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F. EDWARD HEBERT ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW I

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ACCESSION NUMBER 79-60

INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 15, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: F. EDWARD HEBERT

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE McSWEENY

PLACE: Congressman Hebert's Office, Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

M: This interview is with F. Edward Hebert, Democrat from the First District, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Mr. Hebert, I would like to summarize briefly your career before we begin. It's a very brief summary. You of course come from New Orleans, Louisiana and were educated in that part of the country and in that city. You became involved in newspapering at a very early age around 1920 and were a sports editor and later political editor and columnist for the New Orleans States. Is that the correct newspaper?

H: I began on the newspaper in 1919. I was still a student at Jesuit High School and I wrote prep school sports at that time for the [New Orleans] Times Picayne. I became the assistant sports editor of the Times Picayne before I was out of high school. Then I went to Tulane University and became the first sports editor of the Tulane Hullabaloo, which was the school paper. I remained at the university for four years and there at the university was football manager and took the usual active part in campus activities, and so on and so forth. Then I went as assistant sports editor of the New Orleans States; I left the Picayne and went to the New Orleans States.

(Interruption)

M: You were talking about your newspaper and career.

H: Oh, yes. I left the Times Picayne and became assistant sports editor of the New Orleans States and remained there for two years at which time I left and became the director of publicity of Loyola University and remained there for three years, I think it was. Then I returned to the New Orleans States as the promotion manager of that paper, and then went back up to the newsroom as a general reporter and began to write a page one column. This was during the Winchell era and everybody had the local Peeping Tom. Every paper had theirs and I happened to be ours. I was feature writer as well, general newsman.

Then the Picayne bought the New Orleans States, and when they bought the States I then became the political editor of the paper and remained as a page one

columnist. I covered the Huey Long campaign when Huey started out for the Senate and then later became city editor of the paper. In 1939 after the death of Huey Long, when the so-called Louisiana scandals broke, I was the editor that wrote those scandals and caused the upheaval in Louisiana. The day that we had the first publication of the scandals, I think we had everybody in Louisiana that was anybody indicted. It was a mark of distinction to be indicted. And it meant the president of the university, the governor, you name him and he was in jail. We had three suicides and I think the total number of indictments was around four hundred and ninety in a one year time, and as a result of that activity, I came to Congress.

(Interruption)

M: You were elected to Congress?

H: Purely by accident, I had no political ambition whatsoever. I never intended to enter public office; I had never been in public office. In this time, it looked to me like a pretty good chance to be a better reporter if I came to Washington. They got me on sabbatical leave for two years because I knew I would never be re-elected. [With] my temperament and my attitudes and my way of going, there wasn't a chance for me to be elected more than once.

M: It is a fine thing to say, Mr. Hebert. I believe that you are the dean of the Louisiana delegation.

H: Well, that was thirty years ago.

M: And you were recently, I think, commended for having twenty-five years consecutive [service].

H: No, thirty years. I've been in Congress thirty years now. I became the first man from Louisiana to serve twenty-five consecutive years in the House of Representatives, and I have served longer in the House of Representatives than any individual in the history of the state of Louisiana. So I'm still on sabbatical leave for a long period of time. That's about it, as far as my coming to Congress is concerned and I'm at that point now where I'm looking around, maybe it is getting to the end of the rope.

M: I don't think so yet. You were appointed or currently, I should say, are on two committees. I would like to just name them: the Armed Services Committee where you are the third-ranking Democrat, and the Standards of Official Conduct Committee where you are also third-ranking, I have it. You are chairman in the Armed Services Committee of the special subcommittee number two and special subcommittees on retirement and the service academies.

H: I have about four or five subcommittees, and I'm going to be reappointed in the next day

to another one.

M: Oh, all right. These things I think are pretty well documented and we--

H: Oh, I think they are. Of course the committee that Mr. [Mendel] Rivers is chairman of--the Armed Services Committee and [he and I] came into Congress at the same date. We are the only two left of the old Naval Affairs Committee, upon which Mr. Johnson served.

M: This is a good place to get into this. Let me begin this part of the interview by asking you if you recall back in 1941 when you first came to the House your first meeting with Mr. Johnson and your impressions?

H: My first meeting with Lyndon was a casual one of the freshmen congressmen, the individual that had come up as a pageboy or doorkeeper I think it was Lyndon was, and later became secretary to Dick Kleberg from Texas. I met him in that casual way because you know, a freshman in Congress is like a freshman in the university, it's the same thing. I know fewer people in Congress today than I did when I came in. It is the same way on a campus. When you were a freshman on the campus, you knew everybody on that campus; when you graduated, you only knew your class and a few outsiders. And that's the same way in Congress. A congressman comes up here and he knows these people, he has heard their names, and he seeks them out and these are people who awe him. After the years go along, well, then you don't generally know them. You don't go out of your way to know them.

As it's of interest too--Lyndon didn't know anything about this of course, no reason to know about it--when I didn't have any idea of ever coming to Congress when I was on the newspaper, Mr. Roosevelt came to New Orleans. There had been a young congressman elected in Texas named Lyndon Johnson, and Mr. Roosevelt came down there on his way ostensibly to go down to Corpus or someplace to go fishing off the coast. In reality he wanted to make the contact with the new congressman. He knew of course we were building then the big two ocean Navy--the government of the country was dedicated to the concept of the two ocean Navy. That's when I think, and this is merely conjecture on my part, but I think based on hindsight and knowing what happened, this is probably the first time that Lyndon Johnson and Franklin Roosevelt were brought close together in a package. I think this was the time that Franklin Roosevelt sold Lyndon Johnson or Lyndon Johnson bought Franklin Roosevelt, quite frankly, in this visit, because as you well know Lyndon became a very devoted follower of Franklin Roosevelt, along with Sam Rayburn. At that time I was on the newspaper. The scandals had not yet broken in Louisiana; there had been no indication of scandals. I have often thought of that particular--

M: Do you recall when you developed a little closer friendship with Mr. Johnson?

H: The friendship that I developed with Lyndon would be a friendship that you develop with members of your own committee the first two years, and then, you remember, he went away to war. He was a young commander in the Navy, served in the Pacific, and then he returned here. Of course he always had Mr. Roosevelt as his mentor, and he moved in the--I was only playing in the class A league and he was playing in the majors. So, obviously, we didn't cross each other in the same ball game all the time.

But [I knew] Lyndon through our association on the old Naval Affairs Committee and then when I got to know him of course perhaps best of all is in 1945 when Mr. [Carl] Vinson appointed a committee to go to Europe within two weeks after the shooting had stopped in Europe and the surrender. At that time Mr. Rayburn had decreed that there could be no more members of Congress going abroad, but as soon as the surrender took place--of the Germans at Hitler's death--then immediately we went abroad to what we call a wrap-up or a roll-up. This was a special select committee appointed by Mr. Vinson and it was supposed to be a so-called blue ribbon committee. I got on it as a youngster, freshman, and the committee was composed of Mr. Johnson, Lyndon Johnson, as chairman of the committee, Mike Bradley of Pennsylvania, the next member, and myself the third Democrat. On the Republican side, the ranking member was Sterling Cole who later became the director general of the atomic commission in Vienna, served over there for quite a number of years, and Bill Hess, William Hess, of Cincinnati, Ohio. We were the five members.

During that trip we were the first civilians to go into Bremen. We went there and the Navy had taken Bremen, but we went over to Europe by way of Bermuda, the Azores, and London, Paris, and then we spread out from there; we went to Scotland of course when we came back. We went into Italy and, as I say, Bremen and Bremerhaven, Africa, Morocco down in that [area], Palermo and Sicily.

On that trip the young fellow Lyndon took along at that time was a young fellow named Don Cook. Of course we knew why Lyndon took him, so he could do Lyndon's work. I think they had more aides on that committee than we had members of Congress. When we got to London we picked up Bradley's son, so he had an aide. And when we got to Paris, Cole had a young naval lieutenant; we picked him up and he had an aide. So it left only Hess and myself without aides. And we complained to Admiral [Alan] Kirk at dinner one night that we had no aides, so he said he would give us an aide. So we picked up the boatswain's mate around and made him the aide. But the official escort on the party was Captain Ramsey, Donald Ramsey, and he had an aide also. I forget his name now, a Marine buddy, I forget but it will come to me.

M: What do you recall about Mr. Johnson on this particular trip?

H: I recall many things on it. Of course officially as we showed you, for want of a better name and to make it sound better, I wrote a book which I called I Went, I Saw, I Heard which describes the trip in diary form and reading it now, it's almost eerie, the

predictions that we had. But on the trip, I tell in the opening day of the diary--writing the diary--about how Lyndon immediately became a fine host and saw to our comfort and everything like that, and he was very considerate of the members of his committee.

I had a letter among other things to--I had a friend of mine in New Orleans named Frank Quinn who was an Irishman born in Dublin on March 17--couldn't be more Irish than that--and he handled Grant's Scotch in America. We landed over there and stayed at the Cumberland Hotel in London, right outside of Hyde Park. We went to dinner one night and asked for Scotch and the fellow said, "I say, where will we get the Scotch?" We thought you could get Scotch any place that you wanted it. We didn't, but I had a letter from Frank Quinn to Grant Gordon who was the owner of Grant's Scotch. And we went down to Edinburgh, Scotland, and Lyndon and I went up to visit the Grant's place, deliver the letter, and we came away with a whole case of Scotch. And we handled it very well. We were on "You take the high road and I'll take the low road and I'll get there before ye," and the whole bunch of us did all right. We went up and down the highways and the byways of Scotland.

The election was just about coming up then. Churchill was on the way out, that soon. The war wasn't over yet, but as you recall Churchill was defeated. That was a very, very--one of the little human interest things.

M: What was Mr. Johnson's reaction to seeing all these places so soon after the war?

H: Well, his reaction was, I think, the same as all of our own reactions. He had been in the service in the Pacific and he had come out. And I'll never forget we were in Port Lyautey on Memorial Day and had services there. Look, there's a picture of us there. This was a place which commanded the entrance to the Mediterranean where our Sixth Fleet is right now. This place was taken by conquest from the French, not the Free French, the other French. We stood there at that graveside and everything and put the flowers on the grave, and his reaction, as far as I can say, was typical of American reactions and a very devoted, emotional thing, as far as we knew.

I think one of the most interesting conversations and of course the most intimate ones I ever had with him was the night in Bremen. This night in Bremen, they had one place standing, practically only one house in the whole city of Bremen, [which] was the quarters of Admiral Robinson whom we previously knew. Lyndon and I had the library for a bedroom and each of us had a cot in this library. It was a big library, and we had the spirits sitting in the bottle between us, and when we each wanted to take a slug, we each took a slug and drank it. That night Lyndon, I'll never forget, was very, very talkative, very loquacious. He really rehearsed his whole political career to me that night.

M: Would you tell me a little about it?

H: He told me about how he had met Roosevelt and what Roosevelt had meant to him and

his general philosophy of going--and these sort of things that we [are] talking to now only can be of value if you tell things that shouldn't be told. I'll never forget one expression he used. He was telling me about being at the White House one day and Jesse Jones wanted to see the President, Mr. Roosevelt. Roosevelt told Lyndon, he said, "Go out and wait for me. I've got to talk to God." (Laughter). I say these are the kind of things that I think make history itself, but you have to risk the danger of being maybe not quite proper in telling them.

M: Did he indicate then his political goal?

H: No.

M: Or any of his ambition for higher office?

H: No.

M: Do you think that he was planning to stay in the House?

H: He knew everybody, naturally, in his connections and all. Senator Wadsworth was over there at that time and we went out to the so-called Little Red Schoolhouse where the surrender took place. You are not old enough to remember that. Well, that's described, too, in the book. Much was made of the surrender of the Germans in the so-called Little Red Schoolhouse. It made a beautiful line: the Little Red Schoolhouse. Well, there are schoolhouses that are smaller or larger and it was a schoolhouse and it was painted red, but that's as far as it went about being a little red schoolhouse, you know, as we accept it, but the line sounded fine.

We were up in Eisenhower's headquarters and a strange thing: in the room were only maybe ten or twelve of us, and there in the room were two future presidents of the United States. Neither one at that time thought even in their own minds, that they would be president of the United States--I don't think either one of them [did]. And both were, Eisenhower and Johnson.

M: Do you recall how this trip came about? Was Mr. Johnson instrumental in getting this trip with Mr. Vinson's approval?

H: With Mr. Vinson you had to promote everything you got. It could have been Mr. Cole who promoted the trip because Mr. Cole loved to travel. And of course you would have to have a Democrat to be chairman of the committee and Lyndon was a favorite of Mr. Vinson's. That was my experience from Mr. Cole and Mr. Hess, that I learned how to be a chairman. I was a freshman on the committee and Mr. Cole and Hess wanted to go to South America. They were two Republicans and they couldn't go with two Republicans; they had to have a chairman--Democratic chairman--so they asked me to go. I didn't know what it was all about. Being a young freshman, I would travel anywhere, across

the Potomac if you asked me to. I soon found out I was the chairman, but I was only a protocol chairman. I didn't amount to anything. Well, this is how it probably picked up. Lyndon wanted to go and he and Stub were very good friends--Cole--it grew from that. It grew from that.

M: How would you characterize the young Lyndon Johnson then?

H: Most affable. Very likeable. Very, very likeable. And as I say, we had a lot of fun on the trip. We had plenty of fun. Well, when we left over there we brought back two Red Cross nurses with us in the plane that we were coming back in. One of them was Admiral Gatch's daughter. Well, again you are too young to know that they had a very famous battleship called Battleship X--it was sort of mysterious--of which her father was commander. And the other was a young girl that Lyndon knew from Texas named Wilkie [?]. We took them back with us, I mean, they hitched back. She was up here just the year before last to see me, and she was staying at the White House. She came back here after all those years and everything.

Then coming back home we left out of Paris and then we had to go back to London and we stopped in Greenland--at Iceland rather--at Reykjavik. We left our big plane to be refueled and everything and took the DC3--that's the old--you know what a DC3 is. They had the bucket seats on each side. And we just rolled a bottle from one end to the other. Everybody wanting to drink. I mean, I'm telling you these things to show how human he was; he was very, very human. I mean he was one of the boys, [one of the] gang. Now shut that off.

(Interruption)

M: Mr. Hebert, we are still talking about this trip. I wonder if there is any other recollection you have about what you all did and what was said and thought, particularly relating to Mr. Johnson.

H: Well, the things that we did and talked about it and all are all recited in [inaudible]. It was just a trip that I think we learned a lot on. We met General Clay whom--what's the name, not Cassius Clay--Lucius Clay, whom Lyndon knew very well. You see, Lyndon knew most of the people; it was a great entree for all of us. And he made a most excellent chairman. He was a very fine traveling companion. Excellent.

M: How would you describe Mr. Johnson's relationship with--well, let's begin with Mr. Vinson and take Mr. Rayburn.

H: Well, of course, he and Mr. Rayburn always professed mutual love for each other.

(Interruption).

- M: Now, Mr. Hebert, continue now after your having met a quorum call. We were discussing--
- H: I just missed my name, too.
- M: Oh, really.
- H: I had to wait until they get [inaudible].
- M: We were discussing Mr. Johnson's relationship with various members of the House and I had mentioned Rayburn which you commented on and I wonder if you--
- H: He got along well with members of the House.
- M: And Mr. Vinson too?
- H: Oh, extremely well with Mr. Vinson, extremely well. I think Lyndon was the first one to persuade Mr. Vinson to fly.
- M: I hadn't realized that.
- H: He took Mr. Vinson in an airplane for the first time. He and Mr. Symington did. Mr. Vinson wouldn't fly at all, and he persuaded him to fly.
- M: I think another person I would like to ask you about their relationship as you saw it was his and Mr. Roosevelt's, Franklin Roosevelt.
- H: Well, I only--you mean the President? Well, I only know what he told me about the President. I never saw them together or anything and I can only repeat what he told me and he used the same expression about Mr. Roosevelt as he used about Mr. Rayburn. "He is like a daddy to me." Which seemed to be a very frequent expression of Lyndon's.
- M: Were there occasions when he would have to choose a side between either one, either Mr. Rayburn or Mr. Roosevelt as far as an issue or piece of legislation?
- H: Not that I recall. Not that I recall. There were no sides to choose. Mr. Roosevelt called the shots.
- M: Did you participate in what is--
- H: I have a very interesting thing I just remembered, saying Mr. Roosevelt called the shots; this is something in which Lyndon was involved. They had before the Congress, and it's of interest at the moment when we talked about tax deductions, you know, and tax bills. There was before the Congress--this is my sophomore year--a plan of tax forgiveness

known as the Ruml Plan. Are you familiar with it? Do you remember?

M: I try to recall all the things about it.

H: Ruml Plan. R-U-M-L. And as usual I was a maverick. I was out of line with the party's leadership and about thirteen or fourteen Democrats were supporting the Ruml Plan. I got a call at my home on Saturday morning from Mr. Rayburn; he asked me would I be at the White House that night with Mr. Roosevelt and a bunch of the sophomores, second termers. A very strange thing, parenthetically, is now these wild-eyed liberals or so-called Democratic study groups are yelling for caucuses which they are having every month and all, and this is a great liberal movement. Up until the time this year I had been in Congress all these years and I had never attended a Democratic caucus. [There's] a very simple reason why I never attended a Democratic caucus: they never had one. Because Mr. Rayburn ran the shop like he wanted to run the shop. I used to argue with him. I did argue with him, being a freshman and youngster and so on, that at least, by God, he ought to let us express our opinions and I pointed out to him that Huey Long held a caucus every day. The vote was 99 to 1 but he held the caucus and at least gave somebody a chance to say something, knowing they wouldn't get it done but they had a chance to say it and make them feel part of the team. The result of that is one of these pat him on the back and say, "Now, little boy, be good."

We had this meeting at the White House with Mr. Roosevelt. He had just come back from Europe and just met with de Gaulle and Churchill. I think it was right after Teheran. And this was the night the famous story--which has now become a famous story--about his evaluation of de Gaulle, you know, about Clemenceau and all. He told us that story that night and I repeated the story as a matter of fact. That's how it got out in the paper. [I] never ceased being a reporter.

So Mr. Rayburn asked me was I going to the White House that night and I told him yes. He said he wanted to see me, wanted to talk to me about something. So that night at the White House [there was] a very small crowd. The President was sitting in a chair drinking beer and munching on crackers and cheese, just generally informal. The Speaker called me on the side and said, "Eddie, how would you like to be on the Board of Visitors of the Naval Academy?" Well, hell, I would like to be on the board of anything as far as I was concerned. I had nothing going for me. I was a lowly sophomore, tickled to death to be on any committee so I said, "Well, certainly, I would love to do it, Mr. Speaker." He said, "Well, Lyndon is on the board, Lyndon Johnson, and he has got too much to do. He just simply can't take care of all that work. And he is going to resign from the board. And I'm going to name you to take his place."

So the House went into session on Monday and Lyndon's resignation was in. He resigned from the Board of Visitors. That high pressure of work, he couldn't devote his time to the Board of Visitors, and Mr. Rayburn immediately named me to the Board, and that was my introduction to the Board of Visitors. Since [then] I've served so long on it

and right now I'm in charge of the Academies. I'm a high executioner of all these academies. And, fine, I went on the Board, and of course [all] the work that it took over there was to go over there and have a nice time and have a couple of drinks and have a nice party. That's all that we could encompass. But this was doing me the big favor, the youngster, you know.

Two days later when I was sitting in the House, I was waiting for it. Mr. Rayburn sent a page down for me and I went up to him; he wanted to see me. I went up and he said, "Eddie, don't you think you can go along with us on that Ruml Plan?" I said, "No, sir, I'm too deep. I am committed." Pay off, I couldn't. (Laughter) So it looks like he wanted something that he couldn't collect on. But Lyndon gave me my entree into the Naval Academy.

M: Could you describe for me over your long service with Mr. Johnson on the Naval Affairs Committee and then the Armed Services Committee--?

H: Well, he was never on the Armed Services Committee. He had gone to the Senate by that time.

M: I thought it became the Armed Services in 1946.

H: Well, I think he was in the Senate by then.

M: [In] 1948, he went to the Senate, but anyway--

H: He was on the Armed Services Committee? I don't even remember him on the Armed Services Committee.

M: Well, would you just describe to me what--

H: [Paul] Kilday, yes, because Kilday was way down at the end of--almost at the end of the line to get on that. See, Kilday came from the Military Affairs Committee from Texas,

M: How would you describe Mr. Johnson's activity on that committee and his influence?

H: Well, he always had influence. To use the common term, he was always a wheeler and a dealer. He lived politics; he breathed politics; he loved politics. That was his forte. That's the best way I can describe him.

When I was made chairman of the investigating [sub]committee of the Armed Services, the first telephone [call] I got was from Lyndon from the Senate. He had a similar opposite committee to mine over on the Senate side and he offered me his help and cooperation and everything. And he did, I mean what I needed of it. But he was a super, a master politician.

(Interruption).

M: Mr. Hebert, we were talking about Mr. Johnson's role on the House Naval Affairs Committee.

H: Well, as I say, he was an influential member because he knew these people and he was very affable and very likeable, no doubt about it. And I shared his philosophy quite a bit until he became a westerner instead of a Texan. [He] changed on fundamentals on which I disagreed, because I could never forget on one of these television or radio shows when he first indicated that he would run for the presidency and he switched on civil rights, I remember I said, "I'm sorry, I have to leave my dear old friend, Lyndon."

M: Just as an aside, what year was this?

H: I have, forgotten. It was around when that first civil rights bill began to come up. You know, whatever year they were.

M: 1957 was one of the first.

H: Whatever it was--I'm not--

M: Well, we will come up in time to that point. Did you participate in Rayburn's Board of Education meetings?

H: No, I did not. I'm not a--I knew Mr. Rayburn very well and I respected him. I was very friendly with him. I don't take orders.

M: Do you recall any particular events or issues during these House days where Mr. Johnson really became very involved and was influential in getting legislation?

H: Well, of course, his biggest days were after he went to the Senate. On the House side, he wasn't involved. I remember when Pappy Daniels [O'Daniel] beat him to the Senate, when he was leading in the early returns and I remember Mr. Rayburn's expression, "Well, we cleaned that plow; we can take care of some others now." At that time he thought that Lyndon had won and he had not. Of course when Coke Stevenson lost by 87 votes, I used to call him old Landslide Lyndon.

M: How did he react to that?

H: He just laughed. What could he do about it? You have to take those things in stride.

M: Did you ever discuss with Mr. Johnson his feelings about being a member of the House of Representatives?

H: No. I never got involved with Lyndon in those kind of things. My relationship with him was a pleasant one and a friendly one, but nothing other than that.

M: How would you rate him as a congressman looking back now?

H: A very effective one. Oh, definitely. As I say, politics was his life. He played politics; he loved politics. When you get somebody who is as adroit as he is and loved the game and played the game for what it was worth and has the ability to do it, you are going to get a very effective individual. In contrast, I would be very unsuccessful. It is not my cup of tea--not at all.

M: Well, he was in the House for some ten years before he was elected to the Senate in 1948. Was he in a fairly powerful position at the end of [that] time in the House?

H: No, he was never in a powerful position in the House.

M: I didn't mean officially--I meant just--

H: I think that he had great influence with Mr. Vinson and had influence with Mr. Rayburn. All of Mr. Rayburn's friends did. And these people believed in the game of politics and played it. I have no criticism at all; it is their choice, not mine.

M: Were you aware of his trying again for the Senate in 1948, of his desire to run for the Senate again?

H: No. I mean I wasn't exposed that much to his feelings of that nature. Obviously after running once, he would run again. Of course the election with Coke Stevenson, the election was something which left much to be desired for the victor, but again that's politics. I really don't--I have no feelings in these matters except if somebody wants to do that, let him do it.

M: Are there any other recollections you have of meetings or discussions with Mr. Johnson during his [House of] Representative days?

H: No. I keep repeating the same thing. I have no reason to do it, because to me I make up my mind what I want to do and I do it. There is no need discussing things. You just heard the conversation on the phone. You see how short it was and how light it was?

(Laughter).

M: Yes. All right, I would like to continue on with the period of the fifties when Mr. Johnson was in the Senate.

H: Saw very little of him.

M: Do you recall any particular occasions?

H: No. . .very little of him.

M: Were there any occasions where his leadership techniques and/or strategy was felt in the Congress that you--?

H: Not to me personally, but [I received] a report back on it and that was [during] the civil rights fight. A member of Congress who was on the conference committee came back and told me, "I never realized he wanted to be president that badly."

M: Do you recall when you first began hearing Johnson's name in connection with presidential possibilities? It would be about the mid fifties.

H: Then . . . then, right when this civil rights thing started. I [would] say when he began to shift his position, when he ceased being a southerner and became a westerner.

M: Do you have any comments on his relationship with Eisenhower or what was felt about that among members of the southern delegation?

H: Well, I think he cooperated very well with Eisenhower when he was president; I don't think there is any doubt about it. I think he was very helpful to the president at that time. As far as the southern delegation was concerned, of course, he was persona non grata as far as the southerners were concerned. Very much so. I couldn't go beyond that.

M: One thing I haven't particularly asked you, over this period of time did you have an idea of what Mr. Johnson's feeling was towards the military and the military establishment and, say, our defense preparedness level?

H: I would say my impression would be [that he was] very friendly to them. He was head of preparedness committee there and he was a navy commander in the war. I would put Lyndon as very friendly to the military, to the uniform. I would think he would be very friendly to the uniform at the overall.

[My answers to] the questions you ask me are opinions, opinions based on very slight observations and nothing in depth, not being any time or thought to them. I'm not bothered with them. I'm not concerned with them.

M: Well, I think I'm more or less aiming at how you saw Mr. Johnson as a member of the House and I think at this point a very longstanding one as during his Senate years and any contact, of course, that you had with him.

H: The contact in the Senate--I had no contact with him. Really, there is nothing for me to contact him on. We had nothing in common. I would see him and talk to him. When he was vice president, I saw him on several social occasions, and we were friendly. I remember one night out with the Marine Commandant, somebody came up to me and hit me on the back like that and I turned around and it was Lyndon. I mean little things like that but nothing of any great demonstration that I know.

M: All right, then I will continue on in period of time. Let me bring this up to 1960. Did you attend the convention, the Democratic convention?

H: I never have attended a Democratic convention. You must think I'm an awful Democrat.

M: No. What was your--?

H: Now I'll tell you why I don't attend them. Because I'll not be bound. If I attend a convention and I vote, I'm bound. I think I am bound.

M: What was the feeling about Mr. Johnson in Louisiana before the 1960 election?

H: Well, Louisiana was for him at the convention. Louisiana Democrats that attend the convention were all strong Johnsons. Every one of them was. And if I had been a delegate, I would have shared that.

M: Did you have any idea that he would accept the vice presidential nomination under Mr. Kennedy?

H: I had no feeling about it. I didn't give it any thought.

M: What was your opinion of the JFK-LBJ ticket?

H: Oh, I think that Johnson did as well as he could in carrying the ticket. I think he did.

M: Did you ever hear him comment as to why he accepted that position?

H: No, as again I say I'm not privy at all to--there's only one time. This is almost vulgar. I won't say it exactly, I'll let you. . . One night at the White House--he used to give good parties at the White House, both he and Jack Kennedy did and, as I say, we got along fine. We just happened to be walking down the corridor together on the way to the bar and the President said, "Give me a Scotch," and I said, "Give me one, too." It was just one of those things, that you happened to be thrown together alone and I said, "Listen, when in the hell are you going to get that so and so secretary of defense to leave my district alone?"--the Eighth Naval District I represent. He said, "That Republican"--by this time, we're just alone, you see. He said. "That Republican secretary wants to save money." I said, "But he isn't saving money, he is wasting money." He said, "He'll

convince you." And I looked at him right in the eye and I said, "Bull." [If] somebody asks what did tell the president, that'd be a fine thing to tell them. I mean, just those little incidents that mean nothing, but--

M: Well, we are looking for those too. Mr. Hebert, what was your activity and what was your opinion of Mr. Johnson or Mrs. Johnson's campaign in Louisiana?

H: I didn't vote for him.

(Laughter).

M: I wasn't asking that. Do you recall, were you anywhere attending any of the public functions?

H: No, I never attend.

M: This is in 1960, not 1964.

H: I never attend.

M: Okay.

H: I don't attend rallies and I don't participate in presidential elections. In fact, I don't participate in any election. I don't participate in the governor's race, I don't participate in the mayor's race. I participate in one election every two years. Then I'm strong for Hebert. That is the only election I take part in.

M: Did you have any occasion to see Mr. Johnson while he was vice president?

H: Yes. I mean on these--

M: Social occasions?

H: --social occasions. I saw him at parties.

M: Did you ever see him when he visited the House for legislation?

H: Visited the House? He never did to my knowledge. I mean, he may have dropped in over there and walked around. I never saw him on those occasions.

M: Were you aware of any feeling of Mr. Johnson being under any restraint being vice president?

H: No, I'm not competent to answer the question. I don't know.

- M: How would you describe the difference in the leadership of Mr. McCormack and Mr. Rayburn?
- H: The difference is great. I am devoted to John McCormack, but John McCormack's great fault is he tries to be friendly to everybody. I'll put it this way since you worked on a newspaper. He would never make a good city editor; Rayburn would. You know, what you've got to be is a good city editor, and Sam was a very strong man, a very strong parliamentarian and knew his business.
- M: How would you evaluate the effectiveness of their two types of leadership?
- H: Oh, Rayburn would have to be far out in front. I think John is his [own] worst enemy. McCormack--he is wonderful, tremendous, but you can't be that way. You just got to be a no good so-and-so to be a good speaker.
- M: Were you aware of Mr. Kennedy using Mr. Johnson in any capacity to get legislation through?
- H: No, I am not aware of it. I don't know whether he did it or not or to what extent he did it. You get this scuttlebutt. I'm not giving you scuttlebutt, because I don't know it to be a fact. I could talk all day on gossip. I'm only telling you what I know to my own knowledge which is the only valid thing for me to tell you and not what you pick up.
- M: Do you think that Mr. Johnson had any particular role in foreign and military policy during this time? He of course did take a trip to Vietnam.
- H: Did he have any role in it? Yes, I think he had a role in it. I think it was a horrible role. I think his backing Mr. McNamara up is the most horrible thing I can ever think of.
- M: I was thinking of during the vice presidential years.
- H: Well, the vice presidential years, I wouldn't know what role he played in that. I'm talking about the presidential years. I'm talking about his decision to take the--and I'm sure he followed McNamara's decision. I'm sure it was McNamara who was the strong man. I feel that, now I don't mean I was exposed to that. I feel that McNamara was calling the shots and the President was taking them because I can't envision a president--the Commander-in-Chief--not seeing his command, his Joint Chiefs of Staff, who are his advisers under the law, not seeing them for over a year to discuss Vietnam. He did not see them.
- M: What period was this?
- H: This was the period of August 1967 to the next 1968. That is sworn testimony under

oath; it was not hearsay.

M: Since we are discussing your involvement on the Committee of the Armed Services, I would like to continue with that and this will be during the presidential years. I may go back to some other things, other areas. I think I would like to ask these questions in sort of two areas--if you had any contact or discussion with Mr. Johnson or relation with members of the White House staff regarding these issues and then also what your opinions were on them. And I think one of the first that comes to mind was the reorganization of the Defense Department under Mr. McNamara.

H: Well, the reorganization of the Defense Department under Mr. McNamara was something [in] which Mr. McNamara went beyond the law and the intent of Congress, far beyond it, though he did not break the law. He stayed within the law, and the fact that he was able to get away with what he got away with was not Mr. McNamara's fault or the President's fault, it was Congress's fault for not calling a halt to it. I will put it that way. Now in sitting down here and talking to you, I recall incidences of being in White House conferences with the President on Santo Domingo. I recall on Sunday afternoon just before that broke, and I shared the President's position on Santo Domingo. The decision on Santo Domingo was at the morning conference, as I recall it, and the President, as I again recall it, gave us five alternatives that he had. Now this is about ten, ten-thirty, maybe up to eleven o'clock in the morning. And I asked him, I said, "All right, Mr. President, you have given us five alternatives. Which one are you going to take?" He said, "I haven't decided yet," and in effect he said, "I'm not going to let somebody else announce it." Now what's he got us in there for, to tell us? Well, this is a neta confar [?]. There was no such confirmation.

He was a master at getting Congress over there in these little groups and giving them all the inside--inside, hell--and particularly to a freshman. He would charm a freshman. One of these other fellows, you know, would start talking and the President would get up and then he would walk over to a freshman and, let me tell you, he would address all his remarks so that freshman--you could see him swelling up more as the night went on: "The President was talking to him!" He was selling him a real bill of goods. And he had great charm in doing this kind of stuff. Again, maybe I get too personally involved. My twenty-three years in the newspapers made me a little, I don't know, a little cynical. Big names didn't impress me. Big shots didn't impress me. I saw them come and I saw them go. Didn't impress me a bit.

M: Some other defense issues, I think, I would like to ask you about if you had any involvement in them or activity on them.

H: I had involvement in plenty of them. Now you are getting down to present dates.

M: Let me just mention these, and [see] if you want to comment on them. One would be the TFX issue.

H: I had nothing to do with that. That's Senator McClellan's baby.

M: The base closings and the merging--

H: The base closings, I had plenty to do with. The base closings were the most atrocious waste of money I have ever seen in my life.

M: Did you have any contact from Mr. Johnson or members of the White House staff regarding that?

H: Only one reversal. [It] was before Mr. Johnson. The first sixty-three bases closed, only one reversal. That was New Orleans--the Eighth Naval District--and Mr. Kennedy.

M: How did you bring that about?

H: Strictly accidental. I happened to go to the White House when they closed the Eighth Naval District in New Orleans, and it was the most horrible thing in the world. It was a waste of money. We had a coffee at the White House. I don't go to those things. Very rarely I go to them--very, very rarely go to them, those kind of clambakes. This afternoon I just happened--[I] said, "Well, I'll go over," and I happened to run into the President--Jack Kennedy--and I told him, I said, "What in the hell do you think they are doing down in the Eighth Naval District?" And he said, "What?" I said, "They are pulling the flag down." He knew what I was talking about. The other characters didn't know what I was talking about--I was using navy language. I said, "They are pulling the flag down." He said, "Well, have you talked to Connally?"--Tom [John Connally, Secretary of the Navy] Connally. I said, "Who in the hell do you think I have been talking to? Of course, I talked to Connally." He said, "Well, I will call McNamara up." The next morning--it was a Saturday morning--the telephone rang bright and early. Mr. McNamara was on that phone. The Eighth Naval District wasn't closed up, just that simple.

M: And another issue would be the merger of the reserve forces.

H: I know plenty about that.

M: Would you like to tell me a little bit about your observations and activity on that?

H: I blocked it.

(Laughter).

M: Yes, sir.

H: I don't know whether you knew that when you asked me that question. I blocked it cold.

M: Would you describe how you did that?

H: Well, how I did it: I just had enough votes; I had enough votes and did it. But up to the last, the merger--that was HR2 last year. [That] was the bill that blocked that--Mr. Vance, Cy Vance, of whom I am very fond, and Steve Ailes, the former secretary of the army, came down to tell me what they were going to do about the merger. I told them, "You all can't do it. You need a law to do it." "No, we don't." "Oh, yes, you do." "No, we don't." I said, "Don't you try it." Mr. McNamara--he knows everything--he tried it; he didn't do it, just built enough fire and everything. McNamara sat right over there, and I looked at him and I said, "Robert, you are just a transient. I have seen them come and I have seen them go and I'll be here long after you have gone. He is. He's gone and I am still here.

M: Were you ever aware of Mr. Johnson's sentiments on that particular issue?

H: No, it would only be reflected in--

M: His secretary.

H: --what the secretary did. The other big fight that I had over there in which the--again this is signing a paper on the part of the President--was the ROTC, the junior program. McNamara--it cost five million dollars to run that program, and he cut it all out and cut out the junior program. This was a dog eat dog fight. We had two hundred and thirty-four units in the Army; there was no units in thirty years I think it was. Now we have authorized, I think twenty-four hundred units, and by law they can't stop it. Now up to the very minute, the Defense Department didn't want the President to sign that bill. I know that. And he didn't sign it until minutes before the deadline. And the message that he signed it indicated that they ought to look into the junior ROTC program again. Now this was strictly McNamara. This is strictly--I am sure because I am sure the President really didn't know too much about this area at all. I am sure he didn't.

M: In having members of the military establishment and members of the Defense Department, the civilian side of it, testify before your committee, were you under any feeling that the military couldn't get their point across?

H: Any feeling? Full knowledge that they couldn't say it! Full knowledge that they couldn't say it.

M: Do you think this went as far as military muzzling, as they call it?

H: There is absolutely no doubt about it. Absolutely no doubt about it.

M: What were some of the areas where they felt they couldn't?

H: We are still suffering from what McNamara did. If I was Mr. McNamara, I couldn't sleep at night, the thousands and thousands of American boys who have died because of him.

M: In the conduct of the war in Vietnam?

H: It is absolutely horrible. It makes me almost want to vomit when I hear the statement made that bombing was not successful. Of course the bombing wasn't successful, his kind of bombing. All our bombing would have been successful; we would have won that war three years ago. Go in there and destroy. In my book when I fight a war, I'm either going to kill you or you are going to kill me. I'm not going to pet you. Imagine them not being able to destroy targets and things like that--you talk about those bases.

One day I told McNamara--I used to say things just for fun because I knew he didn't understand what I was saying, needle him. I said, "Mr. Secretary, you have now closed 673 bases." This was when he was way up high on this thing. "As you look back in retrospect, haven't you made an error? Haven't you made the wrong decision in those six hundred and seventy-three decisions?" He said, "No." I said, "You haven't made a mistake in 673 decisions?" He said, "No, sir." I said, "You're better than Christ. Christ made twelve guesses and blew one. He couldn't get twelve good men. Twelve decisions he made and he blew it, so you are better than Christ." And that's the truth. Oh, that was [inaudible].

M: What would you say was the most [serious] problem between Secretary McNamara and the House Armed Services Committee, and I think [this] was apparently well publicized--the feud between he and the chairman, Mendel Rivers?

H: The feud was more with me than with Mendel.

M: Was it really?

H: It was. The feud was all me. Mendel would just wisecrack to him and say things about him, but I was the one in the fights with him. And I never lost in decision. Not a single decision did I lose to Bob McNamara, not a one.

M: Did you ever try to bring up any of these issues with Mr. Johnson?

H: Well, the only time I mentioned it to him was when I told you I told him that night to leave my Eighth Naval District alone. He told me the guy wanted to save money. That was the only time I ever did that. We would have more fights with Lyndon, too, if he had stayed there on the draft. That draft now--whoever advised him or whoever tried it out on him, I don't know. Very few people know it, but he sent a draft lottery up here two

days before he went out of office, two days before he went out of office, you know, for a so-called lottery. This is what gets me. He had this fellow Alfonso--Alfano?

M: Califano.

H: Califano planted a story with Scotty Reston that the Congress wasn't moving in implementing the draft law. It was not our business at all. And Scotty Reston called me up and apologized for that.

M: Because it didn't get there until two days before the end?

H: No, I am not talking about that. This is prior to that. You see, what they tried to do--I was the one that blocked the lottery. I blocked it, the so-called lottery. And all right, that was Teddy Kennedy's action. So then they come out and Nixon's got the same thing. They've got a so-called draft bill--I mean, a lottery. What they say, what they have said, and what Johnson said and wanted to change the law--they can do everything that they want to do without the changing the crossing of a T or dotting of an I. Now, do they want to change or do they want to play politics?

M: Within the standing draft laws?

H: Right now--as it is. As it is. I've got a tape, television tape or film of these shows--we do a show ever second Sunday in New Orleans--that I did in 1967. [It] spells out exactly what Nixon and Johnson advocated. I am for it. I believe in it.

M: It wouldn't require any change in age or deferments?

H: No, they have got the power to do it right now. In my lottery--if you want to call it a lottery--it would be a lottery by divine providence. That's much better than human error, isn't it? Take the birthday. Is there anything more a lottery than your birthday? Is there? There is nothing except a caesarean, and your mother couldn't think about it nineteen years before to prevent it so you wouldn't get drafted. You couldn't tell when the child was going to be born. It is purely luck when you are born.

M: Draft at a certain age?

H: Draft at the age closest to age 20. In other words your birthday, see, and you could be only exposed for one year. That's all. And you do all of this without changing the law. And if they ever bring that thing out, this is going to be my fight with the chairman. We won't come to a parting of the ways, but I am going to argue. If ever they bring that draft law to that floor, God help this country. Pandora's box is going to be the most orderly thing you ever saw in your life compared to what will happen. It's going to go that way and nobody is going to stop the floodgates. Nobody.

M: Let's continue on in the conduct of the war in Vietnam.

H: The conduct of the war in Vietnam. When--and I have to blame the President for going along with this thinking--the raid on Pleiku took place--I forget the exact time--we had twenty-five thousand troops there. This was the first real raid in which we lost numbers. I happened to have Mr. McNamara on the stand that day that it happened. And I cannot understand, and I am sure the American public can't understand, why a nation as mighty and as powerful and as resourceful as America can't defeat a little five-and-ten-store nation like Vietnam, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, anyone. So I asked him, I said, "Now I have heard you twice in the last twenty-four hours say you couldn't defend a base, you know, like Pleiku. Now you can't tell me that a nation as great as America can't defend them. You may be unsuccessful, but you can defend it." I said, "Why can't you defend it?" He said, "We don't have enough people." He had twenty-five thousand. I said, "How many people would you need?" He said, "Two hundred and fifty thousand at least." I said, "Well, why don't you put the two hundred and fifty thousand in, and let's win this thing."

Of course his answer was that more people would get killed. Isn't that the most stupid thing you ever heard of in your life? Of course more people are going to get killed--now. But down the road nobody is going to get killed; nobody is going to get killed. But that's the answer. Now this is a matter of record. It is in the hearing.

He called me up in New Orleans--McNamara did--and he was on his way to the Ranch in Texas. He said, "Eddie, I want to ask you five questions." Of course he is buttering me up. He doesn't give a damn what I am going to answer them or what my advice is going to be; he just wants to like pat a little freshman boy on the head, you know. He said, "I want to ask five questions." I can just see him with that pencil. Number one--this is before the first supplemental bill I think--thirteen billion dollars. "Do you think we need a supplemental for thirteen billion dollars?" I said, "Bob, let's get one thing straight: you are going to win this war; you have got to win the war. The American public is not buying this war; they don't want any part of it. You have got to win it and you have got to win it militarily before you start settling your political questions, which I know you have got plenty of. Now if it takes thirteen billion, if it takes one hundred and thirteen billion, you pour it in there if you need it and win because you ain't going to have nobody to give it away to in the giveaway programs when you come back if you don't win it." That is number one. Number two, he asked about the number of people--five hundred thousand. I said, "I will give you the same answer I gave your money. Five million people, put them in there. You've got to win." Number three: bombing. I said, "Bomb. I'd bomb a string if it contributed to the enemy, little piece of string. I don't care what it is. I would bomb Hanoi if necessary. I would bomb the harbor [in] Haiphong. I would bomb everything. You can't be selective." Our boys are going over there--and this is the truth--knowing that MIGs are on the ground and looking at those MIGs and can't touch them. Now isn't that a hell of a way to run a war? It's terrible. And that's the way we were fighting the war. You ought to talk to these kids

that are flying up there and getting shot down and can't fight the enemy. So that's--I'd bomb. Unlimited bombing, that's all. They're always scared of China, scared of Russia, scared of China, scared of Russia. We shouldn't have gone in. When you pull a gun, you be ready to pull that trigger. If you aren't ready to pull that trigger, don't you pull that gun. Make up your mind then.

Then he said, "Well, what do you think about the new expression on Congress?" I said, "Definitely I'd get it. You won't get as many as you get on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. You may get thirty or forty against you, but you will get a solid expression from the Congress." Which I think would have been helpful at that time. Then the fifth thing he asked me, "How about the United Nations?" I said, "That is an old women's sewing circle. Sure, talk to them. That ain't going to get you anywhere. It ain't going to do you any good, but talk to them. I'd talk to them." Those five points, now I think if we had used those five points four years ago, we would have won the war.

- M: This was a more recent conversation. This was early. This would be 1965, though, wouldn't it?
- H: This would have to be when the first supplemental went in, and he was on the way down to the Ranch to see the President.
- M: Did you have any discussion with Mr. Johnson regarding these issues on Vietnam?
- H: None. I don't know if Mr. Johnson discussed this with anybody except Mr. McNamara and you asked about the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, General Wheeler. General Wheeler was the only military man that went to the White House, and yet the law says that the Joint Chiefs are the military advisors. Oh, I have to take back one statement I made. I was in error. I said he never saw the Joint Chiefs for a year. I'm wrong. He saw them one time. The subject was the surtax, I think, talking about the loss.
- M: Then you didn't attend any of the congressional breakfasts or briefings on Vietnam that were held at the White House?
- H: Oh, he never had any--very rarely. If there were any briefings on Vietnam, they were political leaders, not the military leaders.
- M: No, I meant you yourself as a member of Congress--some of the congressional briefings.
- H: No, he never had any congressional briefings that I know of--maybe one or two. We used to have breakfast every second week with McNamara. I mean the Policy Committee of Armed Services, the senior members did. But that was useless.
- M: Why do you say that?

H: Box each other. Nothing done. Didn't listen to you. Don't do anything. [The] first time I met Mr. McNamara I was chairman of the investigating [sub]committee. I went over there to the Pentagon and had John McCormack and Joe Campbell who was comptroller general, Bell [?] was head of the Budget Bureau, Senator Douglas from Illinois, Congressman Curtis, and we were talking about waste. I held the first waste investigation, I sat next to McNamara and we were showing him these overcharges. He said, "Do I have enough authority?" And I looked at him and I said, "Mr. Secretary, you've got all the authority you need. The only thing you have got to worry about is that man in uniform who says he can't do it." Later on I told him, I said, "You know that first day?" Of course he had forgotten. I said, "I didn't expect you to take me so seriously. You went too far." He took the law and stretched it as far as he could. As I say, he didn't break the law, now. We are at fault; we are the ones that did it. We gave him the power. That's the trouble with the country today, the Congress gave them all these powers, gave these viewers all the power that they got. And they use them and then we cry and don't do anything about it.

M: Were there any sort of ideological splits in the committee between hawks and doves on the war in Vietnam?

H: The doves are just fluttering their eyes very lightly. I guess we have got a couple of sweet little doves in there, but most of us are hawks. But now when you say that, I don't say it as loudly and vocally as I would have a year ago. Because the situation has not come now to a hawk and a dove--the situation is coming to get the hell out of there, because we are in an impossible position and we are in there because of McNamara, because of following his policy. Your passiveness, your permissiveness has caused all of this. Here your trouble has been these kids who would volunteer for the draft. They were fifteen, sixteen years old, and they see these demonstrations, all these demonstrations allowed. All this permissiveness is allowed. They ain't interested. They don't want to fight. I don't blame them. I don't want to get killed either, but after all, this is my country. And the country is so divided, as I told McNamara. I said three or four years ago it was. The country didn't want it then. But the division--the divisiveness--had not taken hold as much as it is now. Now it is impossible. So all you can do--I think all you can do is withdraw. Do the best you can and never go in again.

There is another example. They talk now about giving the military hell. I am no apologist for the military and my record shows that, because I've conducted some of the most vigorous campaigns involving the military in my years on the committee, some of the real big ones like conflict of interest, investigation of the air frame industry, the waste chamber of horrors, all these things aimed at the military. So they can't say I'm an apologist for it though I don't think they--all this blaming of the military and now they're turning Rivers into it. They're blaming him for half of it. The military hasn't made a decision in eight years. It has been a civilian who has made the decision: Mr. McNamara. Right from Saigon he said he would be glad to have it called McNamara's War. I haven't heard anybody quote that. Nobody said a word about that. That's these

damn newspapers and that idiot box, television, the most horrible thing that ever came on earth and sea.

M: Do you think there were any other areas of sort of not allowing the military advice to come to the forefront such as in the deployment of the ABM's or other defense posture?

H: I think that the military had been so demeaned. That's another thing I told McNamara. These things actually happened. I said, "Mr. Secretary, you have got the morale of the military so destroyed and so low that one day a four star general is going to walk in the door of your office, and as you lift your head up and you are going to see him, you are going to say, 'I have no telegram to send, son.' You are going to think it's a Western Union boy. That's what you believe, and that's the truth." That is what he believed in the uniform. But it is a horrible thing to say that they are at fault, too, but yet again what are you going to do? Are you going to take these men--are they going to put their careers--are they going to wreck themselves? You know, it is pretty good to be brave when you are not on the firing line, but they are cowing them and I think what happened to them--the great tragedy is a result and a reflection on the junior officers who see the senior officers. I'm telling you Buz Wheeler's head must hurt him from doing this, going "Yes or no," whatever McNamara would do, whatever McNamara would do.

M: Do you have--

H: What's this got to do with Johnson? (Laughter)

M: The times. Did you have any other contact with Mr. Johnson regarding some of our other military confrontations?

H: No.

M: Such as the Middle East?

H: No, the only one I had was Santo Domingo.

M: What about the seizure of the Pueblo?

H: No. We blew that one, too.

M: Do you think that Vietnam has caused neglect to other areas of our--?

H: I think Vietnam--of course again we go back to your civilian control and civilian decisions. If MacArthur--who was a little god on his own--had been allowed to cross the Yalu, we never would have been there, never, because it would have settled once and for all that question. But Mr. Truman, the great artillery captain, relieved MacArthur, god on earth of-- He was such a PR--[Inaudible]

M: Were you informed ahead of time--I should say how were you informed of Mr. McNamara 's resignation?

H: I wasn't informed at all. I don't think Mr. McNamara was informed himself. But I have always made the statement and I'll repeat it, that he would last just as long as Mr. Johnson thought he was useful to him and the minute that he figured that he was the albatross around his neck, he would cut him loose. And I think that's exactly what happened. When he became a liability, he couldn't buy Mr. McNamara.

There was only one thing. What was I thinking of? They got me at the house one night--Barefoot Sanders--oh, Mr. Vinson was in town. He said the President was going to announce something and I forget really what it is. The bombing--about announcing the secession of the bombing.

M: March 31st speech.

H: Was that it? Yes.

M: That was one--

H: He said we would not bomb anymore.

M: I think above the 19th or something.

H: Whatever it was, yes. [He] ended up by saying if you can say something nice, won't you say it?

M: I'm sorry, I am unclear. Who said that?

H: Barefoot Sanders called me from the White House to tell me that the President on that night would make this announcement. I was at dinner. He found me; he knew I was having dinner with Mr. Vinson who was in town. But then he ruined the whole information by telling me, couldn't I say something nice. (Laughter).

M: Did you participate in any of the reviews that went on of the Vietnam policy in the last of 1967 and 1968?

H: No. Any of those things, not policies but situations, they'd put Mendel [on]. The only time I'd participate is if the senior member is not in town.

M: How did you feel about Mr. Clifford's relationship with the committee and with Congress?

H: Terrific. Terrific. Greatest pitchman I ever met in my life. A real con artist. And you loved it. And you knew it was happening to you.

M: Was that the difference between these two men?

H: Clark Clifford knew men; he knew human nature. McNamara was just a computer. McNamara had no sense of humor or anything at all. And Clark Clifford--I was devoted to him. I told him one day, I said, "Let me tell you something, Mr. Secretary, you stay on your side of the street and I'll stay on my side of the street and we are going to get along fine. It takes one to catch one. Now we are going to get along good, and we get along perfectly, wonderfully well.

M: Although he was for withdrawing our troops and lessening our commitment?

H: I think his paper that he wrote--this recent paper--it was a magnificent confession of the change of attitude. I think he expresses pretty much what all of us who are hawks could well feel, though he never was the dedicated or stubborn hawk that most of us were.

M: Did you feel at a particular time when we shifted our commitment in Vietnam from a military nature to some sort of political settlement?

H: We always had a political thing in there. We always fought a defensive war. We never did fight to win. Now this is true. Only one outfit had a plan to win that they were never allowed to put into effect and that was the Marines. But the other services didn't even have a plan. They were not allowed to have a plan. That's their problem.

M: I would like to go back just briefly to some of the domestic legislation which of course was tremendous--a lot of it. Well, before I go into Mr. Johnson's presidency in that aspect, let me ask you: did you have any conversation with him after the assassination of Mr. Kennedy? Or any meetings?

H: No more than what I've described to you.

M: Did you play any part in the 1964 election and campaign in Louisiana?

H: I do not campaign.

M: You repeated that to me.

H: The last campaign I took part in--

M: Was yours.

H: --was in 1948, the so-called Dixiecrat. You can tell where I was then. I'd never met

Strom Thurmond. I want to meet the guy who caused me all my troubles because I was removed from the committee. Nobody ever said anything about that. They had forgotten that. They took me off the committee of Un-American Activities after that election.

M: Oh, really?

H: Nobody defended me. There was a little hullabaloo about that one.

M: Mr. Hebert, the Congress under Mr. Kennedy was said to be uncooperative, and of course noted compared with this is the period of 1965 and 1966, the 89th Congress which is noted for such a tremendous amount of legislation, domestic legislation. I am wondering, first, do you think that some of these issues, these programs that were Mr. Kennedy's, could have passed?

H: Without Johnson's help?

M: Well, I was going to say if he had continued on, would he have been able to get them passed eventually?

H: It would have been a fight, I guess. You see, all the legislation that was passed was not the original legislation. They were watered down quite a bit, though it was obnoxious and not acceptable to many of us. But it shows, again, what a terrific politician Johnson was, the way he ran that stuff through. Now he had the votes, but little slight margins going up to ten or twelve or something like that. In the last Congress, he couldn't have gotten any of that through because it had changed. You see, he was riding in his first two years with the sweep that he went in with, the overwhelming sweep, and those people were gone the next two years. So you recognize this. And it's a hell of a lot of different to get something passed than to get a bill repealing, because if you get the legislation repealing what you have done you are facing the veto, and you don't have a two-thirds to override the veto. You see the situation they find themselves in there?

M: Were you ever the recipient of any sort of the Johnson "treatment"?

H: Not one.

M: Were you contacted from the White House staff on any of the programs?

H: Never or routinely.

M: How do you mean routinely?

H: That's like a whip check. You know, a whip check is a routine check. The most pressure I got was from John McCormack. John knows I like him and I liked John. They would tell me, "The Speaker's on the phone," and I said, "Okay, Mr. Speaker, what do you want

me to vote for now and get defeated?" Well, I just loved the guy. He is a terrific guy.

M: What do you consider were some of the strategy, some of the strategy and tactics of getting through such legislation in which we've come to call the Great Society and the War on Poverty and civil rights?

H: Tactics? Very simple, a little arm twisting, that's all. Johnson, who saw getting on that day--he's a good man on that telephone. He just likes the telephone.

M: But you never had any occasion of talking with him on any of the domestic legislation?

H: Never.

M: I think before I try to make any sort of summary questions here, I wonder if there are any occasions that you just recall of dealing with the presidents, or any of President Johnson, or if there were any times that stand out in your mind that were sort of indicative of the man?

H: No more than what I have tried to tell you and I have tried to express myself as kind as I could and the fact that I disagree with him terrifically and philosophically and politically doesn't mean I didn't like him. I did like him. I did like him very very much.

M: What did you see were his image problems in the idea that developed of the--

H: I think that Lyndon paid too much attention--you remember, he would always have a dozen polls to pull out of his pocket. He was a consensus guy.

M: Did he lose his consensus?

H: He lost his consensus. But he always saying, he was feeling out people, feeling out things. He was very secretive in his own decisions, I think. And the surest way in the world not to get somebody appointed is to say he was going to name Joe Blow to a job. That's a cinch. That was the end of Joe Blow. He'd never get it.

M: What was the reason for the discontent or unpopularity of Mr. Johnson in your district, say, this last year if he had run?

H: Well, the reason of that is--of course, in Louisiana he was absolutely hated because they considered him a turncoat. They considered Lyndon Johnson the most horrible man that ever lived. When he turned on the civil rights it was a 90 per cent turn to what his voting record was. In the House as a congressman he voted with the South and he didn't vote that way in--Well, you take [Hale] Boggs in this last [election]. Boggs says the reason he was almost beat was because the people didn't want Johnson in this last election. Now he said that publicly. They didn't vote against him; they voted against Johnson.

M: Do you think Mr. Johnson could have been re-elected?

H: Oh--

M: I know that is speculative.

H: I think he may have, after the race that Humphrey ran. God knows, Humphrey is no Johnson.

M: That's a very good reason. What would be your evaluation of his direction of military policy in this country during his presidency.

H: I think it's very bad.

M: Would you like to tell me why?

H: Well, I told you why: the Vietnamese war, I think, is very bad. That is the only way you can get a direction of military policy.

M: Do you think that the power and the prestige of Congress declined under Mr. Johnson?

H: Could it decline? We will have to determine that first.

M: Is it lower than it was?

H: Well, I have a great deal of sympathy for Congress and its makeup. I don't have much admiration for a lot of things that it does. So to say, would it decline, now it's hard to say. You see we are going through a strange phenomenon right now, as an example. Under Mr. Johnson, particularly the last two years, the Congress was a conservative Congress because you had the bloc of the southerners which was the swing bloc. Now people don't know what's going on and they don't realize what's going on, but the liberals are in charge of Congress right now. They are. The so-called Democratic study group, which is a bunch of wild-eyed liberals, they control the Democratic Party that's in the House. They are in control. They have gotten everything they wanted. They refused John Bell his seat. No, they threw Rarrick out. Of course, Rarrick was scared to death they wouldn't. They put all their so-called reforms and got concessions and they really have got the votes. Now you come up and take that vote on the surtax. What happened? The leadership, the Speaker, the Leader, [Carl] Albert, the Whip, Boggs, the chairman of the committees, all of the leadership can only pass that bill with five votes, so they can't control their own party. Now where does the swing vote come in? The swing vote comes in from those Republicans--the liberal Republicans who are the swingers. They are the ones who provide the margin like in the other days that the South did. So you see what is happening? People don't realize it. You take for instance when you have only

fifty-six votes, and most of those are southern votes in there of those fifty-six.

M: Let me just ask you here--we are getting low on the tape--if you saw any or what changes you saw in Mr. Johnson from when you first knew him in the House to how you saw him as president of the United States and knew him.

H: No real changes. He was just an older and a more mature man but I am sure the same attributes he had as a young man he had as president, the same tenacity he had as a young man he had as president; the same adroitness he had as a young man basically. Well, he had to be basically what he was in his maturity that he was in his youth. Remember he was a secretary. Where did he end up as a secretary? President of the secretaries' club, didn't he?

M: Yes.

H: These are the things that you find in kids in school. That kid who was the president of his class, he is going to be a leader. You can pick this out all the way through.

M: What do you see now as his strengths and weaknesses of his administration and how do you think history will judge him?

H: History is an enigma in judging people. How they will judge him, I don't know and couldn't venture. With no relationship, history will probably judge Huey Long as a great man. I think he was the most corrupt man I ever knew. But history will overlook a lot of little things that those of us who lived during his time saw in him, the ruthless dictator that he was. The same will go for presidents. Now, for instance, I think that Harry Truman was one of our great presidents, and I fought him like hell. I fought him as hard as I could fight anybody. I didn't realize the man had the courage of his convictions. He made a decision and he did it. He didn't hesitate.

M: And Mr. Johnson?

H: He waited for the outlying precincts to come in. (Laughter).

M: That's a very good way. I have no further questions, Mr. Hebert.

H: I have no further information to volunteer. I don't know if I helped you any or not.

M: I think you have a great deal.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]