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George E. Reedy
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INTERVIEW XVI

DATE: September 13, 1984

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE E. REEDY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Professor Reedy's office, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: The first thing I have on that [1960] chronology is that LBJ met with Jack Kennedy and Robert Kennedy right after President Eisenhower's State of the Union address in January. Do you recall any of the significance to that meeting?

R: No. I don't remember it at all, and I doubt if there was any unusual significance to it. I don't believe anybody was present except the three of them, because I think I would have remembered if I had actually been there.

G: Okay. Now, the liberal Democrats made an effort to expand the Policy Committee.

R: Right.

G: And to create a different mechanism for calling regular meetings of the Democratic Conference.

R: Yes. Well, that wasn't _the_ liberals, that was one or two of them. One of the real problems at that particular time was that the liberals really did not understand the manner in which the Senate works, and what they were seeking to do was to use the Senate as a means of shaping Democratic policy. Well, you simply can't do it. There's

only one way the Senate speaks and that's through its votes, and the votes always cross party lines. The only time you ever get a genuine party vote in the Senate is on questions of organization, you know, who's going to control the committees, that sort of thing. The liberals at that point had an idea that if they had frequent caucuses, conferences--whatever you want to call it, it's the same thing--that at those conferences they could make decisions on party policy and that that would be the kind of a program they could take into the election.

Well, I wish they had studied their history a little bit better. It was true that up to about 1916 you could control the Democratic votes in the Senate, and probably the Republican votes, too, I just don't know for certain, by calling caucuses. But there was a special set of circumstances. In those days the senators were not elected by people, they were elected by the state legislatures. The state legislatures are pretty controllable, and the Democratic leader could call a conference, and if he could get a 51 per cent vote in the conference, all the Democrats were bound to go along with whatever the 51 per cent version was unless they had made a campaign promise not to do so, or unless they had specific instructions from their state legislature not to do so.

Now, the trouble with that was that in 1912 they passed the amendment providing for the direct election of senators, and it was very, very interesting to watch the way the caucus system fell to pieces. Obviously since the amendment was passed in 1912 that meant

that all of the senators in the 1913-1914 Congresses had been selected by state legislatures, because the amendment hadn't been in effect before. This was probably a rather deceptive thing to Woodrow Wilson. There was a very remarkable Senate leader, I think one of the three greatest of all times. His name was [John Worth] Kern; he was from Indiana. Wilson would send a message up to Congress. Kern could call a Democratic caucus. He could always get a 51 per cent vote in the Democratic caucus, and since the Democrats controlled the Senate, that was it. He was putting Woodrow Wilson's bills through like nobody's business. Well, I'm one of the few persons that has actually seen the records of the old Senate Democratic--what did they call it?--Steering Committee, which was really not much of a steering committee. When Johnson was the leader it was used as a committee on committees, a committee to make committee assignments. And for the first two years of the Woodrow Wilson Administration the tactic worked. But in 1914 one-third of the Senate was elected directly by the people of the states. That meant that you had two-thirds selected by the legislature, one-third elected by the state. And the records of the Steering Committee reflect that some of those who had been elected directly were not going to go along with the caucus system. In 1916 two-thirds of the Senate had been elected directly, and Kern had to give up altogether on the caucuses; they simply would not work.

What was happening here is that the liberals, with very little sense of history, were trying to do something that the Senate simply would not do. I don't think they could have gotten the kind of

meetings of the conference that they wanted anyway, but if they had, it would have been just complete chaos, because they would have taken votes and then been promptly repudiated all up and down the line by the Senate. But it was very difficult to explain that to them. What had happened, Woodrow Wilson unfortunately left a very bad intellectual legacy with his book on the American Congress [Congressional Government], because he thought the Congress should react the same way the British Parliament reacts, never occurring to him--or it may have occurred to him but he didn't draw the necessary conclusions--that the prime minister of Great Britain is elected by the Parliament, which means that he has control over the Parliament or he or she wouldn't have gotten elected in the first place. I think an awful lot of those senators had studied political science when political scientists were still looking at the United States Senate pretty much in Woodrow Wilson's terms. They were trying to do something that was physically impossible, and the difficulty was that they could be very embarrassing about it. It was difficult to explain. Their concept, of course, being that Lyndon Johnson was an absolute dictator.

To make it a little bit worse, at that point Johnson's leadership of the Senate had weakened, there's no question about that. For one thing, the Democratic majorities had become too big. You know, it's one thing to keep cohesion when you have a small, very narrow division. Then the troops have a tendency to get together. But when you get an awful big majority, what happens to the troops is they start defecting because they don't think it will make much difference. Then

secondly I think Johnson had lost interest in the leadership, very frankly. So quite a bit of difficulty was created over it.

The question of the composition of the Policy Committee was also a very foolish one. The Policy Committee as it was then constructed really was rather representative of the Senate, which should be the role of the Policy Committee. But what they were looking for was a committee to make policy, and the Policy Committee has never made policy. That's a misnomer. You can't make policy. It doesn't mean anything. You know, in the executive branch of the government you get a committee to create policy, then whoever is running things can go ahead and order that it be done. But in the Senate if a group of senators come out and say, "This is policy," all they're going to get is a horselaugh. The policy of the Senate is how it votes, no other way.

And Johnson had gone rather far. One of the things that they never quite seemed to realize is all of the things that he had done to increase not quite so much liberal representation on the committee--although they were there, too, but the liberals were a relatively small group in the Senate--but to increase, let's say, the moderate liberal representation. He'd gone through a number of back flips and side turns. He'd created a committee on the consent calendar, for instance. You know, on the days when they call the consent calendar and they read the titles and nobody objects, the bills become law. So Johnson created a committee that was supposed to gather all of the objections of the bill so a senator wouldn't have to be present when

the roll was called; this committee would object for him. And as I recall he managed to make them ex officio members of the Policy Committee.

G: Do you recall who was on the committee?

R: I remember George Smathers was, who might be regarded as a sort of moderate. I don't know exactly where you would put him. The spectrum was getting very difficult. He was certainly a moderate liberal by Florida terms, probably a moderate conservative by northern terms. You know, these definitions depend largely upon the platform from which one stands. And the other I think was the man from Michigan, Hart, Phil Hart. I know Phil Hart was on the Policy Committee, but I believe he was on ex officio. So you had a very good balance there, a man that was about as liberal as they could get in the Senate but still had a lot of sense, and then a man that was somewhere in the moderate conservative, moderate liberal range.

G: The charge that you hear so often was that the Policy Committee was dominated by southerners and westerners.

R: That was true at the beginning, but then what one must realize is the Democrats were dominated by southerners and westerners. You see, what the liberals were looking for was to put a liberal face on what was essentially not a liberal group. If you wanted to take a look at the Democratic strength in the Senate, the Democratic strength in the Senate was the eleven Confederate states, plus the Rocky Mountain states.

G: Well, in terms of seniority, but in terms of composition there was--

R: No, in terms of composition they were a majority. They never counted. The liberals were a very, very small part of the Senate.

G: Well, I'm not talking about the liberals, I'm talking about northerners and easterners.

R: If you get into northerners and easterners I think you'll find that the southerners and westerners, I don't know that they were in an absolute numerical majority, but they were the controlling factor and they would have been the controlling factor even if there hadn't been any seniority rule at all. That had nothing to do with it. And I think they may well have been in the majority; I'd have to look that up. Don't forget you start off with twenty-two votes from the ex-Confederate states. Then you add to that Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, New Mexico, that's another eight [ten] votes, that gets you up to thirty [-two]. Then you pick up a few oddballs here and there. I think [Frank] Lausche of Ohio was in the Senate at that particular point and Lausche was way to the right of Bob Taft. You get some of the New England group such as Johnny Pastore, who was a liberal but certainly was not part of the liberal bloc. No, the Policy Committee was pretty representative.

G: How did Johnson react to the effort to have regular conference meetings? Was there anything behind his saying that he would agree to have a meeting whenever any Democratic senator wanted him to call a meeting of the conference?

R: Basically he was trying to stall it off, and he was absolutely right in stalling it off because all that could have emerged would have been

tremendous disagreement. It would have made the Democratic Party look very, very weak and very disorganized. What it really amounted to is that the liberals rather realized that themselves. They didn't want meetings; they wanted a procedure for calling the meetings. What they were really trying to do was to take the procedure for calling the meeting out of Johnson's hands. But Johnson realized that there was no occasion upon which they would want a meeting called, and he was perfectly safe in saying "if any senator wants a meeting called, just have him ask me and I'll call it," because nobody was going to do it. If that had happened the liberals would have been slapped in the face; they did not have the votes. This is all a shadowboxing game, that Johnson didn't want to be blunt about it. That what was happening is the liberals were manipulating some symbols here. But he was totally and completely safe when he said he'd call a meeting, because none of them wanted a meeting. At that particular time the huge Democratic majorities--and they were huge; I think we got up in the seventies somewhere along there--but they included a lot of very conservative people, very conservative.

G: Rayburn announced that he wouldn't serve as chairman of the Democratic [National] Convention.

R: Yes.

G: Do you recall why?

R: I think it was health. I think that he was reaching a point where he couldn't take another one.

G: You don't think it had anything to do with supporting Johnson's candidacy?

R: It might have but I rather doubt it, because at that particular point Johnson's candidacy was far from a sure thing. Johnson went through that whole thing as a reluctant dragon, so to speak. In the morning he'd be for a campaign and then by noon it would have worn off, and by the evening he would be against it but would have made so many commitments he couldn't back out. It was a strange situation.

G: I want you to talk about this in detail as we get further into the year.

Let me ask you about Paul Butler's role. Here was a case where the Democratic [National] Chairman was very much in favor of one particular candidate.

R: No question about it, he was in there solely and simply to elect Jack Kennedy president of the United States and he made very little disguise of it. The strange part of it was that I don't believe that Kennedy particularly appreciated it, because Butler was a very, very inept politician. The Kennedys kept him on the string because obviously the chairman could do an awful lot of things about setting up the convention. But Butler had no real political feel and I don't think any real understanding of American politics. I'll never forget that preconvention advertising campaign he wanted to launch; it was absolutely ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous! It was childish and puerile in its concepts. God, that firm that he came in with! We had a meeting. I was there, Ted Sorensen was there, Charlie Brown

was there representing Stu Symington, and Herb Waters was there representing [Hubert] Humphrey.

G: This was the campaign planning committee or something like that?

R: Yes. And the first idea that Butler came up with was this preconvention campaign just to make people think well of the Democratic Party. He brought in some advertising outfit from the West Coast, Los Angeles, who had a reputation for their creative work. Well, maybe their creative work was good, I don't know, but their knowledge of the American political system was absolutely nil. And what they came up with was genuinely a caricature of what an advertising campaign should be for a political party. To this day I can wake up in the middle of the night and sometimes just burst out laughing, it was so idiotic.

G: What do you remember in particular?

R: Oh, the main thing they had was a series of animated cartoons in which they were going to have a very loveable little donkey and a great big, unpleasant elephant. They had discovered that those were the symbols of the Democratic Party. Well, where they got the idea that loving a donkey would get people to vote Democratic, or hating an elephant would get people to vote against the Republicans is beyond me. And the individual spots they were going to show, I remember one in particular because it was the ultimate in the ridiculous. It showed two voters, the Republican--not two voters but a Republican propagandist and Mr. Voter, and the Republican propagandist is saying, "We must have a candidate who is experienced in world affairs." Mr. Voter says, "That's right." Then "We must have a candidate who has dealt

with the high and the mighty all over the world." The voter says, "By God, that's right." "We must have a candidate who has been at the pinnacle, at the top of power in the United States," and the candidate [voter] says, "By God, that's right. I'm going right out and do something about it." And your next shot shows the voter walking down the street with a banner saying "Elect Jim Hagerty President." Who in the hell knew who Jim Hagerty was? I had to stop for about five or ten minutes and figure it out myself what in the devil they were talking about.

They had a series like that in which the elephant was doing all kinds of unpleasant things and the donkey was doing all kinds of nice things. Then they had a song which they sang, and believe me, I always thought the most ridiculous of all campaign songs was the Taft one, "I'm looking over a four-leaf clover that I've overlooked before," but if this one had ever gotten on the air, oh!

But what was even funnier was the reaction on the people there. First of all, there was Herb Waters and his reaction was the funniest, because there was only one place that Paul Butler could have gotten the three or four hundred thousand dollars that was needed to produce that campaign, and that was out of the same sources that Hubert Humphrey was tapping. And all Herb could see was three to four hundred thousand dollars that Hubert needed for his campaign going down the drain. Charlie Brown and Ted Sorensen took one look, and the commercials were so lousy that the disgust was just written all over

their faces. And as far as I was concerned the whole thing was a bunch of silliness anyway.

G: Did you say so?

R: I wasn't quite that blunt; I just questioned whether we needed such a campaign. Paul Butler, he persisted in it until some woman actually representing the agency itself had all she could take--pretty smart woman--and she said, "Look, Mr. Butler, you've got the four representatives of your candidates down at the end of the table. They are all turning thumbs down. We might as well forget this." She knew a little about politics. You know, there were about twenty people there and I think Butler was hoping that he could persuade a majority of the twenty, which he might have been able to, I don't know. But what would that have done when all of the four candidates in effect were saying, "Hey, forget it, bub."

Then they set up a bunch of committees, I recall. It was a rather interesting situation. The liberals, who had no real strength in the Congress, had plenty of strength in the Democratic National Committee and on the various organizations, and that was largely because nobody was terribly interested in the Democratic National Committee. I think the liberals moved in and took it over because it was the only place they could see where they had a chance of obtaining some power. You had people like Paul Butler and Neil Staebler and I forget who else was on it. What they were after primarily was to put a very liberal face on the Democratic Party. What had turned out,

however, was that they became one of the principal devices through which Jack Kennedy was able to take over the convention.

Now, when I say liberal I want to be very careful there, because there were an awful lot of people who in terms of political philosophy would definitely be liberal but would not be included within this particular group. It was a sort of a cultist group, rather hard to put one's finger on. An excellent example would be Johnny Pastore, the senator from Rhode Island, who was very distinctly a liberal, or for that matter Stu Symington was very distinctly liberal in his politics, but neither one of them would be included within the area of this little cult. The closest that one would get to it would be Hubert Humphrey, and even Hubert didn't quite come across in that class. It was a group of people who were liberal because they had never really had the responsibilities of politics. You know, when one has a constituency, the constituency puts certain brakes, certain dampers on, and these people really didn't have a constituency.

G: What became of the committee after the campaign planning--?

R: Oh, it sort of limped along; those committees never do very much.

G: Did LBJ make any effort to get Butler to be more neutral during this period?

R: No. Two reasons: one, he had too many other things on his mind; and two, he had a very low opinion of Butler, very low. I don't think he thought it was worth it, which was a mistake on LBJ's part. But the principal thing that was wrong with our campaign was not that so much [as] simply the fact that LBJ never made a wholehearted commitment to

it. In fact, he never even made a halfhearted commitment to it. He made about a quarter-hearted commitment to it.

(Interruption)

You see, there was a very real problem here. This whole thing was very difficult. In the first place, we had the problem of a reluctant candidate who in a sense was being forced to become a candidate whether he wanted to or not. What had really happened is that LBJ, and one thing that I don't think he fully appreciated himself, had come to stand for a certain position within the Democratic Party, sort of a bridge between the liberal but not liberal-cultist North, the conservative but not cultist-conservative South, the westerners, who were very pragmatic, what was left of the old New Deal--and basically that was pro-LBJ, the old New Deal--and then some of the more practical machine politicians of the North. Not all of them, because many of them with their Irish antecedents were automatically [pro-]Kennedy. But there was a very large and very significant element within the Democratic Party that looked to LBJ for leadership. Now, one of the problems with politics is that at a certain point the leader picks up obligations to the constituencies, and LBJ had a very large constituency within the Democratic Party, and if he had capitalized on it earlier and wholeheartedly, I think it was quite possible that he might have gotten the nomination that year.

But the difficulty was, first of all, that he really was not certain that he wanted it. In fact I think that if everything could have been balanced off, the balance would have tilted against his

running for the nomination. I think to a certain extent he was sort of shoved into it. There were a number of psychological factors. I myself believe at that particular point he had sort of caught up with the fact that his life had not been very satisfactory, that he'd spent so much time getting somewhere he had never taken a really good look to determine whether it was where he wanted to be. And I think he'd reached the stage where he wanted to go into some sort of a skidding reverse. He at times talked about it. He talked about it quite often, really.

G: Did he?

R: Oh, yes. That is, dumping politics altogether, usually in very short monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon words. I think that he was more or less dissatisfied with his whole life. Very frankly, that's where he began expressing dissatisfaction with his family, with his friends, with almost everything. He was on the verge of a second childhood syndrome, so he could start all over again. And I really do believe that the principal factor which kept him in the race at all was this constituency. You know, you simply can't walk out on the troops, you can't do it. But secondly, there was his rather peculiar position. There was no way in which he could dominate the primaries, because even assuming he had made a wholehearted commitment in 1960, that was too late. The Kennedy people had been working on this whole question since 1956, and they really had it sewed up, sewed up well in advance. I can recall on this later trip to Wyoming, getting off the plane and the state chairman, a man named--later became a congressman, was it

Hinkley? [John Joseph Hickey?]--he didn't know that I was part of the LBJ group because I got in an automobile with the journalists, and he was driving. I think he thought I was just another newspaperman. Somebody asked him whether LBJ had a chance here, and he said, "No, the state's all Kennedy." And they said, "Why? Isn't LBJ more like your type of people?" and he said, "Well, that's probably true, but this is the first time we've seen him. The Kennedy people have been in the state for at least eight months."

So the normal primary route couldn't be entertained. His only real possibility was to hang somewhat aloof, not so aloof that people would read him out completely, but not to get so thoroughly embroiled that he became a formally-labeled candidate. Now, what that meant, however, was that he had to maintain his national position, and his national position was due to his leadership of the Senate. So he could not compromise his leadership of the Senate. Any formal announcement of a candidacy would have done that. On the other hand, if he didn't hold some doors open, then he would not have enough strength at the convention to capitalize on what could happen if there had been a deadlock. I can recall one instance when we were forming this national committee, in which I called Dean Acheson and asked Acheson if he could become a member of the committee, and Dean expressed real regret. He told me he would like to become a member of the national committee for LBJ, that he was all for him. He said unfortunately he had taken seriously some of LBJ's disclaimers and had already promised his support to another candidate, which turned out to

be Stu Symington; I didn't press him at the time. But what he said in effect was that he would have supported LBJ but LBJ had been too reluctant, so he went along with a declared candidate. Now this really put everything in a terribly difficult position. To become an avowed candidate, meaning an all-out effort to contest the primaries and do the whole works, that would definitely have cost his Senate leadership. But to have lost the Senate leadership would have very definitely cut from under his feet the only real grounds he had to stand on as a presidential candidate. So you can see there's a rather painful dilemma. That is really walking a tightrope over Niagara Falls.

G: To what extent was the belief that a southerner couldn't be elected president part of his reluctance to run?

R: I think that was part of it, but I don't think it was the major part.

G: You think he really believed that a southerner couldn't be elected, or he couldn't be elected because he was a southerner?

R: Not quite so much because he was a southerner, but because he was a Texan. I think a number of factors had broken down the myth that a southerner could not be elected. For example, being a southerner was no handicap whatsoever to Estes Kefauver, who was a southerner. Tennessee was one of the Confederate states. But in Estes' case, Estes had another handicap, which was that he was overly liberal; he was too far over to the left to strike the center of the Democratic Party. But at that particular point I think Texas was a handicap in national politics, a handicap that had nothing to do with a southern base. It was basically due to oil. Texas had become very unpopular

nationally because the oilmen had become very unpopular nationally. To be spattered with oil was a sure ticket to oblivion, and the fact that most of the Texas oil industry opposed Johnson--which they did, the oil industry in Texas was overwhelmingly anti-Johnson--wasn't going to cut much ice because people didn't know that. The internal politics of an industry like oil are very complex and can only be understood by people that have to deal with them all the time.

G: Now, you talked about his constituency urging him to run, pressuring him to stay active in the race.

R: Yes.

G: Who primarily propelled his candidacy in this?

R: It's a more subtle proposition than that. It was coming to him from all kinds of people. What they were really doing was going ahead and acting on the assumption that he was a candidate and then he couldn't let them down. This would have included Tommy Corcoran, it would have included Oscar Chapman, the former secretary of the interior, it would have included all kinds of New Deal officials. Jim Rowe finally gave in and went over to the Humphrey campaign for a while, but after West Virginia Jim came to the conclusion that that wasn't possible. One of the unfortunate parts of it is that the only people we could put in our national office were largely Texans, John Connally and people of that character, and the face of the campaign kind of became Texan. I remember The Making of the President [1960] that Theodore White wrote, he had a rather prescient line about all the Texans wandering around with that cowflap on their boots. Then he said at the top

level, though, there were much more impressive people in the Johnson campaign.

The whole thing turned out to be in a sense rather pathetic. It need not have been rather pathetic. If he had really gone in money, marbles, and chalk, I don't know that he would have gotten the nomination, but he could have mounted a very impressive campaign.

G: Would he have had to step down as leader to do this?

R: I think so, yes. But I think he could have done much better even while retaining his leadership. It was the blow hot-blow cold thing, and again the fact that he was in this mood, the world well lost for love, that sort of thing. His personal life had become very entangled at that point and I don't think he was thinking very clearly.

G: Anything else on Johnson's mood during this time?

R: I think I've summed it up rather well. He was impatient, he very definitely had lost his fine touch with the Senate. God, I'll never forget that civil rights bill in 1960.

G: I want you to talk about this in detail, but let's talk a little bit more about the campaign first and then--well, maybe we ought to talk about it.

R: There isn't too much more to say about the campaign really. I doubt whether we really picked up anything by the campaigning at all that we didn't have in our hip pocket already. We went to a lot of places. I think one of the things that really sums it all up was Ed Johnson of Colorado, who was a very powerful figure in Colorado, issued an extremely strong statement backing the Lyndon Johnson candidacy, and

he wrote a note to Lyndon Johnson saying "Here it is. I'm sorry to tell you it's not going to do the slightest bit of good because it came too late, and I couldn't make it any earlier." That summed up the whole campaign: too little, too late.

G: Okay. During this time did Johnson work through other candidates? Did he support, say, Humphrey in some of the primaries or try to build opposition to Kennedy in that way?

R: I don't know whether he did it openly, but very obviously that was one of the few hopes he had. In West Virginia, for example, where [Robert] Byrd opposed Kennedy--well, both Byrd was in there in opposition to Kennedy and so was Hubert Humphrey--the thing just fell totally to pieces. I remember Jim Rowe--somewhere in your files there is a very interesting memo by Jim Rowe, because I remember it clearly, on the West Virginia campaign in which he in effect said to Johnson, "Look, this is all over." Then he explained why and how devastating the whole thing was in West Virginia. The strange part of it of course was that Kennedy did not carry West Virginia in the election. And in a sense Kennedy had gotten West Virginia by tactics rather than by popular appeal. But it didn't matter how he'd gotten it, he'd gotten it. Also, Kennedy did not do too well in Wisconsin, did not do nearly as well as--well, what happened is it looked very good from the outside because everybody assumed that Wisconsin was Hubert Humphrey, right next to Minnesota. Anybody familiar with the politics of these two states learns early that the politics of Minnesota has nothing to do with the politics of Wisconsin, except for a little strip along the

eastern edge of Wisconsin where there are not very many votes. What really gave Kennedy what edge he had in Wisconsin was his Catholicism. Everybody tends to forget that this is a very heavily Catholic state.

But I think that overall it's safe to say that the Johnson candidacy turned out to be rather pathetic as a candidacy, and it was not due to his lack of strength, but it was basically due to the fact that he wouldn't settle down and do it.

G: How evident was what appears to be endless financial resources that the Kennedy campaign had?

R: Kennedy campaign?

G: Yes.

R: Oh, God, it was very evident, evident in West Virginia. You know, in West Virginia the key to the primary are the county sheriffs who supply automobiles to take the voters to the polls for the primaries. This was in those days; I don't know what it's like now. Those sheriffs could deliver votes. But the kind of campaign that was staged in West Virginia--one of Jim Rowe's points in his memo was the way in which the Kennedy family was able to blanket the whole state and give the impression that Jack Kennedy was appearing in ten or fifteen towns in one night. But they had all the money they needed and then some. I don't think it was the old man's money, though. I think what it was was an awful lot of people that chipped in because of the old man's money. You know, money attracts money.

G: One of your memos during this time suggested that Joe Kennedy was in effect buying the nomination.

R: He was in a way, but not with his own money. Again, that's one of the peculiar things. If you're General Motors or something like that, you can go out and you can make a loan from any bank. If you're a very wealthy candidate, all kinds of people are going to chip in, because whether you win or lose you can still be of some advantage to them after the campaign is over, you see. Without the tremendous monetary resources of the Kennedy family I do not think Jack would have been very seriously considered. The assets that Jack had--and he had assets, no question about it--one, he was representing the World War II generation, which at that point was just reaching maturity. Two, he was Irish, Irish-Catholic, and the Irish in this country still had rather bitter memories of the discrimination that had been practiced against them. But you know, in a funny sort of a way it should have been another Irishman, so to speak, because the Kennedys are what you would call cut-glass Irish.

G: What do you mean by that?

R: Well, the Irish usually classify it as pig in the parlor, that's down at the bottom. Then you get the lace curtain, that's when Pat gets a job and Momma kicks the pig out of the house and puts it in a sty in the back yard and hangs up lace curtains. Then cut glass is where you get an awful lot of money, they go to Harvard, Choate, places like that. [They] still don't quite make it. You know, the legend is, and I suspect it's true, that Joe Kennedy died bitter over all the clubs in Boston that wouldn't let him in because he was an Irish Catholic. And I wouldn't be at all surprised if that weren't the reality.

But the mere fact that Kennedy had accumulated so much money meant that an awful lot of money was willing to chip in and back the campaign, because, after all, even if Jack Kennedy didn't win it would be advantageous to have all the administrators of that tremendous Kennedy fortune feeling rather favorable toward you.

G: Did Johnson support Humphrey financially in West Virginia?

R: No, not to my knowledge.

G: We've always heard that they helped finance Humphrey's West Virginia campaign.

R: Could be, but not to my knowledge. I'm not too knowledgeable on the monetary arrangement, but I kind of doubt it. I think Humphrey could have gotten his own money.

G: Well, let's talk about some of the legislation that spring before the convention. The major item is the civil rights bill.

R: Oh, boy, was that botched. That was botched from beginning to end. And LBJ proceeded in that one on a very slapstick basis. For some reason, I never understand why, he and I had kind of a falling out, and he brought this up on the floor without me around. I don't know what he thought he was doing. He knew he had to have a civil rights bill of some kind, or he thought he had to have a civil rights bill, I'm not quite so sure myself that it was essential at that particular point. And the circumstances were not favorable.

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

R: --in 1957. One of the reasons they'd gone along in 1957 was in the belief that if that act went through they wouldn't be plagued with the

issue for a long time to come. And here just three years later they were getting socked with another dose. Now, it couldn't be avoided very well because there were too many forces at work. I think the administration wanted another bill just to embarrass the Democrats, because such bills were always embarrassing the Democrats, and immediately [it] produced the split between the North and the South. You had a number of northern Republicans who had managed to make certain moves that made it almost inevitable. They were beginning to play the old game of attaching civil rights riders to all kinds of legislation, which of course immediately throws everything in the fire. So something had to be done.

But the bill was not very carefully shaped. Frankly at this moment I'm trying to remember the antecedents of it. I think it came from the administration but I'm not sure. But LBJ really had no strategy whatsoever for it, he just brought it up.

G: He brought it up as a rider, didn't he, to another bill or brought up another bill and then added the civil rights [provisions]?

R: Something like that, something like that. It was very, very foolish. He brought it up in such a way, and I can't remember the precise details now, but I was really astounded after it was done. I didn't know it was going to be done this way. He had me completely out; I was over in the Senate Office Building at that point.

G: Here are two memoranda.

R: Oh, yes, these I remember. These were later.

G: But that one to Monk [A. M.] Willis talks about the circumstances of the--of course it is a defense of Johnson's strategy in this.

R: Actually there had not been any trickery at all. It was just ineptness was what it was. Let's see if I can refresh my recollection from this. I think that was a Jack Bell story. Jack Bell of the Associated Press, who at times could be very imaginative, did come up with a story that the southerners had been outfoxed and the bill had been brought up by trickery, which it hadn't been. In fact, the trouble with the bill was that it was brought up without any real consideration of strategy. On this occasion I have never known Johnson to act with less forethought, with less planning, with less consideration. He just brought the damn thing up. I didn't even know it was going to come up. In fact, he had me over in the Senate Office Building at that point. In fact, it was during the debate that he inally decided that he'd better get me back to the Senate Democratic Policy Committee. And once it got going they just droned on and on and on and on.

G: His purpose for bringing it up in the way that he did was his feeling that [James] Eastland would not let it out of the Judiciary Committee.

R: Well, of course Eastland wasn't going to let it out of the Judiciary Committee under any circumstances. Eastland couldn't let it out of the Judiciary Committee. But that wasn't any insuperable obstacle at all. If he had sat down and had the necessary discussions with Eastland and with the various other people, it could have been brought up without engendering the feelings on the part of so many southerners

that he'd tricked them. It was just plain, absolute carelessness and what it reflected, it reflected the turmoil in his mind and the feeling that he had that quite possibly he was just going to chuck the whole thing.

G: Yes.

R: What finally emerged wasn't much of a bill at all. I've forgotten now what the final wording was. I don't believe the referee proposal got established, but it did do one or two positive things. The major problem with the older [1957] bill was that there was no mechanism by which registrars could be forced to register blacks. That was the main part of the bill, and I think something did come in where the attorney general got some extra power. But it was much less of a bill than could have been passed if there had been a sufficient advance exploration. But for some reason he just cut himself off from almost everybody that could have given him any decent advice on it.

G: [Richard] Russell referred to this tactic as "a lynching of orderly procedure in the Senate."

R: Right.

G: Any insights on that?

R: No, and I've forgotten why. I don't think he'd consulted Russell in advance, which gives you an idea just how far things had gotten. I know Russell was, I believe, disgusted with the slapdash carelessness of the whole thing. And it was kind of a lynching of orderly procedure. Of course you quite frequently lynch orderly procedure in the Senate, but you always do it with advance consultation, which makes

your disorderliness orderly. And LBJ had failed to come up with the kind of consultation that would make the disorderliness orderly.

G: Did LBJ see this as a tactical mistake in retrospect?

R: I'm not sure what he saw it as. I just don't think he cared really.

G: The diary seems to quote statements by LBJ as saying "this was my greatest mistake and it's going to kill me politically for having. . . ." Do you remember his expressing attitudes such as this?

R: He was always expressing that attitude. Everything was going to kill him politically: Jim Wells County was going to kill him politically; beating Shivers was going to kill him politically. LBJ was the kind of man that was always contemplating something that was going to kill him politically. I can't take that seriously at all.

G: Well, what did he do to try to repair the damage? I noticed that shortly after that he met with [Everett] Dirksen and Russell. Did he have any success in--?

R: Yes, he did. Eventually he reached a point where he realized that something had to be done substantively, and he could make different pleas to all of them. Russell I think was still hopeful that somewhere along the line LBJ might become president, and once he got around to really talking to Russell, he was able to point out to him that whatever might happen, if some kind of a bill didn't get through there was absolutely no possibility that LBJ could become president. I think he was able to talk to Dirksen from the standpoint of could they slap Eisenhower in the face in the closing days of his administration, and what kind of a campaign could the Republicans put on if

they had actively contributed to a complete debacle in the Senate debate on this issue. He was able to start putting out feelers, the kind that did result in a viable compromise, and I've forgotten what the compromise was now.

G: Anything else on the Jack Bell story?

R: I've forgotten exactly what it was Jack said. I think he--

G: Did you yourself do anything to blunt that?

R: Nothing much you could do except that memorandum that you have there that was intended for Monk Willis. I think that a similar memorandum was sent around which at least--you see, the memorandum is quite accurate. There was no way in which debate on a civil rights bill could have been prevented. It's quite possible that the bill could have been blocked, yes, but my God, the consequences of that would have been really horrible. Everybody would have suffered. But there was no way the debate could be blocked. And I think the Jack Bell story--I wish I could remember what it was--left the impression--I think John Stennis was on the floor or something like that [and] I think it left the impression that Stennis had slipped up, had failed to block an LBJ maneuver. And the truth was it wasn't a maneuver, it was just sloppy parliamentary work. But everything was sloppy that year.

G: Okay. Now, let me ask you to go into as much detail as you can on the filibuster itself.

R: Southern filibuster?

G: Yes.

R: It was really a filibuster that I think at that point could not have been broken. Filibusters are very peculiar. There is never really sufficient strength in the Senate for anybody to filibuster a bill to death. What the person must have is to have some allies, some secret allies, that are convinced the filibusterers have a reasonable case. Now, in the 1957 bill, what had happened there was a realization of the southerners that they had lost their principal allies. That's the senators from the Rocky Mountain states. The senators from the Rocky Mountain states would never filibuster with the southerners, but at least they would lend them some tacit support. It was impossible to get cloture.

(Interruption)

The southerners had lost the tacit support of the Rocky Mountain states' senators and what one might call the senators from the Southwest, because they then had realized that something had to be done about civil rights. It couldn't be bottled up at all. But in 1960 the southerners did have that support, and I doubt very much whether a cloture motion would have worked. What had to be done was to bring the southerners and some of the Republicans like Dirksen into a mood where they realized that something had to be passed no matter what it was. Of course what this required was a tremendous amount of negotiation to get that something down to a point where the southerners could roll over and play dead. It wasn't at all easy.

G: Well, this was the period where Johnson actually set up a cot in P-38 and spent the night there.

R: Yes. Oh, yes.

G: Let me ask you to talk about that aspect of it.

R: Well, I don't know what to talk about; that always becomes inevitable during the filibuster. You see, one of the ways in which you can break a filibuster, of course, is if one of the filibusterers gives out and there's nobody there to take up his place, which means, of course, that the leadership therefore must be in a position where it can spring to the floor immediately and take advantage of any lapse in the filibuster. To a great extent this becomes a part of the tactic of filibustering. There are cots all over the place with senators sleeping in cots and ready to spring into action. But you don't dare leave a flank uncovered during a filibuster. If you want to break it you've got to be ready to step in. If you want to sustain it you've got to be ready to step in. That's such a common tactic that that happens in any filibuster.

G: How many nights did he spend up there?

R: I don't remember. I know it was a long protracted period.

G: Did the staff spend the night there, too, any of you?

R: No. Usually there would be somebody around. I stayed around pretty late, but there wasn't much point in having a staff there. Not much the staff could do.

G: The newspaper accounts seem to indicate that the southerners were much better about organizing their attendance and being there [with] around-the-clock precision than the liberals.

R: They meant it. The southerners meant it. See, in 1957 the southerners had had some understanding of the fact that a bill had to get through, that it couldn't get through with their help, but they weren't ready to really fight to the bitter end. In 1960 they were ready to fight to the bitter end.

G: Did the process of having to stay there all night affect the attitudes of these people? Did they become more difficult to get along with, for example? Did Johnson himself become moody as a result?

R: No, no, no. You see, one of the things you have to realize, the filibuster is not a bad test of certain things. It's been unfairly characterized as a means of blocking legislation that's capricious. It's not a bit capricious. If people are determined to block things through a filibuster, what it really means is that they must undergo some physical punishment that is so great that they really are not going to resort to the filibuster unless the alternatives are too much to bear, unless they simply cannot go home. I myself think it would be bad to abolish the filibuster, because it gives you information that can be obtained in no other way. There is a certain point where the majority must be prevented from riding roughshod over the minority, because if it does ride roughshod over the minority the results are going to be violent. And the willingness of the southerners to undergo this kind of physical punishment was merely evidence of the problems that they had with a civil rights bill. No senator is going to go through that punishment unless he absolutely has to.

G: Okay. The cloture petitions were defeated, well, at least once, on the [floor].

R: Yes, as I said, the southerners had their allies back.

G: You indicated that LBJ brought you back to Policy during this time.

R: Right.

G: And what was your role during the civil rights [debate]?

R: The same role it had always been, trying to analyze, trying to come up with something that would enable the bill to pass.

G: The problem with going through some of these memoranda and analyzing them is that one has to decide whether LBJ's intent was to pare down the civil rights bill as much as possible in behalf of the southerners, or whether he was trying to get the bill passed that could pass.

R: Forget the paring down for the southerners. LBJ didn't give a good whatever we want to use about how the southerners felt about civil rights, except to the extent that it set certain limits on what could be done with a bill. LBJ had no sympathy whatsoever for the anti-civil rights movement. If he had had the votes to do it, the legislation that would have passed would have been far more extreme than what was passed. But LBJ was not a southerner in that sense. It was rather unfortunate that the poor devil came from a Confederate state, which, as you know, historically was not very Confederate. Texas got tricked into the Confederacy. It did not enter very willingly, and it did not play much of a role in the Civil War.

But he was not trying to pare down to make the southerners happy; he was trying to get a bill passed, and you could not get a bill passed without dealing with the southerners. I gave you a very lengthy letter on that in regard to the 1957 [bill]; the same situation applied in 1960. The only difference was that in 1960 he had not approached it with the same forethought and the same care that he had in 1957. I'm telling you, the whole key to 1960 is that LBJ was really very much in a mood to toss up his whole life and start over again.

G: So then the memoranda that you wrote and others wrote during this period were largely designed to make his posture more palatable to the South?

R: Of course. He had to maintain the southern support. He couldn't do without it.

G: During the civil rights debate that year there were some incidents in Texas reflecting on civil rights. You had the sit-ins in Marshall, where the black college students at Wiley and Bishop conducted demonstrations at some of the lunch counters and things, and then you had also some desegregation efforts in Austin. Let me ask you how Johnson reacted to these incidents.

R: I don't recall, but I know that as far as he personally was concerned the whole state could have been desegregated, it wouldn't have bothered him in the slightest. Don't forget, the minority votes in Texas were very, very important to Johnson: the black vote, which he always got unconditionally, and the Mexican vote, which he always got

unconditionally. It's fashionable to ascribe some of that to some of the border bosses, and there's no doubt that the border bosses had something to do with it, the Kazens and I suppose George Parr, but not completely. LBJ automatically got the Mexican vote, and one of the reasons the bosses supported him was because most of their constituents wanted them to support him. And second, he was willing to go pretty far for the Mexicans and for the blacks. He had no problems with desegregation whatsoever, except obviously that the dominant political structure of Texas was still prosegregation.

G: Now the Senate did kill Part III of the bill and the federal grant provision to aid desegregating schools.

R: Well, Part III was still kind of a nightmare. Nobody was quite sure what it would do, but it really did open up some possibilities of broad dictatorial powers, there's very little doubt about that. I've often thought that that was probably put into the bill to get taken out, so that you could then go ahead and proceed with some sort of a bill. Part III was not reasonable. There were variations of it that could be made reasonable but the liberals who were for Part III would not go for the variations. So the variations--you'll find a section of the Civil Rights Act of 1963 that really has Title III in it, but it has it in a sensible form, a form that did not make it--they really could have revived Reconstruction fully under Title III as it came from the administration. As I said, I wondered at the time and still wonder whether that wasn't really put in for trading purposes. It was much too extreme.

G: To what extent did this civil rights bill experience in 1960 affect Johnson's relationship with the southern senators?

R: I don't think it affected it at all. I think that at first they were rather mad because they thought they had been tricked, but it wasn't difficult to show them that they hadn't been tricked, that the only thing that had created that impression was that Jack Bell story. The one thing that was clear there is the southerners who had been willing to give him a considerable amount of latitude in 1957 because of their hopes that he might become a presidential candidate, they weren't quite as willing in 1960. They weren't quite as willing.

G: Okay. Now, another piece of legislation that came up in the Senate that year was the clean elections bill. Do you remember that?

R: Oh, mother of mercy. Good God, yes. What a headache that was.

G: Senator [Thomas] Hennings led a fight to include primary elections in the bill.

R: Which actually of course is a civil rights question. You know, those clean election bills are always incredible headaches. You cannot get any of them passed except for all practical purposes by unanimous consent. You're dealing here with something very, very sensitive. No matter how you work it out you're going to tilt the election process, and that's going to worry people. I myself have always thought most of it was a lot of nonsense. What you usually do is you get in a great uproar for some reason, so you pass legislation. Then four years later you discover that you've created an absolutely intolerable situation, but you can't repeal the legislation no matter how bad it

was, because to repeal an election [law] that was intended to bring about clean elections means you want dirty elections, and nobody can be on the side of dirty elections. So what happens--it's just as inevitable as the sunrise--is that at a certain point everybody starts tacitly ignoring the law. I do not know of any set of laws which have been so freely ignored as the election laws, since the repeal of Prohibition. Because the general rule, you discover you can't live with them.

G: Russell Long introduced an amendment that would require all states to have primaries.

R: Yes. I wouldn't pay too much attention to it. I think what that was was basically an effort to weaken the Hennings bill. In other words, say, "Okay, if you're going to cover primary elections, then let's make you all have primary elections," which a lot of northern states didn't want. The New Yorkers wouldn't have wanted it. I don't think anybody from the big industrial states has ever been too happy with the primary concept.

G: Okay. A good point.

(Interruption)

G: Another measure that you had was the area redevelopment bill, twenty-five million dollars for--

R: I'll have to refresh my recollection on that. About where would I find that [on the 1960 chronology]?

G: Let's see. May 4.

R: Did I have any memos on it?

G: No. This was a twenty-five million dollar authorization of federal grants and loans for chronically depressed areas, basically Appalachia. Nothing significant that you remember?

R: I can't remember anything about it.

G: Okay. Now, you also had a number of foreign policy issues. Of course you had the U-2 incident. Let me ask you to recall what you can of Johnson's reaction to that. I think you were with him and traveled to Pittsburgh about the time that the story broke.

R: I don't remember traveling to Pittsburgh. What was that about?

R: Well, let's see, May 5. You can see it on May 6; the entry is there if you look in that. East Liverpool, Ohio. It's the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner at East Liverpool.

R: Let's see. I remember his reactions to the U-2 incident very well. He thought the thing had been rather poorly handled, that in the first place there should have been no U-2 flights. Eisenhower and Khrushchev were planning a summit meeting at that point, you know, and Khrushchev used the U-2 incident as an excuse to call off the summit. About the only thing I really remember aside from that is a briefing by Allen Dulles, then head of the CIA. He briefed me and he briefed Johnson--I don't think anybody else was there--on the situation. What he said in effect was unfortunately good operatives do not make [good] pilots, and good pilots do not make good operatives. The inference was that if this man had been a real operative he would have swallowed poison or something on his way down. And I remember the only thing they had--he was just trying to speculate on why it had happened,

because the U-2 was too high to be reached by any Soviet antiaircraft, and his assumption was that he probably had a flameout, and diving down to get the engine started again had probably brought it down to a point where Soviet antiaircraft could hit him. That's about all I remember.

G: Had Johnson been aware of the U-2 flights before this or was this his first--?

R: He was aware of them. I remember also Dulles saying that it wouldn't be too long before the flights were no longer needed anyway.

G: Okay. Now, a number of Democrats issued a telegram that they contemplated sending directly to Khrushchev but ended up giving to Eisenhower, and you had some input on that I believe. Do you remember that?

R: No, I'd have to refresh my recollection again. When was it?

G: Let's see. Look at May 17.

R: I remember it, but it was little more than a gesture.

G: Okay. Johnson's position seems to have been one of forming a united front behind Eisenhower.

R: Oh, of course, that was always his position. With Johnson it was automatic. If the country was in trouble, then everybody had to rally behind the president. That was an article of faith with him.

G: Anything else on that trip to East Liverpool? He also went to West Virginia--I notice he met with the Mine Workers, Joe Yablonski, and went into West Virginia at that time, too.

G: There's not anything there that's not on the surface. I remember the meeting well, and it just [was] one might say pure vanilla, but a better way of putting it is that whatever happens is on the record and you've got it.

G: Okay. Nothing sticks out in your mind?

R: No, I just remember the meetings.

G: Now, during this time he also flew to New York and met with Eddie Weisl and Dick Berlin, and you went with him on that trip. Do you remember that? This was April 26.

R: April 26, that would be before that then. There were so many meetings with Weisl and Berlin. Yes. The major point of the trip really was to meet with the Newspaper Editors Association, which was just a meeting, it wasn't a formal address or anything of that nature, but it was a chance for him to talk to the newspaper editors. Then that afternoon Ed Weisl brought Dick Berlin and George Sokolsky by, and I think it was more than anything else an intention on Eddie Weisl's part just to buy LBJ some protection from Sokolsky. You know, Sokolsky is about as far to the right as you can get and still be within the realm of sanity. In fact, I'm not even sure it was within the realm at times. He was one of the ex-socialists that had turned so bitterly anticommunist that he was seeing them under the bed. He was a great supporter of Joe McCarthy and really way far to the right. Now a man like that can never be too helpful, except if you can keep him off your back it's good stuff. And I think that's all that was involved. I think basically Eddie Weisl, who thought very highly of

Johnson, was just trying to buy a little bit of breathing space for Johnson.

G: How about Berlin? What would he be doing there?

R: Well, he was head of the Hearst Corporation. Don't forget, Ed Weisl had two or three really major clients, and Hearst was one of them, that is, the Hearst chain, and Berlin was president of the chain.

G: I see.

Okay, another issue that year was the federal pay raise, and Ike vetoed the legislation, saying that it had been passed with extraordinary lobbying. And Congress overrode the veto, second time in eight years. What do you remember about that?

R: Oh, it's fairly routine. The postal unions, and to some extent the federal workers, had forged themselves to a position where they were about the most potent lobbyists in Washington. They could get, within limits, almost anything they wanted from Congress, and as you can see, as you know, it was very difficult to override an Eisenhower veto, and when he was overridden twice on the same issue, that gives you an idea how potent they were. That was largely due to the head of the postal workers union. What was his name? Donahue? Donahey? Donahey I think [William C. Doherty]. God, that man was a clever politician. Boy, he was clever. He knew that he didn't have the power to strike or anything like that, and didn't want to exercise it, but my God, if you had voted right and you were in a small town and you were going to make a speech and wanted some of his help, in would be rushed about five bus loads full of people to stand there and cheer. You could get

a band in about five hours' notice, you could get flags put up, you could get halls decorated. Aah! I have warm memories of the kind of reception you got from those people.

G: Did it ever work the other way? Did they ever not support you?

R: Not as long as you went along with them.

G: Another issue that seems to have been somewhat controversial was the Sugar Act, which one version would give Ike authority to set the quota for Cuba only through the end of 1960. There must have been some powerful interests in sugar.

R: Oh, brother, and how! The Sugar Act was one of the--well, let me put it another way. The Sugar Act probably produced more intensive lobbying than any other single measure ever passed by Congress. See, those sugar quotas were really worth money, big money, and the offshore quota had been heavily mortgaged to Cuba, because Cuba is the largest sugar producer outside of the United States. So when we severed relations with Castro, that left one hell of a big quota to be divided up. Now, what the State Department wanted was to divide it up along the lines of American foreign policy, but what happened as a practical matter, all of these countries--Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, Haiti--every single one of them hired lobbyists and they hired high-powered lobbyists. I remember Harold Cooley, who had been chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, he became a sugar lobbyist, and Clark Clifford was a sugar lobbyist as I remember. And the heat that they could put on, just unbelievable! I don't think there was anything illegal that went on, but what they were were men who had

helped write the act. You know how the Sugar Act works, don't you? The United States pegs the price of sugar, providing that only a certain amount be put into the American market. The result is that for all practical purposes sugar is produced completely by quotas. There is so much of a quota for the cane sugar producer in the United States, so much for the beet sugar producer. Then in each individual country outside the United States there's so much for each person. And Cuba had a tremendous [quota]. What in the hell was it? The number five million tons keeps running through my mind, but I think that's an awful lot. I doubt if it was that big, maybe five hundred thousand or something like that. But it amounted to thirty, forty, fifty thousand-ton quotas that you could pass out to these various countries and, boy, would they fight for it.

G: Well, was there any bearing this year on the domestic production?

R: No, that was going to remain the same regardless.

G: Did the domestic producers have any preference on how the quotas would be given out?

R: No, they didn't care, as long as they got theirs. I mean, they were constantly fighting for bigger quotas on their own part.

G: Yes. And there were some pretty powerful people involved, of course.

R: Yes, because sugar cane involves Louisiana and Mississippi, and then sugar beets are very, very potent all through the western states, which are not very populous but each one of which has two senators.

G: Wasn't Senator Byrd also involved in sugar production in some way or another?

R: Not that I know of.

G: Okay.

R: Which Byrd?

G: Harry, of Virginia.

R: Virginia? Well, he was chairman of the Finance Committee. I don't think that bill went through the Finance Committee.

G: But I thought he had some personal interest in sugar himself.

R: I don't know what it would be; they don't raise any in Virginia. He may have had some interest somewhere but I don't know about it.

G: Okay. Another issue that surfaced that year was medicare.

R: Yes.

G: Jack Kennedy introduced a medical care bill that January, early in the session. Later on Soapy [G. Mennen] Williams accused LBJ of having threatened Walter Reuther, that unless he [LBJ] got more support in Michigan he would sidetrack the medicare bill.

R: Oh, God! Soapy at times--I don't believe LBJ would do that. I can accuse LBJ of a lot of things that aren't very pleasant, but I don't think he would do that. But he might well say, of course, "Look, the medicare bill is in trouble. A lot of my friends are saying 'for the love of God, why should we put this through for Walter Reuther?'" That's about as close as he would go, but that wouldn't be a threat. Soapy sometimes--it's kind of funny because Soapy and Johnson were basically good friends. They'd both been NYA administrators together and there seems to have been a bond between those NYA administrators. But I'm absolutely convinced that's nonsense.

G: Okay. Anything else on the medicare bill that year?

R: Not much. It was too early to get it through. That was first proposed by Harry Truman, and the trouble with a bill like that is it takes a number of years to break the ground. You've got to get people to thinking of it. It's always going to be rejected at first and for some time afterward.

G: Okay.

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R: --[James] Hagerty got when he went over there [Japan], and how he got really surrounded in that automobile and it took helicopters to keep him from being mobbed. I don't know what to comment on it, though; it was just there and I don't think there was any Johnson involvement.

G: Now, Pat Brown, Governor Brown of California, issued a statement that LBJ had held up some bill that was beneficial to California. I think he regretted the statement later on, regretted having made the statement. Do you remember that?

R: He did. But I don't remember what it was about. I don't know what the bill was. Have you got a name or anything?

G: No, I don't have--let's see, I saw a memo on this. No. I'll see if I can find it.

R: I don't remember what the bill was about. I know that there was a certain amount of hostility between Pat and Johnson, which was unfortunate because basically they were the same kind of politicians. I think it was just the separation between the two. I got to know Pat fairly well later on. He's a pretty good Joe.

G: Okay, now you did go out west with him in late May, went to Idaho.

R: What's the date?

G: May 27. Then Washington State, South Dakota, North Dakota.

R: Yes, I remember that trip very well. The problems were apparent all along. I remember when he addressed the Washington State Democratic Convention in Spokane, for instance. I discovered that a man named Miller--I can't remember his first name even though I knew him quite well--who was a Kennedy operative was for all practical purposes staging the convention.

G: Which meant what in terms of your appearance?

R: Well, nothing really in terms of our appearance; we were just one of the people that appeared. But he was really handling everything at that convention. Joe Miller, that's right, I remember that because I always kept thinking of Joe Miller's Jokebook. Joe Miller, who was a rather well known political operative in the Democratic Party, a rather able one, when I discovered he was in charge of that convention I knew where Washington was going to go.

I also remember Pierre and Bismarck, where the--of course I think the main thing I remember about Bismarck is we got there and discovered there were no telegraph facilities at all. The itinerary we had had said that there was a telegraph office right across the river from Bismarck, I've forgotten the name of that town. But investigated, it turned out to be not a telegraph office where they could send press copy, but an office that could take telegrams and call them in by telephone to Des Moines, Iowa, which was the nearest office. It was

really rather amusing; the only way the press had of calling in their stories was a telephone that was, oh, I'd say about as high as those plaques on the wall, and I remember the female reporters with us having to stand up on tiptoes in order to speak into the phone. Only one phone for Nancy Hanschman [Dickerson], Phil Potter, Earl Mazo, Loye Miller, Bob Baskin, Jack Morris, Mary McGrory, Bob Hollingsworth and Bob Vermillion. It was ridiculous.

G: I noticed that LBJ appeared on local television with Frank Church.

R: Yes.

G: Anything there?

R: No, not particularly. I think Church was up that year, and I think that LBJ was helping--he and LBJ got along very well. He introduced one of the principal amendments in the civil rights debate in 1957.

G: I noticed here that Mrs. Johnson also spoke to a Jefferson-Jackson Day gathering. Was it unusual for her to make a public speech?

R: Not a brief one, no. She made them; she made some very good ones. She was awfully good. You could always depend upon Lady Bird to say exactly the right thing. Exactly the right thing.

G: What was Marvin Watson doing in the campaign at this point?

R: He had been loaned to us by the Lone Star Steel Company and he was just sort of along managing things, taking care of itineraries and baggage and hotel and all that sort of thing.

G: How about John Ben Shepperd? I noticed that he was--

R: I don't remember that. That rather puzzles me. John Ben had become fairly friendly with LBJ. In 1954 there was a period when it looked

as though John Ben would be one of LBJ's opponents, but it didn't work out that way, I think mostly because that was the year that LBJ hit the hustings real hard in the fall and everybody decided they weren't going to go up against that buzz saw. But LBJ and John Ben became fairly good friends. John Ben was a man of considerable sense. He was a man who [was] very well balanced, and he was a good man to have around LBJ I always thought. He was much more conservative in his politics, of course, but that's not the point. The point was that LBJ needed people around him with a lot of common sense, and he was one of them.

G: Then he flew to Reno, held a press conference, attended a reception for the general public and addressed a dinner, and went from there to Los Angeles.

R: Right.

G: Anything on that leg of the trip that you recall?

R: Nothing of any importance, I remember the trip well. I think we stayed at the Beverly Hilton that night.

G: What was Johnson's mood during this trip?

R: I'd say bemused more than anything else. His heart really wasn't in it. Obviously he wasn't getting any good news on the trip, but I don't think that really bothered him. I think it was the factors that I mentioned earlier, that he really was a reluctant dragon.

G: Now, I guess while he was gone his supporters opened nationwide headquarters in Washington.

R: Right.

G: And he didn't seem to have been at all happy about this.

R: He wasn't.

G: Didn't they raise the sign and then have it lowered a few days later?

R: Oh, there were all kinds of things. He'd give permission to do things in the morning and by noon he'd have called it off. It really was a crazy period in which you could not depend upon him to make a decision and stick with it for more than half an hour.

G: Now, John Connally and Oscar Chapman and India Edwards were working on the campaign, is that right?

R: Right.

G: Let me ask you to describe what each of them did.

R: Well, [with] Oscar I think [it] was more the prestige of his name than anything else. He was a good northern name. Oscar was not too much of a political operative, but he was rather well known, and especially in western conservation circles. John Connally actually ran that office. What India Edwards did was to try to line up as many women as she could. She was a very competent person.

G: Johnson was quoted at the time as saying that he would have preferred the headquarters to be operated from a hotel room as Lucius Clay had done for Eisenhower, and that he referred to himself as another Warren Harding.

R: He was really beginning to roam pretty far afield at that point. Obviously you couldn't operate it from a hotel room the way Lucius Clay did for Eisenhower; it was a different situation altogether. When he says another Warren Harding what he meant was that Harding, as

you know, got the nomination when there was a complete deadlock at the Republican convention, and LBJ started to think of himself in those terms and then started to think of himself in terms of Warren Harding, which again was completely ridiculous. There was no resemblance between LBJ and Warren Harding.

G: Was there any tension between Johnson and Connally during this period?

R: Yes.

G: Tell me what you recall of that?

R: Well, it was just the on-again, off-again, gone-again, Finnegan syndrome. John was really having a terribly difficult time since almost everything he wanted to do was disapproved by Johnson. Now, of course Connally was the kind of man who would go ahead and do it anyway. But this led to a very awkward situation. For one thing, John could not commit Johnson to any public appearances, which is the sort of thing that a campaign manager should be able to do. Johnson held those reins tightly in his own hands and he refused to make decisions. You could get him out on the stump occasionally but not very often, and when you did you almost had to drag him out. It was ery, very painful. I know they set up a staff, which was a fairly competent staff, reasonably competent. I didn't think it was great. But then there wasn't very much for the staff to do. It became nightmarish at times.

G: Do you recall his actually ordering them to take down the sign?

R: No, but I have no doubt he did.

G: I wonder if Connally ever considered dropping out of the campaign and going back to Texas?

R: I think he did. But at a certain point John got in so deep he couldn't get out. That was one of the differences. Johnson would keep kidding himself that he could get out; Connally was much more of a realist. Connally knew that once you'd made certain commitments you couldn't back out on them.

G: Now, you went to New York with him shortly after that, New Jersey and New York, and met with Governor Bob Meyner and went to Binghamton, New York, met with Carmine DeSapio and Weisl again and Frank Stanton. He filmed a Dave Garroway "Today" program. What do you remember about that trip?

R: Just about everything, and it wasn't particularly worth remembering. There was nothing significant at any of his meetings, no commitments of any kind. I remember Carmine DeSapio was able to sound like he was sympathetic, but that's about all it amounted to. Meyner was a sort of a colorless personality, really. The meetings took place just the way they are there, and there simply was nothing outstanding about any of them. I wonder if Binghamton, New York was where the airplane wheel caught on fire?

G: Your plane?

R: Yes. On landing.

G: Tell me about that.

R: I can't remember whether that was the place, but we came in for a landing and apparently there was some brake fluid that had spilled and

the scorching of the tire on the runway set the tire on fire, or at least the material around the tire, and we were told to evacuate the plane real quick just as soon as it stopped. Well, they had the fire out in nothing flat. It wasn't serious. The reason I remembered the incident, it's about the only interesting thing that happened on that trip. God, those trips were dull. Too little, too late.

G: Now, Congress did adjourn and LBJ announced I guess two days later. Right at this point, I guess even before he announced, JFK had issued a statement in response to one that Truman had made about Kennedy's youth and inexperience, saying that it was important to have a young, healthy man in the White House. LBJ evidently took that as a reference to his own heart attack and shortly thereafter the Addison's Disease story was circulated. Let me ask you to recall what you can about that.

R: The Addison's Disease story?

G: Yes. The story that Kennedy had [Addison's Disease].

R: I remember it. I remember it well. I didn't hear about it until after it had gotten going. There were plenty of stories floating around about Jack Kennedy, but they all involved his insatiability for women. It was known that he had back troubles, but I don't think I actually heard the Addison's Disease story until I got to the Democratic National Convention. That was one of those underground things. I know that LBJ very early decided that he should do things to emphasize Kennedy's youth on the grounds that many people would think he was too young. One of his favorite stories was about the man

who has gray in his hair, callouses on his hands, and something else, I've forgotten what, but trying to give you the impression that what you need is a good grizzled person who's proved himself in service. I don't think it had much impact.

G: Phil Graham evidently helped him with his announcement speech. Do you recall that?

R: Oh and how! Phil was a would-be mover and shaker. Phil was an awful nice guy but he was doing his damnedest to become an adviser to the high and the mighty, and the easy way to get help out of Phil in anything was to hand him one of your speeches and let him edit it and do various things to it. He wouldn't hurt it any. In fact, what he would give back would probably be an improvement, although not necessarily an inspired improvement. But he was somewhat naive, naive about many things, and LBJ really knew how to play him.

G: Tell me what you remember about the announcement itself.

R: Very little. I just remember that he made the announcement and that--

G: He announced in the Senate Office Building?

R: Right. In the Caucus Room I believe. Had a rather large crowd there. But there really isn't too much; there was nothing outstanding about it. By that time there very obviously wasn't very much of a chance, because the possibilities of deadlock were disappearing rapidly as Humphrey was being eliminated and Symington was being eliminated. There simply couldn't be any bit of a deadlock on the basis of the eleven Confederate states of the South. I think the edge was off it for almost everybody at that point.

G: Did Johnson's attitude change after he became an announced candidate?

R: To some extent. Once he announced that he was a candidate, he would then go ahead and do certain things, but even then he didn't put the real fire into it that. . . .

G: Before this there seems to have been some thought of fielding a southern candidate, more southern than LBJ, just to try to lock up the southern vote to keep Kennedy from making some inroads there. Was this--someone like [Herman] Talmadge perhaps--ever considered?

R: Not seriously.

G: Okay.

R: I noticed that note and I was wondering what you were talking about. I think it's the kind of thing that bobs up somewhere and gets put in paper, and because it's in paper people think it's important.

G: Now, you went to New York and met with the Time editors and some people from Newsweek.

R: That was not a good meeting, the one with Newsweek. I recall that well because LBJ was absolutely at his worst. He was evasive, he ducked all the questions. He did fairly well with the Time people; I don't know why he went into that reverse on Newsweek. It was so bad that Sam Shaffer of Newsweek, who had been one of his biggest boosters, was just sitting there cringing.

G: Really? What was Johnson's explanation of that, do you know?

R: I never heard an explanation. He just did a lousy job, that was all.

G: Then he went to Henry Luce's apartment for dinner, remember that?

R: I wasn't there.

G: Now, from there you went to Chicago or actually returned to Washington and then went to Chicago the next day, and from there to San Francisco and to Los Angeles after that. Anything along that part of the trip? Anything in Chicago?

R: Not really. Chicago obviously was a lost cause. As long as [Richard] Daley ran Chicago, Chicago was going to go to Kennedy. San Francisco, I seem to remember Lady Bird making a rather haunting speech out there about how she remembered San Francisco from the war years when so many wives were there trying to reach out to their husbands and lovers on the other side of the ocean. That's the only thing I remember out of San Francisco.

Of course I remember plenty about Los Angeles after we got there, but nothing particularly outstanding in the arrival itself. I think somebody was there to meet him at the airport. They had a kind of an honor guard to meet all the candidates. We went in and we went to the Biltmore Hotel. But I've forgotten where Johnson went. I guess he put up in the Biltmore Hotel, because that's where the major candidates were. Boy, I remember what a mess the whole thing became.

G: Where did you stay? Did you stay in the Biltmore also?

R: Sure. Everybody did. Mainly I remember getting up one morning and going over to get a shirt out to wear, only to discover that somebody had left a bottle of whiskey in that drawer overnight. My God, the whole drawer just reeked of whiskey, including my shirt. I had to send down to a haberdasher in the hotel and get a couple of shirts sent up.

The whole scene was pretty much Johnson at his worst. I think he was right up against it at that point, where he was going to have to make some kind of a decision, and he obviously didn't want to make a decision. He had this New York publicity type, Tom Deegan, with him, and he was always playing Deegan against his staff. Raised hell with me at one point because I hadn't consulted Deegan about a press conference. Well, the reason I hadn't consulted Deegan was because I couldn't find him. That was very simple. He was moody, he was tempestuous. I remember Deegan coming up with this concept of a debate with Kennedy, which we all agreed was a good idea, except the way it turned out it was blander than a vanilla ice cream cone.

G: Well, Kennedy had routinely sent wires to delegations, is that right, or proposals and ended up sending one to the Texas delegation?

R: Something like that.

G: And you all accepted with--

R: Well, what we said in effect was put the Texas and the Massachusetts delegations together in a debate. Well, he was very gentlemanly. I don't think anybody laid a glove on anybody.

G: Well, most people contend I think that Kennedy came out better than Johnson did.

R: No--well, because he was ahead of Johnson, nobody lost anything. The more I look at that thing, the more of a waste of time it seems to me. Los Angeles was a very poor city to hold a convention in anyway. The convention hall was way out in Beverly Hills; the Biltmore is downtown Los Angeles. A cab ride was ten dollars, and in those days ten dollars

was an awful lot of money. They had shuttles that would take us back and forth. During the convention--have you ever been to a national convention?

G: No.

R: Everything goes sort of crazy. The tensions begin to mount. People lose their heads. Silly stories that normally wouldn't attract two inches of type become blown all out of proportion. I know at one point Andy Biemiller was asking me when something was going to happen, and I said, "When you produce those delegates." Well, I was just kidding. I wasn't really laying down any threat. I thought Andy knew that. Damned if the Los Angeles Times didn't have a big story the next day about Andy Biemiller charging that a Johnson aide had threatened him with something unless he produced delegates. For the love of--that was so silly that even Andy had to laugh at it when it was brought home to him.

G: Were you surprised at the extent of Kennedy's strength?

R: No, I knew it. I knew it in advance.

G: How about Johnson?

R: No, he knew it. There wasn't any doubt at that point.

G: A lot of people feel that some of the animosity between LBJ and Robert Kennedy emerged from this convention.

R: I think it was before that. Those two men just didn't like each other. There was a real Dr. Fell syndrome there. At the convention I think that Bobby did everything he could to block LBJ as vice president.

G: What did he do?

R: Tried to talk Kennedy out of it, tried to talk Jack out of it. He was talking in terms of Stu Symington, I believe, which would have been a disaster because Symington couldn't bring Kennedy any votes he didn't have already. I think that LBJ was definitely the right choice from Jack Kennedy's standpoint, and I'm convinced that without LBJ Jack Kennedy would not have won that election.

G: Were you present when Robert Kennedy came over and met with Johnson?

R: No, nobody was present there except Bob--Homer Thornberry's assistant--Waldron; Bob Waldron was hidden in the closet taking down notes.

G: What did you learn of the meetings from Johnson?

R: About fifteen different versions.

G: Have you yourself been able to piece together what happened?

R: Oh, I think so. The version that Kennedy later put out was that it was offered to Johnson with the expectation that he would turn it down, but that he fooled everybody and accepted. I don't think that that was true. I don't think Jack meant it to be turned down. I think Jack had correctly assessed the situation and had realized that without Johnson on that ticket he didn't stand much of a chance, which he didn't. He could never have carried any part of the South without Johnson, and he needed to carry some of the South because Nixon was going to take away--already had some of the fat northern states all sewed up. But I think that this is where all of the malaise that had infected Johnson all that year came to a head, because I think he realized at that point that here he really had to make a decision. If

he said yes, then the rest of his life was essentially going to be a political life. Even if he didn't win the presidency he would still--he couldn't just then go ahead with any plans to toss everything up and go to Tahiti. I'm being metaphorical there.

My own belief, which is buttressed somewhat by rumors, is that probably the major discussions were not the ones with Rayburn that he always talked about, or with Bob Kerr or people like that. I think the major ones were personal discussions as to his future life. What was really at stake here was whether he was going to say to hell with politics, become a businessman and spend the rest of his life in wine and women--or at least one woman--and song, or whether he was going to play out his stake as a politician. The further I get away from the convention, the more I can put it into perspective, the more I am convinced that that's what really happened. Because his selection as vice president was so terribly logical, there is no reasonable argument that could have been made for selecting any other candidate. None. And I think that he must have known that and I think that Kennedy must have known that. I do know that he was in a deep personal quandary at that particular point, and as I said, I've heard all kinds of rumors as to discussions that he had with members of his own family. Be that as it may, he finally accepted.

G: Now, the campaign had gotten pretty nasty on both sides, and the Addison's Disease story was widely circulated at the convention.

R: I think Connally referred to it publicly, didn't he?

G: Yes. Was this a source of antagonism between Johnson and Kennedy, and did LBJ consider not utilizing that weapon?

R: I really don't think he did that. My own belief is that John went ahead and did that on his own.

G: What was Johnson's reaction? Do you recall?

R: No, because I wasn't with Johnson at the time. But that's not Johnson's style. Johnson could be awful nasty but not that way. He sort of had a deep sympathy for somebody that had some sort of a disability. One of the primary guiding points of my life is the deep belief that if a thing is improbable, then it probably didn't happen, and I think it's improbable that Johnson would have done that. I don't think it's improbable that Connally would have done it all by his own. So on the one hand I have got a probability, on the other hand I've got an improbability, so I accept the probability. And I don't think actually that it had gotten too nasty. I think it kind of looks nasty in retrospect or to this generation, but that wasn't terribly nasty by the style of politics of that era.

G: Not everyone in Johnson's organization wanted him to accept the vice presidential nomination.

R: Most of them didn't I think--no, not most, but quite a few didn't.

G: Let me ask you to recount who did and who didn't, and what their reasons were.

R: I'm not sure. I know that I wanted him to accept. I wrote him a memo at the time. Did you ever find it?

G: I think it's in there. I believe it is.

R: I know I wrote him a memo at the time. I don't think Walter [Jenkins] wanted him to, but I'm not sure.

G: Mrs. Johnson?

R: I think she wanted him to. But I think it's logical that she would want him to, therefore I'm not sure that I know that.

G: I don't think that she did at first.

R: I have heard that. I have heard that, but I am not sure.

G: What about Bob Kerr, who was around then?

R: He started out being against it and then swung over to being for it. And of course Sam Rayburn--I think Johnson has exaggerated that story. I think Johnson himself made the decision, but he liked to ascribe it to Sam Rayburn. I do know that Rayburn's hatred of Nixon was pathological. I've never forgotten when Eisenhower would address a joint session of Congress, and on occasions like that, you know, they meet in the House of Representatives with the vice president and the speaker alongside of each other. Rayburn wouldn't even shake hands with Nixon. He'd just sit there stonyfaced, he wouldn't look at him, he wouldn't nod his head. Oh, he hated Nixon! Nixon, to Rayburn, had done the unforgivable thing, he had referred to the Democratic Party as the party of treason. Rayburn didn't mind being called a thief--he wasn't, but he didn't mind being called a thief--or maybe even a rapist, for all I know, but when you said treason, as far as Sam was concerned that was beyond the bounds.

G: Were you privy to any of the discussions on whether or not Johnson should accept it?

R: No, and I don't think anybody was. I think that all the discussions were individual. I doubt whether there was one meeting in which everybody sat in and expressed an opinion. In fact, I know goddamn well that's right.

G: How about Jim Rowe or any of these other people, Phil Graham, that were drifting in and out, meeting with--?

R: I don't think Phil saw him at that point. Jim Rowe thought he ought to accept it, I know that, because Jim and I were in constant contact with each other. I forget now whether we shared--no, we didn't share a hotel room there; we shared the hotel room in the 1956 convention. Jim, I do recall, was for it. I mean most of the people that were against it were by and large the Texans who thought it ought to be the presidency or nothing.

G: What was John Connally's position?

R: I don't remember. I didn't hear from John.

G: Didn't Connally leave the convention early?

R: I'm under that impression, that as soon as he realized there wasn't a chance that he walked out. John at that particular point had become very unhappy with LBJ over a long series of things.

G: What were they?

R: I think some of it was personal. Some of it was his feeling that LBJ had gone too far over to the northern liberals. Some of it I think was sheer pique that he'd sort of cut John off and taken on a new set of advisers. And I think part of it was that John just had his belly full of the way LBJ had acted during the campaign. But I really don't

know how John stood, I just have a hunch that he was against it.

G: Well, one of the problems appears to have been that LBJ and John Connally raised a lot of money in Texas on the grounds that he was running against Jack Kennedy, and now it was going to be difficult to have to go back to these same people and say, "The fellow that I wanted you to help me beat is my running mate and now I want money for his candidacy."

R: Oh, politicians have swallowed heavier ones than that.

G: But was this a difficult thing for Johnson to do?

R: I don't think so.

G: Really?

R: I just can't believe it was. I never heard it mentioned as a problem, but I don't think it was--now, Connally might have considered it a problem. Now wait a second. Connally was much more sensitive to the wealthy and the powerful in Texas than Lyndon Johnson. This is one of the reasons why Connally's presidential aspirations fell so flat. He really was a wealthy man's man, whereas Johnson had the saving grace of some genuine feeling for the underdog. That was not fake on LBJ's part. He would never have become president unless there had been that area of real realism. Be that as it may, the feelings between Johnson and Connally were really rather bitter.

G: Now, after the convention--

R: He went to Acapulco.

G: Yes. First of all, is there anything else about the convention that you remember that we haven't talked about?

R: To me one of the most important parts of the convention was it came time for LBJ to appear out on the platform and accept the plaudits of the crowd. We all tumbled down into the buses to take us to the arena, and there was Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy got into a bus where I was already sitting. Now, Bobby and I had been a little bit at swords' points. I think Bobby felt that I, as a descendant of the Irish, had no business being with Johnson, and he had said some rather bitter things about me at various times, never on the record, but off the record. And I can still remember, he walked over and he kind of patted me on the shoulder and said, "Everything's okay now, George." I remember that well. First time I ever saw a benevolent smile on Bobby's face.

Then I remember we got to the convention. Tom Deegan was with us. We were all supposed to go up on the stage and stand behind Johnson [Kennedy?]: Johnson, Lady Bird, the daughters, myself, Walter, I've forgotten who else now. But Tom Deegan was there, and I did not like the thought of Johnson appearing there with a public relations man at his elbow. So we got up to the stage and I just blocked everybody after Lady Bird and the girls. If you notice the pictures, none of us appeared on the stage with him, but that was the reason. I just thought that it would not have been a very good idea for Johnson to step up with a New York publicity man.

Then we went to Acapulco.

G: Well, you went I guess to the Ranch briefly and then--

R: Yes, and then to Acapulco.

G: What do you remember about that interval?

R: The Ranch?

G: Yes, and Acapulco.

R: Well, it was an unwinding period. There was very little politics discussed during that period or very little organization or anything else. Most of that was shoved off until we got back from Acapulco. And down in Acapulco we really tried to enjoy ourselves. Most of the things that I remember are rather amusing. [Miguel] Aleman had that marvelous place at Puerto Vallarta [Puerto Marqués], right outside of Acapulco, where he has these lovely cottages stepping down the mountainside. It's not in the Bahía de Acapulco, it's the next bay. He had a yacht and a dock, and the yacht was a rather good-sized one. Miguel Guajardo was taking care of us. Every morning we'd have beautiful sweet rolls delivered to us by a German baker who had settled down in Acapulco, and we went to Las Perlas to see the diving boys and various other odds and ends. I remember late one night coming back from Las Perlas, Eloise Thornberry said, "Let's see if there are any of those marvelous sweet rolls out in the kitchen," and before I could stop her she went in the kitchen. Poor woman. Have you ever been in a Mexican kitchen? Cockroaches that big crawling over everything. Eloise let out a shriek that I think could be heard all the way up to Austin, Texas.

G: About six inches long?

R: Oh, yes. Have you ever seen those big tropical cockroaches? They're unbelievable.

G: A foot long?

R: Not a foot long, but I've seen them as much as eight inches long. I remember Charlie Guptill [?]--now wait, what was it? No, it wasn't Charlie Guptill, it was Bob Hill who was ambassador at that point. Bob made the mistake of flying down to Acapulco with a lot of newspapermen thinking that Johnson would like an interview at that point. Well, of course, that was one time when he positively did not want an interview. After all, he hadn't even had a chance to talk to Kennedy. So I can recall the interview, which was very unsatisfactory to all the press. And all we talked about was the fishing. Lady Bird had caught a nurse shark and I had caught a big sailfish.

That evening we were at Las Perlas and Charlie Guptill was sitting there--Charlie was the Associated Press man in Mexico City. I remember at one point Charlie got very sentimental and he wanted to go over and tell Johnson that he thought he was a great man and he, Charlie Guptill, would certainly help him. And Charlie got up and started toward LBJ. I'll never forget those Mexican security men. They were getting up with drawn pistols right on the spot. Whew! I quick ran up and threw my arms around Charlie and got between him and the Mexican security guards, who knew me, and got Charlie back to his table. We almost had a nasty incident right there because they would have killed Charlie if he had taken two steps toward LBJ.

He really did relax down there. LBJ loved to go shopping and buy a lot of stuff for people. They had a rather good *zocalo* in Acapulco

at that time where he could buy lots of clothes for the women, sports shirts and stuff like that.

G: Did he feel that he had made the right decision then in accepting--?

R: He never talked about it. At that particular point he wasn't talking about anything until we got back to the Ranch. And the first time we really started talking about the campaign was back at the Ranch after Acapulco.

G: Do you think that the factor that he wanted to defeat Nixon or prevent Nixon from being president was one of the reasons that he had accepted?

R: Johnson?

G: Yes.

R: I don't think it was that bitter. I think Rayburn was. I think that Johnson was anti-Nixon. He once told me that Nixon was a fascist, which obviously Nixon was not, but it does give you some idea that LBJ really had some strong feelings about him. But I don't think they were that strong. I think he accepted it primarily because he recognized that this was a sign of something, that even being vice president was something. Now, he had some illusions about it. I think he--

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R: --thought that because he was a powerful man that he would be powerful as vice president. He is supposed to have said "power is where power goes." Now, I don't know whether he did or not.

G: You don't remember him saying that.

R: I know damn well--I didn't hear him--

R: Still be in the Senate.

G: One of the reasons that Kennedy supposedly wanted Johnson on the ticket was to carry Texas, specifically to carry Texas. Do you think that that was a factor?

R: Oh, no question about it. Not only Texas, a lot of the South.

There was another factor there though. There were certain real chinks in the Kennedy armor. One of the important ones was the Jewish vote, and strangely enough, Johnson stood very high with the Jewish voters.

G: Why was that?

R: I think mostly because he had worked so closely with Jews in Texas that they had passed the word around throughout the United States, this is a good friend. Then you had people like Eddie Weisl and somebody else, I've forgotten who now. But he got along very--oh, and old man Marcus, Stanley Marcus--he just got along very, very well with the Jewish vote and Kennedy did not, you know. The Jews were very suspicious of Jack Kennedy.

G: Was this because of his father?

R: Because of his father, yes. Then also I think at that particular point Johnson could probably have done better with the black vote than Kennedy could. Later it shifted. Kennedy's real master stroke was that call in to Coretta King when Martin Luther King was thrown in jail.

But there are some very strange things. One of the most rousing and spirited meetings during the entire campaign was Johnson's with

the American Liberal Party up in New York. You know, for all practical purposes that's a Jewish party. It was founded by Dave Dubinsky and Alex Rose, and it's not really a political party. What it is is it's sort of a branch of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. It rarely nominates candidates; what it does is cross-file both the Republicans and Democrats so that Democrats--in New York it's terribly difficult for a Democrat to vote the Republican ticket, but if they had a Republican that was really appealing to Democrats, the Liberal Party would very obligingly put them on the Liberal Party ticket, and these people that couldn't vote for him as a Republican could vote for him as a Liberal. That was quite a game in New York. But Johnson really took that convention by storm.

G: Let me ask you to recount that. Describe his performance there.

R: I had written for him a speech on Israel making it solely and simply a foreign policy speech, figuring that would be the best thing for him to do. But then we got into this meeting and I looked around and I saw my old friend Alex Rose, whom I'd known for many years, and Dave Dubinsky was there, and I quick scribbled some notes down for Johnson. I said, "Why don't you open up this way: 'I don't know much about the details of your platform. I haven't had a chance to look at it. But there are certain things that it seems to me really bring us together. You are against sweatshops; I am against sweatshops. You are for honorable men having honorable work; I am for honorable men having honorable work. You are for decent wages for people that are working; I am for decent wages for people that are working. We are together.'"

And I scribbled these notes and handed it up to him and he opened his speech with precisely those words. And that was all he needed. All you had to do was to get Johnson started and he could handle it after that himself. Well, by God, when he finished with that crowd, whew! They were standing in the chairs, they were waving handkerchiefs, they were yelling, they were screaming.

He finished with a story about Dave Dubinsky and Maury Maverick. Have you ever heard this story?

G: Tell it.

R: He said, "A long time ago Maury Maverick went up to New York and he got ten thousand dollars from Dave Dubinsky. And being Maury Maverick, he went on back to San Antonio and he had all the money put into silver dollars and walked right down Broadway with these silver-dollar sacks slung over his shoulder. And he opened up a storefront and every Mexican that came through, Maury would give him a silver dollar so he could pay his poll tax and vote, which of course is strictly illegal under Texas law, so he got indicted. And it looked pretty bad for Maury." But Lyndon said, "I went over to Everett Looney and said, 'Everett, can't you stop by and do something for Maury?'"

G: [Alvin J.] Wirtz I think it was.

R: No, it was Everett Looney.

G: I believe it was Wirtz.

R: It wasn't the way the story was told in New York. I would have remembered Wirtz; I'm very clear on this one.

And he said that finally the day of the trial came and Everett Looney walked over and got up in front of the jury and said, "Well, folks, I'm just a country lawyer and I don't know that I can add too much to this trial. I don't want to take up too much of your time. Just want to remind you folks of the jury of one thing. We're meeting in the shadow of the Alamo where Maury Maverick's ancestors fought and bled. Since that immortal day, what has been the fate of Texas? Our young men, our young people, our wealth, our gold has gone up to New York to enrich the coffers of those New Yorkers. And finally, after more than a century, Maury Maverick goes up to New York and he gets ten thousand dollars and he brings it back to Texas. And what does Maury do with that? Does he build himself a swimming pool? No. Did he build himself a great big fine house? No. What did Maury do? He used that ten thousand dollars so that poor people could pay their poll tax and vote. Are you going to send Maury Maverick to jail for that?" They acquitted Maury unanimously.

And there was a marvelous story to close the meeting. I remember Ollie Pilot [?], a reporter for the--oh, what was that little liberal paper in New York, the tabloid, very liberal.

G: Oh, I. F. Stone's Weekly.

R: No, not I. F. Stone's Weekly, this is a daily newspaper. It's still in existence. It's the one that the Australian [Robert Murdoch] bought. Oh, God, it's funny I can't think of the name of it. It was ultra ultraliberal to put it mildly. Let's see, the Times, the New-York News and the--Ollie Pilot was a reporter for the Post and he was

a very, very, very ultraliberal who was highly skeptical of Johnson. And when the thing was over I heard him saying to somebody else, "You know, I sure underestimated this operation." I don't think Jack Kennedy could ever have gotten that reaction out of that crowd. I still remember Dave Dubinsky's introduction about all the times he went down to Washington and he met many people, and he said, "This man didn't promise as much to us as a lot of other people promised, but he always delivered what he promised." I think that was really one of the turning points in the campaign.

G: Did the Kennedy campaign use Johnson as effectively as they could have in areas like New York?

R: It turned out that he was used effectively in New York. I'm not sure that this was due to the Kennedys or not. I remember the last meeting in New York the Kennedy organization broke down completely. The Johnson organization had to take over for that big meeting in Madison Square Garden, because I know the Kennedy [organization] just fell apart totally. But Johnson did very well in New York. I'll never forget that triumphal tour beginning--I think it started up in Erie, Pennsylvania and came on down through Syracuse and I forget what else, winding up in New York and the meeting in Madison Square Garden. By that time I think they'd caught on to the fact that Johnson could do something other than carry the South.

I'm not so sure that Johnson would have carried much of the South if it hadn't been for that demonstration in Dallas that was put on by those women. That was a real turning point. I wasn't at all sure

that we were going to carry Texas until after that. That really got people mad. The South Carolina politicians have told me they think that that's what converted South Carolina to Kennedy. And you know it brought Russell out. Russell up until that point had just sat down in Winder and sulked, but he was very fond of Lady Bird and, boy, he came roaring out of his home.

G: Were you in Dallas when that happened?

R: Oh, yes.

G: Let me ask you to describe that in as much detail as you can.

R: Well, there's not too much to describe except they were nasty. The two hotels were right across the street, the Adolphus and the Baker. I've forgotten which we were in and where the meeting was now. I think we were in the Baker and the meeting was in the Adolphus. And Johnson started across the street. Ben Gill, I think his name was, was the Republican congressman from Dallas I believe.

G: Bruce Alger.

R: Bruce Alger, was it?

G: Yes.

R: Where do I get Gill? Well, whoever it was, he had had some kind of a meeting that day and these Republican women after the meeting decided to go down and heckle Johnson. Well, they were all society women, that's what really--if this had been poor women off the street it could have been rather disastrous. But they started to boo and hiss and spit. God, they were ugly. Really ugly faces. But the thing that made it, that really was potent, was that NBC cameraman, Mo--

G: Oh, I know.

R: Mo--what in the devil was Mo's name? Levy? Mo--

G: That's it.

R: Mo Levy? Mo Levy was there, and, boy, he got it on film, and that night it was on NBC, and Mr. Nixon was the ex-next president of the United States. Because really, it looked awful, and it was awful. There was no actual physical assault or anything like that, but you just saw those ugly, distorted, hateful faces. You know, you wanted to push those noses in of these hideous, spiteful women. I remember the next day Johnson was supposed to have said that if a United States senator and his lady can't cross the street in Dallas, this is something the people ought to know. I remember the next day when we got down to South Texas, which of course is so strongly [pro-]Lyndon Johnson it's not even funny, all the crowds turning out, "Lyndon Johnson, this is your country." I think that that may have been the really decisive factor in the campaign. We only carried Texas, as I remember, by about 60,000 votes. Well, that's not much.

G: Yes. Well, let's go back to the incident itself. Did he have any alternative to taking that route? Could he have taken a less public route and avoided the demonstrators?

R: Only by turning around when it became apparent.

G: Really? Did he know that they were going to be there in the lobby?

R: No.

G: He didn't?

R: No, because they hadn't been scheduled to be there. It later turned out--I talked to some of the reporters from the Dallas News--those women had been downtown for some other purpose, I don't know what it was, and they'd all decided they'd go down and heckle Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird. It wasn't any schedule anywhere.

G: Was there any actual spitting that occurred?

R: I'm not sure. I think there was. But the trouble is, the faces were so nasty and so ugly that you would just automatically assume there was spitting, but I would not take my oath that there was, no.

G: Was there any shoving?

R: No, they didn't touch either Johnson or Lady Bird. It was just the nastiness of it, the booing. That was all that was necessary.

G: Did they prevent them from walking through the crowd?

R: No. No.

G: Some people have suggested that LBJ moved as slowly as possible through the mob in order to get as much of it on film as possible.

R: I wouldn't doubt it. I wouldn't doubt it at all. He recognized immediately how potent this was.

G: All right, tell me what he said that indicated that he recognized the advantage of it.

R: Oh, he didn't have to say anything. He didn't have to talk about a thing like that, I knew.

G: Well, what happened when he got into the room where his luncheon or whatever [was being held]?

R: Well, that's where he made the remark to reporters that if a senator and his lady can't cross the street in the city of Texas [Dallas], it was time that people knew about it, something like that.

G: Okay. Did he say anything else about that episode?

R: Not at the time, no. Later, in talking about it, he had a sort of a gleeful triumph, an air of gleeful triumph. And God, it was potent, there was no doubt about that.

G: Anything on Russell's coming into the campaign? Did Russell call and indicate that he was [coming]?

R: I think he was on his way before he could even call, and he toured Texas with LBJ. Well, of course Russell was still the southern leader. As I remember we carried South Carolina by 30,000 votes. I myself, I'd been in South Carolina, and I would have been amazed if we'd only lost by 30,000 votes. Because we were in two areas of South Carolina.

In South Carolina, this was another place where he got the nasty spitting faces from society girls. That may have given him the full idea at Dallas. Because I remember we got off the plane in South Carolina, and I've forgotten where it was now, because his major meeting in South Carolina was at Anderson and we drove to Anderson. But the plane came down and here were all these young girls, some rather pretty girls, too, waiting to greet him, big signs: "Communist Stooge," "Communist Traitor." Every time he'd say something they'd stick out their tongues, "Ahhhhhhhhhh!" The photographers fortunately were getting full-faced pictures. I wonder how some of those women

felt when they later saw how they looked. He was really mad. And I said, "Look, the way to handle this, start out your speech, 'Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" And he did, one of those pretty girls making the ugly faces, just sort of heaping coals upon their head, and he discovered right there that it was effective. That may have been something of a prelude for what happened in Dallas, I don't know. John Ben Shepperd was on that trip I remember now, when we went through South Carolina, because I remember John Ben talking to one of the leaders of the organization that was picketing Johnson.

G: What did he say, do you recall?

R: I wasn't there, I just saw him talking across the field talking to him. That was part of the train trip through the South, which also was very, very effective.

G: Yes. I want to talk to you about that at length.

R: God, LBJ was good on that trip.

G: Well, we've got the whole campaign to go through, but these are some of the areas that are important.

Anything else on the Adolphus Hotel incident? Did he see this as typical of Dallas?

R: No, because in a way it wasn't typical of Dallas. If I had had to make an advance prediction I would expect something like that more in Houston than in Dallas. Dallas really is a very conservative city, conservative in the real sense of the word. What makes Dallas conservative is that it's a banking and insurance capital, and banking and insurance industries have a tendency to create extreme caution in

people. So I just plain didn't expect it. Houston, which is a manufacturing city, a production city, tends to go in for wild things. Now, I know that the conservatives in Dallas are very, very conservative, but I really hadn't expected that in that city. I thought it was too civilized.

G: But Johnson always seemed to do better in Houston, at the polls.

R: Sure, of course, because in Houston you had that large black population which would vote for Johnson, and they voted in Houston. Most of those oil workers would vote for Johnson against the type of people that run against him. And the few oil men that were on Johnson's side were in Houston, people like Wesley West and J. R. Parten. I don't think he lived in Houston, but he was sort of associated with it. You see, Houston is a city that goes back and forth to extremes. If you look at the political history of it, you'll find that one year it will elect extreme liberals, and they'll scare the hell out of the people of Houston, and a couple of years later they'll elect extreme conservatives who will scare the hell out of the people, so that next time they'll elect--it used to be very amusing to watch the swings back and forth from far left to far right with nobody capable of staying in the middle except Roy Hofheinz, the mayor. That Dallas thing was a godsend though.

G: What was Mrs. Johnson's reaction to it?

R: I don't know. Just shock, I think.

G: They had signs there, too, didn't they, the women were carrying [signs]?

R: Oh, plenty of signs, sure. They were very hastily scribbled things and very stupid. To make it even sillier is that they actually posed after--they were quite proud of what they'd done. I don't think it occurred to them for a couple of weeks that they had just ruined any chances that Nixon had.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview XVI