matter the Senate wasn't; the statehouses were. I think Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn, having grown up as products of the Washington scene, misjudged it worse even than people like me. Their environment was solely oriented to Washington, and I really believe [they thought] that when the various senators from around the country and the various congressmen from around the country with whom Johnson and Rayburn had such wonderful rapport over the years, when they really moved out in their [areas] back home, they would swing delegates. It just didn't happen that way.

M: It didn't work that way.

S: No.

M: Did you go to Los Angeles?

S: Oh, yes, I went to Los Angeles.

M: Were you a member of the Texas delegation?

S: I don't recall whether I was a member of the delegation that year or just on Johnson's staff. I forget how we lined it up, but I

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was a member of the Johnson staff.

M: Were you surprised or disappointed when Johnson took the vice presidential position?

S: Shocked!

M: Shocked?

S: Shocked would be a better word.

M: You were shocked for the reason that you didn't think he would take such a position, or couldn't, or what?

S: I was shocked. I guess I wasn't as sophisticated as I thought I was. I neither thought it would be offered nor did I think he would consider accepting it.

John Connally had a secretary out there who called me. I was staying at the Beverly Hills Hotel, I was living better than most of my fellow workers out there, I had my wife and daughter there. I'd had dinner I think the night before with Jack Valenti and the present Judge John Singleton and a group of others. I got a call the next morning that said, "Come on in," and they were having a meeting with some people. "Mr. Johnson's going to accept the vice presidency," I guess it was around noon I heard. No one was as stunned as I was. Matter of fact, I left town the next day.

(Interruption - Telephone)

M: You say you left town?

S: That next day I left town, went to San Francisco, and a very interesting thing about that and this I think might be something

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a little unique I might add to this story. We met Walter Jenkins and his wife and John Connally and his wife in Las Vegas three or four nights later. I'd gone on to San Francisco and I don't know where each of them had gone, but we had dinner together in one of the hotels in Las Vegas. We were out there taking off a few days. I remember John Connally saying to me, "Bob, don't be so glum and so depressed. We just got the hell kicked out of us out here. And deserved it, maybe. But we all learned a great deal, and I have a feeling that we learned some lessons that are going to come in handy over the years."

And, at the time I paid little attention to that, I thought it was just a philosophical approach to what we at that time thought was a rather sad situation. And I've often thought how wise he was in his judgment. I also recall seeing Senator George Smathers the next morning at Las Vegas, after this Connally conversation. And George said to me, "Bob, I don't know why he did it, but I've been around him long enough to know that if he did it, it's right. And I just have to take it on faith, on confidence in him." And I'll remember that conversation.

M: You mentioned that Connally said that you learned a lot from this campaign. What did you learn?

S: Well, we learned how little we knew, I think, about political conventions in general and how they operated. But more significantly, I think we learned a lesson that I earlier stated to you and that is that politics in America was changing and

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that the senators and congressmen didn't really control the situation back home, didn't have as much influence with the delegates as we had thought they had, and Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn thought they had. The statehouse is still the center of power in most states.

M: Did this mean that the primaries were more important?

S: This meant that the primaries were more important. Of course it did. It also meant that work back home on an individual basis was more important, that you couldn't rely on Senator so-and-so to come in and influence his whole delegation.

M: Right.

S: For example, I had Florida, I said it was a responsibility of mine. And we lost about six votes in Florida to the Kennedys even though most of the people wanted him and George Smathers did everything he could to help us with Johnson. But he just didn't control them all, and the work just hadn't been done there. An interesting sidelight on that: I remember they had a favorite son campaign for Senator Smathers. His name was placed in nomination as a favorite son and I had worked with that Florida delegation so much that to get them to go for Johnson, I had to organize and produce and help them build the signs for their favorite son campaign, and then I marched in it. I was a strong member of the Florida delegation then, but I was keeping my friendship with these people, so they would stay with Johnson.

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M: Were you contacted at all after the assassination of John F. Kennedy?

S: Well yes. I was the first outside person to the hospital.

M: How did you happen to be there?

S: Someone came up to me at the Luncheon Hall and said, "Aren't you with John? Aren't you on John Connally's staff?" I said, "No, I'm not." This is before it [the shooting] was confirmed. We were all waiting for this luncheon.

M: Where were you?

S: I was at the luncheon. I'd been active in planning the luncheon. I had represented John Connally in the planning of the presidential visit to Dallas. As you know, with all these advance men and everything, you have to keep the President and the Vice President and the Governor [happy], everybody has to be kept happy. I was on the arrangements committee representing Governor Connally and, instead of being in the parade, I'd gone on out to the luncheon to wait. And someone came in and said, "There's been trouble." One of the highway patrol did. He said, "Governor Connally's sister's here. Can you get her?" I got Governor Connally's sister and the highway patrolman rushed me to the hospital and I got there and Mrs. Connally was standing there. I didn't see the Johnsons then. I went in another door and I saw Mrs. Connally standing there, and I think the Johnsons had just left for the airport. Mrs. Connally was leaning up against the wall by herself and I saw her there and the next thing I did was, while the Johnson plane was airborne, I immediately put in a call for the Governor's Mansion in Austin and we kept that line open. We told them to go

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get Lynda who was in school there. I remember talking to them, and I remember Lynda saying, "Is my daddy all right?" And I said, "Yes, dear, your father's fine. He's on his way to Washington and you'll hear from him." So that was my role.

Interestingly, when I returned to my law office days later, it seemed an eternity, but I learned that the President had called here from Air Force One just before he took off and had sought advice from my partner, Irv Goldberg, with respect to what he thought on who should give him the oath and whether it should be taken here or there. The present Judge Goldberg was wise. He was not here but was at home and they called him then at home, and of course he was wise enough to know that anyone can give an oath, even a notary public. He got in touch with Judge Hughes and then she did it. So we were really intimately involved with that.

M: Maybe you can answer a question that's rather mysterious. Nobody seems to know the answer. In the books and so forth written about this trip, there's the idea, the conjecture, that Kennedy came to Texas to heal a rift between Connally and Yarborough. Is there any truth in that?

S: Absolutely none. And I've done more research on that than, I guess, anybody in America, including all the authors.

M: All right, then why did Kennedy come to Texas?

S: Kennedy came to Texas for a number of reasons, I would imagine. The major one is his political fortunes were in very bad shape

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in Texas. I helped Governor Connally when he prepared his story which ran in Life magazine. As you look over on that wall, you'll see the picture and the inscription there. It's a picture from Life magazine.

M: Right. That's the one of John Connally standing with his hat in his hand.

S: That's the one of John Connally. Came off of the cover of Life. The reason he sent me this picture from Life is because I worked on that story with him. We made a great effort to help write a very simple and factual account.

M: I might say for the record that on this picture there's an inscription that says: "To Bob Strauss, a great citizen, wise lawyer and loyal friend whose unselfish devotion and tireless work made this picture possible." And it's signed: "With gratitude and affection, John Connally, Governor."

S: Connally had been to Washington and discouraged President Kennedy from making the trip sometime earlier, but the President was very anxious to come down here. As I say, his political fortunes were sagging and a poll was showing that he and Johnson were going to have one hell of a time carrying this state against Goldwater, for example. And the second thing was he wanted to raise some money. We didn't want him to raise a lot of money down here, but he was hot to raise money and so we put on a fund raiser and had this very successful trip until that horrible minute. But I don't think it had anything to do with Yarborough.

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M: That has a long background, because they've just had many disagreements.

S: That's right. It still exists. That's right.

M: Did you have any contact then with the new President after this?

S: Yes, I had contact with him on a number of occasions.

M: These were social occasions, and then I assume--

S: Social and political.

M: How about the campaign of 1964, did you work in that?

S: Yes, I was in the campaign of 1964. Helped organize the Texas effort, and helped raise money for it.

M: Was that a fairly easy campaign?

S: In Texas, yes, it was an easy campaign for us. We didn't spend a lot of money; we didn't do a lot of things we would normally have done. Then I don't remember if it was before or after, I guess it was after the campaign, we had a very large and successful fund-raising affair here to pay off the debt of the Democratic Party. And we left the party absolutely free of debt for the first time in many years. Mr. Johnson was very anxious to keep his house in order financially. And we did so. I was active in that dinner and, as a matter of fact, sat with him at the dinner that evening.

M: Did you ever do any special committee work for Johnson?



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S: No.

M: I've noticed a picture over here that looks like it was taken on board Air Force One.

S: That's right.

M: Is that correct? What was the occasion of the picture?

S: Well, I was in Washington. We were having a big fund-raising dinner in New York the following night. And some of the men at the White House brought to the President's attention that I was in town or some way or another it came to his attention, and they [the Johnsons] asked my wife and I if we'd go to New York and join them for dinner. My wife was in Texas. I was very flattered of course. They asked if we'd fly with the President, so Helen flew up from Dallas the next day, and I flew in Air Force One with the President.

(Interruption)

S: Anyway, I took that trip there. Then to show you how thoughtful the President can be, when I got to New York that dinner was in that grand ballroom of the Waldorf, thousands of people there, big fund raiser they were having. I said to my wife, "Honey, I really feel bum about asking you to come up for this dinner. We don't know anyone here, and there are thousands of people. We'll be sitting back in the corner with some people we have nothing in common with." I walked in and asked for my table there. People had already assigned you tables and I gave them my name and they said, "Oh, are you the Mr. Strauss from Dallas,

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Texas?" And I said, "Yes." They said, "You're sitting with the President." And we went over and sat at a table with about twelve people. That ruined my evening really because I spent the rest of the evening thinking how terrible it was that I was sitting there with the President and no one knew who I was!

(Laughter)

M: On those occasions, Lyndon Johnson could be very gracious?

S: Very gracious, on an occasion like that. He danced with my wife twice; he asked them to move the centerpiece--well, I sat across from him--where he and I could visit better. And as tough and as mean as he can be when the chips are down and he has to be, and as thoughtless as he can be when his mind is on other things, and as demanding as he can be, he also can be just that gracious.

M: I suppose Mrs. Johnson was there?

S: Always there and always even more gracious than the President.

M: Do you have any impressions of her role as first lady?

S: Oh, I would be a bum person to assess her role because there are so many people who can assess it much better. But from the distant view I've had, I would think it a very significant role.

M: I've heard that Lyndon Johnson as president more or less neglected state politics and the state political structure.

S: Oh, I think he did neglect it. I don't think he had any interest in it. I think he rose above provincialism. That's the thing I always liked about Lyndon Johnson. While he was a product of

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his state, I don't think he was ever a captive of it, and I think he always was broader in his views.

M: Your work in state politics then was not obstructed?

S: Never obstructed in any way by Johnson. He never helped us, he never hurt us. He went about his business.

M: Could he have done something to help you more?

S: Oh, I don't know, I never thought about it in those terms. I'm sure any United States senator could do more than he does and he's a man of great influence. Particularly this man was, and he knew what was going on in Texas. But he didn't help, he didn't hurt, he went about his business and was above that. He was only active in state politics, I think, when he felt that it was significant to the national picture, as when he had the fight with Allan Shivers over control of the delegation.

M: This is in 1956?

S: Yes, and I think that was not because he wanted involvement in state politics, but because he wanted to be sure that Texas played a significant role in the mainstream of the national political scene.

M: Were you involved in that 1956 fight?

S: Yes, but not a lot. I don't know why I wasn't. As I think back, I don't understand why I didn't have more involvement.

M: Yes, well, thinking about that, did Johnson do the right thing?

S: Oh, I don't think there's any question that he did the best thing. I think he had to do it. It was a bloody fight here,

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and Johnson and Connally and Rayburn and Price Daniel took on a very powerful man in Allan Shivers and did it successfully. I think it kept Texas at that time in the mainstream, as I say, of the national scene. I think Shivers had gone too far that time to the right.

M: He must have made not only Shivers mad, but also the liberals under Frankie Randolph.

S: Yes, he made a lot of them [mad], he took a lot of scars for that, Johnson did, but I think he thought it was important, and I don't think he looked back. I think Shivers respects him a great deal today; I know that he does, it's not just what I think, I've heard him say so. So he didn't lose his respect, he lost his friendship temporarily.

M: That was a tough fight.

S: Awfully tough fight. And as I say, I don't recall why I didn't do more. There must have been some reason that I was tied up away because I was really only on the periphery of that.

M: Were you surprised on March 31, when Lyndon Johnson announced he would not run again?

S: I used the term shocked a minute ago in describing his decision to take the vice presidency and that would be an understatement compared to this other.

As a matter of fact, I had been on the phone that afternoon, Sunday afternoon and talked to Arthur Krim and Jake Jacobson, planning a fund-raising campaign. And my recollection is that

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Krim was talking from [Washington]--I think he might have even been at the White House talking. He wasn't in New York, he was somewhere in Washington, I think over in the Executive Office Building or somewhere.

John Connally called me that night at midnight and asked if I'd come to Austin. I flew down to Austin the next morning at seven and we started assessing what this meant.

M: Do you think now, in retrospect, that Johnson did the right thing, politically speaking?

S: Oh, I don't know, I really don't know. I believe that Johnson could have been re-elected.

M: He would have taken Texas, would he not?

S: Oh yes, and I believe he not only would have been re-elected, but I believe he would have been a meaningful president. Now, maybe the mood of the country is such that it would have been impossible for him to govern as well as someone else, I just don't know; in all candor, I just don't know. In any event, I think he had made that decision a long time before that date and he just was hesitant to lame duck his administration and weaken himself. He waited till the last possible moment, and I know he waited until about the time Truman had made such an announcement because he wanted there to be a historical basis for the time he picked.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson ever help Connally in Connally's campaigns for governor?

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S: No.

M: He was strictly at arm's length--

S: Absolutely left him alone.

M: Is this the way you would have wanted it?

S: That's the way Connally wanted it, and I assume the way Johnson wanted it.

M: Did Connally want to be independent then?

S: Yes, Connally was very anxious [to be]. He's just like a son to a father. The fact that you don't want to have him involved in your business doesn't mean that you love him any less. I think that Connally and Johnson differ on many issues, have always differed on many issues, and they're both two strong, able, tough, formidable adversaries. But the fact that they differ so sharply on many issues doesn't mean that they don't have a great love and affection for each other which I'm sure they do, and their families do.

M: So the independence of Connally in these campaigns was at the desire of Connally and not because there was any bad feelings?

S: No bad feeling, no bad feeling. I would say, yes, Connally felt he wanted it that way, and I think Johnson understood that. And he understood, as I understand with my own sons, there's some times I want to get in and say, "You're not doing this right." Now, they may be doing it right, but in my opinion

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it should be done the way I would do it, but I'm hesitant to meddle and I keep my mouth shut. I'm sure that Johnson has had the same feeling about John Connally, who he loves as much as he could love a son--he's almost like a son.

M: One general question about the fund raising which you've been involved in: How do you go about raising funds? Do you call these people on the phone or do you have meetings or do you get them together and have the candidate come speak to them, or what?

S: I guess you do all those things, David. I guess you do all those things.

M: Is most of it done through personal contact?

S: Yes, most of it. I'm an experienced fund raiser and I do it through personal contact, yes, and where possible, use the candidate; where it's impossible, I don't.

M: Do you ever have to sell the candidate? I mean the idea: this is what he stands for, this is what he'll do.

S: Of course you have to sell. Of course you have to sell that, and I've had notable success fund raising. The main thing I've tried to do is show people, surely, I tried to convince people that, number one, they're not getting anything for their money but good government, and while they may not always agree with the candidate that they're supporting, they are, on balance, getting good government, and that's a pretty damn cheap price to pay, the contribution we're asking. When you tell a group, of course, the sophisticated political givers know that, they

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want to be a part, they believe it's important. They don't give because they want anything or expect any quid pro quo. People know better than that, most people do. There are always those people, a few, who think they're going to get something for nothing.

M: Try to bargain with you or something.

S: Or think that there's something sinister in political contribution. Political contribution is something to take great pride in and both by the recipient and by the donor. I take great pride when I give money. I'm contributing to a piece of America and the American system.

M: Is this the appeal you would use?

S: It's the appeal I do use, and it's very effective. Now I know a lot of people raise money and indicate that the giver's going to be one of the insiders and going to benefit one way or another. People don't respond--decent people don't respond to that, but decent people respond when you tell them they're just damn fortunate to be able to contribute to the American way of life.

M: Did you work with Henry Fowler on this at all?

S: No.

M: I know he was involved in some fund raising.

S: Henry Fowler really wasn't deeply involved in fund raising. Arthur Krim was a great fund raiser for the Johnson administration.

M: He was the chief man then for the nation.

S: That's right. He really had more to do with it than all the rest of them put together. [Richard] Maguire had helped some, and



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[John] Bailey helped some, and a lot of other people helped, but Arthur Krim was devoted to the President, and he had great influence on donors because they knew he was honorable and they knew the money went to the right place and it got where it was supposed to go. He's the fellow. Wonderful man.

M: One last question then: Is there anything that I should have asked you that I didn't? Any contact that you may have had that was significant that didn't come up or any statement you wish to make to conclude with?

S: No, there's one thing I think might [be of interest]. You asked about the President's involvement in Texas politics. I didn't mention, and I should have because it goes to the heart of something else, I'm national committeeman from Texas and I was one of the two or three people responsible for the campaign in Texas for Humphrey and Muskie.

M: You're the committeeman right now, aren't you?

S: Yes. And there were many stories that were coming out that Johnson wasn't doing everything he should do to help Humphrey and just the contrary of course was true. I recall Mr. Johnson calling me to his bedroom at the White House and asking about three weeks before this thing ended. As a matter of fact, it was October 9, that he called me there.

M: You were physically in his bedroom? It wasn't a phone call.

S: Physically in his bedroom, and he was working in bed at nine o'clock in the morning. I was sitting there and aides were

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coming and going, and he said, "Bob, I called you here because I want to know where we stand in Texas. Is Humphrey all right down there?" I said, "Yes, sir. We're in reasonably good shape. We're behind, but we'll catch them." And he said, "Well, I want you to--is John helping you?" I said, "Yes, sir, John Connally, will help us when he wants to." He said, "Tell John I hope he'll do everything he can do." He said, "Don't let those people waste a lot of money down there because it's hard to raise this year, and I know it. You don't have it to throw away. You won't have it when you need it the last few days." I said, "Yes, sir, that's the way I'm running it." And he said, "We've to carry Texas for Humphrey. He's not beat. He's got a chance to win this thing. And it's going to have to be won the last few weeks. But I've got to have an accurate assessment of where we stand in Texas; I want to know." I said, "Mr. President, we've got a fifty-fifty shot at carrying Texas and with your help and the Governor's help, I think we can make it." He said, "That's encouraging. Go down there and watch your money and let me know what you need." And of course we asked him to come in on that last night and he was there, and I think the combination of Connally getting on the platform with Ralph Yarborough and touring the state and the President's appearance the last night was what carried Texas. Just that simple.

M: Did Johnson move too slowly there?

S: I don't think he moved too slow at all. Had he moved earlier,

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it would have been too soon.

M: There's the idea, too, that Johnson might have hurt Humphrey if he'd campaigned for him, because of the Vietnam situation.

S: I think that Johnson did just exactly the right thing to help Humphrey. He did everything Humphrey asked him to do. He did no more, nor any less. He wanted to help Hubert Humphrey be elected president of the United States, of course.

M: So from your point of view here in Texas, he did the right thing.

S: From my point of view in Texas, timing was almost exquisite in its perfection. As a matter of fact, everything we did was almost exquisite in perfection to carry Texas for Humphrey. I'd always thought we had a pretty good shot at it. When we started it was so bad I wanted to be sure we weren't embarrassed and humiliated. After that I began to think as we moved, Nixon was, I thought, freezing; he began to choke a little, and we began to really get up a head of steam. The last week I thought we had him. And we'd pinch him at the wire that last twenty-four hours. That's just about what we did. So the timing, everything we did was right for a change. Usually you look back and say, "Oh, if I'd done this, that or the other."

M: During that campaign, didn't you get discouraged?

S: Oh, yes, of course it was discouraging.

M: Right about mid-October.

S: It was terribly discouraging when it wouldn't fall in place. And of course it was even more discouraging for me; I had the responsi-

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bility of financing this campaign, and everybody that I usually raise money from were supporting the Republican Party; certainly a great many of them were. It was awfully discouraging. So we had to go out and take very modest amounts of money and run a very modest campaign.

M: Was the difficulty in raising the money and so forth due to Vietnam mainly?

S: No. I don't think so, I don't think so. I think that Humphrey was just not a good candidate for Texas. Humphrey wasn't a southwestern candidate and I say that [although] I'm very devoted to Mr. Humphrey and I consider him a warm friend, not a close friend, we're not that intimate, but a fine friend. I wish that he were president, but he still isn't an ideal candidate for Texas.

M: Is that because he doesn't have the combination of conservatism and liberalism that Johnson has?

S: Yes, I think his whole background is one that just doesn't make him an ideal Texas candidate.

M: Well, that exhausts the questions I have. Do you have any last comment or anything you wish to say?

S: No, except to say that I've seen Mr. Johnson recently and I'm pleased that he looks happy and healthy.

M: Is he taking retirement well?

S: Yes, happy and healthy, and seems to be enjoying retirement. I've seen his family.

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I think, as so many others think, that history will deal very kindly with him. He's a very complex man and it won't deal with him very simply. It can't. But it will deal with him very kindly. And I think he still will have a tremendous influence on our lives for the next decade or so because he has an interest and he cares.

M: Fine, thank you very much.

S: Thank you!

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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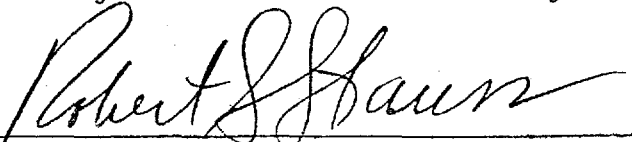
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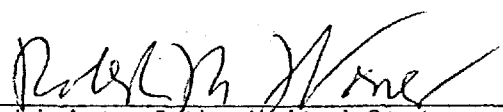
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