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GEORGE E. REEDY ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW XX
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GEORGE E. REEDY

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INTERVIEW XX

DATE: September 25, 1986

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE E. REEDY

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Professor Reedy's office, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: One last question on the trip around the world, the Far East trip. When LBJ returned, he testified before the House Foreign Relations Committee.

R: Right. Foreign Affairs Committee.

G: Yes. Foreign Affairs. Do you have any recollection of that testimony?

R: I know what he said. The testimony was actually written by Carl Rowan, who punched it out on the typewriter while we were still in the air coming in from Bermuda. Carl Rowan, of course, had been in Asia quite a bit and he knew how to put it together and very quickly.

G: He knew then that the committee was going to request him to appear or did he request--?

R: No. I don't think so. I don't think so.

G: How did he--?

R: It was a report to the President, fundamentally.

G: I see. But would LBJ, do you think, initiate the request to testify before the committee or would the committee request him?

- R: Oh, it could have gone either way. My hunch is that I think the committee probably requested him. I don't know but I imagine that's so. There's no formal record of who asked whom.
- G: Do you recall his reaction to swearing in [John] Tower as the new senator from Texas?
- R: Just swore him in.
- G: Yes.
- R: There were no--
- G: He didn't comment on it later that day, nothing significant about Tower being--?
- R: No. Positively not. I think he just [says], "Here he is," so he swears him in. And I spent quite a bit of time with him. I doubt if he cared much, one way or the other.
- G: In general, how did LBJ view Tower?
- R: Didn't pay much attention to him. I suspect I knew Tower better than he did. I never heard him say anything about Tower that I can recall, one way or the other. I think in a sense that during this particular period, he was sort of conditioning his mind to think nationally rather than just Texas. But I have never heard him remark about Tower one way or the other.
- G: What was your own assessment of Tower during this period?
- R: A man of more ability than I'd anticipated. I got to know him fairly well because he usually ate lunch over at that restaurant that opened up around the corner from the Carroll Arms. I can't think of the name of it right now, but it became quite a gathering spot on Capitol Hill. And a couple of times Tower and I had lunch together; it just so happened one table was available and we were both hungry.

First of all, the man had a much better grasp of history and economics and the political system than I had anticipated. Secondly, he did not strike me as being a really rabid conservative, which is something else I had expected. In fact, he seemed to me to be reasonably sensible. That's about it.

G: Was this in terms of his demeanor and general attitudes, as well as his voting record?

R: Well, his voting record I didn't look into too closely. But, obviously, when you're speaking over lunch near the Senate, anybody is going to betray himself or herself politically.

G: Any recollections on that trip to New York?

R: Very dull. Very routine. There wasn't anything to it. He went up and made a speech. Let's see, did he come back the next day? Yes.

G: Later in June you flew to Los Angeles with him to dedicate an airport and then to the Governor's Conference in Honolulu.

R: Yes. My God, I'd forgotten that [Diana] Tschursin [?] was on that. Senator [Hiram] Fong--I know I spent a large part of that trip chatting with Senator Fong. He gave me some fascinating information on Hawaii. Dick Bird, that was the commodore, [Daniel K.] Inouye was the congressman from Hawaii. Fred Dutton--I think Dutton only went to Los Angeles. I don't think he went on to Hawaii. What in the hell was Tschursin doing on that trip? I don't know.

Again, it was routine. There was nothing outstanding about it. He had a speech to make in Los Angeles. And then out in Hawaii, I think he went and inspected the East-West Center, if I recall properly.

G: Then a week or so later you flew to Fort Worth with him to be with Amon Carter, and then he met with Sarah Hughes and spoke to the Texas Bar Association. This was right around the time of Sarah Hughes' nomination as a federal judge.

R: Again, I mean this was just a routine. There was nothing outstanding about it; I recall the occasion.

G: Anything on Ayub Khan's visit to Washington and Texas during this period?

R: No. It was rather interesting. I had a chance to talk to him and formed some impression of the man. You know the Pakistanis sort of specialize in getting presidents who are popular with American presidents. And boy, Lyndon Johnson fell for Ayub Khan like a ton of bricks. Within five minutes, they were bosom buddies. You would have thought they were brothers.

Khan--Ayub rather; they're all named Khan--Ayub was a man you took one look at him and you immediately saw all the hundreds of British army barracks he'd been in. He was much more British than anything that came from England. I remember on the trip around the world, he had sort of a state dinner in Karachi. It turned out to be a barbecue, with Khan presiding over it, and the major entertainment consisted of a regiment of bagpipers, the largest I have ever heard.

Ayub was the kind of man who could make a decision awfully fast, much too fast I thought, but he could make it. And very blunt-speaking, I think that's what attracted Johnson. But it also attracted Nixon, and as I said, the Pakistanis specialized in this.

One of my memories is on the around-the-world trip, Johnson's session with [Prime Minister of India, Jawarharlal] Nehru, which might as well not have been held.

That was the most meaningless session in the history of international diplomacy. Just as though Nehru were speaking Sanskrit and Johnson were speaking Cherokee Indian, they simply did not understand each other. And what this means I think, I think it has had a bad impact upon American foreign policy, because presidents have had a tendency to do what Nixon called "tilt toward Pakistan." And Pakistan is all too obviously not the key to Asia or even close to it. There are two keys to Asia; one is China and the other is India.

G: There was a press report in August that LBJ had not been helpful to the administration on either the Peace Corps bill or the foreign aid bill that year. Any recollections?

R: What?

G: This was a quotation attributed to Mike Manatos, the legislative liaison.

R: I never heard it and I just can't believe that Mike would have said that.

G: You do feel, then, that LBJ was helpful on both these measures?

R: If he had to be, he would have been. I don't know. I don't recall very much of an argument about them. But I simply can't believe that there would be any problem.

G: Well, it was just a press report.

R: I would think Mike would have too much sense to stick his neck out that way.

G: Okay. Let me ask you to talk about the Berlin trip.

R: Okay. Oh, I see where Tschursin comes in; that's Diana. Yes, what do you want to know about Berlin?

G: Well, you've got--

R: This blew up very quickly. Taking Max Friedman along was a little bit strange, but it turned out to be a very good idea. The rest of the people are obvious: Charlie Boatner, a

gentleman to help handle the press; General [Lucius] Clay, Chip [Charles] Bohlen, Colonel [Howard] Burris.

The main thing that I remember is that as we were flying over--and it wasn't in a jet; that was the era of the Lockheed Constellation--sitting up with General Clay most of the night long. The main thing that I remember, quite frankly, is a marvelous story he had about Harry Truman. When the communists first started building the Wall, Clay's concept was to counter by flying supplies into Berlin, which of course involved a considerable risk. The General's staff was against it. Most of Truman's advisers were against it. And Clay said, "They'd all met with Truman and they made the pitch."

Everybody else came down so hard that Clay just figured Truman would have to go along with them. So he said he was walking out of the room, feeling rather disconsolate, and he turned and he saw Truman standing there with his head down, his hands on the desk and he said Truman suddenly looked up and said, "General, you're going to get your planes."

Aside from that, it was just sort of a nervous conversation all night long. After all, it's not too pleasant to be flying onto a bullseye where World War III could very easily start. You know the strategy; the strategy was to have the Vice President right smack in Berlin and send this regiment of soldiers through, daring the communists to stop them.

G: What would have happened if they had tried to stop them?

R: God only knows. That was just the sort of thing that nobody thought about, I think.

They made the assumption that we just had to do it and that the communists probably

wouldn't try to stop them, but if the communists did try to stop them, that would have meant that Russia was ready for World War III anyway, so let's fight it out there.

G: The added element of the Vice President being there was for what purpose?

R: That's going in money, marbles and chalk. That was telling the Soviets, "Look, we've got our Vice President in that city, and if you think we're kidding, we have not sent an office boy." See, it gave the gesture a degree of solidity. It was not something that the Soviets could dismiss as just a grandstand play.

As I remember, we flew in first to Bonn, of course, and that was pretty formal. Bonn is a city that looks like, oh, a gingerbread house out of Hans Christian Andersen, very old fashioned. We had a brief session with [Konrad] Adenauer and we picked up Willy Brandt in Bonn and then flew into Berlin. We spent the night in Berlin. And then the next day his tour through Berlin really started, and oh, lord, what a tour it was. I have never seen so many people before in the streets. And you could hear them as you go by: *Gott sei dank, das zweite Tier ist hier.* "Thank God, the second"--Germans say beast or animal, meaning--well, like we would say top dog or second dog, they would say beast: "Thank God; the second beast is here."

I was operating the press bus. It gave me some problems because the driver of the bus couldn't understand my German. However, there was a girl reporter from Hamburg. She didn't speak any English but she understood my German. So I'd tell her what I wanted in German, then she'd tell the bus driver what I wanted in German.

Oh God, it was just incredible, the tremendous number of people. They were looking upon Johnson as being a deliverer. That must have been one of the great

moments of his life. And when we finally wound up at the *Rathaus*, where Johnson spoke to the multitudes, I climbed up high and took a look, and my God, it was just a solid mass of humanity packed into the whole *Rathaus*. And when you could see up the streets, there were solid masses of humanity on the streets, leading away from the square, from the *Rathausplatz*.

I talked to some of the German police authorities, and they convinced me this was on the level: they said there was room for 380,000 people in the square. And they based this upon aerial photographs in which they had marked it out and then marked out the number of people that could possibly stand here. Now, of course if it wasn't full, you wouldn't know, but here it was filled with 380,000 people. I forget what he said; it didn't matter, all he had to say was "Well, we're with you folks."

I remember one rather amusing incident where Willy Brandt--who by the way is known to German reporters as "Willy Brandy", because they tell me he's quite a lush--stopped and there was an old lady there with a bottle of beer. She held it out and they took the cap off and both Willy and the lady got sprayed.

That night at the *Rathaus*, we had a dinner. I believe Johnson spoke at the dinner, too. And it was quite an affair, with the best wine I've ever tasted in my life, *Kerwernacktarsch* [?]. I took down exact specifications from the label. I found it when I got back to the States except it didn't taste that good.

We were all expecting to stay in Berlin a couple of days. I had some excellent invitations to go out to restaurants on the *Königstrasse*. But Johnson decided the next morning he'd had enough and we flew out and came on back.

G: Why did he want to return, do you know?

R: You mean to the United States?

G: Yes.

R: The business was over, and the man had almost an obsession of doing something that people would interpret as junketing on public money. And it always hurt--I don't know if it was his conscience that hurt, but something. But for instance, he might go down to Nice if he were in Paris or he might go to--he was afraid to let anybody know about it. And he thought that when he was overseas that he should be working every minute of the time. Well, there wasn't really anything left for him to do the next morning. And so he flew on back.

It was a rather successful trip. One of the things I remember very well was the ubiquitous [Yoichi] Okamoto. God, every time I looked up, there'd be old Oki hanging by his heels from a [inaudible], you know, click, click, click, click. He must have shot sixty thousand films that day. You probably have them in the Library, that one where Johnson and the Colonel are standing there looking like statues.

Oki was awful good at that. Oki once explained to me the technique of great photography: to take just as many pictures as your fingers will allow you and take them all a little out of focus; that makes them arty.

G: How did Johnson react to the reaction of the crowd? There was tremendous enthusiasm.

R: Oh, he was in seventh heaven.

G: Was he? What did he say about it? Do you recall?

R: He didn't have to say anything. He was just blissful.

There was one bad trouble. We had a very good interpreter. But Johnson, who knew nothing about the structure of the German language--Johnson loved, when he was speaking, to come out with half a sentence, have that translated, and then come out with the second half of the sentence. You can't do that in German. It doesn't work.

And he'd come out with half of the sentence. He'd look at the interpreter, then he'd look at me and glare. And we were yelling at him, "For the love of Christ, you can't do it!" I don't think he ever did understand it. I mean, you would have thought that he would have picked up some German in the Hill Country.

G: Yes. There were a lot of Germans around.

R: But he didn't. He did not pick up one word.

G: Do you recall how the trip developed? You've traced the historical background, but in terms of who called LBJ and how it was decided?

R: It grew out of a National Security Council meeting, which I was not at. So I don't know.

G: Anything else on that trip?

R: No.

G: John Connally went along on that trip, I see.

R: German?

G: I think so.

R: No. No. No, sir. That I would certainly remember. Oh, he may have been there for some reason. That's entirely possible. But he didn't go on the trip [with us].

G: Okay. Anything on LBJ's assessment of Adenauer?

R: He never said much. I can sum it up pretty well, though, no matter what he said. He was

always very reticent about older people when they were people of capacity, which Adenauer obviously was. I think he stood in a little awe of them. And Adenauer, who knew exactly what he was doing--you could always see Johnson sort of back off a little bit and fade when he was with somebody like Adenauer. But as I said, in competence he would have given Adenauer very high marks. And I can't tell you how I know all these things, but I do.

G: How about Willy Brandt? What was his impression of him?

R: Never heard him mention Willy, either. But Willy was a very hale-hearted kind of a backslapper, not a phony backslapper but one of those sort of bubbling over, ebullient types. I can well see how he became so popular in Berlin. I don't think he had the size of an Adenauer, though.

G: You mean the stature?

R: Yes.

G: Okay. Then in late September, September 28, he departed for Stockholm for Dag Hammarskjold's funeral. You went on that as well.

R: Yes, I was there.

G: Let me ask you to recount your recollections of that trip.

R: It led to one of the funniest scenes I ever saw in my life. We took a whole slew of diplomats along with us; by that I mean diplomats of other countries that were in Washington and were supposed to go the funeral.

So here we had *Air Force One* loaded with ambassadors from Nicaragua and Brazil and what have you. And we were to land at that airport, at Stockholm, you know,

which is way to hell and gone from Stockholm. Actually, I think it was closer to Upsala than Stockholm was. But since we were going right to the funeral, at a certain point all these ambassadors suddenly stood up, took their clothes off and started dressing in formal funeral clothes. And the funniest damn thing in the world to see all of these rather portly, but dignified men stripped down to their underwear and trying to get studs in their shirts and get the right kind of an ascot tie, *et cetera, et cetera*.

Was Adlai Stevenson on that trip? I think so.

G: Yes.

R: I'm pretty sure he was, because there was a woman diplomat on it, too. Adlai, the gentleman, gave up his bed to her. There were two beds on the plane. Johnson had one and Adlai had the other.

G: He was on that trip, you're right.

R: I'm pretty sure. I thought so.

Aside from incidents like that, the trip to Stockholm was really rather uninteresting. There were a few little bit of acid exchanges between Stevenson and Johnson; the two never really liked each other. But again, I can't even remember what they were about. It's just I remember they happened.

But the more interesting part was after the funeral. There was a reception and there was nobody that hated funerals more than Lyndon Baines Johnson. God, he hated them. And he wanted to get the hell out of there. What he'd done was to fix up a meeting with [Ambassador Thomas] Finletter in Paris the next day. And that gave him an excuse to leave the reception a little early, because Paris shuts down completely at ten o'clock.

If you aren't in there by ten, they won't let you land, or they wouldn't in those days. I think Orly was the only field. I don't think the one they're using now was set up then.

So he was able to leave on the plea that he had to get in before ten o'clock. And he was so damned happy to get away from that funeral that he was walking on air. God, he was just euphoric. And he told Colonel Burriss and me, "Set up dinner in the best restaurant in Paris." So Burriss called the embassy and we got a table at the *[La] Tour d'Argent*.

Well, Johnson was a manic-depressive, whatever else he was. And by the time we hit Paris, the depressive state had set in. And that dinner is absolutely the worst that I have ever sat through in my life. Here we are, in one of the great restaurants of the entire world, and all he wants to do is to get out in a hurry. He'd say to me, he'd say to Burriss, "How do you say quick?" Burriss says, "*Tout de suite*," [immediately] and he'd "*tout de suite*" at all over the place; sounded like a canary. And then he turned and said, "George, is there another word for *tout de suite*?" And I said, "Try *vite-moi* ." So he tried "*vite-moi*." And you know things just didn't move fast in that restaurant. That's the kind of restaurant where you're supposed to spend four hours or five hours; nothing is cooked until you order it.

By that time, I wanted to get rid of him; the restaurant wanted to get rid of him. (Laughter) And we came to dessert. "How in the hell are we going to get dessert?" He wanted dessert. So I said, "Try the *profiterole*, Mr. [Vice] President." You know in France, a *profiterole* is something you give to kids, really. But that didn't matter. It's fast, and they can do it in a hurry, and I knew he'd like it. So they put together a [French

dessert] for him. I don't think it was even on the menu. And we managed to get out of the place.

And we went from there to the *Hôtel Georges V* where we were staying. And I got him I thought safely tucked into bed and in his room. And there's a bar near the *Georges V* that I like very much, a bar called--what is it now? I've forgotten the name of it at the moment; it will come back to me. *Calvados, Hôte Calvados* [?]. I thought, well, I'm at least going over and have a drink at *Calvados*. I walked over, opened the door, stepped in and by God, there he was, sitting there with a couple of secretaries and a big smile on his face. The manic phase was back again. He said, "Oh, George, is this one of your hangouts?" And I said, "I've been here, Mr. President." I got the hell out and went to another bar, back to the *Georges V*, I think.

The next day, he had a session with Finletter, which I think was routine. I don't believe that anything of any importance really took place. We were all supposed to have lunch together, but somebody horned in on it that couldn't be turned down; I've forgotten who. And that meant that Colonel Burriss and I were both out in the cold; there were not enough chairs at the table. That's when Johnson said, "Well, you two can go get a hamburger or something." In Paris, go get a hamburger, for the love of--so Burriss and I, we went and we found a place where we had, not a hamburger, but some fairly decent food.

Talking to him about it afterward, I gathered that really nothing of any importance took place in the session with Finletter. And we flew on back to the United States.

G: He had been in Paris several times before?

R: I wouldn't say several, no. He'd been there before.

G: Well, he'd been there at least once while he was senator.

R: I think he went there twice when he was a senator. The one I was with him; that was in the NATO Parliamentary Conference. I think that's the only time he'd been to Paris, come to think of it. And then I know he didn't go to Paris again until this trip, because I was with him all those years.

G: And then right at the end of World War II, I guess, he went for the first time.

R: That's what I think may have been the other time. But if so, this would have been his third trip to Paris. And he knew nothing about it and I don't think cared very much either. Spoke no French, not even the few words that most of us pick up reading French menus.

Strange, you would have thought that a man who had his marvelous faculties for imitation would have been something of a linguist. Because usually people of that sort pick up languages very easily. He'd lived in the Hill Country where you had these broad numbers of people to whom German was the first language and English the second. He never picked up a word of German. There were plenty of Mexicans around and the Mexicans all worshipped him. What little Spanish he did speak, he usually got wrong. I remember once his praising a group of little girls as *niños*. And they had to very carefully and tactfully correct him that it was *niñas*. I don't understand that.

G: Maybe he was just too impatient to--

R: Well, usually it doesn't take patience so much. If you really want to learn, you will. Of course sometimes you learn because you have to. I remember one night, coming back from Las Parras in Mexico, we were hurtling down the mountain and he said, "George,

tell that driver to go more slowly, to slow it down." I hadn't the faintest idea what you said in Spanish to slow it down. But I suddenly remembered a sign saying *Despacio/Escuela*. I knew *escuela* was school so I said, "*Despacio*" to the cab driver and by God, he slowed down. That's how I learned some Spanish.

G: Why didn't you want to stay with him in that bar when you walked in and discovered him there?

R: Look, I had been with him all day, all the preceding night, all the preceding day. I just wanted to have a quiet, relaxing drink and not talk to anybody. I wanted to unwind a little bit.

G: Was this at all combined with the fact that he had been in a bad mood earlier in the day?

R: Not particularly, because this was pretty much his life. As I've said, I'm no doctor, but I would be willing to diagnose him as a manic-depressive. He was up-down, up-down. It was a constant with him. And usually the further up he went, the further down he went, too.

He actually preferred Nice and the Riviera. It's resort country; he could lie out in the sun. That was more of the sort of thing he liked to do.

G: As long as you're talking about France, any thoughts on Johnson and [Charles] de Gaulle, his attitude towards de Gaulle?

R: It was rather interesting. He had de Gaulle's number. Johnson recognized de Gaulle for what he was immediately, which was something of a bully. And Johnson really handled de Gaulle very well. There were certain types of people with whom Johnson could be superb. De Gaulle was one; Churchill was another. He did very well when he was

talking with really strong, powerful generals and presidents and what have you. But oh, lord, he could be such a sucker for rather sleazy public relations types. That's one of the great mysteries I've never fully fathomed, how a man that could handle Charles de Gaulle could be taken into camp.

G: Can you give me an example of his handling de Gaulle?

R: When I say handling de Gaulle, it never got to a point where he had to handle him. Nothing happened that required that kind of manipulation. But when the two men were together in a room, you realized immediately that de Gaulle had been forced to recognize him as an equal, which de Gaulle usually did not do. Now de Gaulle was usually looking down his nose at everybody and of course with his height, he had a lot of nose to look down. But not Johnson. It was more an indefinable matter of bearing.

G: That's an interesting point. Okay. Anything else on that trip?

R: Not really. The trip was primarily for the funeral. And everything else, I think, was just sort of window dressing, not window dressing precisely but Johnson wanting to get away from that funeral as fast as he could. And the conference with Finletter was just as good as any other reason; better, in fact.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

R: How could I forget it? How could I forget it? Jenkins, Lloyd, that was--

G: This trip is October 2, early October.

R: I know. I'm pretty certain that's the night he ran into Bobby Kennedy out there. In fact, I know it was. Yes. It was rather amusing. He had a very elaborate suite at the Beverly Hilton. There is nothing very interesting in this until this night.

G: Nothing in Las Vegas?

R: Oh, no. Las Vegas is Las Vegas. I always find that city dull. He liked it. I didn't understand why. It still bores the devil out of me.

But quite a large gathering in that suite. Let's see, do you have Walter Jenkins there? I remember he was there, too.

G: Yes.

R: Yes. We were supposed to eat. There's a double restaurant up on the top of the Beverly Hilton, one which is a rather fancy, elaborate French-style restaurant; the other which is much more of a down-to-earth [place]. And we were supposed to eat supper, at first [at] the elaborate one, but Lloyd Hand talked him into moving into the other restaurant. Then Lloyd Hand talked him into leaving the Beverly Hilton altogether and having dinner at Chasen's, which, as Lloyd explained, had the older, more subtle, more sedate Hollywood-type of stars.

Well, that was the point at which he had learned that Bobby Kennedy was there in town. So he thought he would drop off to see Kennedy. And the rest of us, Bill, Lloyd and I, went on to Chasen's to settle down at the table. When we walked in, my God, I looked up and there was Dick Nixon right down the corner having dinner. Well, Chasen's--I don't know what kind of tie-in Lloyd had had with Chasen's, but obviously they were expecting us and were all set to get the maximum they could out of having the Vice President of the United States eat dinner. And I didn't particularly relish the idea of getting him and Nixon together at the same time in a campaign year.

G: But, now, this was 1961.

R: I know. Well, no, I mean--I'm sorry. I still didn't relish the idea of getting the two of them together at that particular point in Chasen's restaurant. And I was hoping to hell Nixon would get out of there, which he finally did. I remember as Nixon walked by he spotted me and he said, "Hi, George." And I started to say, "Hi, Mr. Pres--" but it suddenly occurred to me, "That's a hell of a thing. He might think that I'm being nasty about the fact that he ran for the presidency and didn't make it." My voice kind of went into a squeak. I think I came out with a Mr. Vice President, finally. And Johnson got there after Nixon had left.

Now I'm not quite sure what happened at the meeting with Kennedy. Something had happened there that he regarded as somewhat unpleasant. But he did not tell us what it was. I gather Kennedy was there with the--well, the impression I had, he's there with the famous rat pack. But that's only an impression.

G: Let's see, the notes indicate that he met with Kennedy and Mrs. [Patricia Kennedy] Lawford at Romanov's for drinks.

R: I didn't know where he'd met them but that would be about it. But something had happened there. I don't know what.

G: Could it have involved the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity?

R: No. No. Not a bit. Of course, he and Kennedy--he and Bobby--disliked each other so intensely that I always thought it was better when the two didn't get together than when they did. He was convinced that Bobby was engaged in all sorts of plots and machinations against him.

G: Do you think that Kennedy was?

R: No. Not the sort of thing that Johnson was thinking about. I think that Kennedy was trying to block him at every possible turn, yes. I think that Kennedy did not want him to be the vice presidential nominee. I think that Kennedy, Bobby, would have liked to have blocked him from any chance of being renominated in 1964.

But Johnson had contrived in his own mind a very complex plot against him being led by Bobby Kennedy which included almost daily briefings of the press, secret briefings about everything wrong with Johnson, which included Bobby constantly trying to put him in embarrassing situations. He always worried about trips abroad because he assumed that Bobby had cooked them up to get him stoned in some country.

I remember once he accused a reporter, Loye Miller, who was then [working] for *Time* magazine. He's something else now; I don't know what. But he started to talk about [how] he knew about all of the briefings downtown and Loye was absolute flabbergasted, didn't have the faintest idea of what Johnson was talking about. Because it didn't exist.

G: Why didn't they like each other? Why didn't they get along?

R: I don't know. I don't know. There was just--have you ever seen two dogs walk into a room from opposite sides and all of a sudden there's a low growl and the hair starts going up on the back of the neck? That's how those two reacted, which was strange because Johnson got along very well with all the other Kennedys. Got along all right with Jack, got along very well with the old man and got along very well with Teddy. But he and Bobby, they were at swords' points immediately.

G: Some explanations have attributed it to just bad chemistry.

R: That's what I would attribute it to. There are some people that simply don't like each other. You know the old rhyme of juveniles, "I do not love thee, Dr. Fell, the reason why I cannot tell, but this I know and know full well, I do not love thee, Dr. Fell." I think it was just about that simple.

But he was always attributing things to Bobby. I think that he was quite correct in his belief that Bobby was opposed to him and wanted to get rid of him. But some of these incredible cabals that he conjured up. Oh, brother!

R: Do you think that Kennedy conjured up similar cabals about Johnson?

G: I would doubt it. I would doubt it. But I don't really know. I knew Jack pretty well, and I knew Ted fairly well. But Bobby was always something of a mystery to me. I know that he thought that with an Irish name, I had no business working for Johnson. I remember that. That came back to me through some reporters that he'd talked to. But I really don't know enough about the man.

But I just don't think so, because I think he had a logical mind. And also, he had enough contacts within the press that he could have found out very easily. I tried to tell Johnson that if Kennedy were holding daily briefings of the press, that it would certainly get back to me, which it would have. There was just no doubt about it. My contacts among the press in Washington at that point were such that anything of that nature would certainly have come whistling in over the transom into my room. But he simply wouldn't believe it.

G: Do you think that the friction between them can be attributed in part to differences in background? The fact that--

R: Well, it didn't bother him where Jack Kennedy was concerned or Ted Kennedy. Of course, Bobby was quite different from his two brothers.

G: How so?

R: Bobby was very intense. God, he was intense, much more so than either Jack or--you know, Jack and Teddy are kind of live-and-let-live types. They weren't real--Bobby was an ideologue and no sense of humor whatsoever, absolutely none. There was a touch of the fanatic in Bobby, which did not exist in the other two brothers. I'd say that Bobby may well have been the smartest of them. But Teddy was certainly the best politician, and Jack was kind of in between Teddy and Bobby. Some of Bobby's brains but not the cold, almost fanatical dedication, and some of Teddy's political ability but not quite. Teddy is a superb politician when he works at it.

G: Okay, let me ask you a little bit more about this trip. He also toured a jet propulsion laboratory in Pasadena and then Vandenberg Air Force Base.

R: Right.

G: Much of this trip had to do with visiting NASA space facilities.

R: Yes. Sure.

G: Tell me the reason for that.

R: He was chairman of the President's Commission on Outer Space [National Aeronautics and Space Council]. And obviously, as chairman of the commission, he had to go out and look at something. You know, it was just the normal thing to do.

G: But was he doing it for publicity? Was he doing it for information? Was he doing it to highlight the significance of the space program? What was his motivation?

R: My guess is that he just did it because it was the sort of thing that should be done. That may seem like a very peculiar answer but it's not.

Obviously, he wanted some publicity but not publicity in the normal sense. At that particular point, I think he was desperate for something that would convince the average American that the Vice President was doing something besides staying up nights worrying about the health of the President. And a tour like this did give him an appearance of really doing something. So in that sense you can say it's for the publicity.

But I think in a larger sense he probably just felt it was incumbent upon him, as chairman of that group, to get out and take a look at what he was talking about. He had seen very little of the installations up to that point.

G: Let me ask you what your own reaction to the installations that you visited was.

R: The most important thing was that they introduced me to a number of problems that I hadn't fully appreciated up to that point. I had been a very ardent advocate of the whole space program. In fact, I'm pretty sure I'm the one that sold Johnson on it. And I'd been sold on it originally by that man from Alabama that I mentioned to you, I think, at an earlier time, Charlie Bruten [?].

But I'd had quite a bit to do with getting Johnson plunged into it and with the hearings and everything else. And therefore, when I went through those space installations, the main thing that hit me in the face were all the complications I hadn't realized were there. I became fascinated by finding a man who was an expert on the switching systems within the capsules. The switching systems were so incredibly complex that they had to have a very highly trained electrical engineer, who did

absolutely nothing except work on those switching systems.

And they had a physicist who had a rather dramatic way of presenting things, who also gave me some sense of the problems. He kept talking about these things that looked like rocks and he said, "And they fly like rocks, and yet we've got to fix them up so they'll fly."

I remember one impression that I had. For some reason, I had less optimism about the space program after that trip than I had had before. Because it seemed to me that too many of the problems were in a stage where there wasn't even a beginning of a solution, let alone a solution.

G: Any ones in particular that you remember?

R: No. There were just so many problems. One of the peculiar ones, one of the most difficult parts of a whole outer space trip is the re-entry into the earth because the capsule must hit the atmosphere at precisely the right angle. If it's a little too high, then it's going to skip off and that thing will wander through space forever; there's no way in the world of getting it back. If it's too steep when it hits the atmosphere, it's going to burn to cinders before the thing gets to the ground. And I remember the problem was illustrated to me as holding an apple in this hand and holding a knife in this hand, and then plunging it and just hitting the skin of the apple, nothing else. But hitting the skin, not missing it, hitting the skin without even touching the flesh of the apple. This meant that they had some terribly difficult problems.

(Interruption)

R: They had had a few trips. That was in and out of space. But they were still highly

dissatisfied with the instrumentation they had to accomplish that particular thing. They'd also discovered that the most important single substance for the space program was ceramics. They were still playing around with various types of ceramics. But the standards they were setting for them just seemed to me to be incredible. You know, I can't give one big dramatic problem but just put them all together. They were not as far along as I had thought they would be.

G: Was Johnson a critical investigator in situations? Would he ask tough questions? Would he make a--?

R: On something like that?

G: Well, not necessarily that particular problem, but just on one of these trips in general, would he scrutinize the facilities carefully or was it more ceremonial?

R: No. No. He didn't have the understanding that would have been essential to doing that. You really can't ask very critical questions in a situation like this unless you have some knowledge of physics, some knowledge of engineering, some knowledge of mathematics, some knowledge of the computer sciences.

He could be very good in asking questions in a political situation. God, he could cut to the heart of it. And he was also very good in asking questions about social situations. If you were to bring him into a re-housing project, for example, Lord, he would know as much about that project as the architects by the time he finished talking to them.

Here--and this again is also interesting--his problem with things like physics or ceramics or biology or what have you was not at all a lack of intelligence. That had

nothing to do with it whatsoever. It was just a habit that he had in his mind of not really focusing on any type of intellectual discipline, unless it had a direct bearing on a problem he was trying to solve. Once it had that, God, he could master it in one big hurry.

I think I've told you about the way he mastered that highly complex question of the difference between civil and criminal law. That's rather typical. I don't think that man had cracked a law book in forty or fifty years at that point. And you see, he didn't really have to learn anything about physics or chemistry or engineering or what have you, or aerodynamics.

G: How about management and personnel? Would he home in on these?

R: No. No. That was one of his greatest weaknesses. Johnson, never in his life, never, understood the necessity for some sort of orderly management. And to the extent that he would get into management, it would usually be on very trivial, very tricky public relations items. I can recall when he was traveling somewhere, I think it was in Puerto Rico.

(Interruption)

R: We were traveling in Puerto Rico and [Bill] Moyers was with him, looking at some Peace Corps projects. The man in charge of one of them had a long beard. His only real comment was to tell him he had to shave off that beard, because he thought it looked bad for the folks back home to see this man in a beard.

And when we went into the main camp where they were training these poverty corps types, the training was awfully tough. It was really awfully tough. It had one elderly lady there about sixty-four or sixty-five, and her eyes were just twinkling. She

had gone through it, the whole thing. I mean [it was] physically tough. You know, they were wading streams, running army obstacle courses, the whole works. And he remembered her vividly. He said, "Ma'am, you sure ought to be proud of yourself." She said, "I am proud of myself." God, he told that story for weeks afterward. What he would do in a situation like that is not really look at the administration to see whether it was orderly and workable. He would pick up the little human interest things that stood out that hit him in the face. And of course he ran his office like that. That was one of his great weaknesses.

G: Did you ever discuss with him the need to have an orderly management system?

R: Oh, good God, no. It would have been a waste of time. What I would usually try to do, as did everybody else including Walter [Jenkins], was to get an authorization out of him to do things in an orderly way and then try to do it ourselves in an orderly way. That's the only way you could do it.

I know at times when I was press secretary it became monstrous. He had an idea that the only time I should brief the press was when we had some news, then I'd call them in and give it to them. God, I tried to explain to him that the press must have, absolutely must have, a reliable, predictable type of contact with a press secretary. I don't think he ever understood it, but there I raised so much hell he finally let me alone.

When Sam [Rayburn] was dying--the reason why I'll never forget it is I just got a glimpse of Rayburn through the door when Johnson went in to see him. And it was a horrible sight. I did not recognize Rayburn. There was nothing there except bones with the skin stretched tautly over the bones. And I realized all of a sudden, my God, that's

the Speaker. There was not one ounce of flesh on any of it. And, you know, he was fey; the look of death was on his face. That's why I'll never--I've never seen a man look as bad as he did. The mere fact that he could move at all made you think quite possibly he's a zombie at this point. I remember that it was really a traumatic experience.

G: Did Johnson just go and stay a little while?

R: He stayed with him for a while. Yes.

G: Could he communicate with Rayburn?

R: I don't know. I don't know. Neither of us talked about it. It wasn't the sort of the thing that you wanted to talk about.

G: You mean there was total silence after that? He didn't discuss--?

R: Not total silence, but we did not talk about his visit with Rayburn.

G: What did he say about Rayburn's condition?

R: Nothing.

G: Surely it had an impact on him?

R: Of course it did. That's why he didn't want to talk about it. He wanted to get it out of his mind if he possibly could.

Later, when Rayburn actually died, I remember we were in an automobile and I don't recall the circumstances, but there was Lady Bird Johnson and myself in the front seat and I guess we heard the news of Rayburn's death over the radio. We knew he was going to have some statement, so I pulled some paper out of my pocket and started to write down something. And Johnson in the back seat, off the top of his head, came out with one of the most beautiful tributes I've ever heard: "This will be a lonely place

without him." I remember that's the way it opened. I was writing frantically, trying to keep up with him. I have no shorthand. I use the Phillips code which most reporters use.

But he was speaking slowly. And lord, that statement that he produced was so far superior to anything I could have come up with. And I quickly whipped it into shape, you know, got a couple of dangling clauses out of it. And that was his statement. It became rather famous. I remember in one TV newscast at Rayburn's funeral, they had Johnson record this, and they dubbed in Johnson's words while it went on. That was a beautiful thing.

I wonder how in the hell he, Lady Bird and I came together in that automobile? It was in Washington, D.C. I think it was in Virginia actually. It was a weird combination.

G: At the funeral itself, you had that famous group of four seated there: Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson. Three presidents and one future president there.

R: Yes. Yes.

G: Anything on the occasion itself? Did you go down to the funeral, do you remember?

R: I'm pretty sure I did. I don't remember for positive, but I would think I would have been there. I knew Rayburn pretty well.

It's rather difficult, at this late date, to give people a picture of Rayburn's standing in Washington at that particular time. There was a size, a stature, to Rayburn that sort of left everybody else looking secondary. It's funny, this little baldheaded man with a pot stomach. When Rayburn got up to speak in front of the House, the House quieted down.

There was not a sound. Have you ever been in the House of Representatives? You know that continual clatter?

G: Yes.

R: Not with Rayburn speaking. And presidents would rearrange their schedule for Rayburn, rather than the other way around. You know, Eisenhower wanted to hold the legislative meetings at seven o'clock in the morning and Rayburn sent back word that if he had wanted to go to meetings at seven o'clock in the morning, he would have stayed on the farm. And that put an end to that.

It was funny, Rayburn was not the most skillful speaker the House has ever had. Not nearly as skillful as Tip O'Neill for that matter. But he was a dominant figure in Washington. Everybody sort of looked up to him; didn't matter what you were. Rayburn was kind of put on a pedestal. It's not at all unusual for four presidents to show up at his funeral. A couple more would probably have shown up if they could have gotten out of the grave. I think he was more respected than any other figure I've known.

G: Why do you think that was?

R: I don't know.

G: What was it about him that--?

R: You couldn't put your finger on it. You knew he was absolutely on the level, that there was no pretense to him, no fraud. His word was absolutely good. He could tolerate a lot of nonsense. He was a rather forgiving man. The only person he would never forgive was Richard Nixon. But it was just there somehow. It's one of those undefinable things. You can recognize it; you could not be in Washington and not recognize it. You couldn't explain it, couldn't even describe it.

G: Then in late October you flew to Texas, to Fort Worth with him for the swearing in of

Judge Brewster, Few Brewster I guess, and--

R: I don't remember it.

G: --dinner honoring him. [You] went to see Rayburn again at that point.

R: I don't remember it.

G: Okay.

R: Maybe that was the time that I actually saw Rayburn through that door.

G: He aided Henry Gonzalez that fall in Gonzalez' election, and apparently had some contact with Bobby Kennedy about the fact or some arrangement whereby Gonzalez had not filed in time or something. There was some problem with the filing date. Do you remember that?

R: No. But is that the first time that Gonzalez got elected?

G: This was when they got Cantinflas down.

R: Oh boy, do I remember that campaign.

G: Tell me about that one.

R: (Laughter) I think he really elected Henry.

G: Do you?

R: Oh, and how. But the Cantinflas story, there I really have the story. There's a sort of a political fixer down in Texas [Mexico]. It's been so long since I've been down there now, I'm having trouble thinking of his name [Justo Sierra]. Oh, for about three generations, his people have been high in the Mexican government. His father was in the cabinet of Huerta. God, my mind is playing tricks on me. I'm getting old.

G: Was he a friend of Johnson's?

R: Yes. He was a friend of López Mateos. He flew up to the United States with López Mateos. He was the interpreter when Johnson first met López Mateos down in Acapulco. He was sort of an international playboy, amateur bullfighter. I can see the man right in front of me and I can't think of his name. Well, you can look that up and put it later.

G: Okay.

R: But I ran into him about a year after the campaign. And he said, "George, I'm sitting there at home at night and the phone rings and I pick it up and there on the other end is Lyndon Johnson." And he said, whatever the name is, "I've got to have Cantinflas up here tomorrow night." And he said, "But, señor, how can I get Cantinflas?" "I don't care how you do it. You get Cantinflas up here tomorrow night in San Antonio."

And he did it somehow. This man, as I said, was quite a fixer. ABC hired him the year the Olympics were in Mexico and he managed to get ABC the exclusive contract for carrying the Olympics. That's how good he was.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

R: He's now out of favor, by the way. He made a very bad mistake when he backed the wrong candidate for the PRI [*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*] presidency. And that ended--it may come to me before we're through.

So he put Cantinflas on an airplane to San Antonio. And Cantinflas came back a couple of days later and saw him and said, "What, [is] this man crazy? What's [inaudible] up there?" He said, "I land at the airport and this great big man, he grabs me. And he takes me into a room and he says, 'Look, we're going to go through the streets, and you're going to have people and there's going to be a lot of shouting and cheering.

They're going to say, "Viva Cantinflas." And every time they say, "Viva Cantinflas," you say, "Viva Gonzalez." So I go through the streets. People cheer and they say 'Viva Cantinflas' and I say 'Viva Gonzalez.' He finally goes in and sends me on back here. What kind of crazy business is this?" (Laughter)

Oh, God, I wish I could think of his name. Almost everybody that would know is dead now. That's it, Justo Sierra, Justo Sierra. He is the pre-eminent Mexican fixer. His father was the pre-eminent Mexican fixer before him, and his grandfather was the pre-eminent Mexican fixer. And Justo was quite a lad. Justo was the one that got Cantinflas. Nobody else could have gotten Cantinflas like that. And Justo was very close to a long series of Mexican presidents. I got to know the man fairly well. He was rather charming. He was a complete rascal and made no bones about it. But he was the one that got Cantinflas.

G: Why did LBJ go to this trouble for Henry Gonzalez?

R: A lot of reasons. You've got to begin with one, that he really had a very deep sympathy for the Mexicans. That was genuine. That was not just a pose. A lot of people thought that he was just trying to take the curse off of his so-called anti-civil rights record, but that's not true. He really did throb to the Mexicans.

G: You have the Cotulla experience.

R: Right.

G: But what else do you have with which to document this?

R: Well, I don't know that I could document it; I don't have to. I was around the man when he was talking to them.

G: Well, let me put it in another way. What evidence do you have or what can you cite to give me an example of his feeling that way?

R: The only thing I could cite are the many things that he did. After all, he got that federal judge, a Mexican; the famous one about that kid from Dos Rios [Felix Longoria was from Three Rivers, Texas], which again all this could have been fake. That's why I have difficulty with it.

G: Oh, Longoria--

R: Felix Longoria. That wasn't fake. That was for real. You could tell mostly when he was around Mexicans. God, he really was; he was their bosom buddy.

G: Well, describe it for me.

R: Just the way they appealed to him and he appealed to them. Everybody was at ease. There was no feeling on the part of the Mexicanos that this man is being patronizing or this man is just trying to--they accepted him for what he was. I can still recall the absolute enthusiasm that would greet him every time he went down to the border. And it was wild enthusiasm. And he himself had adopted many Mexican manners. This is why he was always late to a party because, you know, Mexicans are always late. Their manners are very elaborate but they do not include punctuality.

We had some Mexicans working on the staff. Any one of them will tell you what I'm telling you. Again, I can't cite evidence but anybody that was around him, I do not think anybody could spend any time with that man without realizing that his feeling for the Mexicans was a very genuine feeling. You just couldn't do it. I think it grew out of Cotulla because I doubt if he ever saw a Mexican before Cotulla.

Now, you know the campaign that was put on against Gonzalez was a pretty nasty campaign. They brought racial bigotry right into it. Every billboard for [John W.] Goode, all through San Antonio, stressed that Goode was a Lutheran. They'd do it various ways but that was the same; that was the real tip-off. After all, if he's a Lutheran, he cannot be a Mexican. And what was the name of the Archbishop of San Antonio at that point?

G: [Robert] Lucey?

R: Lucey, Archbishop Lucey. Ever talked to him?

G: We have an interview with him.

R: Well, I think that he'd tell you that Johnson was very genuine where the Mexicans were concerned. But I think that he was somewhat outraged by the kind of campaign they were running against Henry Gonzalez. Second, I think the [Phil] Kazen had appealed to him. Third, he felt that San Antonio was sort of a stronghold of his, which it was as long as they could get Mexican votes out. It was a real stronghold.

Here you are, in that very strange world, it was very easy to cite all sorts of things he did for Mexicans. One can easily say this is for political purposes. The only thing I can add to it is that I knew him and they weren't. I can't describe it. It's just a question that usually if you're around the man as much as I was around him, you sooner or later understand when he's being sincere about something and when he isn't.

And Johnson was very, very sincere about two or three things. I'd say the Mexicans, this worship that he had for education. I think it was the type of education that you and I wouldn't recognize as education, but nevertheless, he thought it did everything

including curing chilblains. And I think that he became sincere in the question of black civil rights. But that did come much later. It wasn't something that happened to him as a very young man as the Mexican thing did.

Of course, the Mexicans were responsible for his being in the Senate. And even though those votes were being cast by political bosses along the border, you can be damn sure those Mexicans never had any objection to voting for Lyndon Johnson. It didn't matter whether they were boss-controlled or not; they were going to vote for "Lyndon B. Johnson y Dos Rios [?], Señor Dos Rios."

G: Okay. Anything particular on LBJ and Henry Gonzalez?

R: No. They weren't particularly close friends.

G: They weren't?

R: Well, they knew each other and got along with each other, but they weren't particularly close friends, no. Gonzalez never forgot what Johnson did for him. And I think Johnson may have been the difference in that campaign. That bringing in Cantinflas, that was a master stroke.

G: Yes. Do you know whose idea it was in the first place?

R: Sounds like his.

G: Really? You think Johnson was aware of Cantinflas?

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He might have not known who Cantinflas was. That's the interesting part of it. He might not have even known that Cantinflas was a motion picture star. But he would have known that the Mexicans all thought Cantinflas lived on high.

There was one rather emotional moment on the trip to the Truman Library. He

and Truman got along together very well. And Truman had had a replica made of the Oval Office. Not to the precise dimensions, but precisely like the office except I think about an eighth smaller or something like that. And Truman had also done a recording, a voice recording on the presidency. And I can still remember, we all stood there listening to Truman's voice and looking in at the Oval Office. At the end of it, Truman had tears in his eyes. I remember that.

Was that the day that we had the lunch with Truman in the Muehlebach [Hotel]?

What date is that?

G: This is November 9.

R: What year?

G: 1961.

R: No, that wasn't the time then.

G: But the hotel kitchen did catch fire.

R: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well, some grease caught fire. I don't know that you can say the kitchen caught fire.

G: Okay.

R: We were in Kansas City quite a bit, off and on.

G: When you went to Missouri, oftentimes, particularly St. Louis, you would get together with Tony Buford.

R: Of course. Tony Buford worked for Gussie Busch, and Busch and Johnson were very close friends so Buford would be a close friend, too. And let's see, there was a public relations man working for Tony Buford--what the devil is his name? I can't remember; it

doesn't matter.

G: How do you explain that close relationship?

R: I haven't the faintest idea.

G: Was there any legislation that the beer people were interested in?

R: Not that I know. It was a relationship that Johnson had developed before I started to work for Johnson, so I just know it was there when I was there. They didn't see each other too much. Johnson would go to St. Louis occasionally to see him. But there was a fairly close relationship because--it was mostly through correspondence.

G: Okay. You flew to Detroit with him to address the White House Regional Conference there and he had dinner with the governor of Michigan and others. Anything on that phase of the trip?

R: That was very routine. I remember it well because there was nothing to remember, so to speak. But that was fully routine. You know, a lot of these things just come off the way they were planned and that was one of them.

G: Okay. And then it was right after that that you returned to Washington and then Rayburn died, and you flew back to Texas.

R: Right. What's that date again?

G: This is November 16, flew to Perrin Air Force Base with--

R: Let me get that. Oh, I'm sorry, November. [I] haven't gone far enough yet. Let me see it in context for a second. Jim Blundell.

The reason I remember it so thoroughly, poor Liz [Carpenter] is absolutely terrified of airplanes. And I think we had that little Beechcraft at that point, perfectly

adequate plane. But we ran into some very heavy storms, with lightning crashing all around and Liz was sitting right next to me. And every time there'd be lightning, wham, her fingers would dig right into my arm. By the time we reached Phoenix, my arm was just black and blue all up and down. (Laughter)

At one point, Johnson himself got a little bit panicky. I remember his asking the pilot, "Do you know where you are?" The pilot said, "Yes." Thank God, Johnson didn't follow up with the next question. The pilot knew we were over Arizona. That was about it.

G: Okay, you went to New York with him to the--

R: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Seems to me there was--no, there was some argument over his speech on the plane, but that didn't matter.

G: Anything significant on that?

R: Oh, Liz had had a couple of amusing remarks thrown in which Bob Kerr didn't like.

G: Oh, really? What were they about?

R: Turn it off; I'll tell you.

(Interruption)

R: They had the luncheon with the *Newsweek* editors. That turned out very poorly. Usually, he would take sessions like that by storm but not this time.

G: What happened?

R: I don't know what it was. I think at that particular moment that he was feeling the misery of the vice presidency, which he felt very, very deeply. And he gave them evasive answers in almost everything. I remember talking to some of my friends later, Sam

Shaffer especially, who told me that he just left them with a terrible impression. But evasion was the main--and he was evading, too.

G: Why would he do that?

R: Again, because he felt, first of all, that he'd been trapped into taking a position that had absolutely no power or force in it whatsoever. And, secondly, he was being beleaguered by Bobby Kennedy, and, third, any journalist he talked to was probably a Bobby Kennedy agent. He went that far, you know. It was probably a Bobby Kennedy agent trying to find a knife to stick into him somewhere. The whole period of the vice presidency was a wasteland when it came to any contacts with the press.

G: Okay. Then he went to New Hampshire to attend Styles Bridges' funeral. Did you go with him to that?

R: I don't think I did. I think I'd remember that and I don't.

G: He had been close to Bridges.

R: Oh, very close, oh and how. Where is that? What is the date?

G: November 28.

R: Oh. No, I was definitely not there. I would have remembered it because I knew Styles pretty well, also.

That story is worth carrying. When Johnson first became chairman of the Preparedness Committee the press compared it generally to the Truman Committee that had preceded World War II. And Harry Truman, then president, called Johnson into the White House for a discussion. He called Johnson and the committee in. But then he asked Johnson to stay behind for a few minutes after the rest of the committee had left.

He said, "Lyndon, let me give you some advice. You're going to be successful or you're going to fail in this investigation, according to your relationship with the ranking Republican on the committee." And he said, "You're pretty lucky. You've got Styles Bridges as your ranking Republican." And he said, "Styles, you're going to see him watching you very closely for four or five weeks. What he wants to know is are you dealing off the top of the deck, the bottom of the deck or out of the middle. He doesn't care how you do it, but if you do deal off the top, he'll deal off the top. If you deal off the bottom, he'll deal off the bottom. If you deal out of the center, he'll deal out of the center. He just wants to know the name of the game." Which was a pretty good description of Styles Bridges. Anybody was an idiot that tried to play games with him.

G: Any insights on Bridges and the China lobby?

R: Yes. Not so much on Bridges but the whole China lobby. There is one very important factor involved in that China lobby and that is that it consisted to a tremendous extent of the people who before World War II would have been isolationists. Now during World War II, the term "isolationist" became pejorative because the isolationists had hooked themselves up so closely to the Nazis. And they had Burt Wheeler, Gerry Nye and D. Worth Clark. That whole crew had gotten mixed up with the German-American Bund and George Sylvester [inaudible] and the whole business.

So when the war ended, the term "isolationist" had become pejorative, but the theory really hadn't. There were still very many people in the United States who embraced the old isolationist concept of no entangling alliances: that the United States should not engage in such things as the United Nations or the Marshall Plan or the Point

Four or anything like that. But they didn't dare call themselves isolationists. Now Chiang Kai-shek gave them a very convenient excuse for being against foreign policy without having to say they were isolationists. Their principal line was that "We're internationalists, just as much as you are. But we insist that we have to apply ourselves to China just as much as we do to Europe."

Well, of course the thing was nonsensical. Nobody in his or her right mind was going to give anything to Chiang Kai-shek. Now every thousand dollars that we sent over there to help out the Chinese would probably wind up with twenty-five cents, buying maybe a can of beans for a Chinese soldier.

This is one factor that you definitely have to take into account, that it was a marvelous diversion for the isolationists who did not want to say they were isolationist. Now of course there were other factors. The Soong sisters, and God, Madame Chiang really was a charmer. I'll never forget her. I saw her in Taipei and she'd charm a bird right out of the trees.

And you had another thing, too, which was that quite a bit of the Republican leadership was centered around Bill Knowland from the West Coast and of course on the West Coast they look more to China than anything else.

The third thing was our Chinese relationships had become all loused up because of that incredible--what was his name? Hurley, Ambassador Hurley.

G: Yes, Patrick Hurley?

R: Yes, Patrick Hurley, who really got taken into camp by the communists and then later claimed that he hadn't, that it was the embassy that had been taken into camp. And so it

afforded a very rich field to explain that the reason we lost China, as though we ever had it to lose, was because of treachery in the State Department.

And put it all together, it became a pretty good racket in some sense. Somebody like Styles Bridges would embrace it, I think, just because it gave him contact with money. The kind of people that were pro-China had a lot of money and they were willing to spend it. And at the same time, it gave him the license that I've already explained where he could tell everybody that he wasn't an isolationist. Isolationists were not popular in New England, even without the onus that they picked up during World War II.

That's one of the things you really have to keep in the back of your mind. Sometimes, if you look at the Senate, what you discover is that many controversies in the Senate echo controversies of the past. That does not mean they're necessarily caused by it, but I remember Harry Reynolds of INS, pointing out to me in the days before World War II that all of the isolationists were people who had opposed Roosevelt on the Court packing bill. And that everybody, with the exception of Senator [William] King of Utah, who was for Roosevelt's foreign policy in the intervention in Europe, had been for him on the packing bill.

I went back and checked the records on that thing and, by God, he was absolutely right. That was one of the bitterest battles that was ever staged in the whole history of the Senate. It was fascinating to watch the development of the isolationists who began just as isolationists to keep America out. But it started to get closer and closer, more of a Nazi tinge almost every day.

G: How would Johnson deal with someone like Styles Bridges?

R: Oh, he had no trouble dealing with Bridges at all. That was easy. Just deal off the top of the deck.

G: Did his awareness of Bridges' association with the China group diminish his respect for Bridges?

R: No. Johnson didn't think that way. You know, this is one of the difficult things to understand about Johnson. Like he did not have respect for people because they held certain views; he did not lose respect for people because they had certain views. Johnson analyzed almost everyone from the standpoint of ability and from the standpoint of how they would react in any given situation. He was one of the most non-ideological politicians that ever got into the United States Senate.

Where Bridges was concerned, he recognized immediately the ability, which was very, very high. Bridges was a real schemer. And as far as he was concerned, the only step after that was to figure out where he could get Bridges' vote and where he'd have to write it off and get the votes from some other source. But this is one of the hardest single things to fathom about Johnson. Most of us have a set of political, social principles that to us are mandatory. I don't think he had any. I think the closest he came to it was a sort of general populist view that you had to be for the common people. It's spelled P-E-E-P-U-L. God, I got tired of that line.

One of the things that happened during the vice presidency was sort of a separation of Johnson from much of his former staff, and even to some extent from his former Texas friends. I never fully understood it. I think to some extent, he felt that his

Texas background had prevented him from being president. And what he was doing was trying to construct a whole new life that was somewhat aloof from Texas. This, I believe, was one of the things that John Connally resented, the feeling that there was a deliberate effort being made here to disassociate himself from his past. But if you look at the staff that he had as vice president, you'll find virtually nobody on it that had been with him before. I was there and--

G: Jenkins.

R: Jenkins and one or two of the secretaries and that was about it.

G: Well, he didn't have as large a staff, did he? Because he didn't have the [inaudible].

R: He could have. He could have had more than that.

G: Could he?

R: Oh, yes. [He] lost some good people. Lost Bill Lloyd, lost Charlie Boatner.

G: Anybody else that you think of?

R: That were lost?

G: Yes.

R: Warren Woodward; of course Warren Woodward left before, but he should have come back. He would have been a real asset. But even more than that, I'm thinking of not only the staff but of the Texas people. I remember once getting a call from Phil Kazen, who was in very grave trouble because the poverty corps had started a project in Laredo whose major aim was to organize the poor people of Laredo against the city government of Laredo. And poor Phil Kazen was just absolutely bewildered by all this. And he couldn't get through to anybody in the White House. So he finally called me. I wasn't in

the White House then.

G: What did you do?

R: Not much I could do. I just wrote Johnson a memo on it. As I said, I wasn't even in the White House at that point. But many of the Texas people that you would expect would have become prominent in Washington never got there at all.

G: That's an interesting point. Did he pick up some new people at this phase that were--

R: Well, Moyers, of course, he really picked up as vice president. Moyers had been in his senatorial office for a while, but he just sat in the back room and handled correspondence.

G: But Moyers went with the Peace Corps, didn't he, really?

R: Of course he did.

G: During this period, yes.

R: But it was during the campaign that Moyers became prominent.

G: You were saying 1961 was just a very bad year.

R: Terrible year, because he discovered during that year that there is absolutely no power in the vice presidency whatsoever. Even this business of breaking ties is a lot of nonsense. I've averaged out over a number of years [and] discovered there were ten tie votes a year. And that on the average, it was really necessary for the vice president to vote to break them only three times. As a rule, most tie votes are a challenge to the administration and in a tie vote the administration wins, so why should the vice president vote? The only time that it's essential is when you get some weird quirk and it doesn't happen often, in which the tie vote is on a pro-administration challenge to something that came out of the

committee as an anti-administration [vote]. And obviously if that's a tie vote, then the vice president voting can make a difference. In seven out of ten on the average, the vice president doesn't have to vote at all. I think when they usually do it, it's just sending a signal to the president, "Hey, boy, I'm still on your side."

But he made a number of incredible blunders right at the start, things that I don't understand at all. For one thing, that idea of his of trying to attend the caucuses, the Senate Democratic caucuses, and preside over them. Well, I didn't even hear about it until he tried it. He started springing these things without talking to anybody, or at least without talking to anybody that could have given him adequate advice. Because even I could have told him that they're not going to put up with it. You know if there's one thing the Senate is jealous about, it's the concept of two senators from each state. And to have a vice president presiding over the caucus, in their minds, means one state has got three senators, even though that's not quite true. All he's doing is presiding. But that doesn't matter. They are not going to stand for it.

Then the other thing was that incredible letter that he wrote trying to get Kennedy's signature. You must have a copy of that floating around somewhere. In effect, Kennedy was supposed to give him the Pentagon and outer space, and one or two other things.

G: Do you know who drafted that letter?

R: It may have been Ken BeLieu or it may have been that pal of Ken BeLieu's, that mathematical genius that later went up to New Jersey. Ken, I think, was in overall charge of the project. Now of course, Ken was a very good man but he was an absolute

innocent when it came to politics in the Senate. And to present the President of the United States with a letter in which he's supposed to give up control over the army and the navy and air force, especially with a constitution that specifically makes him the commander in chief.

(Interruption)

G: Let me ask you to go over this here.

R: Sure.

G: You were saying that LBJ was convinced?

R: Oh, LBJ was convinced that the vice president had to be at any and all times a loyal supporter of the president. And that if he disagreed with the president, that the only proper way of expressing that disagreement was face-to-face to the president in a private meeting with literally nobody else present; that under no circumstances was he to set up any kind of a center of opposition to the president.

I think a lot of that grew out of the fact that he had had a rather close look at that incredible operation that John Nance Garner ran in the Senate. I can still recall it myself. At the end of almost every day--I was with the United Press then--we, meaning the press, could drop down to John Nance Garner's office and he'd say, "Well, boys, let's strike a blow for liberty." And he'd put bourbon and water into glasses and we'd all sit around and have a drink with him, while he'd put out as much anti-Roosevelt material as he possibly could. I don't think it hurt Roosevelt in the slightest, but it was just somehow unseemly. It was amazing that Roosevelt--well, of course, Garner probably didn't do that until the second term, which was when I knew him. But it was inevitable that Garner was

going to get ousted for that third term.

G: Particularly after the Court packing bill, I guess.

R: Right.

G: There was a Mexican farm labor bill in 1961 that was enacted that--there were press reports that LBJ was working actively to defeat an amendment that the administration supported and there was some indication, at least in the press, that Johnson worked actively to--

R: I don't know, but I don't believe it. I really don't believe it. I think that's a misnomer there. If he had done anything at all for it, I can assure you the press would not have known it.

G: But this would pit a strong Texas interest, which used Mexican farm labor, against a national policy. Do you think LBJ would have sided against some of the interests in his home state here?

R: That would be a difficult one. I think the Mexicans were more important to him than anything else.

G: Okay. But you don't have any recollection of him trying to--

R: No, and I don't believe it. That's one which I just flat don't believe. There's something wrong there.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview XX