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INTERVIEWEE: EDWIN WEISL, SR.

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

May 13, 1969

F: This is an interview with Mr. Edwin L. Weisl, Sr., in his office in New York on May 13, 1969. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Mr. Weisl, you're out of Illinois, right?

W: Yes, sir.

F: Tell us a little bit about how you came to be what you are in life.

W: Well, I was lucky enough to get a scholarship at the University of Chicago.

F: I've taught there.

W: And by working my way through there, I was able to get a degree in law and practice law.

F: You practiced in Chicago?

W: Yes. I first became an Assistant United States Attorney in Chicago and served there for four years, and then became a Special Assistant Attorney General to prosecute a large mail robbery case in which a post office inspector was involved.

F: This was under a Republican administration?

W: Well, I was appointed originally at the tail end of the Wilson Administration and then reappointed in the Republican administration.

F: I don't want to pry in your personal life, but why did they pick such a young man as you were? I might add, incidentally, I asked John--do you know John Crooker, Sr.?

W: Yes.

F: In 1948--he's getting pretty elderly now--but in '48 he was named to

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see Mr. Johnson's certification through as a Senatorial candidate in that disputed contest, and I asked him--he had said he didn't know Mr. Johnson--"Why did Mr. Johnson pick you?" "Because I was the best lawyer available anywhere."

W: Well, I was picked as an Assistant United States Attorney through a mutual friend; I was the playground director in what was known as the "Tribune Poor Children's Camp," during the summer, and some people I met at that camp were acquainted with an Assistant Attorney General of the United States, and they recommended me to him. Through his recommendation I was appointed an Assistant U.S. Attorney. After that I was recommended for reappointment in the Republican administration by the judges of the United States District Court in Chicago.

F: What prompted your move to New York?

W: I was asked to help a friend of mine who was organizing an investment trust in New York. In the course of that work, I met Mr. Odlum who was the president of the Atlas Corporation, a large investment trust. I negotiated a merger of that particular investment trust, that I was working on, with the Atlas Corporation. And through Mr. Odlum I met some of the Simpson Thacher and Bartlett partners and they induced me to stay in New York.

F: How did you happen to go with Paramount Pictures?

W: The Atlas Corporation owned a substantial interest in the debentures of the Paramount Company which was then in bankruptcy, and Mr. Odlum assigned me to look into that investment; and in looking at that investment, I met all the other creditors, that is, all the other large creditors of the company, and we organized a committee, and through that committee the Atlas Corporation, and other creditors, took control of Paramount--brought it out of reorganization. I became a director, and Simpson Thacher became counsel to Paramount Pictures.

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F: We'll get into your later government service in a little while. How did you first meet Lyndon Johnson?

W: I was personal counsel to Harry Hopkins and, visiting him one day at the White House, he suggested that I make the acquaintance of a young Congressman from Texas. He said that President Roosevelt thought very highly of Congressman Johnson, and that I ought to meet him and help in every way that I could. So he called up Congressman Johnson, and I went over to meet him, and we became friends.

F: What was your first impression of him?

W: My first impression of him was that he was a very dedicated person; he wanted to know all about business, all about Wall Street, all about New York, all about everything that I could think about, so that he could gain as much knowledge about what the businessmen thought and what people in the East thought and what their programs and plans and ideas were.

F: Did you find that he was rather innocent to Eastern business interests, as well as political and social interests in those days?

W: Well, I would say that he had no exposure to those interests; I wouldn't say that he was innocent. He was very thoughtful and knew something about business, generally, but not too much.

F: You then saw him rather frequently in those Congressional days?

W: Yes. I saw him--each time I came to Washington I visited with him. And each time he came to New York he stayed with us at my home.

F: Did he come frequently?

W: Well, no, not very frequently. It varied.

F: Did you have a feeling that he came with the sort of purpose to be educated?

W: Oh, I think he came with various purposes. He came with the purpose of getting to know as many people as he could, and also to promote his interests in his radio station.

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F: He was taking an active interest in the station at that time?

W: Well, Mrs. Johnson purchased the radio station, and it was having quite a difficult time to survive; in other words, he had to get companies to advertise on his station. And to do that, he had to get acquainted with companies--potential advertisers.

F: He was seeking national advertisers?

W: Both local and national. Most national advertisers have local interests in the Texas area.

F: And so he was hoping to work through the home office to induce local people to advertise--local outlets.

W: Well, yes, both.

F: What did you do on these weekends? He stayed at your home?

W: He would from time to time either stay at our home or stay at the apartment building that I lived in.

F: Was there such a thing as a typical weekend?

W: Well, it varied. Some weekends we'd have maybe eighteen or twenty Texans join him.

F: You felt you were running a Texas colony.

W: And we had a good time; we'd go to the theater, go to ballgames, sometimes to the races.

F: Did you have the idea you were preparing--helping shape a national character?

W: Not at the time, I didn't give it much thought--in that area, anyway.

F: How long did this association continue?

W: It continued to the present time.

F: So that any time he was in New York he was likely to be in touch with you and maybe even be a guest?

W: Yes.

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F: Did he ever have time just to play?

W: Oh, sure. He went to theaters, I told you, and had cocktail parties.

F: Well, I have picked up the impression from other associates that he's the world's poorest companion at a ballgame because the game doesn't interest him; it's the people who are around him who interest him, and therefore he's talking out some problem. Was that your experience then?

W: I think that's true. I don't think he had any special interest in sports. I think he enjoyed them to some extent, but he wasn't what you'd call a fan.

F: He wanted to be where the people were, though.

W: Yes.

F: Did he come to you with any particular problems in those days?

W: Yes.

F: For instance?

W: Well, I told you that he needed--that is, Mrs. Johnson needed help in getting customers for her radio station.

F: I was thinking of legislative problems.

W: Well, he would discuss various problems that came before Congress; I don't recall specifically, in those early days, what they were, except that he was a great admirer of President Roosevelt and wanted to help his program in every way that he could.

F: This goes a long way back, but do you remember whether he ever discussed the third term question with you?

W: No, I don't.

F: That's where he broke with Vice President Garner--on this, which, of course, made a split in Texas solidarity.

W: I have no knowledge of that.

F: Did he talk with you about going into the service?

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W: Yes.

F: Do you recall anything about the circumstances?

W: Yes, he said he felt that he ought to go into the service, and he did go into the service.

F: Any reason why he picked one service over another as far as you know?

W: I don't really know why he picked the Navy.

F: When did you begin to suspect that he might be more than just another bright Congressman?

W: Well, I suspected that quite early in my acquaintance with him. I suspected that he would either be a Senator or a Governor. Although I must say that Harry Hopkins told me that President Roosevelt thought that he would go very high in government.

F: So that President Roosevelt, then, did sort of have an eye on him as a--?

W: Yes, he did.

F: As far as you could tell, were Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Johnson relatively congenial?

W: Oh, very.

F: They could work together and visit together?

W: Oh yes.

F: Did you ever play any role, advisory or otherwise, in any of Mr. Johnson's purely Texas Congressional campaigns?

W: Yes, some. I represented--you know, as I told you, I was a member of the Board of Directors at Paramount, and also chairman of the executive committee for a time. We owned about a hundred theaters in Texas, and I would get in touch with all the theater owners there and ask them to support Johnson.

F: I realize that your association with theaters came in through the legal

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and financial side, but did Mr. Johnson ever seek your advice on how to get properly displayed in the theaters, how to improve his own image, or was he worried about it?

W: No, because the theaters never displayed anyone in the theaters, but the theater managers and owners were quite influential people in the community.

F: Whom did you work with in the theaters there? Did you work with the individual theater owners in Texas, or did you work through a chain like Karl Hoblitzelle's, or--?

W: Well, I worked with Mr. Hoblitzelle, with Bob O'Donnell, and with Mr. Nova in Austin, who owned the theaters there.

F: Louis?

W: Yes. And then Mr. Hoblitzelle and O'Donnell and Nova worked with the local theater managers.

F: Just to spread the word around that this is a good man?

W: Yes. They were very fond of Johnson, all of them, anyway.

F: Were you involved at all in his Senatorial campaign in either '41 or '48?

W: I was in the '48 campaign.

F: Tell us what you remember about that.

W: Well, for years I had been counsel to the Hearst companies, and the Hearst companies owned the San Antonio Light in San Antonio, Texas. And I had Mr. Johnson meet Mr. Berlin, the president of the Hearst Corporation, and got him to recommend that the San Antonio Light support Johnson for the Senate in '48, which they did.

F: Did you ever meet Coke Stevenson, his opponent?

W: No.

F: When it came down to such a close decision, were you involved in the contest over his certification?

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W: Yes.

F: In what way?

W: I was subpoenaed as a witness for the Joint Committee of Congress, the Joint Military and Naval Committee. At that time someone stated that--some anonymous letter was sent to a Congressman from Pennsylvania, I forget his name, stating that certain financial interests who controlled the Convair Company had financed, or helped to finance, Senator Johnson's campaign for the Senate; and that, in return for that, he helped them get a contract for what was then known as the B-36. And extensive hearings were held on that subject, and no evidence was presented to support that claim.

F: What was your role as a witness?

W: I was asked whether I had helped finance his campaign for the Senate, and whether I had been influential in urging him to get the contract for the B-36 for the Convair Company, which was then controlled by a client of our office.

F: Had you?

W: No.

F: Did Mr. Johnson talk to you prior to the running for the Senate in '48 about whether he should run, because he was getting pretty fair seniority in Congress.

W: Yes, he did. Of course, I urged him to run.

F: You thought it was worth the risk, even though he had lost one campaign for the Senate already?

W: Yes.

F: Did he ever talk to you about the alternatives in case he was defeated, because this ran parallel to a Congressional election and he would have been out.

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W: I don't recall that we had any specific conversation about that.

F: Did he discuss with you, then, after he became a Senator, the possibility of his becoming Senate Minority Leader?

W: Yes.

F: Can you relate the circumstances about that conversation?

W: Well, he told me that Senator Russell was very anxious that he become the Senate Minority Leader.

F: Well, now, Senator Russell was in line for it. Why do you think he--?

W: Well, Senator Russell could have had it if he had wanted it, but he preferred to devote his energy to the Armed Services Committee, and suggested Senator Johnson for that post.

F: You don't think that Senator Russell felt rather sensitive on his deep South background, and thought this might hamper him as Minority Leader?

W: I don't think he did at that time; at least I was unaware of it if he did.

F: Why do you think Senator Russell picked on Senator Johnson who was pretty junior?

W: Well, he thought Senator Johnson had the youth, the capacity, and the energy to make a great minority leader.

F: When Senator Johnson talked with you about this possibility, I would presume he was enthusiastic about it?

W: Yes, he was. We both were.

F: Did he ever have any doubts?

W: None.

F: So, if offered, he would accept?

W: Yes.

F: There wasn't any pussy-footing on that?

W: No.

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F: All right. Was it because of your friendship with Senator Johnson that you got back into government service in the fifties, or because--

W: As a what?

F: That you got back into government services--where you were Chief Counsel of the Preparedness Committee, for example.

W: Yes, it was solely because of my friendship for Senator Johnson that I did that.

F: Why did he come to you?

W: I don't know. I guess he assumed that I could do a good job. Both he and Senator Russell, incidentally, came to me.

F: Can you tell me a little bit about the offer--the meaning of it, the circumstances?

W: What he said to me was this, as I remember it. He said, "You're always criticizing what's happening in government, and never do anything about it. Why don't you come and serve the government?" He was sort of half-joking about it. He said, "We're going to have this important hearing, and you ought to come as my counselor--as counsel to the committee."

F: For the sake of future generations, what did a chief counsel do in the 1950's for the Senate Preparedness Committee?

W: The chief counsel would first select some assistants to help him; then work with the staff of the Senator and of the committee, and prepare a proper examination and presentation of the issues. It was a fact-finding committee really.

F: Were you given a free hand in naming your assistants?

W: Yes, sir.

F: No political pressures then?

W: None whatever.

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F: What kind of assistants did you try to get?

W: Well, I got Mr. Vance as my chief assistant and my son as junior assistant. And then we had a man from Senator Russell's office as a consultant, and some of Senator Johnson's assistants--men like Mr. Segal and others whose names I don't remember.

F: Are you given a hard and fast budget for that sort of staff, or do you just sort of play it by ear--within reason?

W: I don't remember any specific budget that we had. I know that as far as I was concerned, and Mr. Vance, and my son were concerned, we got practically nothing for our services.

F: Did it involve your moving to Washington?

W: Yes, I moved to Washington.

F: Did it leave you time for any other service?

W: Well, for the first few months I had very little time for any other services; after that I did manage to spend some time for the firm here.

F: What was the general climate in the Senate at this time? Were they antagonistic toward the work of the Preparedness Committee, or was there general enthusiasm, or mixed?

W: I would say there was confusion because the Russians, at that time, had put up the Sputnik which alarmed both the Congress and the people in general, and they were anxious to make a thorough study to see whether we were prepared in that area of exploring outer space and having both short range and long range missiles; and, generally, our preparedness in a military sense.

F: Did you have much opportunity to observe Mr. Johnson's work with the committee of Senators themselves?

W: Yes.

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F: How did he seem to work with them?

W: Well, he was always a consensus man; he wanted to get unanimous agreement from the committee on every issue, from both Republicans and Democrats; and we succeeded in getting that. As a matter of fact, the Republicans accepted me as their adviser; I think that is one of the few times that a Democrat was adviser to both the Republicans and the Democrats. I met with the Policy Committee of the Democrats as well as the Policy Committee of the Republicans, and briefed them ever so often on what was going on.

F: What did you find when you started the investigation?

W: Well, we found that the Russians were very well-advanced in outer-space problems, in science, in education, in technology and in military development--weapons systems--

F: Did you find they were ahead where it was generally thought?

W: Yes, we found they were considerably ahead of us.

F: Was there equivalent worry on the part of--or concern--on the part of the Senate committee?

W: Yes, there was great worry about it.

F: Did this, as far as you had any opportunity to observe, extend to the White House?

W: Why, yes, of course it was of concern.

F: Did you have any opportunity to observe Mr. Eisenhower's hand in the committee or not? Or did he seem to leave it alone?

W: As far as I know, he left it alone.

F: They had their job, and he stayed out?

W: That's right. The only sanction that Senator Johnson gave me was that we should do nothing to impair the image of the standing of the President of the United States; that this should be a fact-finding committee, not to

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blame anybody for what has happened but to find out where we stand and what ought to be done about it; but not to try to cast any reflection on the office of the President of the United States. And we observed that direction to us.

F: You would defend Senator Johnson, then, against the charge of using this preparedness issue as a political football?

W: Absolutely. The best evidence of it was that every statement and conclusion that was reported was a unanimous one.

F: Did you have to do considerable redrafting to get unanimous--?

W: Well, we had to do some redrafting, yes, but in substance everything was unanimously agreed.

F: Is this a case of the facts being so convincing, or evidence of Mr. Johnson's manipulative skill, or--?

W: It had nothing to do with his manipulative skill at all. It was a factual question; the facts were persuasive and convincing enough to cause both the Republicans and Democrats to endorse our recommendations.

F: I won't bother you with the details or the facts because those, of course, can be dug out of regular government documents, but I am interested in your reaction to what went on.

Well, now, then, on this matter of the Committee on Space and Astronautics, were you in on the inception of that committee?

W: Yes, sir.

F: Tell me about that.

W: Well, that committee was organized to provide the development of outer space vehicles from a non-military point of view. And we called witnesses to give their views as to how that ought to be done. Mr. Vance and myself drew the statute that was adopted creating NASA--that's the civilian body

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in charge of civilian development of outer space. When that statute was passed, then I withdrew as counsel.

F: Is this committee, again, triggered by Sputnik?

W: Yes.

F: I remember a Herblock cartoon from that time in which you're beginning to think about, 1960, and it shows John F. Kennedy with the controversial issue of labor, and Stuart Symington with the controversial issue of certain armed forces propositions, and Lyndon Johnson with the nonunderstandable, noncontroversial--what Herblock's message is, "Well, these men are grappling with issues and Lyndon Johnson is grappling with space, which no one can contest." Did you have a feeling, at the time, that you were doing something sort of airy and far out, or that this was a real problem which needed to be dealt with?

W: It certainly was a real problem.

F: Well, I was thinking more--did you have a feeling that Mr. Johnson was just sort of arrogating to himself an area in which there was no controversy?

W: Not at all. He stepped right into the controversial subjects personally and cross-examined each witness quite thoroughly, particularly the military commanders, on budgets and on plans and programs and research. No, he wasn't looking for the easy way or arrogating to himself those noncontroversial areas, not at all.

F: Some of Mr. Johnson's critics have claimed that he shows undue deference to the military leaders. Did you find this--?

W: Not at that time; I would say it was quite to the contrary, at that time. I mean, he had respect for their views, but he didn't hesitate to cross-examine them thoroughly and analyze the evidence that we presented to him

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and to the committee concerning certain shortcomings and failures of the military complex.

F: Was he fairly explicit and blunt in his questions?

W: Very.

F: Did he tend to question more as a, let's say, as a prosecuting attorney, or as an investigator?

W: I would say as a fact finder.

F: Did he seem to favor one service over another?

W: No.

F: How did you come up with the idea for NASA?

W: Well, it became clear that there were two areas concerning outer space; one was the military area, as to how and if outer space should be used for a military purpose; and the other was the great civilian possibilities in outer space--the discovery of planets, the moon, transportation, communication. And Senator Johnson felt--his staff and we--all felt that there should be a demarcation between the military development and research in outer space, and civilian; and that was the purpose of the hearings.

F: This matter of the planets--in other words, the civilian interests--this was not considered just expensive dreaming?

W: Oh, no. Many people thought it was expensive Buck Rogers dreaming, but we had an array of scientists who testified that a great deal could be learned of great importance by exploration of outer space.

F: Did you work with Mr. Johnson at all on the Civil Rights Act of '57?

W: Yes.

F: Do you want to tell me a little bit about that? Did he come to you when this was beginning to boil, or after--?

W: Well, we discussed it quite at length. You know, that all happened during

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the period in which we were conducting these hearings; and we had sessions on that civil rights bill. He had in it many things that weren't accepted, such as a conciliation board which he urged the Congress to adopt and which wasn't adopted; namely, wherever there was a controversy or potential controversy, on civil rights between various ethnic groups, that there should be a conciliation board who could hear these complaints and try to settle them before they became acute. But that was not a part--

F: Some more of his consensus technique.

W: Sure.

F: Now, then, Mr. Johnson has been lauded and accused on the Civil Rights Act of '57; one was that time was overdue for a civil rights act, and that, in a sense, he watered it down to where it was palatable to the South. The other is that the northern liberal could not get it through, and that he made it possible. I mean, you can take whichever viewpoint you wish, but I'd like to know what your own feeling on that is; whether it was made possible because of his attempt to find a common ground, or whether you think that he did have to conciliate one group or another.

W: Well, I think that President Johnson's philosophy has always been to do what was possible. He'd rather get something of an issue rather than nothing of an issue. I think he tried his best to get the most that he could out of a civil rights bill; it was from that point of view that he was able to get support of many southerners and midwesterners for a civil rights bill--by not insisting on an extreme one at the beginning. He always felt that the chief important ingredient in civil rights, to begin with, was to assure every person of the ability and the right to vote. He felt that if Negroes, particularly, and Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, got the right to vote, and made it possible for them to get the right to

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vote, that that would cure many of the injustices that existed. And he felt that that was the most essential thing to get through first.

F: Knowing his identification as at least a partial southerner, do you think this was an emotional commitment or an extreme practicality and the belief that the time had come that something had to be done?

W: I think it was an emotional commitment. I think Johnson ever since I knew him deeply felt the injustices that were being perpetrated on the Negro. I know it from my conversations with him over the past thirty-odd years, that he always felt very keenly and very acutely about the injustices and the discrimination against the Negro.

F: Did he ever express to you in the earlier days what his stand on civil rights might do to him politically back with his home constituency?

W: Yes, he did. He said that he felt that we had to grow up on that issue; that we had to remove, as far as we could by law, discrimination against the Negro. Now, of course, he also realizes as anyone would that he had to be practical about it because if he was publicly too extreme on that issue, he just couldn't be elected; and if he couldn't be elected, he wouldn't be in a position to do very much about it. Therefore, some people claimed that he changed, that when he was a Congressman, and in his early days as Senator, he didn't vote as strongly for civil rights as some civil rights advocates did. But he was aware of that; I think he was simply weighing how he could be most effective: Could he be most effective as a Senator or a Congressman, or would he be less effective if he just came all out for civil rights when the climate wasn't ready for it in his area and be defeated? But I think, as far as emotions and feelings were concerned, he always was a great believer and leader for civil rights.

F: Going back a moment to his Congressional career, did you get the feeling

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that he felt a bit fenced in--shackled--by the limits of being a Congressman, and that becoming a Senator freed him to a certain extent?

W: I think so.

F: He never expressed this, though, to you?

W: Well, no, he never expressed it in these words, but I think he felt that as a Senator he could do so much more than he could as a Congressman.

F: By now, you are getting to be, yourself, something of a power in New York politics; what was the reaction, as you recall it, of the New York Democrats to the Civil Rights Act of '57? Did they feel this was progress or--?

W: Well, the New York Democrats were always for civil rights because they were much in the same position as the Southerners were against civil rights. You couldn't get elected in New York unless you were for civil rights.

F: So they felt that this was an accomplishment they could take back to the state and point to with some pride, if not total?

W: Of course.

F: When did you become Democratic National Committeeman?

W: In 1964.

F: Had you suspected by the late fifties that Mr. Johnson was going to be presidential timber?

W: In the late fifties? Yes, I would say--

F: Did you think he had a chance in '60 for the nomination?

W: Yes, we thought he had an outside chance.

F: Based on what? How was he going to do it if he did it?

W: Well, based on the fact that he had very strong supporters in the North and in the East.

F: He's open, I think, quite honestly to the charge that he did not spread his interests sufficiently in those intervening years from 1956 to 1960

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to capture the nomination; that his work was not as effective and much more localized--in Washington too much--to capture the nomination. You would agree with that?

W: Well, I don't think he was a candidate in 1956.

F: No, but I mean that the minute that the '56 convention was over, there is a consensus, particularly, that Senator Kennedy was running for 1960. And he was speaking all over the country and contacting gubernatorial groups, and so forth, whereas Mr. Johnson was working with the Senate and the Congress. Do you think this was a miscalculation on Senator Johnson's part, or do you think he--?

W: I don't think he had any choice. He couldn't possibly be considered for the Presidency of the United States unless he made a good record as a Majority Leader of the Senate. In fact, that was the only way that he could really bring favorable attention all over the country to himself, by being a dedicated, hard-working and successful Majority Leader.

F: Did you ever get the feeling--I presume you knew Sam Rayburn fairly well--that in his later years Speaker Rayburn may have been a little jealous of the success of his protégé?

W: Jealous of Johnson's progress?

F: Success, yes.

W: Quite the contrary. He was more like a father to Johnson; he was proud of his progress.

F: Did you talk with Speaker Rayburn about the possibility of Johnson's getting the nomination in 1960?

W: Yes, sir.

F: What was the gist of it?

W: Well, he said that he thought he had a chance and that he ought to try for

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it. As a matter of fact, he urged Johnson to declare for it many months before he did. Johnson was rather reluctant to do it.

F: There's a general feeling that the delay hurt his chances. You would agree with this?

W: I do.

F: Why do you think he delayed?

W: Well, because the Kennedy forces were working every minute of the day garnering support all over the country while Johnson was busy in Washington putting legislation through.

F: And the Senate was the first order of business, then, over and even above--?

W: Above everything else.

F: Did you go to Los Angeles?

W: Yes, sir.

F: What was your feeling of the climate when you arrived there? I'm not talking about the weather, I'm talking about the political climate.

W: Well, when I got there, and made a study of the situation, I reached the conclusion that Johnson would not be nominated.

F: Did you think that if you got past the first ballot he had a chance?

W: I thought that if it got past the first ballot, he had a reasonable chance, because we had commitments from some delegations that they would vote for Johnson on the second and third ballots.

F: You had the feeling that he was running ahead of Symington and--?

W: Oh, yes. He was the only serious contender to Kennedy.

F: Did you work with Mr. Truman on this at all, to try to get him to--?

W: No.

F: What about Edwin Pauley as the California leader?

W: Well, we had a general conversation with him, but I don't think Pauley had

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much weight at that time in the California delegation. The California delegation split all over the lot.

F: Yes, it had proportional representations that particular year, I remember. I think it voted for about six different candidates.

W: I think it leaned more toward Stevenson than toward anyone else.

F: What was your first inkling that Johnson might be asked to be the vice presidential running mate?

W: At the time it was announced over television.

F: It caught you by surprise.

W: It caught me by surprise.

F: Where were you?

W: I was in my room at the Ambassador Hotel.

F: With the TV on?

W: With the TV on.

F: Were you at all involved in Mr. Johnson's uncertainty of whether to accept?

W: No, not at all.

F: What was your reaction to the news?

W: I felt very badly about it.

F: Why so?

W: Well, I thought, first of all, being the Vice President wasn't nearly as important a job as being Majority Leader of the Senate. And I thought that he would disappoint many of his friends to whom he had said he would not be a candidate nor accept the vice presidency.

F: Did you have a feeling that this would make a strong-as-possible ticket, or that it would alienate the liberals too much?

W: I felt that it would make the strongest possible ticket, knowing that it might alienate some of the liberals.

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F: Did you see the hand of old Joe Kennedy in this at all?

W: Yes.

F: In what way?

W: Well, I think Joe Kennedy advised his son that in order for him to win he had to have a man from the South as Vice President.

F: Prior to this time, did you ever have any opportunity to observe any relationships between Senator Kennedy and Senator Johnson?

W: Well, there was a relationship; it wasn't very close.

F: Was there mutual respect, or--?

W: I think that Senator Kennedy had a real respect for Senator Johnson.

F: Do you think it was duplicated?

W: I think that Senator Johnson had respect for Kennedy's ability; he was rather disappointed that he didn't attend to his job as a Senator, though.

F: Too busy running, or just casual?

W: Too busy running.

F: Did you take part in the campaign of 1960?

W: Yes, sir. You mean in the nomination?

F: No, in the--

W: I didn't take too much of an interest in the election, no.

F: What did you do in the way of trying to encourage Mr. Johnson's nomination prior to the Los Angeles convention?

W: Well, I contacted everybody I knew in every state that I had friends to try to get support for him.

F: Did you make trips in his behalf?

W: Yes.

F: What kind of response did you receive?

W: I had, in most cases, this kind of a response, they would say, "We agree

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that he's the most qualified man, but we don't agree that he can be elected because of his geographic upbringing."

F: Which, in your opinion, was the more adverse factor: the fact that he did come from a state of the old Confederacy, or the fact that Texas has such as almost indivisible identification with the oil interests?

W: I think the significant factor was that the Kennedys were terrifically great organizers, and they had organized and planned this thing for years and knew how to do it and did it in a very effective way. I think that was the whole answer. And they had a very attractive candidate. After all, John Kennedy was very articulate and very able, and had the support of intellectuals, young people, and projected a fine image.

F: During the actual campaign for the election in '60, did you give Mr. Johnson any advice about handling himself in New England or New York?

W: No.

F: There was some question whether he should invade the North and stick to the South and West, but he did come up here. Were you--?

W: Well, he didn't come up here very often.

F: I know. Were you involved in any of his trips?

W: No.

F: So that you didn't play any role of any significance here.

W: No.

F: Did you see him much when he was Vice President?

W: Yes. Well, not as often as I did when he was Senator or Congressman.

F: Did you see him in Washington primarily?

W: Mostly in Washington; occasionally when he came here.

F: Did you get any feeling about how he saw his role as Vice President?

W: Yes. He saw his role as Vice President as one who had to be loyal to the

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President, and he took great pains to be completely loyal to the programs and ideals of President Kennedy. While he would privately express his views to the President, publicly he was always thoroughly and 100 percent loyal to the President.

F: Did you get the feeling that he was having to clamp a real restraint on himself?

W: Well, I think on some issues he did, yes, privately.

F: Did you feel that he felt that the Vice Presidency was a somewhat second-rate job to being Senate Majority Leader?

W: Yes, I did. I think he did feel that.

F: Do you think he regretted the choice?

W: Yes.

F: Did you get any idea that he thought a presidency might grow out of this, or that he'd just come to the end of his political road?

W: I think he felt he had come to the end of his political road.

F: Where were you on assassination day?

W: I was having lunch at Lehman Brothers, clients of ours.

F: I've often thought we ought to count up all the costs of all the dinners that didn't get eaten that day that were ordered. You tend to eat later here than you do in the Midwest, but both places, you know, everybody was at lunch and everybody left his lunch untouched. What happened to you in the next three or four days following the assassination? Did you get in touch with the new President?

W: He got in touch with me, yes.

F: By telephone?

W: Yes.

F: For what reason?

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W: Well, he said he felt he needed his friends' help now more than ever. This was an awesome task and he wanted us to think what he could do to bridge the change of administration, and we did a lot of things to help in that respect. We wanted to be sure that the world would understand that there would be no difficulties in change-over and so forth.

F: Beyond pledging your support, what could you do to help?

W: Well, first of all, I had Mr. Lehman call up all the leading bankers throughout the world that he knew, and he knew most of them, to tell them the kind of a man Johnson was, to assure them that he was a responsible man and that they had no fear from his takeover of the Presidency; and they all responded very well.

Then I had Mr. Berlin of the Hearst Newspapers, head of the Hearst Newspapers, who was a friend of the President--through me, primarily--see that the newspapers treated him well. I got in touch with Mr. Newhouse who then owned the largest chain of newspapers, and, you know, got him to feel that this President was a great man and would be a great President, and to convey that feeling to the public. I talked to Mr. Sarnoff, the head of the National Broadcasting Company, and Mr. Stanton of the CBS, and Leonard Goldenson, the head of ABC, to get them--which I think they would probably have done anyway--to be sure that they would project the feeling that this was a dedicated man that would be a great President.

F: What kind of a response did you get from them?

W: I had good response everywhere.

F: They didn't feel any great uneasiness?

W: No.

F: That something second rate had been put--?

W: No. There was great sadness, of course, but there was no uneasiness except

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that natural uneasiness that comes from the assassination.

F: Did Mr. Johnson call you at home, or here?

W: At home, I think--I don't remember.

F: Do you remember about how soon after he got back to Washington?

W: I think the day he got back, I'm not sure.

F: Did you go down to the funeral?

W: No. I don't think I went to the funeral.

F: Did you go on down to Washington then?

W: Yes.

F: And you saw the President personally?

W: Yes.

F: What was he like in that period?

W: What?

F: What was he like during that period? What was his demeanor?

W: Well, he was very calm, very cool, very anxious to show that he wasn't going to make radical changes from the Kennedy Administration; very anxious not to offend any of the Kennedy people who were in government. He had plans to do certain things to get legislation through that would be helpful.

F: Did he talk to you at all about whom he was going to keep and whom he was going to dismiss from the Kennedy faction?

W: No, he felt he ought to keep them all until, certainly to the end of the interim administration; he felt that he would not disturb any of the Kennedy people.

F: Do you think this was a wise decision?

W: No.

F: Why not?

W: Well, I feel that a President ought to have his own people and his Cabinet,

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people that he knew and that knew him. I remember when President Roosevelt died; Harry Hopkins called the Cabinet together, and he said, "We must all resign immediately and insist on President Truman taking our resignation, because no matter what President Truman did, we would always say President Roosevelt would have done it differently, and we would never be satisfied." And I felt that way about Johnson. I felt that he ought to have his own team, but he disagreed with that.

F: Why do you think--just to show continuity?

W: No, I think that he felt that he was an interim President, that the Kennedy people were good people, and that it would be a sort of disrespect for the dead President to remove his personal appointees.

F: Do you think that the Kennedy people appreciated this viewpoint?

W: No.

F: Did you see any evidence of it, personally, besides what has come out in the open?

W: Yes, it gradually came out in the open, at least stories were leaked about--

F: He kept on--

W: I don't say that about all of the people; I think among the most devoted people that Johnson had were some Kennedy people. Katzenbach was very devoted and very loyal and very faithful; I think McNamara, certainly, was loyal and faithful. I don't know any of the--

F: Rusk, Udall--I mean, there are a surprising number of people who stayed on through.

W: I don't know about Udall. I know Rusk was. But that wasn't the issue in the minds of those of us who thought that he ought to have his own people; we felt that no matter how loyal and faithful they would try to be, they would always compare what he was doing with what they'd think Kennedy would have done.

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F: In that first visit down to Washington that you made, where did you see him?

W: I saw him at the White House.

F: What was the atmosphere like there?

W: Very calm.

F: There wasn't any wholesale confusion?

W: No, no. Very calm. It was the most wonderful takeover I've ever seen.

F: Before the assassination, did you get any inkling as to whether Mr. Johnson was being considered for being dumped as Vice President in '64?

W: Yes, I did.

F: How did it appear to you?

W: Well, there was a feeling, based on some evidence, that Bobby Kennedy was unhappy with Johnson as Vice President; that he felt they ought to have more of the intellectual type, so-called, as Vice President rather than this fellow from Texas who projected that sort of Texas image. Now, whether it was true or not, I don't know. I know this: that Jack Kennedy didn't feel that way; I don't think Jack Kennedy ever had any idea of dumping Johnson. I think Schlesinger and that crowd had a hope that they could get someone else, because they never could fit in with Johnson. But President Kennedy--when Johnson put the issue up to him--you know Johnson told the President that if he didn't want him to run, he'd be glad not to run; that he would not embarrass him; that he would make some statement that he personally didn't want to run. Jack Kennedy said, "Nothing doing; I want you. And I want you to run, and I'm going to support you always. I won't run without you."

F: Do you think Jack Kennedy felt then that this was as good a Vice President as he could have gotten?

W: Yes, he did. He had a very high respect, I'm sure, for the Vice President.

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F: Do you think Johnson felt the same respect toward Kennedy?

W: Yes.

F: And that this was a good team?

W: Yes, I do.

F: As '64 goes on, was there ever any alternative discussed to Mr. Johnson as the Democratic nominee?

W: No, none at all.

F: Not even among the disaffected Democrats?

W: No.

F: They were stuck with it regardless.

W: There was no suggestion at any time.

F: Did you play any significant role in the nominating convention down at Atlantic City?

W: Well, there was very little role to play. I think on the Vice Presidency--

F: Did the President talk to you about the possible Vice President?

W: Yes, he did.

F: Who was discussed?

W: McCarthy, Humphrey, Jackson--

F: Did he show a preference one way or another to you?

W: I never got a definite impression from him. I thought at one time he was leaning toward McCarthy.

F: Why do you think he leaned away?

W: Because the leaders throughout the country seemed to favor Humphrey.

F: You didn't have any great surprise, though, when Humphrey was chosen?

W: No.

F: Do you think Mr. Johnson, himself, sort of staged, for theatrical effect, this delaying of naming his choice for running mate, or do you think he could not quite decide himself?

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W: I really don't know. He has the capacity, you know, to do those dramatic things from time to time.

F: He also has the capacity for making up his mind at the last minute, too.

W: Yes, he does.

F: So you don't know which is the truth in this case. Did you think this was a good ticket? Johnson and Humphrey?

W: Oh, yes, I thought it was a very strong ticket, particularly when you're running against Goldwater.

F: You had a New Yorker now, some people remember his name--William Miller--in this campaign. Did that make any particular problems for you?

W: I didn't quite understand.

F: The fact that you have Miller as a vice presidential nominee from New York--

W: Oh, well, he was a nothing in New York.

F: So that his presence on the ticket didn't pose any problems?

W: No. It hurt [the Republicans] rather than helped, because he wasn't considered anything, was he? He was, I think, the--wasn't he the national chairman of the party--but he came from an obscure town in Niagara and had never made much of an impression. I don't think 70 percent of the people in New York knew who he was.

F: Mr. Johnson came up here to speak in the latter stages of the campaign. Were you involved in that?

W: Yes.

F: Do you want to tell about the preparation and what happened after he got here?

W: With the help of Mr Oresman and my son, we created a big to-do at Madison Square Garden for him. We had actors, a big show, had Bobby Kennedy speaking, and I don't know who all. We had quite an event.

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F: Did the President talk with you about the possible candidacy of Bobby Kennedy for the Senate?

W: Yes. For Vice President? Yes.

F: No, for the Senate.

W: Oh, yes, he favored Kennedy.

F: He wanted him to run for the Senate?

W: Oh, yes.

F: Did he give any concrete help to Senator Kennedy?

W: Yes, he did.

F: In what way?

W: Well, he spoke for him several times here.

F: With what response?

W: Good response.

F: Do you think he helped Kennedy's candidacy?

W: I'm sure he did.

F: Do you think that Kennedy needed him?

W: Yes. He needed him, but he needed Goldwater more, you see, because Goldwater was so weak that the strength of Johnson would naturally rub off on him.

F: How did you meet the carpetbag issue on Bobby Kennedy in New York? He was a pretty nominal New Yorker.

W: Well, first of all, he was born in New York; he lived in New York for awhile; went to school in New York. And we're a kind of cosmopolitan city, anyway. Most people in New York were carpetbaggers originally.

F: So this really wasn't too much of an issue?

W: Oh, it was some kind of an issue, but not too much.

F: How did Mr. Johnson go over in this campaign with the more liberal element in New York?

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W: Well, I must in candor say that the liberal elements in New York--the real liberals--never truly accepted Johnson. I don't know why because he was more liberal than the most liberal of them, but they never truly accepted him. I don't know--they always were rather--

F: Why do you think this is? Is this a matter of style--culture?

W: It's partly style, partly the fact that he's from Texas and--

F: It's hard to believe any good can come out of there.

W: They can hardly believe that. They would tell you, "He's good and he's wise and he's effective, but well, he just isn't our kind of a guy, that's about all." They never truly accepted him, except the old-time liberals, you know, like Mr. Lehman who accepted him. Mrs. Roosevelt would accept him.

F: Well, now, the bigger enemy in this case has got to be Goldwater. Do you have the feeling that once we have saved the country from Goldwater, that the liberals then feel the time has come to work over Mr. Johnson since they no longer have the Goldwater threat? Or is this just something that developed over Viet Nam? In other words, if it hadn't been Viet Nam, would it have been something else?

W: Well, I think without Viet Nam, Johnson would have been a shoo-in to be nominated and probably elected.

F: You think this is the issue then?

W: Oh, yes. He had a great record of liberal legislation and business legislation. I think he might have carried the country even bigger than he did against Goldwater, if it hadn't been for the Viet Nam war, because he had a great relationship with all factions of the country: with labor, with business, with liberals.

F: Now, to a certain extent, he inherited the Viet Nam war--he accelerated it.

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W: To a complete extent he inherited it.

F: Yes. How come it all became his war?

W: Well, there came a time in 1965 when everyone agreed that he either had to abandon South Viet Nam, or increase the commitment of troops and air power; and it was the consensus of opinion by everybody--I mean, not by everybody, but I would say with 80 percent of the Congress and the Cabinet and the military, that he ought to send these troops and their contingents there. And he was assured by McNamara and the Joint Chiefs that if he did that, he'd probably have it over with in a year. And once having gotten into it to that extent, he just couldn't pull out.

F: The rest became hindsight.

W: It became hindsight. Everybody played results. I think even his severest critics will admit that in '65 when he sent the troops there, that he had to do it; that he either had to give the whole thing up, or send these troops and the air contingents there. It's just one of those unfortunate things. I think one of his difficulties was that he couldn't sell it, didn't know how to sell it to the people.

F: Did he ever talk Viet Nam with you?

W: Yes.

F: Along what lines?

W: Well, he had grave doubts about what he should do. The roll of casualties weighed very heavily on him; he just had a terrible feeling of responsibility and couldn't sleep nights. It was one of the most difficult eras that I think he ever went through, that sense of feeling that people were being killed in this war, and how to stop it.

F: Do you think he ever considered pulling out?

W: I don't think he ever considered pulling out, but I think he considered

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various conditions. I think he almost weekly discussed with the Security Council what, if anything, he ought to do that wasn't being done to bring this to an end.

F: Now, his critics portray him as being sort of granitic and monolithic in this in that you could only talk to him on one side of it. Did you find--?

W: That's not true. George Ball, for instance, was one of the opponents of the war from the beginning. He appeared before the Security Council several times and was urged by President Johnson to state his point of view opposing the war in Viet Nam, and to keep stating it, and keep arguing it, and keep having a dialogue on it, and urged every person at the security council to discuss any point of view that they had. He was not rigid about it at all, and George Ball will tell you the same thing.

F: Did the President ever try to persuade you to come to Washington during his Administration in some official capacity?

W: Yes.

F: Can you talk about it?

W: Yes. He asked me to consider becoming Attorney General, and I told him that I felt that I was too old.

F: Well, I wouldn't agree with that. Did he try hard, or did he give up when--?

W: Well, he tried reasonably hard. I wouldn't say that he made a great production out of it. He had me investigated by the FBI thoroughly; I think they've checked everybody in the country about me.

F: Was it age pretty much that was the factor that kept you from going?

W: Yes, it was.

F: At what stage was this? Was this before Katzenbach?

W: That was in late '64.

F: When Bobby was quitting.

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W: I don't know whether Bobby was Attorney General or Katzenbach.

F: He inherited Bobby, of course.

W: I think that Bobby was then Senator. Yes, he was; he was elected Senator. Katzenbach was in.

F: He was acting--

W: This was after the election.

F: Did you have any leanings toward Washington during this period?

W: None.

F: Were you prepared for the March 31 decision?

W: No.

F: Had he talked to you at any time about the fact that he might quit?

W: Yes. I didn't believe him.

F: In hindsight, do you get the feeling he was forecasting, or do you think he was just talking both sides of an issue?

W: Well, I don't know because every time he ran for office, he'd say that he wasn't going to run, and so I got kind of accustomed to it and didn't take it seriously.

F: I have other evidence of that, oh, twenty years earlier, of his giving instructions to people to start making other arrangments, that he was quitting public office.

What was your reaction? Did you hear the speech that night?

W: Yes, I did. I thought he did the right thing.

F: Did he talk with you afterwards about it?

W: Yes.

F: What did he say at that time?

W: Well, he asked me whether I thought he did the right thing, and I said I thought he did. I thought that it was the only thing he could do. After

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all, the country was becoming so disunited and the feeling was so terrible about the war--

F: Do you think he felt defeated or a sense of release?

W: No, I don't think so. I think he thought he could win, and I thought so, too.

F: Did you ever visit the ranch?

W: Yes.

F: What sort of occasion was that, just social?

W: Social.

F: Tell me about a weekend at the ranch, or a week, or however long it was.

W: Well, it always was a very pleasant experience. The most impressive part of the visit to the ranch was the hospitality and the sweetness and charm of Mrs. Johnson. I've never met anyone who in such a nice way could make people feel comfortable and attend to their every need and to be such a charming hostess.

F: You've seen President Johnson now over thirty years. Have you observed any changes or growth in him in that period, or bad habits that became worse, or bad habits that became better? In other words, let's kind of do an evaluation.

W: I've noticed a change in him, of course. I didn't feel the change was for the best. He became too careful in his relationship with people--sort of wasn't as open-handed with the public as I thought he was when he was Majority Leader, when he was a Congressman. He sort of became withdrawn after the Viet Nam war. He felt that the intellectuals had done a job on him, and that the liberal newspapers like the New York Times were out to get him. He became very sad, depressed, which was contrary to what he used to be.

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F: Do you think he would have fared better with a sort of "damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" attitude?

W: Sure. He shouldn't have paid any attention to what the newspapers said, or what some particular columnist said, or what the intellectuals thought or didn't think. He should just have gone about his business and been open with the public and with the press. I think he should have made a better relationship with the young people. I think the young people would have taken to Johnson if he'd gone out and spoken to smaller groups. You know, he was a terrific man to talk to a hundred people. But he sort of felt they were all against him and he kind of gave up.

F: It's agreed that he is more effective with small groups than with larger groups as a general rule.

W: Yes.

F: Did he ever talk to you any about either his television image or his public speaking image?

W: Yes.

F: Was he aware of his shortcomings?

W: Yes.

F: Did you ever suggest what he ought to do about it, or did he have any--?

W: Yes, I wanted him to get professionals to train him, and for about two days I succeeded in getting some professionals to come and train him. And then some little item appeared in the newspapers by some obscure columnist and he stopped it, which was ridiculous in my opinion.

F: About when was this?

W: Some time in 1965.

F: Pretty early in the Administration?

W: Yes.

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F: May I ask you who were the professionals?

W: They were at that time the producers of this television show, father and son, remember, "The Defenders," or whatever it was. They worked on movies. They were real professionals, really pros that--

F: Did you ever talk with them about their experience?

W: Yes.

F: Did they think they had an apt pupil?

W: Yes. In fact, they fell in love with Mrs. Johnson because they observed her demeanor in the White House with her children, and they were so anxious to help.

F: But this sensitivity reared up again.

W: That sensitivity came to the fore. I said to him, well, my God, everybody knew that Eisenhower had Montgomery training him, everybody knew that Kennedy took public speaking lessons; there was no harm in having professionals. I tried to argue with him that it was his duty to do it.

F: What do you think history is going to say about Mr. Johnson as a President when we get to that long gun barrel?

W: I don't know.

F: What do you think?

W: Well, if I were a historian I certainly would hold him in high regard, but, after all, history is something that one can't foretell. I think he deserves a high place in history. I think he put through more liberal and constructive legislation than any President in history; and I think that a man from the South to have been so active in the promotion of civil rights [he] ought to deserve high commendation from historians. I think that he probably was the greatest Majority Leader we've ever had in this country, probably the best student of the mechanics of government of anybody we ever had. But--

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this damned war--I don't know what the war will do to him or how historians will react to it.

F: Do you think he wasted time and energy trying to make a place for himself with the intellectuals? Do you think he should have ignored them?

W: I think that he wasted time in the way he tried to do it. I think that many of the intellectuals had a high respect for him. After all, what is an intellectual? Just because a man is a professor doesn't make him an intellectual, or because he wrote a book doesn't make him an intellectual, that I've talked to. There are men of high mental capacity and idealism who were very strong advocates of Johnson, and I think he could have made a great many friends if he had gone about it in a natural way.

F: Let's go back just a minute to these early days when he first came up here. Did he have any sort of raw qualities that had to be toned down, anything, in other words, to fit him into a more nearly national sort of person? Was there too much Texas about him?

W: Well, there was a lot of--there was less Texas about him than the average Texan, but there was still that open rough characteristic. But he was a very articulate man; he was a very thoughtful person; he was very considerate of people. Sure, there was a great deal that could have been improved, but I think that if he had remained natural as he always was, he would have made a better impression. I don't think people expected him to be a Schlesinger or a Galbraith; they expected him to be a hard practical dedicated man. For instance, he felt that if some fellow had a Phi Beta Kappa key, that made him an intellectual; there are a lot of Phi Beta Kappa keys in pawnshops. I mean, that certainly is one attribute of greatness, but not a sole attribute. But he became impressed whenever you'd suggest a name;

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he'd want to know whether he was on the Law Review, or whether he was a Phi Beta Kappa man; and if he was, that made a great impression with him. I think he felt sort of an inferiority in that area.

F: Did you get the feeling either in the early days or later that he was sort of like the nouveau riche who can't get in the old clubs? I may be overstating this, but you get what I'm talking about. There's an element that doesn't quite accept him.

W: In the sense that he couldn't get into that so-called intellectual group, yes. He always felt that they'd never accept him. And yet, you know, my gosh, he did have the support of the great intellectuals.

F: But you can't explain why he cared really, can you?

W: No, I don't know why he cared, because, after all, just like old Mark Twain's story about the fellow who bought the frog farm--they made so much noise he thought the place was full of frogs and when he bought it, he found there were only two frogs in the whole pond. I don't think that anybody cares a lot--I mean, as far as the masses are concerned, what Mr. Schlesinger says or thinks, or what Mr. Galbraith says or thinks, but he overrated them. But we all have our weaknesses, and that was one of his.

F: Have you seen him or talked with him since he retired?

W: Yes.

F: How's he been getting along?

W: He seems very content, he seemed quite calm, he looked well, acted well.

F: Where did you see him?

W: In Texas.

F: You went down there?

W: Yes.

F: To the ranch?

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W: Yes.

F: Have you advised him at all on his after-retirement career?

W: Yes. Well--advised, I mean we discussed it.

F: Have you ever served as a personal lawyer to him?

W: Personal lawyer to him?

F: Yes. Handled any of his affairs, per se; I know you've been on the periphery of--

W: I've handled some of his affairs, yes. I wouldn't say I was his personal lawyer.

F: Anything to distinguish him from any other client, besides his being President of the United States?

W: Except that he doesn't pay any fees.

F: You have the pay of his friendship.

W: Yes. Well, now, that's just a joke; of course, we wouldn't expect anything.

F: Going back to 1955 when he had his heart attack, when did you first learn of it?

W: The day it happened--either the day or the day after.

F: Who called you?

W: Mrs. Johnson.

F: Was she concerned?

W: Yes.

F: Did she want you to come down?

W: Yes.

F: In what capacity? Just as a friend?

W: Just as a friend.

F: Did you see the Senator at that time?

W: No.

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F: Did you get the feeling that this might be the end of his political career?

W: Well, I got the feeling, at that time, it might be the end of his life, because the doctors only gave him a twenty or thirty percent chance to live; it was a very massive coronary.

F: How was Mrs. Johnson taking it?

W: Just like she takes everything--stolidly.

F: When did you first see the Senator?

W: After he got out of the hospital. He asked me to draw up his will.

F: Had he gone to that point without a will, or was this a new one?

W: I don't think he had a will.

F: He'd been playing it kind of carelessly, hadn't he? Did he have a feeling--did you gather that he had a feeling then of living with the nearness of death from that time forward?

W: No.

F: Did he sort of dismiss it cavalierly, or--?

W: Not cavalierly, but he never had a feeling that he was going to give up politics.

F: It wasn't a death knell, then, so far as he was concerned?

W: No, not after he got well--I mean, after he got out of the hospital. I don't know how he felt when he was in the hospital.

F: Well, now, I have rather gathered that he went right back into high gear again and just ignored it, except for certain--

W: He did after about two or three months.

F: He gave up smoking, and a few things like that, but--

W: Yes, and he gave up eating all that fried food he was living on. He was a terrific fried-food eater, you know. Chile con carne, you know, and rich things that he ate.

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F: They changed his diet and that was about it.

W: He changed his diet and his smoking habits.

F: But as far as the workday was concerned--

W: As far as his drive was concerned, he didn't change one bit. In fact, he wanted to prove that he was well by working harder and driving harder. You know, he always carried his cardiogram in his pocket, you know, to show everybody.

F: Well, I gather that he's the real delight of the heart specialists, to show what you can do, you know.

W: That's right.

F: And that they talk about him.

W: They do. After all, it's fourteen years and he has never had a recurrence; his blood pressure is normal, and his ability to work--I think his ability to work hard saves him.

F: It's a form of relaxation.

W: Well, it's a form of relaxation. I think his danger is having nothing to do, getting to brood and get depressed.

F: Do you think this could happen to him in retirement?

W: It could.

F: Did you ever see any of his celebrated blowups?

W: I don't think I saw any of the celebrated blowups. I saw him blow up.

F: Were they over something specific, or did that just sort of trigger a long build-up?

W: Some trivial little thing that I saw, nothing very specific.

F: Was he contrite afterwards?

W: Yes.

F: Did he ever blow up at you?

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W: He never blew up at me.

F: So you never got the contrition either.

W: No, never.

F: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Weisl.

W: You're very welcome.

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to the

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