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HARRY MCPHERSON ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW I

PREFERRED CITATION

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Transcript, Harry McPherson Oral History Interview I,
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The following is the text of a letter written by Harry McPherson in 1979, authorizing the LBJ Library Director to make his oral history interview available to researchers:

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May 22, 1979

Mr. Harry J. Middleton
Executive Director
The Lyndon Baines Johnson
Foundation
2313 Red River
Austin, Texas 78705

Dear Harry:

For some reason I can't remember what limitation I put on my oral history. I think it was 10 years, which would make it about due for expiration. In any case, there seems to be no good reason for further restricting access to the history. So you may take this letter as authorization to make it available to interested persons.

I hope all goes well with you. What's the story on our LBJ debates?

Best,

Signed: Harry

Harry McPherson

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Harry McPherson

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Harry McPherson, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

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3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed by Harry McPherson on October 28, 1970

Accepted by Harry J. Middleton for the Archivist of the United States on March 3, 1975

Original Deed of Gift on File at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, 2313 Red River, Austin, TX 78705

ACCESSION NUMBER 74-210

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: HARRY MCPHERSON

Lawyer; b. Tyler, Tex., Aug. 22, 1929; B.A., U. South, 1949; D.C.I. (hon), 1965; student Columbia, 1949-50; LL.B., U. Tex., 1956; admitted to Texas bar, 1955; asst. gen. counsel Democratic policy com., U.S. Senate, 1956-59; asso. counsel, 1959-61; gen. counsel, 1961-63; dep. under sec. internat. affairs Dept. Army, 1963-64; asst. sec. state ednl. and cultural affairs, 1964-65; spl. asst. and counsel to Pres. Johnson, 1965-66; spl. counsel to Pres. Johnson, 1966-69; private practice law, Washington, 1969-.

INTERVIEW I

DATE: December 5, 1968

INTERVIEWEE: HARRY MCPHERSON

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

PLACE: Mr. McPherson's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

B: This is the interview with Harry McPherson. Mr. McPherson, very briefly, your background is this: born in Tyler, Texas in 1929; bachelor's degree at Sewanee, the University of the South; further work at Columbia University; Air Force service from 1950 to 1953; then a law degree at the University of Texas in 1956. Is that about the basic outline?

M: That's right.

B: There's one thing I've noticed in the written material. There's a story that's told: during your Air Force service concern over the implications of the Joe McCarthy era prompted you to go into law and public service. Is that a correct story?

M: Yes, it is. And I look back on it with some pride that I was so exercised over McCarthy and some chagrin that I knew so little of American history that I thought McCarthy would be a permanent phenomenon. The one thing I knew nothing of, for sure, was law. I had expected to be a teacher and hopefully, a poet when I went into the service in 1950, being fed up with graduate school for a while. And when I got to Germany in early 1953, the McCarthy committee was in full cry back in the States and I became so concerned about it that I wrote to Senator McCarthy and asked him for his committee documents, and on studying those became even more concerned and certain that every American of any liberal inclinations was going to have to either be able to defend himself or to defend others.

B: You got a reply and a complete set of documentation?

M: Oh, a very warm and forthcoming reply from Senator McCarthy. Of course I didn't express my views about him in my letter. I merely asked for the committee documents, but he was

interested in finding another recruit in Wiesbaden, [Germany].

So I went to law school, thinking that law school was essentially about constitutional matters, matter of civil liberties. I discovered it was about torts and private property and was somewhat taken aback.

B: Did you have in mind deliberately preparing yourself for a public service career as opposed to a private law practice?

M: To some degree, yes. And as I got down to the wire in late 1955 after taking the bar exam and looking around for a job in Texas in a law firm, I was more and more inclined to go into something else, other than the private practice of law.

B: I might insert here, you mentioned your ambitions toward poetry. For the record, you are the author of two one-act plays which have been produced here in Washington. Have you published any poetry?

M: No, none except in the captive literary magazine of which I was an editor at Sewanee, I never published any.

B: Then in 1956, I assume shortly after you got your law degree, you joined the Democratic Policy Committee of the Senate. How did you get that position?

M: Through good luck. I had a cousin working on Senator Johnson's staff named Jack Hight, who was an administrative secretary to the Senator. He told me that Gerald Siegel, who was then the counsel of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee, was looking for an assistant. He was overworked and had told Senator Johnson that he needed someone to help him; the Senator had authorized him to look for someone but had said that he would like him to come from Texas. So--

B: Does that mean that that was just a preference or an absolute requirement?

M: Well, he would prefer it. He didn't say it was an absolute requirement. Gerry was from Iowa and was a Yale law graduate, had been executive assistant to Don Cook on the SEC, and had worked with Senator Johnson on some of the preparedness hearings along with Don Cook and in that remarkable exercise in which the chairman of the SEC would come over and help the Senator from Texas on his preparedness matters.

At any rate we made the connection and I went down and was interviewed. About the same time the word went from Senator Johnson through Dean Page Keeton, the University of Texas Law School, that he was looking for someone and two streams coincided.

B: Did you know Mr. Johnson before then, or know of him?

M: No, I had one connection with him. I had never met him. My wife and I had sent him an outraged telegram the year before. He had spoken on the Senate floor after Senator [William F.] Knowland [R.-Calif.] had made one of his typical P.R. speeches for Chiang Kai Shek and China, the necessity for maintaining our strong ally in Asia, the Republic of China; and Senator Johnson had spoken very favorably about Senator Knowland's speech. We thought that it was wrong for the Democratic leader to be buying that policy; this was at a time when the liberal community was very exercised about the China lobby. I got a very long and thoughtful letter back from him. It was only years later that I would understand that he very likely did not draft that letter--that was later when I was drafting similar replies to similar telegrams and letters.

But I had never met him. As a Texan, I had known of him for a long time. My father had voted for him in 1941 and in 1948, and we were certainly deeply interested in the 1954 campaign when he ran against Dudley Dougherty but I had never met him. I met him the first time on the Senate floor.

B: The question arises there: you call yourself a liberal; at that time Mr. Johnson was not exactly known as a liberal. Did that cause any trepidation in your mind in signing on with his crew?

M: Well, among the Duggerites [i.e. Texas liberal faction whose leaders include Ronnie Dugger] in Texas, the Texas Observer crowd, he was certainly not regarded as a bomb-throwing ally. But at the same time there was a good deal of respect for him and considerable feeling that he might be an instrument of good, once you put that phrase in quotes, from their point of view. And given Texas politics, he was certainly the most progressive senior public official on the scene.

It was a shock though, I must say, when I arrived here on February 1, 1956 and went to work in the Democratic Policy Committee and found that the first bill that I worked

on with Gerry Siegel was the natural gas bill. That was the one that Senator [Francis] Case [R.-N.J.] later bombed with his announcement that he had been offered a bribe. That was a shock because like most liberals, I was antipathetic to the, quote, gas lobby and much more on the side of Senator [John O.] Pastore [D.-R.I.] and Senator [Paul H.] Douglas [D.-Ill.] and the others who were for preserving the FPC's regulatory power.

B: Did you ever talk to Senator Johnson about that?

M: No.

B: You answered very quickly and definitely. Was that the kind of thing you just would not have raised, given your status and his?

M: Absolutely.

B: What were the circumstances of that first meeting on the Senate floor?

M: Extremely brief and yet curiously intense. I was marched across the well of the Senate by Gerry Siegel during a break in the proceedings and introduced to my new boss, and he said, "Glad to have you, do your best," somewhat abruptly but with full force.

B: From 1956 on to 1963, you were with the Democratic Policy Committee, finally ending up by 1961, I believe, as the General Counsel. Is that a correct outline?

M: Yes. That's right.

B: What precisely did that work involve?

M: I began as the counsel for a little committee called the Legislative Review Committee or the Calendar Committee. That was a group of three junior senators, I can't recall who the first three were. As I remember, by 1957 or 1958, it was Senator Joe Clark [D.-Pa.] and Senator Herman [E.] Talmadge [D.-Ga]. Senator [Sam J.] Ervin [Jr. D.-N.C.] and Senator [Alan] Bible [D.-Nev.] served on it at one time; later, Senator [Edmund] Muskie [D.-Me.], Senator [Daniel K.] Inouye [D.-Hawaii], Senator Dan Brewster [D.-Md.].

The function of that committee was to review all the bills that had been reported out of committee and placed on the Senate calendar to see which of them could be passed by

unanimous consent. This is the way in which the Senate gets rid of the volume of its business. Most of the bills that can be passed in that way are private claim bills--relief bills of one sort or another, immigration bills. But occasionally some rather significant pieces of legislation can be passed: no one really opposed them; there's no need for a lengthy explanatory statement by anyone; it can be inserted in the record as the bill is passed to explain it in the record. It may be desirable to pass it by unanimous consent rather than to risk a long debate on a bill. There are a lot of reasons why bills are passed that way. Sometimes we stopped private claim bills and relief bills because they were just bad bills. They would be reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee for a variety of reasons, usually [because of] their sponsor.

B: Like bad bills, you mean just poorly written?

M: No. Bills that were not in the public interest in our judgment; relief bills that gave relief to people who shouldn't have it.

B: "Our judgment," being the judgment of this committee?

M: Of this committee. I would review the bills and in the early years, I would write an explanation of each one of them. Later on I just read them, got to know them, and marked the bad ones in my opinion and would tell the committee about those.

The committee took its job seriously and it was quite an exciting experience. I will never forget the first time, which was after about a year, in which I sat alone with the committee on the floor and we ran through a calendar call--a dizzying experience. The clerk calls the bills like a tobacco auctioneer and if you make a mistake, you're in hot water. It's very troublesome to get it undone. You learn a good many parliamentary devices to make up for your mistakes, but still the heat and pressure of it is very intense. I used to leave those calendar calls after sometimes two hours of it feeling utterly exhausted from the intellectual and almost physical intensity of it.

B: You mentioned that sometimes a major bill would be handled that way for good reasons, I believe, was your phrase. What would be an example of that?

M: Well, I shouldn't say, perhaps, major. A considerable change in the law affecting regulatory procedures in some

agency. Perhaps a large--very large--relief bill that involved some major principle of government policy, something involving a half a million dollars or more that might ordinarily require some debate. And yet the bill was essentially a good bill; there was nothing really to be gained from an extended debate of it and, therefore, this was a convenient method of calling it up and passing it.

B: And the corollary to that is debate might possibly have hampered passage?

M: Yes, except that both sides--both parties--have these calendar committees, and they serve not only as self-starting committees who judge the quality of legislation themselves but as command posts for the whole party. So that when a calendar call was announced on Monday, say, for Wednesday, between Monday and Wednesday I would receive dozens of calls from Senators asking that a particular bill be held up. And we would do that. We would object to the passage of the bill by unanimous consent, which would keep the bill on the Senate calendar and require it to be motioned up later. So if Senators were doing their business, if their legislative assistants were on the ball and were reading the calendar, reading the bills, and calling those of interest to the attention of their Senators, we would hear from them. Occasionally a Senator would come in the next day, having read that a bill had passed in the Congressional Record, and would want it reconsidered. You could do that, within a period of time, unless a motion had been made to reconsider it and that was tabled and that kills it. Or that passes it and sends it to the other body or to the White House.

B: Did Senator Johnson often get involved in this process?

M: Indeed he did.

B: Under what circumstances would he be?

M: Well, I guess Senator Johnson was almost unique in the modern history of the Senate in the degree of his interest in legislation. It was as if he wanted to put his stamp on virtually every major piece of legislation and on a great many minor ones. But he was interested in them. After I became essentially his floor counsel in about 1958, I would send him each day a calendar marked up with the names of Senators who were interested on both sides. And about three times a week I would send him a memorandum in which I would go over the major bills on the calendar and describe the

problems that were in them, not just which Senators were for or against but what the substantive problems were. I doubt if there has ever been a more thorough legislator than Lyndon Johnson. He was chairman, of course, of the Democratic Policy Committee and after I began going to meetings of that committee in about 1958, I saw the intensity of that interest in legislation. This is something that distinguished the leaders of the Senate from others. Johnson has sometimes made the distinction between minnows and whales. I remember once, when he was Vice-President, he said, when I spoke about [John F.] Kennedy's support in the Senate--I said I thought a number of Senators wanted to support Kennedy and he said, "Yes, but the trouble is he's got all of the minnows and none of the whales."

The whales generally sat on the Democratic Policy Committee. There weren't many exceptions to that. At the end of a luncheon, usually a good steak luncheon, in the office of Skeeter Johnson, the Secretary of the Senate in those days, we would go over the calendar. I would pass out marked up calendars to each Senator on the Policy Committee and Johnson would start right at the beginning and go through each bill that had been reported and not yet passed. And he would ask whether there was any objection to the passage of the bill or would stop and say, "What's this all about?" and I would attempt to explain it. Sometimes questions would be asked that I couldn't answer. Generally we'd get through with most of the bills cleared for action.

The Policy Committee's a curious thing. Perhaps I'd better go back a minute and say something about that. In the 1946 Legislative Reorganization Act, the one that [Robert M.] LaFollette [Jr. R.-Wisc.] and [A.S. Mike] Monroney [D.-Okla.] put through the Congress and was the last great legislative reorganization act, there was a recommendation from this joint committee headed by LaFollette and Monroney that each party have in each house a policy committee. This was a political scientist's dream. It was to be a kind of floating platform committee. It was to provide a standard of policy for each party between the national conventions so that you could tell who was a Democrat and who was a Republican--what was Democratic policy? What was Republican policy? in this particular situation. That passed the Senate without a word of debate; it was never even mentioned in the Senate debate. Apparently nobody even paid any attention to it. It got to the House and Speaker [Sam] Rayburn didn't like it at all. Neither did Howard Smith [D.-Va.], the head of the Rules

Committee--Judge Smith. So it was knocked out. It was thought that it would conflict with the Rules Committee and would introduce an element of partisan policy into the House deliberations that would make it difficult, I think Rayburn thought, to hold the coalition of Democrats together, Southern and Northern.

- B: Is there a possibility that people like Rayburn and Smith thought that it might have been a threat to their leadership?
- M: Quite possible. The basic aim of leaders like Johnson and Rayburn, I've felt when I was there, was to keep the coalition [of Republicans and Southern Democrats] from hardening. Johnson, once when I was urging some particularly liberal policy on him, said that he didn't want to do that because he didn't want Dick Russell [D.-Ga.] to walk across the aisle and embrace Everett Dirksen [R.-Ill.].

They believed that the establishment of any hard line of Democratic policy that would exclude the John Stennises [i.e. Sen. Stennis, D.-Miss.] would make the hardening of that coalition with Republicans much more likely. And it was hard enough to pass bills as it was; we had such a narrow majority for most of the time in which Johnson was Leader that he had to go across and pick up--he had to hold as many Democrats as he could--and then he had to go across and pick up a few Republicans, because he was bound to lose the Strom Thurmonds [D.-S.C.] and the Jim Eastlands [D.-Miss.] and so on. So he was always very skittish about coming down hard on policy. This was one reason, I think, why both he and Rayburn opposed the Democratic Advisory Council which Paul Butler, in 1958, recommended be created and that Johnson and Rayburn take part in it. When you looked at the membership of that Democratic Advisory Council--Eleanor Roosevelt, Paul Butler, Adlai Stevenson, I think Joe Rauh, and some others--and considered from their point of view what would happen if they joined it, you would get a terrifically divisive force going so far as their leadership in the Congress was concerned. You'd have a Democratic policy announced that many of the Southern chairmen simply could not go along with publicly. The great trick of leadership was always to get them to cooperate to the extent possible, without making it an ideological issue, and that was their [Johnson's and Rayburn's] concern.

In any event, to go back to the Policy Committee, the House knocked it out in the conference between the House and the Senate on the bill. The House agreed that the Senate

could have it if it wanted it, but it didn't want it itself. So almost the very next bill that passed the Senate after the Legislative Reorganization Act and Independent Offices Appropriation Act contained a section which said, "for the expenses of the staffs of the Democratic and Republican policy committees, which committees shall review legislation" and so on, so much was provided. There was never any basis in legislation--in authorization--for those committees. It was a brilliant device to get it through without describing what it was going to do.

B: Whose invention was that incidentally?

M: I don't know. The Republican Policy Committee, I suppose primarily because Republicans had a tendency to be much more cohesive in their policy than Democrats, developed into something very much like what was envisaged by the joint committee of Monroney and LaFollette. It has become over the years a kind of sounding board for Republican policy. They have luncheons every week and Dirksen or the chairman of the Republican Policy Committee come out of those luncheons and announce that the Republican Party is against something or other, every now and then that they're for something or other, but mostly that they oppose some legislation that the Democrats have cooked up.

The Democratic Policy Committee probably because it was--well, for two reasons: one, because of the terrific divisions within the party which made it hard to develop a coherent policy stand on anything; and also because it was the party in power during most of the time--developed into an operational committee very much like a rules committee in the House. Bills were simply not brought up in the Senate unless by the Majority Leader, and the Majority Leader didn't bring them up unless the Policy Committee had cleared them. This developed simply by practice.

B: Is it fair to say that that committee was pretty much Lyndon Johnson's creature?

M: I'd be inclined to say yes, in the sense that he was certainly the most powerful member on it, the most persuasive member, and he had the responsibilities of leadership on his back. Senators, particularly those in the Establishment--in the Club, as it's called in the Senate--have a great deal of respect for the Leader. The maintenance of a strong leader is quite important to them, and they were quite cooperative with the Leader for that reason. Bills that they personally opposed on policy

grounds they frequently cleared because they knew that the Leader had to take them up for one reason or another, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1957. Certainly Russell and [Lister] Hill [D.-Ala.] and the rest of them couldn't, quote, clear that bill as a matter of desirability. But as a matter of recognizing that the Majority Leader had to move on it, they were prepared to do that. But I should say that the members, when you had people like Bob Kerr [D.-Okla.] and Richard Russell and Warren Magnuson [D.-Wash.] on the committee, while they were very close friends of Lyndon Johnson and his fellow whales in the Senate--part of the Establishment in the Senate--they were extremely strong-minded men and they took a consuming interest just as he did in legislation. And here again is one of the differences I alluded to while ago. They really went over legislation and looked at it from its top side and its bottom side, from a, I should say, ninety percent from an objective viewpoint as legislators, ten percent from a political viewpoint as Democrats.

- B: Now, the kind of procedure you're talking about works both ways. You mentioned the support that Senator Johnson got for the 1957 Civil Rights Bill, but that bill was altered from its original form, presumably largely Mr. Johnson's doing, to make it more acceptable to the Southerner.
- M: It was the only way to pass it. He had to alter it. He had to soften Title III and I'll have to go back and look again to see; there have been so many civil rights bills since then that it's difficult to remember what Title III was.
- B: For this kind of thing it's not necessary. It's thoroughly written down; and it has something to do with the jury trials in certain cases, if I recall.
- M: It has to do with whether--that's right, with whether someone, a state or local registrar challenged under the act would be entitled to a jury trial.
- B: In that kind of thing can you separate in Mr. Johnson's mind principle and expediency? That is, in 1957 was he sincerely interested in getting a civil rights act passed because of the effect it would have on Negroes and others, or was he just trying to chalk up another piece of legislation? Or can you answer that?
- M: Well, it's difficult for me to answer it, because I didn't know him anyway near as well as I do now. And the subject of Lyndon Johnson and the field of civil rights is worth a

good deal of talk. My guess is that at that time he felt that there were certain historical necessities for the Democratic Party that required the passage of legislation. That is, this was Eisenhower's bill; it had passed the House; here it was in the Senate; no legislation had passed in eighty-five years. Secondly, the very fact that no legislation of this kind had passed in eighty-five years was an inducement to try to pass it, to bring off a great coup of this kind. He needed thirdly, I suppose, to establish himself as a more than sectional leader. The year before, in 1956, he had refused to sign a Southern manifesto which every other Southern Senator did sign--the one that condemned the [Supreme Court's] Brown decision of 1954.

Johnson, I believe, is your typical Southern liberal who would have done a lot more in the field of civil rights early in his career had it been possible; but the very naked reality was that if you did take a position--an advanced position in Southern terms--it was almost certain that you would be defeated, not by someone else with an advanced position, but by a bigot. That happened all over the South for years and years and years. But Johnson was one of those men early on who disbelieved in the Southern racial system and who thought that the salvation for the South lay through economic progress for everybody.

One of the most powerful speeches, I suppose, he ever made in his life was in New Orleans in the 1964 campaign. He was speaking extemporaneously late one night to a huge crowd and he recalled how a Mississippi Senator of the Johnson stripe--that is, a moderate in the field of civil rights, one who believed in economic progress rather than race-baiting--had said as he was going back down to campaign for the last time in his career that he just thought he'd go down to Mississippi and talk about real progress, because the only kind of campaigning anybody hears about these days is "nigger, nigger, nigger," and Johnson shouted those words with his fist clenched in New Orleans and the ovation was tremendous. It was a very gutsy thing to do in that campaign in New Orleans in 1964. But recollection of that by him at that time makes me believe that in his early career he was that sort of a politician. He had a genuine populist feeling about poor people.

B: Did you ever hear him have comment on the 1954 school segregation decision at the time?

M: No, I never heard him say it. In those days, in 1957, he could be of two minds privately. I heard him at one end of

the cloakroom talking to Paul Douglas one day, saying, "Paul, the amendment to the Civil Rights Bill is coming up and I need your support to get such and such done." Douglas who was allied with him on trying to pass the bill although opposed to him on the Title III thing, said that he would help.

And he [Johnson] went to the other end of the room and was talking to Sam Rayburn, and said, "Sam, why don't you all let this nigger bill pass?" So obviously that language was not the language that he would ever employ later on, and I've never heard him use the word. But at that time he was down in the trenches with guys who were determined not to let the bill pass, and he was doing his damndest by every conceivable device to bring them around. He warned them that much worse would come unless they would pass this modest bill, and he would tell some of the Northerners that if they would only let this modest bill go through, they would get a better bill later. So he was playing it out of both sides.

B: Did that kind of thing ever get him in trouble?

M: Oh, it contributed to the "wheeler-dealer" part of his reputation.

B: It may be also why in a circumstance like this one has to ask a question about sincerity.

M: His sincerity is to the end result. He doesn't believe that the end justifies any means; he believes it justifies quite a few means. But he has a curious degree of reserve and feelings of delicacy about some means. I mean, frequently when I am prepared in hot pursuit of an end to do something that is not entirely out of a political science textbook, he bridles at it. He's not an unscrupulous man. But he is certainly a hard-going politician.

B: At what sort of means would he bridle?

M: Well, for example, he is probably as genuinely edgy about invasions of privacy as any public figure has ever been. He despises wiretapping, bugging, that sort of thing. So getting the goods on anybody by that means, by overhearing, eavesdropping, snipping about of that kind, is anathema to him. He just hates it.

He also has always held back from finally twisting the knife in anybody, that I've never seen. I don't mean that

he isn't rough. He is. And he has walked over people, but not in such a way that he left six-inch hobnails in their backs. And he pulls back from the final brutality to individual dignity. And this is what has preserved him as a major public figure for thirty-seven years, because people know that although they're dealing with a tough man that they're dealing also with somebody who will not finally run over them.

B: Can you give a specific example, either from the Senatorial years or later, of a case in which he stopped short of a final stab?

M: No, I don't suppose I can. Not because I won't, but because I just can't remember one. It's just--. It's an impression I've had from watching him deal with people.

A great deal has been written about the Johnson treatment and it is an overpowering treatment. It always reminded me of Kid Gavilan, the Cuban boxer, who had a bolo punch that came over the top of his head, or of that fellow--it wasn't [Wilmer "Vinegar Bend"] Mizell but another pitcher for the Reds years ago; he had such long arms that when he threw a side-armed, it looked like it was coming down the third base line. You know, he could argue any kind of way on any kind of level: the highest policy, the narrowest self-interest, political interest. He keeps probing until he begins to score.

And then there's something about the tremendous drive of his confrontation; something about his physical height, which he uses very effectively. His very massiveness and bigness. That has an almost irresistible force to it. But there is also something, when someone really cries out "I can't do that," there's something that snaps him back up. And I've seen him become almost tender with people who just said they couldn't do it, and he's let them alone, and that has been it. And he hasn't gone out to try to ruin them later whatever. He has a considerable respect for such men.

B: Your description implies that first, that Johnson has to know very well the person he's dealing with and secondly, that the person has to be right there. Is that correct?

M: I think that probably is true. He is the fastest learner of personality that I have ever encountered in my life. Abe Fortas once told me, when he and I were lamenting the fact that Johnson didn't like somebody that we liked, that he thought Johnson was wrong in this case, but that generally

speaking he was the best judge of character he had ever seen. And I must say that I have been immensely impressed by his capacity to judge people. There have been some people in the last few years whom I have liked and respected, whom he has warned me about and I thought he was being almost paranoid about them who've turned out to be bums--guys who wouldn't stand in public with conviction they had expressed to us in private. And after a while you get tired of that sort of thing. You've got to have something better to run a government and to maintain some public support. So his judgment is good.

As to being near someone, having to be near someone, certainly he is infinitely more effective in a room than he is in an auditorium or on television.

B: That's the reason I asked the question. It has been written by many people, I think, that although Johnson was a superb Senatorial leader where he was operating in a fairly small group, that he hasn't been able to transfer those leadership techniques to public or mass leadership.

M: Yes. I really don't understand Marshall McLuhan, but what little I do understand leads me to believe that Johnson is a hot type and that the coolness and detachment that is very effective on television is a quality he lacks. He is someone whose intensity does not come over well in large public gatherings today, and this has been attributed to the fact that he's an old Southwest politician who has been out shouting to courthouse crowds all his life. That may have a lot to do with it.

There's also--I don't know how many people I've heard, very distinguished people, say that after leaving a small meeting with Johnson that "My God, if people could only see him that way." But if you look back over a transcript of what he said in a small meeting, you see that he used arguments and told stories and made analogies that just simply would not do on thirty minutes of television. Sometimes he goes, after touching first base, he goes to left field, climbs into the bleachers, sells hot dogs, runs back down on the field, and circles the bases and comes home. You think he's never going to get to the point, but it all comes back with tremendous force and with great comprehensive power when he ends his argument, and it's damned near irresistible when he's at his best. This can't be done on television. You need a straight kind of approach, very logical and cool and dispassionate almost, that has some humor and some genuine self-reflection that

he's not good at projecting.

B: To get back into his Senatorial days, did you see much in those days of the relationship between Sam Rayburn and Senator Johnson?

M: I didn't see much of it. I know that Johnson went over frequently--until the last year when Mr. Rayburn was progressively ill--to the Board of Education meetings and met there with the collection of Texans and others, Dick Bolling [D.-Mo.] and Frank Thompson [D.-N.J.] and John McCormack [D.-Mass.] and people like that, which was in part a legislative session of its own, and in part just a bull session and a lot of boozing. He was devoted to Rayburn, as perhaps he has never been devoted to any other public figure with the possible exception of Dick Russell.

B: When did you first begin to see signs of Presidential ambitions?

M: Well, it was talked about, I remember, in 1956 when he went to the convention. Gerry Siegel, who had been with him then, told me that the one guy who never believed that there was any gold in them thar hills was Lyndon Johnson; that a number of people were pushing him, but that he was quite aware that he had no basic support and did not want to fire early and get himself into the position that Russell had been in in 1952 when he really pushed in his stack and was murdered by labor and civil rights groups and others in the party. So if the Heavens had opened and if the hand of God had reached down and touched him, he would have been exhilarated and would have done his best, but he knew that he had no real chance, that the party was not with him.

I suppose that the Civil Rights Act of 1957 certainly must have had in his mind some aspect of personal politics and that he was trying to repair that image of being a sectional leader and put himself into a position of running in 1960. As it was, he came out both as the man who had passed the bill, but also the man who had run the continuing fight against the liberal groups--the guy who had prevented Title III from being strong and all that.

Essentially Johnson's problem is that running for President, as has been well-documented and I believe it to be true, is that he treated the Senate as a major political institution as far as Presidential politics went. He thought that if he had the powers in the Senate, Joe O'Mahoney [D.-Wyo.], for example, if he had Joe O'Mahoney

with him, he would have something very big. Well, Joe O'Mahoney was a power in the state of Wyoming--Wyoming has how many electoral votes and delegates--very few; Oklahoma doesn't have many more; Georgia doesn't have many; Virginia doesn't have many. So this was a--I shouldn't say a badly thought out campaign; this was the basis of his support and he was, I suppose, put out--put off--by the liberal community in the Democratic Party, and ran with what he had and it wasn't enough.

B: Did you have any direct involvement in presidential politics before 1960?

M: Not at all.

B: Before we get back to 1960 a question, one aspect of which you've mentioned already: there has been also a good deal of speculation about the precise relationship between Senator Lyndon Johnson and the oil and gas industries in Texas. Do you have any knowledge of that?

M: Not too much knowledge. I have strong feelings about it and have heard him talk about it on one or two occasions. It's defensive. They were against him--

B: His conversations about it are defensive?

M: No, I mean his relationships to them is defensive. What he has done, what he was doing in the Natural Gas Act of 1956 was to do just enough to keep them off his back down in Texas, to keep a lot of oil money from going against him in the next election whatever that was--presidential or senatorial or whatever. He was never a friend of the oil and gas industry. I believe myself that he has never been a believer in an ideological sense of the 27 1/2% depletion allowance. He's not a disbeliever; it's just something that he resolved was a fact of life for any Texas Senator. You simply could not oppose that and stay alive as a political figure in Texas. So therefore don't worry about it. If he ever made a speech about it and I guess he did on occasion, Paul Douglas would bring up an amendment to do with it or John Williams of Delaware would, and he would make occasionally a brief speech, saying "I think we ought to keep it; it's needed; the oil industry has a lot of employees and they're dependent on this allowance." It would usually cover about one half a column in the Congressional Record, done as an afterthought. I once saw him put one in by just handing it to the reporter on the Senate floor without even making the speech, because he had

no desire to become an apologist for the industry.

The most passionate speech I ever heard made for it, I believe, was by Ralph Yarborough [D.-Texas], which gives you an idea that one has to serve that demon.

B: Was he personally close to any of the individuals in the oil and gas industry, any of the Texas big-rich?

M: I think he was close to a few guys, not in any sense from their oil and gas point of view, but people that he has known over the years and who have ranches near his and who have supported him financially in his elections. But he has never done a damned thing for them that I have ever been able to detect, and I've had my antenna up to catch it.

When he came to the White House, one of the first acts he took was to shove the entire oil problem over to Interior. It used to be that decisions affecting the oil import quota, for example, were made here [in the White House]; that is, allowables and stuff like that. There was an awful lot of White House participation in it. There has been absolutely none since Johnson became President. I know because I've got that general area as part of my jurisdiction. And the only thing that we've ever done is to sign a proclamation that had been prepared by Steward Udall, and it has to be done every time there's an amendment on the oil import quota; the President has to do it by Executive Order. He has been extremely leery of any connection with it whatever, and to my knowledge has never done a thing for it.

B: Has he been more positive about it than that? Has he indicated to the Interior Department that it is not necessary to try to please the President by pleasing--?

M: Oh, absolutely. He told Udall that he wants him to make every decision on his own and to report to him if anybody over here, any staff man, ever called him about any decision in the oil import field. He wants absolutely nothing to do with it.

B: Before we leave the Senatorial years, is there anything else that stands out in your mind about that, on the level of policy, principle, or just plain anecdote?

M: Well, I think one thing that ought to be mentioned is a major policy guideline that Johnson adopted. And in this case, the public posture was mirrored in private

performance, and that is in his relationship with the Eisenhower Administration. He has come to be much more tolerant and approving of President Eisenhower in the last few years than he was back in the 1950's, although even then he saw some genuine merit in President Eisenhower. When he came in as leader of the Democrats in 1953, he said, in pretty obvious relation to Senator [Robert] Taft [R.-Ohio] and his policy, that he did not believe it was the business of the opposition merely to oppose, and that he was going to try to be a responsible leader who would cooperate with the Administration wherever possible and would offer constructive alternatives where possible. And this he did. It turned out, if one judges the wisdom of a policy by its practical results, to be a very successful policy. Because when he came in, the Democrats were in a minority and in 1958 after several years of this policy, they had a majority of fifteen or seventeen members in the Senate. This was certainly not attributable merely to that policy, but I think it would have probably been the majority would have been quite a bit less had the country not seen that Democratic Party and the Congress was not being a purely obstructionist party.

B: That situation has been phrased in less flattering terms, that perhaps a motivation, if not the motivation, was the fact that any man or party who opposed the immensely popular President Eisenhower would be in serious political trouble.

M: I think that's true and I don't believe that those are mutually exclusive. But I do think that the country also grows tired, quickly tired, of a show put on for partisan effect. This doesn't say that there weren't some grand and glorious partisan occasions. As a matter of fact, Johnson was a master at arranging what we used to call the "morning hour round robin" in the Senate. When the Senate goes into session each day at noon, there is a morning hour in which bills are introduced and extraneous material is put in the record; poems by American Legion award winners are put in and so on. It's also an occasion for getting some political heat generated, if one is so inclined. Senator [Mike] Mansfield [D.-Mont.] is not so inclined and Johnson was. Frequently he would either inspire some other Senator to get up and take a crack at an Eisenhower or a Republican administration policy; then he would get up and with an expression of wonderment on his face, say "Do you mean that they have done so and so?" And then he would get into a colloquy there and a third Senator would get up, and a fourth and a fifth. Finally, fifteen or twenty Democratic Senators would be on their feet having the time of their

lives, yielding to each other with expressions of dismay, outrage, wonderment, bewilderment, and the best at this were Kerr and Pastore and [Hubert H.] Humphrey [D.-Minn.], Monroney, [Albert] Gore [D.-Tenn.], [Wayne] Morse [R., Indep., D.-Ore.], a highly combative group of Democrats. And they were really superb at it. They could go on for forty-five minutes and give the press several columns of stories. And it made for good reading and a lot of fun.

But when it came down to the really crunch stuff that Eisenhower had to have--support in the Lebanon crisis in 1958--he would always be there with him and would make a very calming statement, saying that he had been consulted and that he agreed and so on. Very much the way Dirksen has behaved toward him.

I sometimes think that he did best as Leader when he had a narrow majority, when he had forty-nine to forty-seven. When the tremendous majority was elected in 1958, including a lot of liberals, he was confronted with much more of the issue-oriented Senate than he had had before; much more of a Paul Butler-national party kind of Senate. It extremized, polarized the two parties and the Southerners, being unable to go along with their Northern Democratic brothers, would go over and join the Republicans frequently. It also made the acts of legerdemain less spectacular because you had a much larger vote there. Some of these guys were quickly friends of Johnson and became part of his camp. Dan Inouye, for one; [William] Proxmire [D.-Wisc.] was at first absolutely adulatory about Johnson--it was embarrassing. He used to make speeches every day; Johnson would motion up a fast private relief bill and Proxmire would be on his feet saying this was the greatest--one more example of the tremendous power of Lyndon Johnson as Leader. It was really embarrassing and Johnson would sometimes almost wince over it.

B: You wouldn't think Johnson would submit easily to obvious flattery.

M: No, he doesn't. He both loves it and hates it. He's embarrassed by it, sometimes feels the guy is a boob to be so flattering, but if it's done right, as it has been done right on many occasions, he's very much moved by it.

Lyndon Johnson has the most devastating capacity for self-analysis I have ever seen and here is a man who continually fools himself and everybody else. It's curious. I remember one night sitting with him in the Mansion over

here as he was looking through some photographs [Yoichi R.] Okamoto had made. And he said "Look at that photograph; look at me there smiling," and he was standing by someone that he doesn't particularly care for. He said, "Have you ever seen a phonier smile in your life?" And I said, "No, I haven't really." And he said, "That's the way I always look when I don't want to. When I don't feel sincere, I try all the harder to look sincere and it looks all the worse every time."

That's perfectly true; I had known that about him and so had others who observed him. But I didn't know that he did. And yet there he is in that kind of trap.

B: Does he take to that kind of analysis from other people? Have you ever, for example, tried to do that kind of thing?

M: Yes, I have done it.

B: What's the reaction?

M: Thoughtful.

B: He's willing to answer without anger and retribution?

M: Yes. He takes pretty well to that from people that he feels are essentially loyal to him and are concerned for him, as I am. And I should say that my ability to do this has grown over the years. It has taken quite some time.

I was a leader of the opposition for a long time on his staff, and word of this got back to him. But he never asked me to get out. I'm not talking about here, but in the Senate.

B: Perhaps you had better explain what being leader of an opposition on the staff means.

M: Well, there were several of us staff people who were much more inclined toward the Northern liberal positions on some legislation than he was willing to go with. But I learned a hell of a lot in those five years with him in the Senate, and I would say that I came to admire his politics and his principles, as regarded legislation and how the country works and how you get things done and so on, more than I admired my own liberal convictions. Put starkly that way--I don't mean that one had to give up one's liberalism to work for Lyndon Johnson. On the contrary, he has been at least a progressive and has been in many cases a liberal,

increasingly so as the years have gone by.

But there are cases when that came into conflict. I remember one in particular where Jack Kennedy had authored a bill that would have repealed the loyalty oath requirement in the National Defense Education Act. This had been a subject of great controversy and bitterness in the colleges. A lot of college presidents, on the motion of their faculties, had said "if the loyalty oath is retained, we won't accept any assistance from NDEA." The bill was reported out by the labor committee, of which Kennedy was a member--it was heavily stacked with liberals--so it got out. And for several weeks, I kept nudging him to take the bill up. And one day he turned to me and he said, "I am not going to get the Democratic Party into a national debate: resolved that the Communist Party is good for the United States, with the Democratic Party taking the affirmative."

I wasn't there in the years in which, as is pretty generally agreed, he busted Joe McCarthy, with the censure resolution. He has never had anything but contempt for McCarthyism, for hollering after Communists and all that. He knew too Goddamned many of them for one thing back in the 1930's. He knew too many guys who later turned out to have been either members or quasi-members of the party. And he has what Sidney Zion of the New York Times has said is probably the most acute sense of civil liberties of any modern President. But from a purely political point of view, he didn't want to go back to the days when Truman and the Truman Administration were under attack by Joe McCarthy, and the Democratic Party looked pro-Communist or looked as if it was soft on Communism. The Johnson approach was to be tough on Communism, at home and abroad, and then to be able to get your liberal program through. He thought that the odium attached to being soft on Communism would kill any possibility for progressive legislation, and I think from a hardheaded point of view he was right.

He came finally, I think, to support that repeal. He didn't like the loyalty oath; it was a Karl Mundt [R.-S.D.] operation and he had sublime contempt for that frame of mind. But he did not want to reengage in that kind of a struggle.

In any event as to that 1958 class of liberals, there soon developed a great outcry--I don't know where it was inspired really, whether inside the Senate or out and I say that genuinely, I'm not sure--but at any rate a great outcry against Johnson as being a superpowerful leader who was

running roughshod over the individual rights of Senators, and in many ways he was. He was the Leader and to get something done in the United States Senate, you have to run over somebody some time. An awful lot is done by unanimous consent. Senators who cry loudest against the unanimous consent procedure and the sort of juggernaut of leadership passing legislation later found themselves beseeching the Majority Leader for unanimous consent action to get what they wanted through.

I remember one time when Wayne Morse made an eloquent speech against the unanimous consent procedure of taking up and passing legislation. He had just objected to an unanimous consent agreement limiting debate, which was the method that Johnson really perfected in the Senate--getting both sides to agree to two hours or four hours, with an hour for amendments and that sort of thing. It was only later that I found out that Morse was objecting was that he had a long standing agreement to address a convention in Portland on the day of the vote. That's why he objected to holding it then and then made that great, passionate, political science speech about the evils of the unanimous consent system.

B: Is it true that Humphrey was probably Senator Johnson's main link to the liberal camp in the Senate?

M: Yes. They had a friendship from the start. Humphrey made some terrible errors when he came into the Senate. He was fresh from his triumphs at Philadelphia in 1948 in the convention, and he came in and landed all over Harry Byrd [Sr., D.-Va.] with a very rough speech. And this just isn't done by a freshman Senator, even Senators who don't agree with Harry Byrd don't like that sort of thing. So he had a long time to make that up. He began to learn that he could achieve more by cooperating with the power structure than by opposing them. He never did win over some members of the Establishment, but he certainly won over others.

There was a certain fundamental populism that all of them shared. I'll never forget one evening when Hubert Humphrey was speaking on a farm bill that Ezra Taft Benson had set up. It had a sliding scale; as Humphrey made the concluding speech of about ten minutes in length. He was bone-tired and in a passionate, hoarse-voiced, and angry, he said "Hubert Humphrey did not come to the United States Senate to vote for sixty percent of living wage!"

And it was such a powerful speech that Dick Russell,

who had started out of the chamber, turned around, came back and sat down in front of Humphrey, reached around and grabbed Olin Johnston [D.-S.C.] and some others, and pointed at Humphrey and told them to listen. And they all began pounding the table with Humphrey. It was a damned revival. You could see the relationship between Humphrey and these guys who had mostly come up in the depression. Dick Russell was the author of the early farm legislation for poor farmers and vocational education, rural rehabilitation. He had become quite conservative on almost every issue you could think of, but he still retained a little bit of that. Olin Johnston was a thorough-going populist and currently represented the Piedmont, a very cunning man who appeared to be the stupidest man in the Senate, but had great talents. He certainly always voted the right way.

You know you'd find this kind of populism everywhere. I remember one afternoon walking on the Senate floor and being dumbfounded to hear Jim Eastland, very much in his cups, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, making ostensibly a speech against the Communist Party, but then getting off into all kinds of subjects and delivering the most vivid denunciation of Wall Street bankers I've ever heard in my life. He talked about these "blood-suckers from New York who had come down and starved the little farmer and little banker and little businessman in Mississippi." And who should get up and defend the Wall Street banker but Bill Proxmire, who had been working for Dillon, Reed in his early years? It was a real changeabout.

Johnson and Russell had a relationship, I suppose, of father-son, or elder brother and younger brother. Dick Russell is one of the most attractive men I've ever known in my life. He is a great gentleman, a man of tremendous integrity, and one of the smartest men who ever served in the Senate. Had he been from a larger state, had he not had the background that he had in Georgia, I think he would have been President and would have been an immensely able President. He just let the twentieth century pass him by. As he said one time in exactly those words to me. And yet he never became an all-out bigot; his views on race are those very much of a paternalistic land-holder who wants to take care of his colored people but sees them very much apart and is terribly annoyed when they rise up and demand their rights annually. He is in no sense a Strom Thurmond or a Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, who are genuine racists and despise black people.

The most memorable event in their relationship I

remember--I'm sure there were many of them that were equally memorable--occurred one night when a bill known as H.R. 3 had come over from the House. It had been kicking around for years. It was the brainchild of Judge Howard Smith. It said in very deceptively innocuous language that a federal law would not be assumed to preempt the field in which state law also operated unless the federal law said so. This would have required going back through the whole statutes of the United States and writing in such a law. It was opposed by the largest concatenation of forces I ever saw; it was opposed not only by the labor unions and the civil rights groups but by the American Association of Railroads and everyone else, because there would be perfect chaos if such a law were passed. It was attached to or considered with two other bills. One that Senator [John M.] Butler of Maryland, who was an insipid ass if ever there was one, had proposed which would strike at a number of Supreme Court decisions, chiefly by withdrawing jurisdiction from them, and a third by Senator [John L.] McClellan [D.-Ark.] which would have had the effect of over-turning the Steve Nelson decision and, in effect, permitting state prosecutions of Communists.

The first two bills were beaten but not as widely as we hoped. There was a long debate on H.R. 3 and it drug on into the evening. The ostensible leader of the debate on the side of the opposition, the liberal side, was Senator Tom Hennings of Missouri, a tragic figure in the Senate, an elegant handsome man; wore white suits, black ties, and had a great mane of black hair, and he was a terrible alcoholic and would show up often in the Senate slurring his words, very much in the bag. He was sober that night but he was not very effective. Humphrey was doing the actual work for the liberal cause, and Johnson; but Humphrey did most of it, going around rallying the liberals. About 10 o'clock, 10:30, a vote was taken on a motion to table H.R. 3 and it failed forty-eight to forty-one. It was devastating. Everyone assumed that this was a kind of a showpiece. We were letting the conservatives have their hour on the floor. The bill had been held up for weeks; finally the Democratic Policy Committee had cleared it because the pressure was very great. There was a lot of mail and the conservatives were raising a lot of hell. So they said, "Give them their day."

Well, they not only had their day; the Senate refused to table the bill forty-eight to forty-one. And Russell leaned over Johnson's shoulder and said, "Lyndon, you'd better adjourn this place or they're going to pass that

Goddamned bill."

So Johnson jumped to his feet and moved to adjourn. Bill Jenner [R.-Ind.] jumped up and asked for the ayes and naves, an almost unheard of thing--that the leadership would be challenged on a motion to adjourn. The ayes and naves were taken and as usual, the leadership prevailed by a wide margin, so the night was over; the issue hung up in the air.

Johnson strolled over across the well of the Senate to Humphrey's desk and began talking in a very low and angry voice, in a sense saying that "you've screwed this thing up, now it's about to pass, we're in bad trouble and we'd better talk about how we're going to get out of trouble." He was surrounded by a bunch of us; newspapermen had come pouring down out of the galleries to stand around on the floor. He suddenly turned around and looked around at everyone and said, "I don't know these people; let's go upstairs." So they went outside; he picked up Tony Lewis of the New York Times, who had been waiting all day to talk to him, and took him upstairs with Humphrey. And Tony says that the next three hours were the most remarkable that he had ever spent in his life. While they drank an awful lot of whiskey and told a lot of stories, Johnson outlined how they were going to get the votes that they would need to defeat the bill.

And the next day three people who had voted not to table found themselves unaccountably detained in the cloakroom and never made it to the floor.

Another, Wallace Bennett of Utah, a solid Republican former president of the National Association of Manufacturers, voted against the bill and the vote was forty-two to forty-one to beat it. Somehow they had lost seven votes on the other side, and we'd gained one.

B: And that presumably was Senator Johnson's doing?

M: It was all his doing. He just worked all morning.

Johnson's relations with Kerr were fascinating. I must by now have names about three people as having the best mind in the Senate but Kerr would certainly be up there among them. He had a razor-sharp mind and a razor-sharp tongue. He was the most devastating debater I think I have ever seen. He was frightening on the floor and he had full command, almost in an eighteenth century way, of political invective. He once called Senator [Homer] Capehart [R.-Ind.] a rancid tub of ignorance on the floor. The next

day Senator Capehart, on a point of personal privilege, said that he very much disliked being called a rancid cup of ignorance. And Kerr said, "I never said that, let the record be read," and the record was read and it showed that he had said a rancid tub of ignorance. And Kerr said "anyone who can observe the corpulence of the Senator from Indiana will see how ridiculous it would be to accuse the Senator from Oklahoma of having said that the Senator from Indiana was a 'rancid cup of ignorance.'"

At any rate he was a master at an invective. There has been no one like him. Joe Clark occasionally is sour, but that's what it is. It comes across without humor, and he's not well liked in the Senate, nor feared, nor admired. It doesn't have the power to get the galleries roaring with laughter and Senators clapping their sides as they enjoyed with Kerr.

Kerr was absolutely unintimidated by anyone and unafraid, unabashed, to declare his personal private interest in certain legislation. He got through some legislation for the oil and gas industry and for the cattle industry that he had a very large personal interest in. And he made no bones about it. Because he didn't, it had a very powerful effect. When he was on your side, it was like having the British Navy anchored offshore. When he was opposed to you, he seemed outrageous to most of us. Teetotaler; Baptist. And a man of such dimensions that he just had to be dealt with. There were several of those in that class of 1948 - Humphrey in his own way; Paul Douglas in his own way; Clinton Anderson [D.-N.M.], who was a formidable figure in the Senate; and Kerr and Johnson led the class. There has never been anything like it for producing a group of whales.

Carl Meyer in 1958 wrote an excellent piece--in commentary about--he called "The Triumph of the Bland." He said that the class of 1958, which had just been elected, were all very decent fellows but that they were bland compared to the giants of the past. He compared them with the 1948 class and with the Senators of the 1920's, the LaFollettes and Borahs, and people like that, and found that whereas the older group would do things that were embarrassing--Borah for example would be an isolationist and so would LaFollette; George Norris had his own quixotic taste, you know, running off for things that didn't make much sense--nevertheless, they always did the big things. They always came through with the huge investigations that laid bare an industry's peccadilloes or got great new

legislation going. They were tremendous figures and the 1958 class, while it would never embarrass, would also never excite. And they used as his prototype people like Phil Hart [D. Mich.], who is just one of the most decent human beings alive and a superb public servant, but rather colorless. The one guy who has emerged out of that class--the two guys, I guess--are Gene McCarthy [D.-Minn.] and Ed Muskie.

B: Was Johnson personally close to Kerr?

M: Yes. Close to and arms length with at the same time. They shared an awful lot of interests. Johnson, Kerr, Anderson and Wayne Morse would sit over at the corner of the Senate during a debate and in the most querulous terms and also with enormous humor and invective, would trade horses or cows. They sold each other animals all the time.

B: You mean that literally, horse trading in the sense--

M: I mean literally; the animals on the farm. Each of them had animals from the other's ranch or farm. To hear them tell it they were always spavined or diseased, brought half of what they'd paid for them and so on. Very rough country talk.

This is a curious thing. I used to notice the hands of men like Kerr and Johnson and Bill Fulbright [D.-Ark.] and some others of that older class. Their hands are generally big and scaly, freckled and hairy. There's a very common look about them--a worker's look--even though some of them, like Fulbright, has been an academic all their lives. But there was that quality of roughness, of ability to fight, and enjoyment in combat that they all shared.

B: Did Senator Johnson ever bother to really hate any other senators, or did he just dismiss the ineffectual ones?

M: I think the latter is true essentially. He had contempt for some Senators; he felt that some of them were always--particularly I think he had it for extreme liberal Senators because he felt that they would never achieve what they were trying to achieve, and if only they would cooperate with the Establishment they would get part of what they wanted and that way they were going they would get none of what they wanted. You'd have a bill like the Area Redevelopment Bill, Depressed Areas Bill, which came up first in about 1958. Paul Douglas was insisting on two hundred and seventy-five million dollars to start it.

Eisenhower said he would veto anything like that; he would veto the whole bill probably. Johnson said he thought he could get seventy-five million dollars through. That was anathema to Douglas. That was a repudiation of a Democratic Party pledge and platform. It was more of the Paul Butler idea that you needed issues in order to really make the distinction between the two parties. Johnson felt that you needed a record of accomplishment. You could say that you got it started and the next year, once you had your foot in the door, you'd really move it.

His closest friends in the Senate were Magnuson, whom he had known for years. He was a hard worker and very effective and a czar in his committee and a playboy on the side; Kerr, Russell, to some extent Hill, although I think something must have happened early on that made Johnson and Lister Hill not as close as they would have been, perhaps the jealousy over the leadership. He was close to Pastore and was increasingly close to Humphrey. Mike Monroney to some degree, although they never entirely were joined as friends. He had a terrible time with Gore. They had a lot in common politically, but Gore had the damndest ability to offend through a kind of righteous pomposity that would drive Johnson right up the wall and me too. I used to just despise it. He always looked like a Baptist bishop standing back there speaking of the outrageous thing that had just been perpetrated on the people by the Establishment. Then Gore was also terribly ambitious. He wanted to be Leader, wanted to be President always--never had the opportunity.

I'm trying to look over that body now and think of all the people on it. Harry Byrd [Sr.] was never a figure, when I was there of major proportions except as an obstruction to be removed when he was on the Senate Finance Committee as chairman. He just had to persuade Byrd to take the bill up and pass it, but he was always a kind of croaky-voiced old man in a yellowing-white suit whose main public contribution was a quarterly report on nonessential federal expenditures. But he was no force at all. He was someone to be used, someone to try to get by.

B: There was a Senator John F. Kennedy there too toward the last.

M: Yes. I don't know enough about their relationship. My feeling is that at this time in the 1950's Johnson liked Jack Kennedy, and that Jack Kennedy liked and admired Johnson. Johnson was jealous of him because he was glamorous and had so much money and all that and also

because he was something of a playboy, very much a playboy as a matter of fact. He felt rather protective of him. He wanted to help him where he could and made a very strong seconding speech for Jack Kennedy in 1956 in Chicago for Vice-President, in part because he didn't care much for Estes Kefauver [D.-Tenn.] but also because he genuinely did like Kennedy.

B: You know, you always hear of Johnson being a protege of people like Russell and Rayburn. Did it ever work the other way? Did Senator Johnson ever single out young upcoming men in that fashion?

M: Yes. And some of them would stay hitched. One of the things about him that goes along with his tremendous power and vehemence is that he is sometimes all-absorptive. He consumes people, almost without knowing it. He wants, once the deal is made, once the friendship is established, he really wants that person to be a Johnson man and it takes a long time of being with him, around him, to free yourself. There is a period in which it's almost suffocating. There are things done for you which are very attractive. You can be part of the leadership that gets your bills passed; you get built up by the leadership; there are speeches made about you; guys go out and speak in your campaign; financial help is there insofar as it is possible to get it. And it's very attractive. But it does become a very narrow chute for an animal to run in and this becomes very confining. And for guys who feel, as most politicians do, that they want a degree of freedom and some options of their own, this becomes too confining.

Frank Church [D.-Idaho] is an example of one who went through that period. Gale McGee [D.-Wyo.] has stuck with Johnson and so has Dan Inouye. But there are some Senators, I think, who felt that [confinement].

One of the earliest and strongest supporters of Johnson was Gene McCarthy. As a matter of fact in 1964 McCarthy was still hoping--was very much hoping--that he would be named as Vice-President. A curious man. I enjoy him and yet my respect for him as a major public figure is not very high.

B: Does that date from recent events? The campaign [in the spring of 1968]?

M: No, it doesn't. It dated from about 1960 to 1961 when I began to realize that Gene McCarthy was spending all of his time down in the Senate Restaurant making bon mots for the

press. And no time on the floor getting any bills--trying to help with any legislation or any time in committee. He was a master of what Hermann Hesse calls feuilleton. Just extraneous information. He was full of sardonic wit with his colleagues and would entertain the press with stories about them. That's all right if it's joined with some progressive and hard working legislative statesmanship, but there was none.

B: It doesn't sound like the kind of a man who would appeal to Senator Johnson--if he didn't do his work?

M: Well, he appealed in the sense that he went with the Establishment on most issues. When he was on the Finance Committee, he was a vote in Bob Kerr's back pocket most of the time. And he had been a good man for the Establishment in the House, on Ways and Means. He's a funny companion and generally was, in those days, an Establishmentarian. So he was acceptable except that Hubert Humphrey did everything for the state of Minnesota that was ever done in the Senate and McCarthy did nothing.

[End of Tape 1 of 2]

INTERVIEW I

DATE: December 5, 1968

INTERVIEWEE: HARRY MCPHERSON

INTERVIEWER: T. H. BAKER

Tape 2 of 2

B: This is the second tape of the interview with Mr. McPherson. I guess we had better start moving forward in time a little. Did you get involved in the 1960 Democratic convention?

M: No.

B: What was your reaction when you found out that Senator Johnson had accepted the Vice-Presidential nomination?

M: Great surprise to begin with. It could be the wonder about why he had done it. I never have been entirely satisfied that I know. I think part of it had to do with Sam Rayburn's violent feelings about Richard Nixon, his feeling that Jack Kennedy could not carry the country unless he was supported by someone like Johnson on his ticket, and his feeling that it would be an awfully bad deal. I think also Johnson had been the prime Democrat in the country; there had been an awful lot of stories written about him that he was the second most powerful man in America after Eisenhower. And looking forward to a time in which another Democrat would be the most powerful man in America and that man would be surrounded by a staff that was generally not very friendly toward Lyndon Johnson, made the prospect of being Majority Leader under that man not very appealing. It's one thing to be a Democrat to whom the Republican President comes to make arrangements and accommodations, and another to be told to get a certain bill through. It's one thing to do, as Johnson had done with the Democratic Policy Committee, to run your own Administration and another to receive bills from the Administration and be told to get them through in as nearly a coherent form as possible.

The Democratic Policy Committee in the 1950's was a kind of alternate administration, in this sense: that it was a forum, it was a place, a staff, and the very rooms provided a place where Democratic Senators could come and work out an alternative bill to one offered by the Eisenhower Administration. This was probably its most

useful function. And the 1957 Civil Rights Bill and the 1960 Civil Rights Bill were in a large part written there. The National Defense Education Act, the Space Act which Johnson had offered himself in 1958, were written in the Democratic Policy Committee.

When you're in opposition you don't have the horsepower; you don't have the materials; you don't have the information available to you that you have when you're in the White House. The agencies and departments, you know, will sort of help, but they don't really give you everything they've got. So you have to set up your own devices and this was done in the Policy Committee. Johnson must have known that that situation would no longer prevail. You wouldn't have a Democratic leader and a Policy Committee staff that was producing its own legislation. The most you could do was produce some amendments and tell the Administration that they were necessary in order to pass the bill they wanted, but mostly you'd be taking orders from the White House staff, from the Attorney General, and you'd be out of it.

- B: Of course, what you seem to be saying is that Johnson was presented with two alternatives, one of which was bad and the other of which was worse, because the Vice-President is pretty well out of it too.
- M: He is, but there's a strong possibility that he could succeed after eight years to the Presidency. There's a good possibility that the final work of "desectionalizing" a man could take place when he's a part of a national administration. I think the prospect of leading the, quote, Southern conservative faction against the liberal Democratic White House was pretty appalling. It didn't suit with Johnson's tastes; he didn't want to go up there representing the views of John Stennis and Spessard Holland [D.-Fla] and Sam Ervin and people like that.
- B: Do you think this kind of speculation went through Johnson's mind in that fairly brief time in which he was presented with the decision?
- M: Without ever having heard him speak this way at all, it's just my guess that it did. There's something in Johnson which confronted with an ultimate personal snarl, with a very rocky road, that finally sort of gives in. I think [his withdrawal on] March 31st is an example of that. I would and a lesser man would have done it a hell of a long time before.

B: Do you mean he reaches the point where he takes the easy road because it's the easy one?

M: Well, he sort of gets out of the fray finally. I don't know of any man who is more capable of going back and back and back and back again into the fray than Lyndon Johnson. He is a real fighter and a persistent guy.

I remember one day in the Senate when he was Leader. He had worked for hours to get agreement on an unanimous consent agreement, to get all the Senators who were concerned about a bill to agree to vote the next day at 2 o'clock after two hours debate. And he finally made the motion to the chair for the unanimous consent agreement. And John Williams of Delaware, a cranky old bastard-chicken farmer from Delaware, his sights go about five feet, got up and in his whiny old voice said "I object." Well, there was a moment of silence. Everybody could feel the fury in Johnson. Johnson put his head down, stuck his hands in his pocket, and walked out very quickly from the chamber, jingling the coins in his pockets. He came back in about five minutes, his color had changed, he was back walking very quietly and easily, went up and sat down next to Williams. And they both talked staring at the ceiling of the Senate. And then they got up and walked out and went into Johnson's office. They came out in about ten minutes; Johnson strolled over, took his place in the Leader's chair, got up and offered the same motion with only amending it to 3 o'clock, giving Williams some face saver, and got it.

Most people I know, and certainly including myself, would have been so infuriated that I would have either gone off to the nearest bar or at least gone off and told everybody what an old bastard Williams was, complained and so on, and let it go; give it up; can't get it through him.

B: You don't happen to know what he said to Williams in those ten minutes, do you?

M: I haven't any idea. Knowing Johnson and having watched him with an awful lot of people, I'm virtually certain that he didn't offer him anything except that extra hour when it finally came out. He must have explained his troubles from the time he was born; he frequently does that, makes you feel like such a dog for impeding the march of progress that you're willing to go ahead and yield.

But I suspect that confronted with all those problems I was talking about in 1960, it just seemed: "Well, hell, I'm

tired; I've been working hard as Leader; I've had a heart attack; I think I'll, instead of going through the frustrations and agonies of being on the short end of the stick down at the Hill and being kind of an errand boy for Jack Kennedy, I'll run with him. I'll be Vice-President and I'll bide my time. This is just not my time to try to maintain sizeable political power on my own." It must have been a traumatic decision to make because it was like the son suddenly telling the father to get out of the driver's seat and moving over himself. And the relationship had always been one of Johnson's primacy over Kennedy's acceptance of a second--of a junior spot.

B: Did you ever then or later have any reason to believe that the Kennedys didn't think Johnson would take the offer?

M: I just don't know. I've read what you've read, but I don't know anything about it.

B: That's why I asked. It's one of the areas in which there's speculation which I presume will never be cleared up completely until Mr. Johnson--

M: Well, I imagine that whatever they thought at the beginning and whatever their hopes were--if any of them hoped that he wouldn't--that Jack Kennedy was damned glad he did because he was indispensable to winning the election.

B: Did you do any campaigning in the campaign?

M: Not a bit.

B: Were you asked to?

M: No.

B: We've hit this several times. Up to this time had you ever done any political campaigning?

M: No.

M: No, I don't stay out of it by my own choice, but I've never gotten into it. I've never been asked to and generally, except in the form I was prepared to be turning out three speeches a week while campaigning this year [1968]. In 1964, during the campaign, I was over in the State Department. He had plenty of speech writers and didn't need another one at that time.

B: You stayed on, after the 1960 election, with the Democratic Policy Committee, by that time the General Counsel, First of all, was there a great deal of difference in the leadership then?

M: Immense. And it's an interesting question in the Thomas Carlisle sense whether the event or the personalities effect that change. Mike Mansfield is a monk. He has no desire to impress his imprint on legislation, no desire, really, to be the Leader of the Senate, except that he does enjoy the prerogatives of being Leader and his wife enjoys them more. But he is a passive man except on a few things almost entirely in foreign policy, where he has a very keen interest: Cambodia, Laos, to some extent Viet Nam. He's just a bewildering man. I don't understand him, never have. I've known him and I like him and we're friends. I used to get absolutely enraged because he would not do things which cried out for doing.

But again, that's the personality; the event itself was that the whole focus of power had shifted as far as the Democratic Party was concerned, Democratic leadership was concerned, down to the other end of the avenue. He had a great devotion to Jack Kennedy and to Jacqueline Kennedy. I used to feel that it was in large part their mutual Catholicism and the kind of weeping Madonna, the beautiful weeping Madonna quality that appealed to Mansfield, again in a kind of monkish way. He's not an engager; he's not a fighter; he's not someone who enjoys the tumult of politics. It's in part that kind of passivity that makes him, I think, very attractive to the people of Montana. I think he'd have hell in a very tumultuous state unless he changed his views. He's quite an honorable man and they're voting for someone who is not a, quote, politician, not in it for gain and all that sort of thing. He lives simply and never has given the Senator Claghorn view of himself.

But in any event, here was his personality. That made for a change in the leadership. So did the fact that the focus in power had moved.

B: What was Lyndon Johnson's reaction to all that? Did he or could he try to continue to lead the Senate from the Vice-Presidential position?

M: I remember about a month after he became Vice-President he walked into the Senate Democratic cloakroom one day. In the past when he did that, there was an electric charge in the air. The Leader had walked in, and everything just sort of

stirred up. It was almost as if they were school kids. Even senior Senators, you know. It would change the whole mix when Johnson walked in. Most of the Senators were enjoying some relaxation. They were reading the sports pages and talking about the Senators and the Redskins, or they were talking about how somebody had just had a conference with the House and old George Mahon [D.-Tex] or old Albert Thomas [D.-Tex] from Houston had just taken their pants off, figuratively, had just completely beat the Senate in the conference, but it was just talk; it was like a locker room. And when Johnson came in, they knew that he had in mind some action. He wanted to talk to somebody about doing something, and it shaped everybody up. It was like the teacher walks into the room and says "Now, we're going to teach the class. You kids have had a nice social hour here, but we're going to start learning some history."

And he walked in that day, a month after he became Vice-President, and nothing happened. And it was just a--he was still quite acceptable, but he was no longer a member of the club. It was a very subtle thing but you could feel it. Partly, I suppose, it was the relief of being out from under his gun. There was a great sense of relief and joy in the Senate when Mike Mansfield became leader. On almost the first day he became Leader, he said "We're going to get home by 6 o'clock in the evening; we're going to see our families. I want to try to work out a recess so that people can get off in the summertime." And the Senate applauded, literally applauded. So one was out from under the bullwhip of Johnson, and everybody wrote articles about what a great thing it was going to be which made Johnson snarl and grouse like mad.

But he [Mansfield] never really, as far as I could tell, tried to be Leader. He did see a lot of Senators and he did try to persuade them to vote for Administration bills and so on. But I don't really know how deeply involved he was in the Administration's legislative program. I do know that it was very rare that we would have a meeting in Mansfield's office with the Senate leaders, and with the people who were leading a certain bill, the debate on a certain bill, and Administration people--it was only on rare occasions that Johnson was there. And I believe he said once that Larry O'Brien had never come to his office in about two years to seek his advice; they were running their own ball game and they didn't want Lyndon Johnson to be the leader.

B: Did you stay personally close to Johnson in those years?

M: Yes. Which presented a few problems with Mansfield. Although Mansfield never said it, I could tell that there was a feeling that I was consorting with Johnson still. Bobby Baker and I were Mansfield's principal legislative people just as we had been for Johnson in the last couple of years, so things went on pretty much as before. But I did retain my relationship with Johnson and in the off season, in recess, I once wrote a long paper convincing whoever read it that Johnson was a liberal.

B: For whom and at whose request and for whose eyes?

M: His.

B: At his request? Do you know what happened to that paper?

M: Well, it got showed to an awful lot of people. A lot of newspapermen later told me--it didn't have my name on it--but a lot of people told me they had seen it and they thought it must have been mine.

B: Convince anybody?

M: I don't know. I thought it was pretty convincing.

B: You mentioned Larry O'Brien not seeing Johnson for two years. Again, there has been a great deal of speculation about the relationship between Johnson and not just John and Robert Kennedy, but the entire Kennedy group. Was there animosity there?

M: Sure

B: Mutual?

M: I don't know--maybe animosity is too strong a word. I think there was some contempt on their part and some fear of Johnson. Contempt because he was a Southern "pol," not a swinger, nobody that you would invite to get thrown in the Hickory Hill swimming pool or to go to a fashionable party in New York. There was a fear that he would try to re-exercise power and that he might, in fact, lead a cabal of Southerners against Kennedy legislation. I mean, I was told that some people had that fear. It was certainly groundless. He never attempted to do it.

B: What was his attitude toward them?

M: He continued to like Jack Kennedy, and he had a real

appreciation for the burdens of the Presidency, a genuine one. He thought that, as I said earlier, that they had paid too little attention to attracting the support of the whales and they were too satisfied with only having the support of the minnows.

B: Circumstances just require a certain amount of speculation in this regard. Do you suppose John Kennedy would have, in the normal course of events, groomed Johnson as his successor for nomination in 1968?

M: No. I doubt it. I think he might have been inclined to do so personally, but I think the pressure on him would have been too intense.

B: Pressure from whom?

M: Bob [Kennedy] and the White House staff; his supporters. At that time labor and civil rights groups were still not convinced that Johnson was on their side, and I imagine that they would have used the national Democratic machinery to make that difficult if not impossible.

B: Do you think Johnson might have been dumped from a Kennedy ticket in 1964?

M: No, I do not. As a matter of fact, I feel very strongly that he would not have been.

B: What did Johnson do to keep busy while he was Vice-President?

M: Well, he was active in the Equal Employment Opportunity field. He had a committee that Hobart Taylor and others were involved in, in which he tried to persuade people to adopt equal opportunity practices.

I think the first time I ever had the real sense of Johnson's commitment in civil rights, one that didn't have anything to do with getting a bill through, for either the prestige or the political gain that that entailed, occurred one day in about 1963, in maybe the spring of 1963. When Kennedy sent down the omnibus civil rights bill which became the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and as you remember, it has in it a title that prohibits discrimination in places of public accommodation. This was just as obnoxious as hell to the Southerners. This was going against private property and it was telling people how they could use their--who they had to associate with in cafes and restaurants and so on. The

students at North Carolina--Negro students--has already conducted the first sit ins. It was a very, very hard subject and didn't seem to have any chance at all of passage. I was sitting up with Johnson at the chair of the Vice-Presidency in the Senate shortly after it had been sent down and we were speculating about it. Stennis walked by on his way out. Johnson asked him to come up to the chair and Stennis did. He said, "How do you like that Title II of the Civil Rights Bill, John?"

He said, "Oh, Lyndon, well you know, our people just can't take that kind of thing. It's just impossible. I mean I believe that man ought to have the right to--if he owns a store or owns a cafe, he ought to have the right to serve who he wants to serve. I mean, people don't want to associate that way and that sort of thing. Our people just never will take it."

He said, "Then, you don't think you'll support it." "Oh no Lyndon, I don't think I'll support it at all." He said, "Well, you know, John, the other day a sad thing happened. My cook, Zephyr Wright, who has been working for me for many years--she's a college graduate--and her husband drove my official car from Washington down to Texas, the Cadillac limousine of the Vice-President of the United States. They drove through your state and when they got hungry, they stopped at grocery stores on the edge of town in colored areas and bought Vienna sausage and beans and ate them with a plastic spoon. And when they had to go to the bathroom, they would stop, pull off on a side road, and Zephyr Wright, the cook of the Vice-President of the United States, would squat in the road to pee. And you know, John, that's just bad. That's wrong. And there ought to be something to change that. And it seems to me that if people in Mississippi don't change it voluntarily, that it's just going to be necessary to change it by law."

"Well, Lyndon, I'm sure that there are nice places where your cook and--"

Then the Vice-President just said, "Uh-huh, Uh-huh," and just sort of looked away vacantly and said, "Well, thank you, John." And Stennis left. Johnson turned around to me and winked. But that was straight from real feelings. That made him angry and represented, as I say, the first time I had ever really had the feeling that that comprehension of the simple indignity of discrimination was deep in Johnson.

B: I have to ask this. Is it a true story? The story about

Mrs. Wright driving there?

M: He says it is. He turned around to me after Stennis left and said, "That's right."

B: I asked because I have heard an account of Johnson giving the same story at a time before he became Vice-President. [The interviewer is mistaken here. Luther Hodges, in an interview in this Project, describes Johnson telling essentially the same story. The Hodges' version took place after Johnson became President, not before he became Vice-President,--THB]

M: May have happened before and after. Because Mississippi didn't change until now.

B: I was going to say, any time Mrs. Wright was driving through that part of the country, I guess it would happen.

Did you get the impression that Mr. Johnson was uncomfortable or unhappy or under unusual restraint in the Vice-Presidential position?

M: Yes. I was out at his house, The Elms, the house that Pearl Mesta sold him, swimming one afternoon with him and with Abe Fortas. And he looked absolutely gross. His belly was enormous and his face looked bad, flushed, maybe he had been drinking a good deal. But he looked like a man who was not trimmed down for anything. His life was not causing him to come together physically, morally, intellectually, any way. On the contrary it was--it must have been a tremendous frustration in it, just tremendous.

B: Did he ever speak of it?

M: Not in those terms.

B: By indirection, you mean, he--

M: Well, you know, you could read anything you wanted to. If you felt that that was the case, then you would read a lot of things into what he said.

B: Did he ever speak harshly or critically of the Kennedy staff, of Robert Kennedy and the White House staff members?

M: He spoke critically of Bobby, never of Jack.

B: Along what lines would he criticize Bobby?

- M: He knew that Bobby was out to get him. You know, he and Bobby were so much alike in so many ways. They're tough pols and they get into the room and take the gloves off and start swinging, bare knuckles, in political fights. Both interested in power. Both driven men. Jack was much more relaxed than both of them, much more detached, amused, a better politician in the national sense of gaining support and of having people like him than either one of Johnson or Bob Kennedy. Not as good, I believe, as either a legislator or as an executive as either of them--I don't think Jack was.
- B: If there was animosity and rivalry between Robert Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, was there also some degree of mutual respect?
- M: I just don't know. It has deteriorated so badly in the last--I mean, it did until Bob Kennedy's death. Their relations were really so hostile, guarded, suspicious.
- B: Another thing in those years: the fall of 1963 was the time when the Bobby Baker case broke out into the public. Can you just take that and trace it back from your association with Baker on?
- M: Yes. Bobby Baker was probably the most valuable Senate employee in my time. He was preeminently valuable because he was one of the few people on the Senate floor, Senators included, who could count. Most people, when they would look at any contentious issue and have a position themselves, tend to be much more optimistic in their counts than the situation deserves. They just can't help but feel that the issue is so clear on their side that the people must vote that way. They are utterly--they think people are driven by ideological convictions on all issues. They can't imagine that a man might vote against a bill--that a liberal might vote against a liberal bill because he's teed off with the leadership for bringing it up on his daughter's birthday or wedding day. And yet people do that. So once you look at a guy like Joe Clark, he's going to vote liberal on that bill and the liberal position is so and so. Well, it just may not be that way at all. Frank Church is a liberal and he's certainly going to support us on gun control, like hell! He goes out and makes speeches against gun control and makes it the issue of the year [1968] Bobby could count; Bobby didn't let that kind of consideration affect him, maybe because he didn't have terribly strong convictions himself. He was sort of a South Carolina populist, I guess, by conviction. Very smart, very quick, and indefatigable.

Just worked all the time. He was always running some place to make some kind of deal.

His great tragic flaw, if indeed a tragic one it was, his great flaw was his ambition. He wanted desperately to improve his financial situation and he did. He would sometimes come running in and ask if we could take up a certain bill. And I would say we took it up two hours ago and passed it. He would look shocked and run outside, get on the phone, and call someone and tell them, "I just got your bill through." And he very much needed to build up his reputation as the mover and shaker.

He dealt at arms length with Mansfield; he was closer to Johnson as a person and yet Mansfield needed him even more desperately than Johnson had. Johnson, even though he embraced him, was also aware that Bobby was running on thin ice. He had heard too much--rumors about his serving many clients--and he told him to quit and go out into private practice when he became Vice President--when Johnson did.

Bobby went to Mansfield and told him that he thought he probably ought to quit, and went to Kerr, who was probably--not probably, certainly--the man to whom he was closest. He and Kerr were just father and son. Kerr had loaned him a lot of money. And both of them--Mansfield said, "I'll quit as Leader if you quit as secretary of the majority. I can't run the Senate without you."

B: Was Mansfield aware of the rumors?

M: No. I don't know if he was or not. Maybe I said "no" too soon, but I would be surprised if he had heard as much because his network of intelligence just simply didn't reach out that way.

Kerr told him not to, that he didn't think the Establishment could run in the Senate without Bobby, because he was the best vote getter, vote rounder-upper that there was. But it always struck me as very ironic, and unfair even, that Johnson got nailed as the guy to whom Bobby was the great close crony and that Mansfield escaped any criticism at all. Frankly I don't think either one of them deserved criticism, because Bobby was not doing the things that he was later charged with doing under their scrutiny at all. They knew nothing about it. Johnson literally did not know a damned thing about the operations that Bobby got himself tied up in and I know that to be the case.

B: If I can clear up something here, you said that when Johnson became Vice-President he had heard rumors and suggested that Bobby resign. When did the rumors start?

M: About then. 1961.

B: Just about 1961 or so?

M: Yes. I say when he became Vice-President. It was in that first year.

B: The activity of Bobby Baker had started considerably earlier.

M: Bobby was in a lot of deals and that sort of thing. When I say rumors, let me make it clearer what I mean. I don't mean rumors of the sort of things that Bobby finally got nailed for, but I mean rumors that Bobby was spending most of his time putting business deals together. And Johnson knew that he was a very sharp kid, that there was an awful lot of Flem Snokes in him and that sooner or later that sort of thing was going to come a cropper. A Senate employee dealing with great, great powers that Bobby had, dealing, wheeling-and-dealing for a lot of private interests was just bound sooner or later to conflict.

B: You wonder how, in as close a body as the Senate is, that kind of thing could go on very long without attracting attention.

M: Well, the Senate is both close and permissive. And also willingly obtuse about such things. I mean it all gets tied up with the fact that--I mean if you hear that X is doing something that somebody rumors is not absolutely straight and skinny, but X comes to you and says, "Going to have a party for you. We're going to charge a hundred dollars a plate; going to get you reelected," and you say, "Hot damn!" Then it all just sort of gets lost. You know, the rumors get put to the side and he's a good fellow and he's helping you out and you're a good liberal and you want to get reelected. The friends of Bobby Baker were not just Mike Mansfield, Lyndon Johnson, and Bob Kerr, those of the Establishment. They included virtually every liberal in the place.

Senators came to see me when they wanted to get a bill taken up or when they wanted to work out a problem with the other side to try to find a time when it could be done, to work out an amendment that the other side would find acceptable, and I would go to the Republicans and work with

my opposite number who worked for Dirksen or Knowland. But they would go to Bobby--. They went to me for the legislative stuff on the floor to get their bills through. They went to Bobby for help in their campaigns and for help with the government, I guess, generally.

B: Is it possible that Lyndon Johnson also more or less deliberately averted his eyes from Baker's activities?

M: I just don't have any judgment on that at all. I mean, I honestly would not have any basis on which to judge that.

B: Incidentally, sometimes I have to ask what are almost rude questions. But someone looking at this transcript might wonder. Did you ever feel that you and Bobby Baker were in any kind of rivalry for prestige or position within the Senate structure?

M: Well, I guess I would have to admit a degree of jealousy, in that he was an extremely famous person and I was less so. We both appeared in an Esquire article a few years ago when we were working together. We were the two Senate men. It was young men on the move sort of thing. And Bobby and I were the guys in Congress; Bill Moyers was the guy in the Peace Corps. It's an amusing group to look back on. Harold Brown, who has become Secretary of the Air Force, was one of them. Mark Raskin, who is the leader of the New Party--of the New Left party--was one of them. He was working then as a goad, a gadfly for Mac [McGeorge] Bundy.

But I guess I did feel that I was nowhere near so publicized and yet I was, as the years went on in Mansfield years, I was doing as much or more than Bobby to get legislation through. But I don't know. We were just very different animals. I found Bobby's social life unattractive. He was continually with lobbyists and big party--you know, big slap-on-the-back kinds, and I just didn't dig that. I had the reputation of being bookish. I remember one time when Johnson was trying to get a bill through and one night he was trying to get some advice on it and he was bitching to somebody that the only two people who knew anything about the bill were me and Senator Russell. And he said "Russell's off reading Plato and Harry's off reading the Bible." It was at that time I was writing those church plays, you know, so--

But I enjoyed Bobby often because I just enjoyed the sort of carnival energy that he had, sort of a circus barker quality, a raffishness that was a lot of fun and I admired

him for his abilities, which were many.

I heard a lot of rumors too, but I attributed many of them to jealousy on the part of others. There were an awful lot of guys who worked for Johnson when he was a Senator who were extremely jealous of Bobby. That was before I got up to the position where I thought I had a right to be jealous. And they were the fellows who generally had heard the rumors.

B: Who would that be?

M: Some guys who were working in the Democratic Policy Committee in those days. I'd just as soon not drag them into this.

B: What was Mr. Johnson's reaction when the affair broke, there in the fall of 1963?

M: I don't know really. I think he felt defensive and protective about Bobby. He felt he [Baker] had been a fool, but wanted to get good representation for him. Abe Fortas represented him for awhile; I'm sure that was with some urging from Johnson. Bobby was not the most cooperative client, I think, in the world; that is, he didn't level with Abe. I don't know whether that led to the break but it certainly contributed to it. Ed Williams took it over then.

B: A break? Did there come a time when Johnson just--

M: No, I mean that led to the break with Abe Fortas, why Abe Fortas gave up his representation of Bobby.

B: You didn't mean that Johnson just abandoned him?

M: No. Johnson--I don't think he would want to walk out on a plank to defend Bobby Baker, Bobby Baker's integrity. And as I say, I know he believes he was a fool and just too hungry. But he also thinks he was wronged in some respects, just as he thinks Walter Jenkins was wronged. Generally, people he has been close to, he's inclined to say in the privacy of others with whom he's close, that he believes they got a raw deal.

B: This brings us chronologically up to the time of President Kennedy's assassination and Mr. Johnson's accession to the Presidency. What was your first contact with Mr. Johnson after the assassination? Did he call for help from you?

M: I was out in Japan when Kennedy was assassinated. At that time I was with the Army. Let me go back just for a minute to an interesting point. In August of 1963 Cy Vance, whom I had known in the satellite--the Sputnik--hearings of 1957 when he came down with Ed Weisl, an old supporter of Johnson's, to run those hearings, was Secretary of the Army. He called one day and said "Would you be interested in coming over here and taking the job of Deputy Under Secretary of International Affairs?" It runs the Panama Canal Zone and Okinawa and has some special forces and civil defense aspects and so on.

And I thought maybe I would. It was getting very boring around the Senate. Nothing was--the Kennedy legislative program had ground to a halt. So I went into to see Johnson about it, just to ask his advice. This was before I saw Mansfield. And I described the job at some length and he said, "Don't do it, don't do it!" He said, "Bobby may go to jail and you're going to be the kingpin in the Senate. You'll have a unique position. You can do anything you want in here. You can run this place. You're half running it now and you can run it all."

And I said I didn't find that very attractive. Nothing was happening and somehow the Kennedy legislative program had just died. And I had been there seven years and wanted to get out and see if I could be an executive, an administrator, and not just a staff man of that kind. And I talked on for about five minutes and he sat there with his eyes heavy-lidded, half-closed, staring at me. I didn't know whether he had gone to sleep and had just forgotten that I was there or not.

Then he said finally, after a long pause, "What do you want?" And I think it was the first time I had ever really been asked that question, in that way. It was the existential question. Is there anything you want; do you want something? Not, do you make a choice between ten things and you take the one that's least unattractive. In the sense that William Belitho meant in Twelve Against the Gods, do you have a target? Are you after it no matter what happens? And, boy did I stumble around. You know, it's a terrible question to confront, not so much because, or not only because it's difficult to know in our world for most of us, who aren't born with a hand that's just shaped for a nuclear reactor, you know, that wants to become a nuclear physicist, or shaped for an easel and a brush, or a baton. For most of us it's a very murky thing; we don't think of ourselves in terms of a pilgrimage toward something. We

sort of live a saga in which we go through a whole series of events and things happen to us and we happen to events, but we don't really aim for anything. It's not only because we are that way, but because when you do choose something, you "x" out, exclude a lot of other things. You seem to be closing off possibilities when you say "I want that." And if you fail in getting that, then you really are a failure. If you never come down hard and say that "I want that thing," no one can ever really judge you for having [tried] and say that you failed. You've got what you are, or you are what you are; it's not that you've failed to get what you desired. Anyhow, I had a hard time.

But finally, after we talked some more he said "I think you ought to do it. Go ahead." And then made a strong case for doing it. He had really changed his mind and confirmed mine.

So I went over there and--

B: May I ask something here?

M: Yes.

B: Did you ever ask Lyndon Johnson that question and if you did, do you suppose you would get an answer?

M: Well, if I got a candid answer, I think I'd get "power." Not for its own sake, but power to change things; power to do things, to such an extent that you'll later be remembered gratefully. People will say "a great man walked here."

B: I was wondering if his asking you that question was any indication that he had ever asked himself that question.

M: I don't even know if he had to. I think he probably has answered that every day of his life.

B: One of those whose hand is shaped, as you say? Excuse me, go ahead--

M: I went out on an inspection tour of my fiefdom in Okinawa in November of 1963 with a military assistant, a colonel. We came back through Tokyo. I had never been there and we spent two or three days ostensibly reviewing the United States Army in Japan, but mostly just gawking. And I was in the Sino Hotel in Tokyo, an American transit billet, at 5 o'clock in the morning, sound asleep. And I got a phone call. It was about 5:30; it was 12:30 Dallas time, 12:30

noon. My military aide said, "Mr. McPherson, I know this is a terrible time to wake you up and it's a terrible thing I have to tell you, but President Kennedy has been assassinated in your home state."

You know, to wake up, to come out of a deep sleep in a part of the world with which you're very unfamiliar, where your bearings are quite foreign to you, and to hear that kind of hallucinatory statement, boggles the mind. It took a long time to come to grips with that fact and to accept it. I can't--we left that night as we had planned and flew back to the States. We got here Saturday night.

B: Who made the phone call?

M: From my military aide who had received word through the military network, the worldwide network.

We flew back and got here Saturday night. Sunday morning I went to church, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, up on Capitol Hill, where I had been involved as a vestryman and had done the plays, and with whose rector I was and am very close--Bill Baxter. And lo and behold, the new President and his family came in. The place was swarming with Secret Service agents--God, there must have been twenty in the church, and there were cops on the top of the Library of Congress Annex with rifles, and a massive crowd outdoors.

The sermon and the service was very simple and very powerful. I remember the sermon hymn was "America," and I remember Lyndon Johnson weeping and got his handkerchief out and held it over his face and was rubbing at his face. It was so overwhelming. And Bill Baxter, with a very steady voice, preached a hell of a sermon.

B: Had he known in advance that the President--

M: Yes, he had been called two hours before. They probably did a fast security check on him and all that.

Johnson had been to St. Mark's before a few times. Mrs. Johnson had been there often. It went back to me and to his favorite secretary, Mary Margaret Wiley, now Mary Margaret Valenti, who had come to the church and whom I had taught in a confirmation class, but he didn't really feel it was his home church. Mrs. Johnson felt that it was hers and she was extremely fond of Bill Baxter, who is a very straight man and who speaks unlike any clergyman I've ever heard, who speaks with brutal and loving truth to people who

need it. He's kind of young--He's a young father figure. He preached that day about how we were held together in this moment and that it would pass quickly, but it was vital that we understand the dimensions of our being held, of our unity; understand what it means to be a one people. Just feel it, inhale it, because it's going to go; but having known it, we'll know what it is that we hope to have through less violent means.

When it was over, curiously the Johnsons decided to go back into the parish hall where everyone went after church to have coffee. And they stood around and everybody was just sort of in awe around him. The Secret Service was going crazy.

Terrible to say, I can't remember if--no, now that I think of it, I think this is the way it happened. After he had been there shaking hands with people--it was very comforting to him, quite obviously, to shake hands. Very plain people, old women and kids and everybody just going up and taking his hand. And a lot of people crying and holding his arm. It was immensely strengthening. It was the first time he had been with a crowd of just ordinary people since two days before. And he drank about three cups of coffee, just inhaling them, but--. He and I stood toe to toe for a long time and we just talked very quietly about what he was doing. I don't even remember the substance of the conversation. It was mostly just a connection with a known face, and he said, "Come on, walk me out to the car." The family had already gone. So we walked back through the church. I looked down and it was a completely empty, dark church, and you could see every five feet a Secret Service man standing.

He was talking and we got to the door of the church and just as we did, I felt a heel go right down on my foot and an elbow come into my gut and it just paralyzed me. It was a terrific blow by a Secret Service man and what he was going to do was get Lyndon Johnson out that door and into that car without getting shot. There were about a thousand people in the street, and I don't blame him a bit. I was sore as hell, because Johnson was right in the middle of a sentence, and he turned around and saw what was happening and he said, "Oh," and then [Rufus] Youngblood or Clint Hill or one of them just took him by the elbow and very strong, with great strength, moved him right down those stairs and into the car.

And I think I then went back into the church and it

wasn't five minutes, before--it seems not five minutes--before somebody came up and said, "Jesus Christ, they've shot Oswald." Just after he left the church.

The next week he came back to the church and he had spent the morning calling around, setting up the Warren Commission. We--my family and I--left the church with the Johnsons in the car to come back down to the White House. And he was talking very enthusiastically about how he had just won a victory; he had just persuaded [Earl] Warren to become the head of the commission to investigate--

B: Did he describe the conversation?

M: Yes.

B: Is that the conversation about "if I asked you to put on the uniform--?"

M: That's right. The private bears his weapon, service of his country, and all that. He talked about John Sherman Cooper and Hale Boggs, balance it off get [John J.] McCloy. And we came back, we came to the White House and it was the first time I had ever been in the West Wing of the White House.

Jim Rowe and Tommy Corcoran were here. About what I don't know. He talked to them privately for a few minutes and then we all got back together. And I knew that he and Jim Rowe had been very close and had had a terrible falling out in 1960 when Jim was running the Johnson campaign and he got fed up with other people running it. Jim's a very crotchety guy, tremendous man, very, very bright and a great politician, fine lawyer; but they really had a terrible falling out and apparently with hot words between the two of them. Rowe's one of the few guys around this country who has known Johnson for a long time and who will really stand up and say what they think, you know, including some rough words. I don't know if he has ever said, "You're crazy as hell, Mr. President," but I'm sure he has said something very much like it.

Anyway, Johnson said, "I've been thinking back over 1960 and thinking of where I am now; and I need friends; I need help and you have been a friend to me and one of the wisest advisors I know. And I let you and I drift apart and it was my fault and I was foolish and short-sighted and I'm sorry and I hope that you'll forgive me and be my friend and support."

B: He was saying this to you?

M: No, to Rowe. And Rowe said--tears in his eyes--he said, "My God, Mr. President, it wasn't your fault." And he said "Yes, it was. Don't argue with me. Just be content to be the first man to whom the 36th President of the United States has offered his apologies."

B: Irresistible.

M: Lyndon Johnson, when he is dealing with sophisticated men, is the most sophisticated man I've ever seen. I've seen him recently, just about two weeks ago, with a collection of very distinguished people, a small group of people--lawyers and businessmen--very good judges of human behavior and men of very high standards. I watched him for a couple of hours talking to them. And I was aware once again why he has had support throughout these years from the Sidney Weinbergs and the John Loebes and the Ed Weisls, the Dean Achesons and the Felix Frankfurters and so on; why they're high on Lyndon Johnson. Because he is anything but a corny, Southwestern politician.

As a matter of fact, he is a provincial, a very deep provincial, and this is one of his big problems. But he's a Washington, D.C. provincial, not a Texas provincial. He has lived here for thirty-seven years and he thinks this world, this orbit here, is the dynamo on which the whole country runs, the only place that matters and that it's central armature is Pennsylvania Avenue. That's his profound conviction. And it's not that he thinks the world begins and ends in Texas either. He doesn't know Texas. He knows his 10th District. He doesn't even know what's happened to Houston and Dallas, all the urbanizing of the state, and the rest of it. He really is a Washington provincial.

But he's also, as I was saying, a magnificently sophisticated man with one of the richest vocabularies of any man in public life I've ever heard, with sentences that while sometimes slurred and made elliptical, almost always parse. He is an immensely intelligent human being.

B: It's a good time to ask a question I had in mind. Does he have any interest beyond public affairs?

M: Almost none.

B: Literature, music, nothing beyond--?

M: No, he doesn't. And this occurred to me the other day that that is one of the two things that has been a major limitation of his. I suppose in the narrow sense it meant only that he didn't have very great support among the artists and writers of America. He went along very happily with getting an Arts and Humanities Endowment Foundation, but that was only because it was one more piece of the Great Society. But because those people have--they are the communicators. They reach the consciousness of the country in ways that politicians don't reach it with bills and even with magnificent achievements in legislation.

But there's another way in which it was a detriment and that was it made him kind of, made him seem terribly narrow and unilevel, only operating on a political level. Not spacious, not with the kind of interests such as other people have. Almost everyone is interested in some movies or some books; I say, almost everyone: a hell of a lot of people are. And it made him seem inhuman. There was no empathy between them and him from the basis of just pure leisure and leisure-time enjoyment.

B: Do you know if he ever feels personally the lack of some other resource, some inner resource?

M: I don't know. I think he may develop it. Men like this sometimes develop it after they leave public life. They take up some kind of interest. He may start collecting paintings. He did have an interest in paintings.

Here's an apocryphal story, may be an apocryphal story. Are those all right?

B: Yes, as long as we identify them as such.

M: Well, it may not be true but I was told that once when Johnson was Vice-President, he was touring the Mediterranean; he was in Turkey, Greece, Italy, and wherever he would go he would order somebody to go out and round up twenty-five or thirty paintings and have them brought up to his rooms. And then he would buy a few to take back home. He likes some abstractions and that sort of thing, you know, but mostly liked representational paintings. He went to Italy and somebody brought up a painting of a woman who had the proportions of a Rubens or a Renoir, Woman, a very large woman, a nude holding a soldier's head in her lap. And he thought that was a good painting. But she was really very beefy. I'm told that he was in the car driving back with [G. Frederick] Freddie Reinhardt who's something of a

nose-in-the-air fellow, a slightly effete Easterner--the Ambassador. So they were in the car and they were discussing this--this painting. And Johnson says, "He wants \$3,000 for it." I said, "I told him I'd give him \$1,500, but I also told him that I would give him the whole \$3,000 if he'd take about twenty pounds off her ass."

The other thing I was going to say about Johnson's--the thing that I think has limited his ability to communicate with the public, is the lack of any fun around here. There was a wonderful Charlie Bartlett column the other day on the anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination. Charlie Bartlett was very close to President Kennedy, personal friends for many years and introduced him to Jacqueline Kennedy--[It was a] very moving piece; he said "For all the troubles that the present President has had with the Kennedy family, Jack Kennedy in his judgment would have profoundly approved Lyndon Johnson's grace under pressure," which is what Hemingway said courage was. But then later in the article he said, "there is a lack of fun around the place, and Lyndon Johnson wrestles and groans with problems like a professional wrestler." And there's a lot of that. You know, we talk about the burdens of the Presidency, the agonizing decisions; we stay up all night and if possible, we put out hollow eyed pictures of the President, and that sort of thing. There's no sense of fun, no elan; we're all working hard all the time and Christ knows, we are. It has been a grueling four years for all of us. But I think that he may have been spooked by impressions that I certainly know I heard in Texas in 1962, when I would go down to see my family, that this was all just a big swimming pool party up here and a lots of whoring around and boozing and a lot of dilettantes having a ball. And he may have felt that the country felt that and therefore needed Johnson.

But in any event, he has gone--I think--we've gone so far to the other side--I mean, simple little things that don't seem to mean anything at all, that really are superficial. Such as staff baseball or football games with the press. There was a certain--there's a certain feeling that if the staff can do that, then the heavens aren't about to come down. And that's sort of comforting to people. Also that the staff is kind of human like everybody else. And yet that was "x-ed" right from the start.

So I think there is a degree of feeling on the part of people that they want there to be some lightness, some genuine esprit and not just a kind of nose-to-the-grindstone puritanical devotion to duty and work all the time.

B: Is this attitude of Johnson's new? It didn't exist in the Senate days?

M: Well, it never--certainly the staff worked like hell in the Senate days, but there were none of the inhibitions such as one has felt around here.

Time to trot out a theory that's sort of related to this. A few years ago I was up in Rhode Island on a vacation. We drove up there because the airplanes were down; they were on strike. Johnson was having a terrible battle with Mr. Seemiller, the head of the machinists union, and the airlines were on strike. I had known very well that Johnson had been working for hours, days, nights, trying to settle that strike. Within the course of a week in New England, I heard three different people utterly removed from each other say that the reason the strike wasn't settled was because neither the President nor the Congress cared. They all had their own airplanes. As I say, it was such a wild thing to hear. But then I began to reflect on it and it occurred to me that there is a tremendous suspicion of government and this reinforced it. The people really do have a great suspicion of government servants. And that much of what Johnson had done with, you know, no ball games and no frivolity--cutting off the lights in the White House and all that--was an effort to counter that. It was also an effort to allow him to spend a hell of a lot more on other things. When he cut off the lights in the White House, you know, he could show that he was really being frugal.

But then, thinking back to 1963, I began to see, at least in my own mind, that the country in November 1963 was about as shocked and busted up as a child whose family has just been killed in an automobile wreck, a family that wasn't very good for the child in the first place. I mean, the legislative machinery had ground down; everything had begun to stop; Kennedy was unable to get anything done. Then he's killed. An engineer who couldn't make the train run is now dead, we here--we passengers. And we're all out in the middle of the desert some place. And a guy gets up and says, "I'll go up and run the damned train. I know how to fix these things." And he gets his wrench and he marches up by the side of the cars, he gets into the train and fixes it. And pretty soon the train starts to roll. Everybody lets out a great cheer. It was the damndest performance the first few months. It was a spectacular performance. Whatever mistakes he has made, whatever they take away from him, as years go on, as programs turn out not to have been as successful as we hoped they would be and all that;

however history gets redone, nothing can redo the fantastically competent job--if something can be fantastically competent--the superb job he did in those early months. And the country says, "Hurrah, hurrah, we've got somebody who knows how--a professional who knows how to run it! Okay, so he's a wheeler-dealer and all that; what we needed was a wheeler-dealer to get this train going, to make the deals in Congress, to make the deals with labor and with business and foreign governments." God, it was just great!

And then once the train is just rolling beautifully, you hear people say, "You know, that guy really is a wheeler-dealer, and he's probably making a lot of money up there in the first car. He probably is thinking about himself and he's ugly--did you ever notice that big nose and those big ears and all that sort of stuff? He's kind of crude, pulls dogs up by the ears, shows his scar from his operation and all that," and there begins to be a terrific grouching. Everybody says, "Hell, the train's running fine, we don't need that guy."

There's a great need in a period of crisis for a superb government mechanic but as soon as the crisis is over, the old mistrust and suspicion of government and government servants returns and I think that's what happened to him. I mean, it's one explanation for what happened.

B: To get back to roughly where we were in the chronology, did he ask you to come to the White House staff very soon after the transition, or what happened next? I know that sometime in 1964, you left the Department of Army for the Department of State.

M: One other contact with Johnson, when I was at the Army in late 1964 or early 1965--it was early 1965, January, my other fiefdom exploded [Note: the Panamanian crisis was in early 1964.] One night after I had come back from playing squash over at the Pentagon to my office over there, I was about to leave and the phone rang and it was the Lieutenant Governor of the Panama Canal Zone. And he said, "Some kids are walking into the Zone over here. They've got a lot of banners and they're heading for Balboa High School."

And I had known two days before that the American Legion and the students and everybody had surrounded the flagpole at Balboa High School and had refused to allow the Panamanian flag to be flown along with the American flag on that flagpole. I had gone to Cy Vance with that information

and [to] Steve Ailes, my direct superior, the Under Secretary of the Army. And we had agreed that it would probably be better to try to let the Governor work this out--we had talked to Governor [Robert John] Fleming down there--rather than to issue an order requiring the flag to be flown even if it was done by force. Well, two days later, the Panamanians didn't wait and marched in.

Anyway, he said, "Well, they're walking--" and I said, "Well, keep me advised," and I went home where my wife has the mumps and was in awful shape. We had a little kid and there was no servant and she was coping as best she could and in real misery--high fever and all that. So I tried to look after her and the phone started ringing off the wall, every five minutes, a new report from the Canal Zone.

Well, about 9 o'clock I called Steve Ailes and Cy Vance and told them what was happening. That the kids had been rebuffed at the flagpole and marched out of the Canal Zone and had thrown a lot of debris, bricks and rocks through the windows of cars and turned over some cars and set them afire, and then it was beginning to look pretty rough. So we all agreed we ought to go out to the War Room and meet and did about 10 o'clock at night. We had open lines and loud speakers on in the War Room from the Canal Zone. General [Andrew P.] O'Meara was the commander of the forces in the Canal Zone. He and General Fleming, who was the Governor of the Canal Zone, were very much at odds. We had no Ambassador in Panama--had had vacancies for a long time.

B: They were at odds over what to do?

M: They were at odds personally. Had been for a long time.

But at any rate, the story got through in dribs and drabs. A Colonel [David S.] Parker, now General Parker, was Lieutenant Governor and was a very steady guy. So about 12:30 we decided we'd better get something on this on the record for the President, because things were getting worse and worse.

B: May I ask here--before this time, you hadn't notified the President?

M: The President had been notified that there was trouble brewing, but we wanted to get as complete a picture of what was happening as possible.

So throughout the night the General Counsel of the

Army, with whom I had met three months before and who had become a good friend and colleague in the Pentagon and my partner in many adventures, Joseph A. Califano, and I sat on the phone with the Canal Zone and began writing a brief, almost minute-by-minute brief, of everything that had happened. It turned out about fifteen pages and when it was done at 7 o'clock in the morning, we didn't even have time to go over it, just had it typed and handed it to Cy Vance, who left in his tuxedo and black patent leather pumps which he had had on the night before, for the White House where there was a meeting with the President at 7:30 in the morning. And that was handed to the President and was the first document he had about his first national security crisis.

Later--I went home about 7:30, slept for a couple of hours, looked after my wife a little bit more, and came back at 11:00 that morning. I got called by Cy Vance and he said, "The President wants me and you and Tom Mann and Bob Manning (who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs) to go down there later today and find out what's happening."

So that was pretty exciting. I figured I had considerable time to go home and pack a bag and all that. So I went up to my office, walked into the john, and within a minute, there was a bang on the door. It was Steve Ailes and he said, "The helicopter is at the end of the pad." So I went running out, dashing down and showing Cy and Tom Mann and Bob Manning. We flew out to CIA and picked up a guy who was head of their Central American section and off we went to Andrews [Air Force Base] got on Air Force One and off to Panama. Dark gray heavy suit, not even a toothbrush, and spent three days down there. It was the first time I've ever gotten shot at, or even in an area where you could get shot at. Pretty hairy time.

And then two weeks later Joe Califano and I went back down and spent a week, frantic week, writing the United States' brief for the OAS investigation of the riots.

B: What did you get done in Panama when you were down there getting shot at the first time?

M: Well, mostly information back up here, and slightly rearranging the military posture of the United States down there. Except that Cy and Tom Mann made several hairy ventures in an unmarked car over to see the President of Panama. And the whole thing began to damp back down. They

began to throw the box into it.

B: What does "rearranging the posture" of the United States forces in Panama mean?

M: Well, strengthening, bringing in some troops to strengthen the--I agree with you, it's a good bureaucratic term--. But strengthening the forces on the Colon side, which is the Atlantic side. A number of them had been wounded and they were very weak forces. Setting up better methods of intelligence and guard duty and so on. It was extremely well done, but I shouldn't really make it sound as if we did a hell of a lot because General O'Meara is a first class general and he really knows his stuff.

B: Was this in anticipation of the trouble accelerating?

M: Might have accelerated, might have continued, might have revived, once it was down. But then the negotiations about whether to have treaty negotiations began.

B: Was most of that handled by Mr. Mann, rather than yourself?

M: Yes.

B: Did you have any further contact with the President in that situation?

M: No, I didn't, and I didn't--I saw him on occasion at church or some social event. Every now and then we'd get a picture from him or something of that sort.

B: Excuse me, that's an intriguing little detail. You mean just periodically there would show up in the mail a picture of him?

M: Oh, no, I wouldn't say periodically. I'd say once every four or five months he'd send a picture, maybe that someone had taken of the two of us on some occasion.

But in August of 1964, Ben Read, an old friend of mine who is the Executive Secretary of the State Department, asked me if I would be interested in becoming Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. I was, almost entirely for the naked reason that it was an Assistant Secretary of State's job and that sounds pretty great for a guy just thirty-four years old. So after talking with the incumbent Luke Battle and with [Dean] Rusk, and Cy Vance, [Robert] McNamara and so--McNamara thought it

was absolutely asinine. He never told me that; he told Joe Califano that anybody that would go off for a make-work job like that and leave the Pentagon "when I [McNamara] was about to make him--" I don't know--some Special Assistant or something. I called Walter Jenkins and asked him what he thought and he said he thought it didn't sound like a very important job, that he thought that I was high on the list of McNamara's hotshots and that I ought to stay over there; Califano and I were obviously going to run the place. So, that didn't appeal to me very much because I still had that Assistant Secretary rank in my eyes.

I called [Jack] Valenti and asked him if he would find out from the President whether it made any sense for me to do that. Reason: it would be foolish to go over for a month or two and then have the President say "Come on over to the White House."

The Kennedy staff was just shaking out; guys were leaving, and it looked as if after that period of transition when he wanted the staff to stay, those that worked with him before would probably come in.

Next day Jack called and says, "The President says do whatever you want to." So I took that as meaning that he didn't care and I probably wouldn't be going to the White House. So I did take the job.

B: Let me ask another devious question here. Is there any suspicion that the offer itself had originated with Mr. Johnson?

M: Not at all. Ben Read knew that I was interested in that sort of thing and had not talked to anyone about me. After I said yes, he talked to Luke Battle. And after I saw Luke, Luke talked to Fulbright. Fulbright knew that I didn't know anything about the program; he felt I was too young, but I had known him and worked with him for a long time and we were friends, so he said okay.

I remember my confirmation hearing. He was the only man there. It was early in the morning, about eight o'clock. And he said, "I think I've seen you before." I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you know anything about this program--this Fulbright program?" "No." Long pause, waiting for some kind of elaboration. He said, "Well, do you want to learn? And I said "Yes, I'd like to learn." "Do you think it's of any importance?" "Yes, I do think it's important from everything I've heard about it."

"Hmmm." He looked down and saw Senator [Frank J.] Lausche [D.-Ohio], and said, "Senator, do you have any questions?"

"No, nice to see you again, Harry. Thanks very much."

And that was it. That was my hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and I was voted out in a few minutes and sworn in on my thirty-fifth birthday, the night of the Democratic convention--the night the convention chose Humphrey, which gave me the chance to say that I am old enough to be Vice-President so if there's a deadlock tonight--

But I had a lot of fun over there, stayed six months and traveled a good deal. Went to Europe, spent three weeks, went out to Hawaii to oversee the East-West Center, which is under that domain. I ran a program with about four hundred people and a fifty million dollar budget.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]