INTERVIEW I

DATE: January 28, 1976

INTERVIEWEE: BOB WALDRON

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mr. Waldron's residence, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

G: You're from East Texas. Beaumont, is that right?

W: No, Arp.

G: That's right, that's right.

W: A-R-P, in East Texas.

G: And how'd you get to Washington?

W: I had gone to Northwestern to study court reporting and finished there and went down to Texas to go to business school. When I was finishing the business degree I was with the firm of Powell, Wirtz, Rauhut, McGinnis. Judge Rauhut encouraged me to go to law school, which I had no intentions of practicing, but he was very encouraging. So nearing finishing a degree and no job, I went to law school. I was finishing the second year and Judge [Homer] Thornberry, then Congressman Thornberry from Austin, asked me to come to Washington as his administrative assistant in June of 1955. Fortunately, I accepted the offer and came in June of 1955 as his aide. And then, like so many Texans, I am still here.

G: When did you first go with the law firm?

W: In August of 1950.

G: Yes. So you knew Senator [Alvin] Wirtz before he died.

W: Yes. I knew Senator Wirtz before he died.

G: What were your impressions of him at that time?

W: Truly, my impression of Senator Wirtz was--you know, you hear the word expressed about men who've been in government as statesmen. The Senator was very impressive, a very quiet man and a very organized man. I never could say that I knew the Sentor well, because it was only in the office that I ever saw him. But I felt that he had a tremendous strength. He had been an adviser to many great men and had served in Roosevelt's cabinet here and was, I soon later learned, a very great adviser to Mr. Johnson.

G: When did you first meet Lyndon Johnson?

W: My first recollection of the President was in, as I recall, 1953 or maybe early 1954. No, I take that back. It would have had to have been before Senator Wirtz died, because he died, as I recall, in 1951. It was when the Senator was still living. Mr. Johnson came in the law firm to visit the Senator. I merely met him in the reception room, and then he immediately went in to see the Senator. Then my first chance to speak to him and visit was, as I recall, in 1954 before I came up here.

G: Any first impressions?

W: First impressions were kind of an impression of awe, that here was my first U.S. senator, and here was a very large man and a very strong-acting man and, of course, was there for business. I would say awe would be my first impressions.

G: Then, you say you came up here in 1955?

W: June of 1955.

G: 1955. That would have been a month or two before the heart attack?

W: As I recall, he had his heart attack in July of 1955, the Fourth of July weekend.

G: Right.

W: I heard it over the radio.

G: You had not really become close to him?

W: Oh, I did not know him then.

G: I see. Well, describe the process whereby you became closely associated with him.

W: Mainly through Judge and Mrs. Homer Thornberry, because the Thornberrys were very close friends of the Johnsons. They lived about three blocks apart. They lived on Davenport Street and President and Mrs. Johnson lived on 32nd Street in northwest Washington. Congressman and Mrs. Thornberry were very dear to me and included me in so many things, and I first started seeing the Johnsons at the Thornberrys' socially. Again, I was so pleased to have the privilege of being around the Senator. Then Mary Margaret Valenti--nee Wiley, Mary Margaret Wiley--and I had worked together at the law firm of Powell, Wirtz and Rauhut. Mary Margaret came in January of 1955 and I came up in June of 1955, so we were very good friends and attended social functions together, and that gave me another opportunity to be around Mr. Johnson when he was majority leader.

G: Well, what sort of things did you do with him?

W: Well, I was just privileged to be in his presence, either with Judge and Mrs. Thornberry or around other members of the Texas delegation who were

good enough to include me and would have the Johnsons.

As I recall, the President first invited me to their home in 1957. I don't have a diary so I can't pinpoint the year, but I was invited to dinner with Mary Margaret and was very excited about going the first time. Then after that, I was invited by Mary Margaret, as her date often, to go to functions where then-Majority Leader and Mrs. Johnson and Mary Margaret and I would go.

G: Where did he like to go during these years?

W: During those early years he enjoyed going certainly among the Texas friends, and to social functions given by Texans, but he also went to a lot of political functions. Being the majority leader, he certainly was invited to so many things and oftentimes Mary Margaret and I would be privileged to go with him, and certainly on their invitation. It was a treat for me as an outsider to be included, not being on the staff, you can imagine.

G: Were you expected to work on these [occasions]?

W: Oh, no, no, no. In those periods, see, I was assistant to Judge Thornberry and the word work never came up. It was always at a social function or to dinner in their home or at Judge and Mrs. Thornberry's.

G: He didn't dispatch you on errands?

W: Oh, not at all. This was strictly friendly.

G: Yes. What did he do for relaxation? Where did he go?

W: He enjoyed tremendously being among friends and family. I shall never forget the first time I went to President and Mrs. Johnson's home on 32nd. There were ten or twelve of us, and I remember Mary Margaret, and

Judge and Mrs. Thornberry, and myself, and Marge and Walter [Jenkins]. Who else was there I can't tell you. But again, this wonderful man sat and there were stories and kidding and asking other people for stories. But it was an evening of jovial conversation and mainly telling stories, some political and some family. He enjoyed kidding people that he was close to.

G: We're going to use 1960 as a watershed here. Can you describe some of your travels with him before 1960?

W: Yes. My first encounters of really travel, I would say, begin in the latter part of 1958. President Johnson then in 1958 and 1959 and some in 1960, would go to Middleburg, Virginia and spend the weekend at the estate of Mr. and Mrs. George Brown of Houston. It's the beautiful estate, Huntlands. President Johnson was very gracious about including me on some of those weekends. So it was a privilege to spend more than an evening with him. Most of the time he would ask me to go with him in the car, where we would have the hour and a half driving down and the weekend together, and he would invite other friends for the weekend. So it was a chance to spend, say, two or two and a half days of total relaxation, where he was out of the turmoil of the capital and the phones not bothering him, and just be among the people that he enjoyed being with.

G: Did he talk politics much in these?

W: Oh, certainly. My impression is the President always talked politics in some form, even if he were joking. But once he got into stories, so many of them are based on his early years and [are] memory connected. And he loved to tell stories on other people. But basically I would say

they were politically motivated or at least slanted, because that was his life. And, you know, I just always enjoyed him kind of summarizing what had happened that week in the Senate.

G: How did he see himself as a politician? Did he see himself as an operator, someone who could get things done, who could outmaneuver the opposition, who possibly had done his homework more than the opposing person?

W: Let me say that I would never say that the President, on a national issue, would have based it on outmaneuvering someone. I think this man, if there ever was the word statesman applied to a gentleman, he did what he thought was best for the nation. History has proven what Mr. Eisenhower said, had it not been for Lyndon Johnson as the majority leader, President Eisenhower never would have gotten a program passed. When the President [Johnson] thought it was for the good of the nation, that was the motivating force in my memory. Certainly he was a partisan for his party. He and Mr. Dirksen and Mr. Martin and Mr. Rayburn argued their points out, but when they went on that floor of the House and Senate, they stood by their party. But they knew when to compromise. So he had done his homework, not only in briefing himself or being briefed on the background of the bill, but he never, to my knowledge, went on the floor for a vote when he did not know where he stood. He very carefully, personally, polled those members to know where he stood. And your expression, "did his homework," is exactly right. I feel very strongly that this man was partisan when he needed to be, but when the moment of compromise came, it was the good of the nation that motivated him.

G: Well, he obviously must have taken pride in the fact that through this extra work he was able to get things done where other men had not been able to.

W: Well, I think the answer is, which he even proved later as president, Mr. Johnson personally made his appeal to another senator. He did not leave it up to an aide. He picked up the telephone or he went over and buttonholed him or got him by the elbow and pleaded his case with him, Democrat or Republican, hoping that he convinced him to vote with him. Now certainly he had disappointments, but he did it by personal appeal. And he continued to do it in the White House. How many men have picked up the telephone, and that great man was on the other end with no secretary intervening, pleading a case, and also thanking a senator for a vote.

G: How was he on the telephone? I understand that he used it almost to excess.

W: You know, the wonderful thing--Bell would have loved him, because no one ever got a greater use out of the telephone than Lyndon Johnson in my knowledge. He loved it. He used it. And I will say that Mr. Johnson must have had the same type of telephone we had in East Texas, where you were on a party line, a weak connection, and he had to yell over the first phone he ever [used], because he still talked very loudly, even under the modern system. He still talked extremely loudly to get a point across, and yet he could speak so softly that you had to listen to hear him. But he made every use of the telephone twenty-four hours a day, no matter where he was in the world. One of the problems of the President,

he never realized the time difference of countries. If he wanted to call, it was done regardless of the time.

G: Can you recall a specific example?

W: Oh, yes. On the trip around the world in 1961, he just used the phone to call the States when we were in the Far East, and couldn't understand why people were not at their desk or were in bed or were at dinner or at church. You know, he just didn't stop to consider that we were on the other side of the world, and he would be rather irritated that whomever he was calling was not at their phone.

G: Well, I gather that everyone was reachable on the phone to him, or should be reachable.

W: Should be reachable, and he was almost unforgiving if you weren't. You know, if you were going somewhere, just leave a phone number. I will say, in my experience, Walter Jenkins caught more flak from not being either in the office or at home by the phone, because he was, to my knowledge, the closest adviser to the President. And [such] a knowledge of so many years of background [was] constantly retained in Walter's mind so that it was essential when the President needed him that he could reach him. But he was just almost unforgiving, even if Walter were in church, you know, that [he couldn't reach him].

G: Anything else before the 1960 campaign that you [remember]?

W: Well, I would say that 1959 was an exciting year in that Judge Thornberry was gracious enough to quote "loan me" every time Mr. Johnson wanted me to go somewhere. Socially I was then privileged to go with him a lot. Certainly during the year 1959 when he was making the decision about running

for president and beginning some of those early contact speeches, when he was going around, he asked me to travel sometime during that period, and again, weekends. We spent a number of weekends that year at Middleburg. And I was privileged to start traveling prior to 1960 on just speaking engagements.

G: These were largely weekends?

W: They were weekend engagements where I would not be away from the Judge's office. But they were like anyone beginning to run, like we are seeing today. They were invited either for a political rally or a convention or something, that he would ask me to go with him.

G: Was he a reluctant candidate then?

W: No.

G: He was interested in testing the waters?

W: I think he was very interested, and was making his decision whether he would run at great strength for it.

G: Did you urge him to run or not?

W: Oh, I would have never been that presumptuous.

G: Really?

W: I will say that I was so awed--and I never will forget the experience--I was privileged to be in the car alone with him when he had definitely decided to run, and he looked at me and said, "Why would anyone want to be president?" And my sincere answer to him is, "I can't imagine why anyone would take that burden on." But I would have never been presumptuous enough to advise pro or con. If I had ever been asked, I would have certainly encouraged him to run.

G: How do you know that that was the moment that he made up his mind?

W: Oh, I don't. I'm just saying that this was just all of a sudden. Certainly toward the end of 1959 he would have made the decision and started running, and I was not on the staff so I can't say when.

G: Well, the picture that we have is one of his campaign people trying to get him to open up a headquarters, to commit himself--

W: To make a statement in advance.

G: --and he wouldn't do it.

W: No.

G: Were you privy to this? Did you see. . . .

W: Oh, I saw this reluctance, yes.

G: Why do you think he had the reluctance?

W: Well, again, it's far from me to say why. No greater politician ever lived in my knowledge of knowing right timing. And I think this great man had a greater knowledge of timing than any one of his advisers. So he realized in his own mind the right time to announce, regardless of what someone told him.

G: But I think a lot of them feel in retrospect that if he had announced earlier and gone into West Virginia, he might have had a better shot at winning that nomination.

W: Again, part of this is hindsight.

G: Another theory is that he was too busy running the Senate to commit himself to a full-time campaign.

W: Well, you've kind of taken the words out of what I'm sitting here thinking. Mr. Johnson then was majority leader of the Senate and he had his

hands full with a very difficult Senate. He felt his first duty was to be there at all times and to see that those programs were passed. It was not easy for him to be running around the country campaigning. I think you've hit it exactly on the head of my summary, that he felt his first duty was his current job.

G: Well, he finally was talked into announcing or did announce. They set up the headquarters and he did campaign, but it wasn't long before the convention. What are your recollections surrounding that convention?

W: The recollections that I enjoyed and were extremely exciting to me are the recollections of the campaign itself. Because once he began campaigning, like everything he did, he threw himself and everyone around him into it full force. It's incredible to me the physical strength and the mental strength of this man, and Mrs. Johnson, that they could endure week after week, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, the constant push and pull of a political campaign. And the people--you know, it's like in any campaign, everywhere you land, everybody wants to be the one nearest to you. It's incredible that everywhere he would be this wonderful gracious man. You know, he could be very angry at times about timing and certain phases of the campaign to his staff who had arranged it. But once he appeared before the public, it was just like it was the greatest thing in the world. He told so many times that story that they claim that his mother told, that "Sam Houston had been two wheres and I ain't been nowhere, and if Mother were with me tonight, she would know that I've been two wheres. I'm now in Podunk Hollow." And of course the public loved it.

But he really projected himself as a human being during the campaign. And we literally, as I recall--now this could be a guess figure--[traveled] something like fifty-five thousand miles. He tried to cover every inch of this country. But regardless of how reluctant, upon landing whether he was tired or not, once he walked in that room or on that podium, he then tried to identify with the public. And there were moments that were just so vivid, and are still vivid in my memory, of how the public responded to this man when he would speak as Lyndon Johnson, the man, and his experience in the Senate and what he truly believed for the country.

G: Where do you think he got his best reception? Which stop?

W: Oh, God, there is no way I could answer that question, because it would vary. What was intriguing was that one city in a state would just be overwhelming and the next one would be moderate, and then down the road would be one even greater. I would say that probably the most memorable receptions of tremendous crowds were the LBJ Special going through the South.

G: Were you on that train?

W: Oh, yes. That is probably my favorite memory. Because here was a week on the train and the briefing by President Truman of what to expect.

G: Oh, I didn't know he got a briefing.

W: Yes, this was a very exciting day for me.

G: Well, what did President Truman tell him?

W: We went to Kansas City--here we are using "we" as if I were the one invited. President, then-Majority Leader, Johnson was invited by the

leaders in Kansas City, or he had arranged to come, and we stayed at the Muehlebach Hotel in President Truman's suite. Mr. Truman came to visit. We had lunch with the President and just he and Mr. Johnson, of course, talked politically. But then he briefed Mr. Johnson on what to expect about the train. And I never shall forget the detail.

G: What did he say?

W: One thing that he said, "Don't ever go through a town and not appear on the back of that train, because they're going to know that you're coming, and they're going to come from distances to see the train go by, and they're going to want to see you. So always be out on the back." But I never will forget the detail of technical things. He said, "Now be sure your people put a backdrop back of you, because if they leave the train door open, your sound is going into the train and not out to the people." And here the former President gave technical advice, but he went into great detail of what we were going to expect, what to do, what not to do, and we followed his advice.

G: Did he say anything else?

W: Not in my presence. Now he and Mr. Johnson had certainly a lot of conversation privately. But there was lots of joking, and the great sense of humor and the joking between the two men.

G: Do you recall any of the jokes or anything?

W: No, just kidding between the men. But I just was so impressed that Mr. Truman encouraged him to make the train trip, felt that it would be advisable, and you would reach so many people that you wouldn't reach otherwise.

G: Yes. Let me stop this.

(Interruption)

G: Okay, I guess we're ready to leave Independence, is that right?

W: Well, this was prior, this was during the campaign. But we went in there and the President made some speeches, but got advice prior to the train trip. Then, of course, wherever we went from there--God, the schedule that a candidate keeps to run for president was frankly so gruesome in that three-month period that I have no recollection. I did not keep a diary. We could have been anywhere as far as I was concerned in speaking.

G: Culpeper?

W: You mentioned Culpeper. My favorite 1960 campaign story is the great day the LBJ Special arrived and we all met at Union Station and got on the train. The train stopped in Alexandria, Virginia and picked up some people, and the first big stop was Culpeper, Virginia.

G: Can you explain why it was Culpeper?

W: Because I think it was the first stop on the railroad outside the metropolitan area. Also, it was close enough to Washington that all the local press and the foreign press could come to be in rural America, is my impression of it. As you know, Culpeper is a very small, country town. The President, this was his first speech on the train, and he was really geared up to give the Republicans hell. And he did. He just blasted forth with all the press standing on the track, and all the farmers in their overalls, and local people. He just worked himself up into the greatest speech you can imagine, but he made the mistake of saying, "I ask you what Dick Nixon ever did for Culpeper?" And the crowd applauded.

Some old farmer said, "Hell, I'll ask you what anybody ever did for Culpeper!" And it just destroyed the speech. There was just no way you were going to overcome that. So we said goodbye and then took off. (Laughter)

Then we started stopping at little towns and big towns. One of the other moments is [that for] about two days we would come into town, they'd have the tape on and they'd be playing the "Yellow Rose of Texas" and all the political music tapes. And we had just been sick and tired of the "Yellow Rose of Texas" after about the first day. He made this glowing speech in whatever town we were in. He finished in a roaring speech and he said, "Now God bless you, Podunk, and remember to vote Democratic." And then, thinking that the speaker had cut off, he said, as the train had started pulling out, "And Bobby [Baker], turn off that goddamned 'Yellow Rose of Texas.'" And of course it just blared out over the speaker. (Laughter)

But what was intriguing about the train is that, say we were going into Richmond, Virginia, and our next stop would be somewhere in North Carolina. While he was making a speech in Richmond, the people from the next stop, the leaders of that [area], would have driven over and [they'd] get on the train so that they could go into their home town being on the candidate's train and having the blessing of the candidate. Therefore, you had a chance in that interim period to meet a lot of these people and to observe them, and to see the real political process in operation.

G: Did he get along well with them?

W: Oh, he got along extremely well because, one, they were supporters. And so many of them were men running for office in their local area.

G: Sure. Did he try to get local issues from them and things to talk about to [the next crowd]?

W: No, my reaction is he basically spoke on the national problems. He did not get into local politics.

G: He didn't use that opportunity riding with them to familiarize himself with the local issues?

W: No, he wanted to know about them, but in his speeches he did not [talk about them]. He geared his speech to the needs of electing a Democratic administration to cure national problems, and he kept his speeches geared to that.

G: I want to ask you one thing. Do you have any idea whose idea the whistle-stop was to begin with?

W: I can't answer that. My feeling is that it had been so successful for Mr. Truman and [had] not been done [since], that the President himself thought it would be a way to reach the public.

G: I see.

W: My feeling is that he, probably, himself thought it was a good idea. And again, I'm speaking off the top of my head, because he set up the interview with Mr. Truman, and the major topic of conversation was the train.

G: Truman, I suppose, favored the idea?

W: Oh, very muchly so. He thought it was the greatest idea of all. And it proved true. It proved that he reached a tremendous amount of the South that he wouldn't have gotten to.

G: I suppose it was particularly conducive to that part of the country then?

W: Very muchly so. And again, it was a way to reach a lot of rural America at a central point, to where they could come from all the neighboring small towns where you can't in a national campaign reach them.

G: Well, let's back up just a minute. Are there any high points of the 1960 convention? You were there in Los Angeles. Do you have any recollections of the preceedings there, or being in his hotel room?

W: Let me say that if there ever was a time when I regret not keeping a diary [this was it], because it was, as we have soon later learned, truly an historic period. I was privileged to go with Mr. and Mrs. Johnson on the plane when we went directly from here to the convention and arrived. The Texas delegation had been delegated to a dreadful hotel called the New Clark. Governor [John] Burns was on the plane going out with us, and my room that had been assigned to me at the hotel there in Los Angeles had been taken over as an office, and I spent my first night in Governor Burns' suite. Then as a result of being invited by the President to serve as a "secretary," or an aide, it was my great privilege to be with him so many of those hours at the exciting state caucuses where he would go to each state and appeal for their votes. You would be privileged to go along and then to sit in the hotel suite and have them discuss strategy and have him surround himself with his trusted friends and advisers.

The first exciting thing that was almost like you were doing a TV program or a play, was--if I can remember correctly--he appeared before

the Kentucky caucus. [I don't know] whether I'm right on the state or not but it was in the morning, and he was handed a telegram where Senator Kennedy had asked for permission to appear before various state caucuses and by error, the secretary had included the state of Texas. Immediately the President chuckled over this, and we went back to the hotel and he got with his advisers, then Mr. Connally and Speaker Rayburn and Judge Homer Thornberry and Walter Jenkins and some of these men. They decided the thing to do was to be very courteous in the reply: that, of course, Mr. Kennedy could appear before the Texas delegation if he would appear with Mr. Johnson. And that was the basis for the debate.

They threw the gauntlet down, and I was privileged to be the one who took the dictation for the telegram. We went, not in Mr. Johnson's suite, but down the hall. As I recall, Senator [Robert] Kerr, John Connally, Speaker Rayburn, Judge Thornberry and Walter and maybe one or two others [were there]; I don't remember who all was in the room. But they very carefully worded that telegram to where there would be no way to get out of it. I had to stretch out, because these men were sitting in a circle and I couldn't hear them all, and I bodily stretched out on the rug, lying on my stomach with my notebook, and each man gave his statement and then we jelled it down into the telegram.

G: Who did most of the work on that?

W: The President, basically, as I recall, worded it and then [there were] corrections so that the words were, what I would say, loaded. Then they stood over me to type it, and I was just a nervous wreck. But then they sent the telegram by Western Union just like you would answer. Mr. Kennedy

accepted because, frankly, he had no way out of it. And that was the basis for the great debate. It was very exciting, not only certainly for me to be the one to be asked to be in the room, but I think he thoroughly enjoyed the challenge. It was a boo-boo, as we all know, that the telegram ever came to the Texas delegation, and he made the best of it.

Again, what you asked me earlier about the man doing his homework, Mr. Johnson knew voting and counting. I never shall forget the day of the balloting for the nomination, he questioned his aides on how many votes. He was given a number larger than he thought he had, and he had the wisdom to know that it was not that great.

G: Really?

W: And so expressed it. He said, "This is not a true count." So the night of the balloting, he chose to stay in the hotel and asked Mary Margaret Wiley and me to stay with him and to watch it on TV and listen to it. Once the balloting was taken and Mr. Kennedy had won, he was so calm. He knew what the count was and he was very calm. I never shall forget that he took it just as a matter of fact, and he said to us, "Now, tomorrow we'll go home. Tomorrow let's do what we want to do. If you want to go to Disneyland or do something, well, enjoy the day, and then we're going home." Because he considered it over with. Then Mrs. Johnson and the girls came back, and we talked and visited. Then I got up and went to bed.

The next morning I went in the room to report in and Mrs. Johnson said, "Will you help me to straighten up the room?" [She said] that

Senator Kennedy was coming to visit. That was the breaking point, to my first knowledge, of the offer that they wanted him to accept the vice presidential nomination. So it was extremely exciting, because Speaker Rayburn met Robert Kennedy in the adjoining room and the discussions [went] back and forth and men came and went.

G: What did you witness here among all of these things?

W: Merely just staying out of the way. It was made known to me that Senator Kennedy had made the proposal, and the President was seeking the advice of his friends whether he ought to accept.

G: Did he ask you?

W: Oh, no. No, no, no.

G: Who was for and who was against?

W: As I recall, in the beginning Mr. Rayburn was against it, and other than that I can't tell you, because I have not read records of who was for and against. I think in the beginning Judge Thornberry was opposed to it and I would say certainly the majority of his Texas advisers.

G: I believe Senator Kerr was opposed.

W: See, these strong men, his close Democratic political advisers, felt the answer was no. But when they sat down with him and then started talking, I think the President felt that he knew Mr. Kennedy needed his help and that he could be of help. Then who convinced whom of the answer, I don't know.

But I will say that it was exciting that, once the decision was made and the time had been set to make the announcement public to the press, Senator Kennedy came in the room and he and Mr. Johnson talked and stepped

out in the hallway. Mr. Johnson asked me to come with him and take down verbatim what was said at that press meeting, exactly what each man's statement was. I was privileged to stand by him and make it and type it up, and George Reedy and Horace Busby then took it and released it. The press was there, but we made a press release out of it. It was an extremely memorable and exciting moment to me to be privileged to stand there and hear these two men make a public announcement that "we're going to be the ticket if the convention accepts." Well, then that night of course the convention accepted Mr. Johnson.

G: Did you, during this time in the suite, see a soul-searching or reluctance on the part of LBJ with regard to whether or not to accept?

W: Oh, I think very definitely. I think the man agonized on whether he thought he should do it. And certainly, again, I think in every decision he considered Mrs. Johnson and used her advice.

G: Why do you think he chose to do it?

W: I think he realized that only with his help could Mr. Kennedy make it, that Mr. Kennedy could never carry the South. I think it was, again, as we study history, that some men must put personal pride behind them and say, "I feel that I can do the job, and I owe it to my country to join this man in the ticket." And I think it was a great soul-searching, because it went on all day. Otherwise, I think if Mr. Johnson had not, he would have just said, "Yes, I will run." But he not only consulted Mrs. Johnson, he consulted his very closest friends and advisers at great length. And my recollection is Mr. Rayburn in the beginning was very much opposed to it.

G: Really. Well, I've gotten two different theories on this. One, that Sam Rayburn was in favor of it to begin with, the idea that he felt anyone whose name had been placed in nomination before the convention for president had an obligation to accept the second place on the ticket, and that he had so stated this belief before the first ballot.

W: And yet my recollection is opposite.

G: Can you recall any specifics about what he said?

W: No, because you must understand when Mr. Rayburn and Senator Johnson talked, it was private conversation. When Robert Kennedy and Mr. Rayburn talked, it was private.

G: What are you basing this on then?

W: Just conversations with people around them, what I picked up or what people said that night after I'd gone to bed when it first came up and during the next day and since then. Again, I would think John Holton and Judge Thornberry, or certainly Roland Boyd, some of these men who were close to the Speaker, who would have visited with Mr. Rayburn that night, would certainly know far more than anyone outside.

G: I want to get you to amplify one more thing that goes back to that night before when you were watching the returns on the television with him and you could see these states coming in. Did he make any comments? Do you remember? For example, Arizona was one that I think his people had told him he could expect to get, and the Kennedy people got it. North Carolina, I think he anticipated more support there than he had. Can you recall his reaction to this?

W: No, I can't, because he would make remarks or talk to us, but I don't recall any specific disappointment or statement about any state. And again, that's so long ago, I just could not remember.

G: You said that he had told his aides that their reports were too optimistic.

W: Now this I can truthfully say. I happened to be in the car leaving the caucus, and as I recall it seemed like to me it was either the Illinois or Wisconsin caucus. I can't tell you the state. But as we left, one of the aides gave him a count of what they thought he could count on and he looked at it and he said, "This is too optimistic. We don't have that many." It was just awesome to me that this man had such a political wisdom that he could basically count himself where he stood. And I think he realized it.

G: Okay. Anything else on the convention?

W: No, not in particular. I just remember the excitement of him accepting the nomination.

G: And you were on the platform?

W: I was privileged to. He asked me to go to the platform, and Mary Margaret, President and Mrs. Johnson and Lynda and his sister and Horace Busby, and who else I don't recall. But it was very exciting to be asked to go on a national platform with a candidate and to stand there and share the excitement and the awesomeness of it. Certainly my family were rather impressed by this scene.

G: Seeing you on TV. Well, let's get back to the campaign then. You

were on the whistle-stop, I think, before we went back to the convention. Did we leave out anything on the whistle-stop?

W: The marvelous thing about the whistle-stop is that it was the most memorable and enjoyable part of the campaign, while it was gruesome. But it was a contained form of campaigning. In other words, you were going along in a contained area where the people came to you, and you weren't just jumping off of a plane, in and out of a car and running yourself to death. I think Mr. Johnson himself enjoyed that part of the campaign. He seemed to show his enjoyment. It gave him a chance between stops to visit with some of the local people and to make himself known as a human being and not just as a politician. The problem that I find which [makes] national campaigning so awful and so gruesome is that a plane lands, and you run in from an airport to a convention center. You make a speech, and you get back on that plane and go to the next stop and no one ever knows you. Very seldom does anyone ever have a chance to say that "I had five minutes with this man to know him personally."

G: I believe he was told by one of his aides that he ought to get an Electra airplane for that campaign rather--

W: Well, we had the Electra which we called the Swoose. We all got wonderful cuff links as a gift from the President after the campaign. One pair is the end of a caboose of the train, and the other pair is an outline of the Electra.

We had the most wonderful crew of the American Airlines. One of the funniest stories is that the Electra staff, the crew, had been assigned to us; Captain Campbell as I recall, from New York was the captain

and all of his crew and the stewardesses and the electricians and the crew people. If I could look in my records--there was a wonderful Italian man who was the electrical engineer. The ramp would be let down, and it was his duty to go down first and be sure those propellers were still and everything was in order before he let the candidate off. Mr. Johnson would roar down the ramp and shake hands with this man and say, "Howdy, I'm Lyndon Johnson," and then go off into the crowd. Well, this man stood it for two days, and then he just couldn't stand it any longer. He said, "This man has greeted me twenty times and he doesn't know who I am." This was just one of the funny things of the campaign, that this man was so intense on campaigning that here this same engineer was at the end of the ramp every time, and he greeted him, you know, on the trips with him.

G: Were you on the plane that time they attempted to land it on the Ranch?

W: Attempted? We did! And it was just gruesome. We were campaigning in the Midwest. This was Friday night, and he wanted to go to the Ranch. So we were to land in Austin and then be shuttled over to the Ranch. The President went up and asked Captain Campbell if he thought he could land the Electra at the Ranch. They checked out the length of the runway and the lighting and the conditions and all, and the captain said, "Yes, I believe I can." Well, then he came back and announced that we were not going to land in Austin, we were going to the Ranch. And I thought if I had a rosary, I would certainly whip it out. Well, of course, we went roaring into the Ranch, the plane landed with a tremendous thud, and he threw the propellers in reverse. I just knew we were just going

straight through the hangar and the LBJ Ranch and right into the Pedernales, but he brought the plane to a stop. Of course, by dawn the FAA were there raising holy hell, threatening to cancel the captain's license. We went out to see the runway, and there was about a six-inch gash right in that pavement. Fortunately, the President stood by him and said it was his instruction and Captain Campbell was saved. But it was a very leery evening for landing, I'll tell you.

G: That was the last time it landed there?

W: That was the only time the Electra landed [there]. But this was what I've said so many times. It's a miracle to me in national campaigns we've never lost a candidate, because the campaigning is so gruesome and so timed that no one questions when you get on or where you're going. With the automobiles and the planes and trains, it's a miracle we have not had an accident.

G: I believe you were expressing the other night the idea that primary on everybody's mind was getting there, making that deadline, not the weather conditions, not the safety provisions.

W: It's almost insane that wherever in America you're scheduled to speak on Friday night at eight o'clock, you're going to be there, because they've gathered the crowd. You know, in Minnesota we flew in an old plane where there were bucket seats, and I'll always adore Senator Humphrey for saying, "You keep your bolts tight and I'll work on mine." Because we literally insanely went up into a rainstorm in a very poor plane, and by the grace of God we landed. But if it had gone down I would not have been the least bit surprised. But no one, including the candidate, ever questions how to

get there. Your public is waiting, and you've got so many votes possibly to garner, and they all show up. It's absolutely insane as far as I'm concerned.

G: I believe at the beginning of the campaign he took a vacation. Is that right? And then went to Boston and then Hyannis Port and had a session with Kennedy. Were you there?

W: No, I did not go on that. See, those were preliminary to really hitting the, quote, "campaign trail."

G: He went to New York, I think, and that was a high point, wasn't it? Were you there?

W: That was one of the high points, and again, campaigning in New York was so foreign in that you were campaigning in Brooklyn, in Queens, and stopping at delicatessens and all of this. And he wowed them in the metropolitan area of New York the same as he did in Indiana. They loved him. What was so amazing, he could identify with any group the minute he walked in. And it was so interesting to me who were the leaders and the organizers. If you ever saw America at your fingertips, it's that every group or every locale had their leader, and we were privileged to know them, because we were put in the cars with them and got their side of the picture. Whatever ethnic group or religious group or whatever you were with, we were privileged to be thrown in with them and to get this great sales pitch. But it was just unbelievable how Lyndon Johnson could identify with every group and that they could identify with him.

G: He could go over an audience pretty well, couldn't he, and tell who was out there, what they were--?

W: And also, again, through his years of campaigning and the experience in the Senate, whether they were with him.

G: Do you recall any specific illustrations of how he was able to size up an audience?

S: Seriously, not specifically. He would look over an audience, and I think the President could tell whether they were basically staged. In other words, they reacted if they were there to hear him and liked him. But if it was a house filled, I think he sensed that.

Again, I will say that the advance men are probably, in American campaigning, a group that are never thanked. The advance men on any man's campaign, regardless of the candidate, are saddled with the burden of finding the proper place, convincing the local people to gather the crowd, to finance it. And really, I think they receive very little credit for the success of the national campaigns.

G: Did they ever get the height of the podium right?

W: It adjusted daily. You know, they learned to get a tall podium. What I learned about being around Mr. Johnson, because he was so intense with himself, he never asked any of us to do something he would not do or had not done. He worked twenty-four hours a day and couldn't understand why you weren't willing to do the same. But he had done all these things, and I always felt he rather had a right to make certain demands. I was always surprised that he didn't blow up any more than he did. You know, here I wasn't even the candidate and was fed up with the whole thing.

You can't imagine how grasping the American public is. Everybody's got to shake your hands and hug you and put their arms on you. Everybody

wants to be the "in" one the minute you enter a room. Just the physical pawing of a candidate is just dreadful in the American public, and it's just something I could never tolerate. As I've told you, the nearest I've ever come to being fired was saying, "I don't mind writing to them; I hate to mingle with them." Because everybody wants to be the one closest to the candidate, and so many people can be totally obnoxious in doing it. How a candidate's nerves survive is a miracle to me.

G: But on the other hand, he himself was a very tactile person, wasn't he?

W: Oh, extremely so. He could be furious with either a delay or that too many things had been scheduled that day, while he had approved them. The longer we ran behind--and mainly it was because of him, if he was enjoying an area. One night in Indiana, just to give you an example, we went in to this meeting and he said, "Now we can only be here an hour, and I'm only going to speak fifteen minutes." And he told Mrs. Johnson; he told Mary Margaret, and he told me, "Now do not let me speak one minute over fifteen minutes. Now, that's your responsibility." So when he got about down to ten minutes, he was just going crazy. He was just having the best time in the world. Mrs. Johnson slipped him a note, "You have two minutes." And then I handed a note. Then he got up to about twenty minutes, and as I recall, Mrs. Johnson handed him another note, "You're five minutes over." And they could see us doing it. He went on about twenty-five minutes, and then he stopped and looked at the audience and he said, "I'm just loving being here with you people, and I'm just enjoying every minute of it. Lady Bird and my staff are trying to rush me out of here; they're saying that we're running back of schedule, and they're just

trying to push me out of here." And the audience went, "No, don't leave." And he looked at us like we were just traitors to the cause. He talked for thirty-five minutes, and then blamed us later that he was late!

But we would be running late and late and late but if he liked the audience and responded, he was going to stay until he was ready. And then he would be irritated. He would be tired, having done so much, and he would be getting hoarse. Then he'd get angry that he had six more stops to make and would fuss about it. But he would do it.

G: Did they generally tend to overschedule him, do you think?

W: Any candidate is overscheduled. Now, it would not be so if you could stick to schedule, but you can't. The minute you get in a crowd, whether it's transportation or a speaker ahead of you, there's going to be a delay, and all day long that delay keeps building.

G: I suppose it's very obvious, but let's review some of the things you do at these stops. I guess, one, you try to meet the local leaders or the local dignitaries.

W: The first thing is the local leaders are generally brought to you. Like on the train they were brought to the prior stop.

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G: The local leaders, these will be primarily, I guess, people who were elected to public office?

W: No, no. There would be people who were already elected who were running and were on the Democratic ticket, but also your local advisers and supporters, financial supporters, that oftentimes--my perfect example

would be Mr. Roland Boyd of McKinney, who's never run for public office, but has one of the greatest knowledges in the world of how to campaign and how to help a candidate, not only financially but in advising, and would be the one who would help set up that meeting. In fact, so many of these loyal people in American politics open their own homes for the social function and will pick up the tab for it. So you had a chance for a while for the candidate and his wife to be in the home of [local people]. Although there would be a large roomful of people, they could walk around and get to know those people, and those people then could know the candidate. But you always, in every stop, would have the people who are running for office on the ticket wanting the aura of the candidate's endorsement. So you had all kinds of people, good and bad and indifferent, to deal with.

G: And then you would want to speak to as many people as you could in a general. . . .

W: In a general area. Mainly they would have a large convention hall or school or auditorium, whatever. Certainly in good weather it would be outdoors--

G: Sure.

W: --where you could appeal to the largest number of people. You always had the local people making their little speech, and finally they got around to the candidate. Then it was my job, and Mary Margaret's job, to get down everything he said, because once he got started on his speech, the written speech, he ad-libbed and oftentimes would just put aside [his written speech].

G: You did this to have a record copy of what he said?

W: To have a record copy of exactly what was said.

G: What happened to the tapes? Do you know?

W: My assumption is that they are at the Library, that they were put away at the end of the campaign. A lot of them we did transcribe and a lot of them we didn't. Sometimes the tape recorder would go on the blink, and I would use shorthand and then I would transcribe my notes and turn them over. But once in a while we would boo-boo on the tape and, you know, the tape would be ruined, so there are some of them that are not recorded. Of course, we never did want him to know that we had done that. (Laughter)

G: Anything else on the campaign?

W: I think it was interesting to me to find the feeling of America, and I base this on my parents who were basically country people. I don't think we give the American public credit for being as smart as they are. I think they see people, and they understand them, and that they are not as moved by the American press polls and statements as much as they are if they can see the candidate. It gave me a much better appreciation of our country, of the average mind of this country. I was absolutely impressed by the devoted workers. Until you've been in a campaign you can't conceive of the ungodly hours, totally thankless hours, that local people put in. And the President wanted to thank these people. He made an effort, if he could get into a headquarters, to go through and shake hands and to thank the workers or to do it in the beginning of a speech. Because he had been through it so many years himself, having been an aide to a member

of Congress and campaigned through the years, that he knew the importance of saying thank you to local people.

As you know from your work in the Library and reading, no one wrote as many thank you letters. You know, he would thank you for thanking him. I'm a great one for writing thank you notes. I'd write the President a thank you note, and he'd thank me for thanking him, and I said, "The staff's going to kill us both if we don't cut this out." But he wrote so many thousands of letters to people who did things to help him, and he wanted that personal identification. Again, as you've known from others and from history, he had a capacity for remembering people. Somehow he could connect you with a locale or a prior source or something, and he awed people throughout this country for remembering some contact.

G: He seems to have had almost an obsession with details, wanting to know everything about everything.

W: Well, let me say that the first thing I learned, just being invited to go with him and do secretarial work: never give Mr. Johnson anything that you could not back up, and never answer a question if you didn't know the answer. Just say, "I'm sorry, I don't know." But the President, as history has recorded, used the statement, "I'm only as smart as those around me." And he would trust you, if you gave him information, that you had researched it. So you first learned either to have a source for your information or just say, "I don't know." Therefore, he was very careful on details, not only of factual things, but details of people. He wanted it exactly right of who they were and what they did and what the contact was, but he truly was obsessed with details.

G: You were mentioning earlier two other little guidelines in dealing with him. One, I think, when he got mad. Do you recall what the--?

W: Well, you know, as I said, you just hoped you never were the one to incur his wrath. Because the President, when he was angry, was very, very angry, and the person in the room caught it. You might not be the one who caused the thing that upset him, but you were going to hear it anyway. He would blast forth and blow up, but he would get it out of his system, and if you brought it up an hour later he would think you were out of your mind. Once it was over, it was over, and if he had hurt your feelings, he certainly made up for it. I mean, he never said, "I'm sorry," but he did everything he could to apologize in a friendly and a generous [way]. Because truly he was the most generous man I've ever known, not only generous with himself, but generous with gifts. He wanted to give you something every time you went to see him. I've certainly been the recipient of perfectly lovely things, but mostly the generosity of his time with me.

But what I have never gotten the public [to understand]--you know, the press loves to play up any man's faults, and they love to play up that he could be so mean, or he could be so angry, or he would blast forth. Once you travel with one of these men, and certainly with a man who was that intense, how he didn't blow up every day was a miracle to me. The physical and mental strain thrown on a person is just unbelievable. Fortunately those who loved him and worked with him learned to just let him blow up and get it out of the way and then go on about your routine.

G: You wouldn't argue with him?

W: I certainly never did, and basically no one else did. Just let him get it over with. And the point is, he would blow up at Mrs. Johnson the same way he did a staff member, and this great lady would just let him get it out of his system. I remember one time prior to dinner he became very angry and sounded off and included Mrs. Johnson, and this lovely lady just all of the sudden said, "Dinner is served." And all of a sudden that ended it. She didn't argue or she didn't make any issue. She just announced that dinner was ready, and we got up and went to dinner, and it was over.

But I think that, one, he had the privilege of doing it because of the tremendous strain and demand, and I'm grateful that [he could]. You know, none of us wanted to go through the bath of fire, but once you'd been through it and understood the pressures, then you were rather grateful that he did it to get it over with and out of his system and then go on to something greater.

G: Did becoming vice president change him? He had new responsibilities.

W: He had new responsibilities, but I don't think it changed him. I think he became more aware, again, that he was serving the world and not just the country then, because the responsibilities were worldwide. I was privileged to accompany him on the trip to the NATO meeting immediately after the 1960 election and prior to his being sworn in as vice president, and then accompanying him on the trip around the world. And I think the President became extremely aware of his image and influence and duties in America's position in the world and not just ourselves.

G: Do you have any particular reflections on the NATO trip?

W: Yes, as the records show, he was in Austin the night of the election, at the Driskill. Then when President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson had been elected, he talked to the President, and Mr. Kennedy came to the Ranch and spent the night. Then the day following the President's departure, we then left for Paris. We came up here--to Washington--and then went to Paris. He then wanted to be very carefully briefed on the position of NATO and our place in the world. Not that he hadn't been as majority leader, but he was certainly brought up to date. He made a very moving speech at the opening session of the NATO meeting. And he very specifically wanted to have Thanksgiving lunch with the troops at NATO, and made a great issue of going and spending the day at the NATO headquarters with the troops. But he enjoyed being in Paris.

G: Had he been there before?

W: He had been before, but this time it was a little more relaxed. The most memorable evening--I think it was the second night we were there--he arranged for us to go to Maxim's for dinner. And it was a glorious evening, lots of fun and good food and dancing and visiting. Then the next to the final night he took us to dinner at Lasserre, which is probably the most famous restaurant in the world, and again we had a great evening of fun and talking and again reminiscing [about] the campaign.

But he enjoyed Paris and shopping. It was my first experience to see him relaxed for a while, to take in the sights and to want to do things without feeling that he had to do something every minute politically.

G: Was this the first time you watched him buy art, for example, and presents for people back home?

W: Yes, it was my first encounter with him, except in New York, where he wanted to buy gifts and to look at paintings. And he bought some in Paris. When we were leaving the NATO meeting he stopped at a gallery and bought a painting, and he bought me a beautiful mirror. But he wanted to go shopping. I had bought some hats, and he wanted to know where I got them, and we went in and they made some hats for him. What was so unbelievable about this man, if he bought himself something, he bought you something. Then we went to London from the NATO meeting and we did some sightseeing, and then we wanted to go to the silver vaults and he went with us and, again, bought us a gift and enjoyed buying it. And he enjoyed looking; he enjoyed haggling.

G: Can you recall the haggling?

W: Oh yes. You know, he would ask how much they wanted and they would tell him, and he'd say that he just couldn't afford that and he'd offer them less. Of course, any dealer was just fascinated by the newly elected Vice President of America haggling. Then on the trip around the world when he was then vice president, he was extremely generous.

G: In the dickering, would he meet their price if they wouldn't come down?

W: Oh, yes. Because he knew he was going to buy it. You know, he never penned anyone, but he just thought it was great fun, joking with the dealer and, certainly, in some places he didn't ask. But I remember in Hong Kong, he was extremely generous to all of us, because he asked me to go with him to get some suits made and shirts and a dinner jacket and a smoking jacket. He had me look at the fabrics with him, and he talked to the tailor and he ordered these things, and he turned around and ordered

me one of everything he'd ordered. You know, I was just stunned! I came away completely clothed from that venture.

But then what was so wonderful, in the hotel in Hong Kong there was a man who owned the Dynasty Silk Company named Linden Johnson, and he'd been from Kansas, as I recall. He closed the shop so that the President and Mrs. Johnson could shop without being disturbed. And he [President Johnson] asked me to go and find out the shirt size of every press man on the trip, and the dress size of every lady, and he bought every one of them a gift to size, or as near as we could get. But he really enjoyed buying beautiful things and good things. But he wanted each of us to have [something]. But I was just astounded when I was with him. When he would buy things, he would buy those of us with him almost the same thing.

G: Was his taste in clothes better than his taste in art?

W: Oh, yes. Because he loved good-looking clothes and he knew them. I think the President in art bought what he liked. If he liked the painting, whether I liked it or you liked it or whether the director of the National Gallery liked it, he didn't care. If he liked it, he was going to buy it.

G: But he obviously had confidence in your eye as a. . . .

W: Well, I will say this, that if the President asked your advice on something, whether it was in clothing--I happened to be a clotheshorse at that period, and I loved things and I kept up with fabrics and accessories and all, and the President was very complementary of the way I dressed and would ask me to purchase things for him. But he would listen to you

on things. If he asked your advice, he really wanted it. Like on art, sometimes he wouldn't listen. You know, he didn't mind.

G: Particularly on art, since you were with him on these trips and he is well known for having purchased art from all over the world, did you see a pattern in the type of art that he liked? Did he go for--?

W: Let me say that I think he bought art that he could identify with. In other words, if it were a rural scene, he would like it. A painting that he bought in Brussels that I very badly wanted to purchase myself I was surprised that he bought it, because it was a true Impressionist style of the pastel colors of a canal scene. But the minute he saw it, he liked it and wanted to know who painted it, and the State Department arranged for the artist to come in to visit with him and explain the painting.

But he bought paintings of children, I know particularly. They would be appealing to him. But also, I think he wanted to get paintings representative of the particular area. Whether we liked it or not, he saw something in it. But I think, again, he wanted something, when he got back to the LBJ Ranch or to the White House, that this painting looked like Indonesia or it looked like Mexico. He wanted to immediately identify that painting with a moment of his life. So I think a lot of his choices were true identity with the country. Some of the paintings I really did not like, but it was not my choice. But I was flattered that he would ask your advice, and I was pleased that this man wanted to see art and wanted to understand it and wanted to collect it. Whether anyone ever liked his collection--he's given a lot of it to the Library and there's

some at the Ranch, and he was very generous in giving those paintings away. After we would get home, he would give to people a painting that he bought in Taiwan or in Hong Kong or in Brussels. He would give them away with great affection, that this painting--you know, he liked it and wanted you to have it.

G: He was a great patron of the western artists, I think.

W: Again, I think that's identity. Here was a man's man, you know, a ranch man, a strong man, who could identify with cattle and ranch land and mountains, and I think he saw in that something that he truly could believe in. He loved the western art. The museum in Fort Worth was very generous in loaning paintings to Mr. Johnson. Also in statuary that he collected, he loved the western art. And, as you know, at the Ranch is the wonderful Remington of the Indians coming over the rise.

G: Well, you mentioned the NATO trip and then Berlin.

W: No, I did not go to Berlin. I went around the world in 1961.

G: That's right.

W: He was sent by Mr. Kennedy on a goodwill trip to the Far East, and we ended up coming around the world, but we first went to Hawaii and to Guam and then to Taiwan. We had a wonderful visit in Taiwan with the Chiang Kai-Sheks. He went to a, quote, "state dinner" in the mansion with them. Then the next morning he went to breakfast with President and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and I was privileged to be with him. He asked me just to go along and to take notes, and he asked permission for me to take notes of the day.

G: Did he have an interpreter?

W: Yes, oh, yes. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek had a very brilliant, attractive, young Chinese boy who served as an interpreter for him and the President. Of course, she speaks flawless, perfect English.

G: She was educated here.

W: She was educated here, but the President, President Chiang Kai-Shek, understood a lot of English, but he did not speak it. And so it was very exciting to be privileged to sit there at a breakfast table where they really were talking directly, as opposed to being at a state dinner.

G: Can you recall the thrust of the conversation?

W: No, unfortunately, I wish I could answer that question, but the State Department considered my notes as being privileged, and they asked me to turn in my notebook and I cannot remember. Part of it, of course, was the importance of American support, because still President Chiang Kai-Shek felt that they could eventually return to the mainland. Now, the only part was his great thrust that he hoped America would stand by Nationalist China.

As we journeyed other places, he seemed to very much enjoy seeing that part of the world and meeting with their leaders and talking. I know particularly in Greece he seemed to enjoy that and we did some sightseeing each time. He took this on a much more relaxed basis to where he got to see part of the world and to enjoy it.

G: Was he truly interested in sightseeing?

W: I think that he was truly interested when it was a truly historic spot. Now like the ruins in Athens, he enjoyed very much seeing that, and being in Paris and London. Certainly the historic spots of that would be a part

of his knowledge of history. I did not go on all the foreign trips with him. I do know on the Benelux trip, it was the most relaxed I ever saw him in my knowledge. It was a goodwill trip. It was not a strenuous trip, because we only went to Luxembourg and then to Holland and to Belgium. There were no major addresses, and he was meeting with the leaders of the countries. It really was a social trip, and he thoroughly enjoyed it and spent quite a bit of time out among the public and shopping and going around. But on that entire trip he was very relaxed, and again on that trip he bought paintings. He wanted in each country to see representative art.

It was my most enjoyable trip with him because he was so relaxed. [He] had a great sense of humor and loved [to kid you]. I grew up in a little town of Arp, Texas, of a thousand people. And, as I've said, he loved to kid you and to get a story on you. As we walked in the palace, he leaned over and said, "It's a long way from Arp." And I said, "Well, it's closer than Johnson City." And he loved it, and joked and kidded. All during the time with the King of Belgium he was extremely relaxed and the King was so relaxed. He's a very attractive young man, and it was as if we really were visiting a friend. There were lots of casual conversation during that trip.

G: That's fascinating.

W: He told the Secret Service that I curtsied to the King of Belgium to make a joke on me, and kept it up for a long time. At the LBJ Library dedication, there were seven agents [who] came to me and asked me if I'd been

presented to royalty lately. But if he could get anything on you, he never let you forget it.

If I ever write anything or am ever asked to speak on Mr. Johnson, I so desperately want--if you could ever convince the world of what a truly human being this man was, how sensitive he was to your [feelings]. You know, when you hurt, he hurt, and when you were sad, he was sad. He truly did love people and was very extremely kind. But I don't think the American public ever really got that image of him, unless you knew him. Anyone who asked me about him, I opened the conversation with, "If you knew this man, you will understand what I'm going to say." But so many people never knew him and so they don't believe what I want to say.

You know, I think a lot of people here in this city and in Austin, Texas, never really believe how wonderful he was, because, one, they didn't know him or they don't want to believe it. And I'm just really hardheaded on [the subject]. But I don't think there was ever a kinder man that lived, and certainly [no one] more conscious of your needs and your desires and all. I know I just mentioned to him one time--just to show you how quietly this man could work. We were at Middleburg and I mentioned that I had a chance to buy a house, and I thought it was a good bargain. It was near the Capitol, and I could walk to work and gave my reasons, and he said, "I think you're right. Where I made my mistake when I first came, I remarked that the best investment would be if you bought property around the Capitol, because as the Capitol expanded they had to buy it up." He just asked me about my financial needs, and he never said any more.

On Monday morning, about eleven o'clock, I was in my office and Ed Clark of Austin, Texas, who was president of Capitol National Bank, called. He said, "I understand you have a little problem." I was a little stunned, and I said, "Yes, sir." And he said, "Well, what is it?" And I told him what my needs were, and he said, "Fine, we'll be happy to help you." Now Mr. Johnson, on his own, very quietly passed the word, and I will never forget it as long as I live. But he knew here was a way to be helpful and he felt that you were worthy of it. But there were just so many times in my life when he did things very quietly for me, that only I knew that he ever did them.

(Interruption)

Let me say that it was my privilege to see President Johnson more as a friend than [an employer]. I was never on his payroll so I was never a staff member, although when I was working, I worked right along with the staff and I am very pleased that, as far as I know, all of Mr. Johnson's staff still consider me a friend and were always very helpful and continue to be helpful. But it gave me a privilege of being around him and, if he were angry with me or disappointed in what I was doing, that he couldn't fire you, he just didn't have to ask you go to again. So it gave me a little freedom of saying, "Yes, I can," or "No, I can't," or "I won't do that" on making a trip, but also, of joking with him. And as I said earlier, he loved to kid with you and to get something on you that he could pick at you about, and to tell other people.

My privileges of observing him is that so many times I would be invited to just be in the room when he was talking to a world leader or to

a national person or just to another friend, and learn so much of early Senate history, or information that he had learned that day, or something, that you just kind of pinched yourself that, "I'm really not sitting here." You know, you had no reason to be in the room other than by his invitation.

G: When he was using something on you as you described, did he have a tendency to exaggerate?

W: Oh, very muchly so. You know, he would just blow it up. And what was so great, he would start laughing and chuckling and smirking to make it even worse than it was. And when he would tell a joke, he would start laughing so far before the punch line that when he got to the punch line it was almost anticlimatic. You know, he would just roar on his own jokes. And of course, he loved to tell things. Particularly he would tell a story on Judge Thornberry, on Walter, or Judge Moursund or on Mrs. Johnson. And of course just delight in [it] and just overexaggerate every detail, you know.

G: Was he ever the goat in his own jokes?

W: Sometimes he would be.

G: Really?

W: I think one of the dearest--you know, we've all heard through history of the famous eighty-seven vote Duval County box. He told a cute story that after the election that he was down there visiting, and he was walking along the street and this Mexican-American was sitting on the curb crying. He said, "What are you crying about?" The man said, "Well, my daddy's been dead ten years, and he came back and voted for you and didn't come

see the family." And he just roared, and he took it all in his stride. He told a lot of stories on himself, and certainly when he was young. He would tell about Jesse Kellam and A. W. Moursund. Some of the men that he started out with in those early years I did not know, so I did not know some of them who he was talking about.

G: The Crider boys?

W: The Crider boys. Oh, my God, the Crider boys, and there was a German family that he was always quoting from that lived in Johnson City. I don't even remember their names, but, you know, it was a true German name and, of course, he would tell the great stories about them and very strongly pronounce that German name. He loved telling early stories about the family.

G: He could mimic, too, I've heard.

W: Oh, he mimicked everybody. He would mimic from the Pope down. You know, he loved to truly try to mimic the person that he was telling the story on, men and women. But you would just be in stitches over some of his stories on himself. But, as I said, he would love to find something on someone and start out telling it seriously to make everybody in the room believe [it], you know.

G: Let's get back abroad on some of the trips that were taken. Senegal in April of 1961, I believe, were you on that trip?

W: No, I didn't go. I went in June of 1961 to the Far East.

G: And then later that month Konrad Adenauer visited the Ranch. Were you [there]?

W: A very exciting time, because he took Mr. Adenauer, as you know, to Fredericksburg. And the President--let me stop to say that history is going to record world leaders were far more, not impressed, but far more knowledgeable of America and understanding America and our problems and our relations with them, because President and Mrs. Johnson chose to take them to the Ranch. Again, the press never gave him credit for giving a barbecue on the White House lawn or for giving a state dinner at the Ranch. But he took them in stride, relaxed, to where he could talk to these men in a natural surrounding, and they could be among people they could identify with, and this is a perfect [example]. I'm glad you asked about Mr. Adenauer, because it gave him a chance to take this man, who was a national leader of his country, and show him a section of our state--not just of our country, but of Texas alone--that was all German, that had been settled by Germans, who were sympathetic to Germany even into World War II. And [he could] understand that we had problems locally as well as dealing with Germany. He asked one of my dearest friends, Van Cliburn, who had won the Tchaikovsky competition, to come to the Ranch and play for Adenauer, and he did everything he could to give this visiting leader a chance to understand Lyndon Johnson as a human being in his own territory.

You know, any of us could be entertained at the White House, but we don't belong. It's not your home or your surrounding. I think it gives everyone a great chance to see the man in a natural surrounding, and I think it paid off tremendously, certainly on diplomatic groups. They were much happier to be invited to Texas than [the White House]. See, once you have been to a state dinner, you've been to all of them. They're all done

basically exactly alike. You're put at large tables, except Mrs. Kennedy started the small tables at the White House. But it's just general conversation and the toasts and the compliments to each other and the entertainment afterward. Every state dinner that I went to was the same, whereas at the Ranch, it was relaxed. There was much greater chance for the foreign leader to meet people and talk and walk around than you do at the White House. So I felt very strongly that that was a perfect example of communicating with a foreign leader, that we're outside of just the nation's capital and the political event, we're down here on a ranch dealing with local people. And they included so many more people than just political leaders. If you ever were privileged to go to one of the barbecues at the Ranch, it was incredible the number of people and the entertainment and the relaxed manner all day long. It gives the world leader a chance to talk, but it also gives local people a chance to go up and say, "I'm Bob Waldron or Mike Gillette or Joe Schmuck," where you wouldn't do that in a formal surrounding.

G: Father [Wunibald] Schneider.

W: Father Schneider was a perfect example.

G: Well, that's fascinating. It really is.

W: Even when they entertained at the White House, the President made every effort to get a cross section of America in talent and in friends and in business, and I think every president does. But Mr. Johnson, and certainly Mrs. Johnson, wanted everything they did to try to be as relaxed as they could. And they often gave less formal functions for that very purpose, to give people a chance to meet.

G: Pakistan.

W: (Laughter) You're touching on a touchy subject.

G: The camel driver story.

W: Well, I must say I was not sympathetic. We landed at the airport. Now, this is my side of the story. We stayed at the palace, and Ayub Khan was then ruler. On the way into the city we passed just hundreds of people along the streets, waving and cheering. The President would have the entourage stop--he was then vice president--and we'd get out and shake hands with the people and visit. We made a stop, and [there was] this man with a little cart and, as I recall, a camel pulling it--I'm not really sure whether it was a horse or a camel, but anyway it was not a motored vehicle. The translator translated for Mr. Johnson, and he said, "Well, you should just come to America. Would you like to come to America?" And of course the man said, "Oh, yes. I'd like to," and the President got in the car and we went on our way.

Well, the press then went to the man and interviewed him, "Would you like to . . . ?" and "Were you serious?" and "If the President meant this, would you come?" And of course [he said], "Yes." And, of course, as soon as we got home--as I recall, the Pakistani government was not in favor of it--the President followed up on it, and our State Department wasn't overly enthused about it, but Mr. Johnson thought it was great and so did the Ford Company. But Reader's Digest, if my memory is correct, helped finance the trip and the man came and was entertained in New York and at the White House and at the Ranch. The interpreter made him sound like one of the most brilliant men that ever lived. I don't for one

minute believe he ever said a fraction of the things that the translator said he did. But the man went back, and I think the trip ruined his life. He was a thorn in their side once he returned. The Ford Motor Company gave him a truck. He left his family and then he thought he was important enough to run for their parliament. You know, I just thought the whole thing was really ridiculous. But while he was here the President enjoyed him and certainly the man enjoyed it, but I never did. I was never sympathetic to that visit.

G: Do you think that this one fellow appealed to LBJ because of either his responses through the interpreter, or was it just someone in the crowd--?

W: No, I think one thing, the man was above an average person at the time. You know, he was an independent businessman and he was, say, a little above average and, whether those were his answers or not, he certainly appealed to Mr. Johnson at the time. He invited him, and it was picked up, and it worked out.

But on the interpretive part of that trip we were in India. First we were in Bangkok and we went to a dedication of a water project, a power dam, and the Buddhist monks presided. You know, the temple and the altar was set up, and all these saffron-robed monks were there and going through the ritual and all the gifts and things. The President made a statement, and the interpreter said, "There is no way, there are no words in their language for me to say what you are trying to say. I mean, I cannot convey your expression or thought in the way you're saying into their language. It just can't be done." Well, Mr. Johnson just couldn't understand that. If it's words, and you can speak their language they're

bound to be the words. So he went through it again, and the young man just said, "I cannot translate it." And it irritated the President.

Well, the same thing happened in India. We were on the way out in the desert to dedicate an agricultural school and it was, say, two hours from the Taj Mahal, but you were out in that almost desert land. We stopped at a watering hole and [there was] this poor man about my father's age. We have no idea how far he had walked to get a bucket of water. And here's this poor farming man who had been out there all of his life with no one paying any attention to him, by the fate of circumstances, he's getting a bucket of water when the Vice President of the United States and all this entourage descends on him. Well, it nearly scared the man to death and, you know, he was just awed by it. The Indian authorities put the old man at ease, you know, that here was the Vice President of America, and he was there to dedicate--God knows what they told the old man.

So President Johnson just used this as a platform to identify the Pedernales area with the desert part of India. He turned to the interpreter and he said, "Tell this gentleman that I grew up in an area almost this barren, with no electricity and very little water, and with the help of the government, the rivers were damned and power plants were put in and electricity came and then we had all the water we needed." He went through this glowing, marvelous speech, and the old man said to the interpreter, "I don't need any more water. I've never had but a bucket a day, and I don't want any more water." And the interpreter said to the President, "This gentleman says that he's never had any more water and

doesn't need any more water." So the President just didn't take that, and he went through the speech again, that how wonderful this was. Well, he never did convince that old man that he needed any more water.

But it was exciting and it was fun, but there were certain expressions in Pakistan, in India, and in that part of the world where there are no words in our language to express the thought. I mean you could say, "This is Monday and it's six o'clock," but you can't use words to express the exact thought that the President wanted, and it took quite a bit of convincing that you just don't put this in words. But I just never shall forget that wonderful old man's expression, "But I don't need any more water." And it just did not stop the President at all. He went right on with his speech.

G: Taking this illustration and the camel driver episode, did the President look back on these with any reflection as you recall? Did he refer back to them and, if so, how did he treat them? Did he have a moral for them?

W: Not in my presence. I think that he sincerely thought that asking world leaders to come, that's fine, because their governments send them and they want to come, and they come for a purpose. But I think Mr. Johnson felt that this again proved America is a land of all nations and all people of a different walk of life, and that a camel driver could be invited by the President, and if he could come or someone could provide it, well, he had been invited. Certainly he was entertained. My God, the camel driver got greater treatment than often foreign leaders have gotten.

He certainly saw more. You know, he was just wined and dined all over the place. But you'll never convince me that he said all the things that that interpreter put in his mouth. My gosh, the poetry he quoted was just flowing.

G: That's great. Berlin was in August. You did not. . . .

W: I did not go to Berlin.

G: Then in September, that was NATO, which we've talked about. Is that right?

W: No, we went to NATO in 1960.

G: Oh, before. During the interregnum.

W: Before he was ever sworn in. See, we went the day after Mr. Kennedy left the Ranch.

G: He went again--I guess this was for the Dag Hammarskjold funeral.

W: Probably, but he went to the NATO meeting, again, to represent our country.

G: This was September. In July, 1962, he went to Puerto Rico, I think.

W: I did not go.

G: Yes. September and August he went to the Middle East, Iran and Turkey. Did you go on those?

W; I did not go on those.

G: Let's see. I think he was in Hawaii when the Cuban missile crisis broke. Do you have any recollections of the missile crisis?

W; Yes, I do, and it was, again, very awesome for me, one when moments of your life or history almost make you stop what you are doing and listen. I was leaving the Capitol and was driving home and I remember very vividly. I was at the Department of Agriculture when the news announcer said, "We

now take you to the White House for an address by the President of the United States, and at this moment he's the loneliest man in the world." And you know, it was just so frightening, because at that moment President Kennedy committed us to war. He called Khruschev's bluff and it was really a commitment. I just never will forget that as long as I live.

Now, leading up to what I'm going to say, I was privileged then--the Bay of Pigs, as I recall, was on Thursday, give or take, Thursday or Friday and, as we know, it was a total fiasco--Vice President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson asked me to go to Middleburg that weekend, and I was privileged to go with them. On Sunday morning, Mr. Johnson had a saddle for the Kennedy daughter that he had had made as a gift and he wanted to take it over. He called and invited President and Mrs. Kennedy to come over to Huntlands for lunch. President Kennedy said that they had house guests and they couldn't come, but why didn't President and Mrs. Johnson come over there to visit. So Mr. Johnson accepted and asked us to go with him: William S. White, the columnist, and Mrs. White, and Mary Margaret, and President and Mrs. Johnson, as I recall. Now there might have been someone else. Those are the only ones in my vivid memory.

President and Mrs. Kennedy then were at an estate called Glen Ora that they were leasing. We went over. We drove up, and the President and Mrs. Kennedy and Caroline came out to meet us, and it was the dearest memory in that little Caroline greeted the President like a long-lost friend, very warmly. He presented her with the saddle, and she wanted him to go with her to the stable, you know, to see her pony. There was just great affection and great, true interest between him and this child. Then Mr. Johnson and

the President visited very quietly, and I will say that if I've ever seen human agony on the face of a human being. . . . As we know, Mr. Kennedy accepted the responsibility for that fiasco and had gone over and over it, and he started discussing it with Mr. Johnson. Then he and Mr. White and President Johnson went down at the far end of the terrace near the swimming pool and talked for a while and came back. But it was a very solemn, quiet visit and the three men spent most of the time alone. But President Kennedy very, very vividly agonized over that part of history. And again I was just awed to be privileged to be in the group.

But what I hope the American public will understand one day is the true rapport of Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson and Jacqueline Kennedy and Mrs. Lyndon Johnson. You'll never convince me that Jack Kennedy did not admire and trust and rely on President Johnson for advice, and he and Mrs. Kennedy got along beautifully. It was a warm relationship and the American press will never let us believe it. But I was around on occasions when it was evident, when these people were, you know, truly affectionate toward each other. The President and Mrs. Johnson were often invited at the end of the day to go over to the Mansion with President Kennedy and discuss things and to be in the presence of his family, and I never witnessed any animosity at all. But the American press will never let us believe that they were good friends.

G: I think a lot of the speculation of hostility centers around Kennedy advisers and the Vice President and Robert Kennedy.

W: Well, there is no question that they were jealous of Mr. Johnson. I don't think there was any great rapport between Mr. Johnson and Mr. Kennedy.

The aides were part of it, who stirred it up and fanned it, and I think the greatest mistake Mr. Johnson ever made was keeping that much of the staff on. He was very sympathetic upon the assassination that these men and women had lost their leader and their boss, and he wanted so badly to help them and take care of them, and he felt that they could be a great help to him because of their prior experience and I think his great error was ever keeping the majority of them.

G: Did you ever get the feeling that he disagreed on the handling of the Cuban missile crisis?

W: I cannot answer that because I never heard him discuss it. Not in my presence did he ever discuss his viewpoint. Now there would be others on the staff that will know that, but I cannot answer that question. He never discussed it with me.

G: Did you have the feeling that he was willing to run again for vice president in 1964, before the assassination?

W: Oh, I definitely had the feeling that he would have run again as the running mate.

G: You don't think he thought about retiring?

W: Not then. Now, let me say, to my knowledge, no. Now that would be only because of. . . .

G: Did he expect to be retained on the ticket?

W: Yes, I think he did. You know, I think he felt that he was doing his duties in supporting the President, and that there would be no reason that he would not be asked back.

G: Well, was he, do you think, restive in the vice presidential period?

W: I would say in truthfulness, yes, in that here he had been the majority leader of the Senate for so long, had been the true decision and policy maker, and all of a sudden he was merely presiding over the Senate. And while he had a tremendous influence, he just was not in the constant battle which he so much enjoyed. But he fulfilled the duties of that office, giving far more than anyone in history up to that point had ever given. He was doing something all the time and was always receptive in fulfilling of the President's requests. The President was his leader and he conferred and helped and did everything he could to make the burdens of the presidential office lighter. What anyone critically wants to make of the foreign trips, he was asked by the President to take them and he took them as seriously as if he had been running the country. He briefed himself, he prepared and he worked himself to the bone on every one of those trips.

On the trip around the world, we went around the world in two weeks, and I will never get over the human endurance of this man. Now in Formosa he never did go to bed. He went to the dinner at the palace or the mansion with the Chiang Kai-Sheks. He came back to the hotel. He called Washington and got some briefings and said he was going to breakfast with the Chiang Kai-Sheks. He was talking to me and dictating and I went to sleep, and he gave me hell about that, that the younger generation couldn't last, you know. Then he worked all night and went to that breakfast, and he was as clear and as vibrant as if he had had eight hours sleep. I never have gotten over that, that this man could go as long as he could in a campaign or on these trips and be just as wide-eyed and as sharp as he could

be. He enjoyed that breakfast tremendously. There was great physical emotion and energy expounded, and he answered questions and he asked questions and was very enthusiastic all day with no rest.

G: That's great. Well, I see we're about to [run out of tape].

W: We've ruined your tape!

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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