

INTERVIEWEE: EUGENE "GENE" WORLEY

INTERVIEWER: T. HARRISON BAKER

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B: If we could start, I reckon the logical starting place would be where you first became acquainted with Lyndon Johnson.

W: Well, I first heard of Lyndon Johnson back in 1935; I was serving my first term in the Texas legislature, the House. I heard about a young whipper-snapper who was in the Congressional race to succeed [James P.] Buchanan who had died. He had been chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I say a young whippersnapper because that's what I'd been called when I was running for the Legislature, at the ripe old age of 25.

B: You were still in the University of Texas Law School, weren't you?

W: Yes. That's one reason I ran, because, like Lyndon, I was working my way through school and that \$10 a day wasn't hay back in those days of depression. Anyway, Lyndon was the same age. I didn't know him then but everything I read and heard about him I liked. And certainly we had a common bond being young and in politics and trying to get elected.

B: Back in those days when he was making that race, what did you read and hear about him?

W: It was in the newspapers, of course we didn't have TV in those days, but I knew some people who knew him that like him very much. One of them was Homer Thornberry. We were classmates in the University. And everything I heard about him was he was quite a boy. And he demonstrated that in the election; I think he won out over eleven or twelve opponents.

B: Do you remember anything about his campaign in that election? That was the election that we was going straight down the line with Roosevelt.

W: Yes, he went all out. Back in those days most people down in our neighborhood, especially the young ones, went all out. You don't know, you weren't born, were you?

B: Just barely born, sir; I was about four years old.

W: Well, you don't know how hard it was to make a living. Nobody had any money. The bank closing certainly didn't affect me, I didn't have an account anyway. Most people didn't. Most of them were like Lyndon was, he was working--

B: He was in the same boat, too?

W: Everybody was, going to school or trying to make a living in those days.

B: Did you meet Mr. Johnson personally during or fairly close to that campaign?

W: No, I didn't. I was just one of those admirers at a distance. I was pulling for him, plugging for him; and another thing: when I ran for Congress there were twelve of us in the race. One thing I like about the aftermath of Lyndon's race was that most of those fellows whom he beat, became his friends. I mean there was no bitterness, he carried on a fair campaign, a hard-working campaign. He didn't leave a bad taste in anybody's mouth as far as I know. But I didn't meet him until I got up here, I ran in '40, was elected, and I met [him] in 1941 as a member of Congress, as a freshman member of Congress; and there's nothing much more helpless than a freshman member of Congress, unless it's freshmen at Texas A & M--I understand you went to A & M too.

B: Yes, sir.

W: Well, you can understand the analogy there.

B: Yes, sir. Did Lyndon Johnson give you any help as a, by then, an older hand?

W: Lyndon was always helpful. Not only to me. Let me see. That would be his third term, wouldn't it--my first term? He'd already got himself set up pretty well in Congress by that time. It's just characteristic of Lyndon, he helped you anyway he could. I remember his providing me with offers of assistance, about keeping your fences up back home, doing this and doing that on various legislation.

B: What kind of advice exactly does he give to a young Congressman about your relationships with the district and so on?

W: Well, very constructive. He'd always followed that admonition that Sam Rayburn did, that a member of Congress has two constituencies to serve. One, of course, is your home folks, your constituents. Well, three in effect. I'll elaborate a little on the Speaker's ideas there.

B: Do, please.

W: And then you've got to get along in the Congress, otherwise you're about as ineffective as you can be.

B: You mean with your fellow Congressmen?

W: Yes. You've got to shoot square with them just like you do with your own district; and as Sam Rayburn used to say, "The best judge of human nature is the House of Representatives. If there's anything phony about you, they catch it pretty quick," because you know they're used to things like that. They've had experience. Then, of course, the national good. Those are the three. I don't know how to divide them as to--you've got to serve all three of them, or should, in our representative form of government.

B: Did you get any help from Mr. Johnson or any of the other older hands in

getting things like good committee assignments?

W: No. I think he would have helped if he'd thought he could have.

No, freshmen members always, or generally always, get minor committees.

B: Now, in those days was Mr. Johnson considered to be any sort of protege of some of the older hands like Sam Rayburn, Fred Vinson, Carl Russell?

W: I think so. You mean Dick Russell?

B: Yes, sir, excuse me.

W: Dick was in the Senate, I don't think he was in the House at the time, was he? No, I think the Speaker helped Lyndon very much, in fact I know he did. He was very close to the Speaker, they had great affection for one another.

B: Was the relationship between Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson closer than that of Mr. Rayburn to the rest of the Texas delegation?

W: I don't know how to answer that. They were very close, I know that. The Speaker thought the world of Lyndon, and Lyndon thought the world of him; they were very close. Of course, most of the delegation at that time was close to the Speaker.

B: Now, was it in those days that you and Mr. Johnson got involved in golf and poker and horse racing and that kind of thing?

W: Oh, yes, he'll talk you out of your eyeteeth on that first tee. I think this was the first game we'd played, out at the Army and Navy [Country Club]. I don't know who was in town, I think it was Felix McKnight of the Dallas News, and maybe one of the Dealey boys [of the Dallas Morning News]. Anyway, we went out to the Army-Navy. I was playing fairly good golf in those days. And, of course, we had a match and Lyndon complained that he'd

been busy; and I knew he had been, I hadn't seen him playing much golf, and said his game was pretty rusty. Well, all he was doing was leading me up to spot him a stroke a hole.

B: You're playing this for money?

W: Well, we didn't have much money, we were playing I think for a quarter-- quarter Nassau, fifty cents about the most you could lose or six bits. But anyway he talked me into this stroke a hole and sure enough, we get to seventeen, and I'm fifty cents down, which wasn't hay in those days. I said, "Lyndon, I ought to just play you double or nothing on this eighteen," which is par 3, "and still give you a stroke a hole." I was trying to get my money back. "Aw, no." I said, "Well, why not, what can you lose, you're playing on my money?" He said, "Hell, I didn't work seventeen holes just to give it all back to you on one hole." And he didn't.

But anyway he's such a good bargainer, that frankly, I thought he'd have old Khrushchev eating out of the palm of his hand. He's a very persuasive fellow.

Just like Ann's [Mrs. Worley] mother, Mrs. Spivy, down at Bonham. They were always strong supporters of Lyndon when he was running for anything they could vote for. Ann's father said about Ann's mother, "When Mrs. Spivy talks to people about voting for Lyndon, she doesn't ask you, she compels you to vote for him." That's true. Most people were either strong for him or against him.

B: No middle ground?

W: Well, occasionally there'd be a middle ground. My mother was strong for him. She admired him very much. She was a Christian Scientist, very devout. When Lyndon ran for the Senate, she wrote in longhand every

Christian Scientist in the State of Texas, and some outside the state, because she said, "Well, he's going to be President someday."

B: That was in the '48 election?

W: Oh, this would be about--yes, when he ran the first time in '41?

B: Well, he made a run in '41 against "Pappy" O'Daniel [W. Lee O'Daniel].

W: '41, yes. Pappy counted him out down there.

B: Then he ran again in '48 and lost to Coke Stevenson.

W: Well, I wouldn't be surprised if there wasn't a little finagling going on down there.

B: Well, there seems to be--

W: Yes. I mean the first time he ran.

B: Against "Pappy" O'Daniel?

W: Yes.

B: Did the Texas delegation have some poker games in those days, too, when you were all in the House?

W: Yes. I think I told you the other day, there are three ways you can sort of size up a fellow. One's playing golf with him, one's drinking with him, and one's playing poker with him. Well, I've done all three with our friend and he measures up to every standard that I would ask for in a man. Never caught him cheating. He'll try to bluff the devil out of you--like Harry Truman in that respect. But he generally had something to back it up. I remember one night we were playing at Sid Richardson's. Do you know him?

B: I know of him. You mean the Fort Worth millionaire?

W: He was a self-made, not millionaire, billionaire. Bob Anderson told me that was the first billionaire he'd ever known. But anyway, Sid had a place down off Aransas Pass, and we were in a friendly game.

You mentioned Richard Russell--Dick Russell was along. Sam Rayburn, Sam never did play poker, but he liked to kibitz. Homer [Thornberry] and Myron Blalock, Stu Symington, Lloyd Bentsen, and I've forgotten who else. But anyway we were playing. Lyndon, of course, like in golf pretended he didn't know much about poker. Sure enough, once I had three tens, and was playing him for two jacks, sure enough he had three jacks. Trying to play like he didn't know how to play poker.

B: Did you ever get into any poker games with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Truman?

W: Yes, occasionally.

B: How did it come out between those two?

W: Well, I don't rightly know. We used to go to the Speaker's birthday party, or Truman's birthday party, and we'd generally wind up in a game after the thing. The President--Mr. Truman--and again the Speaker wouldn't play, he'd just kibitz. And Lyndon and I think Stu Symington, Clark Clifford, and Jim Barnes--you remember Jim Barnes, oh, I guess about half a dozen. And I sometimes--well, I don't know how to--I've forgotten who won and who lost. It wasn't any big stakes.

B: I was going to say, did the stakes get very high in that kind of thing, or just mostly fun?

W: They used to play these off-brand games, you know, like Spit in the River, Nine Card Stud, or something like that. It was mostly for fun.

B: Were Mr. Johnson and Mr. Truman given to those wild card games in poker?

W: Truman more than anybody. He used to delight in bluffing Fred Vinson out of a pot. Fred was one of the finest fellows that ever was, including a great Chief Justice, but he just never did learn how to play poker, like most Texans do, and like some Missourians do.

B: I meant to ask you awhile back, what kind of score did Mr. Johnson make in golf in those days?

W: Well, he beat me and I was shooting in the high 70's or low 80's. Pardon my immodesty. I haven't done it lately, but it was when we were both young. I was 30 I think, or 31.

B: Mr. Johnson, I don't believe, plays golf much now. I wonder when he gave it up?

W: I don't know. Well, frankly, I seldom knew of his playing golf when we were in the House. He always had something doing. He had too many balls in the air.

B: Another question that comes up. Did he take much time out for this kind of relaxation?

W: No. I used to try to get him to go down to the gym and work out, but he never did. I don't know how he got his exercise. He just had so much energy, Harri, that he was just working all the time. Something for his constituents, or on naval--he was on Naval Affairs [Committee], and you know we were in pretty bad shape in naval affairs, I mean countrywise in '41.

B: I think we might as well stop now so you can--[break for a ceremony Judge Worley had to attend]

B: Sir, did you ever go on any of the famous deer hunts?

W: Well, one. The one I was telling you about, it was a deer hunt down at Sid's place, Sid Richardson's place.

B: Oh. That was when the poker game was on?

W: Deer, ducks, this was after the thing.

B: Have you ever been to any deer hunts down at Mr. Johnson's ranch since he has had that land?

W: No. I've been down there, looked over the ranch, seen all the deer, but it

was out of season; besides that, I'm not a very good deer hunter.

I don't know whether this would be of any interest to you, but on this trip I was telling you about, you know Lyndon is quite a needler, or can be at times. Anyway, he and Myron Blalock were out. Myron got a deer-- I don't think Lyndon got one--but anyway, that night Lyndon was charging Myron with having shot their pet deer, I believe he called the deer Rufus; it was supposed to have been a tame deer.

B: This was at Johnson's ranch?

W: No, this was at Sid's place. And Lyndon kept ribbing him so long that--of course, none of us knew- we hadn't been with them, how much fact there was to it, but Lyndon was needling old Myron. Incidentally, the late Myron Blalock, one of the great men in Texas. But anyway, he let him have that needle so long that old Myron really got upset about it, and started taking it seriously. Well, of course, Lyndon finally quite ragging him about it.

B: What was that you were mentioning just briefly awhile back about Mr. Johnson's advice at horse races?

W: Yes. He's a great adviser on horse flesh. One time the Speaker asked, well, it was Fred Vinson, Luther Johnson from Corsicana--the late Luther Johnson, he was a member of the House for years, fine fellow--and Lyndon and me to go to Pimlico, a track over in Maryland. As the two youngest, it was our job to carry the bets for the Speaker and the Chief Justice and Luther. So, nobody was betting much, I mean, a \$2 bet or a \$5 bet, something like that. Well, Lyndon and I were sharing I think several bets, a \$5 bet cost us \$2.50 apiece. Well, we hadn't been doing a bit of good, and the Speaker wanted to leave about the sixth or seventh race, I think, before the crowd left. Anyway, Lyndon had this, what kind

of a sheet do you call it, form sheet. It was Greek to me, but he was reading it like he knew what was in it, and there were two long-shots. We were behind, not much, maybe \$5 or \$10, but we decided we'd split a \$5 ticket on a long-shot, and get our money back. So they were parading the horses before the race started and I saw a grey, a dapple-grey horse that looked mighty good to me. As I say, what I don't know about horses and horse racing would fill a lot of volumes. But I think I was betting on the name, maybe the number, but I liked the look of the horse. I said, "What do you think of that?" And he looked at the odds, they were 90 to 1. And Lyndon said, "Aw, haven't you heard," he said, "don't ever bet on a grey." I said, "No, I hadn't heard it, but," I said, "have you got any you like better?" He said, "Yeah, what about that roan?" And I looked at the roan, and I said, "I like the grey. What's the odds on that roan?" We looked at the board, and it was about 90 to 1 too. Anyway, I said, "Well, we better stake that grey." "No," he said, "I know horse flesh, I know horse racing," you know, with his usual confidence. So he out-talked me and we bet on the roan, \$2.50 apiece on it to win. And sure enough, guess which horse came in!

B: The grey.

W: The grey! At 90 to 1!

B: And what was Mr. Johnson's reaction to that?

W: Typical. He said, "Well, that one should have won." I agreed with him it should have, but it didn't. And he didn't offer to reimburse me that \$2.50.

B: This kind of relaxation wasn't too common though in those days?

W: Well, yes and no. Things got a lot more tense, as you might recall. This must have been before the war, before Pearl Harbor. I'm sure it was, because I don't think we'd had enough gasoline to get over there during the

war. This was my first term here.

B: Weren't you and Mr. Johnson involved in the pretty major event, the extension of the draft in 1941, the one-vote margin?

W: Yes, yes. Looking back over it, I get chills when I think how close we came to really just turning loose every bit of strength we had. That was Over the Hills in Ohio, that was extending the draft, as you recall, and it passed by one vote.

B: Was Mr. Johnson instrumental in rounding up the votes?

W: Oh, yes. He was very instrumental. Very helpful. There was a good bit of division. The Republicans were opposing it, and some of the Democrats too. Anyway I thank the Lord that it was extended whether with one vote or a hundred but that was a very crucial vote. It's one of the few times during my service in Congress that one vote meant really that much difference.

B: Wasn't there something in that vote about Mr. Rayburn sort of banging it through when there were still some votes out in the hall?

W: Well, now, then I was pretty new at parliamentary procedure, other than in Texas Legislature; down there we'd use the Spalding Rule Book or whatever book we wanted to. We could suspend the Constitution by 4/5 vote. But I think the Speaker--there was some question as to whether it passed--no, there's no question but what it passed, I think it was verified. You know, the roll was recalled; but as soon as he knew we were one vote ahead, he slammed that gavel down. The motion to reconsider was laid on the table, and that was that.

B: Shortly after that, right after Pearl Harbor, is when Mr. Johnson went into the Navy. Do you remember the circumstance of his leaving Congress and getting his Naval commission?

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W: Yes, though frankly, I don't know, I thought Lyndon was in the Naval Reserve at the time.

B: He may have been, sir.

W: I think he was. I think he was already in. I wasn't. But he was the first one in the House who volunteered to join the armed forces. I'd made a promise during my campaign for election. You don't recall these days, but they were very tense and there was a lot of opposition to the war. You know Roosevelt had said that none of our boys would be sent to a foreign soil. And I told my people that I'd vote against war as long as I honorably could, but any time I voted for it I'd offer my own services along with everybody else. And I was trying to do that. We had a bill, the so-called Neutrality Act, to repeal a part of it. The way it passed the House, we simply voted to arm our own ships, then the Senate hooked on an amendment providing that those ships, armed, could go into belligerent ports. Well, to me that was tantamount to a declaration of war. Sure enough within about thirty days--Pearl Harbor. And there was a division in the Texas delegation. I think there were only three of us, Hatton Summers, as I recall, and Charlie South, and I voted against it. Another reason we just didn't have anything to fight with, Harri.

But anyway to make a long story short, as soon as Pearl Harbor happened, Lyndon, as I say, was the first to go in. I went around to see him, I guess this was December 8th or 9th, he was in his office. He had his hand, his left hand I think, in a pan of water with some medicine on it. You know he had a skin disease bothering his hands. I think he told me he was trying to correct that so he could pass his physical to get in. But I asked his advice, I gave him

my circumstances and I told him I'd sure like to get in the service, and asked him what he would advise. Incidentally, Harold Cooley and I had already gone down to an Army recruiting station to enlist, but they turned us down because we were over 27, at that time you couldn't get in, and I was married too. I tried the Air Force; they said they'd be glad to have me, and I asked them what I'd be doing and they said examining purchase contracts. Desk job, I was too old to fly, they said. But anyway Lyndon gave me some good advice about seeing Admiral [Chester] Nimitz. So I went and talked to Admiral Nimitz.

B: Did he pick Admiral Nimitz because he was an old Texas friend?

W: He was an old Texas friend, and he was head of the Navy at the time.

Anyway, to make a long story short--oh, incidentally, John Connally who was then Lyndon's administrative assistant also was in the Naval Reserve, and you know you're required to have three recommendations from the Naval Reserve. John gave me a letter, I think Lyndon gave me a letter, and somebody else. Anyway, Admiral Nimitz commissioned me and put me in Intelligence. That's where most lawyers were put; I was what you'd call a cellophane officer I guess, they called them in those days.

B: You saw service in the South Pacific there over the winter of '41 and '42, did you not?

W: Yes. I was first stationed out on the West Coast. The only job of any importance I had out there was in connection with the Japanese civilian evacuation. Incidentally, Tom Clark was out there at the time in charge of the alien program. That's the first time I met Earl Warren, he was Attorney General [of California]. We all had a meeting, I think at Barstow, what to do with those Japanese out there. We didn't know whether they were loyal, disloyal, or whatnot,

but just for their own sake and for everybody's good, the recommendation was to set up these camps.

B: You mean this group of Tom Clark and Earl Warren?

W: I was with my superior officer who was a commander. Everybody was in general agreement that had that not been done there would have been an awful lot of bloodshed. Innocent blood as it turned out, because most of those Japs, if not all of them, were loyal. We had to do something for their own sake.

B: By innocent bloodshed, you mean possible retribution from the non-Japanese residents of the West Coast?

W: Yes, it was very tense out there in those days. But we're talking about Lyndon, not me, but anyway, I went on out in the Pacific. As a matter of fact, my CO out there told me that he had heard a rumor that President Roosevelt was going to issue an order that all members of the Congress should return to the Congress. As a matter of fact, I was trying to get out in the Pacific before that order became effective. Lyndon was already out there. So I went on out to Pearl, then on out to Australia and New Guinea. Lyndon and I covered some of the same area about the same time.

B: Didn't you meet him once out in the South Pacific?

W: Yes.

B: When and where was that?

W: Well, I was on my way out from Pearl, we were flying out to Australia and Lyndon was coming back. We met on a little island out there. I've forgotten whether it was Palmyra or Canton, some little tiny speck of land. I remember we saw a plane coming--we'd just landed, and saw another PBV [airplane] coming in. And in the boat coming ashore was a tall,

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gangly lieutenant commander. I thought I recognized him, and sure enough it was old Lieutenant Commander Johnson. Well, we sat up all night. I've never seen more beautiful moonlight, full moon and [this] made me homesick, made both of us homesick for Texas, but we talked until daylight. We couldn't understand how in the world a nation as powerful as ours, leaders as smart as we thought they thought were, could ever let this nation get into such a bind, get so weak, I mean we were just virtually defenseless.

B: That was at the time of a series of losses in the Pacific?

W: Oh, that's all we had out there was losses. Good Lord, this was before [the Battle of] Midway--that was the turning point in the war. But, well, we both resolved then that if we ever got back to a position where we could ever do anything about it, we were going to see that this country never was caught short again. I'm glad to say that Lyndon has stuck with that, as you can see today. He stuck with it all the way through after he came back. As a member of the Naval Affairs Committee, he had a far better idea of what to do and was in a position to do better than I could. Then later on when he went to the Senate, he became chairman of that Preparedness Subcommittee, and he as much as anybody else kept us from disarming right after the war. He could see this Russian thing coming on, and anyway, I'm sure glad that he kept faith and is keeping faith with that agreement or resolve that we both agreed to.

B: That conversation that night in the South Pacific there, did it get off on the career military officers? A question comes up about Mr. Johnson's attitude toward the place of career officers as opposed to the civilian side, Congress, handling military preparedness, and so on.

W: No. Of course, the question came up as to what sort of strength we had out

there, I mean the professionals and how in the world we could get volunteers out there with such little shipping. You know we were occupied primarily in the ETO [European Theater of Operations] at that time. And nobody in his right mind would have thought this country could have done all it did in that two or three years. Amazing!

B: Then shortly after that, Roosevelt's order did come through and you and Mr. Johnson came back to Congress?

W: No. Lyndon was already on his way back. He was on a special mission that I was not privy to, and he told me, explained some of it, explained where he'd been and what he'd seen and what he'd done out there.

B: What was his special mission?

W: Well, I don't know the details of it, but it was a sort of fact-finding mission; it was a very important one too.

B: Was it at Mr. Roosevelt's request?

W: It was my understanding that he'd sent him out there. Lyndon really spent more time out there and I think saw more, did more, than I did. This order came out while I was on my way back. I was running for reelection. I didn't announce for it, because I'd just as soon have stayed in as gone back to Congress, but some friends of mine put my name on the ballot. I had opposition, a fellow from Pampa was running against me in the primary and I sent word back, if they wanted me to keep my promise and stay in the Navy all they had to do was vote for my opponent. If they wanted me to come back to Congress, they could vote for me. So it wasn't until after the primary that I'd learned that I'd been reelected and came on back. Otherwise, I would have disregarded, I think, this Presidential order because I don't think he had any authority to tell us what to do.

B: That was in '42? The '42 election?

W: Yes. I appreciated his motives in the thing, his purposes, because we should have been back there. But I wouldn't take anything for what I learned and saw out there, and I'm sure Lyndon wouldn't either.

B: Do you recall anything then about Mr. Johnson in Congress during the remainder of the war years?

W: Oh, yes. He was just sticking to his resolve out there, doing everything he could. Of course, everybody was then trying to get all the material and manpower we needed to win the war. Oh, incidentally, to show you how thoughtful old Johnson is--I call him old Johnson like the Speaker did--Ann was back home, we were expecting our first-born then, she was back with her parents in Bonham. We picked up some mighty pretty little shells on the seashore and I said, "Lyndon, would you mind giving these to Ann, tell her I'm still thinking about her, still like her," and so forth, and he said he'd be glad to. Most of the time people forget things like that, as busy as he was, but as soon as he got back he airmailed those to Ann. I think he called her down in Bonham and told her--you know, people appreciate those things. But it's just characteristic of the fellow's thoughtfulness with detail and kindness as a matter of fact.

B: In that kind of thing, is there any hint of calculation, that is, of building up support, or is it just human kindness?

W: It's just human kindness, to me. I think just because you're in politics doesn't mean that you're callous to people's needs.

B: I've heard it said that Mr. Johnson is really a very sentimental man.

W: He is. There's no doubt in my mind, very sentimental.

B: Do you remember when he decided to try for the Senate, well, try again in the '48 election? Do you remember talking with him any about it before he made the race?

W: Yes. I kept asking him why he didn't make up his mind, you know, get in or get out. And I thought he was making a mistake waiting so long, but again he knew better than I did about the score. We used to talk about it. That's when we both smoked. We'd stand back of the railing in the House Chamber--you can't smoke on the floor--and we'd talk about the state of the Union and everything. Sam Rayburn also told him that the best thing for him to do was announce quick. Coke Stevenson, you know, had already announced, and it looked like he had it sewed up. But Lyndon finally announced, and you know the result of that.

B: Why was he reluctant to make his announcement?

W: I don't know. I never did understand it.

B: Did he have any doubts--I understand he had to resign his House seat to run.

W: No. He didn't. That might have been one of the problems, whether to--well, frankly, I've forgotten the details. But I never did understand why he waited so long. I was afraid he had waited too long.

B: Did he ask the rest of the Texas House delegation for campaigning help?

W: Yes, I'm sure he did. I know Walter Jenkins--well, I've forgotten whether Lyndon asked me or not; I volunteered. I gave him the names of all my friends over the twenty-eight county Panhandle district, and I called two of my newspaper friends down there who went for him. I had a problem in that race. I had two campaign managers: one was strong as horseradish for Coke and the other was strong as horseradish for Lyndon. And I learned earlier in my career when I came out for Ernest Thompson for governor and made speeches for him that it's not a smart thing to, you know, mix your own race up with somebody else's. However, I don't know who endorsed him outright. I know Sam Rayburn did; he went to bat for him. But the other members, I don't know.

B: You mentioned the other day a story about Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson getting the results of that election.

W: Oh, yes. Well, it was after Lyndon had won by, what was it, eighty-seven votes?

B: Yes, sir.

W: We were down in the Speaker's office, so-called Board of Education place, a term he detested. He didn't like to hear it referred to as the Board of Education, although you could get a good education there.

B: What did he call it?

W: Well, he never did refer to it as that. He'd just say, "Come on down, I'm here," he'd call you on the phone. You know how laconic he was. "I'm here, come on over." So we knew where he was. But anyway, this day, it was late in the afternoon, it was after five, we'd had a session that had ended and the phone rang and the Speaker picked it up. He said, "Yep. Nope. Yep. Well, come on," and put it down and turned to me and said, "Do you know who that was?" I said, "Nope," and he said, "It was our new Senator. He just got back into town and wants to drop by. When he gets here, I'm going to say, 'Now, Lyndon, you sit down in that chair over there and I want to hear everything you've got to tell me about that campaign, and then I don't want to hear another damned word about it.'" So sure enough that's what he told him when he came in. Well, Lyndon, honestly, he's one of the best storytellers; he can just fascinate you in a room. I mean, he can sell you anything. He has got reason and logic, persuasion and everything else; it's a shame that he can't carry that through on TV media. He's like Sam Rayburn; the Speaker could do the same thing, but when he got on TV or radio, I mean it's just stilted, non-natural thing, but anyway, Lyndon went through the whole campaign which took quite awhile.

but I don't think he ever mentioned it again.

B: Did he go into the disputed votes down in South Texas?

W: Oh, yes, went into every facet. What he didn't go into, we'd ask him, because it was really interesting.

B: Did you come out of that with any opinion on how valid those votes in South Texas were?

W: Oh, you know South Texas as well as I do. I couldn't understand why Coke, for example, who used to carry them all the time as lieutenant governor and as governor when they were lopsidedly for him--I say this with all respect for Coke and everybody else who has been the beneficiary of those votes--I couldn't understand why he'd fuss about it when they went the other way. Those fellows just liked Lyndon better than they did Coke. Well, if they were invalid in past instances, I guess they were invalid now, but they were proved to be valid. I'm not sure but what Lyndon was counted out that first time.

B: In the Pappy O'Daniel race?

W: Yes. I don't know whether it was Pappy himself or not. I was still in the legislature when Pappy was governor. I don't accuse anybody of it, but Lyndon has always suspected, and I share that suspicion, that there was some funny business going on.

B: I believe--isn't it another of Mr. Rayburn's sayings, "sit on those ballot boxes 'til they're counted?"

W: Yes. But it was really interesting to hear Lyndon tell about it.

B: Did he go into anecdotes from the campaign too?

W: No, I don't recall any. Mainly, it was just a recital of chronological report of the trouble, and he had plenty of trouble down there.

B: What sort of things--do you remember any instances of trouble that he described?

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W: No, not in particular. I don't want to--a good part of that is off the record, you know, just the way you talk when you've been through a campaign, who supported you and who didn't and so forth.

B: Did he seem pretty happy to be moving up into the Senate?

W: Yes.

B: In those days when you and Mrs. Johnson and the others would sit around and talk, did you ever talk about ambitions for the future? Did Mr. Johnson ever indicate he wanted to move up?

W: Strangely enough, yes. I never did have any. I was like Sam Rayburn. I thought the House was a better place to serve if you were going to serve your constituents. I just never did have any real desire to go to the Senate. I was glad Lyndon did, because I knew he'd make a good Senator. I remember one time, we used to talk about ambitions and so forth. One time we were behind the railing in the House, smoking and talking as usual. Lyndon said, "Do you ever think about going on to the Supreme Court?" and I said, "No." He said, "Why not?" And I said, "Well," with his usual logic, "were you qualified to come to Congress?" I said, "Well, I had to leave that up to my constituents. They thought I was." He said, "Well, why do you think you're not qualified for the Supreme Court?" And I just said that I didn't know enough law [or have enough] experience and so forth. And I must have convinced him because after he became President he never did mention it. No, seriously we used to talk about many things, but I don't think we ever talked about either one of us ever aspiring to be President.

B: Were there ever any indications that he might be thinking of that beyond--?

W: No, not until he got to the Senate. He might have been thinking it.

My mother had thought it. She was a pretty astute politician.

She said, "He's going to be President one of these days." I don't know whether I told that to Lyndon, but--and a lot of people thought so.

B: After he went to the Senate, did he still stay pretty close to the Texas delegation in the House?

W: Yes. He was closer, I think, than any Senator that we'd had. He always, when he'd get--You know, most of the agencies would announce through the Senator a project or something that a Congressman got. Many instances when I was able to do it on my own, I would just announce it myself, but in many instances, Lyndon was very thoughtful. John Connally would call the affected Congressman and say, "Well, so-and-so department has just announced a new post office or a new reclamation project," something like that. He'd say, "We've got the notice here and would you mind if the Senator joined with you in announcing this?" And at least some of the time I didn't even know that it had happened.

B: You would not have gotten to make the announcement if they hadn't called?

W: Well, frankly, many things go on that you don't know affecting your own district. Most of the time I knew, because I'd had a hand in it, but I'm trying to give an example of his thoughtfulness and cooperation. John would call, and I'd say, "John, I didn't know anything about this. Why don't you just let him announce it?" He'd say, "He'd rather you'd join," but he said, "Well, how about a joint announcement," and I said, "It'd tickle me to death," and it did. Some of the members were

a little put out--some of the older members who had more seniority than I did--felt a little upset about joint announcements or something, but on the whole he was most cooperative with the House.

B: Did you ever see the famous Johnson treatment in operation?

W: Well, yes, I've seen it. Persuade and cajole, I don't think I've ever seen him threaten anybody, but it's--Lyndon was not a lawyer, but he would have been a darned good one. He should have been.

B: Were you ever the subject of that kind of persuasion yourself? Did he ever talk you into doing anything you originally had not planned to?

W: I don't think so. No. I don't think there was too much difference in our voting. As a matter of fact all of us, most of the Texans stayed together, primarily because Sam Rayburn was Speaker and out of loyalty and support for him. It was something of a matter of principle that you couldn't go along with, then I'd go to the Speaker and say, "I just can't vote this way."

B: What was Mr. Rayburn's reaction in that kind of thing?

W: Well, he always listened; he could appreciate your position.

But in the main, we voted pretty much together. Well, this Neutrality thing, I thought the President and Mr. Rayburn and everybody else was wrong, at that time. I might have voted for it later. I mean, to me that was a matter of principle, I voted my own convictions and caught hell from my district for doing it, as a matter of fact!

B: Did Mr. Johnson keep his temper pretty well? Have you ever seen him get really angry?

W: I've seen him pretty wrought up.

B: What kind of thing tends to get him wrought up?

W: Well, I guess the kind that gets you and me wrought up. Off hand,

I don't know of any given instance. Somebody might doublecross him or lie to him or something like that. You just don't do that, whether in politics or anything else.

B: In cases like that, does he ever bear a grudge? Does the anger last?

W: He has a long memory. Now for that "last," how vindictive as he's charged to be, I don't think he is vindictive. I mean in the odious sense of that term; he remembers his friends and he remembers his enemies.

B: I was going to ask, it works on the other side too--once a friend, always a friend?

W: Yes. Lyndon's the type of fellow who expects you to go all out for him, and he'll certainly go all out for you--that's his characteristic. When you can't go all out for him, he'll understand but he'll still wish you had.

B: Were you surprised when Mr. Johnson accepted the vice-presidential nomination in the '60 convention?

W: Yes, I was. I'm glad he did. We were over at Mr. Rayburn's--Ann and I --for dinner the night before he left for the convention in Los Angeles. Of course, that's what we were talking about, and there was a lot of talk about [John] Kennedy had it in the bag and that Lyndon was going to run second; that he couldn't win, and that he ought to take second place.

B: Was Mr. Johnson there too?

W: No. I think Lyndon had already gone out. Anyway the Speaker said, "You know, the first thing I'm going to do when I get off that airplane tomorrow in Los Angeles is to announce to the world that Lyndon Johnson ain't interested in second spot on a ticket with Kennedy." And he said that with great emphasis and I felt sure he would. The next day I saw the paper, I mean his landing and caption, but I didn't see

any quote that he wasn't interested in second place. But a few nights before that, we'd had some Texans out to a little barbeque including Lyndon and Bird and a group of mutual friends; and of course it came up then. And Lyndon said he wasn't interested in that second spot. And I'm satisfied in my own mind he was not interested then. They were interested in first place period.

B: That night before he left for the convention, did Mr. Rayburn seem to agree that the Kennedys had the nomination sewed up?

W: No. He said, "It's going to be a tough fight. But we've got a fighting chance," and that's about all they had--a fighting chance.

B: Again, in those conversations before the convention itself, was there any sort of implication that if they couldn't get first place this time they'd just start trying then for first place in '64?

W: No. Everything was concentrated on winning this time but it just wasn't in the cards. I thought Lyndon had at least a fighting chance, just like the Speaker said. And it never did occur to me that he would take second spot. It was like Sam Rayburn said, though, the next morning after he agreed that Lyndon he should accept he said, "I know a damned sight more this morning than I did last night."

B: I did with the Speaker. We went into some detail. I'm sorry now that since there is so much controversy about what happened out there, that I didn't ask him to just tape record the thing or write it out.

B: It would have been nice. Do you recall what he said? Apparently, Mr. Rayburn's decision was influential, and the question is what made Mr. Rayburn change his mind?

W: Well, I think he realized, and Lyndon did too, that the Democratic Party could not win without Lyndon. Kennedy couldn't have made it. I served in the House with John Kennedy, I thought a lot of him, he was a nice fellow, but he couldn't have carried those southern states without Lyndon.

B: And Mr. Rayburn indicated it was that, the good of the party, that decided both of them?

W: Well, substantially. I mean all these details, substantially the same thing that--who was this fellow from the Washington Post [Philip Graham, publisher]--his version was correct. John Kennedy came to see Lyndon and asked him to run and all this talk, well, anyway--

B: That fellow at the Washington Post, Mr. Graham?

W: Yes, he was substantially accurate on the thing.

B: Did you ever hear anything about that time that perhaps all of the Kennedy group was not so keen to have Mr. Johnson on the ticket?

W: Oh, I heard it, but if they'd stopped to think they should have known they couldn't win without him. Maybe they hadn't had that much experience, but Sam Rayburn sure had. I still think Lyndon was reluctant to take it. He had to be persuaded to take it.

B: By Mr. Rayburn?

W: He caught the dickens! Some of Lyndon's strongest supporters in Texas gave him unshirted hell after he took that second spot. And a lot of them still bear that today.

B: Do you remember in particular, who?

W: I remember a few. I was surprised at them. Tried to argue with them or reason with them, but they just couldn't get over that.

B: Were they people who thought that he had just sort of lost any chance to be President by--?

W: I really don't know what they thought. One of them was a good friend of mine, a very conservative fellow in the life insurance business in Dallas. I called him I think the day before Kennedy and Johnson went to Texas, that was in '63. He was one of the fellows that thought--he was disappointed that Lyndon had taken that second spot. I called him about an insurance policy that I had with him for one of the kids, and I said, "Incidentally, what are you-all going to do to the President and Vice-President when they get to Dallas, shoot them?" "Aw, no, Gene," he said, "We're going to roll out the red carpet for them." I said, "Are you serious?" And he said, "I sure am, this is a fine day, great thing for Dallas, heal all these wounds and everything else."

B: This is a man in Dallas?

W: Yes. A conservative Democrat who had supported Lyndon for President, a member of this group that really runs Dallas--what do they call it, the Council--?

B: Business Men's Council, or something like that.

W: Preston Smith was in his office at the time--that was when Preston was lieutenant governor--I chatted with him for a minute, then I resumed my conversation. I said, "What about those"--what did I call them, nit-wits, beatniks, or something, and he said, "Aw, we've got them all tied down." I said, "You mean the right-wingers and the left-wingers too?" He said, "Oh, yeah, there'll be no trouble." As a matter of fact that night there was a reception for the Judiciary at the White House, and as I say I served with Kennedy, we were friendly, and I recounted my conversation. I said, "Mr. President, looks like you're not going to have to wear your bulletproof vest down to Dallas." Looking back

over it, I shouldn't have said anything I guess, but he took it exactly like I intended, and he smiled and said, "No, I think we'll work everything out. John and Lyndon and I can handle this without a bit of trouble." And I said, "Fine."

B: John Connally, you were referring to?

W: Yes. That night Ann and I went on over to Admiral Shoup's, he was head of the Marine Corps at the time, dinner with some more friends, most of them Texans.

B: General Shoup? [General David M. Shoup, Commandant, USMC]

W: General Shoup, yes. And everybody there, mostly Texans, who [were] concerned about this trip to Texas and expressed it.

The ironical thing, Harri, in this East Room, you know with the music and a gay atmosphere, good food, everything, people happy, and three days later we were back in that same East Room at the bier of John Kennedy. How things happen.

B: Did you really have--your remarks to your acquaintance in Dallas--did you really have any kind of premonition that something might happen there?

W: Oh, I was uneasy. I can't say that I had any--I was just uneasy about it. But I had no idea what happened would happen.

B: Do you suppose Mr. Johnson shared any of that uneasiness going down there?

W: I doubt it. Maybe he did. I read some things that happened after the fact that indicated there was some concern with local people down there that it might happen.

B: During those years when Mr. Johnson was Vice-President, did you ever get the impression that he was under what was for him a kind of unnatural restraint?

W: Yes.

B: Did he seem happy in the job?

W: Well, as a matter of fact, I didn't see him near as much then or as President as I used to see him. I left Congress in '50, came on the Court. I'd see him occasionally at some social function or at Sam Rayburn's place, not as often as when he was Senator, certainly not as often as when he was House member.

B: Did he go up to Mr. Rayburn's Board of Education fairly frequently, as Vice-President?

W: Oh, yes.

B: What did he seem like, Mr. Johnson seem like in those days?

W: Well, Kennedy tried to keep him busy, and I guess he did after a fashion. I think Kennedy, based on what I've heard and read, tried very hard to keep Lyndon busy at constructive tasks, but it was really not--for a fellow who had all the energy and go that Johnson had, I can see where it would be sort of pallid compared to his prior occupation as Majority Leader. I don't think he was really unhappy, but he would have been happier in that period as Majority Leader. He never did say that, I don't know, it's pure conjecture on my part.

B: You know you mentioned something awhile back that is also right interesting, this really refers more to Mr. Johnson as President. What everyone seems to say is a remarkable ability to communicate with people in person, that just doesn't seem to come over in public.

W: Only once or twice have I seen him really convey himself like he can in a room. It was a White House interview a couple-three years back when he

did not stand behind that podium or rostrum and speak directly into the microphone. He hooked that thing around his neck and walked. He was free. And that was the most natural appearance that he made, and it came closer to getting the true Johnson as you see him in a room. I called Bird later about that and said, "If you can just keep this fellow doing that, it's just fine."

B: Do you figure that he needs the physical audience? When he's talking to a small group for example does he, oh, get up close to them and put hands on a shoulder, and that kind of thing?

W: Well, yes, I don't think he's that intimate with all people; of course, he shakes hands, puts a hand on your shoulder and so forth. It's just a warmth there that is not Johnson on TV or radio. Of course, a man can't have everything.

B: You mentioned Mrs. Johnson several times. Do you think she has played an important part in his career?

W: That match, I think, must have been made in heaven. She is one of the finest, nicest ladies, I've ever know. Thoughtful, considerate.

B: What was she like back in the early days when you and Mr. Johnson were young Congressmen and, I suppose, fairly struggling young Congressmen?

W: We were struggling, all right. Well, we knew Bird when at the University of Texas. Ann, now my wife, lived at Mrs. Butler's on Whitis Street, and Bird lived across the street at another boardinghouse. We knew Bird casually; she was taking come journalism and so was I. We didn't have any classes together, but we knew each other. And we didn't know till after we got up here that she had married Lyndon. But she's a jewel, and I think--I don't know how to say this--but Lyndon might have gotten where he is without her but I'm not too sure. She is just the most

understanding--they just have an awful lot in common. She's smart as a whip, just like her husband. She's a good businesswoman. Of course, Lyndon's a pretty good businessman too, and they've made a wonderful team.

B: Who runs the business--their family business, does she do it?

W: Lyndon has always had topflight people working with him and for him. No doubt about that, he has an uncanny ability for picking people who are smart; but I think in the main, of course it was Bird's money to start with, but then under wise counseling from Lyndon and other people, they've done pretty well.

B: Have you been fairly close to the children, Luci and Lynda, growing up in the White House?

W: No, not very, but I'm just tickled to death they came out as well as they did.

B: You kind of wonder. I've got two little girls myself; raising children in the White House must be hard work.

W: Well, it must be. The Johnsons never did spoil them. Of course, they always wanted--I'm sure they wanted--a boy or two to go along with the two girls. You know Bird had, just like Ann, a couple or three miscarriages before she was able to have any. But they've just been devoted parents and fair without spoiling them. You know how easy it would be if you've got two. Lord, I'd hate to think about bringing up the three that we have in the White House, in that spotlight of public opinion and everything else. But they've given them love, they've given them affection, they've given them time, counsel, just been--well, you can see, those gals have come out pretty well.

B: Did you have any hint beforehand about Mr. Johnson's withdrawal from the

renomination?

W: He didn't hint it, but I sort of suspected it. First place, unless you're fairly close to that place, you don't know what a back-breaking job it is. I don't think Lyndon could have lived through another four years of that. But anyway, to answer your question, I was talking to Bird--we'd invited them out to our place. They used to come out quite often when they were in the House and the Senate, and we always enjoyed barbeque, chile and stuff like that. The Speaker would generally come along and some of our mutual friends. But I think we'd had a barbeque or something, and Bird called me to tell me how sorry they were that they couldn't get out there. And I said, "We're sorry, too; we didn't think you could, but we wanted you to know you were welcome." And she said, "You know, Gene, it's not going to always be like this." I said, "You mean the President is going to quit?" She said, "I didn't say that." She said, "Well, keep inviting us; it won't be too long before--" Well, that was the first hint I had.

B: When was this? How long before he announced?

W: I've forgotten, Harri, oh, a couple of months I guess--just guessing now.

B: There has been speculation that Mrs. Johnson might have had something to do with that decision.

W: Well, I think she did. I think any wife would. Now I discuss these things with my wife, and I'm sure Lyndon did. All these years he has discussed these things with his wife. I don't know if he has always followed her advice, or never has, but anyway I know--you discuss these matters with your wife, don't you?

B: Yes. Do you still see the Johnsons socially now that they're--?

W: Well, not as often as we used to, as I say. Lord, they've got more than they can say grace over. We were over there the other night at a dinner, a lot of Texans were present. And another time this last year, I think. Bird was instrumental in getting this portrait of Sam Rayburn. Do you know Tom Lea from El Paso? Well anyway, several years back Bob Casey, a member of the House from Houston, was chairman of the Texas State Society. He appointed a committee consisting of Bird Johnson and Eloise Thornberry and me to select a suitable memorial for Sam Rayburn. Well, Bird, with her usual thoroughness, suggested a portrait. She worked like a Trojan on that, she got copies of paintings--she got a list first of all the painters that might be available; we didn't have a very big budget. I kept wanting a portrait and so did Bird, so I got some of Tom Lea's work and took them over to the ranch. When Bird was there, we went through them and she liked them. We had some problems about financing the thing. Well anyway, we finally commissioned Tom Lea to do it. Ewing Thomas was a good friend of the Johnsons and they had a party for him at the White House.

To show you how thoughtful the Johnsons are, it happened to be Ann's and my wedding anniversary, I've forgotten which one, but don't let Ann know, last year I think, that'd been our 30th anyway. But they had a wedding cake that said, "Happy Anniversary, Ann and Gene." Now I don't know how Bird found out about that, but do you know anybody else who would

have gone to that trouble? You see now why I'm a Bird fan--Lady Bird, that is. I've been in the hospital, I've been in that thing three times in the last three years, and they send flowers and Lyndon would call in and find out how I was getting along. Those are the things you just don't--I'm giving you those just as examples.

B: Is it Lady Bird who does that? Somebody must keep records of when people's anniversaries are.

W: I don't know. I don't know yet how they found out about it. I'm glad they did, because we took that cake home and gave it to some or our neighbors, and divided it, Democrats and Republicans alike.

B: What's a visit to the ranch like? Is President Johnson a good deal more relaxed down there?

W: He must be. The only time I was at the ranch was when Bird was there. Lyndon had just left for Los Angeles on a speaking trip, and we spent the night there. Blake Clark was down there doing--he was with Reader's Digest, do you know him, one of those roving editors--he was doing a story on Bird at the time. When I go home, I live up in the Panhandle, which is a long ways from the hill country but the country's not too much different --it's just refreshing, it gives you a new lease on life, invigorates you. I'm sure it does him the same way.

B: What do you suppose Mr. Johnson's major weaknesses are as a President? Can you make an evaluation like that?

W: Well, of course, everybody's made an evaluation on that. My thought is that--it's his press relationship. In my opinion there's just an awful lot of empty talk about this credibility gap. I've never known Lyndon Johnson to lie or cheat or steal, and I know good and well he's too far

along in life to do that whether he's President or anything else. I hear all these charges, and I'm trying to be objective about this as though I didn't even know the fellow, but I know what he has done! Nobody in the history of this country, Harri, has gone to that office as well qualified as Lyndon has, by hard knocks, by experience in the House and the Senate, Vice-President. I haven't agreed with him on all his domestic programs, by any means. I thought he was much too premature in civil rights, for example. I appreciate the plight we're in, and a lot of people are in in this country, but like a lot of people, I thought he was moving too fast on that, and I think that's one of the things that has caused him so much trouble and concern. But I can't understand why these colored groups--you know, they were turning their backs on him before he withdrew, did you know that? I mean, they were just--it's like that story Tom Connally used to tell, "You ain't done nothing for me lately." Well, nobody's done as much for minority groups as Lyndon has.

I don't know how to answer that question. His weakness is not in what he does or gets done; he has done more than anybody. I served in the House with John Kennedy, with Lyndon Johnson, with Estes Kefauver, with Dick Nixon, who else--I'm just naming those who are in the public eye, or have been candidates.

B: Yes, sir.

W: I felt sorry for Kennedy. He had this yellow jaundice and all that and he just wasn't in shape to do much of a constructive nature. We'd sit together occasionally and chat. But to make a long story short, Lyndon Johnson could get more done or did get more done than any of those fellows. I mean, he just knew how to get things

done; he was always about two jumps ahead of everybody else.

B: Could that be part of the problem, that getting things done from the White House is different than getting them done in the Houses of Congress?

W: Yes. Well, for awhile he had real good relationships. When he first took over as President he got along fine. Of course it was a honeymoon period. You have differences of opinion, and you can't accommodate all the demands unless you sacrifice your principles. Lyndon would compromise, but I don't think he'd do it to the extent of sacrificing principles. He's protecting the country; and keeping our guard up. I don't know how he could have done anything more. Viet Nam was just a hot potato he inherited.

B: You know, in his general conduct of the Presidency, is it possible that sometimes President Johnson drives too hard, doesn't like to lose?

W: He has never liked to lose at anything. As I say, whether it's golf or poker or whatnot. Nobody likes to; he takes it pretty hard when he loses.

That reminds me. The first term I was here Lyndon was on Naval Affairs Committee and an opening came on the Appropriations Committee. Well, Lyndon's predecessor had been chairman. And Lyndon tried mighty hard to get on that Appropriations Committee. But Albert Thomas--the late Albert Thomas, who was a prince of a fellow, a good friend--also was interested, and the question of seniority came up. Albert had

several months seniority. He'd been elected in a regular election, whereas Lyndon had been elected in a special election. But there was that seniority problem that bothered some of the older members, but it sure didn't bother me as a freshman member. I didn't think much of the seniority system then, but of course, I became fond of it later, after I got more of it.

I remember I told Lyndon--John Connally--John and I used to play golf together and our wives were good friends, Nellie and Ann; we all lived out in Buckingham--I think they asked me how I was going to vote and I told them I was going to vote for Lyndon. And I remember John said, "How about going out and visiting the boss?" Lyndon was sick, he had some sort of throat trouble or something, so we went out there. We chatted awhile and I told him I was going to vote for him. He said he sure did appreciate it. He said he wouldn't forget it. "But that doesn't make any difference," I said, "I just think you ought to be on there. I don't think much of the seniority argument." But anyway to make a long story short, the vote was about--he lacked two or three votes out of twenty-one votes I think--he lacked a couple of votes, maybe three.

B: This was a vote in the caucus?

W: Yes, Texas delegation. We were voting on who our recommendation would be. Incidentally, the Speaker was for Lyndon too.

B: I was just going to ask, what kind of part would Mr. Rayburn play in that?

W: Well, he was strong for Lyndon, but he couldn't beat that seniority bugaboo. As I say, it didn't bother me, but it did some of the older members. They thought Albert was entitled to it by virtue of seniority, but anyway, Lyndon lost. He was very gracious about losing, but I was just thinking back. Had Lyndon been elected to that Appropriations

Committee, it's my personal opinion that he never would have run for the Senate.

B: You mean, he would have decided to go the House route?

W: I think he would have become the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. That's just my surmise, pure assumption. I've never talked to him about it, but I think it might well have been that he wouldn't have wanted to be anything but chairman of that Appropriations Committee. He took care of his district pretty well without being on it, as you know. And he was a hard worker on committees, or anything he was assigned to, and still is. I know he works too hard, in my opinion, but he doesn't think so.

B: Does he have any interest outside of public affairs and politics?

W: Well, I don't know how to answer that. I don't think he has time for much. I heard of him occasionally playing a game of golf. Yesterday [October 15, 1968], for example--I don't whether I've mentioned this. You know Paul Kilday--Judge Kilday died Monday; and Lyndon, as busy as he was at the White House with foreign dignitaries, legislation, and callers and everything else, still had time to go out to the funeral in Arlington to pay his respect to Ceil Kilday and the family. Paul and Lyndon were very close friends.

B: Did he stay around and talk to people?

W: Well, he visited with the family, all the members of the family, then he had to get back. When we were going out we shook hands, a few of us were together. You could tell he was in a hurry and we didn't want to take any of his time.

B: Well, Judge, I've taken a lot of your time. Can you think of anything else you'd like to say?

W: No, except I could go for a hamburger. Do you want one?

B: It's about eating time.

W: Get Lyndon to tell you some time that story about chile. "Chile sold for a dime the world over." I can't tell it nearly as funny as he does.

B: The time "chile sold for a dime the world over?"

W: Yes. About this fellow, a friend of his in Johnson City. I don't think he'd ever been out of the town before. He was always going to this greasy spoon to get a bowl of chile, a bowl of red, for a dime, and a strawberry sodapop for a nickel. Well, he was in another town one time, and found a chile joint and ordered the same thing; and came time to pay the bill, the chile was fifteen cents instead of a dime. And he started raising the dickens. He said, "Hell, man, everybody knows that chile sells for a dime the world over." Get him to tell you that some time.

B: I reckon he has got a fund of that kind of story.

W: Oh, he's a good storyteller. I like to hear him tell stories. He has a good sense of humor. He likes to kid, you know, a practical joker. He used to be, I think he has had too much to do now, but he's still-- And if a man can't retain his sense of humor in proportion to things over in that White House, then he's blown.

B: What kind of practical jokes did he pull?

W: Oh, I don't know of any as such. He liked to needle people. And he generally knew where the sensitive spot was. I remember one time, we named our second boy--our youngest son--after Sam Rayburn. We were down in the place one night and Lyndon brought this up very dryly and wryly. He asked me what had we named our child--he knew all the time. And I told him, and he said, "Gee whiz, that's nice. Did the Speaker give you those heifer calves down there?" I said, "What heifer calves?" He said, "You mean you named your

boy after him and he hasn't given him any heifer calves?" Well, it embarrassed the Speaker, it embarrassed me, but he was putting that needle into the Speaker. As a matter of fact, the Speaker told me, "I had intended telling that to Sam [Worley], write him a letter and tell him what I was doing, but old Johnson had to go start talking about it." That's an example, he knows--well, it's fun, good clean fun. The Speaker did write Sam a letter later. He said, "I've got two heifer calves down there for you, which I will keep on my place and look after, and as they bear in the future, I will deposit your share and send you a check."

B: To your son?

W: Yes, to Sam. That's when he was just a few months old. We still have that letter. I think two or three checks--we turned them into war bonds, and they're still drawing interest. That's characteristic of Sam Rayburn too. Both those fellows had a lot in common. Harri, I don't know of anything. I'm sure there's something I've overlooked, I don't know.

B: Well, if there is, call me and I'll be right back with my machine.

W: I hope I haven't sounded biased or prejudiced. I'm just recalling; as a matter of fact, I've thought of things today I haven't thought of in a long time.

B: It has been very good, Judge. We thank you very much for it.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Eugene Worley

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

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

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Signed Eugene Worley
Date April 16, 1970
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