INTERVIEW I

INTERVIEWEE: JAMES E. WEBB

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

DATE: April 29, 1969

Tape 1 of 1

B: This is the interview with James E. Webb, who was Administrator of NASA from 1961 to 1968.

Mr. Webb, to start way back earlier than that, you were a secretary to a congressman beginning in 1932 when Lyndon Johnson was also a secretary to a congressman. Did you see anything of each other in those days?

W: I cannot recall any contacts in those days. I was working with Edward W. Pou, the chairman of the Rules Committee, and many of the activities in the Congress, especially in the first days of the Roosevelt Administration, on up to a certain point and then came into focus at the Rules Committee. I do remember meeting Mr. Johnson and having some contact with him after the war when I was Director of the Budget and later Under Secretary of State. There were a number of matters he was interested in, particularly the disposition of the waters of the lower Colorado River, for instance, in matters of this kind. But I do not recall any direct personal contact back in the early thirties.

B: The first personal contact would have been in the postwar period, in the Truman Administration.

W: This is the first one that I remember.

B: Did you work with him often then? For example, in your connection as Director of the Bureau of the Budget, did you handle the kind of affairs you were talking about?

W: Yes, not often, because I was dealing primarily for the President with the Cabinet departments which then presented their own budgets to the Congress. So my contact in the Congress was primarily with the Appropriations committees in the House and Senate, and with the Ways and Means Committee in the House and the Finance Committee in the Senate. Those were the four committees that the Director of the Budget had responsibility for responding to, and I do not recall that he was actively interested in the budget factors that pertained to those committees.

B: I might say that--I suspect this is not the appropriate time--but your work in that period in those fields I hope is being covered somewhere in the historical record, if only one thinks

of the evolution of the Bureau of the Budget itself.

W: There are some papers in this regard. This is why Dr. Harvey [Dr. Mose Harvey of the University of Miami] is interested in bringing together and sharpening the focus of some of those papers. I saved some which are now in the Truman Library, and there are a few policy papers, but I have not done anything in the way of an oral history on the Bureau of the Budget days. I am somewhat reluctant to do this. I told Mr. Truman I would not keep a diary, and he didn't have to expect me to be writing any books about my experiences. So we dealt quite intimately.

B: Then, sir, in the next period, from '53 to '61, you were with Kerr (independent oil company] McGee and other businesses. Did you have any closer relationship with Mr. Johnson then?

W: No. Senator Kerr, of course, knew Mr. Johnson, as did Mr. McGee, and I may have had a few casual meetings where they were together and I just happened to be in the city at the same time, but I do not remember any particular matters that we covered together.

B: Did you ever get involved in those years in politics, party politics, say at the time of the '56 or '60 conventions and campaigns?

W: No. I was operating a business that covered eleven states as the president and general manager. I was also a director of Kerr-McGee and a director of McDonald Aircraft Company. In addition I served on four different governmental groups during President Eisenhower's Administration. I served as president of Frontiers of Science Foundation of Oklahoma. And so all of this was in a framework where quite independent of Senator Kerr's activities, I was performing a function as a Democrat and a businessman from the midwest. They usually had to have one Democrat and one businessman on each of these bodies like the Cancer Council and the Bayne Jones committee that studied medical research, and so forth. So I sort of performed that role on my own.

B: Then you did no active partisan campaigning?

W: No.

B: Or party finance raising?

W: Except to make my own contributions.

B: There are some questions like this I have to ask if only because if I don't, someone in the future might notice their omission and wonder why they weren't asked.

W: Right. You ask any question you want.

B: Then, sir, you were on the Brookings Institution transition group over '60 and '61. Did this involve you in any way with Mr. Johnson?

W: No, other than to go through material, some of which related to his interests and activities as a very senior Democrat, who was concerned with all the matters of broad national interest and import. I was aware of his leadership role and his interest in these, but I do not believe there were any meetings where he personally attended or where any briefing papers involved his position. Generally, as a person who kept up with what was going on, I was aware of his interests and activities and related these to these other matters in that way.

B: Did you know Mr. Kennedy prior to his election?

W: Only casually. I had met him once or twice, more or less on social occasions or occasions where I might have been with Senators and Congressmen, but I had no close or intimate contact with him at all.

B: Now, we come to the big one. How were you notified that you were being asked to be head of NASA?

W: I was up at Minneapolis working with some people who wanted to interest me in a business venture there and flew down to Omaha to attend a meeting and left there in the afternoon, went to Kansas City and on down to Oklahoma City, spent the night; and the next day they were having what they call a Friday Forum in the Chamber of Commerce, which in this case was a luncheon of appreciation to Senator Kerr for his services to the state. Don Cook of the American [Electric Service Power Corp]--of the utility of New York--the man, whom Mr. Johnson asked to be Secretary of the Treasury, was speaking, and I was at the head table and was called out to answer the phone. It was Dr. Jerome Wiesner calling from the White House saying that the President wanted to have me consider this job, and would I come to Washington and meet with the Vice President, that Mr. Johnson had been designated to talk with me about this. So I said I would and flew on to Washington that night and met Mr. Johnson on that Monday morning, when I arrived at his office and Dr. Hugh Dryden was waiting for me.

B: There is some indication that you came on to town early to do a little investigating.

W: Oh, yes, I came on Friday night, and I got on the telephone, and I talked to quite a number of people who knew about this matter. I talked to people in the Bureau of the Budget, I talked to several people on the staff at the White House that I had known in the past. I talked to Dr. Lloyd Berkner, who had been a friend of mine for a long time and who was the head of the Space Science Board, and who understood a great deal of the intimacy and ramifications of this.

B: There is also some indication that you were at first reluctant to take on the responsibilities.

W: Well, this is true. When I got to Mr. Johnson's office on that Monday morning, Dr. Dryden was waiting there. He had been invited by Mr. Johnson; so we sat down together, we knew each other, and I said, "Hugh, I don't believe this is a job for me. What do you think?" He said, "I agree with you; I don't believe it is either." And then Frank Pace came in, who had followed me in the Budget, to keep an engagement with Mr. Johnson. I said, "Frank, Hugh and I are here to talk about the NASA job and I don't believe this is really the job for me." And he said, "I agree with you." So I said, "Now, we're going to delegate you to see the Vice President. Since you had an appointment, you can see him first and you tell him that." So he did, and that didn't get very far. He came out in a hurry, almost like he was being thrown out; and I went in and had a talk and something else intervened, and I came out and went over to see Phil Graham [publisher, Washington Post], who had come in and was waiting and said, "Phil, I've got to get out of this. Can't you help me?" And he said, "No, I can't, but there's only one man in town that can, and that's Clark Clifford."

So when we came uptown with Ken BeLieu who became Assistant Secretary of the Navy, the fellow who lost a leg in the war, worked on Mr. Johnson's staff. He had an office in the Navy building, he was going to be Assistant Secretary to the Navy. So as soon as we got to his office, I called up Clifford, and said, "Clifford, you've got to help me get out of this." And he said, "Ha, ha, I'm the one that recommended you. I'm not going to help you get out of it."

B: Was Senator Kerr also recommending you?

W: Yes, Senator Kerr was in Oklahoma City. Naturally, after getting this call from the White House, I talked to him, and he said, "Well, I think you ought to at least consider this." He didn't bring any pressure on me to take it.

B: Did they let you know that a number of other people had been at least under consideration?

W: Well, I found that out over the weekend before I went up to Johnson's office.

B: What was your initial reluctance there, sir? Did it evolve around the question of whether or not NASA should be headed by a scientist or an administrator?

W: Well, you see, I had served as Director of the Budget. I served as Under Secretary of State. I served on a good many governmental boards. I had retired from my business connections except for one week a month. I was president of Educational Services in Boston, chairman of the Municipal Manpower Commission, involved with the Meridian House Foundation and the Washington International Center, and had a substantial number

of interests and activities of this kind that I wanted to pursue over a period of time. I felt that I had made the pattern of my life, and I was not really the best person for this anyway. It seemed to me someone who knew more about rocketry, about space, would be a better person. President Kennedy later made it very clear that he thought it was a policy job. He simply said, "You've had experience in the Bureau of the Budget and the State Department in large policy issues and questions, and this is a program that involves not science and technology so much as large issues of national and international policy, and that's why I want you to do it." But basically I didn't particularly want to interrupt a carefully laid pattern of my life to come back into the government.

B: What finally convinced you?

W: President Kennedy said, "I want you for this reason." And I've never said no to any President who has asked me to do things.

B: Did Mr. Johnson subject you to some of his famous arm-twisting?

W: Oh, yes. He was very anxious for me to do it. As I said, he threw Frank Pace out of his office practically for suggesting that I was not the right man. I got the strong impression that he had come to the point that he wanted me to take this job. Now, whether that meant that he had tried so many others and not succeeded, or some other factor, I don't know but there wasn't any doubt in my mind that he wanted me to say yes that day.

B: Now, sir, when you were contemplating taking the job, there must have been some kind of question in your mind about exactly how much of a free hand you were going to have. There was, for example, Mr. Johnson, who I assume had already been designated responsibility in space, Dr. Wiesner as the science adviser, and the existing staff of NASA like Dr. Dryden. Did these questions cross your mind, and if so, did you clarify them with Mr. Johnson?

W: Well, you've got to understand that I knew most of these people much better than I knew Mr. Johnson and Mr. Kennedy. I was president of Educational Services in which Dr. [Jerrold] Zacharias [physicist] was the leader; he and Wiesner were very close and intimate associates. I had brought both of them into the government in the Troy Project when I was Under Secretary of State; had worked closely with Berkner, who was associated with many of these activities; and had served on various projects of the Academy of Sciences as a generalist. I went up to Woods Hole [Mass.] and spent three months of a summer as a generalist while they had a summer study going on in transportation.

So these people were not unknown to me, nor were the kind of issues and problems of working with them. Dryden I had known for a long time, and the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. I visited the Langley Field first about 1933, going down there on a Navy destroyer instead of an airplane. So this was not an unknown

factor to me. I had been in the aeronautical industry through Sperry Gyro. I had served with the General Council of the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce. So generally speaking, I knew the milieu, I knew the people, the leaders in the aeronautical industry, I was a director at McDonald Aircraft that was building the Mercury spacecraft. Do you follow me?

B: Yes.

W: So I knew enough to know that I would have to make my own way and that no assurances that I'd have a free hand would mean anything very much. I was perfectly aware of the kind of problems I'd face as administrator. I did make it very clear that I wanted an answer to a question as to whether I was coming in to execute some program that had already been prepared. I was assured by Mr. Johnson that, no, they wanted me to figure out what to do and then do it. And that basically was his instruction.

B: That was my next question, whether or not either Mr. Kennedy or Mr. Johnson or anyone had any fairly definite plans as to where NASA was heading at that time.

W: No, I don't think they did, except they felt that there were problems there, that no one could see exactly what the Russians' thrust into space meant to the United States, or exactly how NASA would evolve and would meet its problems. Remember Dr. von Braun and his group had only transferred into NASA the summer before I was here in February, you see. So it had all been put together in quite a hurry. And there had been many issues as to whether or not the program was adequate, whether NASA could do the job, or whether you wouldn't have to turn to the military services, whether any civilian agency could in fact organize and carry out a large endeavor like that. So all these questions were there.

B: Now, immediately you were faced, as you say, with this kind of question, and even more. To sort of take them one at a time, one of the things that comes up right at this time is the question of revitalizing and revising the Space Council to make Mr. Johnson, as Vice President, chairman of it and to make it an ex officio government council. When and where did that idea originate?

W: Well, the Space Council had been established in the original act of 1958. President Eisenhower had not wanted it to be active. He had insisted on being chairman. They had several outside members, from outside the government, and this was not a particularly good way to carry on planning for the government, and it turned out that the concerns in the Bureau of the Budget, the concerns among the White House staff serving Kennedy, and the concerns of Mr. Johnson all ran together along the lines of not having these outside people, of expecting agencies like the DOD and NASA to coordinate their activities in the first instance to the extent that they could, and not to say everything is got to come up for coordination at the council level.

Another direction in which the general consensus ran was that the President wanted the Vice President to have an active role of leadership in this space program, but he didn't want to abdicate as President either; and in a sense he wanted to control the agenda of the council, that he wanted to determine those items on which he would seek and would accept advice, and further that he did not want to abandon the normal budgetary process by having the Space Council make the space budget, but in fact he wanted the Budget Director to have full responsibility over the entire budget, including space. Now, all of that came to focus in revisions of the law establishing the Vice President as the chairman. And I think if you look at those pretty carefully, you'll find that every item that I've just described was incorporated.

It had a popular image, that the President in a sense had turned everything over to the Vice President, but this simply is not written into the law nor was it in fact true. On the other hand, he was very happy for Mr. Johnson to take the lead in talking about things and making speeches and participating actively in carrying out things that the President decided he wanted, such as to expand the program. He said, "Get it done." But he was not about to step aside and there were many around him who felt the space program should not be expanded, that manned space flights should not be a very large endeavor; and so in a sense he was not prepared to abdicate those decisions to anyone--the Vice President, the Budget Director, me as administrator, or anybody else. He wanted to have his part in them. Now the structuring of the Space Council reflected all of those views. But there was a general running together of those items that I mentioned.

B: Then, as it worked out in practice over the years, was the Space Council actually a policy agency or exactly what function did it serve for NASA?

W: I just don't think that you can describe it in any categorical and oversimplified terms. It was an advisory group to the President of the United States through which I, as Administrator of NASA, could raise an issue if I chose to, to which the President could to and say to the Vice President, "Bring this matter into focus and give me your recommendation," or it provided a capability for the Vice President to himself say, "I want to take up a matter and begin to study it, either through the staff or having a meeting." Now, all of those things took place, but basically in all of these Presidential advisory groups, if you are not aware of it, then I think it's quite important for you to understand it, they operate in the way the President of the United States wants them to operate. This was true when Mr. Kennedy was President and Mr. Johnson was chairman of the council; it was true when Mr. Johnson was President and Mr. Humphrey was chairman of the council.

B: You don't mean to imply, sir, that your individual access to the President was in any way limited.

W: It was in fact not limited, and the President and I discussed those things that were most

useful to go on the agenda and it was my definite policy, both with Mr. Johnson as President and with Mr. Kennedy, not to stand by for items to go on the agenda unless I was sure that the President wanted them on. I felt that as administrator of NASA, being the specialist in the space business, I had to be sure that my activity on the council was aimed in the direction that the President wanted it to go, whether he was Johnson or whether he was Kennedy.

B: I don't know of any tactful way to ask this, so I'll just do it bluntly. As chairman of the Space Council, did you find Mr. Johnson generally helpful to NASA?

W: Oh, yes.

B: Or did he have a tendency to meddle?

W: Oh, no. He never meddled. He was anxious to move ahead with the program, and he was always prepared to say, "You and your group know better about what ought to be done and how it ought to be done. I've heard this up in the Senate, or some people tell me this." He was always ready to bring in information, to ask questions, to say, "Have you considered this?" and always ready to press you to move ahead and get on with the job. But never in any way interfered with the operations. He never spoke to me about a contract. In other words, as to whether this person or that person should get a contract.

B: Did he help you in your relations to Congress, in budgetary matters, and that kind of thing?

W: Well, he helped the President.

B: The point's well taken.

W: You see, he understood better than the press that wrote about it that his relations with the President, Mr. Kennedy,, were the important thing--that he should proceed within them, and he did this. He's a very disciplined man in terms of those basic and fundamental things. Now he might have wished it were different. He might have liked to have had different instructions from the President. But basically I never saw him go beyond what Kennedy had indicated what he wanted done, or that he felt sure that Kennedy wanted done without a specific instruction.

B: In other words, rather than saying, "Lyndon Johnson is head of the space program," it's better to say, "He's John Kennedy's deputy for the space program."

W: Well, it would be much better to say that Mr. Kennedy was President, and he was Vice President and chairman of the Space Council, and I was Administrator of NASA, and McNamara was Secretary of Defense, and Rusk was Secretary of State, and [Glen]

Seaborg was chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, and we were all working within the framework of responsible government, and that there wasn't some kind of a magic special kind of organizational feature related to space. Now, the reality is different than the image you give in the public. The President clearly identified in public that he would like to see Mr. Johnson take the lead in space. Mr. Johnson clearly indicated that he was moving ahead vigorously under this kind of instruction from the President. But when the decisions were made, neither man tried to force them out of the pattern through which the government normally makes its responsible decisions. You've got to remember that Mr. Johnson had a staff, Dr. Welch was the Director of it, he could get information independent of me, and in a way the council had to do what is proper in a case like that, create the situation where if anybody has got a legitimate reason to bring up something, they have an access to do it, that it's not just the creature of any one of us, that in a sense it's an independent place where important matters can be brought up if they are not being properly taken care of elsewhere. So this is a fluxing thing, a kind of a plasma, rather than some kind of a rigid structured thing.

B: And about the same time you were making probably the first big decision to accelerate the space program, particularly the lunar landing. Did this begin immediately as you took over there in February?

W: No.

B: The record, for example, indicates that on March 21 you made a presentation to Mr. Kennedy that appears to be along these lines.

W: Well, what you have to, I think, keep in focus is this: during the first period of 1961 the Russians made a number of quite important and spectacular flights. We made quite a number of important, less spectacular, but very important flights. So both countries were coming down the line in flight programs that involved meteorological and other satellites. We were flying monkeys and they had earlier flown dogs. Soon thereafter they were flying men. But by and large there were a number of quite important flights that showed increased horizons as to what could be done. Now, it was perfectly clear that they had been flying a booster that could lift 10,000 pounds into orbit, and the biggest thing we could put up was a Mercury, which is about 3,000 pounds. It was perfectly clear that we were behind them, and that they had been working at least four or five years before we got started on these bigger boosters.

So my first presentation to President Kennedy was: we must increase our booster power and we must begin to think about manned space flight after Mercury. So I asked for something over $300 million dollars to increase the work on the Saturns, the big boosters, and to increase the work on the large spacecraft to fly on them. Kennedy approved the booster side; he did not approve the spacecraft side. As I remember it, he approved $125 million dollars, something of this kind. But specifically did not approve

the spacecraft, in a sense deferred this for further decision. So when the lunar landing thing came along in April and May, you had a second evaluation of our situation after [Major Yuri] Gagarin had flown.

B: Yes. I was just going to ask. In time , there, early in April, April 12, the Gagarin flight occurred. Then, did this encourage Mr. Kennedy toward our manned flights?

W: I think so. By that, I mean it was perfectly clear that Gargarin's(?) flight, coming after the interval since Sputnik and with the image that Russia could in fact produce the first manned flight and that they could fly a spacecraft that weighed 10,000 pounds or so and we were struggling in every possible way to get the Atlas to carry a Mercury that weighed one-third of that, this put a strong impulse on building some additional booster power.

B: What was Mr. Johnson's position in all this?

W: It was that we ought to get going. It wasn't that he knew specifically what to do and he therefore was trying to dictate the program but that we mustn't stand still. We must get going. We shouldn't be delayed. He was strongly for the total that I presented back there in March.

B: For the big boosters.

W: No, the 300 million for the spacecraft and the boosters. And I would think in many ways that he felt my request was too small, that I should have pressed harder at that time for more. And certainly after Gargarin's flight he felt that we just simply couldn't stand still. We had to move.

B: Somewhere in this same period, too, the apportionment of work between NASA and the military must have been settled. Again there is a record of a meeting of you and McNamara right after the [Commander Alan B.] Shepard flight, May 6 and 7.

W: This was one of the early things that I did, and I can't remember now what Mr. Johnson's involvement was, was to make contact with Gilpatric and McNamara. As I recall it, back about February or early March, we had signed an agreement not to unilaterally start the development of large spacecraft. We already had an agreement not to start the development of a large booster without a written sign-off of the other. This was to prevent somebody suddenly saying, "we've let a contract." See what I mean?

So in the April-May period we already had agreements in effect about large boosters and large spacecrafts, that we must come together and agree that the program is in the national interest or it would not be started. In the work of examining what we ought to do and how we ought to do it, you move then to a sharp focus after the decision was made to rapidly expand the program, as to what would be done, who would do it. It

was in that area that McNamara and I generated some staff work by John Ruble, Bob Seamans, and others. Then we met personally, examined the program, and agreed that the Air Force would continue the large solid development, but NASA would go forward with the large liquid boosters and the manned spacecraft program. It was also agreed that their Dinosaur Program, which was a manned program, would continue. That was later cancelled.

B: Was that as easy as you make it sound?

W: No, none of it is easy. Nothing is easy when you are dealing with large programs.

B: As I recall, the Air Force was fighting pretty hard--

W: Oh, the Air Force had a strong desire, at least a large part of the Air Force had a strong desire to upset the 1958 law and to have this mission. They felt that this should be carried out very much like the Navy had done Antarctic exploration in the earlier days with Admiral Byrd. They felt genuinely that this was an important element of national power, national capability, that they had the capability to do it, and that they were the proper ones to do it, and the 1958 law was a mistake. So there was a strong drive to--at the change of administration--to reverse the previous policy and to increase their role. There was also a strong desire on the part of Mr. McNamara not to do that because of the expense of it, and the feeling that he was not satisfied that it was necessary for them to do that.

B: He, then was in favor of the civilian side, NASA?

W: No, he was in favor of the program we worked out which was in fact a division and which followed the law. The law said NASA would develop these advanced technologies, but that the military application of them and research related to that application will be done by the military services. So McNamara was clearly wanting to follow the law as it was laid out.

B: Then somewhere in here the decision was made to go ahead with the manned program as Mr. Kennedy phrased it, "Put a man on the moon in this decade." The announcement, his announcement, was made before Congress later in May, May 25. Did the decision come earlier than that?

W: Yes. I don't think there's any doubt that there were some days in there of maturing exactly how the President would phrase his request to Congress. Now, that doesn't mean that he told me, "Look, the fifth of May, or along in there, I've decided that I'm going." It meant that he had the recommendations that Mr. McNamara and I prepared to Mr. Johnson and that Mr. Johnson had submitted to him, that he was maturing his decision. Now, I don't think there's much doubt that he had decided once he got this, "Well, we are going to have to go with this," but he was preparing the thing for the announcement, and no one of us

was in a position to tell the Congress or tell the newspapers or anybody else, "The President has made a decision." He was reserving that. So when you say it was made before May 25, I think it was. But I do not know precisely when on precisely what terms.

I would only say this: that the strong thrust of the program that was agreed to by McNamara and by me and by Mr. Johnson was to increase the capability of the country, was to move forward to develop all those things that would give us options, that the lunar voyage was the first one of the major spectacular things that we felt sure that we could compete with the Russians. We didn't feel sure we could win it, but felt sure we could compete. My own statement said the industrial strength of this nation means that we can do this. Kennedy stated, "We will put a man on the moon in this decade." That is a President's prerogative to bid for support in terms of what he thinks he can get.

It's a little bit like Mr. Truman, I've used this story many times, asking us to study the Taft-Hartley bill. We did this in the Bureau of the Budget. Six out of seven experts recommended that the law should be vetoed because it brought the government in too early and didn't bring enough pressure on management and labor to settle without bringing in the government, but do you think Truman said that? He said, "I'm going to veto the bill," but then he called it a slave labor law. Now, Kennedy's statement, "We will put a man on the moon" was a President's way of presenting his thing in his style of bidding for support. It is not the terms that those of us who were responsible for the program thought of it.

B: You have also pointed out that although he used the phrase "a national commitment," "a national goal" probably would have been more accurate.

W: It would. You see, people later wanted to say, "We've got a commitment, and Congress has reneged on a commitment if they don't provide the money." That's not the way you really deal with this kind of a matter of annual authorization and appropriations in my opinion.

B: After that, you got still another budget increase.

W: You see, wait a minute, Kennedy said, "Look, we ought to do this, we ought to commit ourselves to it, but we ought not to start if we aren't going to see it through." He never said, "I interpret the first move as a commitment for the whole time." I think you'll find that in the records.

B: And then after that you got still another budget increase.

W: Well, we requested a budget increase to go with this May 25 speech of the President's. And we asked for about a billion, eight hundred million dollars, and this was cut by something like ninety million dollars in the Congress.

B: Another thing you were involved in at the same time, and partly because of that decision, was the selection of sites for your activities.

W: Yes.

B: Were you deliberately working on at least one idea of encouraging southern economic development?

W: No, this is a fallacy. What happened was this: we knew we had to launch these big machines. We looked all over the world to find the best place to launch them from. The further north we went, the more problem we had of overflying Africa. The further south we went, the less energy would be required to get into orbit, but the logistics problems were greater; about a billion dollars had been invested at Cape Kennedy. We looked at Hawaii, we even considered building an island off the coast of Georgia or off the coast of Florida. It turned out in the end that Cape Kennedy, Cape Canaveral at that time, was the best place for us to go. Now Huntsville was already where it was. It had been put there by the Army. Von Braun's group was working there. The Saturns were under development. They were on navigable water so that you could ship the really big stuff down the Mississippi River.

Also on navigable water at New Orleans was this large vacant plant, forty-three acres under one roof, and nearby in Mississippi was a lot of land that could be used for the testing of these big boosters. In those days, nobody knew how much damage the noise would do, how much explosion risk there was. So with Huntsville being something like 1,800 miles from Cape Canaveral up the river and through the Gulf, we figured that if we could take this big New Orleans plant, get it for $1 a year, we could assemble the vehicles there. We could manage the production from Huntsville, and we could involve American industry along the rivers and the coasts and much of the work on the smaller elements could be done anywhere in the country. If a big booster was made on the West Coast, it could come through the Panama Canal; if it was up the Mississippi in Minnesota or Chicago, it could come down the Mississippi; St. Louis could come down. In other words, here was a natural line of flow built around the--Huntsville--Cape Kennedy axis with the New Orleans assembly plant and the Mississippi test facility in the middle.

Then the question of where are we going to build the large manned spacecraft came and the very configuration of this axis concept led you to Houston. You didn't want to put a second big installation in New Orleans. You might have to go to very large space stations that would be constructed outdoors and moved by water. Houston had a very large technical capability. Rice University was there. We had a board that looked into this. So our purpose was to do the space program. Incidentally, many benefits did come to the south, and obviously many people thought of them; we were not unaware of them. We thought it was important for the economy wherever we were to benefit. This is true in Cleveland where we've got a laboratory; it's true in California, where we've got two

laboratories. You see what I mean?

The basic reason was to get the space program done in the most effective way possible and to build scientific engineering and managerial strength for a long time into the future. We were not looking at the cheapest way of making stuff in tents or building poured concrete buildings. We realized that when man left the air, when he had an engine big enough to leave the air and the earth and to move around in space, you are entering a new and unlimited arena, and that we were not just constructing the fastest, quickest way to get a few payloads into orbit. We were building permanently.

B: What about the political implications here? I'm sure you are probably tired of hearing of this, but Vice President and chairman of the Space Council, Lyndon Johnson, of Texas; Albert Thomas, influential in House appropriations, Congressman from Houston.

W: You've left out Mr. Shepard of California, who was chairman, I believe, of the Appropriations Committee at that time, if I remember correctly, or at least he was a very powerful figure in the Congress. There are many political forces at work at all times here. And we followed a very simple policy in NASA. We did what we thought was right for the program, and we let the politicians take the credit when and where they wanted to. We never argued with a politician who said, "I got this installation for my state." But we did not accept the judgment of the politicians as to where these installations ought to be. We put them where we thought they ought to be for the program, and we let the politicians take all the credit they wanted to, whoever they were.

B: Prior to the selection of the Houston site, did you hear anything from Mr. Johnson about the possible areas under consideration?

W: Mr. Johnson was always interested in Texas. A good deal of the time he was Vice President, he still sort of thought of himself as a Senator from Texas. He was interested in everything that went on in Texas. He was interested in appointments, in patronage from Texas. And when you say, "Did you hear anything from him," he was interested in any facet of the program. The basic fact of the matter is that as we studied these things, I informed President Kennedy and not Mr. Johnson that we were moving in our thinking towards Houston.

Albert Thomas was a pretty powerful man in the House at this time. I never told Albert Thomas that our thoughts were moving in this direction. But Kennedy called up Thomas one day and said, "I need your help on a couple of bills here--three bills." And Albert said, "Now, Mr. President, I don't know about this." And Kennedy said, "Now, you know Jim Webb is thinking about putting this center down in Houston." Albert never knew it until that time. And he said, "In that case, Mr. President--" and he supported the three things, but he felt that he had a commitment from Kennedy from then on.

B: And, incidentally, I suppose it should be mentioned that at least one of the areas that thought itself under consideration was John F. Kennedy's Boston.

W: I made the statement when [Gov.] Volpe [R. Mass.] tried to claim we were making political decisions. I said, "If it had been subject to political influence, it would be in Boston, because that's where the most pressure came from." I stated this publicly.

B: Then, also, all of this is going on at the same time. You had the problem of the administration of NASA, the internal control of NASA, which at least a layman gathers was something like a collection of individual little baronies when you took over.

W: Well, not quite. A good deal of progress had been made by Keith Gennan. He had a basically sound plan. His basic policy was to go out to industry with just as much of the work as possible, to work with the universities to the fullest extent that he could. There were strong personalities, and the image to the public was that each one had his own barony. But that wasn't really particularly true. Now, our job, though in the senior NASA positions was to develop a pattern where we could spend 90-95 percent of our resources outside the government, using the resources of the country, strengthening them in the process because the mandate in the law was not to build a strong NASA but to increase the competence of the United States to deal with scientific and technical matters in aeronautics and space. So we simply created, as you will see in Administrative History foreword that I wrote and in the recent McKinzie Lecture publication called "Space-Age Management" I don't know if you've seen that or not--

B: I've read both of them.

W: --that we just went through a very simple process of knitting ourselves together at the top and deciding how we are going to work and then going through various changes in organization to keep a certain amount of instability so that you could maneuver the machine. This is hard to do in a large organization like that, but not basically and radically different from what's done elsewhere.

B: Am I correct that almost all of this was handled by you yourself within NASA, that is, without the President or Vice President getting involved?

W: That's right. Except where a lot of people wanted to complain to them and they would hear the complaints, and then accept my judgment about it.

B: I was just going to say that if there is an exception to that, the case of Mr. Holmes--

W: He was not an exception, just a little louder complaint.

B: Wasn't there eventually a meeting with you and Holmes and Kennedy and Johnson--

W: Oh, yes, Dryden, Seamans, and I were going over there to talk about the request for an additional appropriation which I opposed. I wanted to get the necessary funds in an orderly process of annual appropriations. In this kind of a program, the worst thing you can do is let Congress say, well, we have to cut this now but you can come back for a supplemental in a month. So, I knew this perfectly well. Now, when we went to the White House we took Brainerd over ourselves so that he could hear the discussion and not feel left out and could better accept the decision.

B: Then, sir, another thing about the same time or a little later, and this is another question I have to ask--

W: The way this kind of thing worked was very simple. Mr. Kennedy called me up in Chicago once about eight o'clock in the morning, and he said, "Say, the New York Times is after me, and the astronauts apparently have been offered free houses in Houston, and they are after the White House on this thing. How does the White House get into this?" I said, "Well, now, Mr. President, I can't tell you how you got in it, but I can tell you how to get out of it. Just tell them the Administrator of NASA is handling this." He said, "Well, that is a good idea," and hung up the phone. Now, when the question of MA-10 and Shepard flying came up, the astronauts wanted to make an appeal over my head to the President, and I said, "Fine." They were out at my house. I said, "Go tell him anything you want to tell him."

So Kennedy called me up the next morning and he said, "Well, the boys came by to see me last night." I said, "Yes, I know they did. They left my house, told me they were going down to see you, and I told them to tell you everything on their minds." He said, "Now, you know who's going to make the decision, don't you?" I said, "I think I do." He said, "You know you're going to make it, don't you?" I said, "Yes, that's what I thought."

B: Did he always handle it that way?

W: Without an exception. The scientists strongly felt that we ought to spend a lot more time on centrifuges and with animal experimentation before we flew Mercury. And Wiesner to some extent was their spokesman, and I just told Kennedy, I said, "Now, look, if you and I stick together, we'll come out all right, and if you want these other people to run the program, I can't tell you how you'll come out." And whenever it came to that point, he always said, "Go ahead." When it came to the nuclear rocket, Glen Seaborg and I were sitting on one side of the table, and here was Harold Brown, McNamara, Wiesner, and the whole group saying, "This ought to be reduced to a research program." And I just said, "Now, Mr. President, here are your two administrators, who are responsible people. We are saying 'we ought to go forward at least to a prototype type of thing for testing on the ground and to bank the technology,' and you just have to make up your mind whether you want these kibitzes on the side or you want your responsible administrators." He said, "I want to go forward the way you and Seaborg recommend." There was no exception to

that.

B: That of course is good sound administrative principles. If you put a man in charge, he is in charge.

W: Sure. But this is a different image than you get from a lot of the press and a lot of the people who want to stimulate controversy. A lot of the groups, particularly the scientists felt that there had not been a rational decision-making process in deciding to do Apollo.

B: Also, I get the impression from reading some of the criticism that some of it verges on snobbery, that the scientists are criticizing James Webb for not being a scientist.

W: Well, they wanted control. It's like I told George Kistiakowsky [White House special asst. for science) when I said, "George, tell me what it is that you really think the President's Science Advisory Committee ought to do and ought to be." And he named me about five things, and I said, "But George, not a single one of those is science." I said, "The truth is, you want a seat next to the dealer in the name of science but for some other purpose." They really in those days wanted to control the decision process, and they felt they could achieve this through this Science Advisory Committee which Killian had helped establish and had raised right up to the Presidential level; before that you know it reported to a level below the President at the White House. They really felt that this was the vehicle by which they would dictate many of the decisions. I made up my mind early in the game that I couldn't let anybody dictate the decisions that were at the technical level, whether it was the President or the Vice President or the scientists or Mr. McNamara.

B: Did this kind of relationship with the President continue after Mr. Johnson was President?

W: Absolutely.

B: Did he operate in the same fashion?

W: Absolutely in the same fashion.

B: Another thing, sir--

W: If anything, Johnson felt freer to call me up and say, "You know, I'm hearing these kind of things." Kennedy never bothered very much to do that. But whenever he got to the point that he wanted to say, "Look, I'm going to enter the picture and handle a complaint or bring a matter to consideration." He did, but always within the context of understanding that as long as I was administrator, he was not going to try to second guess me on the decisions. But still I had to answer to criticism. I had to go before him and justify my position, which is okay. It's all right. Nothing wrong with that.

Now, Mr. Johnson was much more intimate in the sense of saying, "You know, I hear this," or, "I hear that," or, "These people are maneuvering around. What are they really up to?" Because he and I had a more intimate relationship than I ever had with Kennedy. In many ways, he was a sort of lonely man. Every once in awhile he would want to get someone that he knew, liked, trusted, and just talk a little bit. And this would extend into his telephone conversations. He's a great man on the telephone. He loved to call you up and just talk on the phone. He also was a great man to try you out, to put a great deal of pressure on you just to see how you reacted to the pressure. He got a little fun out of that, I think.

B: What would be an example of that kind of thing in your case?

W: Oh, I can't recall specific examples, but mostly they were things where he was pretty sure that somebody who had urged him to make you do something, that he shouldn't force you, you see, but he learned from how much resistance you put up and so forth.

B: Did you often talk to Mr. Johnson about matters other than space?

W: Well, "often" is a word that is sort of hard. I did on quite a number of occasions.

B: Would these be real dialogues, seeking advice on his part, or did he just want someone to listen?

W: Well, they were both. I had some quite intimate conversations with him about the vice presidency at the time that Kennedy was President and he had just become Vice President. He, as you know, did not easily adjust to a role in which he didn't have the direct power that he had as the Majority Leader. His power was there, it was very great, but it wasn't the direct power, and he found that I had served as acting Secretary of State during many episodes when Barkley was involved as Vice President. You know, Mr. Truman had a very conscious and deliberate division between Executive and Legislative branches. In the meetings of the National Security Council, if he were not there, the only other person he would permit to preside was either Mr. Acheson as Secretary of State or me as Under Secretary. With the Vice President in the room and the Secretary of Defense coming in, I would say that "the President has asked me to preside today. Sit down, gentlemen, and go ahead with the business." He wouldn't let Barkley as Vice President preside over the National Security Council.

Now, it took a bit of educating for Mr. Johnson to understand that. He knew I had worked around the White House and we had quite a number of discussions on these kinds of matters, the role of the Vice President, how it was changing, the things that he should pay some attention to, the prerogatives of the President. You know, there were a lot of people needling him to take a very strong position and you have to remember that Mr. Kennedy had been sort of a young junior senator when Mr. Johnson had tremendous

power and where Kennedy had little if any in the Senate. And this is quite a reversal of roles in a very great hurry there, you see. On many occasions after Sam Rayburn's death and Senator Kerr's death, I wasn't the only one, there were a few other people he felt he could talk to that he would talk to about himself, his role, different people with whom he was involved.

B: Did he eventually resign himself to the limitations inherent in the vice presidency?

W: Yes, he accepted them but didn't resign himself to them. I mean, his nature was not to accept it in a resigned way. He didn't have much of an air of resignation about him on those things. He accepted the reality of what had to be done and always struggled to do a little bit more, in my opinion.

B: What was the personal relationship between him and John Kennedy? Did they get along well?

W: Oh, yes. I think a great deal of what you saw in the papers was either manufactured or was because the papers had to write something. On the basic and fundamental things I never saw an occasion in which they didn't really have a pretty good understanding. It's almost like two pretty strong animals sizing each other up or people sizing each other up. Now you can't say they have a complete meeting of the minds, you can't say that if the situation changed one or the other may not act differently. There were clearly people around Kennedy that didn't feel that Johnson should occupy as important a role as Mr. Johnson and his associates thought he should occupy. All that goes on all the time. That's no different than it is in many other places.

B: I was going to say, a lot of the newspaper stories at that time appeared to have derived from the relationship between Mr. Johnson and the Kennedy staff.

W: Yes, that is my opinion. I never saw an occasion when Kennedy did not give every evidence of wanting him to be present and to participate important things. I was in quite a number of meetings in the Cabinet Room, and remember I have been there lots of times before in the Truman Administration, and had been around the White House where I was over there every day as Budget Director. So I understood a good deal about this, but I saw no indication at all. There wasn't any doubt that Kennedy knew that as President there were certain issues that he would have to handle as President. This is proper. This is right. Mr. Johnson knew the same thing when he became President.

B: During the Kennedy years, the Bobby Baker affair broke into public print and you and NASA were involved in it, at least in the public prints.

W: Yes, we were. Clark Mollenhoff [newsman--later Nixon aide] and a lot of others drew the associations.

B: From your point of view, precisely what was the problem there, if any?

W: Well, the problem insofar as NASA was concerned was zero. We never had any business with Bobby Baker, never did any, I never met him except once or twice on social occasions, I never turned to him for advice about what was going on in the Senate. When Clark Mollenhoff first broke the stuff, he called me up on the phone and he said, "You know about that house Bobby Baker got?" I said, "No, I don't know about it." He said, "Were you ever there?" "No, I was never there." And so forth. I mean, I just was not involved in that side of the operation.

Now Fred Black was working for North American, they were our very large contractor, and Black was sent to me by Senator Kerr on three different occasions. We turned every one of them down. So as far as we were concerned NASA simply was not involved. Now, the Senate went into a pretty careful investigation after the fire and there were a lot of ugly rumors and in executive session Senator Brooke was the guy who stepped forward and said, "Now, I have to ask you these questions." He said, "Were you ever a stockholder in the Serve-U Vending Company?" I said, "No, sir." "Were you ever a director?" "No, sir." "Did you negotiate the contracts by which the vending machines were put into North American?" "No, sir. I didn't know about it until I read about it in the papers."

The reason it became sort of, I think, acute was when I was in Oklahoma I was asked to go on the board--you see, I was on several boards outside the Kerr-McGee group--I was asked to go on the board of the Fidelity Bank and Trust Company, which was a small independent bank. I told them I couldn't afford to do that just for director's fees, unless it was some business interest I couldn't do it. That worked forward to the point that I and other people in Kerr-McGee bought a substantial interest in the bank, and I became a director representing our group.

Now, when I became Space Administrator, I did not sell the Fidelity stock. The last thing that ever entered my mind was that a bank in Oklahoma City would be involved in any way with the space business. It turned out that Senator Kerr arranged for that very bank to loan money to Bobby Baker in a substantial amount. So everyone tried to draw the association that I owned stock in the bank, Baker got a loan from the bank, the vending machines went into North American. So it was a question of association, but there was nothing to it and the record of the Senate investigating committee, the Senate committee in executive session, clearly shows that. So there was no problem so far as we were concerned; it was a problem where people who were looking for something to burn Mr. Johnson or Senator Kerr or the Democrats were determined that there was something wrong and that they were going to go find it.

B: Did you ever discuss the affair with Mr. Johnson, who as you say received a good deal of criticism out of it, too?

W: I do not remember ever discussing it, except after the fire, when I made it clear that all the stuff that had been raked over before would probably be raked over again because North American was the contractor, and that he should make up his mind how he wanted the investigation handled, that I was prepared to do it responsibly and show that a government agency could get at the facts and whatever deficiencies that were there could overcome them, or we could have a presidential commission, or we could have a congressional investigation, he would have anything he wanted. And I pointed out to him on that occasion that a good deal of the past stuff about the Baker-Black episode would probably be raised by his enemies, and he should take that into account in deciding how he wanted it handled. And he said, "I want you to handle it."

You see, Hornig and his scientists were urging a presidential commission. There is always somebody around urging something. And I just made it very clear that if he wanted me to do it, I would do it, and that if he wanted it any other way, it was fine with me. So he said, "All right, I want you to do it." I said, "Well, now, there's just one stipulation I want to lay down. And that is that you are not bound to this decision. You can change it at any time you want, but I want to be told first. If you change your mind about wanting me to be in charge of it and get the job done, then you tell me first if you want to change." So we shook hands--only time I ever struck a bargain with a presidential handshake.

B: You formally sealed it then.

W: In other words, I never wanted to bind the President. The President has to be free to act. That's the only time I can ever remember discussing anything about Bobby Baker and Fred Black.

B: Then, sir, to carry on approximately chronologically here, by '63 and '64 NASA had become the subject of general debate and some criticism. Presumably, at least in time, it seems to have been triggered by the $5.7 billion budget request there in '63, and there developed a good deal of criticism over--well, you know the range as well as I, whether the moon was really worth it, whether more money for education, less for space, the whole thing. Did this provoke any serious doubts within the administration?

W: Well, when you say 'within the administration,' you are going all the way to the Defense Department, to the State Department, to the scientists--not among those responsible.

B: That is better phraseology.

W: I suppose there were people around Mr. McNamara in the Defense Department that did have some concern about the size of the money required to do these jobs. And, you see, the larger our budget got, the more exacerbating became the desire of the military to have it and a feeling that somehow this should have been their role. And Mr. McNamara had

many other problems with the military, and this was one more. I think among the science people, they saw this not so much as doubts and this kind of thing but as an opportunity to attack the program, because we had been very clear in the beginning, it would take between twenty and forty billion dollars. We had to rise to run at a six billion dollar level in order to make the timetable and move, you see, and to do it most efficiently. We had made it clear that we could get the scientists to undertake the necessary research and that we could put the development job on industry and it would be done. In the early months they thought we'd stumble and fall, you see. There was a good deal of feeling, "well, we'll just stand by and these NASA boys claim this, but they won't make it, and we'll pick up the basket of groceries after they drop them."

By the time we got to the $5.7 billion request level, it was perfectly clear we were going to go ahead. I remember very well one of the senior industrialists coming to me and saying, "Well, you know, I've assumed that you couldn't do this job without coming to me and asking my help, and now I see that you can, and I would like to get in on the program." I mean, there was a lot of this kind of thing, you see. So it began to center along this line, and I was getting reports that very strong-minded people like Dr. Vannevar Bush were coming down and talking to Clarence Cannon, who was chairman of appropriations committee, and bringing pressure against the successful joining of the executive and legislative branches to get on with the work.

B: You say 'people around McNamara.' I assume that Mr. McNamara himself was still sticking to the division you and he had set up earlier.

W: I think in this period he began to have some concern about the size of this program, and I think he also had other concerns that contributed to this. I think part of the concern was just a general feeling on his part, "How could anything as big as this be well run unless I'm running it?" I can't tell you that that's precisely what he thought. Nobody knows what he thought. I don't. But there was evidence that he was unwilling to stand up and be counted for the program.

And let me say this: that this was perfectly clear to President Kennedy as well as to me. I talked to the President about two or three weeks before he was killed, and I said, "Now, look, we're going into a campaign, and I have had a good deal of experience in these matters and so have you. The space program is going to be an issue in the campaign in '64. How are you going to furnish the leadership? What are you going to be prepared to do? Are you going to stake your whole prestige on support of this program?" And I said, "I have to tell you that I think that the Secretary of Defense will not want to support the program as having substantial military value. So you are going into a political campaign with my saying that it has very important technological benefits for the military services, and the Secretary of Defense being unwilling to say it."

B: What was Mr. Kennedy's reaction?

W: Well, his first reaction was, "Well, is there anything personal between the two of you?" I said, "No, sir, not at all." He said, "Is there any reason why you can't work together?" I said, "Not at all. But the plain fact is that you are going into a campaign, and I think this program has quite important elements of technological development that serve our military, and Mr. McNamara is unwilling to say so. And you are going to face that in the campaign." And he said, "Just keep on, and I'll handle that at the proper time. Don't let it get personal." So he was perfectly clear that he was going to have to take a leadership position and that I was going to make clear the benefits of the program.

B: At the time, again, it appeared that--

W: Which I guess is a pretty good way for you to understand how I dealt with Kennedy. Now I never went to Mr. Johnson and told him of that conversation.

B: You mean Mr. Johnson, then Vice President, and chairman of the Space Council?

W: That's correct. Because, you see, when I'm talking about a member of the Cabinet to the President of the United States about the relationship of another member of the Cabinet, this is not, in my view--this is an operational problem where I am responsible for coordinating with Defense and McNamara and with the President and not something that I'm going to gossip about with anyone.

B: And it's got to be the President---

W: It's up to Mr. Kennedy to tell Mr. Johnson what he feels he should tell him about a thing like that. I did the same with Johnson when he was President with Mr. Humphrey. I talked utterly freely and frankly with him; I left it to him as to what he should say to the Vice President. I didn't feel I had to go over and report each conversation.

B: Yes, that very clearly illustrates the function of the Space Council. At that same time--

W: That didn't mean that Mr. Kennedy may not have told Johnson this.

B: During that fall, one of the things that appeared to give you some trouble, at least generate difficulty, was Mr. Kennedy's speech before the UN suggesting cooperation with the Russians. Many people apparently had been backing the space program so long as it was us versus them. Were you in on the planning of that speech?

W: In a limited way. Kennedy sent for me. This was, I think, a day after Gilruth had made a speech up here before some kind of an organization in which he talked about the importance of preeminence in space, the fact that you couldn't have a Russian spacecraft attached to an American booster, that the technical problems were too great, stuff of this kind. The President said that he was thinking of making another effort with respect to

cooperation with the Russians, and he thought he might do it before the United Nations, and he said, "Are you in sufficient control to prevent my being undercut in NASA if I do that?" So in a sense he didn't ask me if he should do it; he told me he thought he should do it and wanted to do it and that he wanted some assurance from me as to whether or not he would be undercut at NASA. I said, "No, sir, I have sufficient control and I will see that you are not undercut." So he said, "Thank you very much."

I went on to St. Louis, and I was there at Senator Symington's house, we had been moving around out there a little bit in Missouri, when Bundy called me and said, "The President does want to make this speech, and he wants to be sure that you know about it." So I then immediately telephoned direct instructions around to the centers to make no comment of any kind or description on this matter. So in a sense I was in on it, but not as a deciding person.

B: Did you anticipate that it might adversely affect your relations?

W: Not to the extent that it did. I did not think that it would be taken by the people in Congress as a reason for withdrawing their support. I was a little surprised at the violence of the reaction down there. It didn't seem to me this was necessary. It seemed to me a President ought to be able to put that kind of a thing forward in a speech at the UN for discussion on a world-wide basis without the people who were supporting the program saying that he was backing away from it. Now, it turned out that maybe there were other factors that I didn't fully understand. I took Kennedy's word on the basis of full faith and credit that he was doing this for the reasons he gave me. There were indications that people around him wanted this to be a slight withdrawal of support, slight testing of the sentiment as to whether the program could stand without his strong support. I don't know today what they were, but there were some slight indications, and I think it was that, it wasn't what he did in the speech so much as this feeling that this was just the beginning of a group around him who wanted to withdraw support.

B: By ‘people around him’, do you mean his immediate staff?

W: I just don't know what I mean. I don't know whether it means Schlesinger and Sorensen or whether it meant the disarmament arms control or whether it meant Mr. McNamara. I just don't know who it meant. I would simply say those around him. There was a feeling on the part of, say, Congressman [Olin] Teague [D.-Tex.] and others that there were those around him who were against the program and this was the beginning of their influence on him not to seek preeminence.

B: Then, sir--

W: And they wanted to resist the beginnings. They didn't want to see Kennedy even begin to slide away from full support of the program, to be out in front, to be ahead.

B: By 'they,' do you mean Congressman Teague and that group?

W: Yes. They felt, partly also, another kind of fear, namely, that except on that basis you would have trouble getting the support necessary.

B: Then, sir comes Mr. Kennedy's tragic death and Johnson's succession to the presidency. Do you recall when you first saw him after the assassination?

W: Gosh, it's so hard to dissociate what you see on television and what you see in person.

B: Yes, particularly at that event. He's known to have called a number of people in the days immediately after the assassination.

W: He did not call me. The first time I remember seeing or doing any business with him--I mean, I might have seen him casually, shaken his hands, I mean, I was in and out, I had a White House pass, as you know, so I could go in, and out without asking anybody. The first time that anything of any significance occurred was sometime about the middle or end of December when he was considering the submission of his budget. You see, Kennedy had not sent a budget up, and he sent for me with Kermit Gordon, the budget director, and he said, now, let's see, maybe he had me at a Cabinet [meeting]. He used to, you know, invite me every once in awhile to Cabinet meetings and to other meetings in the Cabinet Room, and I may have been at one of those and he said, "Come into my office afterwards." But in any event, he and Kermit Gordon and I were there in his office, and he said, "I've just got to get some kind of a tax bill through, and Harry Byrd will not support it unless I guarantee I will hold expenditures of NASA under $5 billion, and I want you to do that." I said, "All right, sir, if that's what you want me to do, that's what I'll do." You see Dryden, Seamans and I kept a control on the program so that we were not a juggernaut, we were not out from under control in the wild way that people said.

I've never forgotten Kermit Gordon's answer, saying, "Well, we've got to look into this with considerable care to see what it does to the program." And then when we walked out, I said, "Now, Kermit, you heard what the President said. I'm going to implement it." And he said, "Not until I've had a chance to look into it, because I want to be sure that this isn't going to spoil the program." But Johnson was clearly as President beginning to look beyond the space program toward his total thing and telling me that I had to hold this under $5 billion on the expenditure side in order for him to give this promise to Harry Byrd and get his support for a tax bill.

B: And there were general cuts going on at that time. It was not that NASA was being singled out.

W: Sure, there was a very hard effort to hold the budget down, but the point is that this is his first withdrawal of support. This is the first indication that he is taking a different position

on space than he took before.

B: What you have just said indicates the next line of questioning. It seems to, well, to quote one of NASA's own histories, "that some of the steam went out of the drive for preeminence for space in the Johnson years."

W: Yes.

B: And as you have just said, that was a first indication that maybe Mr. Johnson's support was beginning to change.

W: I wouldn't say 'support.' I would say his priorities in light of all of his programs. Once he became President, he had a different set of problems than he had before. He was not quite as free to press those areas that he had a particular interest in, he had to look at the total, which is a perfectly responsible way for a President to look at his job.

B: And you feel this shifting of priorities in his mind began as early as that, there over '63 and '64?

W: I'm just telling you what happened. He said, "Hold your expenditures under $5 billion, so I can get Harry Byrd to be with me on a tax bill."

B: Did you discuss with him any time there fairly soon, in '64, about this question of how much support NASA should have?

W: Well, sure. I went through every year in the budget presenting three or four different levels and making it clear that we were not going to achieve preeminence in space at the rate we were going, and that the Russian programs were building up. I said to him precisely what I later said to the Congress, only I said it to him more directly than I said in the open testimony. I made it clear to him what his line of decisions was doing to the space program and to the development of technology. To the Congress I made it clear but also said, 'the President is preserving his options. He cannot do it this year,' and I made it clear in the proper language that he had made a conscious and deliberate decision not to develop the options that were available to him.

B: Did Mr. Johnson--

W: Well, this was in support of his program, not in undermining it, and I never did this privately. I never held a background news conference all these years.

B: In your conversations with Mr. Johnson, do you believe he understood clearly the point you were making?

W: Well, I think he did, but I think he had almost a supreme confidence that at some point he could give us resources again and that we could catch up again. For instance, in that conversation about Harry Byrd, he said, "Next year I hope to make up for this." But he never could.

B: Of course, as I understand it, NASA's point was always that if you are going to have the Mars probes and the Apollo application program, that you can't catch up later, that you have to start now at the base.

W: Well, you've got a five or six year lead time, and you've got to take that into account. You can't start a year later and do it in four years when it takes five years to do.

B: What was Mr. Johnson's reaction to the report of the future program task group which evolved this kind of planning?

W: He was so busy with other things that I doubt very much if he ever fully absorbed that report.

B: Is part of this, particularly here in '64 and '65, just a conflict for money between the Great Society and other programs?

W: I don't know the answer to that question. I would state it differently if I had to say it. I would say that Mr. Johnson as President was struggling with a large number of very hard programs, that he was approaching them in the way that he had learned to approach things through his whole life. He was listening to a lot of people and he was preserving a certain amount of uncertainty on the part of people as to exactly what he would do, which is not an unknown technique among presidents and budget directors and people like that. Now, I think further than that, that he was trying very hard to present what you might think of in his terms as a coherent program that got legislative authority moving in the right direction, and he had supreme confidence that if you could keep it moving in the right direction in the end the things that were truly important would get done. So I think that's the way I would think about it, rather than this is just a struggle for money between the Great Society and these other things.

B: How about the effect of the Viet Nam war as it began to increase in volume and tempo?

W: For several years I did not think this was a critical element in terms of NASA's budget. It may have been more critical than I had thought it would be.

B: Particularly after, say, '66?

W: Now look, in the first budget that we lost the $600 million and dropped back from $5.7 billion, that Kennedy had recommended, to about $5.1 or .2 billion, and then came

Johnson's budget in which he asked for, I think, something like $5.2 or 5.3 billion, something of this kind; then the next year he asked for about $10 million more than Congress had appropriated. That doesn't indicate, you see, that the Viet Nam war was having a large effect. He was in a sense giving me the opportunity to fight for what I regarded as extremely important, not just because it was to stay ahead of the Russians but it was to develop the technological capabilities and to make sure that we could exercise the options that were required. And remember, this covered aeronautical research and this was a pretty important part of the Viet Nam war.

B: Did Mr. Johnson ever discuss with you the allocation of priorities within NASA? That is, one assumes that because of the budget cuts, you were having to look again at your priorities inside the NASA--

W: Yes, he and Kennedy both on a small number of occasions, one or two or three, would raise the question, "Why don't you stop these other things and finish the lunar thing to which we are politically committed?" And my answer was always, "It's too important. And so far as I'm concerned, I'm not going to run a program that's just a one-shot program. If you want me to be the administrator, it's going to be a balanced program that does the job for the country that I think has got to be done under the policies of the 1958 Act."

B: Did you also have to assure them that you could do both? That you could carry on Apollo--

W: I never even discussed that with them. I mean, we were allocating the funds over the total; my point was, give us the most that you can give us and we'll do the most that can be done with it within a balanced program.

B: Did you ever discuss with Mr. Johnson--

W: Now, remember, this is slightly different than new starts, the question of whether you're going to start a new program of planetary exploration, which would be Voyager, or whether you're going to start the nuclear rocket, that's a matter where the President comes in and says, "I don't want to start a new program this year," but that's a different thing than the allocations of resources within.

B: Yes, sir, I've tried to make that clear in the question. Did you ever discuss with Mr. Johnson, or advise him, on affairs other than NASA? For example, cities, transportation, this kind of thing.

W: Yes, he knew that I had served in many different areas, and every once in awhile he would ask me about different things. He asked me particularly on some occasions about the budget, and I gave him some ideas that I thought might be worth something to him.

B: Because of your prior services as Bureau of the Budget Director?

W: Well, that's right.

B: Did this go down to the level of--?

W: And because I read quite a lot, and I stay pretty well informed on those matters, and understood his budget problems about as well as anybody.

B: Did this go down to specific matters, like whether or not to inaugurate certain programs?

W: No. It went to his stance as President in dealing with the total budget situation and the Congress.

B: It was more in the level of technical kind of advice?

W: Technical in terms of how a President's positions are set before the country and the Congress.

B: I have seen rumors that you were at times considered for Cabinet posts.

W: Well the President made a number of statements saying he would like to have me in the Cabinet if I didn't have a more important job. I was never seriously considered so far as I know for any Cabinet post. It was never discussed with me, any particular one, and all I know is this kind of statement that he made in my presence and out of my presence, "I'd like to have him in the Cabinet."

B: But there was never any serious discussion or formal offering?

W: No, there was not, to my knowledge.

B: What was Mr. Johnson's reaction to the Apollo fire in January of '67?

W: Well, it was one of saying, "I know you fellows have done everything you could. We are awful sorry this happened." You see, the strength I had with Mr. Johnson was primarily because I never went to him for help. I never asked him to help me get a vote in the Congress. We did our own business. He had plenty of other problems. So in a sense he knew that we were on his team, he knew that I wasn't going to try to feather my own nest or get some benefit for myself or NASA as against his Administration, and he looked on this as one successful program and that it was being carried on effectively in his interests and therefore he put his time elsewhere, and that's pretty much the way he felt about the fire.

B: You've already mentioned that by allowing you to go ahead and conduct the investigation, that amounts to a vote of confidence.

W: That's right.

B: You and the organization.

W: That's correct. And if you notice that we did a pretty thorough job and made it available right in the public arena in spite of all the yelling around that was done.

B: Yes, that's one reason I'm not going into any detailed questions on that. It seems to me that this congressional testimony and everything else covers it, with total thoroughness.

W: The facts were laid on the record, and then the problems were corrected and the Apollo 8 went to the moon. First time men ever flew on a Saturn 5.

B: Did you find Mr. Johnson knowledgeable on the technical side of the space program?

W: What do you mean, about specific impulse in the booster, or--

B: Well, did he know that kind of a thing, or did he want to know it?

W: No. He wanted to size up whether what you were doing made sense and whether you knew what you were doing and whether you were achieving success and whether you were getting any serious complaints or any great compliments. He wanted to speak about the important things the program meant to the future, the value of the example of astronauts to people, the importance of support of the program, but it wasn't to say this booster is better than that one, or solid is better than liquid and this kind of thing. But he also had a vast amount of information. You see, when a man is President, every kind and description of person talks to him, and they tell him things and he remembers it. He has a prodigious memory. And they had been talking to him when he was Majority Leader. He had been listening to people on these matters for a long, long time.

B: Did he ever discuss with you such questions as the risk of life involved in the manned program?

W: All of us were very conscious of this. I mean, since we were all conscious of it and aware of the risks and were prepared to take the risks that were there, it just didn't come up as a major matter of discussion.

B: Dr. Mr. Johnson ever express a desire to go visit the launch, be on the scene at the time of a launching?

W: I don't believe he ever initiated any discussion of that kind. We considered several times whether we would ask him or when we would ask him, but we also had to consider what would happen if you had a failure, what would happen if you were delayed for a day or two. His very presence would tend to exacerbate any problem that you had. If it were just a weather problem. So I have never encouraged a President to put himself in a position where his presence exacerbates a problem.

B: Actually, Administrator James Webb never attended a launch either.

W: No, I went to the Grissom launch. I saw the Gus Grissom launch, then I went down and picked him up on Grand Turk Island after they fished him out of the water.

B: Is that for the same reasons, sir? That your presence tends to--

W: It's partly that, but it's partly because I had a job to do in Washington. I mean, if you had any trouble anywhere around the world, these things go around the world every hour-and-a-half, if you have any trouble anywhere it is more important for me to be at the center of communications and available to the President than it is to be down there. And besides Dr. Dryden liked to go to them, Dr. Seamans liked to go to them, and so I just let them go because they wanted to go.

B: Mr. Johnson seems, at least in the public press, to have enjoyed meeting the astronauts. Is that correct?

W: Oh, yes, I think he did. I think he felt very much as if they were part of his family of children. He felt very close to them, admired them, liked them.

B: The visits to the ranch particularly seem like friendly occasions.

W: Yes.

B: What was your relationship to Mr. Humphrey while he was Vice President and chairman of the Space Council?

W: Very much as they had been with Johnson when he was in that same position. I took the position that Mr. Johnson was President, or Mr. Kennedy was President. I reported to them, I worked directly with them, but I also recognized the council of which I was a member and the role of the chairman of it, but I was always in a position of not participating in the council in anything that I didn't feel the President wanted done or understood as being done or felt was proper to being done.

B: Did Mr. Humphrey show as keen an interest as Mr. Johnson had before?

W: That's a hard question for the reason that he has been more recently in it. You see, you have to remember that the way the Senate operated when Mr. Johnson was there and for a time after he was Vice President was that the senior people were quite conscious of their jurisdictions and they didn't cross too many lines. Mr. Humphrey had not been in the circuit. Now, Mr. Johnson had been in the circuit for a very long time. I would say Mr. Humphrey took his job very seriously, worked at it, learned a lot about it, made a lot of speeches about it, had quite a number of meetings of the Space Council. And I would say that Johnson probably encouraged him to do that more than Kennedy encouraged Johnson to do it. So I would say there was a slight change in the sense that Johnson was taking initiative to move with something he had been a part of, and interested in for a long time. Humphrey was being urged by Johnson to learn about it, to catch up, so to speak, with what Johnson already knew. You know, it's hard to characterize these things. Maybe I'm even exaggerating that.

B: Well, actually the difficulty of characterizing those things is one of the reasons why we have this kind of oral history project.

W: What do other people tell you about that? About what I've told you?

B: Yes, most people emphasize the fluidity of this kind of relationship.

W: Any man who is a special assistant to the President or Vice President of the United States has to work on things that the President passes to him off his desk.

B: Yes, that's what most people make clear. That there is a boss.

W: And the press doesn't quite operate that way. They think of the Space Council as something that's got a lot of indigenous power and authority and responsibility.

B: And we hope that this kind of thing, it may not clarify it any, but it may be a better understanding of it.

W: Same today with Agnew.

B: Sir, the circumstances of your leaving NASA. Now, am I correct in assuming that you and Mr. Johnson had some time prior to September '68 discussed the circumstances under which you would resign?

W: Yes. Mr. Johnson told me in August 1967 that he was not going to run for President.

B: He told you that early, sir?

W: Yes, that's right. He said, "The only two people that know this are John Connally and

Lady Bird, and Marvin and these other people don't know it and I don't want you to tell anybody, but I'm not going to run."

B: May I ask, sir, did you by any chance try to talk him out of it?

W: No. I just simply said, "I'm going to walk out the day you do. Let's go out together." No, I did point out to him that this would be a great loss to the country, and I did point out the fact that he would be under heavy pressure to run and I didn't see how he could do this, but I didn't argue with him about his decision.

B: Did he present it to you just as a decision he made? He wasn't asking for advice?

W: He was just telling me as a close friend and associate that he had made this decision, and he was going to announce it soon, within a month. Now the point is that I had made it very clear to him that I did not want to stay beyond his term of office, that eight years of this job would be enough for anybody, and that we both had the problem of continuity of leadership. And so it was not too long thereafter, probably in October or so, that Bob Seaman said he wanted to leave. I've forgotten the exact time; we can look it up in the record. And Bob was Deputy. So the question became, how do you assure continuity of leadership when Seaman is leaving, and I had at least this indication that Johnson was thinking about it. I really think that he would implement the decision. I thought that somehow, some way, events would transpire. I said, "Look, you're going to have tremendous pressure put on you," you know.

But when I told him Seaman wanted to leave, we did discuss how you get continuity of leadership in the program, and he gave me authority to look for a deputy that could become administrator when I retired. I did so, and cleared a couple of people with him, and offered the job to them; they both turned it down; and I was moving along to assume that I was going to have to ride out the thing and run the place more or less without a deputy. And about that time John Macy called me up and he said, "I've got a pretty good man here. I believe [he] could do your job as Deputy." So I said, "Send him over." Tom Paine turned up, and I spent about half a day going through the exercise with him, and I knew without any doubt that he understood matters the way I did, he was young--forty-six at that time--he had experience in tempo, of taking something that was down and out and building it up into something good and strong, had worked on paperwork problems of the National City Bank as well as how a government in an underdeveloped country in Africa solves its problems, and I checked him out with people in GE and elsewhere and they all said, "He's tremendous." He had been selected to be in the top group in GE from which they select their senior officers. He told them no, he wanted to come into the government and broaden his experience.

So I immediately said I would like to have him, and the President said, "Well, you bring him over here." So, he came back from California, I took him over there, and

Johnson looked him over, talked to him, and then he said to me, "Do you want this man?" And I said, "That's your decision, Mr. President, He's a presidential appointee." He said, "I'm going to do what you want done. Do you want him or don't you?" I said, "I want him. I want him as your appointee though." So then he went ahead and he made the announcement, and then I cleared him through the Senate after some difficulties because they like to strike a bargain with whoever is going to hold those jobs.

Now, from then on the question was really a question of time. As you moved on past the March 31 date and into the period of the summer, we were getting ready to fly the Apollo again and I made it very clear to Johnson before that September meeting and at the September meeting that there were three advantages we wanted in pursuit of our goal of continuity: one was that we wanted insurance that if Apollo 7 failed, bearing in mind we were going to fly this thing about three weeks before the election, that if the same guys that had tried to burn him with Bobby Baker and Fred Black and all the rest of it got to going again, I wanted to be on the outside where I could take them on in their own terms, not an administrator on the defensive. That was one thing that I thought was important; insurance against the possibility of failure three weeks before an election.

Second, we wanted to present whoever was President, Humphrey or Nixon, with a vacancy, because having been through this for seven and a half years, being somewhat of a controversial person which you almost are bound to be in this kind of thing, I didn't want the argument to be, should the new President keep whoever is in, or should he throw him out? We wanted a vacancy, and I deliberately planned this so that one could say to whoever was President, "You don't have to argue about whether to keep Webb or not. Paine is prepared to stay a year as Deputy. He's not striking for the main job, and so all you've got to do is appoint a man. Just remember that you've got to fly several Saturn 5's this next year." And the third thing, the third element in this, was that I would be available without taking on any conflicting obligations until the 20th of January to watch the program, to be more or less full time or half time with Paine, and if anything happened to Paine I would have gone right back in on an interim appointment, you see, to run the place until the 20th. So the President had the assurance that he was producing a situation of three elements that provided continuity. Now, that was basically what we were doing and we had been working in that direction for over a year.

B: Did the actual announcement come as a bit of a surprise to you?

W: I went over to the President to cover a number of business matters, and I said, "Now, we're coming near the election. Here are some thoughts. It seems to me this is the way to proceed. Paine to do the job. He's already promised me he'll stay a year after the change of administration, if he's wanted, as deputy." And he said, "Well, I think that makes sense, and that's okay." And I said, "All right, I'll begin to make the preparations." Well, now, he's very allergic to leaks and things like this. And he said, "Well, if we are going to do this, we'd better make the announcement." I said, "You mean today?" And he said, "Yes.

Get the press." I said, "Look, I haven't called my wife." But I was not going to argue with his judgment. He said, "This is the time to do it," so I went right smack forward with it.

B: And as you say, the plans had been laid.

W: Oh, yes, he and I were in complete agreement as to what we were doing

B: You know, there is a copy in the NASA files of a telegram you got almost immediately from Lewis Strauss asking if you were ready to campaign for Nixon.

W: Yes, that's right.

B: Your reply was very gentle and polite.

W: I waited just a little while to send it, so as to--did you notice that?

B: I didn't notice the dates.

W: I waited just a little bit to send it. I think, if I remember correctly.

B: I gather you gave no thought to the idea of going on Nixon's campaign.

W: None. I thought I made it clear in my letter that I was a Democrat and expected to remain so.

B: Sir, we are verging on the end here. There is one question I would particularly like to ask you. You are known quite well as a student of administration. What's your opinion of President Johnson as an administrator?

W: I do not think he understands administration; the care and feeding of large administrative organizations is not understood by him, was not by Eisenhower, was not by Kennedy. Eisenhower rode administratively on the staff of the Army and the staff of the military. Kennedy never did anything to really encourage administrative effectiveness. And in a sense he let McNamara push forward with certain things that many of us thought were unsound from an administrative soundpoint. Johnson would let people go on about their business, never gave them any instructors, nor did Kennedy, except, "Fly when you are ready and don't go until you are ready."

But that's quite different than the care and feeding of a large administrative organization. I don't know of any man who has been through the Senate unless he had been an executive before he went there, that understands administrations. So my answer--Truman understood it because he had been an administrator in his work in the

courts in Missouri, and he had served on the appropriations committees for ten years and his interest in it had been strong. But even there he would not do well unless he had good staff work. If he acted on his own without good staff work, he made errors, in my opinion. Johnson wouldn't wait for staff work on administration. He made his own decisions.

B: How about Johnson's judgment of men, which is a part of administration?

W: Excellent for his purposes and to fit in with his thing, he had a very shrewd judgment. Whether you would say that this is precisely the same criteria that you would apply if you were looking at the need of a large administrative organization like the government, for his needs and his purposes he was a very shrewd judge of men, and he was very keen to determine when conditions were beginning to exist that made the relationship unhappy.

B: Do you think his--

W: I think he was shrewd in judging the weaknesses of men as well as their strengths.

B: Do you think his lack of ability as administrator hampered his presidency? Is that one of the sources of his troubles?

W: Yes, I do. I have never seen a more magnificent thing than happened in the Cabinet Room when he called everybody in and said, "Now, look, we are part of the United States government; we have a Congress; it has a comptroller general; we have the courts. I expect you all as administrators not to disregard the reports of the congressional committees and the comptroller general. I expect you to pay attention to them." Every other administration which I had seen had always said, "Well, these guys don't know, we know more about it," and so forth. On the other hand, when it came to the problem of a full and fair presentation of some of the programs that were being put forward and also the relationship of what was called "cost effectiveness" and "cost savings," these were just plain not good administrative operations, in my opinion.

B: Did he ever discuss with you--

W: And I refused in several cases to go along with them, and I think the only reason I wasn't challenged is because I wasn't asking any help from the President nor the others. I was going on about my business.

B: Did he ever discuss with you more fully the reasons for his decision to withdraw?

W: No. Well, I take that back. He did tell me at the time several reasons which I don't--look, you're going to get all of this from him, and I think I've said enough on that score. He did inform me, and he discussed with me some of the things he would say and the reasoning

he expected to use.

B: Sir, is there anything else that we ought to cover that we haven't?

W: I don't know what you've got that we haven't covered. There are an awful lot of other elements, and I think that what we ought to say about that is, if you want to come back to clarify some things that I might know something about, I would be happy and glad to see you.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By James E. Webb

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States. The donor retains to himself during his lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f) (3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not, during the owner's lifetime, be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it. This restriction shall not apply to employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

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

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

Signed by James E. Webb on June 2, 1972

Accepted by James B. Rhoads, Archivist of the United States on June 28, 1977

Original Deed of Gift on File at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, 2313 Red River, Austin, TX 78705

ACCESSION NUMBER 74-266

Law Offices
James E. Webb

1707 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20006
Area Code 202
338-6511

June 15, 1979

Mr. Harry J. Middleton
Director
Lyndon B. Johnson Library
Austin, Texas 78705

Dear Harry:

Within the last six months I have had two requests from scholars to read the oral history interview I did for the Library in 1969, under the direction of Joe Frantz. I had been reluctant to open the material because I had been quite candid at the time, thinking this was for the Library only and not considering the fact that this material would be of interest to scholars in the future. I have again reviewed the transcript of the interview, in light of these requests, and have concluded that access to the transcript of the interview may be granted by the Library, at its discretion, to serious scholars.

I have just written of the Syracuse Research Corporation and of St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota, giving them permission to see the transcript.

With every good wish, believe me

Sincerely yours,

James E. Webb

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Narrator: James Edwin Webb
Biographical information: Lawyer
b. Granville County, N.C., Oct. 7, 1906. A.B., UNC, 1928; student, George Washington U Law School, 1933-36; LL.D., UNC, 1949, Syracuse U., Colo. Coll.; Sc.D., U. Notre Dame, 1961. Exec. asst. to under-sec. of treasury, 1946; dir. Bureau of Budget, 1946-49; undersec. of state 1949-52; dir. McDonnell Aircraft Co., 1952-61; administr. NASA, 1961-68; practice of law, Washington, 1968--. Recipient Robert J. Collier trophy, 1966; Distinguished Service Medal NASA, 1968; Presdl. Medal of Freedom, 1969; Goddard Meml. trophy, 1971.

General topic of interview: The space program, NASA.