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Signed by Arthur B. Krim on May 1, 1984

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ACCESSION NUMBER 85-09

### INTERVIEW III

DATE: June 29, 1982  
INTERVIEWEE: ARTHUR KRIM  
INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette  
PLACE: Mr. Krim's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 1

G: Shall we start with that October weekend at the Ranch?

K: Yes. I guess a day or two after the President returned to the Ranch following his operation, he called the house and spoke to my wife and asked if we'd come down for that weekend. As you will recall, my wife had not accompanied me on the Labor Day visit to the Ranch and so this was her first opportunity to visit the Ranch and she very much looked forward to it. The President said he would send a Jetstar up to New York to pick us up, and that's what happened I think on October 24, [1965]. We were the only ones in the Jetstar except for the courier, who I think used to go down there, if not every day, several times a week. So the only alteration in the travel plan that was made to pick us up was Washington to New York, and then we went directly down to the Ranch.

Mrs. Johnson met us at the ramp and took us in to the old bedroom at the Ranch. The President was in bed and looked tired and said he was tired, but he said he was about to get up and make it to church. He invited us to go to the church, and as I told you in one of my last two interviews, I took my wife aside and said, "I don't think we should go, because that just gets our names in the paper and I think the President's preference is that we not be mentioned too often." She agreed. I told the President I felt it would be preferable if we didn't go to church. He didn't argue, and so as I said before, I feel he

probably had wanted it that way.

He came back a couple of hours later and the very active routine began, and it was active. There was hardly a moment of rest. Relaxation, yes, but hardly a pause between activities.

Once again, he had a newspaperman there, and once again, I was surprised at the fact that he exposed himself so completely to somebody of the press. This time it was a representative of one of the big wire services, Sid Davis, who had brought his family, too. Unlike his relationship with somebody like Bill White, which was close and intimate and confidential and so forth, I gathered Sid was just another important member of the press who ordinarily was a part of the press corps that would follow him to Texas. I wondered at the impact of his selecting one such member on the others, and I never did understand fully how that kind of thing worked out.

G: Do you think he used those sorts of invitations as rewards for writing stories that he approved of?

K: Well, he used them to improve the relationship with the press, and it may or may not be as you say, but generally the reporters that I met in that context were favorably disposed to him. But to say it was a reward for specific action goes beyond anything that I would be privy to.

But when I speak about activities, let me just mention them again, because for my wife this was a new experience and for me it was a repetition of the whirlwind that had taken place on Labor Day. It involved boating and involved helicopter rides to four or five ranches. It involved seeing the Secret Service manage to get Broncos--Fords--into all of those ranches in time for us to take rides around the ranches. It involved his driving

the Lincolns and punishing them. You know, that was when we first heard that the one thing you don't do in Austin is buy a secondhand Lincoln, because it may be one that he had driven as if it were a jeep, which he used to do. He'd run those Lincolns over the fields as if they were four-wheel-drive jeeps, and used to love it. He, of course, would express his great pride in the country and the scenery and all of the things that he was accomplishing, including the irrigation on the Ranch, and the cattle. We began a practice that went on on most of these trips of being deer watchers. Everybody would be saying, "There's a deer at eleven o'clock" or at twelve-thirty or whatnot, and everybody would be on the lookout for the deer. All through it all everything was laid on for comfort. There would always be a Secret Service car behind us with drinks for the asking. It couldn't have been more pleasant. We met a number of his friends. He and Lady Bird were absolutely perfect hosts. It was just a wonderful weekend.

The only thing of substance, apart from describing the activities that I recall, took place at the end of that visit. That is, he asked if we could have a private talk together. I remember he was in pajamas and I think with a blanket and sitting in the chair in the living room, obviously tired. It was toward the end of the day. He, for the first time that I recall, started telling me his worries about the Democratic National Committee. He felt they were mishandling money. He felt that they were disorganized. He felt that he personally had an obligation to see that all those debts were paid, that he didn't want to ever leave office with any of that still in place. He expressed a lack of confidence in the men who were handling it at that time, and he asked me if I would move in and take a good look at the whole situation and see if I could help straighten it out.

I told him that it was, in my opinion, important to build up the National

Committee, that I had had some contacts, considerable contacts actually during the Kennedy years, and I felt that it was important for him as the president to lend himself to strengthening the Democratic National Committee throughout the country. That was the first time when he told me that he didn't give a damn about the committee, he just wanted those debts paid. And I said, "Well, you're going to need them in 1968," and he said he had no intention of running in 1968, which I took as the result of his not feeling particularly well. I was absolutely certain it had no reality to it, that he would run in 1968.

I said of course he would be needed even for the task of raising the funds to pay off these debts. He'd have to agree to appearances and so forth. And on that front he was totally cooperative with me. He said, "You lay it out. You tell me what I should do. If that's what's needed to clear that debt"--it was about five or six million dollars at that time--he stood prepared to do it.

G: Do you think he was exaggerating the mismanagement of the committee?

K: No, he wasn't, as I found out later. But he was exaggerating--not exaggerating, but he did have an undercurrent of suspicion of dishonesty in certain quarters and I never found evidence of that. Sloppiness, yes.

G: To what extent do you think it was a question of him feeling that he didn't have control of the committee?

K: Well, a large extent. First of all, he didn't trust Dick Maguire, whom I had worked with very closely in the Kennedy Administration, and I did trust Dick and I liked him. But Johnson had the same feeling there that he had had during the 1964 campaign about Kenny O'Donnell and Mike [Myer] Feldman, and that is that they were just living out the

days but not really loyal to him. He had that feeling about Dick Maguire.

But his main worry was about Cliff Carter. Cliff had been with LBJ for many years and I had only just met Cliff. To me Cliff was a lovely man. I got to know his wife, too. I think everybody who knew Cliff liked him as a person. A very decent man, but accident-prone in politics. Johnson was just so afraid of scandal. I mean, he felt people thought of him as the kind of president who would misuse the office of the presidency and would sell it, and that the press would be watching with magnifying glasses to exaggerate even the smallest kind of evidence of selling the presidency. He was afraid that Cliff would put him in that kind of position. I heard that many times after this meeting, and he wanted to leave the presidency with the image of integrity in financial matters.

So he gave me that mandate that night and I did move in on the committee. I spent a lot of time in an unofficial capacity with all of them, starting with that period. I had not really been involved with the committee since the assassination of President Kennedy two years before this. But I moved back in and had an office again there and all that kind of thing.

G: How did your authority come?

K: I was known as the President's representative. He made no mystery about that; I was his representative at the committee, and in that sense they knew anything that they said or did would get back to him. So I had as much power to get information as I would need. At that time he was just beginning to know about a young man who had been made treasurer, John Criswell, and he wanted me to find out more about John and work with John. Later John became a suitor for Marie Fehmer.

G: I didn't know which came first, whether it was the--

K: No. John in the committee came first. In the time I'm talking about there was no courting of Marie Fehmer. That came a year or so later.

So that was a moment of substance in an otherwise social weekend. When my wife and I left, it was very clear that he expected us to be frequent guests. I mean we were part of the family as of that time and felt it always after that.

G: Had you bought your ranch by this time?

K: No, no. It wasn't--

G: Did the sales pitch continue?

K: It did in the meeting at the Ranch after this. But at this time we got to know all the ranchers, we got to know all the methods of transportation, of which there were many. We got to know the whole ambience of the Ranch, which didn't change much over the years. I look back on it with considerable nostalgia because those were wonderful days of excitement.

G: How much of his discussion during those days that you were with him revolved around politics?

K: Well, the substantive part I told you about. The conversation constantly included matters of world events and his participation and his decisions. That's what I meant by saying I was surprised that he had somebody in the press that close, because he was often talking about matters of great importance, including the Vietnam situation. He would have the polls on how the public was reacting. He talked frequently of a number of problems. It's hard for me to reconstruct it now other than to say that there was constant conversations of events that were occurring at the time, and a lot of it would be brought out by the fact



that no matter where we were, in an automobile or in a jeep or in a chopper, on the hour he'd listen to the news. I guess the jeep is a bit of an exaggeration, because I don't remember radios in the jeeps. I know in the chopper and in the Lincoln he would listen to the news, and then he would generally manage to get back to the Ranch in time to have those three TV sets on, which he would manipulate. Because if he was at a console [he would watch] first one channel, then the other, and then the third. Of course that would lead to conversation. More often than not we saw him on these programs, and there would be comments about that.

G: Now, he had just really gotten out of the hospital after this operation.

K: He was tired that week, as I said, both at the beginning when we saw him in bed, and I remember that last meeting before we left when we talked about politics. But in between he was just as active as could be.

G: Didn't seem to be in great discomfort then?

K: No, he was running the boat and riding the Lincolns. The only person he would let drive a car was Judge [A. W.] Moursund. If Moursund would come in the car, he might drive it, although even then the President would do a lot of driving, but nobody else. He always had the Secret Service following him.

There were all kinds of amusing things. That first weekend that we were there with my wife, he had a very colorful get-up. He had a red tam-o'-shanter hat on and considering the fact that he was a convalescent, he was very, very gay. On the water he would love to let that speedboat out at full throttle and the Secret Service would follow in two Domzies. The President told me that first night--also my wife--that he had fixed this boat up so that it was faster than the Domzies. Then the Secret Service told us that they

were humoring him, that they couldn't permit that to happen. If anything happened, the Domzies were much faster and they could catch him, but he wasn't to know that that was [true]. I mean, it was that kind of banter. Who knows who was giving us the accurate facts on that?

G: Did they ever worry that he might have a boat accident?

K: Oh, sure. You know, the Secret Service are always alert to the possibility of accidents, and the way he rode that boat, if he ever hit shallow water at full throttle, we, all of us, would have been thrown out. But he never did. As far as I can recall, we never had accidents. There always used to be a certain group on what we called the big boat, which wasn't all that big--it must have been about thirty feet--and the speedboat, and we kind of moved back and forth from one to the other. It was very pleasant.

G: Now he had just signed the Highway Beautification Act. Did he talk about his efforts to get that passed at all?

K: Well, I'm sure he did. He had talked about that on several occasions. He was very proud of Lady Bird's involvement in that. He talked about all of those things. He talked about civil rights, he talked about health, he talked about education. He knew where Mathilde and I stood on these things. Part of the reason we felt so simpatico with him was that his desires and instincts were very much along the lines of ours, and very different from a lot of the people we met with him.

G: You mean the local people or the other people, say, from New York?

K: No, I meant the local people, people like Wesley West and some of the others who felt he was coddling the deprived. Of course, my wife and I came out of the school of feeling the government has to do everything to help those who can't help themselves, to

oversimplify it.

Now, unless you have something else on that, the next occasion in your list is the dinner to Princess Margaret.

G: Let me just ask you about a few things on the October thing that you mentioned. One, the appointment of Francis Morrissey, which was a Kennedy appointment.

K: We did talk about that. I can't put my finger on the whole sequence, but I remember that he felt that the Kennedys had pressed too hard and that they had stubbed their toes by pressing too hard. And by the time Morrissey--he withdrew, didn't he?--by the time he withdrew, it couldn't be put on LBJ's shoulders because he had actually allowed them to play it out their way. Now, he did talk to me a good deal, semi-needling, about how close I was to the Kennedys. That used to come up all the time. But he recognized early on that there wasn't a thing he would say to me that would get back to anybody, and nothing ever did. So he felt free to do his needling.

G: I think Arthur Schlesinger has charged that LBJ sort of continued to keep that nomination alive, the Morrissey nomination, in order to embarrass the Kennedys.

K: Well, you see, that's just what I was trying to recall. He had the opposite feeling, that they had pushed it beyond the proper limits. Whose ox is being gored? There's a little bit of *Rashomon* in this, too. Arthur Schlesinger, seeing this from his viewpoint, could very well have that conclusion. Without knowing what you were just about to say, I had indicated his perspective as relayed to me was not that he had dragged it out, but that they had dragged it out. They could have withdrawn it at any time, as I remember it. And it had some repercussions I think in Massachusetts that I can't recall.

G: Now, also McGeorge Bundy was preparing to leave as national security adviser.

K: Yes. Yes. McGeorge Bundy left just about this time and that's when the President felt a certain measure of satisfaction that he was leaving. I didn't get a feeling of regret, and I do know that he felt that in choosing Walt Rostow he was getting somebody who would be more helpful to him than Bundy had been. But I cannot give you much more on that. I just remember there was no feeling of big loss, and I think within a week or two he had Rostow down to the Ranch, and we spent a couple of days together. The President was full of praise for Walt and what he. . . .

G: Did the President consider others for that position, like Bob Komer or U. Alexis Johnson?

K: If he did, I don't remember that. I don't think they were offered the job, were they?

G: Not that I'm aware of.

K: You know, Walt was picked so quickly, I never heard of anybody else. I didn't know Walt at the time.

G: The press also indicated that the President was placing an increased reliance on Robert McNamara. Was this evident to you?

K: Yes. He was unstinting in his praise of Bob McNamara. During this period--I didn't see any record you had of it, and I just can't put my finger on dates. But during this period he had my wife and I on occasion, and me on more occasions, go to briefings that McNamara was giving on guerrilla warfare and what was going to happen in Vietnam. I remember going to several briefings in that late period of 1965 in Washington. This was a period where he was talking more in praise of McNamara than of anybody else in the cabinet. In later years that switched to Dean Rusk.

G: Now, with regard to Vietnam, Curtis LeMay was advocating a wider bombing range of North Vietnam, and Clark Clifford was going to Vietnam. It was a period of a good deal

of public discussion on Vietnam. Do you recall anything that he said that weekend about Vietnam?

K: Oh, we talked about Vietnam a lot. This was a time when there was pressure for a bombing halt, which I think took place a few weeks after this.

G: [William] Fulbright had advocated that.

K: Yes. Fulbright was beginning to get to Johnson at this period. This was a period when the country was not particularly divided on the issue. This is a period when both Bobby and Teddy were speaking out in support of the President. Certainly Teddy. I think Bobby was still speaking out in support. You know of course that Bobby had offered to go to Vietnam to be his ambassador there before he decided to run for the Senate in New York.

G: Why didn't LBJ appoint him? Did he consider it, do you know?

K: No. Oh, he considered it. I don't want to speculate on that. I know we talked about it.

G: What did he say about that?

K: Well, as I say, I can't remember other than the fact that I think the thought to him of Bobby Kennedy representing him anyplace was not viable. It didn't present a viable suggestion.

But to get back to Vietnam, there was a meeting of all his top people, a National Security Council meeting, that took place somewhere along the line here. I think it was just before he decided on the bombing halt. He invited Abe Fortas and Clark Clifford to attend that meeting. Neither of them were members, of course, of the National Security Council. I remember his saying--and I think it was not at this meeting at the Ranch but at the next meeting at the Ranch in November--describing the meeting at which these two

were there, and how of all these people, the strongest advocates of not having a bombing halt were Clark and Abe. He said, "All the others were vacillating. These two fellows really stood up. They said, 'You have a bombing halt, you're going to get no place. The North Vietnamese will just take advantage of it.'"

Of course, I was on the other side of that. The President always knew where I stood but really until 1968 didn't ask me to get into that with anybody. But in 1968 he did, during the early part of 1968. Because he knew that I was, number one, opposed to the bombing and, number two, would have liked to see the bombing halt continued. I used to ask him, and I remember I would constantly say, "Any breakthrough?" And he would show his frustration that there was no breakthrough, no contact. I'm talking 1965 now.

Actually I remember one particular conversation which was one of the many we had when he was in bed in the morning--I think it must have been in January--when he was going to declare that the bombing was on again. And he got a long cable from Harold Wilson. He read the cable to me and commented on how Wilson was like so many that had attended that meeting other than Clifford and Fortas. That he didn't understand that we'd get nowhere by showing weakness at that particular time. He had a very negative opinion about Wilson's strength of leadership. That, of course, played a part later on, as you know, when Wilson tried to be an intermediary in something that I remember was very fouled up. I think it was something while Kosygin was in the Far East. That comes later in the story. But there was a whole business where Wilson got his signals wrong or messed things up, and Johnson never had a very happy feeling about his involvement in the Vietnamese situation.

Incidentally, I should tell you, in connection with seeing that Wilson wire, you know I had been given top level clearance by the FBI. He had had an FBI check way back in July before my first visit to the Ranch, and I mentioned that because he felt comfortable showing me secret documents. This was in that category.

G: Dean Rusk was also at the Ranch during this weekend.

K: After I left.

G: I see, okay.

Let me show you a memo, particularly the bottom of the second page there, where the President seems to be upset with the--

K: New York establishment.

G: Newspapers. Yes.

K: I don't remember this. Let me try to--oh, Sid Davis I said is interviewing him. I see, yes. A Bernie [Barnard] Collier piece. I don't remember that.

G: The press also reported--

K: What was this?

G: It must have been on [an article on] speech writing with [Will] Sparks and Bob Hardesty.

K: Oh, that they would--[LBJ writes], "Tell Doug [Kiker] I said New York had no mortgage on irresponsibility. Washington is well fixed. Did you see the Wise story on Sparks?" I see, yes. But I don't know what this Bernie--

G: The column--yes.

K: Who was he calling irresponsible in New York?

G: I guess it was Collier, don't you think? Or [Douglas] Kiker?

K: This is the kind of thing he would go into his office and check off, if we had come in

from a ride or something. I would see a lot of these. I don't remember this one.

G: The press also reported during this period that the President had asked the FBI to help the CIA with intelligence gathering in Latin America. That he was disappointed with the CIA's performance I guess particularly in the Dominican Republic. Do you recall the White House reaction to these news reports that the FBI was taking an active role there?

K: Well, I do remember that he felt the CIA had let him down in the Dominican Republic, but I don't remember this particular matter of the FBI being asked to go into Latin America.

G: Was he disappointed in the CIA for either misrepresenting the situation as it was or for not giving him sufficient warning of what was happening?

K: I think the latter. When was it that [Richard] Helms became head? Because I was there that day and he was very complimentary about Helms. We all met upstairs in the living quarters and then went downstairs for the Helms swearing in. I would say that was in 1966 sometime, wasn't it?

G: I'll check. [June 30, 1966]

K: But he was very pleased about moving him in. Who was there at this time? Was it [John] McCone at the time of the Dominican [Crisis]?

G: I think so, yes.

K: Yes.

G: Now in addition, New York politics came up. Abe Beame supporters wanted the President to issue an endorsement or something really strong and received only a greeting. Surely he must have talked to you about that.

K: He did. He talked not only to me but to Ed Weisl, who was closer to that than I was. Ed



was very close to Abe Beame. He had talked to us back in September at the White House. I don't know what the reason was, but he was reluctant to get into New York politics. I think he was a little annoyed that Bob Wagner had withdrawn. We had all spent time with Bob Wagner--meaning the President, Bob Wagner and myself--in May. At that time Wagner didn't say a word about not running, and I think the President was under the impression that he was going to continue and that he'd have a friend in New York. Wagner had always been very supportive of LBJ. In later years an appointment that I was intermediary on, at Bob Wagner's request, was getting him to be ambassador to Spain.

G: Now anything else on the legislation? The Congress had just adjourned and there were a lot of bills, the Higher Education Act of 1965 that he had just signed.

K: Well, this was the heyday. I mean, he had gone through a tremendous period of legislation which went on for a while after that. He was very, very clear that he had a honeymoon and that he had to use it to the hilt. He has said that in his book, and I certainly agree that he said it then.

G: He vowed then that he would push for the repeal of 14-B of the Taft-Hartley.

K: Taft-Hartley, yes.

G: Was that discussed that weekend, do you remember?

K: I don't remember that specifically, but I remember it in general terms.

G: Now there were a number of things that he was unhappy about. One, a Teacher Corps appropriation was cut out by the House committee. Do you recall his reaction to that?

K: No, not specifically. I would guess that he'd be angry at that.

G: The other thing, there was a provision of a rivers and harbors bill that I think he viewed

as a violation of separation of powers.

K: I don't remember that.

G: Well, I think that's all I have on the [October visit].

K: All right, then let's move on to the dinner at the White House. He had told us in October that he'd like us to come to the dinner when the princess came, so the invitations were not unexpected. We did not stay at the White House at that time. I remember we were at a hotel in town, which is quite unusual because most of the times we stayed in the White House, but more after that than before. I remember it was the first night that I met Cristina Ford. She made quite a splurge at that.

G: What was the President's reaction to that? I have to ask.

K: Oh, he thought she was lovely looking. Apparently while dancing her dress fell down. I didn't see it, but everybody talked about it. There was nothing underneath and so it created a bit of gossip.

The President was very gracious with Mathilde and me. He danced with Mathilde; he took me around and introduced me to everybody, including [Lord] Snowdon. All in all he made us feel exceptionally comfortable that evening, and it was a very prestigious group. You have the list of those who attended.

The next morning I think I got a call at the hotel to come over to see him. He was in a bit of a dither at something that had happened the night before.

G: Do you remember what it was?

K: Yes, I do. The staff had invited a number of people to come after the dinner just for dancing. Somebody had come from Buffalo, at the suggestion of Jim Wilmot, who was one of our contributors upstate, who had a criminal record. I didn't know about it, but

apparently the President had seen it on the wire service and it had broken in the press by the time I got there. He asked me if I knew this man, and I said no, didn't have the slightest idea. He said, "Well, did you know that Jim Wilmot had recommended that he be put on the list for the dance?" I said no, because I hadn't. I said it came as a complete surprise to me. He took me into the little office off the Oval Room. We sat there for a while, and he called Marvin Watson in. He said, "Marvin, I don't want anybody ever invited from New York without your clearing it with Arthur Krim from now on. Arthur's got to pass on all of these people from New York," meaning those with so-called political connections. Then he called Bess Abell and told her the same thing, that from there on out that he wanted to feel that I would take responsibility for everybody who had come as a result of political connections, connections with the committee or with the President's Club. More or less that's what happened over the next two years.

G: Were you able to determine who had a criminal [record]?

K: No, but that was done by the FBI. There was a check on everybody, and if there was any question, I would read the check. I would be at the White House occasionally to read the check, because some of the things were not criminal but involved possible embarrassments. I would know what they had done politically, which was the important point. Most of the time we would make the recommendations. So that wasn't so much a case of passing on somebody else, but we would actually make the recommendations. It extended to the rest of the country, too. In other words, the recommendations for the so-called President's Club members or the DNC would generally either come from me directly or Bess Abell or Marvin would call about them, and we coordinated that very carefully. I don't think we had another episode of that sort. Certain people were never

able to go because it could have been possibly construed as venal in nature, and that went beyond their records. We had to be sure that nobody was at that moment seeking any kind of favor from the government or special interest decision. It was a touchy and tricky course. I'm glad we navigated it as well as we did, not without one front-page mishap. That was in late 1966. I had arranged a President's Club fund raiser in St. Louis, which was on the day of the all-star baseball game. The principal speaker was going to be Hubert Humphrey. August Busch, who owned the St. Louis team--that is, the stadium which was host to the all-star game was owned by Busch. Busch invited us to come in his plane and then come to his home and be entertained and so forth. Hubert and I accepted. In the back of the plane was somebody we didn't know, with a baseball cap on, and his kid. The next day it was front-page news that Augie Busch had a problem with the Justice Department. This fellow in the back seat was the assistant attorney general handling his case. We went there for a President's Club meeting to raise money for the President. Well, if you go back on the records, you'll see it was blazoned across the papers in the Midwest and also I think the *Washington Post* and the [*Washington*] *Star*. It was a one-day wonder. Hubert and I learned that you don't take private planes, and if you do, you find out who's in the plane with you. But that was the kind of thing we had to try to avoid with every White House dinner.

G: And Busch was an old friend of the President's.

K: Sure. Augie, Jr. was on the plane with us. Busch was a good friend. But he had this thing before the Justice Department, and he didn't tell us. And this fellow in the back, I don't remember his name, but he should have known enough to say, "I'm not going to fly in this plane because we've got this pending matter." But that was the worst of that kind

of thing that happened to us.

So that was the Princess Margaret dinner.

G: It was also their wedding anniversary. Was that apparent to you? Did he talk about that?

K: Well, Luci made it apparent I think to everybody by a toast, as I recall it, to her father and mother on their wedding anniversary.

G: During this period, he was interested in that Northeast power blackout and asked for an investigation of it.

K: Yes. He put Joe Califano on the job as I remember it, because I remember talking with Joe about it. He called. It involved a good friend of ours whom the President knew, Chuck Luce, the head of Consolidated [Edison], a man subsequently even considered for the Supreme Court on the recommendation of [Warren] Magnuson. I didn't get into that other than I remember Joe calling and asking me questions about it.

G: During this period there was also a good deal of discussion of exclusion of blacks from juries in the South, and the acquittals of people who were accused of murdering blacks in southern states and being acquitted by all-white juries. Did the President talk to you about that?

K: Yes, well, we talked about justice in the South and his desire to put people on the bench who would be fair in these matters. I don't remember this specifically, but I'm sure we talked about it.

G: Also in Texas evidently a number of the people who owned property across from the LBJ Ranch did not want to sell their land.

K: Yes, I think I mentioned that in one of our prior sessions. I'm not sure; I thought I had. The fact is there was one man in particular who was giving him a lot of trouble on that,

and he was determined to solve that because, as I think I mentioned earlier, he didn't want that to become a row of honky-tonks and pizza and hot dog stands. This one man could sell to the wrong person. I think he was trying to avoid condemnation. Maybe he ended up with condemnation; you'd have to straighten me out on that. Maybe it was a question of price, I don't know. But I do know that some time after that he told me he had the whole thing bought out and settled. I think it was a question of price, wasn't it? This man was holding out for--

G: I think so. Sure. I think he wanted a price well above the market value.

K: Well above what he had paid to the others. But that was very much on his mind.

Another thing that he talked about constantly, because he enjoyed it so much, was the management of the ranches that he owned jointly with Moursund. I learned a lot about ranch management just listening to those conversations. The whole idea of owning land was very important to him. Of course, when he left the presidency that became his preoccupation.

G: Shall we go to November?

K: Yes. Now, the one visit to the Ranch that you had notes on was the one on Thanksgiving. I thought there was another one.

G: There was in December, I think, after that.

K: Oh, then maybe I . . .

G: I have some material on that.

K: I knew there was more than just that one during that year. But in any case, in that Thanksgiving weekend, apart from the repetition of the activities, I remember one thing in particular that stood out at the beginning of it. That was that he had told us I think in

October that he had somebody living on the Ranch and could we find some good serviceable clothes that we weren't using for this man and his wife and a big raft of children, I forget how many. I remember during Thanksgiving we visited them, [Hilmer] Hartman, and we had brought suitcases full of clothing for them. And he had clothing from all other friends. I think this fellow could have established a chain store clothing concern by the time he got through. (Laughter) But it was a lovable aspect of Johnson that we saw there, with the kids and with the family and wanting to take care of them. It was very heartwarming. We also I think during that weekend for the first time met Bill Heath, who had a ranch near there, and various other new friends.

One of the reasons I thought that there was another weekend was I remember somewhere in this period he asked us to come to church with him and with George Hamilton and Lynda. I did not see that in the record of the Thanksgiving weekend and I have such a clear recollection of it that it must have happened at some other Ranch visit around that time. Lynda had been staying at our house in New York and we had met George at the house in New York, but this was the first time we spent with him at the Ranch. I had known George, of course, peripherally in the motion picture business before he started to see Lynda. This one was actually reported in the press, as it would be, because whenever he was accompanied by anybody the press would mention who went to church with him. Well, it's of no great importance. I was just trying to refresh my recollection on the number of visits at that time.

Now, the other thing that happened on Thanksgiving is that Mathilde and I were riding with him in the fields, just the three of us, and he turned on the news and the news said that the President, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Krim, were going to attend the

Billy Graham services in Houston. That was the first we heard of this. It surprised us, number one, that he had given out our names, which again was a little inconsistent with what we thought his master plan was, and also that he hadn't mentioned it to us. I can't say that he was a fan of evangelism, but he obviously was a fan of Billy's. So Mathilde said, "My, are we going to that?" and he said, "Yes. Don't prejudge it, you're going to like Billy Graham." And we went. We were the guests of Roy Hofheinz in that ornate, posh, gilded quarters of his in the Astrodome. He took us all through those quarters there. They are very special. Then we listened to Billy Graham, and then Billy Graham came and joined us. All in all, it was an interesting experience. I can't say we became Billy Graham fans, but it was an educational experience.

G: Do you have any insights into their relationship, Billy Graham and Lyndon Johnson?

K: They seemed to like each other. I think Billy Graham was sort of a president gatherer. In subsequent years I noticed with what ease he moved to Nixon and then Ford and then Carter. Now he seems to be breaking a little bit with Reagan on the nuclear issue. I met Billy Graham after that at the Ranch a couple of times and actually I think once gave him a helicopter ride in our chopper. I found him very nice as a person, but I couldn't empathize with his evangelism. So that was the time we met Billy Graham.

G: There was also in that appearance I think a statement of support of the President's policies in Vietnam.

K: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He said nice things about the President from the pulpit that day. And I think politically it was a boost for the President. He didn't need that kind of support at that time, you know; it was coming from all sources.

On the way back I remember sitting with the President in the back of the car, and



his asking me about Ben Heineman. The reason I'm mentioning it is that it was in connection with Ben Heineman entering the cabinet. I was wondering if [Robert] Weaver had already been appointed to Housing [and Urban Development] and whether he was talking about HEW. But I knew he was talking about one or the other. Subsequently, when the HEW thing came up, he did offer the job to Ben Heineman. Now, the reason he mentioned Ben Heineman to me is that I had brought Ben Heineman into the political arena back in the Kennedy days. I knew Ben well and we were trying at that time to do some things for the President in Chicago.

G: Was this fund raising?

K: Yes, the President's Club, with [Richard] Daley. I was in the President's bedroom--Ben didn't know this--when he called him and offered him the job as head of HEW. And Ben explained that for business reasons he couldn't take it on. I just don't remember if the conversation about Ben at this time had to do with that or about Housing. But it did have to do with a cabinet appointment. I don't think it has any particular significance, but I remember that's what we were talking about on the way back to the Jetstar to go back to the Ranch.

G: Now I have some notes on that weekend that you went to the Birthplace.

K: Now my memory is beginning to serve me better. I think the HEW thing was long after. I think it was after he had actually said he wasn't going to run and after--was it John Gardner who had been in that job and left?

I'm sorry. You were asking a question.

G: Visiting the Birthplace, just touring around the Ranch, is there anything else there that you did that weekend?

K: Well, touring the Ranch had more to do than the Birthplace. It was also, of course, the cemetery. It also had to do with these two prefabricated houses that he was bringing in.

G: The cedar houses.

K: They sprang up overnight with Cousin Oreole in one of them. It meant visiting Dale Malechek's place. And it also meant a lot of deer--not hunting, but searching--and the cattle and the irrigation.

G: Did he try to sell you cattle?

K: Not then. He did later. I bought cattle from him later.

G: Did you?

K: Yes. Oh, and also I should tell you on this weekend in Thanksgiving my wife and I went back with him to the ranchettes, and that's when my wife picked out this piece of land with the windmill on it, five acres. Before we got through we had two hundred and fifty acres. But we bought five acres that day.

Now, Mike, I think there's no point to continuing in sequence. I would like to say that the--

(Interruption)

Where did you turn it off?

G: Well, you were saying that from the period of Thanksgiving, 1965 through 1968 there was a kaleidoscope of [events].

K: Yes. Through January of 1969 there was a kaleidoscope of activity and I see no point to going at it sequentially. I see more point in taking topics and covering them regardless of sequence. But I'd like to describe what I mean by the contents of the kaleidoscope. That is that whenever the President was leaving Washington to go to the Ranch, either he or

somebody on the staff would call us and ask us if we wanted to join him. More often than not we did, both before we had our own place there and after we had our place. We would generally go down and either spend the night at the White House before the trip, or go down early enough of the day on which the trip was to be made. Then we would all go down in *Air Force One* and we would always be sitting in the President's quarters. In the back would be generally, if not always, the congressmen from the area, particularly [Henry] Gonzalez and Jake Pickle, who would also get the notice of the trip. We all began to be kind of a club in *Air Force One*. Then he would occasionally have special guests, working guests, from the Congress other than the Texas contingent on the cabinet or whatnot, and he would call for them to come up to his quarters for their little chat, and then they'd go back. He would take naps in those quarters, and there would generally be a meal. Then we'd end up either at San Antonio or at Austin, more often at Austin, and then move by Jetstar to the Ranch and occasionally by chopper. He had these big choppers at the Ranch. Once we had our place there, we would generally get a chopper ride to our ranch until we had our own chopper, and then it was back and forth in the chopper.

Apart from that, he would often invite us to the White House and we would generally have that same room, room 303. It got so that when I was in Washington I almost automatically went to the White House, so much so that once he didn't know I was there and he put in a call for me and we were talking as if I were in New York and he was in Washington. Suddenly I said, "Well, I'm upstairs." (Laughter) So he said, "Come on down," and I came down because he wanted me to meet a lady that I knew, Jeanne Vanderbilt, with her kid. We all had a laugh at the fact that he had called me to give

regards in New York and I was in the White House.

Of course during the course of those three and a half years I had the opportunity to be alone with him many, many hours, just the two of us, or just my wife and I with Lady Bird and him. It's just impossible for me to recollect all the things we covered. He used to pick my brains on anything that he could think of. But of course, since a lot of people knew that I was able to see him one-on-one, I had to carry a lot of messages to him and also get things done. I must say that of the group that came into the money aspects of politics through me, the things they wanted the President to do almost without exception had nothing to do with them or with their business. It had to do with broader issues of importance, in their view, to the country. But not small, petty things. It'd have to do with health legislation, with Israel, with tax legislation. For instance, André Meyer would be giving me messages on the financial community; Mary Lasker would be giving them to me on health legislation, Abe Feinberg on what to do about Israel. I'm giving you examples of the kinds of things where I was kind of a liaison in all of these areas. Through it all we got to know the President better and better, and our impression of him was that he had one of the brightest minds, if not the brightest, that we had ever had the privilege of being in contact with. We often wondered whether that mind would have been improved or possibly damaged by more formal education.

G: Did he ever wonder the same thing?

K: Well, I don't know. But it was an electric mind. One of the things about it which borders almost on extrasensory perception is revealed by the number of times when I had something awkward to discuss with him and I didn't know how to bring it up, and he would open the subject.

G: Can you give me an example?

K: I can't at this moment, but my wife and I have often talked about his prescience, about his coming, not only into a one-on-one conversation, but into a room and sensing what was on people's minds. It was a rare quality. That's one aspect of him that came out.

Another that came out in large measure was his compassion, his personal empathy with people who were deprived or being discriminated against, and his feelings of support for those who had had to make it the hard way, as he felt he had. He felt himself the object of discrimination and therefore sympathized with others who were being discriminated against. One of the things that I personally found in him, for instance, was a feeling about Israel and the Jewish people that you would think would come only from somebody who had roots that had some connection with that, which he didn't. But he had that feeling, and he had that feeling for the poor and so forth. So that compassion was another thing that we saw.

He was a warm friend, the kind of friend you don't find very often in life and you're surprised to find it in a president, who became your friend only after he became president. But he exuded warmth, he exuded the desire to make you comfortable. He did things, he went out of his way to take you when you said goodbye, to receive you when he said hello, things of that sort, which are very, very precious on a personal level. And he had traits that drove us up a wall.

Before I get to that, let me say he was in every sense a big man, not only physically but he just was big enough so that in any room you knew he was the center, he was the leader. I've known two other presidents on a one-to-one basis, and in that sense of awesome power he stood alone. Kennedy had a tremendous charisma which also

made you think of him as somebody special. Jimmy Carter I think compared to Johnson would be lost in the crowd, not only because he was shorter, but he didn't have that sense of strength emanating from him, which Johnson did.

Now, the frustrations, which were in many ways the other side of the coin and in other ways evidence of his being true to himself, of his own inner strength: He was given to exaggeration and frequently left it there, so that people were confused by the exaggeration and wondered, does he really mean it? But he was a master of hyperbole and you had to know how to mesh it with the rest of his--

G: Was there any formula for sorting this out?

K: Time. I mentioned that evening at Camp David. If I had never seen the President after that I would have had a different view of him. He had an abnormal need to keep his options open, and it extended all the way from not letting Mrs. Johnson know who was coming to lunch until five to one, to not permitting anybody to make any official announcement about an appointment or about a trip, even though he had made the decision, until he announced it. Because up until that moment he was free to change that decision. This permeated his approach to both his daily life and things of greater importance.

In 1966 it had a real impact on the congressional elections. He had planned a trip to the Far East, and he planned when coming back to make some campaign support speeches. These were the congressionals in 1966. He told it to me, he must have told it to a number of others. It appeared in the press and he was furious, he said no such decision had been made. Even his friend Marianne Means accused him of inconsistency in a column, and he called off the campaign speeches. If you go back to the press of that

time, you will get quite a lot of evidence of what I'm talking about now. But that option bit, you know.

G: So he would pursue the opposite course because his--

K: Just to prove that he had never locked himself in, even if it hurt him. That's the frustrating part about it, and I'm mentioning it.

He could be very strong in times when to everybody else compromise was called for. He was also a compromiser, but in many instances he wouldn't give. A lot of times he was right, but he was--should I use the word "stubborn?"--on a number of occasions. Now if I stop to think about it, I'll give you examples. I'm just trying now to kind of give you a sort of parachutist view.

G: Do you think that this stubbornness was due to a perception of his chances of having his view prevail, or do you think it was a matter of saving compromise until later until he had gotten some more accessions from the other side perhaps? Was it calculated or was it basic to his personality?

K: I think he was a man who was deeply hurt by feeling that he had communicated something and have it come back the other way, particularly with the New England establishment, the Harvard-*Time-Fortune-Newsweek* axis. He would wear himself out trying to present his point of view, then have it come back, from his viewpoint, distorted. He felt, I think, that he was president and they were not. He just, I think, got his back up as a result of a lot of that. I'm not trying to be a psychiatrist here, but I know that this ate away at him. What it did in many ways was to cause him to be more of himself with those very people. In other words, if the *Time* editors, when they came down there were going to be New England snobs, he was going to give them real Texas treatment. He

wasn't going to change his manners or his language or his anecdotes or anything just to change his image with them. There have been a lot of nasty cracks about how he tried to demean people by talking to them while he was on the toilet, and his table manners. All of that has always made me so angry. The fact is, in that particular way he was natural. If he was with a guy it didn't seem to make any difference whether he was in the men's room or in the swimming pool or in the lounge. I've rambled a lot here, but I just wanted to give you some general impressions.

G: The frustrations, did they seem to increase or diminish as time went on?

K: Oh, I think they increased. I think they had a big part to play with his decision in 1968, and they increased as these so-called intellectuals began to attack him on Vietnam. That became a big contest. Even the strongest erstwhile supporters turned on him on that.

G: The desire to keep his options open, how did you even know when you were going to the Ranch and when you weren't? I understand the press was always in doubt whether the President was going to spend a weekend at the Ranch or not.

K: Well, we knew enough never to say anything.

G: But would you often suspect that you were going to go and then end up not going?

K: No, that didn't happen very often. We were usually advised at the last minute, and we were told when there were some doubts. But yes, he did play that game. And as time went on, he played the game even harder with them. You'll notice in that weekend in Thanksgiving he had the press for a photo session. I don't remember that ever happening again while we were there. On the contrary, the lengths we went to were absolutely extraordinary to avoid the press. I remember the one episode where Mathilde was sunbathing on the deck of the big boat and as far as we knew, we were miles away from



the nearest reporter. The next day [there was] a big picture--who was the blonde on President Johnson's boat? He bawled the hell out of his press people for not spotting that photographer, and Secret Service and everybody came in for a dressing-down.

This was another trait that was frustrating. I think he overdid that, from his own point of view.

G: The secrecy thing or his temper?

K: The secrecy thing. Because like what I mentioned the last time about his being angry about it getting out that he came to a New Year's Eve party; I think a lot of that would have been considered innocuous by the public.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview III