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HORACE BUSBY ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW V

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HORACE W. BUSBY

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Signed by Horace W. Busby, Jr., on May 7, 1999.

Accepted by John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States, June 4, 1999.

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ACCESSION NUMBER 99-08

INTERVIEW V

DATE: August 16, 1988

INTERVIEWEE: HORACE W. BUSBY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Kozy Korner Cafe, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: From LBJ's perspective, you had the Felix Longoria thing.

But I wanted to ask you to talk generally about the Senate office and the process of being a senator as opposed to a member of the House.

B: Okay, don't shape it quite that way. Let me throw out two or three quick ones.

This is the sum total of my early knowledge of Johnson and blacks, not civil rights, blacks. In 1946, as I told you, I worked with Major J. R. Parten and D. B. Hardeman, Alex Louis and others in the [Homer] Rainey campaign, and in the Rainey campaign I met a man who'd always been kind of a hero of mine as a child, former Governor Jimmie Allred. Allred was governor like--what?--1934 to 1938, something like that. I used to listen to him on the radio. At one time we had three Democrats from Wichita Falls, he being one of them, running for governor. And then after he won in the general election--his Republican opponent, Orville Bullington, was from Wichita Falls--but I would listen to him and sometimes went out to the parks in Fort Worth and had heard him. I really liked his style as a speaker. It turned out he knew my father, but he never told me that. I learned that only later.

Well, he picked up on me, I guess because of this father thing, I don't know; he was older by a good bit than I was. But the Governor--we met in 1946 and he talked to me a lot about the Rainey campaign, and I was very flattered. So in 1947 I was at that point working at the State Capitol in the International News Service Bureau. It wasn't much of a job, but I was there and liked it. And so the Governor started--he'd been appointed a federal judge by Roosevelt, and he resigned in 1942 to run against [W. Lee] O'Daniel, and had lost and they'd tried to put him back on the bench and the Senate wouldn't do that. So he had always been kind of a misfit; I think he felt guilty about making money as a lawyer, he thought he ought to be out fighting the battles for the people, the "little 'uns," as he liked to say.

So Allred liked to come around, and I was an attentive audience for his political stories. He was not a big old-fashioned storyteller; he was always walking around on the balls of his feet and pumping a fist into his palm, and just really hot after them all the time.

So he told me one day, the very first thing that anybody had ever told me about Lyndon Johnson, other than just that he'd run against O'Daniel and lost and all that. He said, "You know, Busby, in 1936"--it had to be 1936; could have been the latter part of 1935 or the early part of 1937, but I think it was the summer or fall of 1936. Johnson went to Congress in 1937, right? Okay. He said Johnson was down here or Lyndon was down here and he was passing out NYA [National Youth Administration] money--they called it scholarships but those were just stipends today. They were a different nomenclature back then. And so he got wind of something Johnson was planning to do, so he said,

"I called him to my office." And he said, "Now, Lyndon, I know what you're about to do. You're passing out this money and you are planning to give some grants to Prairie View. I have checked and there's no other southern state in which the NYA director has ever given any money to black students at black schools. I think, Lyndon, that you possibly have a fine future in politics, you can go far. But I want you to know that Texas is not ready for people to give federal money to Negroes at Negro schools." So he said, "That was perfectly clear"--this is Allred--"that was totally clear. That booger sat there and he looked at me and Lyndon said, finally, 'Well, is that all that you had to say?'" And he said, "Yes, Lyndon. I just wanted to help you." And so he said, "Lyndon stood up. I was sitting down and Lyndon stood up by the side of the desk and he said, 'Well, you have nothing else to say, Governor?' 'No.' He said, 'I want to express my appreciation to you for inviting me in here, calling me in. There were some important things I could have been doing, but I came because you are the governor and you called me. It's just been such an inspiration to me. I'll never forget this moment, this time with you, to be able to see what a man like you, whom I know to be a good practicing Christian, to have this splendid example that you've just given me of the Christian spirit as applied to your fellow human beings. It's very touching.'" And so Allred said at that point he wasn't quite sure which way this was coming down. And so he said he got up, and he said, "I wasn't going to let him out of there without pinning him down." He said, "Well, what are you going to do?" to Johnson. And he said Johnson went toward the door and stopped and looked back, and he drew himself up and he said, "Well, in view of the inspiring example that you have just

given me about how some people would treat Negroes and whites, I'm going back to my office and I'm going to double the money I'm giving to Prairie View and I'm sending it down there this afternoon." Well, that's my first introduction to Johnson.

G: What did Allred think of that behavior?

B: In retrospect, he thought Johnson was right. He told this story admiringly, because it had affected him. Of course when Jimmie was governor you didn't have the Houston case decision. What's that case?

G: *Smith v. Allwright*. The white primary?

B: Yes. Was the doctor named Smith?

G: Lonnie Smith.

B: Oh, yes, okay. I always get him mixed up with [Dr. Everett] Givens. Well, the primaries were the so-called lily-white primaries, and the blacks just didn't figure. I know when O'Daniel was running the first time, in 1938, I went out in the yard and we had an old, old black man who had kept our lawn and--no, he didn't keep anybody else's. He had my father up on a pedestal, and he'd come in his own car to keep our lawn, because he knew Brother Busby was out of town all the time. But he wouldn't keep anybody else's in the neighborhood that tried to hire him. And he was referred to--and he referred to himself--as Nigger Will. He'd knock on the door and say, "It's Nigger Will." It was a very bad and dangerous and provocative thing to address a black or let them hear you at that point speak of them as being black; they were fighting words. That was true up until the sixties. I don't remember what speech it was, but the first time Johnson made a speech

about blacks and used the term blacks, it was a wrestling match. Because brought up as I was, being taught you could say colored people, but in my family if I had called somebody a black man I'd have gotten my mouth washed out with soap.

Anyway, I went out in the yard. I was all excited about politics, and I asked Nigger Will--he was one of my best friends--"Are you really for O'Daniel?" I wanted to talk politics to somebody, so I asked him about that. And he was kind of--he was handling me all right, but he was uncomfortable, I saw. And in a minute my sister came to the front door. "Horace, Jr., come here a minute." So I came inside and she and my mother took me to the kitchen and she said, "Don't ask Nigger Will about how he's going to vote, because they don't vote." I didn't know what "they" were.

So anyway that was my first introduction, and it was just before I came up here. I mean, it was not long before. Allred was very enthusiastic about me coming to Washington, as was Allan Shivers, interestingly.

G: Do you recall once a conversation that you had with Johnson about how the blacks would rebel if they did not receive a more equitable--

B: Well, that's in the material I gave you on my first night, my first meeting with him up here, in which he said, "You ought to know how I feel about everything." And he toured the world and talked a lot about the prospects of war, which was on everybody's mind, all that sort of thing. And this went on for about an hour and a half or so in his office. And then finally he said--and I've given you this before; I won't repeat it, but just to put it in the context--"And then there are the Negroes." This was 1948. He said, "They fought the

war; they filled up the war plants, they built the bombers, they did this, that and the other. And now they're back and they're not going to take this shit that we give them much longer." Or, "They're just not going to take this shit we give them," that's what it was. And he said something--I'm not calling it up quite, but to the effect that he said. . . . The point of it was that we were in a race against time, and he said "I hope we can, but I'm not sure we can get this system to respond on this. If we don't do it, blood will run in the streets."

Well, I'd never heard anybody talk that way. It was quite a joke of its own kind. Now in 1948 when I came, there was not any great agitation in Texas over civil rights issues or over racial issues. There never was, really. I think that in your own research about race in Texas that probably some of the periods that you've worked on may just possibly from a more distant vantage point convey artificially a sense of drama and climax and all that you didn't experience if you were living there, because in Texas, unlike, say, Mississippi or somewhere else like that, you didn't have situations where the black presence was threatening. And I remember one thing that communicated--it was in the middle fifties--a lot to me. In Dallas there were--I want to say West Elm; you know, that's a long-time area up there--it was bursting with blacks, and they began to move out, and there were bombings. When blacks moved into a neighborhood, it was kind of a concentrated dose of bombing; it was not every night or anything like that, but a lot of bombings were going on up there of these black homes or maybe a church; I don't remember a church, but maybe something like that that went on.

And so while I lived in Austin I knew Dallas and Fort Worth. Fort Worth was not experiencing the same thing, but given the level it was more a matter of menace than of realized, face-to-face confrontation across the South. You wonder--I somehow--I don't know why I went through life feeling this way. I was reacting to it in Austin--"Well, you know, this is Dallas; they won't let this get out of hand." Well, sure enough, I don't know who did it; I wasn't in Dallas and didn't have this kind of feel of the place. They stepped forward--it could have been Henry Wade or it could have been a judge, I guess--as the press term is, they empaneled a blue ribbon grand jury, all white--I think it was all white. The chairman was D. A. Hulcy, the CEO of Lone Star Gas, which was huge in Texas at that time, may still be--D. A. Hulcy, H-U-L-C-Y, who also, separate from Lone Star Gas, was at that point the chairman of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, national. And this got your attention. And the other people on there, I think that maybe it included the law dean or the law dean emeritus from SMU; I mean you could not have gotten together a more impressive group for a social function, but just plain old hard core Dallas establishment, you couldn't have gotten anything together to compare with this grand jury.

And again, this is where my sense, my experience, my perspective perhaps differs from yours today. I could see where we were going, and that was fine. This is where we ought to go. And it wasn't very long. This grand jury had to have a lot of cooperation from the law enforcement people to do this, because grand juries don't investigate, themselves. But within a couple of months, maybe, wham, bang, they came in with a whole

mess of indictments. And these were not indictments of organizations or anything like that, and they were not indictments of up-scale people. But they had them cold.

That was before the days of plea bargaining, and as I recall, just about every one of their indictments resulted in a conviction or a plea of guilty. How they broke the case I never knew, never looked into it. But that sent a message all over the state, and you just didn't have the problem in the big cities. Eventually, in I guess it had to be around 1954, there was some trouble in Mansfield, Texas, which is near Fort Worth--I grew up going down to Mansfield a lot--about admitting the blacks to the school. And so Allan Shivers was governor and had to face it. And very deliberately, you know, he sent in state force; he sent in one Ranger, deliberately playing on--

G: One riot, one Ranger.

B: --one riot, one Ranger; sent in one Ranger. They didn't have any more trouble. And the liberals just went ape. That's when Ronnie Dugger really parted company with me, because he said, "You know perfectly well he should have mobilized the National Guard, at least. It's because he's a white supremacist he didn't." I said, "No, no, this is the way you do it." "Ah, he should have done this other." If a Texas governor had mobilized the National Guard for anything in race, we would have had a different racial history, just like if you had a northerner as president at the time of Selma and all like that, and they had sent in troops as Eisenhower did in Little Rock, we wouldn't have a Sunbelt. Those troops would still be there, not just in Selma but all across the South. People get to hating and all

like this, and so they want to use maximum force and crush evil, and that's not the way to get around evil if that's what your real goal is.

But anyway, I came up here and Johnson said those words to me. And I realized that when he said it, he said it as I emphasized at the end of this extended monologue. And many of your learning experiences in life occur in milliseconds. You come up to a moment and the sum of your life has taught you to think about something a certain way, and then wham, bang, something occurs and you see the whole thing in a different light and from the other side of that millisecond on, you see things differently. I knew instinctively, although that's the only way I could know, what he was talking about, about blood running in the streets and all that.

I had just arrived in Washington after five days going across the South, Alabama, northern Georgia, South Carolina, where you could just drive through and tell that racial relations there were very different than they were in Texas. And it was something we had to deal with. So we got along in the campaign. Nothing came up about race of any kind. Well, he started his campaign trips and his campaign swings in the helicopter in the first primary in 1948. If I've told you this before, you stop me. We were in East Texas. Now let me say this: at many of the stops, that helicopter whistle-stopping that we did, there would be some blacks in the audience, particularly if it was in East Texas. You know, one of the characteristics of the fifties that always struck me as singular was the fact that the West Texas counties up on to the High Plains, the Cap Rock and then down of course especially through Pecos and down the Pecos Basin down to the Big Bend, all that kind of

thing, there weren't any blacks. So those were the counties that were most hostile to blacks. You had people in all those West Texas counties, the politicians were all against the NAACP, which they never had seen.

Even when I had covered the state legislature in 1947, let me say, you would occasionally have a guy let fly about the evil eastern influences: the AFL and the CIO; they weren't merged then. Occasionally one of them would throw in the NAACP, but not regularly, not the NAACP. I mean it just wasn't that big a thing among the most conservative--I guess you'd have to say incipiently anti-black people that there were. It just wasn't a thing in Texas politics.

But we went out on these campaign swings, and so somewhere in East Texas--I wish if you ever look this up, that you would make me a copy of the supporting documentation I will mention, because I won't have it, otherwise. At some point in however many weeks we did that, four or five weeks, we were in East Texas. The noontime stop was, as I recall, in Cleveland, Texas. There was a guy there in Cleveland who had been in the university when I was, maybe a year younger, [an] exceptionally good track athlete and like a wide receiver in football, named Lathan Abram, I think it was. Eventually he was killed in Korea. He had married his college girlfriend who was also a good friend of mine. And I was obviously very pleased that he was for Johnson. Kind of a well-off family and I thought they wouldn't be.

So anyway, the helicopter, after circling the little town, building the crowd, put down on the empty space--empty in terms of structures and all--down by the railroad

depot. I don't know whether the rail line had been abandoned; at least it didn't have any passenger trains coming on it, I think. There was this depot; there was a flatbed truck, which frequently was the case, as I recall, it could have been that he was using the end of the--like the porch at the end of a little frame depot. And then the railroad track, one pair of tracks, ran right by the station, of course, in a straight line north or south, east or west. And if you're standing where Johnson is, the railroad track is to his right and sort of right under his feet, virtually, and then there's a space, right of way, twenty, twenty-five feet on beyond that track, cleared right of way, and then the woods. We're in the deep piney woods of East Texas, which is not my home country.

And so there off on his right and then off on his left, directly in front of him and on his left, on a slope, was a much broader--oh, I guess it must have been a hundred feet, at least, of not just right of way but access to the station, all, I guess, grass. I don't remember seeing it, but there was probably a parking lot around there somewhere. That's an interesting commentary; you didn't build parking lots much back then. You know, [you'd have] a clay parking lot like the Katy Station in Austin down on lower Congress. There wasn't any parking space around it. Why do you need to build parking spaces?

Anyway, he was talking to Lathan, and Lathan had brought some county officials, or he hadn't brought them but he had them there and he was introducing them, all like this, while the crowd was kind of forming, and so then Johnson got up, this Congressman got up on wherever his microphone was to speak. And I happened to be close, but usually I got lost at these things. I didn't want to be found. But I was up there because my friend

was involved. He got up to speak and he didn't start speaking. He looks up--this was on many things other than what I'm talking about--when he got up to a microphone and didn't start speaking, that was time to head for the woods, because you had no idea what might have offended him or gotten him out of sorts, but you knew: don't be in sight.

G: Is that right? Would that be the indication that he was--?

B: Well, let me tell you, yes. He was wanting to get something straightened out, see, and if you were under foot, like my friend Woody, Warren Woodward--these things, you know, it's like people being accident-prone or subject to violent crimes and all like that. Woody could manage to be in the wrong place at the wrong time if he was in heaven. And I was very good at never being either.

But he got up to speak, or when he should have been speaking, usually these speeches were made without him being introduced. He just got up and said, "I'm Lyndon Johnson." He got up and the first thing I remember hearing was him saying, "No, no, no." Panic buttons go off all around. And he's there; he's in place, nothing is visibly wrong. The crowd is, oh, certainly twenty-five yards away. The crowds will not come up close, you know. And sometimes he would try to pull them up closer.

But he looked over there and finally he said, "Now, I'm not going to start speaking, I don't care if you're missing your lunch or not," or something to that effect. "I'm not going to start speaking until those Americans over there on the right"--this was done with gestures--"side of the track come over here and stand on the same side of the track with the other Americans over here. This is America. We don't do this." So this

gets my attention, needless to say, and I looked over there and on the right side there is a dribble of blacks, a lot of kids, older kids, some older black people, some mamas, all like this. They're about four or five deep out of the woods into this right-of-way, plus then there were also a good many--the piney woods are, with all the undergrowth, you know, if you're not accustomed to them, it takes you a while to begin to pick out people, because a lot of the undergrowth is about as tall as people are. I kept realizing that there were a good many more people in those woods behind the fence than I had thought, and certainly more than was indicated by the number who were out, although the number who were out in the right-of-way, whatever it was; I wouldn't guess how many it was, but it was quite respectable, and here were these whites over on the other side. Plain color-line division. And he said this, and I don't think either side--it was so enormous, what they were hearing, neither side was really sure what they heard. That's what it amounted to. Nothing happened.

So he did it again; he ran at it again. And he sounded terribly put out the second time. I think he even sounded a little angry. Well, he was saying, "All right, come on. This is America. You Americans over there"--he was pointing at the blacks--"now come on, get over on this track. Cross over to this track." Well, when he was that specific, what you saw was about twenty-five or thirty black people of all ages either going over or through the strands of this fence. They were heading for the woods as fast as they could. And there was one or maybe two, well, there may have been three men [who] stayed, and one of them was an old man, gray-haired black. And they held their ground. What

strategy was in their minds I have no idea. It was fascinating to me and I've often wondered what--they were doing something; they were buying time or they were prepared to sacrifice themselves if that's what was going to happen, or they were prepared for something. I just have always wondered, now what was in the minds of those guys? Because I wasn't too sure what might happen myself. Now I was standing where I could see this, and I don't think there was a white person standing there who wasn't just standing rigid, like there were in coffins, looking straight ahead and not looking over where they knew that the blacks were.

So he made another run. Even after all this had happened; he saw what had happened just as well as all the rest of us did. And so he came at it again and the old man, the white-haired black, he kind of sidled sideways; he wasn't slouching over, he was walking. But he came out of his position close to the fence, came all the way over to the edge of the railroad track. He was like standing on the end of a tie, and he stopped. He kind of ducked his head, kind of bowed his head, which I took to mean, "That's all you're going to get. You got me, and that's all you're going to get." I figured by then that he must be old and well-known and well-respected in the community, and he basically wasn't afraid. He might have been afraid, but he didn't really think something was going to happen to him and that's why he came.

So here we've got the woods full of blacks, because they began creeping back up. They never exposed themselves, but if you'd watch, they were behind this leaf and behind this tree, and a couple of them were up in a tree, little boys. And here was this one black

man standing on the edge of a railroad tie. The longer he stood, the more these other two or three black men edged over toward him. They felt a little safer. And here was this big crowd of whites. This was Ferguson country, Democratic loyalist country. And he went on and made his usual speech.

Well, when he finished his speech, Lathan Abram again and some of the people around him were up there close to him, and they shook hands with him and you know, "Good job," and all like this. As I noted, nobody else came up to speak. I didn't really sense animus, but then I didn't know the people. I didn't know what it was. And so we went spinning back to the hotel in several cars; I had my own car and I drove back. And when we got to the hotel, which was one of these things with big wide porches, verandas, southern, high ceilings--I can't imagine today how it was that those places seemed so comfortable in hot weather as they did then and they do retrospectively, most of the time.

I came into the hotel and Lathan--I heard Johnson bellowing down the hall and couldn't believe what I heard, and Lathan came out and got me and said, "He's hollering for you." And so I went down to his room, and I guess it was like a parlor and a bedroom or something, because he immediately took me into the bedroom, and he was coming out of his clothes to take a nap. He was as alive as you ever saw him, and he was just full of energy that was just boiling over. He was just really excited.

He was sitting on a bed taking off his socks or something, and when I came into the room he said, "How many votes do you think we're going to get out of this county?" or this precinct or something, out of this city.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

B: So I held up my fingers; I held up ten fingers, just kind of--I don't know, I had no particular reason for doing it, but just to [show] we weren't going to get many. He shook his head, "No, no. This many." And he held up one hand, and he had all five fingers up and he then took one finger down. Four votes. And he was so happy, he was so happy. You know, it was Johnson; he had stuck it to them. He just got up there and looked out and saw that, and he thought it was the pits to have blacks and whites separated like that, and so--I mean, the man is hopelessly behind in the race, and this isn't going to help. And we were covered. Every big paper in Texas had somebody out with us.

Well, during the afternoon we went to other stops, and several of the press guys--all of them were older, well-known political writers--came over to me and one of them actually said something very nice about it. He thought this was very brave. And the others I would say were not interested in their black brothers that much.

G: Who was the one that said something nice?

B: I can't remember his name. He was not from Texas originally. He'd been there before the war, had gone off in the war and he'd come back, and I don't remember. But anyway, all of these fellows said in effect, "Don't worry about us. We're not going to do anything to hurt him about what he's done." As I recall, the *Dallas News* story--it could have been someone else, but the *Dallas News* story was the only one that--it was written by a fellow named Bill Rives, who later became their sports editor, very nice, attractive fellow who may be the one I'm thinking about, but I'm not sure--R-I-V-E-S. But Bill Rives' story said

in maybe three paragraphs down in the story that Johnson at Cleveland--I may be wrong; it may not have been Cleveland. We were in Cleveland sometime that day--had refused to speak until the blacks had moved over with the whites. And as I say, it was very true to character for him. If he lost the election for doing something like that, well, he lost the election. He would rather have done that than not do it. He didn't do it again, but there never was really that kind of a situation again. Now sometimes in the second primary we would have meetings in hotel ballrooms and all, and there would very often be blacks in the room. How we were getting around Jim Crow and all I don't know and I know it didn't come up.

G: Becoming a senator, did that change his ability to take a firm position on civil rights?

B: No, no.

G: He was representing a different constituency.

B: In time it gave it to him. A senator has so much more latitude and independence than a House member.

G: Did you see the Felix Longoria thing at the time as a civil rights gesture?

B: No. I don't know why you want to dredge up the term civil rights and apply it to that. It was just a matter of right and wrong, to me. Just like the episode at Cleveland; there wasn't any civil rights. In fact the term civil rights had not gained much currency. It came out of Truman's civil rights message at the start of 1948, which everybody looked upon, up in Washington, as sort of a message from a desperate president, trying to win an election he couldn't win. Remember, that civil rights message was heavy with what today

would be seen as cliches: anti-lynching, FEPC [Fair Employment Practice Committee], but also votes for the District of Columbia, statehood for Alaska and Hawaii, ten or twelve things. They were stretching. And if all of Truman's civil rights things had been enacted, which none of it was, it wouldn't have improved relations hardly at all. We weren't thinking that way then, weren't thinking about equal opportunity in hiring and promotion; we weren't thinking about--I guess there was some thinking about housing discrimination, but not a lot.

I was told later the [Brotherhood of] Sleeping Car Porters--the sleeping car and dining car porters, the black railroad union--was always a pretty strong force. What was the name of their leader?

G: A. Philip Randolph.

B: Yes. He was really the most forceful, if you could call it that, of the black leadership. And in the fifties up until about 1958, I always went and came from Washington on the train. In like 1951-1952, I guess, and 1953, the sleeping car porters would frequently get on my case about Johnson, how the NAACP had come around in 1948 and told them Johnson was their man, and they'd put up "Vote for Johnson" signs out in their yard, and then they felt that he wasn't their man because of the speech he made in 1949--

G: Unlimited debate.

B: Yes.

G: Tell me the background of that.

B: I thought I had.

G: No. This was his maiden speech in the Senate.

B: Yes. Very simply, it was this, that--oh, I have told you this, about how we had three offices, three rooms in the office suite at 232 Senate Office Building, which for a while was the Old Senate Office Building. It housed the whole Senate at that point. And I had a desk in the middle office. Johnson right away after getting into the Senate had started out on this megalomania business; he started trying to acquire other rooms assigned to him. "Oh, it's such a big state and I have to have so many people," and he got several nooks and crannies, and he kept that up as long as he was in the Senate. He had some of the most surprising office space I've ever come across.

G: What do you mean?

B: Well, you'd be walking around and climbing underneath things, and you're stepping over dirty rags and all like that, and he'd open a door and here's this bright, nicely furnished room, and you had no idea there was a room there, or thought it was a closet.

G: Was this in the Capitol itself, or in the Office Building?

B: Some of them were in the Capitol, some of them were over in the Senate Office Building. They were just scattered all around. They had completed the new Senate Office Building before he became vice president, but he hadn't really had time to work it. He didn't know where all these closets were.

But anyway, he became a member of the Senate in January, and then I guess it was sometime in February, John Connally was the administrative assistant. We were never very big on titles. I finally appropriated for myself "legislative assistant," because I

realized that when he got an assignment on one of his major committees--in those days, subcommittees were created by a bill or bills, and the Chairman of Interstate Commerce, Senator Ed Johnson of Colorado, somehow had a high regard for Johnson. So he started designating him as subcommittee chairman for bills of various kinds. I saw I was going to be essentially Lyndon Johnson's staff man. The committee had staff people for these subcommittees. So I sooner or later made myself legislative assistant, which had very little bearing on today. But one interesting contrast between the present and then was that you are studying an issue, you're studying the bill and you're studying the debate, and realize that a wholesome accommodation [?] can be made of what one body of senators is arguing or is concerned about. What you do, you go back to the office and sit down and draft an amendment. And sometimes, not every time but sometimes, you'd send it to--the Senate had a law office, small, so you'd send it there for them to make sure you'd fitted it into the bill correctly, mainly. It was a very simple matter to write language that appeared in the law. You don't do that anymore; you've got to have five paralegals and two lawyers and all this to do it.

But anyway, I was in that middle office and John and I had desks back to back. There were four or five other people in the office, way too many people on the premises. And we were there one afternoon, and suddenly the door to the middle office, which had no marking on the outside, almost never opened unintentionally, but suddenly there was some kind of a little commotion occurring at the door, and the lock was turning and it wasn't opening and then it did open, and then in comes our leader with the eyes of a

hunted deer, panic, fright, and he comes in and he is closing the door against somebody. He never let it get open more than about ten inches, I think, and he's having a pushing match with somebody on closing the door. And then he stops and he leans melodramatically back against the door and he just looks like he--really, like I said, it looked like the stag at bay. And he was holding this door shut against this iniquitous force.

He went into his office, and to my complete shock, when he gets to his desk--he had buzzers on his phone, and in the middle office he buzzed--X number of buzzes meant he wanted this person or that person. And to my great shock when he finally buzzed for somebody, he buzzed for me. And you know, all of us were just sitting out there speechless at this little episode, this tiny vignette. So he wanted me, and I hadn't been around a year. So I go in with some trepidation. And he said, "That goddamned AP man. Do you know his name?" Well, when he said AP man I realized that I had gotten a glimpse of a person out there, a man, that he was obviously pushing the door against. I fitted it together, and it was not necessarily a third-stringer but a quiet back-bencher in the AP bureau, nice little guy. I don't remember his name. And he just laid into that guy as though he were the devil's handmaiden. He said, "That's the trouble with those goddamned AP men. If he'd been doing his job, if he'd been where he ought to have been instead over there sniffing around the House, he wouldn't have gotten messed up on this." And I didn't have any idea what the man was talking about, Johnson, nothing, or what could have prompted any of this.

So he went on up one side and down the other of this fellow, about just the character flaws of this AP man. Johnson had been minding his own business; he'd been over to the House. He first said he'd been over for lunch, which he hadn't, and then he said he'd been over to see the Speaker, which he might have been, except the Speaker was not in the office. And you know, just spraying all over the lot. But he just wanted to tell me what sorry people newspaper people were, since I had been one. And I still didn't know a damned thing about what this all meant. So I finally came back out, and I said, "What if he wants to talk to me?" "Well, don't talk to him." I said, "I can't do that. I'll keep him from talking to you, but I can't not talk to him myself." "Well, we'll cross that bridge when we get to it," or something like this.

So I go back out into the middle office, and they're all waiting with bated breath, and I'm unable to articulate what I've just been through, with any sense to it. So Big John explained that Senator [Richard] Russell had called a meeting of the southern senators. We'd said that earlier. Was it called a southern caucus? I don't think it was. Caucus is a word that's come into use more in recent years than it used to be. Southern something.

John himself did not know for sure what Johnson had done, which was tell-tale [that] he was winging it. But we concluded quickly that he must not have gone and the reason he was fibbing around so much, he went over to the House looking for something that would occupy him so he could tell Russell, "God, I got over there and the Speaker had to have me go down on the floor and count the votes for him," or something like that. We don't know; we could impute those kinds of things to him. And that he was the one

who was out of place, not the AP man. I think it finally turned out Johnson did in fact go into the House restaurant and order a bowl of soup, and the AP man was not in the members dining room; he was outside, and he looked in and saw him. So then he followed him when he left, wondering what the hell Johnson was doing over there and knowing about this meeting. And when Johnson did not go to the meeting but went to his office, he closed in to ask. And Johnson was just not going to have anything to do with him.

So anyway, we all figured this out, and finally the guy did come inside or may have been there all the time, I don't know. Anyway I went out to see him and he asked what was the significance of Senator Johnson not attending the meeting of the southern blank that had been called by Senator Russell to plan the filibuster. So I then went in to see him and I said this is the question that the man asked, what is the answer? And he said, "Well, obviously there's no significance to my not being there. I had to be over at the House; I had a conflict." I had not been around long enough to understand him when he was doing something like that, but it still was so broad-brush that you just knew that's what he was doing.

My technique, which wasn't really a technique, but my treatment of him when he got into some silliness of that sort, sort of denying--well, not denying, but just to stand there and let him say it and not answer, and then wait for the truth to start coming out. And he went through two or three more runs of distortion and evasion, and finally he said, "Well, I've talked the last several nights with Lady Bird." And we both feel very strongly

that we did not come to the Senate to engage in filibusters, and I don't expect to be a party to a filibuster this year." And then some other murky muck comes out about he didn't attend the conference for some other reason, but this was his basic feeling. And so I decided to tell the AP guy not that he didn't intend to engage in a filibuster, but that he said there was no significance to it. Oh, I think I said something about "He'll talk to Senator Russell," or something.

Anyway, the next day the *Washington Post* had a story on page one about the fact that the southerners had met and that all members of the Senate from southern states had been present except for Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. They didn't offer a comment; they didn't have any quote from me, there wasn't any sort of third-party quote about it, nothing. It was just a paragraph. Well, I think the next morning must have been one of the most disillusioning mornings of Lyndon Johnson's life, ever. Oh, even before he got to the office, Woody--John and I were usually there like maybe an hour before he came in--so Tommy the Cork [Corcoran], Jim Rowe; I'm tempted to say Ben Cohen, but I don't really remember that, but a whole bunch of these New Dealers calling up. Jim Rowe talked to me and Woody as well as John. "Oh, no. What does wonder boy think he's doing? That's not the way you play the game. He can't be a senator from Texas and amount to anything if he's going to start behaving like this. What is he, a goddamned idealist or something?" All of these guys, you know, that Johnson had spent almost twenty years trying to impress with his liberalism, or they were taunting him about his lack of liberalism, and so he goes and does something liberal and they call up, "Oh, God, this is so stupid. What does he

think he's doing?" He was just crushed. He wouldn't talk to most of them, if any of them. I'm not sure. And they didn't all call up wanting to talk to him; most of those kind of men would rather talk to John.

G: Why would they rather talk to John?

B: Well, John understood them, and it was a more pleasant experience talking to him, and they could let it out about Johnson and not worry. I mean, you know, they treated Johnson like the pledge in their fraternity, all the time I was around they did that. Anyway, here goes all of this stuff off and so finally about a week later, again I did not know what had happened, but he called me in one afternoon and he said, "Now, I don't want to make a speech that is a filibuster speech. I will address the question germanely, about amending Rule XXIII, XXII"--was it XXII or XXIII?

G: I believe it's XXII, the cloture--?

B: Yes--"provided you can go back in the history of the Senate and make a case for it." He said something to the effect that somebody had told him or some way he knew that you could make a case against cloture. I don't remember that he said it that way, but you know. So this was really the beginning of my serious career in Washington, because over the next month I had read every extended debate in the Senate's history, but the whole thing about filibusters had changed when they got over the lame duck sessions, when Congress ended, what was it, March 1 or March 31 or whatever. The filibuster worked to the advantage of its sponsors and the disadvantage of everybody else because all they had to do was to talk to midnight of March 1 or keep the Senate tied up until a time certain,

and then the Congress was constitutionally dissolved. And during World War I somebody had done this very irresponsibly, I think it was on a naval appropriations bill or something. That wasn't what the filibuster was on, but that's what they blocked. And separate and apart from doing a hell of a good job of documentation in the speech and all like this, which I just never had had occasion to do anything like that, and I had very little guidance on this. I was learning how to develop an argument and having a great load of fun doing it. We went through that period and I got the speech together, and he was proud of us. He took to showing it around, more to the northerners than to the--well, not at all to the southerners. And I forget who all it was, but they were all praising him because he didn't--nothing in it about race, at all. So then right at the end Senator [Alvin] Wirtz, maybe Jimmie Allred, I don't remember for sure, several persons like that arrived from Texas, led by Senator Wirtz, and Wirtz just kind of brushed me aside. It wasn't anything wrong with me; Wirtz liked me and all like that, but this was much too important to Lyndon's career to be left to me. And there was a little John Connally business involved in this, too, but anyway--

G: What do you mean? Because Connally and Wirtz had been close, or--?

B: They were trying to be, and John and I frequently got crossways. John let me have the credit on this speech, but it was hard, and he didn't always let me do that, and I would always get mad and decide I was leaving.

Anyway, we went through all this and Wirtz in my presence said, "Lyndon, you can't get up and make a speech like this without talking about the FEPC and poll tax," or

whatever. Johnson said, "I am not for the poll tax. Now, I'm not going to say that." And he wouldn't. So anyway Wirtz and somebody else from Texas wrote some language that's in the speech that is derogatory of some of the civil rights measures, and I just threw up my hands and wouldn't have anything to do with it. I may have touched up the language just a little bit at some point, but I knew that if I messed with it they were going to come back at me. So I told the Senator, "I'm not going to do anything on this." And I left Johnson to do the editing, and I don't remember now how that part came out.

Anyway, Johnson, you know, the big day, maiden speech, all like this. The galleries were filled with all these conspicuous figures from Washington's past; everybody came up there to see Johnson make his maiden speech. We were up in the gallery. At that point I had not taken to going on to the floor of the Senate; I really didn't know I could. If I'd realized that I would have done so, I guess. But anyway, he got a lectern; they have these portable lecterns that hold a speech text or a book that sits on top of the desks in the Senate. So he got there and he started out speaking and before long--he could get himself more wrought up making a speech, internally, than anybody I've ever seen. And he wasn't very long into the speech until the perspiration started showing on the back of his coat and on his forehead. He was really sweating this thing out.

He went through it. You would know from the text, and I don't remember whether Senator Russell or somebody interrupted him to say something helpful or something nice to him. And finally as he was winding down--oh, I was up in the gallery before he finished. I went down to be outside the Senate floor, because he was afraid that

since he was Roosevelt's friend and all this that somebody among the Republicans would tangle with him at the end and start questioning him. He didn't think he could handle himself well, scared to death of being questioned. And I had a little satchel with all kinds of references in it, and I went down to stand in the Senate room that's right off the floor there. It's not a cloakroom; it's a long corridor with desks and all.

And he finished, and Russell did at that point, I'm reasonably sure, say something. Somebody else said something, and so in a moment--there wasn't any Republican after him, nothing like this--Johnson comes swinging through the door, and Lady Bird and some of her friends had come to the reception room, the Wilson Reception Room out there. And when he saw me the first time he didn't say anything; he hugged me, sort of, squeezed me up to him, and went on outside. There were a lot of senators speaking to him back there, thought he'd made a good speech. But for some reason, more moment was attached to him speaking in the Senate than I ever again saw for any mere maiden speech.

Now that I've brought it up, I can sit and ponder for a while: why were they paying that much attention to him? I don't know. So he waded through the various senators, mostly Democrats, one or two Republicans, and he gets out to this reception room, and he spoke to Lady Bird and he hugged the other ladies, maybe Mary Rather, I don't know what all. I was kind of off to the side, where I thought I should be, and he came over to me and he was really high, you know how he could be, just rolling. And he kind of scooped me up a little bit with his arms and then backed off and he said, "I've just made

my first speech in the Senate and my last speech in a filibuster." And he kept his word; he never again spoke on the southern side, if that's what the filibuster was about.

G: Why did he do that; why did he speak at all?

B: Well, John said that--John wasn't saying this from personal knowledge; it was an intelligent assumption--he just said that when I said somewhere back in this, way back, that about a week after that episode with the AP man that something else happened and I never did say it. Well, what happened after about a week was that Senator Russell came to see him by appointment, a careful appointment. I mean, Johnson made a big thing out of it, "I will come to your office," "No, I'll come to yours." That's important in a body like the Senate, who does what. So anyway he came to see him. Maybe they met on some neutral ground; I don't remember. I kept trying to find out what was going on and John said that Senator Russell just took him up on the mountaintop and gave him a picture of what lay ahead if he didn't keep faith with his southern colleagues. He'd never get recognized on the floor when he needed it, and he'd never get bills passed for Texas, and oh, I don't know, the usual list of things, which I didn't think was very exceptional. The other side of that story was that Russell was also--I felt, and I couldn't tell you what all this may be taken from--but Russell was considerate of Johnson. His understanding was deep in that he understood beyond the state of the man; he also understood the man. I don't think a man like Dick Russell--he was not anti-black; he was anti-federal power.

G: [Was] Connally's explanation of what had happened in this interim just a speculation, or did he have some hard data?

B: I can't tell you to what extent he was--see, the word speculation turns me off. When you've been around affairs and events like this, you may not actually have been told what happened, but you know what happened.

G: Did Johnson ever refer to that speech in retrospect? Did he regret having made it?

B: Oh, no, no. Finally, it got good reviews north and south. It seems to me, maybe, that Arthur Krock or somebody important in the press--well, no, it happened in several places in print--took the portion of the speech that had to do with the background of why you didn't want to close off all debate, and used it in an intelligent way. And Johnson looked intelligent. He received almost no criticism I remember, black, white or anything else. You see, the blacks in that time--Johnson was a southerner in their eyes, so when they found a southerner that didn't get up and engage in John Rankin or Theodore Bilbo-style obscenities, almost, about blacks, they paid attention. And let me mention in that respect that in 1946, and again I think I've told you this, but in 1946 when Johnson had the Hardy Hollers election and this concerted effort was being made nationally as well as locally to defeat him, Adam Clayton Powell, who I guess had been elected to Congress in either 1942 or 1944--he hadn't been in Congress very long--came down to Austin at his own expense, stayed with Dr. Givens--I've heard this from both Johnson and from Powell--stayed apparently for several days. And Givens had a lot of black leaders, mostly from Austin and the Tenth District. I think he probably--I've always liked Dr.

Givens--would have used something like that to aggrandize himself a little bit, so he probably had some big blacks in from Dallas, plus his bankers and a few other people like that. Anyway, Powell--see, the blacks in the District had really no political relationship with Johnson, because of their voting status--knew Givens and he knew the president at, what is it, Huston-Tillotson, the school? Isn't there another black school in Austin, a black college?

G: You had the combination, Samuel Huston and Tillotson College were combined at that time.

B: There's another one, though. I forget what it was. Anyway, this was very early in a new era, and Powell came done there and he said, "I want you to know that I've watched this man, the only white man in the South I would do this for. He's different. When John Rankin is going to speak in the House, or when he starts cross-examining somebody on the floor, or not cross-examining but jousting with them, there are a great many southern Democrats [who] come into the Chamber, if it's about race. Lyndon Johnson is the one of them who gets up and leaves. He will not sit on the floor through any speeches about Negroes." Et cetera, et cetera, a lot of things like that. Powell, a good many years after that, was actually--it happened in 1948--well, fifteen years later I was with him on a couple of trips that we made and brought the subject up, and he said it was just a--in the context of the sixties we started to remember what the forties and the wartime were. Hell, on the House floor in the course of a week they'd slobber all over the blacks and the Jews and the Catholics; it was a different world than any you've known. And he said this was a

very telling gauge of the man for the blacks, for Negroes. And I have seen a little bit of that in my time up here; I don't mean that far back, either. There was or is a kind of southerner out of the Deep South, if you tell him at midnight tonight somebody's going talk about getting these monkeys back up in the trees at Lafayette Square, they'll show up over there just to enjoy it. And Johnson didn't.

G: There was a group of NAACP leaders that showed up at Johnson's office after he made that speech, and they were furious. Carter Wesley was one of them, Lula White from the Houston branch, people who had supported him in 1948.

B: Carter Wesley came. I wasn't present on that. Johnson and Carter Wesley knew each other way back, and I think part of my impression was that Carter Wesley was personally embarrassed. He'd gone way out on a limb and now he's kind of having to eat his words. What I most remember about the thing with Carter Wesley was that this degenerated--that's not the right word for it, but it turned into an exchange-of-correspondence-type thing, and I was writing the Johnson end of it and sort of brought him around. Johnson wouldn't let you quit exchanging letters; it never stopped on your letter to him. Well, that was one consideration, but the larger consideration was that--I remember I'd write two-, three-page letters, which I wouldn't write for anybody today, and Wesley calmed down.

G: My impression is that Sam Lowe worked some in this connection.

B: He did. I have no idea what he was doing. I liked Sam Lowe; I never did really know much about him, where his strength might have come from or orders come from. But he

figured. In my memory and I'm sure this is right, Johnson had known Carter Wesley way back, as long as he'd known Sam Lowe, and Wesley was humiliated in front of his black friends by this guy doing what he had done, or what they thought he had done. My argument--I guess the correspondence may still be around--was that what they were saying Johnson had done, which they were perceiving as anti-black, was totally a misperception, and oh, I don't know. I guess a little pleasant demagoguery, that this is as much for your benefit as somebody else, which I believe, frankly, myself. I want that device of unlimited debate to keep the majority from running over everybody, or running over somebody. So it worked out all right.

I don't remember a delegation; you said delegation. It was Carter Wesley and friends, and the friends weren't very noticeable.

Let me mention one footnote here that happened early in 1949 before this thing came up. I guess I had spent several periods out in the front office, the reception room, back at the back of it. We had a receptionist up at the front and a stenographer or secretary in the middle, so you had two people answering the phone, and I was in the back at the back desk. I was supposed to do the things I usually did in the way of writing, but that person was out there, the person--I guess I was pioneering an experiment, but anyway, out there for the purpose of--people came in that should be talked to, couldn't see the Senator or shouldn't see the Senator, didn't need really to see John or Walter. So you talked to them out there. And right early on in 1949 a big black delegation--I can't say it was NAACP; Roy Wilkins was one of them, but they were from several black

organizations, Urban League and all that. And they came by and called, and they readily agreed to talk with me, although they wanted to know from me later what did the Senator think about this. I wouldn't say it was half-hearted at all, but [there was] not a lot of steam behind this, but feeling behind it. They really wanted to know if they could look to the Senator to help them on the 1950 census, to get the 1950 census not to identify people by race. They thought the time had come after ninety years to quit identifying Americans as white and Negro.

One of the first times I'd ever been sort of put in the position of saying anything that could be in some way attributed to him, and I just kind of told them right off I didn't think it was a very good idea, but I would ask. So soon thereafter I got them an answer. I phoned it to them rather than writing it to them. Johnson in effect said, "Hell, no. The day may come when they want that," which certainly was the truth. I don't know why they were off on that. Oh, I guess I do, too. If I'd been black I would probably have bought the idea that that was somehow consequential.

(Interruption)

B: I've never been certain quite where this thing originated, in terms of Johnson's interest in it. My impression at the time--

(Interruption)

B: Anyway, he came out of one of those evening-time sessions in Rayburn's office, and as best as I could figure it out at the time, Wright Patman knew about this Longoria thing probably as a function of being the member of the Texas delegation who was most likely

to read the Texas papers himself. And since he was in Texarkana he got his local paper quicker than most people. Patman had a pretty intelligently tuned sense of public things like this, and he did, in my judgment, over a long period, fairly often--I can't say frequently, but it happened in my knowledge a number of times--he wanted to push Lyndon to the fore. I think he--well, it wasn't a matter of thinking; I know Wright Patman spent a lot of his life up here thinking that Lyndon ought to be president or would be president or something. Was he in the legislature with Sam Johnson? I guess he was.

So Wright got into it somehow, because it ended up with me talking to him two or three times. This story had appeared down there that they were returning a war veteran--I think it was from the Pacific, as I remember it. Was it?

G: Yes.

B: Okay. And something had come up in Three Rivers about the funeral home not wanting to handle the body. And that was substantially all we knew. And Johnson got to burning about it and I don't think he was shaking his fist, but he was muttering about "These boys go off and fight and die and they run into this at home."

Now, Three Rivers, which is down close to Alice, is really off Johnson's track. He didn't really know that country. But anyway, once he locked onto this thing, he wanted to see it through. He may have sent one of his Mexican friends--was it Dr. Garcia--

G: Hector Garcia, with the GI Forum.

B: --who had started the GI Forum. He called him. It seems to me he employed an intervener--he did--to talk with the family. There were brothers, very fine bunch of

people, and there was a mother. There wasn't a father; at least there wasn't a father who was able to come up here. You know, usual big family. I don't remember about language. I don't remember language coming into the picture. Mama might have had some limitations about language, but certainly her sons didn't and grandchildren didn't, because I met them.

But anyway, Johnson wanted to be real sure--did Longoria have a wife?

G: Yes.

B: He did, yes. He wanted to be sure Mama and the widow and the brothers wanted this. He had several alternate proposals relayed to them that I think would have buried him maybe in San Antonio, wherever the nearest--is there? I'm not sure there is a military cemetery in Texas, is there? I'm not sure.

But anyway, it finally got locked in out here, and it was a little story in the press. Johnson wouldn't let me tout it to the press. I think Wright Patman actually was the one who did it at all.

G: Why did Johnson not want you to--?

B: This was typical of him. When you've lost a son and you're burying him, again, you're not doing it for publicity; it's a very personal and private thing. But the issue was such and the novelty of a white Texas senator doing this, it had lots of compelling things about it that would have attracted news attention. If this had happened today you would have had fifteen cables and five state networks in there and everything else and you probably didn't have quite that in those days, but anyway, John was in on some of handling of it, Woody

was--well, everybody was. I was. The Longorias finally came up here. We did not know what we might be getting, what the people were. They came into town quietly on the train, as I recall. That's not plausible, but that's what I remember. I don't think they drove. It was like in February, maybe early March.

Anyway, we got cars and we picked them up somewhere; I've forgotten where they stayed, now. We drove them around Washington and they were [saying], "Oh, si, si!" It was almost like some kind of a sitcom, in a way. They were so nice and they were so grateful, and we were so grateful to them for being so nice. It was just a love affair, all over. I drove a brother and his wife and some unattached male--I don't know whether he was a brother, too. I drove them around, up and down Independence and Constitution [Avenues] and around the Capitol. They just marveled on cue at every sight that they saw.

And so finally the day came of the burial, and early that day the White House called. You've got to remember in both absolute terms and relative terms, the White House calling a senator's office was a rare thing. A senator calling the White House was a rare thing, too. The White House called and asked something about arrangements and where was the party was going to gather at Arlington, because General [Harry] Vaughan was going to attend as the representative of the President. Well, Johnson, instead of--it's not inconsistent; as I said, he wanted this thing played down. He didn't want it played one way or another, but he just didn't want any buildup. And so he reacted very negatively to it. I remember saying something to him sort of sharply that the Longorias deserved, in

view of everything, to have the President of the United States send his military aide there. It wasn't Johnson that was going through this, it was the Longorias.

And we had stuff like that. Somebody else called--I guess the Secretary of Defense, who would have been who? It wasn't Louie Johnson yet--yes, I guess it was. Maybe somebody else, the Chiefs of Staff, they were all calling, the foreign press began to call, not just Reuters but one or two other outfits. It sounded like a production.

So we went out there, and Johnson, on the basis of some instinct, would never agree to have a meeting place, which came up in the White House talks. It's customary for the parties to meet at one of the buildings. There's a building--I guess it's not really a frame building, but it left that impression on me--and then they all proceed by car, truck, horse or whatever to the gravesite, and then the coffin comes on a caisson. At least it used to.

He wouldn't do that. I finally, when we got down there, realized there was a tent up; there was a little bit of a mist. Mama and the boys came under the tent; Vaughan and two other military took up positions outside the tent. Why they stood exactly where they did, I don't know. Nobody else had put them there. And so Johnson calls me over and he said, "Don't look back. Don't let anybody see you looking, but figure out where I can stand that the cameras can't get me if they're getting anybody else. If they're getting those generals"--he meant Vaughan and the other guys--"or if they're getting the family, especially the family, I don't want them to get me." I said, "Well, but the family--I know Mrs. Longoria is saving you and Mrs. Johnson chairs." He said, "Do what I told you." So

I sauntered around, eyes up in the sky, trying to figure out how to achieve what I understood, rightly or wrongly, that he wanted, which was not to be in the same picture with either the brass or the family. And to do that--we were not worrying about television; this was all still photos--they had some long-lens capability in those days, but not a lot. It wasn't like they have today. So I walked down the road; this was at a bend in the road. Nearly everything in Arlington in those days was at a bend in the road. No, there's some straight stretches. And there was nothing between the tent and the roadway, although the roadway was not immediately up to the tent. And I went down there and finally had a position that a photographer could only take a picture of the Johnsons, and he didn't want anybody else with them, me included, and I didn't want to be with them. They could take pictures of the Johnsons from where they were, but if they did they couldn't get anything else in it. So I told him it was on the roadway, it was twenty yards, twenty-five yards from where the photographers were and from where the family was and where the open grave was and every damn other thing. It looked silly to me, but there he stood the whole time.

Now, you remember when he went to Eisenhower's funeral in Abilene, Kansas, in 19--what was it--69?--the networks all got in a swit about it. He was there with the secret service, but he had the secret service locate him where he could not be picked up by the network cameras. You see, the cameras were all fixed in place, and they didn't have any hand-held ones. They talked about him being there, but you never saw him.

G: Yes.

B: Now I don't know where that came from. In this case, once I understood what he was doing and he was not pulling some kind of a stunt, he wasn't being peevish, all those good things--

G: Well, what was the reaction of the people in Three Rivers to this?

B: Well, here's an untold side of the story. It turned out that the people there, either in the county or just in Three Rivers, they were, or some of them had been, Stevenson people and not Johnson people. So they had a little bit of a spin on the story, you know, that this is what it was. We knew at the time that there was irritation and anger and all that among the whites, but Dr. Garcia, I think Dr. Garcia at times during this thought he'd died and gone to heaven. It was not simply because of what Johnson was doing but that for some reason we were paying so much attention to Dr. Garcia. Did you ever know Ed Ybarra [?]? Well, he was the executive secretary of the GI Forum at that time. He and I had worked in the press room together in Austin, and he never really gave down fully on Johnson as far as I ever knew, but he questioned me about this whole episode somewhat later, and he respected Johnson for it. But at the same time, I picked up reflections from him that suggested to me that it's possible that Johnson was making Garcia something that Garcia might not have been otherwise. I don't mean just at that moment, but on into the future because I don't know whatever happened to Garcia, but--

G: He's still around.

B: Yes. But in much later times, non-Johnson people, state legislators that I'd come to know and others--the things I picked up from them--I made no effort to carry this around, but

the funeral home man, the funeral home family, maintained that they had been abused, that they had not refused to handle the body because he was a Mexican but that they had told the family to do it some other way to take advantage of some law or something. I never felt that what they were telling me was a phony case. I did feel that they were responsible for being misunderstood. I don't mean it that blatantly. I'm not saying that they had caused their own misunderstanding. I just felt that if they were misunderstood, knowing the feelings in the community, they should have been responsible enough to have known how to cure it or not let it develop or whatever it was, but there were misunderstandings, but that didn't really make any difference, you know. This was a broad-brush type thing, and it communicated something, and from my end of it, what impressed me, and again, you know, I didn't know Lyndon Johnson all that well. I just thought it was a splendid thing that he had done, a little bit surprising that he would do it.

G: What did he say about it?

B: Nothing. I mean, what do you mean? What would you expect him to--?

G: Well, was he indignant that--you mentioned [inaudible]

B: Yes. Well, that all came in at the beginning, back when I was saying how he went to great lengths to be sure that the family wanted it.

G: Was this an event that solidified the Mexican-American support of him later on?

B: Now see, you bother me with these words that carry with them the connotation of an anvil ringing down through history You know, whang! "Solidification of Mexican votes."

G: All right. Well, select an alternative.

B: Well, he meant--I mean, things like--

G: Did this establish in the minds of Mexican-Americans that Lyndon Johnson was their ally?

B: Well, I'm not a Mexican-American. I don't know what it established, but certainly it couldn't help but establish in most of their minds a sense that he had gone farther than he had to go in behalf of something that, you know, says he's not afraid to stand up for a Mexican when it might hurt him with his own people. These things come--in terms that you asked the question, these things play out over a long period.

I don't doubt that for their own reasons there were probably some Mexicans somewhere who said, "It's just a publicity stunt," and "He's trying to win over," because they're in competition with some other group of Mexicans, but see, Johnson had this history that people forget, back to the Kleberg days. He was working with these people. He knew those Valley bosses.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 2

B: Kleberg's district did not go into the lower Rio Grande Valley. That was Milton West's, but Johnson knew all these Mexican political leaders, and there was no question about it, Mexicans were just his favorite people. Oh, he'd go on at great length about how loyal they were. "You've got a loyal Mexican friend, it's equal to five Anglo friends because they're so much more loyal and will stick with you through--if they're going to stand you over a grave and shoot you, well, your Mexican friend would fall in the grave on top of you." I mean, he just had this extraordinary feeling. I never felt that he knew any--a strange kind of thing to say, I guess--I never felt that he knew any Mexican women. I

guess he did, but all that I saw myself or heard him talking about, it was these relationships with Mexican men: school teachers, principals, superintendents, county commissioners, county judges, all up and down the line like that. Other people who were around him when he was around Mexicans, like Dorothy Nichols, I guess, they said. . . .

Well, you know, Connally said something in his eulogy at the Ranch about Johnson buying toys, using his salary to buy toys, to buy recreational equipment or something in Cotulla.

He and Connally had a falling out, a spitting match, in, I don't know, I guess it was 1963, which ended up being reported because he went up and down in an El Paso hotel with Sarah McClendon on the same elevator while he was holding forth about Connally being "so goddamned dumb. Connally didn't understand that the Mexicans were going to take over Texas in the 1990s, and Connally didn't understand it," and Connally, meanwhile, was going up and down in another elevator saying how stupid Johnson was, but. . . . It was just a strong feeling.

He never did know nearly as many blacks. No. He didn't know very many blacks that I know of. He set Mary--what's her name, Bethune?

G: Mary McLeod Bethune?

B: When I first came up, he was really high on her because, I guess, when he was NYA director, she had said a lot of nice things about what he was doing. He was really high on her.

G: Well, shall we stop here?

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview V