INTERVIEW I

DATE: JUNE 3, 1975

INTERVIEWEE: MR. A. M. (Monk) WILLIS

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mr. Willis' office in the U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

G: Mr. Willis, why don't we start with your background.

W: I am a native of Richmond, Virginia. I went to Texas after the war, after I had been in the Navy overseas, and went to Dallas, Texas. I got married to a Texas girl and went into a field that I had been in before the war, the field of insurance.

I had been somewhat interested in politics a good part of my life. My father had been an early contributor, because we were kin to him, to Harry Byrd of Virginia, and was among those that financed Mr. Byrd's campaign for governor when he was elected governor of Virginia.

I went to Washington and Lee University and to Harvard Business School. I got somewhat disturbed about Mr. Roosevelt's packing of the Supreme Court. After I left Harvard and went to work in New York just before the war, I was introduced to Wendell Wilkie. I got to know him pretty well. He was very, very kind to me, and I helped write some of his speeches. I obviously didn't do too well, because he got beaten pretty badly.

When I moved to Texas I was interested in politics, and it was

obvious that Texas was a one-party state for all intents and purposes. I had read about Mr. Johnson and first met him in 1948 in his campaign for the Senate. I was very much interested in that campaign, very strong for Mr. Johnson. We moved to Longview. Through Bailey Sheppard, who was a great friend of Ed Clark's, a great friend of Jake Pickle's and many other people, I got to know Mr. Johnson. He was looking for help then and he would take on most anybody. In my particular town of Longview, we had a newspaper that was edited by a man named Carl Estes. Carl happened to be a friend of mine and purportedly was a friend of Johnson's. But he was a somewhat dangerous man to be friends with. In the first primary, Mr. Johnson carried my county of Gregg. The truth of the matter is that we had a bloc of votes in Gladewater which we'd put a little money into to try to get the vote out, and we were successful. The second time around, the second primary, they came back for a little more help, and we didn't give it to them because we didn't have the money. They accommodated us by voting against us. So the county switched; it was one of the few counties in Texas that switched its voting. Carl Estes thought Mr. Stevenson was going to win, so he turned against Mr. Johnson during the so-called long count. They had some right bitter words, and while their friendship went on as long as Carl Estes lived, I would not say that it was ever as deep as it was before. I think it was like so many things in politics; it was sort of an armed truce.

Mrs. Johnson had a friend named [Eugenia] Lasseter who was supposed to be a great friend of hers. During subsequent years she professed great personal friendship for Mrs. Johnson but was an active Republican and moved to Henderson away from the Longview paper and became a Republican precinct chairman.

It was during that 1948 campaign that I got to know John Connally. Now for those of us that were county managers, John Connally was the man that we dealt with the most. We would always see Lyndon when he came through the area. We would always get in the car and go with him. He couldn't have been nicer, but he always treated you like you were on his payroll; he was a pretty rough taskmaster. He was very, very kind to me, very appreciative, had a well-run staff that was very thoughtful; of course I'm sure they did all that for him. I remember one day during the campaign him coming to Longview. We were going out to see a particular man. It was out on the edge of Longview, and I missed it by one street--it was a small building I never heard such "oh's" as went on. But he generally forgave you. He could lose his temper pretty fast. He put the pressure on you to raise campaign funds.

G: Do you think this losing his temper was something done intentionally to correct deficiencies in his aides, or do you think it was just a release?

W: I just think it was his way. I think it was because he was a total politician. In my judgment, that's all he really thought about. As

I get on to my later realtionship with him, I'll tell you what I think motivated some of it.

G: What about Carl Estes? You said he was dangerous to be friends with.

W: What I mean by that is he was an extremely able, remarkable man, but he was very complicated. He was sort of an egomaniac, I would say, and he was a person that had very strong opinions. I'm not sure that the people of any county want to be told how to vote or that everything is all right and everything is black and white. Carl would put it on the basis of "there is only one side, and that's my side." Well now, people sort of got tired of that. I think he cost Johnson some votes.

G: You say he switched over to Stevenson.

W: Well, at the end of the long count, at the end of the second primary before Mr. Johnson had been declared the winner.

G: Did Senator Johnson try to persuade him to come back in his camp?

W: Of course the election was over then, and it really didn't make any difference what happened [from] then on. He ran against somebody in the fall campaign. It's been so long ago I have even forgotten who that was. But Johnson won it; he got a lot of votes against him, but he won it easily from whoever the Republican was.

That wasn't even the campaign. The campaign was against Coke Stevenson. He ran second in the initial primary, and then he overcame it and won it by 87 votes, as you know. And of course

they have always talked about George Parr and Jim Wells County and some of those counties down there in South Texas. There was a great deal of finagling going on over just south of us in San Augustine and some of those counties. None of the press has ever printed that to my knowledge.

G: Other Johnson campaign workers in that campaign have indicated that they were counted out in several counties over there.

W: I don't think they were in Gregg County; we had voting machines over there. I think Johnson thought they were. He thought that the man who later became county judge helped count him [out], or somebody tampered with the machines. But I will assure you that's not true. If there had been any tampering, I would have done the tampering for Johnson. So I don't think that was true. I mean, there wasn't any way to tamper.

G: Are you familiar with any other counties in which discrepancies might have taken place?

W: Just in San Augustine, and I have heard in Dallas County but I am not knowledgeable of it. And of course other than what you read in the papers, I am quite confident that there was something untoward against Johnson's interest that happened in San Augustine County, but how many votes there were I can't say. Of course my real contact with Lyndon Johnson comes after this. I was just telling you about my initial association with him.

G: Right. Was it difficult to get Johnson supporters in that area that you

worked in that campaign?

W: After the second primary it became very difficult because of course as you know, in 1948 Harry Truman made a stand for civil rights. And of course that was very unpopular. My area over there in deep East Texas is not unlike Alabama and Mississippi. Someone told me once that by whatever standard it is that you measure ignorance or illiteracy, illiteracy I suppose, that right to the edge of Longview there and to Southeast Texas is number one. I don't know, I've just heard that. They had a tremendous amount of prejudice and deep feelings, and Johnson bore the brunt of a greal deal of it.

Of course, I was attracted to him because he was a doer. He could get things done, and he was a tremendous activist. He was one of the smartest judges of people. I attribute some of it to his tremendous staff with Walter Jenkins, who I think is, by all odds, one of the best staff men that I have ever known in my life.

G: Can you give me an example of Johnson judging someone correctly early on in their relationship or being able to size people up very accurately?

W: I think the people that have been associated with Johnson through the years [are examples]. I think he sized up people like Ed Clark, Ray Roberts, John Connally, Cecil Burney down in Corpus Christi, John Singleton who is a Federal judge down in Houston, Joe Kilgore, John Peace over in San Antonio, many many people that you could

name just as fast as you could talk. Mr. Johnson was a tough man to be friends with because he demanded so much, and it wasn't what you had done for him yesterday, it was what you were going to do for him today. He didn't care anything about inconveniencing you or anything like that. In other words, we were all supposed to be dedicated to the common good, I guess, and the common good was his welfare. Now in my judgment there is nothing wrong with that, because if you are going to get to the top. . . . Texas never did understand the tremendous power--they understand it now--that they had in this Congress with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Rayburn. They never did appreciate it. I have been to Tyler, Texas when the oil people booed Sam Rayburn. They never, never did appreciate what those men did.

G: I've read Senate and Congressional liberals accusing Senator Johnson and Speaker Rayburn of being captives of the oil industry in Texas, and yet it seems that they were opposed by the--

W: That's total bunk.

G: --big oil men.

(Pause in recording)

W: Like so many things in Texas, no matter what the given reason for opposition was, it was basically racism. In some respects, it was a lack of understanding. You see, some of the oil people had participated in the running of hot oil and the making of enormous amounts of money and they hadn't gotten caught in their wrongdoings. They sort of

thought they were a separate group of people who had some divine rights of economic gain. I happen to think the depletion allowance is right, because it's the only thing that gives incentives for productivity. But if you are up here in Washington or have been, you recognize the enormous anti-Texas and anti-oil feeling in this country. It has now grown to possibly a majority, probably a majority. But in those days, it was sort of "heading them off at the pass, " at which Mr. Rayburn was the most effective, and Mr. Johnson joined him.

G: What was your next association with LBJ after that?

R: Of course as he did everything else, after his election in 1949 Mr. Johnson was busy getting himself established up here in the Senate He began to build a skeleton organization in Texas out of the 1948 campaign. We did not hear from him as frequently from the period of 1949 to 1952. Everybody was sort of getting himself established just as Mr. Johnson was. Now as you know, in 1952 with Eisenhower, the Democratic Party was under great attack in Texas. I would say that Mr. Rayburn was more interested in the solidarity of the Democratic Party than anybody else was. Mr. Johnson gave him some help. Mr. [Ralph] Yarborough was a newcomer to the scene, and he got in it to a certain extent, too. For myself, most of my friends were voting for Eisenhower; I voted for Stevenson, did what I could in Gregg County. We got murdered in the same way that most places in Texas did. But I thought Stevenson was a first-rate man. I didn't think he particularly

was one that was popular in Texas, but I was drawn to the magnitude of his intellect, his ability to speak, those kinds of things. I thought Shivers put on a first-rate facade, and I thought he did a good deal of demagoguing and he did it very effectively. Of course, Shivers was an excellent politician. So then we go on up to after 1952 really. I mean, we had a few rallies in 1952, a few things we were asked to do: getting a group of cars to go to some rally at some other place, or having a rally in Gregg County, or whatnot, which weren't very significant and weren't very successful. Eisenhower was very magnetic, very attractive down there.

After that there was a good deal of division within the Democratic Party about what to do. Mr. Johnson at that time wasn't as vocal about it still as Mr. Rayburn; he had not pushed us. He had sent Cliff Carter around to organize his counties. At that time we organized them by districts, congressional districts and senatorial districts. I always had a congressional district myself. I was campaign manager, they called them in those days. Then they changed it to coordinator; I don't know when they did all that, but it didn't make any difference, that's what you have to do. We would always have to do the precinct conventions. I guess I named every delegate that ever went out of there to the convention. I would always try to balance them off, put some of each group on there. We got along very successfully. I believe in giving the small counties a representation. We would give them some

represented Texas interests in the National Convention, and they became very loyal to Mr. Johnson because of that. I remember very well sending people from Camp County, which is a very small county, to the National Convention, and Panola County, which is a very small county, those kinds of things. Tyler would always want to hog it all, but we tried to keep that from happening, and that was the reason I did it for a long time.

I remember one time I wasn't particularly for Yarborough, but I felt very strongly opposed to Shivers trying to lead the Democratic delegation to Chicago in 1956. Mr. Johnson called me and said he wanted to head it, or asked what I thought about it. Of course I told him that we would get murdered in Gregg County and of course for myself I hoped he wouldn't do it, but I would stand up [for him]. He said he would let me know. We talked a while. Of course, he didn't let me know; he had Walter Jenkins call me and let me know. That meant "stand up and let them pour it on you." Of course, that time the Johnson forces won overwhelmingly. I went to Dallas, and we then went to . . . Austin I guess it was. I don't remember where the second convention was. But I was made a delegate to Chicago, and that was one of the times that I really got to know Johnson the best. I stayed with Connally in there. I had the job in the delegation of handling the credentials for everybody that was a delegate up there to Chicago in 1956. So I got to know a lot of people in Texas, and it

was a good opportunity for me to meet them: Jay Taylor, Cecil Burney, and just countless people from over the state, tremendous people, long before some of the johnny-come-latelys who got in it later. My good dear and beloved friend Marvin Watson, I think, was for Eisenhower in those days. I never saw him; he was running around.

G: Do you have any convention stories?

W: Yes, I was going to tell you. One of the fascinating things to me was taking a phone call from Ambassador Kennedy for Mr. Johnson. I didn't listen to the conversation. I heard one end of the conversation and then what was repeated afterwards, that he had solicited Johnson's help for Jack Kennedy for Vice President. Of course, Johnson had put on some kind of campaign for the presidency which was a little amateurish but it served the purpose. John Connally had really come on strong and impressed people a great deal. The great thing for me was to meet people like Tom Corcoran and Jim Rowe and people who had been identified with the Democratic Party for many years and who were so strong for a Johnson-Kennedy relationship. I remember very well then the difficulty that Mr. Rayburn had in accommodating himself, but he did it very bravely in finally supporting Jack Kennedy. We had gone with Albert Gore, whom nobody in the delegation wanted to be for. It was obviously a political maneuver.

G: The objective, I suppose, was to defeat Kefauver, wasn't it?

W: Yes. But I remember I got some telegrams from Longview saying

"Why Gore? Why Gore?" I've still got those telegrams. Of course, they were delivered on the convention floor and it was sort of a joke. I don't think we did very well for our image.

But one time in Chicago, one of the most interesting times that I have ever had, I was up in a hotel room and there were only, I guess four or five there. I remember Lyndon Johnson talking about his great need . . . the way he put it, that he owed so much to Lady Bird and the fact that he was determined to, as it were, pay her back and make people respect her. It was then that I had an insight which I'm sure many people that were more intimate with him had many years before, of his absolutely tremendous drive. Then I realized that what he really wanted to be was President of the United States. He never said that, but it was obvious, because you know, the Johnsons never did make it socially in Austin until after Johnson became President, and then with only a certain amount of the people. The girls got in a good sorority but not necessarily the one they wanted to get in, like many other people. This bugged Johnson a great deal, and he felt extremely frustrated and determined about it. He said that Mrs. Johnson had helped him financially and he was determined to pay her back. That was one of the most memorable insights for me that I have had into him.

G: I have never heard that one. Was Mrs. Johnson much help in this context?

W: Mrs. Johnson was always much help. She is absolutely the number one

lady in this country.

G: Was she a good campaigner?

W: The best, because she cared about you. She was smart as a whip, knew when to talk and when not to talk. But she cared about those that she knew cared about them.

G: Did she ever exert differences of opinion with regard to campaign strategy or anything?

W: Oh, every now and then she would to a few of us, but she never openly. . . . I think she was more of a calming influence for Mr. Johnson, and I think she would do it maybe in private, I don't know. I've always wondered how much 'private' Johnson ever had. I mean, he was always politicking. You know, they accused him of doing this or that that I never would believe in because I don't ever believe he had time to do anything but politic. That was all he was ever interested in.

G: I have often imagined her role in the campaign as smoothing feathers that he had ruffled.

W: She was smoothing feathers with those of us that were in the field or were [in] some kind of public [position].

G: Did this ever happen to you?

W: No. No. I mean, we had a time or two. We had a rather unpleasant atmosphere in Longview because the feeling was so deep against Mr. Johnson. As I tried to tell you before, it was rooted in racism

and civil rights. The hate over there is just unbelievable and was unbelievable. You would only have to live through it to know it, and I lived through it. I remember one time at that convention in 1956, my best friend said, "Monk, now don't come down there and come in that precinct convention, because we are going to put the mud to you." I went down there and stood up for Johnson. Of course, I had about twenty of my friends and everybody else was black; just me and the blacks. It was all a race thing.

G: I take it by that, then, that the blacks did support LBJ.

W: Yes, but the blacks' problem is they don't vote. I mean, they're so very hard to organize. I have a tremendous rapport with the blacks. But Mr. Johnson cared more than anybody about the blacks. You see, we had to go through that long time of history of trying to change. I guess the man that helped change it most [was] a fellow named Andy Anderson, a black man in Austin who is a great friend of mine, and he couldn't do it by himself. The old deal was the 'Uncle Tom' deal where they would want to get paid for working in a campaign.

G: What about S. Y. Nixson in Longview? Did he give you any [support]?

W: S. Y. was always for Yarborough. He and I always got along well, but up until Johnson became President, he was always for Yarborough. I think S. Y. Nixson is basically a good man. He's not the smartest man I ever met; he's not what I call "broke out with brains," particularly 'walking around' sense, which is the most important kind of sense.

G: Do you want to continue now on the next period of involvement that you have, or are there any more convention incidents?

W: Well of course, that convention in Dallas was just unbelievable. There have been so many lies written about that, about what happened. What happened was essentially that who became National Committeewoman or National Committeeman did not make a damn to Mr. Johnson originally. He was interested in getting a delegation from Texas who would go to the National Convention, act with some dignity, support the nominee of the Democratic Party, and adjourn. I mean, I don't think it was a great obsession that the Democratic Party win, necessarily, it was just not to have a public embarrassment of having a group of people that had no interest in it whatever.

Now when we went to Dallas, I was in the Johnson room, in the Connally room, so I know what happened. The deal was, as you have heard many times, that they would take one and we would take one. They said, "We'll take Byron Skelton." Well, everybody knew Byron Skelton had been with the libs for a long time and had been very liberal, nice fellow from Temple. We didn't particularly want Byron Skelton, but that was the deal. We said, "Fine. We'll keep Mrs. Weinert." She had been down there since the Creation, I suppose. "Oh no, you couldn't do that. Mrs. Weinert supported Eisenhower." Of course, [it was] the same old principle that Eisenhower had gotten the majority of votes, so everybody that supported him was cursed.

So then is when we said we'd take B. A., Lloyd Bentsen's wife. They got up there and made her take some kind of oath, pulled out some newspaper and everything else. You know, a whole lot of people voted for Eisenhower in 1952. I didn't. Frankly, I was attracted to Stevenson by his intellect as I told you before, but I don't blame anybody for the way they felt about it. They just wanted a change in government. I just thought there was no use digging up the past. But there were terrible feelings, and of course we never had run a convention. Connally put us all on these different committees, the Credentials Committee, the Resolutions Committee, or this committee and that committee. All of our people did that at every convention. But we didn't have the staying power because there wasn't any real interest in it. It was just the fact that we wanted to get the delegates to support whatever Mr. Johnson wanted to support in Chicago, and they did. But as far as who got the other things, our people would leave. Finally it became obvious that we were going to lose the convention, so we made another deal. You know the story.

G: You indicated that you became much closer to Lyndon Johnson in the following years, I guess in the late Fifties.

W: Yes. Well anyway, then I got interested in Longview in the development of the Sabine River. I worked again with Carl Estes and I worked with the leaders up and down the river on getting a survey started of the Sabine River. We had a congressman named Lindley Beckworth, who

was a nice fellow, but he hadn't been very effective up here. He was a very nice guy, I think, an honest man. But he was sort of a loner. He didn't operate very well within the system. So I had come up here to testify to try to get a basic survey made of the Sabine River, to talk about flood control and building the dams later on. We had come and put in an appearance before the Appropriations Committee, Public Works Committee. I never will forget the year we did it. I remember it as well as anything. Mr. Johnson said he would help me with it. I never talked to him about it daily or anything. I always saw him when I came up here. I was working through Walter and some of Johnson's staff. He took me in there to the hearing, and they were having a damn conference on the thing. Senator Ellender was fixing up the bill, and I remember Johnson saying, "Put something in there for Monk." And Ellender said, "Who in the hell is Monk?" That's the way the first funding got into the Sabine River, if you want to know the gospel truth. They did it, and with a modest amount of money, but once you get in that thing, they continue it, and it has now been done. So that's the way [it was done].

Then you go through other conventions, and of course Johnson might put in an appearance. I'm talking about the two-year convention that the state Democratic Party had. Cliff Carter still was keeping up contact with us. We would always get a Christmas present or a remembrance, a picture, a book, some kind of present or something

from Johnson every Christmas. I'm sure lots of other people did, but they have become more meaningful to me as the years have passed. Generally they had some personal [meaning]. He was very good about that kind of thing.

In 1959 I got a call to come down to the ranch, and we went down. I remember it very vividly. It was fall, October. And I remember some of the people there: John Singleton, Cecil Burney, John Peace, among others. There was a fellow from West Texas--I've forgotten his name--one of the nicest guys I have ever met in my life. I think he is now dead. I have forgotten his name temporarily. There weren't very many of us, but he told us what he wanted to talk about, and that was that he wanted to run for President.

G: Do you remember how he broached the subject, his words, how he brought it up?

W: He wasn't very subtle. The point was, "I <u>am</u> going to run, and I <u>am</u> going to win." We got in that room, if you have ever been there at the ranch, where they have that big table. We were sitting in that room. We all got around that table, and he called on each of us [to say] what we thought. When he got to me--I never will forget it--I said, "First thing you've got to do is to hire Edward R. Murrow, [get] something to make you project on TV. You're terrible." We were supposed to be honest, and he took it. Some of them gave him pretty

rough treatment. But the most incredible thing to me was when he began to discuss how he was going to win. I thought Johnson was one of the truly great human beings that I have ever known. I still think so; I've never changed. I thought he was a good President because I thought he was a 'can-do,' but you can't be everything. Even after he had been Majority Leader, I thought he had less understanding of national politics than anybody I ever talked to that purported to understand. He started reading. He got to New York and he said that Carmine DeSapio was going to take care of New York. Well, anybody that knew anything about politics knew that Carmine DeSapio was headed for the pen. He couldn't influence anybody. He might have been a good man--plenty of folks in the pen are all right--but that was just ridiculous. He would get to Colorado and he would talk about Wayne Aspinall and old Ed Johnson, who used to be a senator. Ed Johnson was running around with a cane. He was eighty some years old and doddering around. Wayne Aspinall . . . congressmen have very little influence totally in their states. Mr. Rayburn proves it in Texas. He was a hero to the Fourth District of Texas, but he was never a hero to the whole people of Texas. That's one of the things that upsets me a great deal. I've spent some time trying to change that in East Texas. I'm very much interested in the symposium they've had about him. But I was absolutely astounded at Johnson's perception of a national campaign.

Well, of course we all went to Los Angeles and we all got murdered.

We were assigned things in states. Our deal was very amateurish.

G: Do you remember any other conversation in that meeting at the ranch, what other people suggested, possibly other criticism, strong points or weak points?

W: Much of it had to do with how he could better project his image nationally. I just remember him going around the room. I remember when he got to me, I said, "I think the first thing you've got to do is to hire somebody like Edward R. Murrow, or someone like him, and you've got to get them to teach you how to project yourself on the TV."

G: Did he think he could get sufficient funds?

W: Hell, when he got to West Virginia he said that old "Humpty" Humphrey was going to beat Kennedy's brains out and that was going to turn it over to him. Of course he knew he could handle "Humpty."

G: Do you think Humphrey was pretty much a stalking horse for Johnson? Did he support Humphrey--

W: He didn't say that, Mike. Johnson was such a dominating, persuasive man. I just think he would have put the arm on Humphrey.

G: Do you think he supported Humphrey financially in that West Virginia race?

W: He didn't say that. This was a select group of people. These were people that were as close to Lyndon Johnson as I guess any of his people. I'm sure that my name came because of the fact that I represented a wide area of East Texas. Most of those people were perhaps closer personally to him than I was, but he could not have

been nicer. I remember when I got there he grabbed me and put me in a station wagon. I sat right by him in the front seat, and he drove us all over the ranch. He was that kind of person. He probably picked out the one he wanted to work on the most, which was me. Of course I guess the funniest thing in that campaign was--I hope Mrs. Johnson never sees this--but in the fall of 1960, along about October, old man T. J. Taylor died over there in Karnack. So we went to the funeral, and I stood right by Johnson and Lady Bird in the cemetery. There weren't as many people there as I thought there would be. I remember Bill Moyers was there. I remember the preacher said, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Amen." Johnson didn't speak to anybody. He turned to me and said, "Monk, how's that damn county going to do?" Talking about Gregg County. I said, "Just as always, Senator, 45 percent of the vote." And that's what we got. You see, we had the Ku Klux Klan against us and of course they are really strong over there. But I never will forget that right at the funeral. Of course he was there as he should have been and he was doing it, but his mind went right from dropping that body down in that grave to saying, "Monk, how's that damn county?"

G: Marvelous story. What was your role in that '60 campaign?

W: I was a delegate to Los Angeles. I was a coordinator for however many counties they had over there. Worked like a dog, and I know that we improved that situation perceptibly over there. We had a hard

time doing it.

G: Did the people in his campaign like John Connally think that he could win in 1960?

W: Yes, I think they did. You mean . . . ?

G: That he would get the nomination.

W: Who, Lyndon?

G: Yes.

W: Oh, I don't know. Connally and I were together a great deal of the time in those deals, in Chicago in '56 and in Los Angeles in '60. Connally was somewhat bitter after the 1960 convention. Connally is not a good loser. He is the most charismatic and most able man probably in America, but he is not a good loser. And of course nobody gets any pay for losing in politics. Nothing deader than a dead politician.

G: There have been suggestions that John Connally was one of the few people who worked for Lyndon Johnson who would disagree with him openly.

W: That's right.

G: And he was very strongminded.

W: I have the highest admiration for John Connally. There is only one thing that I have ever felt about him. I think he has every quality of character that I admire except one, and that's loyalty. I don't care what he says. In the great debate on who made whom, I think that no man is an island and we all depend on other people to help us along the way.

For myself, John Connally appointed me to the Board of Regents at North Texas State University. I have been the chairman of the board there for a long time. It's been one of the greatest satisfactions of my life. I know that John Connally did that because he knew that I was the kind of fellow that would get involved and he believed that I could do it well and thought that the school needed help. But if I hadn't worked for Johnson in 1948, I'd have never known John Connally so we are all touched by somebody else, you see. I never have thought that Connally recognized . . . . Connally grew up in poverty, and he was determined not to have that again. Now he did a good deal for Johnson, there's no doubt about that. But they did a good deal for him. Connally more than anybody I ever knew knew how to handle pressure. He didn't succumb to pressure. He knows how to handle it better than anybody I've ever known. Connally talks a good deal, and it's true that he managed Johnson's campaign, worked even though they barked at one another. Connally wouldn't hesitate to get mad and tell him to go to hell or hang up the phone or not answer the phone; I've been through all that. I've been with Johnson when he said, "Let's call Connally," and hell, we'd search him out all over the country. Connally would get on the phone, and he was very nice, but it was obvious that it was inconvenient for him to talk to us. He didn't give a damn. But at the same time, Connally was three times governor of Texas under the Democratic ticket, he was Secretary of

the Navy, he has nominated a man for President of the United States three times. Now my biggest surprise . . . I mean, I went to his trial, I'd stand up with him, and unless he told me, I'd never believe anything bad about him. I remember we had a celebration centennial, the fact that Longview was 100 years old, and I had Connally come up there to speak. I introduced him to 10,000 people up there. We took him to dinner, and Nellie was there, and I said, "Connally, there's one thing I don't understand about you: how you could support Nixon. Nixon don't have any character. I wrote in Connally when I voted." He said, "Monk, what you don't understand is it don't take character to be President." Well, I happen to think it does. I guess I was a little bitter when Connally, I thought, used a certain amount of opportunism. He certainly didn't deserve to be indicted. But he found out that the biggest difficulty he had was with the Republicans themselves, with people like Mitchell and that kind of garbage that did him in. I tell you that only as the fact that I think that would have hurt President Johnson myself, even though he would have considered McGovern the same thing I did: rubbish, just a nothing.

G: In that 1960 convention at Los Angeles, did the Johnson forces feel that they had certain states that slipped away from them in that convention?

W: Well, they thought they had a lot of latent support. When I worked in Colorado I talked to people, and there was no doubt about it that Johnson

had a lot of second support. But they simply said, "If we get released, we'll be for you." What Connally was telling us was that he thought he could keep Kennedy from getting it. Well, it was obvious Kennedy had it, because we'd go to Ohio, Indiana, we'd talk to these people, and we had a lot of second support, there's no doubt about that. If we had broken that thing up or blocked it. . . . But Kennedy had just done his homework, and he had some kind of organization.

G: There was a lot of bitterness between the Kennedy and Johnson forces in that convention.

W: Yes. Connally's talked about cortisone, said that Kennedy had Addison's Disease. Our deal I thought was pretty amateurish, but I don't blame Connally for that. It was a very difficult thing to do. Johnson got into the campaign late, Kennedy had been working at it and had things locked up. Johnson just carried on a very amateurish campaign.from the time that I knew about it in October, 1959, when I told you we went to the ranch. He didn't announce till just before the next summer and that was supposed to be over here at the Senate caucus room. Everybody knew what he was doing, but he delayed and delayed and delayed. The whole deal was very poorly handled. He sent a lot of guys from Texas who were good people, but with all due respect, they didn't know their ass from a hole in the ground about national politics.

G: I guess the prevailing feeling that LBJ had in that campaign was that his

power and prestige in the Senate would carry over in the various states.

W: Oh, he completely thought that. He was the master of the Senate. There's nobody that's ever been or ever will be, in my judgment, the dominating figure in the Senate [that he was]. But he got confused, which was incongruous and contradictory in a way for the Great Society programs that Mr. Johnson really did believe in. It's true he wanted to be loved, and he had a great urging to be liked, and he had a great suspicion of the press, and he had a great suspicion of the fact that he wasn't acceptable to the Eastern Establishment. But he had a deep, deep, deep feeling about the people because he came from the people; there's no argument about that. But what I say is contradictory; that he thought that one person representing a state--in other words, assuming one Democrat in each state, or in some states maybe two; he didn't always have a big majority, you know--that he thought that those people could speak for all the people. That's gone. The only person that does that is [Mayor Richard Daley], and he's just got a machine. Haig in Jersey City, Curley in Boston, the guy in Missouri, DeSapio in New York--the whole story of it, that's gone. That's the part that was incongruous to me, that Johnson couldn't see that one person--Wayne Aspinall or Ed Johnson or Ed Brown or some other guy, Daley or those kinds of people--could not say, "You've got it." Anybody that knows anything should have understood that.

G: Do you have any insight on Bobby Kennedy's role in the offering of the vice-presidential nomination?

W: Yes. I know that Bobby Kennedy was very upset about it, and I know that old man Rayburn was more upset about it. The one that wasn't upset about it was Johnson; he knew exactly what he wanted to do. But Bobby Kennedy wanted to block it. His brother understood . . . I had an offer from Jack Kennedy to help run his Texas campaign. I used to have some dates with his sister, Pat, years ago, who married [Peter] Lawford. He's the kind of guy [who] kept up with you. They knew where all their people were. I was invited to their parties in Chicago in '56 and in Los Angeles in '60 and really enjoyed it. They are pretty tough. I said, "I belong to Johnson." I wouldn't do it, but I would have been better off if I had, because I had a real good shot with them. When I lived in Texas, he contacted me from up here.

G: I guess that says something about the extensiveness of their political organization.

W: The Kennedys?

G: Yes.

W: God damn, they knew everything. They knew exactly where I was. I'm sure they got that from the political [delegation] list. But in 1956 when we met again in Chicago, after that I would get a book from him, or a picture of him or Jackie, you know, all that nonsense. Then he asked me to come. I came to see him in Washington. He cut off all

the calls, talked to me about the situation, asked me would I agree to have a part in his leadership. I said, "The thing for you to do is stay out of Texas. You aren't going to get anywhere in Texas, and I'm not going to be a part of it. I think you would make a fine President, but I'm for Johnson."

G: Back on Bobby Kennedy--

W: I've skipped around a little, Mike. I'm sorry.

G: Bobby Kennedy came here and met with Johnson, Rayburn, and Connally, I think, and supposedly suggested that LBJ take the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee [instead of the vice-presidential nomination].

W: That's right.

G: Can you recall perhaps from one of the men who was in that room what was said?

W: The story I got second-hand was that Kennedy didn't offer it with a great deal of grace, that it was easy to see through. I mean, it was easy to see that [it was] political, trying to salve an opponent's feelings, trying to keep his spirits, prestige, do him honor--he was a big man in the Senate. But that got nowhere, absolutely nowhere. Jack Kennedy knew exactly what he was going to do, exactly. You'll never make me believe anything different. He didn't get pressured into it. It was a cold-blooded political decision with him, of how to win, and that's what he made it. I think his brother tried to deter him, but I think

Jack Kennedy made a cold-blooded political decision that this was the way to win. One, he thought Johnson had the ability, was the most able person to run with him. I think he thought he needed him to run the Senate, I think he knew that he was the kind of man that could have a chance of carrying Texas and do exactly what he did, which was to split up part of the South. He knew [Johnson] had great ties to Senator Russell; he knew he had great ties to Senator Kerr, all those things. I think they did consider all of that. Johnson did a hell of a job on that campaign. But I think Bobby and them were against it, and these idiots and this fellow Rauh, or whatever his name is, R-A-U-H.

G: Joe Rauh.

W: Joseph Rauh.

G: A lot of the Johnson supporters were unhappy.

W: Oh, of course they were. I was one of the unhappy [ones]. I told Jim Rowe at Los Angeles. Of course we were unhappy. Kennedy had not gone well in Texas. In other words, the feeling was that he would not do well. There were many many that believed that Johnson could do Texas more good and this country more good by staying in the Senate. They simply thought that he was the best at that. I knew from that 1959 [meeting] in October that he had the presidential bug. I'm going to tell you this, and I was wrong: I had become convinced that he had the presidential bug, but I thought he would go nuts being the

Vice President, because he wouldn't have anything to do and he was such an active person. I thought that Kennedy was young enough and vigorous enough to get elected for two terms and that Johnson would be his Vice President for two terms, but that that would be the end of Johnson. I'll be honest with you.

G: Sort of like John Nance Garner, perhaps.

W: Yes. And I just thought either that they would be ready for a change or that they wouldn't give it to Johnson.

G: Why do you think he accepted the nomination? I've read, for example, that Sam Rayburn talked him into it.

W: I think Mr. Rayburn changed his mind and I think did have something [to do with it]. I don't agree that they talked him into it. I've heard and read all those books on it and all the statements on it and listened to the people that were out there. I think Johnson did it because, by God, he thought that would be the best way to get to be President, that he would either succeed Kennedy by getting nominated next when Kennedy quit in 1968 or that something would happen to Kennedy. I just think it was as cold-blooded as that.

G: Did he at the time express this idea in words?

W: Oh no, he didn't express that idea. He just told us he had to do his duty and wrote one of those letters.

G: Well, he campaigned through the South on that whistle-stop tour.

W: Yes, did fine. Did fine. We had him . . . we worked hard. We

worked in that campaign as I have never worked in one.

G: Did you work as an advance man for him in any of his campaign trips or did you travel with him at all?

W: Oh, a time or two, that's all.

G: What was he like as a campaigner?

W: Excellent. He loved the people. He loved those people. He loved to get out and press the flesh, shake hands with them. He loved it. (Interruption)

I think he did tremendously, but Johnson's part in it was rather amateurish, although it was a very sincere deal. For example, the so-called "Lady Bird Special," or whatever it was that they ran through the South. We all got into that thing. That worked very well, but it was just put up by a bunch of amateurs. I think that Johnson did some things in Texas that were fairly effective because I think that people want to be with a winner, and I think that some people had a feeling that some way Kennedy would win. It never occurred to me that Kennedy wouldn't win. I think Johnson thought they could win. But I think the second thing that Johnson thought--this is just common sense--was that if they lost that he would have paid his debt to the party and would have had a chance in '64; that if they lost the blame would be on Kennedy for being a Catholic and that Johnson would be the good person. Now my view was obviously not the right view. I thought they would win, and I thought that Johnson would end up being

like Garner. And I thought, "Here's one of the most able men in the country that's going to be used up." And we couldn't afford it, the country couldn't afford it. There were just different views of it. Do you follow that?

G: Right. It has been suggested that in the campaign that Johnson had an extraordinary ability say when speaking to a crowd to determine the composition of that crowd while he was speaking.

W: Oh, he was the best at that you ever saw. One of the things that always amazed me about both Johnson and Connally was when you'd go out with them, just say going out and eating lunch with them, which I have done countless times. They would get up and work a crowd, and so many other politicians I have worked with wouldn't get up and wouldn't speak to people at the next table. Johnson and Connally would get up and work the whole crowd, walk back in the kitchen, do the whole thing.

G: Is that right?

W: Yes, sir.

G: Did people respond positively?

W: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He didn't care; he made you respond positively.

G: What would he say?

W: Nothing, just "How are you? I'm Lyndon Johnson," and all that. He never was very much of a talker. He would just grin. He knew how to work them and just pump them fast. One of the things that amazed me. I read three books a week. Every night of my life I read.

I can't understand it; I don't think Johnson ever read a book in his life. I'm sure he did at the end of his life. But it was just astounding to me that he was as aware and as intelligent as he was. He was a very, very intelligent, bright man, very keen mind.

G: His learning, perhaps, was oral, word of mouth.

W: Must have been. He said he taught school, but I never heard him in conversation refer to any particular philosophy. But he had a tremendous amount of common sense and as you have pointed out, he sized people up pretty well. There was no doubt about his ability. I happened to be in the same class at Harvard Business School that McNamara was. And I think that there was no doubt about McNamara's genius and his ability and his tremendous mind. But I don't think he had any common sense at all, and I was amazed that Johnson was so taken with him. You know the famous statement he made that "My pick of the lot's that guy with the Stay-Comb on his hair." I was astounded that he would let McNamara lead him down the primrose path, and I am not in any way trying to detract personally from Mr. McNamara's ability or his dedication or his loyalty or anything else. He just wasn't a very practical individual.

G: Other aspects of the Johnson treatment, his relationships with other people: his use of the telephone.

W: Fabulous.

G: It has even been suggested that he couldn't walk by a telephone without making a call.

W: That's right. That's right. I have never seen anybody use it [so much]. He used it a tremendous amount.

Talking about his treatment of people, I never will forget one time being , I think it was, in the White House talking to old Walter Jenkins. The squawk box came on and it was Johnson, and he was raising hell about where some paper was. One of his favorite [sayings] was: "Nobody is ever there when I need him." Of course Walter just gave his life to him. Walter turned off the squawk box, turned around and started talking to me. I said, "God damn, aren't you going to do something about it?" He said, "Hell no, it'll turn up. I'll just screw it all up if I get with it." Johnson was just the kind that wanted it done right now; he was very, very impatient. One of the wisest, brightest men he ever had with him was George Reedy, just a wonderful, wonderful man, one of my dear friends. Johnson used to just be unmerciful on George Reedy. Johnson did not like criticism much. As I told you, the closest I ever had to criticism of him was not criticism. It had to do with the suggestion that he try to improve his ability to communicate with the people, which I think was always his difficulty. But I have been at his table at his ranch, and he would always go through the deal of blessing; he would make a big deal about saying the blessing. And then he would sort of dominate the conversation at the dinner table, tell stories--some of them were pretty good, some of them I had heard before. But I never was afraid of him at all, and he

knew that. Of course, he never in any way would have tried to do that. But I know that he liked me and I know that he trusted me. He knew I was loyal. I think one of the greatest things is that in the last part of his presidency, he invited me, as he had done before, up here to dinner at the White House. As I went through the line, I got to him and he scared me to death: he just put his arms out and grabbed me and hugged me to him, practically embraced me. He turned to the Chancellor of Austria, whoever he was. I'm sure this guy didn't understand one thing he said, talking about the well. He said, "This man has gone to the well with me. He has never deserted me." Now he said it in a way where he has gotten to that stage in life where so many had deserted him on Vietnam, so many people read the popularity polls, so many people. So it wasn't a question of loyalty. He knew that I would do anything he ever asked me to do, anything. But I never did get with him whereby he would think, "Well, what do you think of this?" I'm talking about when he was President. I have talked to him when he was President; he would telephone. When you wake up in the middle of the night and hear that phone ring and it's the White House calling, it scares the crap out of you.

G: What would he call about?

W: Oh, some damn fool thing that was happening in Tyler that he knew more about than anybody else, or something, just to check on something. Now that didn't happen every day or anything like that, but it's happened.

G: Can you recall any?

W: I've forgotten. It was some kind of political thing. I might think of it, and if I do I'll plug it in. But I remember old Rayburn calling. He was calling about the 1961 Rule Committee change. He wanted to know how a certain congressman was going to vote. I said, "Hell, Mr. Sam, you know I don't know. He's going to say he wants to do what's right, and you aren't interested in what's right; you're interested in how he's going to vote." And he said, "Yes." But sometimes they would call about things like that.

G: You mentioned Johnson telling stories at the dinner table. I've read that he was a great imitator.

W: Yes, he did do a lot of [imitations].

G: Can you recall voices he would imitate or mimic at things like this?

W: No, I'll get it. Let's go on. I'll plug that in to you by the time you [get through].

G: Again on the telephone, would he call people late at night--

W: I'm talking about two o'clock in the morning.

G: --To impress upon them his concern about a particular measure?

W: Well, this had something to do with some oil man's opposition to him, or something like that. But it astounded me that he knew so much, that he was so aware of what was going on.

G: Was Walter Jenkins, would you say, the most important man around Johnson?

W: Walter Jenkins is the most devoted, most efficient, finest public servant that's ever been up here in Washington. There is no better. He absolutely was ideal. His judgment was good, everything was good. He gave his life to Lyndon Johnson. And there is one thing that I will always praise Lyndon Johnson for: he handled that Walter Jenkins thing like a pro, and his family never turned their backs on Walter Jenkins. I mean, they did what they had to do at that time. But that pretty near killed him, because Walter Jenkins was the one of all of them. You can add them; you can talk about everybody you want to talk about. The one that retained his character, his self-respect, everything about him. But the fellow that was the closest to Lyndon Johnson was Walter Jenkins. Don't you ever forget it.

G: I have read that Jenkins more accurately than any other aide could speak for Lyndon Johnson.

W: Correct. He had more power than anybody.

G: He could anticipate what he--

W: He could know exactly. He knew more about him, knew everything, knew his strengths, weaknesses, everything about him.

G: Was he useful to Johnson as an advisor on policy as well as merely an interpreter of Johnson's attitudes?

W: No, I would say more of an interpreter of Johnson's actions. I think that's a very good question. No, Walter was the kind, as I have tried

to tell you, he was the one that would call us. He was the one that would ask us to do. And if we needed anything, [we] could call Mary Rather or Juanita Roberts or Mildred Stegall, Mildred particularly, or somebody that you knew would tend to your business. When I would call Juanita Roberts, who was his secretary, don't worry; I know how to get to President Johnson, or anybody Johnson. If I'd get to Walter Jenkins, I could get my message through. What I'm talking about is if you even called Walter sometimes he was with Johnson, so you would talk to Mildred. But I could get there. They knew who their people were. In other words, you didn't get any brush-around.

(End of Tape 1 of 2)

(Begin Tape 2 of 2)

G: At the end of the last tape we were talking about aides that worked for Lyndon Johnson. You gave us the very vivid role of Walter Jenkins' importance. What about George Reedy?

W: I think George Reedy had very, very sound political judgment, legislative judgment. But you talked about two different things, and you yourself tried to draw me out about Walter. I think Walter had certain knowledge of legislation in the same way that I have here.

But the real knowledge about what would go, what would fly in the way of amending legislation, George Reedy had a tremendous insight to. He was a fellow that was respected by the press; he was a fellow that was respected by the labor people; he was a fellow that was respected by all kinds of people that were interested in legislation. Now he was a plodding type of intellectual, academician in a way. I think he has written some of the most rewarding books on government, and I think that he has an absolutely tremendous intellect. But you must remember that Mr. Johnson [did] as so many people do; it's very hard to handle that kind of criticism that inevitably comes to any President. I think the only person as [far as] I have ever heard that has been immune to it has been Eisenhower, in my lifetime. I mean, goodness, Mr. Hoover was just mauled, Mr. Roosevelt was called everything, Mr. Truman had the lowest [popularity rating]. Mr. Eisenhower was a myth; he did nothing. He was a joke as President, I thought the worst one in history, and so some polls said. He was obviously not as bad as Nixon. That's all. But I think the kind of family criticism, public scrutiny, the unfairness that comes to people [in public life] is very hard to take, and Johnson was a very sensitive person. When George Reedy would try to explain some of the reasons for some of the criticism and how to alleviate it, Johnson would become offended. Then he would do terrible things, and then he would go ahead and buy Reedy a car,

some present or something. He broke with so many people. I wasn't in a position to be in that deal, but I go back to the time at the White House when he gave me the [compliment]. It was a very moving thing for me when the President of the United States pulls you out of a line--I didn't know whether the Secret Service was going to shoot me or not--and just tells you that your loyalty has meant a great deal to sustain him. I don't know what your feelings are, but you can't help but be moved by that. I was, because it was very sincere. It was the fact that he was searching for the people he felt had stayed with him. You know I stayed with him, but the point is, it wasn't quite the same because I hadn't had these daily decisions to make about legislation. You understand. I mean, my deal was a different kind of relationship with him, but I never went back on it, and I still think he was one hell of a guy, and I always will.

G: Can you recall the last time you were with him or talked to him?

W: Yes, down at his ranch. He invited us all down there for one of the great times we had; it was when the Library opened. I saw him one time after that, but when the Library opened, he had a tremendous party. That was a fantastic thing. He had all us oldtimers down there. He did the same thing then. He was very moved about the nostalgia of the past.

G: Do you think he was happy in retirement?

W: No.

G: The lack of activity, perhaps?

W: Oh, sure. I think they all are [unhappy], but I think particularly him. I think he had a sixth sense about his health. His family hadn't been particularly long-living people, and I think he knew that his number was up, that kind of thing.

G: I asked you earlier about Johnson's stories. Virtually everyone I have talked to that knew him has at least one really good anecdote, either one that LBJ told or one that was told about him.

W: I'll think about that. I'm sure I can think of one. I can't right now. I'm just drained out on that, but I will think about that and add that, send it to you.

G: Is there anything else that you would like to [talk about]?

W: I don't think so. I don't know whether I've helped you at all, Mike, but I've done pretty much the best I can with it. I guess it was Holmes that said, "It is required of each of us that we share in the actions and passions of our time at the peril of being judged not to have lived." I guess if I have been able to make any contributions to my little community, or to the university I serve, or up here, or wherever, I guess I owe more to Lyndon Johnson than anyone else, and to his family and to Connally, because they gave me the opportunity, and I'll always be grateful. But I saw him as a very human being, full of warts and also full of great things. He was a very complex

individual.

G: Thank you very much.

(End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I.)

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