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LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW V

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Signed by Lawrence F. O'Brien on April 5, 1990.

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ACCESSION NUMBER 92-16

INTERVIEW V

DATE: December 5, 1985

INTERVIEWEE: LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. O'Brien's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 3, Side 1

G: Okay, I want to start with some miscellaneous topics to finish up 1962.

O: All right.

G: Let me ask you first about the John Glenn space flight. Anything on that from your perspective that you recall?

O: Not from any direct involvement, but I was intrigued with the reaction of the President, Jack Kennedy. The pride as president that finally we'd accomplished something in our quest to move up to the Russians and his personal reaction was one of great excitement.

The result of that was John Glenn became a personal friend and was involved with Bobby and Ethel [Kennedy] socially. When John was initially seeking office, it coincided with a period when I was [Democratic national] chairman, and he came to me to talk about the role of the Democratic National Committee. I had to advise John there was no financial support; we had no resources for that. That was a surprise to him.

Over a period of time we became well acquainted. I toured the state and John toured with me. John was very disappointed that he had not received strong support from the Kennedys in this quest. It surprised him; it disturbed him. I felt that there was a degree of political naiveness being shown by John at that stage of his career. He had, from his space period to his political launching, been successful in the private sector. But he presumed that friendship and association automatically brought political support and he didn't seem to understand that there are political conflicts, that Kennedys are oftentimes caught in situations where there are others seeking a nomination, where there are other interests. And there has always been a reluctance on the part of the Kennedys to step directly into the campaigns of others. Perhaps these people exaggerated what value there would be in it, in the first instance, and secondly, if you become deeply involved with one, you must become deeply involved with others. All of that was understood by me but not by John.

G: Was this primarily with regard to a primary?

- O: Yes, it was in the primary, as I recall. The fact is that the Kennedys generally and the President specifically became very much enamored with John. He was very much a hero to them. Whizzer White had an outstanding background as a scholar and as an athlete, and that was the kind of style the Kennedys admired, the hero thing. I think that was part of the quick and ready acceptance of Whizzer into the inner social circle, and with John Glenn even more so, obviously. So he became very much a part of their social life.
- G: Were you around the President at the time of the space mission?
- O: Yes, I was, but I don't have any specific recollections. It was a big moment for the President. The President was very much concerned about what he construed to be our failure to recognize the realities of the future in space and that we had been derelict in that regard. And of course there was the other element, too; he resented the fact that the Russians had made the progress they had made.
- G: Did these successes in the space program help you on Capitol Hill in terms of selling the NASA budget?
- O: It was of help. Could you measure it? I couldn't measure it, but it was, because there was a change of attitude. An upbeat situation was created and it was to a considerable extent because of Glenn, and that was helpful in general. The success of this particular venture was a contributing factor to creating a better atmosphere. The foot-dragging aspect seemed to lessen to a degree.
- G: LBJ was accused of grandstanding for publicity during Glenn's subsequent trip to New York and the ticker tape parade.
- O: Yes.
- G: Do you have any thoughts on that?
- O: Oh, I don't know. I remember that he was--I don't think that was the only time he was accused of grandstanding. He had a style and a flair that lent itself to critics' fault finding. I think there was an occasion when he visited the Pope in which some people criticized his approach to the visit or the gift. But that was his style, and I don't think Lyndon Johnson ever was reluctant to envision where the camera locations were and he had a way of moving front and center. It came naturally to him. I could see nothing wrong in it. He wasn't alone in that regard in the world of politics by a long shot.
- G: The White House did not resent his efforts to--?
- O: No. If there was any resentment I never heard it, and I have a feeling that I would have picked that up. As I've mentioned before, whatever the motivation, Kennedy was totally committed to ensuring Johnson's involvement in all phases of activity--as I pointed out an incident where he wasn't present at a meeting, and there had been a failure to notify him

and the President was very disturbed about it and gave orders to all of us that this could never happen again. I don't know whether Lyndon Johnson felt that he was totally involved. I never had those kinds of conversations with him. But his assignments often were basically--it's true today [of] the role of the vice president: you do some foreign travel; you are the number-two fellow that fills in the gaps, you're called upon by the president to engage in a lot of activities, including membership on various committees and commissions. Some of it I imagine isn't awfully exciting or indeed pleasant at times, but that's some of the--it's a terrible way to describe it--somewhat grubby tasks that a vice president is charged with.

And Johnson had always been number one. As majority leader he came across as number one, and whether number two was something he accustomed or adjusted himself to, I don't know. But I do know the President's view regarding the Vice President and what his role was to be. And it came out later, after Dallas. Some of those resentments on the part of some of the Kennedy people toward Johnson probably didn't exist, or if they did, were kept close to the vest. My close associates, some of whom resented Johnson after Dallas, were rather negative about him. I don't recall them having that attitude [before], or if they did, they didn't express it when he was vice president.

It's hard for me to determine, because I had a difficult time--I've discussed it before and it will probably crop up from time to time--following Dallas. I had to cope with some strong views on the part of close associates which, in my judgment, really made no sense. There was no ground for some of the attitudes and some of the views expressed. It went on for a period of time. It was bothersome, because I on the one hand wanted to retain these friendships and long-time associations. On the other hand, I felt a sense of responsibility. However, if you're feeling that way and you're not comfortable, then get out. Hell, there was nothing to lock you into having to go through with something that was bothersome to you.

But in the vice presidential period, as I've said repeatedly, my personal association with the Vice President was a pleasant one without any rancor or difficulty. In fact, my association with him as president was similar. But what he might have inwardly thought about his role or about us, I have no idea.

I read with interest an excerpt you have of a conversation that he had with Ted Sorensen, and my impression of that--I glanced at it last evening--was [it was] an attempt on the part of Johnson to place on the record his concerns about the lack of progress legislatively. I thought it was a very interesting document because there wasn't one complete sentence uttered by Sorensen throughout. It comes across to me as a calculated move on the part of LBJ to place on the record his views and his willingness to cooperate, and his feeling that perhaps he isn't being fully utilized. There was a series of statements which sounded to me as though Ted wasn't afforded an opportunity to make any comment.

G: Was that typical of a conversation with LBJ during that period?

O: Not that I ever had with him, no.

G: He didn't tend to--?

O: And interestingly enough to me, I think much of what he was saying to Sorensen should have been directed to me. Some of the area of that discussion really was an area in which he and I should have had the discussion. But I never had that kind of a conversation with Lyndon Johnson. We had any number of conversations, obviously, over the years, but I don't recall anything like that, and I have to assume that conversation was held in his office because it was recorded.

G: It was a telephone conversation.

O: Oh, was it? Yes, I noted that. Anyway. . . .

So what hit me is that perhaps during that period, unknown to me, he was concerned about his role and concerned about the Kennedy people not treating him properly. I don't know.

G: He does seem to have been restive.

O: Yes, he was restive. As we have said before, he was troubled by the attitude in the Senate at the outset. It left him with a nonrole up there, and yet he had clearly decided to have his base of operation continue on the Hill, his vice presidential office. That would be his main headquarters. As time went on, it just wasn't working out.

G: I wanted to ask you to talk for a moment about his role as chairman of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. This was a situation where apparently his budget was drawn from various departments and agencies, rather than an appropriation from the Congress.

(Interruption)

Okay, we were talking about the President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity and specifically the nature of funding for that operation, since it didn't go through the appropriation process. Was this a source of irritation to southern members of the Senate and the House?

O: To some degree, as I recall, yes. It was a unique procedure. It was doing an end run. I don't think it affected us particularly or deterred us, but there were some expressions of a negative nature. I would think that Lyndon Johnson in that kind of a role would find it challenging and interesting. I was always impressed with his obvious sincere commitment to equality, and I guess people thought back to his youth, his experiences during the Depression, and would understand his commitment. There was always a tendency on the



part of many liberals to question Johnson's commitment to civil rights. Yet every action he took during my years with him, every effort he expended, and every word he ever uttered, even with just the two of us, clearly underscored his total commitment in that area. It used to be a little bothersome to me, frankly, to have people question it. I remember, for example, in the District of Columbia home rule discharge petition effort, that Joe Rauh and other ADAers gave up that fight on the Hill, and I could understand it. They had worked it over and couldn't get to the necessary number of names and finally threw up their hands. Lyndon Johnson didn't throw up his hands and, to the utter amazement of Rauh and his cohorts, put it across the line. And it was his personal effort that brought that about.

G: What did he do specifically?

O: I followed the usual procedure in all legislative struggles. You worked on a discharge petition as you would a head count, and you made efforts to secure signatures on the petition just as you would try to secure votes. Somehow or other we couldn't get there and I would always avoid direct presidential intervention until there was no other alternative, following the policy of husbanding the President's time and effort so that it would always have an impact and not become just a widely accepted, day-to-day situation on the Hill. So I finally had my list of twenty-two--I believe that was the number--members who should be on that petition and weren't. And typical of that list was a woman named Edna Kelly, who was a congresswoman from New York. She hadn't signed. And it was a carefully put together list. These were twenty-two who, if this were a liberal legislative proposal, you would fully expect to be supportive, but in this instance there was an avoidance, for whatever reasons.

I happened to be in the outer office [to] the Oval Office, talking about things generally, and I mentioned that we had found liberal friends were sort of throwing in the towel and yet we had these twenty-two targets that we were still working on. He wanted to know who the twenty-two were, so I pulled it out of the inside pocket of my jacket and showed it to him. He promptly called the White House operator, the names were all given and the directive was to get them on the phone promptly wherever they could locate them. I don't know whether he went through the whole twenty-two, but I suspect he did, because he had gone through half a dozen. He was frustrated because this was in the evening, it was difficult to locate some of them. I remember Edna Kelly particularly, because with Edna there was no way that she was ever going to avoid signing that petition once he had her on the phone. There was a rather lengthy conversation with all the pleas that Johnson could make and all the cajoling.

But that was kind of effort the President of the United States was expending on a discharge petition involving home rule for the District of Columbia when he should have been over in the living quarters having dinner. But it underscored, to me, once again his commitment in this area. This wasn't civil rights but it had all the elements of it, obviously. So there was no question about his commitment. I felt very strongly about that over the years, because I think to this day there are people that would suggest

otherwise, despite the record. But I guess that if they still suggest otherwise, there's no way you could ever convince them. They don't care to be convinced. They've made up their minds. But this man has never received the credit he deserves in this area. And equal employment was something that fit him.

G: How would you assess the work of that committee?

O: Well, my recollection is awfully vague on the results, but my recollection is it was spotty. Maybe that was due to the structure.

G: Let me ask you about the administration's effort to do away with discrimination in the Defense Department. This was an area where Adam Yarmolinsky in particular was involved. Can you elaborate on that? Do you recall that?

O: Other than state the obvious, that there was a keen desire to put a real effort into it and that was undertaken. There again, as in all matters involving the federal bureaucracy, you found yourself frustrated, and I don't remember the details other than we found over the years that it was difficult to get a handle on the bureaucracy. Our system didn't provide for assured continuity that would have the appropriate people administer as they should, because they'd feel that you wouldn't be around and they'd still be there. And that affected you constantly, to the point where you turn your back on the whole thing and accept the inevitable.

That can go to equal opportunity as well as to any other aspect of the conduct of government. To build a fire under departments and agencies of the government is a difficult process, and I don't think any president has ever had anything but a lot of frustration regarding it. But if you're looking at a defense establishment; you're looking at the military, you're looking at millions of people involved in and out of uniform. You had to try to do it administratively or attempt to. You knew that you were going to have great difficulty and frustrations, but that shouldn't deter you from making an effort.

G: Did the southern members of the Congress object to the effort?

O: I don't recall widespread objection, but I do recall nit-picking and questioning. Members of Congress would attempt to put roadblocks in your path, seriously questioning some of the activities. It didn't become a war, formalized by resolutions or committee actions to block activities.

G: The President signed an open housing executive order. Do you recall that?

O: I don't recall the details of it. Everything you could do in the executive branch that could circumvent or avoid the legislative process and bring about progress in the general civil rights area was undertaken. It was a matter of how creative you were. You knew you were still not in the position to bring about civil rights legislation. You were resorting to executive orders and other actions, faced with a lot of negative comment from liberal

friends who construed activity of that nature to be an avoidance of the civil rights struggle rather than an effort to do whatever you could while you waited your time.

G: Did President Kennedy pursue the executive order because he felt like it was not feasible to get the same thing accomplished legislatively, was that the--?

O: Yes. As that legislative program unfolded--and we've discussed it [before]--the reality of meaningful civil rights legislation, the reality of the problem was recognized. Now, we could have demagogued the hell out of that, and there were people that suggested it. There were people who you felt you could ultimately persuade to join the cause when the time was right. And if you focused on a civil rights bill early on, you were doomed to defeat at that stage.

A lot unfolded which was not in existence at that time. You would carry on this struggle and not succeed and in the process derail most of your legislative program, because it became a single-effort legislative struggle focused totally in one area.

So we resented suggestions from the observers on the curbstone that we were not committed. That's a bit like how far do you pursue the rallies to build the fire under Wilbur Mills on Medicare? Those are judgments. Our judgment certainly proved to be correct, because we had a reasonable degree of success in some very important areas over the first couple of years, and we hadn't unduly antagonized a lot of people. You're trying to create friendships. But to suggest that the administration wasn't committed to this ultimate goal was grossly unfair. The struggle went on and on. As we know, it even became a major struggle in the House Judiciary Committee ultimately, and that was with a much improved climate.

G: On this particular area, for example, of open housing, had you done a fairly extensive head count to indicate what your chances of getting legislation approved or not getting it approved were?

O: I don't think we had done an extensive head count. We had discussed this with key people on the Hill, committee and leadership people, but we didn't get to a head count, and it would have been difficult if not impossible to get the head count without something to count, something in hand.

G: Yes. But you got a sense from that that the legislation wouldn't work?

O: Oh yes, coupled with a feeling that something could be accomplished through this device.

G: The leadership made the suggestion for an executive order?

O: I don't think they made the suggestion, but the leadership was in accord. There was a feeling that this was a good move to make and it could be productive.

G: Was there any fallout from the southerners after the executive order?

O: I don't recall. I think if we were able to pursue the record or go back to the *Congressional Record* or to old clips, you'd probably find there was. Inevitably there would be some negative fallout. But there again, you felt pretty comfortable down there with that sort of thing. So there was griping from sources that you'd anticipate. And we had a little arrogance, a little "so what, this is a procedure that is available to us and we're utilizing it and you can gripe if you want to."

G: You've discussed the University of Mississippi crisis in your book, but let me ask you to elaborate on that, if you will, and describe your own conversations with the President about that, also any conversations that you had with members of the Congress.

O: Well, I don't know as there's much beyond what I said in the book. My direct involvement was minimal. The involvement, again, would relate to maintaining communication with appropriate people on the Hill as this unfolded. I don't know as there's much I could add beyond that.

G: A couple of the points that you stressed in your book: one, the fact that the President felt like he had been misled by the authorities there in Mississippi, I mean specifically the Governor.

O: [Ross] Barnett.

G: And two, the long delay in getting troops on the scene.

O: Well, those were the elements that I was familiar with. I was there. I guess it's time to introduce again the human element. All of these well conceived, organized efforts that are undertaken depend on proper implementation. I remember two aspects of it: one, the President was persuaded that Barnett had not leveled with him and was attempting to manipulate him; and secondly, the military establishment was ineffective. I guess if you did it in the form of a movie or a play everybody would roar with laughter, because here's the President of the United States trying to find out where the troops are, where the general is that's responsible, and almost desperately trying to find somebody in authority to give him an answer. While this well-laid plan is supposed to be unfolding, it's in complete disarray and you have the main actor in the cast down there giving you a total con game. You put all that together and you're in a pretty frustrating situation. There's the President of the United States who everybody assumes pushes buttons and things happen. But for the life of him he couldn't find the troops and he became completely disenchanted with Brother Barnett in the process. So it was a mess. (Laughter)

G: Was he in contact with Secretary [Robert] McNamara during this?

O: Yes, he was in contact with everybody he could think of. I forget the general's name, but there was some general who was supposedly superior to the general missing on some

highway somewhere, and the explanations became ludicrous. The fact of the matter is that the Pentagon couldn't find the troops either and the threats of what was going to happen down there if Barnett didn't straighten out were rather meaningless, because we were removed from implementation. Through those hours, you had a fellow sitting in the Oval Office with all this power supposedly, commander in chief of the armed forces, trying to cope with a bureaucracy that just had been put to a test and was in complete disarray.

Tape 1 of 5, Side 2

G: Did you think that the delay was intentional at all or that it was simply incompetence?

O: I don't think they could read highway signs. (Laughter) It was that bad. I can laugh about it now, but I'll tell you, there wasn't any laughter in the Oval Office while this was unfolding.

G: Was Robert Kennedy involved?

O: Yes.

G: What was his role in this?

O: Well, he was just going along. I think Ken O'Donnell was there and probably a couple of others, and we were just beside ourselves. We decided to remain relatively mute, because anything we would say would probably cause the President to become even more disturbed. It went on and on. In the meantime, as each phone call ended, there was a roar in the office about "where the hell are we and where are they, and can anybody get me somebody that can give me an answer?"

G: What was McNamara's explanation?

O: I don't recall. I don't know whether it was. . . . (Laughter) Nobody had an explanation. I think everybody was running for cover.

G: Did the President explore other alternatives for getting a quicker response, like trying to get men from another military institution?

O: No, I don't recall that--

G: Was there any alternative?

O: I don't think there was. The assignments had been made. That general has been assigned his task. He has his troops. God, if he can't find the location, who can?

G: Was there a lesson that came out of this? Or was there any modification in order to lessen the response time?

O: I don't recall that. I think the lesson that came out was similar to the Bay of Pigs lesson. Just don't dream that, with all the charts they put up on the wall and all the game plans that are developed, it's going to work out the way they tell you. It just doesn't seem to happen. And you've seen it occur. It occurred in Carter's effort to get the hostages out. It seems that every time you get into one of these engagements things go awry. I think it's sad, but maybe it's the size and scope of the whole thing. The bureaucracy is so overweighted that it's beyond. . . .

G: Were there any discussions with the Mississippi delegation in Congress during this time?

O: I don't recall that.

G: Or Senator [James] Eastland or [John] Stennis?

O: Not at this period I'm talking about. There couldn't have been, because the President was otherwise engaged, and we all were. There was an effort to keep in communication with the people on the scene down there, the Justice Department side of it, and assuring them that things were going to work out, while [Nicholas] Katzenbach, or whoever, was peering out into the horizon.

G: Okay. Another episode that you discussed in your book was the Cuban Missile Crisis. But let me ask you to focus specifically on the congressional briefings and the discussions among the members of Congress.

O: That was a fast-breaking situation over a very brief period of days, I guess, going back to the first awakening on my part, first knowledge I had that something was amiss. I was with the President in Chicago and our schedule called for us to go on to Wisconsin. And the President did not make me aware of this crisis at that point.

G: Why do you think that was?

O: He was keeping it very close to the vest. It unfolded rather rapidly and became serious quickly. His determination was to cancel the rest of that trip and return to Washington, and he came up with the excuse that he had a cold. And in my presence he called Pierre Salinger in and said to advise the press that "We're going back to Washington. I just don't feel well; I have a bad cold." And that's all Salinger knew. I went back with him, and I was on the helicopter with him from Andrews [Air Force Base] to the White House. He was very pensive en route, had very little to say. And when he alighted from the helicopter, he charged into the living quarters. I went about my business. And whether it was hours or a day, I became aware of what was transpiring.

G: How did you first--?

O: It must have been in general conversation in the Oval Office. When the military aide to

the President was instructed to carry out the procedures of the movement of government to the Catocin Mountains, there were a number of days involved there. I was designated as one that would go with the President and I was allowed to designate one other person who would go with me.

Things were worsening. The surveillance of Cuba was being carried out. There were meetings in the Cabinet Room. McNamara was doing the briefing, and others were called in by McNamara to assist. There were blowups of the installations. There was the evidence of the further shipments toward Cuba. This unfolded hour by hour. It is my recollection the Congress was in recess. To have the leadership and the appropriate committee members briefed and alerted to all of this became a logistical problem. You were, on the one hand, unable to indicate even the nature of the crisis or refer to it as a crisis, but yet you had to impress upon Ev Dirksen and the rest out there in the hinterlands that there was a need for immediate return to Washington.

G: Did you make these calls?

O: I made some of them directly and my staff [made] others.

G: Tell me how you could persuade them to come back without revealing the urgency of it or the nature of it.

O: Simply, they'd have to accept that I was making the call on behalf of the President and it was imperative "that you return to Washington immediately in whatever manner will get you here the fastest, and I'm not in a position to discuss it any further, but the urgency is underscored and therefore the President must have your presence." Nobody would question beyond that.

G: They were all quickly [inaudible] in response to--?

O: Well, they knew this was a very unusual procedure and they came in from around the country. One member was a senator from California--

G: [Thomas] Kuchel.

O: Kuchel never got over it because he was put in a fighter plane and brought to Washington. The Congress is going to be informed in detail of what has transpired, where we are and what the end result can be. So the briefing was full in terms of the blowups of the installations and the recounting of the current status of the freighters that were moving further missiles into Cuba. All of that was detailed without withholding anything. This was the President conducting the meeting.

G: He did the briefing himself?

O: No. He just called on people to brief. And this went on for a fair length--it took a while

to complete this briefing and to ensure that you hadn't left any element out. This was a complete briefing. And then as you would in other briefings, you would go around the table, and there were a number of people in the room, because not only were the cabinet chairs occupied but chairs were pulled up to the cabinet table and there were people sitting along the wall. So you had probably twenty or thirty people in the room. Then the President went around the table and asked each member to comment. He would appreciate their advice and counsel. The comments varied. Most of it was noncomment. Most of the reactions were to the effect that "Whatever you decide, Mr. President, you have my support." There was some reference to "Is there any way of moving the marines into Cuba?" and that got into a discussion about where they were and what would it take, and my recollection was you were talking about fifteen thousand or something marines. To move them into Cuba would take X number of days, which you could conclude meant perhaps more than X number of days before they'd ever see the shores of Cuba. That sort of drifted out of the conversation.

G: Was there also a fear that once you got them in there you might have a hard time getting them out?

O: Well, [we] never pursued it because it was clear you couldn't get them in there anyway and this wasn't a realistic approach. It sounds a little ludicrous, but actually there was a serious discussion. I don't think the President took it seriously, because obviously the President had given thought to the marines going into Cuba or what courses do you have?

But in any event, it was a repeat of what I had seen or heard before. In that setting you're going to have collective reaction that will be "I support you, Mr. President. I have confidence in your judgment and decision. Whatever your decision is, you have my support." You don't expect anything more than that. Interesting to me is, with all the carping criticism of the White House and the president on the part of the Congress, under those circumstances there isn't any desire on the part of members of Congress for a share of the burden. This is the role of the president of the United States; this is the awesome responsibility we give him. You're perfectly willing at that point to say, "He has that responsibility. All I can do for him and am willing to do for him is support him in whatever he does. I'm not otherwise involved."

So to a considerable extent those kinds of meetings are pro forma, even though at that moment you have as serious a matter as you could have on the table. It still follows the same pattern, and it's interesting to observe that and to recognize and understand it. There are times when that would happen, when I'd say to myself, "Yes, but boy, you don't hesitate to criticize and second guess the President or to complain that he doesn't communicate with the Congress, and that he should have the advice and consent of the Congress on all these matters. It all disappears when it's the moment of crisis." And that was the moment of crisis. It was not exaggerated.

G: This was a briefing with the House and Senate leadership?



O: This particular one, yes. But there were other briefings and meetings in the Cabinet Room. There were a number of them, and they flowed together finally because you had the cabinet in; you had staff people sitting in. However, there had to be some planning before this period I'm describing, because General [Chester] Clifton was responsible for the movement, and he talked to me and to each key member of the staff directly, and we were given our orders. But I do recall that Clifton suggested that perhaps I'd want to take a trip out to see this installation under the mountain and have a better idea how business would be conducted, and I chose not to. I felt it didn't make much difference what it looked like; if that's where you were going, you were going. (Laughter) You didn't have an alternative, so why bother to spend several hours looking at it? But anyway, that certainly didn't occur overnight, making the determination how there would be an orderly movement by helicopter into this installation that was in existence for that express purpose.

But to get back to that meeting, I will have to say it concluded with expressions on the part of every member sitting there in support of the President. Certainly every one of them recognized the seriousness of the situation. They were united bipartisanly when they left that meeting and appeared before the press. They were not discussing any details of the meeting or any aspects of the meeting, just that it was a matter of great import, extremely serious and that they had told the President they supported whatever steps he took in the national interest.

G: Were there any in that meeting that proposed an alternative course of action?

O: There might have been one other alternative of course. I envision Senator [J. William] Fulbright had some fairly extensive comment, extending beyond "you have my support, Mr. President." Not any lengthy comment. No one had any lengthy comment. I think probably Senator [Richard] Russell did. But one or the other may have discussed the marine aspect.

G: What about the surgical bombing alternative?

O: I think that was handled in terms of the briefing itself. In discussing the briefing, the situation at the moment was documented by the photos. They were briefed on what approaches were viable or could be considered or would be considered or have been considered. That was all in the briefing.

G: Did any of them favor a bombing strike?

O: I don't recall that. I don't think anyone, other than whichever members favored a land strike.

G: Do you recall who brought that up?

O: No, I don't. In fairness I think I recall who brought it up, but I'm not that sure so I better

not attribute it. But that was the extent of it. The time frame eludes me now, because obviously the "crisis" was over a period of time--if you go back to General Clifton's instructions to prepare for movement of government and to Chicago, when the crisis had escalated while the President was out of the White House for a brief period. How many days unfolded before Khrushchev blinked, I don't recall now.

But really that was the only solution. I think that a first strike on the mainland of the United States and its effect were clear on the basis of the briefing. It would affect about a third of the country. What would have been the result if Khrushchev didn't blink? You'd have to conclude that if he didn't blink the result would have been devastating. But it became a matter of leadership, strong leadership and courageous leadership. We got over the hump, but I think that in historic terms the President's handling of that situation and what resulted from the Bay of Pigs is worthy of comparison in terms of leadership and the way you respond, having a firm grasp and totally accepting your responsibility. After all, that's not unique with presidents. Harry Truman is still recalled as the fellow who made the decision on bombing, and they're still Monday-morning quarterbacking Truman forty years later.

- G: Critics have charged that because the President brought the nation to the brink of thermonuclear war that it was a reckless decision.
- O: Well, I dismiss that charge out of hand. The fact of the matter is that there was a concerted effort on the part of the Russians to mount this procedure in Cuba, and at some point you would have to make an effort to stop it. Other than taking it to the brink, I don't know what alternative you had. If that's the brink, it certainly wasn't reckless because those ships didn't turn around. The immediate next step obviously would be to turn them around. Would that result in action on the mainland of Cuba? Probably. But at what stage did you cross into being reckless? They were in place. They were detected. It was a proven case. This was the initial stage, but there was more to come and they were en route. I don't know when you say, "Well, now I'm going to have to be reckless." I think that falls of its own weight.
- G: There was a comparison of the U.S. missiles that we had in Turkey. Do you recall how this tied into the decision-making process and ultimately the decision to--?
- O: Not really. I vaguely recall the references to it.
- G: Did the President wrestle with his decision at the time? Do you think he had doubts about it?
- O: Throughout that, my observations--obviously I wasn't in the Situation Room--were somewhat peripheral. Because of my role, I happened to be present during some phases of this and I was able to observe him directly, and I have described his reserved attitude coming from Chicago and on the helicopter. I also remember vividly his general posture at that meeting and other meetings through this crisis. He was very much in command.

He was not exhibiting outwardly any emotions. He clearly accepted his role and he knew where he was headed. He was going to see it through and there was no hesitancy. This man was in total control and total command. There was no sense of wavering at all. He had to see it through and he had to act in the best interests of the country, as he saw it, and he was totally prepared to do it and did.

G: What was Robert Kennedy's role in this crisis as you observed it?

O: I think basically a close relationship with his brother and considerable presence in the White House.

G: Did he participate in this leadership briefing?

O: I don't recall that, and because I don't recall it I would suggest he didn't.

G: What was LBJ's role, do you recall?

O: Well, he was obviously kept fully abreast of this throughout. What conversation took place between him and Kennedy during the course of this, I don't know. But his role--observable--was the role that Kennedy had carved out for him from the outset. He was very much on the inside of the whole situation.

G: Did he have any discussion in the briefing?

O: I don't recall that he did have any.

G: When the crisis ended, do you recall President Kennedy's attitude then?

O: No, other than it was business as usual very quickly and there was a sigh of relief. Everybody went about their business and quickly put the crisis aside.

G: Did he see it as a trial, do you think?

O: I don't recall that he did, and he never by any indication or conversation with me placed it in that category.

G: I believe you've indicated in your book that you felt that although he, because of the crisis, was unable to complete his campaigning for congressmen, that the successful resolution of the crisis was a benefit to those who were running with his support.

O: That was an assumption we made and the record would indicate it was probably a fair assumption. I don't recall what the polls reflected after the Cuban Missile Crisis, as I recall what the polls reflected after the Bay of Pigs disaster, only because I was far more interested in what would occur in the polls after the Bay of Pigs than I was in this instance. In this instance there certainly wasn't a minus factor, while in the Bay of Pigs there was a

gaping hole which I thought was going to be disastrous to us. It proved otherwise in terms of public opinion. I think the qualities of leadership go to the perception of the individual, oftentimes not his actions, but his attitude, his ability to communicate, his acceptance as a leader by the public. Generally all that is in the equation, and Kennedy had the benefit of that despite the Bay of Pigs. There was a growing support for the President across the country. It was wave after wave and there was no question in our mind that he was going to go into a reelection drive in awfully, awfully good shape.

G: I have a couple of items that I just want to wind up with relating to general aspects of your congressional relations. There's some indication that Pierre Salinger really didn't include enough on the status of legislation there and suggestions that perhaps you should give more regular press briefings of your own. How did you handle this?

O: Yes, that did come up. I think there was neglect on our part in filling Pierre in, frankly. The role of that press secretary is such a unique role anyway, and we would have meetings that related to congressional relations with the leadership, not only the breakfast meetings but other meetings in the Oval Office. There were times when you'd say the meeting has ended; somebody ought to call Pierre and fill him in.

We had a tendency, and that I think led to some of this criticism, of bringing key people into the White House privately. A Wilbur Mills coming in to visit the President would not be on the schedule. And we did that because we just did not want to have undue focus on some of these efforts, and oftentimes there was an effort to try to persuade Wilbur or whoever in a given area, and it could be counterproductive if it became a matter of public attention. So we went along that way and sort of drifted into that procedure.

There was not in the Kennedy White House, at least in the early months, an impact on the staff generally regarding congressional relations. Not only was it new to me, it was new to everyone else, and it wasn't their department. This movement can take all kinds of directions and at various steps in the process can probably be a little bit newsworthy. If it is, the news emanates from the Hill in committee action or committee vote. So consequently, Pierre was not given a great deal of background for use in his briefings regarding the progress of legislation. It was more one-on-one interviews with members of the press that I would conduct, and that would be on request most of the time. Members of the press would call and you'd set up an appointment. Many of those discussions took place, and we never thought about it in terms of Pierre.

That wasn't the only area in which Pierre lacked substantive knowledge; much of what occurred in the Oval Office was not relayed to Pierre. He was left hanging time after time after time in his briefings because he simply didn't have background information that would be helpful to him in making a response. There were members of the press that were very well aware that somehow or other he wasn't privy to the extent that a press secretary probably should be. That certainly applied to what activities we were engaged in in the legislative process. But there again, it isn't very sexy, those activities, and you weren't trying to block him off. What you were failing to do was utilize at appropriate times an

opportunity to get press support for an effort you were engaged in. That was undoubtedly overlooked.

But as time went on, that was corrected. Pierre and I would sit down and I would update him and suggest to him certain things that he might introduce into a briefing. And that would happen periodically when the circumstances indicated it. Perhaps there were some advantages to be gained on the press side that we weren't utilizing.

The interviewing aspect was rather difficult, because about every reporter that I would meet with would conduct an interview on the basis that there apparently isn't anything happening, and put you totally on the defensive. There was that general attitude and it wasn't the case. Neil McNeil up on the congressional side saw that a lot of things were happening, and he was dutifully reporting it to his magazine. There were others like Neil, but they had to seek it out a little bit. We weren't really doing the job of informing.

And I think we rather preferred it that way. My feeling was that if we were to develop over the long haul these relationships that we envisioned, the less public involvement in this, the better. Wilbur Mills comes in and you try to convince him of something, and you didn't convince him but he's going to think about it. Do you tell Pierre Salinger, "Well, Wilbur Mills was in and we were discussing Medicare again. He hasn't indicated movement in our direction, but he's still trying to keep an open mind and we'll talk about it again"? What's the value of all that? And if you do that, it's duly reported. Wilbur Mills is then questioned on the Hill about what took place, and I couldn't see any value in it.

The negative side of it was that you got to the wrap-ups on what transpired or didn't transpire during the session. You were up against a press generally that had not closely observed the activities on the Hill, if they weren't on the Hill particularly, or you had columnists like Joe Alsop, Walter Lippmann, people like that. So there was a tendency to sort of pass it by or say, "Gee, I don't think there's anything really going on." You'd get a headline out of it, a feed on a minimum wage bill in the House, but you wouldn't get a lot out of a conference report on minimum wage ultimately being adopted that turned out to be very close to the bill that had been defeated.

So that went on, and it was not exclusively on the Congressional Relations side. It was White House procedure and the President's approach to press relations and the role of the press secretary. And Pierre had a real problem, because Pierre was an able, aggressive guy that was generally liked by the press. He was darn good at his job. But you left him hanging more often than not. And Pierre would from time to time say to me, "I had that thrown at me and I couldn't respond. I don't even know the substance of the question because I've never heard about the subject."

G: Did Salinger and his successors have the same problem under LBJ, do you think?

O: As the records will indicate, we made a conscious effort to promote legislative progress in

every way we could, and that was through the press office, too. But it was also through releasing memoranda to the President by me, a joint report to the President by [Joseph] Califano and me at the end of a session, contacting press people and inviting them in to discuss--

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G: --in to discuss the annual wrap-up, you say?

O: Yes. This became bothersome to us. We had a lot to be proud of; we had made significant progress. A dispassionate, objective look at the record would bring a reporter to the conclusion that it was a substantial record.

That was being reported in those terms by members of the press from the Hill. But we finally at some point, Ted Sorensen and I, had a long session one evening at the home of one of the members of the press. There were probably about twenty press fellows there. We went through an entire evening presenting our point of view. There was a considerable degree of opposition, cynicism or skepticism to our point of view as the evening progressed. It got quite late and Ted became somewhat exasperated with some of those present. Finally a few of them departed and then Ted departed and I stayed. Things cooled off and calmed down, and I thought that night had been very worthwhile. My recollection is it was productive.

I remember that occasion. There were others, but I remember that specifically, because I think what hit both Ted and I was that their opinions were in concrete. Yet as I went back over some clippings not many months ago, there were any number of favorable stories.

I do remember a fellow that I had a great admiration for--we became very close friends--confessing his error, and that was a fellow named Pete Lisagor. Pete was class personified; he epitomized to me all that was good and great in journalism. Pete did his midterm story and it was quite negative. There was no progress, nothing seemed to be developing, and consequently it would be a nonmeaningful session. He got to the end of the session and just turned totally around on his own and contacted me and said, "My failure was not to be an observer, not to follow things more closely, just to listen to scuttlebutt and not pay much attention. Once I focused on the session and devoted some time to it, I recognized that my midterm story was not a fair one. I've corrected the whole thing and I'm going with the story. I think you had quite a year."

Well, you appreciated that. As a White House correspondent, you're more apt to be concerned about the ebb and flow in the foreign policy area, in crisis areas, rather than this slow-moving, rather disjointed legislative process that requires a great deal of attention on a day-to-day basis in order to keep abreast of it. You're not doing that, nor is that your assignment. You're covering the White House, not the Congress, and it was looked at that way. Nobody was saying to Pierre, "Why don't you tell us more about the

legislative process?"

G: As time went on, did you increase your contact with the DNC?

O: Not particularly. Both times when I was chairman of the DNC, we were the out party. The contact with John Bailey in those years was somewhat limited. John's role was a useful role to take the heat, and let you off the hook to some extent when you had to say no. Bailey at times would be the fellow that would say, "This can't be done or won't be done." When it came to the off-year elections, there was a great deal of contact with the DNC because John and his staff were looked to as people to implement activities involving the candidates. In 1962 they were very much involved and during that period John would be over to the White House in discussions with us.

There was a time when someone suggested that we consider having the chairman of the DNC attend cabinet meetings. It never happened, but there was some suggestion along those lines with the feeling that it not only was unfair to the chairman, but it was not in our best interests not to utilize the entity more.

Now, you have to remember also that the DNC was considered by the President to be a bit of a yoke, because the DNC was in serious debt. John would be hopeful that the President would get involved in fund-raising activity that would be helpful to discharge the debt. And that's a subject that the President chose to ignore. It would not be in the forefront of his mind. He had other things on his mind. So there's a tendency to consider the DNC a separate entity, although it could probably be utilized in some way that would be protective or helpful to the President. But short of that, it did not have an ongoing significant role in the administration's activities.

That's basically, I think, wrong. From my own experience at a later date, if I were chairman and my party had the White House, I would fully expect that I would have a meaningful role and be a spokesman for the party. We had a tendency to go along with the nonrole in the administration of the party entity. I don't think it was devastating, but I think we could have shored up the party structure and probably have a greater impact at the state and local level than it has had over the years, if we had given some evidence that there was direct presidential interest and involvement and support of the chairman. But that wasn't forthcoming, and it was just ignored.

(Interruption)

G: Okay. At the beginning of the 1963 session of Congress, Senator [Thomas] Dodd criticized [Mike] Mansfield's kind, gentle leadership, contrasting it with LBJ's. Was the kindness and gentleness of Mansfield's style at all a handicap?

O: No, it wasn't a handicap. Mansfield was a consensus fellow. He, to my knowledge and I certainly had a great deal of involvement with him over those years, would not attempt to dictate in promoting legislation or persuading his colleagues. He rather liked to have

luncheons with them in his office or visitations in the afternoon. He was low key in that regard. He was very supportive of the congressional relations process from the White House. He looked to us to a great extent to carry out some of these efforts. It was just basically a matter of style. As far as we were concerned: a) we recognized it as his style of operation; b) he afforded us tremendous opportunity to carry out our activities in close proximity to the Senate. He was totally supportive of everything we were engaged in, and he was tremendously supportive of the President.

So as far as our work on the Senate side, we felt Mansfield was a tremendous plus. Mansfield's procedures, which I alluded to on a previous occasion, would be, "I'm going to call the appropriate people in, we're going to have lunch, and then you'll present to them the President's views." And it would be done that way rather than Mansfield trying to hit them over the head individually. So I'm sure there was a great contrast between Mansfield's approach to his position as majority leader and Johnson's. I was not involved with Johnson as majority leader, so I didn't have the opportunity to observe the contrast, but clearly they were two entirely different kinds of folks.

As for Dodd's comments, he would not necessarily be privy to all of the efforts that Mansfield undertook quietly and privately to move legislation. But as far as we were concerned, we were very comfortable with Mike. As I said, he was very supportive and extremely helpful, and our relationship was total--communication at all times candid and open. Along with Mike in those days, you had Hubert [Humphrey], who was very active up there regarding the program and its progress. So I don't share Dodd's point of view, but I must say that he would come from a different perspective than I would because he was making comparison between two leaders that he had been involved with while I was dealing with the one leader that I had come to know.

G: Okay. Certainly one of the major measures that was submitted that year was the tax bill, a combination of a tax cut and tax reform.

O: Well, yes, that was major, and it had a surprise element to it: a Democratic president making the proposal and the fact that he felt that enactment of a tax cut would be a stimulus to the economy. It was not the normal Democratic Party approach. But, of course, he was trying to bring about additional revenue by cutting off and reducing certain tax benefits, but it didn't come out as a wash really. It was basically in the final analysis a tax cut. And then--

G: Excuse me. Why do you think that Kennedy did decide to take this route instead--?

O: I think he accepted the view of some of the economic advisers that this was the best approach. It reflected a point of view that differed from the traditional among Democratic economic advisers. I don't recall what led him to this message, because when I came into the picture we were developing the message, and the thrust of the message was clear in the President's mind. I'm not an economist, and I was never wedded to any particular economic philosophy. I found, in the years I spent in the White House, I became less and



less interested in the views of economic advisers because I found there were no two economic advisers that agreed on anything. And I think most presidents probably become frustrated because you never get a clear consensus. Basically, presentations are somewhat in disarray and you just don't know where to turn. So I think you have to probably use your gut reactions in making some economic decisions.

You're advocating a tax cut in the midst of what at that time was considered a very serious deficit. And there were the conservatives on the Hill who said, "This makes no sense at all. You're reducing taxes and that is going to increase the deficit." Even if your judgment is right, this is a serious matter and they can't accept it. And it drifted along to the point of a tough fight and a close margin to avoid a mandate to reduce the budget. I think that as Mills tried to move this along, he got to a statement of policy saying, "Now, of course, the enactment of this legislation would bring about a presidential budget request to Congress that would be reduced." Ultimately that is really what happened, because by the time that we got to the end of 1963 the record indicates there was a feeling that you better not pursue it any further during the remainder of that session. But Johnson's budget presentation did reflect a several billion dollar reduction over the prior budget, which was responsive to the arguments that you bring about a tax reduction in the midst of an increasing deficit. So that was a major argument.

G: Was Wilbur Mills the primary exponent of this?

O: Yes. Whether he was initially or not, I don't know, but he certainly carried the flag.

G: You organized an effort to get prominent businessmen signed on as a committee, a citizens' committee to promote this. I gather both [Henry] Fowler and Luther Hodges were doing the recruiting--

O: That's right, yes.

G: --and that they were having trouble finding distinguished business leaders who were in favor of both the tax cut and the tax reform, that they would favor the tax cut perhaps but not the reform. Let me ask you to elaborate on this idea of developing a citizens' support group and the problems you had.

O: Well, we felt that could be an essential element in this as, first of all, this was not a normal Democratic proposal in terms of the Democratic Party and its posture traditionally. You felt that it should afford some support from the business community, and that there would be leaders in the community who would be in accord with this economic approach. You also recognized that that would probably turn out to be essential in garnering some bipartisan support on the Hill. So it was decided that it was worth a very serious effort, and the expectancy was quite high. You would have a rather impressive roster, blue ribbon, from the business community in support.

The obvious people in the administration to undertake this task would be Luther

Hodges and Joe Fowler, and they proceeded to undertake it and, to their surprise, ran into some serious difficulty in carrying out the effort. I frankly don't recall the end result or just how successful they were in garnering any prominent names. I think that everybody ran for cover. Nothing has changed; it's still the case when it comes to tax reform.

I can remember having a conversation with Henry Ford on this subject and I don't remember that it was particularly productive. I remember there was a business dinner put together for Wilbur Mills to which I was invited. I was probably the only outsider there. It was hosted by Henry Ford and a few others. There were probably a hundred or so top business executives in America with Wilbur as the honored guest. I remember trying to circulate around that room, though most of these people were unknown to me, and trying to get acquainted. I suppose I did contemplate the possibility that we might find an occasional friendly voice there, but I don't recall that there was any success in that regard either.

G: You did win a crucial vote on changing the 4 per cent credit for dividends over fifty dollars to a hundred dollars. Do you recall that vote?

O: I recall it was close. Probably it was a one-vote margin.

G: Yes, I think so. How did you get that [vote]? It was on the committee; it was 13 to 12.

O: I think credit for that vote you give to the chairman. That's where the credit lies. But it's an indication of how difficult that effort was. To have Wilbur coping with a one-vote margin would indicate that he was having serious difficulty himself.

G: The Republicans were launching a campaign of their own for cutting the budget, making speeches. Your paper seemed to indicate that you organized a counter to this with people like Carl Albert and others, talking about the hazards to national security, et cetera, if the budget was cut.

O: Yes. We put an effort into that. That wasn't the only effort of that nature. It became more and more sophisticated as time went on, getting the leadership and appropriate members into the debate discussion, releasing statements. Rather than take that type of opposition, you began to further refine your legislative activities.

It was a feeding process, however. You couldn't expect the Carl Alberts of this world to close their office door and start dictating a statement or issue a press release. You had to prepare all of that, and you should. They were willing to carry out the task, but you had to make it as easy as you could for them. We sort of moved into it as time went on. You could undertake a lot of things like that after a period of time. In 1961, if you were saying to the fellows up on the Hill, "Here's a statement I'd like to have you make; you could put it into your newsletter or you can put it in the *Congressional Record* or you can issue a press release," you'd have been gambling. This couldn't be something that was going to happen in twenty-four hours. It had to move along and time had to

elapse until you felt reasonably comfortable saying to key people on the Hill, "Will you go an extra mile and make an additional effort?" Or say to them, "Can you be there during floor debate? I'd like to have you have some input on floor debate." Well, heck, you're reaching the point where you've got to be a little careful. You're trying to dictate the guy's life for him. And so you did that inch by inch, and if that inch worked out, then you'd contemplate the next inch. It wasn't crass or callous, it was a matter of a willingness to fully cooperate, and your end of the bargain should be to make it comfortable and easy to cooperate.

So a lot of that, even by that stage, had begun to come into our thought process, and in this instance it's an example of the beginning of that kind of activity. As Bob Hardesty and others can testify to, it became part of the operation that Bob and his cohorts were busy preparing material to be funneled on a daily basis all over the Hill for insertions where you could get it.

G: When do you think that operation really got into high gear?

O: I think in the Johnson period after the 1964 election and the additional elbow room. We had gone around the circle a few times by then and become more sophisticated, more understanding. You've developed relationships. Now a few years have gone by. You just keep expanding. And when we get to the Johnson period we get into detail on a lot of this.

G: But would you say this Albert speech, for example, was one of the first efforts here?

O: Yes.

G: You did have an input there?

O: Yes. And with Albert, if you and I were sitting at that time saying, "Gosh, we'd like to have somebody speak up from our side on this and not let these fellows have this free ride," or "All right, who's the somebody you start with?" I'll tell you, without a moment's hesitancy, you'd say Carl Albert. Carl Albert's position regarding the President and the White House, by that stage, was such that our admiration for him and our recognition that this fellow was a dedicated member of the team had grown tremendously. In addition to that, Carl Albert had a quick mind. I saw so much evidence of that, and so did the President, at an early stage. His grasp of the substance of legislation was remarkable. I have known Carl Albert to spend an evening before floor debate on a major legislative proposal that he's not familiar with substantively and play a key role in that debate the next day on the floor, all because of his desire to be helpful and his desire to aid the program. Others had the desire and the heart, but they didn't have that other dimension. Carl could engage in vigorous debate on a matter that he had really little knowledge of twenty-four hours earlier.

G: Was that fairly uncommon in terms of abilities of--?

- O: Yes, and understandably so. You know, when you think of the amount of legislation in progress, the tremendous number of subjects under discussion, and to have a fellow that had this ability to absorb. What's little known about Carl is that he was a Rhodes scholar. He had been the national oratorical champion. You'd get the finalists to Constitution Hall and this was a national contest involving thousands and thousands of high school students across the country. You got to this oratorical contest, and Carl Albert had won that. You know, there are qualities to this fellow--he was sort of small in stature, as you know, and not a blowhard at all. Very pleasant, rather reserved fellow. And yet there you had a real man. No one did more to help both presidents than Carl Albert.
- G: I would assume that his constituency was relatively conservative.
- O: That's right.
- G: Was it difficult for him to take this stand?
- O: I don't believe so. I don't know as he thought about it in those terms. The love and affection for Carl in his constituency was most impressive. I happened to go out there to dedicate a building at Carl's request, and I must say, I never spent such a day. This man was almost revered by everybody I met. By that stage, the highway in from the airport was the Carl Albert Highway. His voting record would not have adversely affected Carl's political career. That would be my judgment. I did have a very pleasant overnight out there, being presented by Carl at various functions. The people just loved him.
- G: Was this later when you were postmaster general?
- O: Yes.
- G: Well, let's focus on some of the reform aspects of this legislation. First of all, you had oil depletion; there were a number of people in the Congress that favored cutting back on the oil and gas depletion allowance, which was not done or at least to any extent. Can you recall this dilemma?
- O: There were no surprises. Those that favored and those who strongly opposed, you could have head-counted that up front before you ever submitted the message.
- G: Did the administration have a preference here?
- O: No, I think that what it came to was where would the votes land. There would be a give and take in that area and how did you come out with a plus?
- G: Did President Kennedy have any particular view of his own on this depletion?
- O: I don't really recall. I don't believe that he had any overriding view or I would have been

aware of it. It was in an area that could be negotiated.

G: Now, another reform that was proposed was the proposal to limit itemized deductions. Do you recall that? This was one where the administration was defeated on its proposal. Do you remember?

O: Yes. Well, oil depletion would be in that category, too. But it went to what can you do in the context of tax reduction. You're going to reform some aspects of existing deductions to see if you can't increase the revenue side to partially compensate for the revenue loss. The drafters of the legislation would be seeking a laundry list of areas that you might work on and this would be one of them. You were adding to your up-front difficulties if you didn't show some reform, and that reform had to go to an increase in revenue. At no time do I recall we envisioned a package where the reform end of it would compensate for the loss in revenue through tax reduction and you'd come out with a balanced proposal, but you had to show some significant reform aspect. You ran into people saying, "My God, you've got an increased deficit and you're going for a broadly-based tax cut."

G: The administration was criticized for backing away from the reform side of this.

O: That's right.

G: Wilbur Mills was evidently just furious about this. Do you recall how this evolved?

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O: I don't recall in specifics, but I don't want to sound callous. If you back away from reform, it isn't because you were not strongly in support of reform, whether you're talking about oil depletion or any other aspects. Oil depletion could be focused on, and you try to present your case in the best light possible. On this you're going to get into the private interest and pressure group areas. The old story of the art of the possible: how much are you going to have to give in order to come out with a meaningful bill that accomplishes your initial objective to bring about a reduction in taxes to bolster the economy, in the climate of an increased deficit.

So you can't tell up front how much of this you're going to have to negotiate. Wilbur Mills could say, "Listen, let's stop all this. I don't want any other changes in this package, and we're going to go the distance with it." But our experience with Wilbur would be when you got to the committee head count and you weren't there, that bill could drop over the side in a hurry. And then if you couldn't present to Wilbur up front that you had a more than reasonable head count that came close to ensuring passage, you would not have a bill on the floor. Wilbur Mills was noted as a fellow who did not go to floor action until he was assured he was going to succeed. So on the one hand, Wilbur might say, "You're giving away too much." On the other hand, you'd have to weigh that on the scale that was part of the process. Obviously you'd love to have a bill that remained intact and arrive at the President's desk, but that's not the reality of the legislative process.

G: Did you talk with Mills about this aspect and the fact that he was disturbed?

O: My recollection is that I did know he was disturbed. I can tell you it wasn't inordinate, or if he were that disturbed he would have told us where we could go. I remember sitting with Mills on any number of occasions. He was a baseball fanatic. He had game balls encased on the shelves. That was one of his great areas of interest. He was an enigma to many. As Gene Keogh, who was a senior member of the Ways and Means Committee, said to me, "The day is going to come when I'll best Wilbur Mills at some point on some issue," and I said, "You never will, Gene, as long as you spend your weekends in New York and Wilbur spends his in the office, because he'll always know more about what's going on than you do." (Laughter) And that's the kind of a fellow he was.

But I had the experience at a later date with another chairman, and at that point I was in the sports world. I was lobbying on behalf of the National Basketball Association on a bill that had something to do with tax on sports tickets, in the Ways and Means Committee, and I had Wilbur Mills' successor asking me if I could provide him with a head count of his committee so he could determine where his committee stood. Well, that really stunned me, because [in] my years with the Ways and Means Committee and with Wilbur Mills, that wasn't the way it [was done]. You might work a head count on his behalf but, believe me, he would never say he didn't know what was going on. He never allowed that to happen.

I would say that perhaps off that eleven to twelve vote, Wilbur Mills might have concluded that this was subject to a little more negotiation. So I would not place too much credence in the suggestion that Mills was awfully disturbed with us.

G: Some of the administration supporters in the tax reform voiced the complaint that they had gone out on a limb for the administration and had the limb sawed off when the President backed off. Was this a valid argument, do you think?

O: Yes. It was unavoidable from our point of view.

G: Can you tell me where and how the decision was made to cut back on what you could go with on reform?

O: I can't in detail, but you never cut back or negotiated away anything unless you were persuaded that was necessary in order to ensure progress of the overall legislation. That was your motivating factor. You would regret that if in those negotiations you had staunch supporters who had been up front for an entire package, including all the reforms, and found that the limb of the tree, not the tree but the limb might have been sawed off. You had to live with that because ultimately it was an essential step to take in order to ensure success.

G: There was a note in your papers after one vote on the tax bill in which nineteen of the

twenty-one Democratic members of the Texas delegation had voted right, by your standards. The note was to congratulate LBJ and members of the delegation for having shown that degree of unity. Do you recall that effort and what was done?

O: I don't recall the note, but I do recall that that was a case where there was direct LBJ involvement with the Texas delegation.

G: What did he do?

O: He communicated directly or indirectly with the delegation in an effort to garner support. That was an area in which he felt that he could be of some real assistance, and I'm sure that probably motivated my note. We probably never got the Texas delegation to that degree in support of our proposals; I would think that was probably the high-water mark.

G: Do you think it was at all tied in with the oil and gas depletion allowance?

O: I don't think that support would have been there if there had not been some give-back or withdrawal from the oil depletion side of it.

G: But do you recall a specific accommodation?

O: I don't recall.

G: Okay. Anything else on the tax measure?

O: No.

G: Shall we go on to the civil rights bill? This is an area which you've discussed in your book, specifically Charlie Halleck and his role.

O: Well, you see, we've discussed civil rights during our conversations and I think I made reference on a number of occasions to the right time, the right climate. As I recall it, we started that year with a rather modest civil rights proposal that was significantly strengthened in subsequent months. You can relate that to what was occurring out in the countryside. You're beginning to sense that this grassroots activity, this tremendous media attention, the leadership of Martin Luther King and the activity of others were beginning to build. You had Birmingham in there. You had all of this going on. So you started the year by saying, "We're going to take that further leap into the civil rights field." Then you no sooner had gotten that done than you began to note that there was a rapidly growing public interest, and that got you to strengthening your proposal.

But with all of that, you haven't found daylight yet. And you got into a terrible impasse in the House Judiciary Committee. You had Congressman [William] McCulloch of Ohio, the ranking Republican, who to his everlasting credit as far as I'm concerned personally committed to meaningful civil rights legislation and actively engaged in bringing

it about. You were flying in the face of the longtime supporters of civil rights that were on the committee, the liberal Democrats, saying, "Wait a minute, this is in our view not a total civil rights proposal, and we're opposed to it. We're going to have the entire civil rights package as we see it voted on favorably, and we're going to vote against anything short of that." That fell right into the hands of the southern conservative Democrats on the committee, and the Republicans. They could see civil rights legislation of any meaningful kind would be blocked in the committee. You had Manny [Emanuel] Celler, who was chairman of the committee, not enamored with what was construed by the liberals as a fall-back position.

G: He favored a more aggressive--?

O: Naturally, and so did we. That wasn't a point of argument. Now we're getting to the realities of civil rights again. As this unfolded and it became a very heated matter, we went to extremes in our effort.

Our position was if you don't spring a reasonable civil rights proposal out of that committee, where do you go from here? You've spun your wheels again. You've had this rise in temperature in the countryside in this area. You had hoped to benefit from that legislatively. There you have this tripod, if you will: you have the Democratic liberals in opposition; you have the southern Democrats in opposition; you have the Republicans basically in opposition. How do you ever bring this about?

There was one congressman who was listed in that category who came from Chicago, and not questioning his commitment and his motives but questioning his judgment, we resorted to contacting Mayor [Richard] Daley. I called the Mayor and explained that--you're not a congressman from Chicago unless you were designated by Mayor Daley, and if you think otherwise then you're making a horrible mistake; you're going to be an ex-congressman in a hell of a hurry--we needed this man's vote for this compromise proposal. The President was in dire need of it if we were going to move civil rights, and the Mayor assured me that this would be relayed to the member.

The member was a fellow that went home weekends. Another week went by and this is smoldering. He took occasion to go back to Chicago, and it was reported to us that he was on a television program in which he repeated his strong objection to what the administration was doing and he'd have no part in it. I don't recall that he voted with us, and I had no further contact with Daley and I had no knowledge of what transpired, but I noted a little later that the congressman announced he would not be seeking reelection. Whether that could be attributed to his failure to be supportive of his leader in Chicago, I don't know. I rather suspect it had a lot to do with it. But in any event, that's an example of just what we were faced with. Finally--

G: But let me ask you, do you remember his name? Was it [William] Dawson?

O: No, no. I don't remember his name. If I check the record, I'll find his name and if I check



the voting record, I'll have his name quickly. I'm not reluctant regarding his name; it's eluding me at the moment, but my recollection is it was an Italian name. [Roland Libonati]

Then it came to the point where Bobby Kennedy, Nick Katzenbach and everybody else involved, everybody is pounding doors and becoming awfully frustrated and we can't seem to get over this hurdle. McCulloch is being cooperative and so is Manny Celler. How do you get a majority vote out of the committee? Clearly you had to find some Republican support to go along with the moderate Democrats and overcome the handful of liberal Democrats. How could you piece this together? You needed several votes.

The President and I discussed this. Our decision was to have the President contact Charlie Halleck. Now, Charlie Halleck was the minority leader; he was a conservative Republican. He was a worthy adversary. He was an aggressive, hard-hitting adversary. He and I had a pleasant personal relationship, but that had not deterred Charlie from opposing us at every turn of the road with a great deal of glee. Charlie had a nickname for me: O'Toole. To this day I've never known how that came about. We'd have little side bets supposedly, of a quarter or something, which were never paid off anyway. Charlie would say, "Well, this bill is coming up tomorrow. I've got you this time, O'Toole." And I'd say, "Well, Charlie, I'll make a bet with you that we'll beat you by ten," or something like that. Or "We'll get together after the vote and have a drink." "Okay, fine." Well, we'd beat him. I don't think we ever lost to him. Maybe there was one occasion. And Charlie would just come back for more, however, so we'd have to have the drink. Well, I had no interest in having a drink in the recess of the Capitol, but I'm not about to suggest to Charlie I'm not interested, so in I'd go. And Charlie would pour the drinks, a very heavy drink, and I'd always get into a chair where I could put the drink down behind the chair and forget it existed, and we'd have a conversation about the activities of the day and then we'd handshake and say, "Well, there'll be another time, and I'll get you the next time." Well, that was the background.

There certainly was not anything I could look to in terms of potential support from Halleck on civil rights. But we have no alternative. There's nothing left. We've exhausted every possibility. So the President called Charlie, and he put it to him pleasantly. He said, "I need your help, need your support, and I wonder if you could see your way clear to talk to some of your colleagues on the committee and give us a hand on this." To my surprise and the President's, Charlie responded very well and said that he needed a little time and he would check the members of the committee and see if he couldn't persuade some of his Republican colleagues to join us. He even set up a time frame, "I'll get back to you by noon." Maybe it was noon the next day, maybe noon two days later, I forget, but I remember there was a deadline of noon. Well, I don't think we jumped up and down with joy, but that was a modicum of progress. Charlie at least had told us whether he would really do it or not. Who knew, but he told us he was going to make an effort to help us in this instance.

The deadline came and I was in the Oval Office with the President and no call from

Charlie. We let the deadline go by and we were really on edge. It went by probably a half an hour to an hour, and finally we were looking at each other and what are you going to do? You might as well place the call to Charlie. And so he did. And Charlie apologized first for not getting back by the appointed time but said he had been delayed in being able to make his contacts, but he could now advise us that several members of the committee had seen it his way and would help vote the bill out. Well, we were just amazed. I made reference to it in my book because I thought it really belonged there. The Charlie Halleck I knew over those years I always recall in that context. That to me compensated for just about everything else that he might have done in opposition to us, which he did rather unsuccessfully anyway so we were never embittered by it. And it was voted out in committee.

G: What led you to seek out Halleck to begin with?

O: Desperation. Absolute desperation. You've done everything--everybody was involved, the department, the White House, and God knows who else, civil rights leaders, you name them. Everybody involved had been on this case, and you can't put the votes together. I will say, undertaking a presidential call to Halleck on this subject under those circumstances was not motivated by any feeling on our part that we were going to have any success; it was in desperation. What else is there that we could conceivably do that we haven't done? And that's what motivated the call. The bill was reported, and I say to this day that was the moment when you could say, "You're going to have enacted into law in this nation meaningful civil rights legislation. It's now unstoppable."

There was the feeling that it never could emanate from the House anyway, that someday maybe you could convert Ev Dirksen to civil rights and that you could get some kind of movement in the Senate. Somehow this would be worked out in a different direction. But once the House committee had acted, the record had been established, and the road was forward and it was just then a matter of how long a trip you had. But there was no going back.

(Interruption)

G: Okay, we're on the civil rights bill. Richard Bolling introduced a discharge motion which was criticized as a political move since there was an agreement, apparently [between] the Democratic leadership and the White House, to furnish enough GOP votes. What do you recall about that discharge?

O: Well, we didn't favor it either.

G: Why do you think Bolling did that?

O: I don't know. Bolling was a very active member, was looked to by liberals for leadership, and he was probably responding to his own constituency. But it was not a move that we favored. In fact, it was of concern to us, because rightly, McCulloch and Halleck and

some of those people could say, "Well, what's going on? Now you're making a partisan issue out of this when you wouldn't have a bill if it hadn't been for us. We understood that this bipartisanship that was shown in the committee would carry on through the process." All of that was valid. I don't remember having any conversation with Bolling. I may have, but I do know that that was a subject of discussion in the White House and that we were concerned about it. I remember specifically McCulloch reassuring him, telling him that we were not party to it.

G: The motion failed, as I recall.

O: Yes. That had to be a little bit of showbiz anyway, because at best discharge petitions, as we found out, are extremely difficult. I can't believe that a knowledgeable fellow like Dick Bolling would have any feeling that he could do this and have a success. So it had to be a part of establishing a record of some sort. It didn't make any political sense or legislative sense in our terms.

G: You also had the dilemma of whether to tie the public accommodations section to the Fourteenth Amendment or to the interstate commerce clause. Do you recall the arguments here?

O: No, I really don't. I recall the problem and, as you say, the dilemma, but I don't recall the proceedings attendant to it.

G: It seems that your Republican allies favored one approach and the Justice Department favored the other, I guess the commerce clause.

O: Well, the committee voted it out anyway, with the commerce clause, and that was a close vote, too.

G: Okay. The liberal Republicans attempted to force a vote by bringing it up on the Calendar Wednesday--do you recall that?--in order to get the Democrats on record I guess for a vote. Albert adjourned the House to block that effort.

O: I do recall, now that you've jogged my memory, that occurred, but there again, that's a little bit in the category of the discharge petition. You know, there's a little gamesmanship being played. That procedure, that Wednesday procedure, was doomed to failure from the outset and those that were participants knew that. Carl Albert had a simple procedure available to him and that was that. So I don't think that was of any moment to us.

G: Okay. Now, in the Senate the public accommodations measure was referred to the Commerce Committee rather than the Judiciary Committee. Do you recall that?

O: I recall its referral. How that came about I don't recall.

G: How much discretion was there in terms of what committee a bill, particularly a

controversial bill, went to?

O: Well, you go to leadership again. Some of those decisions were beyond our control, our significant input. Oftentimes they had to do with committee chairmen; they had to do with members of committees, they had to do with the leadership. Unless it was going to cause undue harm, it was more jurisdictional, more of an internal matter you'd leave alone.

G: Okay, let's look at some of the related events that you've outlined as impacting on the expansion of the legislation and the focus of the legislation. You had the confrontation with George Wallace at the University of Alabama. Were you with President Kennedy at any time during this phase and recall any of his own deliberations on how to deal with that?

O: I recall being with him, but I don't have any recollection of anything specific. Not being with him through the whole course of it, but being involved in the sense of being present during some aspects. I don't have any specific recollection beyond that frankly. Obviously I recall the occurrence, but I don't recall anything that would add to the record.

G: Okay, how about the developments in Birmingham?

O: Well, that was really a Justice Department area of responsibility and it was vigorously pursued. There was significant presence and immediate action. The record was being established that Bobby and his associates were going to act as decisively as they could in matters of this nature and everyone should understand it.

G: You've mentioned how some of these events helped shape the legislation. Let me ask you if they helped shape the President's own attitudes about what was necessary.

O: To some extent unspoken but reflected in the President's actions is a sensitivity to events as they developed in terms of adding a dimension to the possibilities of enacting legislation. How much evidence did we have that this was enhancing legislative progress? You're dealing with a subject that has gotten a maximum degree of public attention, and when that occurs it should mesh.

This was an added dimension that was not anticipated at the beginning of 1963. It certainly had to enhance the possibilities. As you go back over the record of 1963 on the House side, you have to conclude that it may have enhanced but sure as the devil it underscored the difficulties you had prior to January of 1963 and the impossibility of getting anywhere, which was what our view was in 1961 and 1962. We certainly at the outset of 1963 hadn't taken the total plunge. We were trying to move in the right direction. Then as events unfolded, we became more and more aggressive.

G: Do you feel that President Kennedy was shocked by the violence that took place that spring and summer?

O: Well, I know he was--I guess shocked would be fair, very much disturbed--because he made reference to this in conversations, his deep concern about it in human terms and as president. He was deeply concerned. By the same token, he and those around him recognized that it might in a strange way be affording an opportunity. But it was very disturbing and it was becoming more and more disturbing because it was getting out of hand. It was bringing about a national crisis. Obviously you couldn't sit around and tolerate this. You had to take whatever action was available as aggressively as you could.

As far as Bobby was concerned through that period, I doubt that he devoted his attention to much of anything else. His strong right arms in this area--well, there were really two: Nick Katzenbach and Burke Marshall. All their time and attention was devoted to this mounting problem because confrontations were beginning to crop up regularly. I don't think at that time we were considering this as in the waning moments of a longtime struggle. It sort of had some of the elements of war to it.

G: In August you had the March on Washington. How did the President react to this?

O: Well, there again, as that March on Washington unfolded, it was an extremely dramatic presentation of concerns in an historic manner. That was the general attitude in the White House. This was an extremely important event in terms of American history.

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G: The March on Washington and a number of the other events that summer reflected the leadership of Martin Luther King. How did President Kennedy regard King?

O: He greatly admired him. Bobby articulated his admiration of King more than Kennedy did, and that doesn't mean they didn't share equally this admiration. But he saw in King a true leader. I think the effort that Bobby made on the President's behalf is a clear indication in what regard they held him. There were those trying to undermine King during that period and later, up to his assassination. There were all kinds of rumors and stories around Washington regarding King. There was a major effort to try to destroy him. I'm not talking about killing him, but destroy him, destroy his reputation.

G: Was this the FBI primarily?

O: Yes. It seemed to emanate from the FBI. I never got deeply into that area. It didn't involve me directly, but I would pick it up and you'd find people on the Hill suggesting that they had been made privy to information the FBI had regarding King. The White House itself supposedly had been made privy to information regarding King. That information could have only been from one general source. To some extent, I think it probably was encouraged in some quarters on the Hill.

G: But since the FBI was at least nominally under the control of the Justice Department, couldn't the Attorney General have done something to eliminate this?

O: I don't know how much evidence the Attorney General had of actual FBI involvement. Leaks can be, as we all know, carried out in ways that elude securing evidence. I don't really know what Bobby, what discussions he had with [J. Edgar] Hoover or what discussions Hoover had with the President. On rare occasions Hoover would ask to visit the President. Was it on that subject or just a courtesy call, I don't know.

We have to remember, going way back before this period, Hoover's position in the FBI, which I was aware of back in the late forties. I was with a freshman congressman, Foster Furcolo, and we did the usual thing. You have this opportunity to do a little film for back home use in reporting to your constituents, and you want to get some dignitaries on with you to show that you are a person of influence. The first name on the list that we developed was J. Edgar Hoover, and J. Edgar Hoover was never reluctant to come to that recording studio on the Hill and do these bits for member after member, and every member wanted them. That kept improving his situation with the Congress. He was in one unique, unusual position. When he had reached retirement age, I never had in my mind the thought that some president was not going to announce that he was prepared to reappoint him. He had gotten beyond the norm; it was really a dangerous situation in a lot of ways, because he was beyond authority even from the White House. He was in a position that was downright scary.

I probably met the man six times in my life. I had never had any discussions with him of any substance. As a young guy, I remember being present at that taping and being awfully impressed with him, and I think that was a view that most people had regarding this hero that was in every Crackerjack box. He was in a position to gain a great deal of information about a great number of people. Whether he ever utilized that information in his interests, which he was accused of often, I don't know.

But going back to Martin Luther King, I guess that it's pretty clear. I always hesitate to report matters on the basis of learning third- or fourth-hand without evidence, then recounting it as fact, when I really don't know whether or not it's fact. I guess in this instance with Hoover re Martin Luther King, there's enough evidence on the record of FBI interest in King to indicate that Hoover was making a particular effort in that area.

G: Did President Kennedy ever explore the possibility, do you think, of trying to retire Hoover or put him out to pasture?

O: I'm not aware of it. No, I never had any conversation with him about Hoover.

G: How about Robert Kennedy? Did he ever--?

O: I never had any conversation with him either. I just don't know.

G: Why do you think LBJ didn't share President Kennedy's admiration of King?

- O: I don't know that either. I'll have to say that I was not directly aware of the fact that he didn't share his admiration. It never came into a conversation I had with LBJ as vice president or president. But there was some undercurrent there I never tried to explore.
- G: It seems almost as if LBJ considered King a rival or a threat, whereas Kennedy did not? Is that possible?
- O: I don't know how it could be possible. It seems to me there would be no reason because of my conviction regarding LBJ's civil rights commitments. I can't conceive of a reason why he would not look favorably upon King. After all, he was engaged in what amounted to a peaceful revolution. I think some of King's activities helped contain other possible activities that could have been very disruptive. And his constant plea for peaceful actions within the law certainly was helpful. Something is eluding me, because I really don't know how Johnson could have envisioned that King was a rival; it's beyond me.
- G: Let me turn it around the other way. Did you see any evidence of an alliance or friendship between Johnson and King?
- O: No, but it could exist and I wouldn't be aware of it. I know that I never had any discussion with Johnson regarding King that I can recall. I never, therefore, had any recognition that Johnson might not feel kindly disposed toward him or supportive of him. I'd have no reason to think otherwise. And if indeed that were the case, I just honestly can't figure out why. Obviously, if he did feel that way there were reasons. What could they be? Just speculating, I assume Johnson was privy to whatever information Hoover had regarding King. Maybe that turned him off on King. I don't know; I have no idea.
- G: I wonder if it could have at all been a generational thing and the fact that Johnson was quite a bit older than King, whereas Kennedy was younger.
- O: I don't know that. But after all, there was a great change on the part of all of us. I mean, Negroes referred to themselves as Negroes in those days. There was a rapid change and there was a great sensitivity to how you reacted to black people, how you communicated with them. I've lived through it all; I'm old enough to have lived through it from the beginning. There was a matter of adjustment, and there was a sensitivity on the part of whites, a great sensitivity. Just how do you relate, how do you avoid any misunderstanding, and what is proper use of the language to the point of the proper handshake? I wound up with an organization that was over 70 per cent black. I would never have called a Negro a black as a young fellow; I would probably feel that if it ever came to my mind that was an insult. So I really didn't know just what the rules were, and you had to learn as you went along. So that could be a generation gap. And if you refer to some of the other leaders of the civil rights movement, some of those were not people that I felt comfortable with.
- G: Who, for example?

O: I think the group in which--I can't even think of the name of it--the fellow walked around in overalls and disrupted my meetings in Miami and was belligerent and boisterous. He and a couple of others like him were floating around the country and I was not at all impressed with them. In fact, as John McCormack said, my position was I held them in a minimum of high regard.

King was different totally. King exuded leadership. He could articulate his positions. He was a responsible leader. King could have lit a match any day and you would have had a national conflagration. He chose to go in the other direction and be very tolerant and even-handed as he pursued his course. I never knew King intimately. I may have shaken hands with him twice in my life, but I had to be impressed. I think part of being impressed with King was my feeling toward some of the others who were traveling a different road entirely.

G: Do you think that King's opposition to the war in Vietnam was perhaps a factor in estrangement from LBJ?

O: That would make sense because obviously, where the President sat, opposition to the war in Vietnam could disturb you and cause you to be damn mad. I for one did not appreciate King's view on the war in Vietnam. It had nothing to do with Johnson. I resented it. As long as King confined himself to the area that I accepted as his area of leadership, I was supportive. But when he decided to move into a so-called peace movement and articulate that aspect of his views, he lost me. But that was personal; I had a son in Vietnam and I wasn't about to accept all this garbage, whether it was Jane Fonda or King or whoever.

Of course, there was a time frame here. If that attitude toward King existed before Johnson was president, that's another thing, if it was a longtime position he had. But if it was evidenced during the period of Vietnam and King's position on the war, then it does make sense.

G: Looking over that civil rights bill that was ultimately passed the following year as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, I want you to contrast President Kennedy's approach to the legislation with President Johnson's. I'm going to load the question to a certain extent, because it seems, particularly from looking at that Sorensen phone call, that Johnson was much more inclined to press it in terms of a moral issue, whereas President Kennedy would advocate it in terms of a legal or an issue of justice. Do you think this is an accurate reading of the difference?

O: I think President Kennedy would have had no difficulty pursuing civil rights legislation as a moral issue, as long as he never overlooked the reality that he was not going to get legislation at that time under those circumstances. There's a certain judgment that goes into this, but I think with Lyndon Johnson and his suggestions on pressing the issue come hell or high water, do or die, that's all well and good if you're trying to reinforce your position with the public generally in a political context, but if you are trying to envision just how you bring about legislation, I would argue with Johnson in that regard. And I



would say that I don't think anyone can lay claim to having stronger views than anyone else in this area and this administration.

It's a matter of how you accomplish it. How often have you seen the parades and the waving of the banners and chuckle and say, well, that's nice, and there'll be a lot of media attention and we'll see it on the evening news, but hell, it doesn't mean anything. It's not going to get the job done. I think his view was that if you pressed it as a moral issue and you were aggressively out front, that could lead you to legislative success too, so you'd have the best of both worlds. I would like to have shared that view. That's the natural course to follow, but I think if you have a responsibility to do everything that you can to bring about a law of the land in a meaningful sense, you have to carefully carve out that course and not be overly antagonistic to those that you hope someday may see it your way. And that's difficult. That's not the easy road, that's the tough road.

It's all right to think back and conclude what was best to do and I'm not questioning his motives, but I would say to him, "Mr. Vice President, realistically I don't think that's going to get us where we want to go. In fact, it may delay where we want to go and may be counterproductive."

- G: Did you notice any difference in tenor from one president to the next on this bill? Was Johnson more inclined in his own mind to see it as a moral cause rather than an issue of justice or law?
- O: I would have to lean to concluding that he saw it more as a moral cause than just a law. I think he saw it as a crusade. It had the elements of a crusade, this great battle being waged for right and for justice. There's nothing wrong with that. And I don't think that was a point of view he adopted after he was president. There were clear indications from this memo that it was a view he had early on, that he was disturbed the administration wasn't reacting accordingly and that the President was not out there waving the banner in that crusade. I don't think it was political motivation. You could debate the pros and cons of this ad infinitum, but on the one hand I wouldn't for a moment question, and I'll repeat it again because I had all the evidence any man ever could have, I could never question Lyndon Johnson's commitment in this area. He was wedded to this cause. But by the same token, I would also not question Kennedy's commitment to this cause and that he was wedded to it.
- G: My question really addresses more what it says about each person's frame of reference rather than their goals or their commitment. It's basically their perspective and how they're thinking on this issue.
- O: I don't think I'm equipped to make a judgment on that point. Regardless of how the issue was approached or how it was handled, I don't think there would be an iota of difference in terms of the bottom line between the two men in that regard. I really don't.

You know, it's a little like Jack and Bobby. If you were talking about this issue

when you met with Bobby, you'd find Bobby bordering on the violent. He would be exercised and committed and you'd say, "That guy, he's going to go through ten walls to be sure this is finally accomplished." You would sit with Jack Kennedy and it wouldn't be the same conversation at all. Jack Kennedy would be far less emotional. But there wouldn't be one iota of difference between the two of them in terms of their attitudes and views and commitments. I think it's the personality of people more than anything else.

Kennedy was the kind of a guy--it took me a long time to realize how much physical suffering he went through, with all my intimate acquaintance with him over fourteen years. In my early days with him when he was a candidate for the Senate, I would see him on crutches and then I would see him without the crutches. I would see him in a hotel room, when we were in the midst of a day of many events, obviously not feeling well, and I'd say nothing and he'd say nothing. He never had a conversation with me about physical problems other than on one occasion, and I never forgot it. Way back when he was in the Senate as a freshman and that back problem continued to cause him great difficulty, I wasn't aware of it until we had lunch in the Ritz Hotel in Boston--I believe it was probably a Saturday--when he told me that he was leaving after lunch for New York and he was going to be operated on against the view of his family, his father and others, who felt that he should not undertake anything as dangerous as that. He had been advised by the Lahey Clinic not to be operated on, but he wasn't going to live with it. Well, heck, I'm sitting there with my mouth hanging open, because I don't believe the extent of his problem had totally penetrated with me. I was taken aback that this man was saying to me, "This is it." I was just shook, and we parted and it was that following night on national news. It was announced that he had been operated on and had been given the last rites of the Catholic church. And off my conversation with him at lunch, I sat there thinking, "This is it."

It took months to overcome that and go about his business. I mean, a fellow living that way is apt to be different. He wasn't a fellow that complained. I realized that over those earlier years I must have imposed upon him all kinds of activities, i.e., standing in receiving lines for hours, where he must have been suffering inordinately, and yet I didn't have any evidence of it, nor did he ever communicate it with me. And what had happened in the hotel in Springfield was that he caved in and I had to get a doctor to fit him for crutches. I made an announcement to the press that he was called back to Washington and canceled the rest of the schedule. That's when it began to hit me.

Well, with all of that you have a fellow who comes from a little different direction than we do. Lyndon Johnson's nature was to be out front, articulate, and espouse in what was a colorful manner at length at times. You'd never have a conversation with Kennedy to the extent and length that you'd have with Lyndon Johnson on any subject. It wasn't his nature.

When I was doing my book I couldn't understand why I could put together a long list of Lyndon Johnson anecdotes and stories, a man with whom I had a shorter association with than I had had with Jack Kennedy, and the Jack Kennedy side of the

column was almost nonexistent. How could I know Kennedy fourteen years and have difficulty giving a balanced anecdotal aspect to this book? Well, it finally hit me that Kennedy was a great listener; he loved stories and he loved anecdotes. He loved to laugh. But he did the listening. That's why a Dave Powers was repeatedly asked to tell those stories, because even though Kennedy had heard them a hundred times he'd laugh again. But Johnson was the storyteller, Kennedy was the listener.

And you get to civil rights and whether it's a moral issue. You can't avoid the very different personalities. I don't think that you necessarily come to the conclusion that they had different points of view.

In the activities of these two very different people, we've reflected on the fact that Johnson would retain grudges, while Kennedy would do his thing with whatever grudge he had and then go on. Johnson rather enjoyed confrontation, but in a much different way than Kennedy. Kennedy enjoyed confrontation because he loved the battle. Whether it was a physical battle or a mental battle he wanted to wage it. And I have all kinds of evidence of that. I don't think Lyndon Johnson would approach a battle in that sense. He might try to persuade the Houston ministers; he might seize the opportunity to meet with them and hopefully turn them around. Kennedy would approach the Houston ministers in the sense of defiance saying, "Hell, I don't care if it's the Houston ministers, the Texas delegation, or whoever. Let me at them." And he would not dwell on the result; the action he was engaged in was satisfying.

G: Whereas Johnson might dwell on the outcome?

O: Yes. So what are you going to do with these two guys? We're trying to evaluate, analyze, try to come up with scraps of evidence or perceptions that might give us a lead, and all we have in common really is the two fellows held the same office.

G: When you were discussing how Kennedy repressed, in this case, physical pain, I think what a contrast it must have been to LBJ, who seemed to just wear his heart on his sleeve and be pouring out all of his problems.

O: Yes.

G: Is this the case? Was it a--?

O: Never with LBJ, and believe me, I never felt uncomfortable; I never felt uptight, I never felt in any kind of awe. I enjoyed him and I felt that as far as I was concerned we communicated well. I admired him particularly for his tenacious efforts in the legislative area, and the extent he would go to get across to you that he was supportive of you and that you could depend upon him. He wanted to be a participant and to share your problems as he expected you to share his. That wasn't Jack Kennedy.

G: How so?

O: Well, Jack Kennedy wasn't that kind of a fellow. I can imagine if I had called Jack Kennedy at three o'clock in the morning, as Johnson suggested to me. If I had done it Johnson would have thought nothing of it. It would have appalled me if I had contemplated doing something like that. Nevertheless, Johnson gently reprimanded me for delaying until seven-thirty to give him bad news. I should have called him so he could have bled with me, as he put it. (Laughter) Now, with Jack Kennedy, the greatest emotion I probably saw him [express] in the legislative context was the day I told him we lost the minimum wage bill, when he took the letter opener and stuck it like a dagger into the top of the desk. But that was highly unusual for Kennedy.

Now, the Kennedy I knew may not have necessarily been the Kennedy that his social acquaintances knew. You have to remember that I was comfortable with my relationship with him--what I would have to term a professional relationship. There was no question that we had common interests and we shared common views and he knew the regard I held for him, because I wouldn't have made the sacrifices I did personally on his behalf if I didn't feel strongly. The other side of that coin is that he respected me and what I was engaged in or he would not have indirectly taken on his father, as I recounted one time, who objected to what I was doing. He wound up supporting me rather than caving in to his father.

G: Well, let me ask you to go into this one area a little bit more. Who were his social friends?

O: His intimate friends were fellows he had been in the service with. Red [Paul] Fay was one of them, and there were two or three others that I met. Red Fay I met often because he became involved in the political scene. The other friends were--the longest and closest was Lem [Lemoyne] Billings. I say the longest and closest because Lem Billings was ever present, and it was obvious that Jack enjoyed his companionship. There were a handful of others that went back to Harvard and his days at Choate. I believe Lem went to Choate, and there was a fellow from my home town I believe probably went that far back with him by the name of Reed [?]. They were truly longtime friends.

Now, there's nothing unusual about that. Beyond that, you're talking about friends sought out by him who went to the PT boat, a little bit of Choate, and a touch of Harvard. But the PT boat was very important. I think that's what occurs, because it's interesting in my own son, who went to Harvard and was in the service, that the friends that he's retained over the years are apt to be the fellows he had an intimate association with in the service rather than the fellows he went to school with. Maybe the experiences you share are more deep and abiding than perhaps the experiences of school.

I would be invited, my wife and I, to the compound from time to time. We visited there quite often, down at Hyannis. We would visit with Jack and Jackie after they were married, on occasion, and stay at their home in Washington. But I was not on the regular list of invitees for various social events.

G: You mean at social events at the White House or before this?

O: No. The social events at the White House were never social events; they were all business. We went to more White House black tie dinners than you could shake a stick at until we were so sick of them that we'd be the first ones out, down the back stairway through the rear entrance of the White House. I remember one night running into one of the cabinet members dashing with his wife--we bumped into each other. We had to laugh because we were both making a hasty exit before the entertainment of the evening.

So, no, I'm talking events that would take place in McLean with Bobby and Ethel or things of that nature. That's the way it was and that's the way I liked it. I'll have to say that I didn't find much in common with some of those peripheral social acquaintances he had. The fellows that I met--the PT boat fellows and Lem and a couple of the others--I liked and I could readily understand why they were close friends. But when you got beyond that, whether somebody was being dumped into the swimming pool was of no interest to me and I would much prefer not to be involved.

G: Was Johnson different in this regard in terms of--?

O: I didn't have the longtime association with Johnson that I had with Kennedy and yet Johnson and Lady Bird reached out to Elva and me in a variety of ways.

Tape 3 of 3, Side 2

G: You say you were included in activities that you--

O: It was a relaxed atmosphere. I was in the living quarters with the Johnsons very often. I did obviously spend a lot of time with the President because he was a late night guy, in the office or over in the living quarters. Because of his keen interest in the activities I was engaged in, I would be with him. Mrs. Johnson was very thoughtful and kind to Elva; that was her nature. She would make a point of having contact with cabinet wives and staff wives. You shared their excitement at the weddings of their daughters. The same with Kennedy weddings, but I'm talking about a fellow that I didn't know nearly as well as I knew Jack Kennedy. So the whole thing was a very pleasant experience that Elva and I treasure. Elva, also, always enjoyed Jackie's company.

But on the Johnson side the difference is that I was not a long- time acquaintance; I was not an intimate, yet you felt totally comfort- able. There was a sensitivity to staff people and a recognition of what they were engaged in. When I would sit around with him up in the Mansion, I didn't experience the high emotional levels that were attributed to him, flaring up at staff people, that were recounted often. After Dallas you had a Johnson staff and a Kennedy staff side by side in the same building. They could never be totally melded, and in fact there was an excessive number of employees, too. But I don't recall that Johnson could flare up and strike out.

- G: Was this something Kennedy was less inclined to do, do you think?
- O: Yes. I don't think perhaps you could find two more different people, the more we talk about this.
- G: Was Johnson more likely to involve himself in your personal life than Kennedy was, would you say?
- O: No.
- G: I'm thinking of all sorts of things ranging from your wife's activities to maybe in one case helping select a tie or showing you how to part your hair or something.
- O: No, there wasn't that closeness. I had to adjust myself to Lyndon Johnson. One of the early occasions--I never forgot because it was so unusual--was a dinner at his home where there were Jack Brooks, Bobby Baker, their wives, Elva and I, and the Johnsons. It was a cold night and I remember it started by Johnson feeling that we should see the house and the grounds. I recall he put floodlights on, and the grounds were barren and it was cold. We took a stroll around the grounds and he had music coming from the trees. That didn't end the tour, for we went through the house, through every room in the house, including every bedroom. As this went on, he pulled out a sport shirt with LBJ on it, and he said, "Now I want you to have this." Then he had a bottle of perfume for Elva and then he had something else from another room. I remember that whatever collection we had of these gifts, I put them on the table in the foyer and I felt uncomfortable about them.

The evening progressed and it came time to leave, and he caught me. He was right, I didn't admit it, but the collection was all on the table. I didn't make an attempt to pick it up. He said, "Well, aren't you going to--?" "Oh," I said. He said, "No, you were going to walk out without them. You just were going to avoid"--or something to that effect. The son of a gun had me figured. So I hauled off and brought them home.

(Laughter)

Then I guess it was after Christmas--yes, Christmas of 1963--I forget who said, "The President wants you to have this as a little memento of Christmas." There was a beautifully wrapped box. It was a wristwatch, engraved. It was very nice.

Then there was another occasion when I was at the Ranch and the President said something about the deer. Well, I had been able to avoid entrapment in hunting deer, and I was congratulating myself because some others who had no interest in hunting deer had been entrapped. I think he realized that he had not gotten me out on the early morning hunt, but I had to see the deer. He's driving the car and you go out bouncing over the fields. Finally we pull up and there are some deer in a little distance, and he said, "Now, give me a cigarette." So I gave him a cigarette and he opened his window a little bit, stuck the cigarette out and the deer came over and swallowed the cigarette. So we kept

putting the cigarettes out and the deer just loved the cigarettes. You're sitting with him out there, well, I mean, who have I known in life that I'd. . . .

This sort of thing was not that unusual, like the swimming pool incident, he and I debating some issue, and [Dan] Rostenkowski to his dying day will never forget the two of us standing there belly to belly discussing something intensely. Well, hell, forget the fact that by that time you had become--I hadn't, I had never known anybody like that among my friends and acquaintances. (Laughter) But you had to take it in the spirit in which you assumed it was meant. And I think the leavening factor in all that was Lady Bird. She was always so pleasant and so interested in things and so apparently happy to see you. It was just a very comfortable situation.

G: Was he more inclined toward gift giving than Jack Kennedy, do you think?

O: Oh, yes. In our early days there were a couple of occasions where Jack and I exchanged Christmas gifts, neckties or something, but that wasn't the norm. Nor did you even think about it in those terms. You might send each other a Christmas card and that was the end of that. It was a different atmosphere and a different approach.

G: Do you think that regional differences explain part of this, Johnson being from the South or the Southwest and Kennedy from New England?

O: Yes. I wouldn't be able to document it because I come from the same region that Kennedy came from, but I think that's part of it. I think there was a basic lifestyle that was different, too, and background, in terms of here's a fellow that had worked for the NYA. Jack Kennedy never worked for the NYA or anyone else. The Johnson family wasn't as large a family as the Kennedy family, spread out over the landscape. I never knew Johnson's parents, but I did know Kennedy's parents, their family activities and their approach to things. I suppose that if both of them hadn't been president you wouldn't think anything of it. But when you get a query about these two fellows to relate the two of them--your observations of them in the same position--it does bring you to the contrast.

Another thing--and I think he more than half meant it--we had occasions where Johnson was pretty much persuaded that we had pulled a lot of fast dealings--we, the Kennedy people--in terms of the nomination in 1960. He had assurances from his staff people traveling the country, delegate counts and the rest, and he found that they were completely out of whack. Where he had delegate commitments, somehow we had gotten with those people and gotten the delegates away from him. And it was always in the context of admiration, despite my repeated assurances to him that I would be glad to claim that if it were accurate, but it wasn't, and we just weren't that skillful or politically astute.

Lady Bird one night was reading *The Last Hurrah*, and she mentioned it to me that she was in the midst of the book. She said, "I've got to ask you. This is a novel, but I'm told that it's an accurate portrayal of politics with a significant Irish tinge to it in that era in Boston. Is that true?" I said, "That is factual. That's not a novel." She was disbe-

lieving; she said, "Gosh, that's a bunch of colorful characters and all this stuff that went on." She said she was enjoying the book.

Johnson was in awe of Dick Daley. Jack Kennedy could understand Dick Daley; they had a relationship. It was a natural involvement in the political context. Daley could deliver; Daley expected in return to be duly recognized. But with Lyndon Johnson, a telephone call from Dick Daley was about as important a call as he could receive. He would be concerned about Dick Daley's area of interest at the moment and that Dick Daley would be pleased and satisfied. Johnson would be sure that whatever request was made was carried out. He said to me, "You know, I'm persuaded that you Irish politicians, you and Daley and those fellows, get together and you have one of those secret societies. You have one of these clubs somewhere and you meet regularly." (Laughter) "You've got this sort of communication network," and I'm sitting there laughing and I think he was half serious! He thought there was some additional element in the fact that we shared a common heritage that brought us into some kind of a clandestine organization. I thought it was awfully funny. I assume he was pulling my leg, but I think that there was a little touch of, I don't know, "there's something strange about you people, there's something I can't quite grasp."

- G: But do you think that ethnic heritage or political experience enabled Kennedy to, for example, understand Daley better than Johnson did?
- O: I think it's probably not so much understand him but know how to handle him.
- G: He'd been dealing with Irish politicians all his life.
- O: The difference with Daley--most Irish politicians would be a little more like Johnson, outgoing, story-telling, back-slapping--was that Daley was a Buddha. You could sit and talk with Daley and his voice level wouldn't alter. The communication would be somewhat limited because he would speak in brief sentences. He could express his position in about three sentences, no more than that necessary. He was a fellow that you looked at not necessarily with awe, but you saw that he was truly a boss, and you'd better believe it.
- G: Was Johnson really one of a kind or were there similar personalities among the senators and congressmen who were from the same region that he was?
- O: I think that some aspects of Johnson would be similar, but I think he was really one of a kind. Now, the average southern senator--I dealt with them and southern congressmen--I found that, running through my dealings with them, uniformly there was a level of--how do I best describe it?--they were always most courteous, always attentive to what you were saying, always ensuring that you were comfortable with them. The fellows that I would know best, in the Northeast, you walk into their office and they might neglect to ask you to sit down. But with a southern representative in the Congress, you were greeted by the staff with the utmost courtesy and pleasantness. You were always brought



to the member without any undue delay. The member would express concern that you were comfortable and did you want to have a cup of coffee. And I think that's probably part of the makeup of the South, not only elected representatives. I enjoy them thoroughly, and to me, in the early days, this was a relatively new experience. I had gotten to know a number of these people in the political context but that was pretty much a rush in and out sort of thing. You didn't get to know them in the sense of having a lengthy conversation or a cup of coffee with them.

Johnson had all of those elements, but along with it he had this style that certainly was not typical of southern members. He was one of a kind. He was a very unique guy. But the courtesies and the extension of effort to be sure that "have you had enough to eat?" or "would you like another drink?" or "are you comfortable there?" or "Elva, what would you like to do?" that sort of thing, I think you see much more of it in the South and Southwest than you do where I come from. Now, I'm not suggesting my own kind of people geographically are not courteous and kind and considerate, but it's just a different approach. It's a more relaxed [approach]. This doesn't apply to Johnson necessarily, but I always found it--well, not long ago I was in with Jake Pickle. I hadn't seen Jake in quite a while. Gosh, it's just sort of like old times. You walk in and Jake [says], "Oh, sit over here. Let's have a cup of coffee," and he did some reminiscing and we chatted. He was busy, I knew, and I wasn't trying to delay him but we had just a pleasant half-hour. That's the way they are, even when they were saying no to you. (Laughter)

G: Do you think that the age difference between Johnson and Kennedy was part of the fundamental differences between them? Was Johnson more old-fashioned? He was older than Kennedy.

O: I think there's some of that with all of us. I find that I'm having that experience now. I find that the arrogant wise guy I was during a period of my life I see in others of a comparable age now. Now I'm looking at it from the position of the elder and I'm very tolerant of it, in fact, without realizing that I'm one of the elders. I've had it happen in the NBA where my own staff was very young. I've always had a young staff over the years and in the NBA particularly. I was building a staff and I was looking for the young, vigorous bright guys that have a sports interest, and so consequently I wound up with a top staff that was different than my predecessor, all young. But this slipped every now and then. Concerning somebody in the league in my age group, every once in a while they'd say, "Oh, Christ, that old so-and-so. What does he know?" or "He's bordering on senility if he hasn't arrived." I'd see one of them look at me and realize, "We forgot the old man was sitting here."

I think every young person has an element of that in him and it's natural. As you get to middle age, you begin to balance it out a little. Then when you get older, you are sensitive to the fact that you've got something to overcome in communicating with someone thirty years younger than you are. Life changes and lifestyles change and points of view change. Everything changes. My God, look at the changes I've seen in my years.

- G: As you moved from Kennedy to Johnson, did you feel like you were now working for someone who had perhaps a more old-fashioned view of the world around him or a less modern view?
- O: I don't think it entered my mind, because my view of the world around me might not necessarily be totally Kennedy's view of the world around him. We came from a different background. The only tie that Kennedy and I would have is a comparable ethnic background. He was a third generation and I am a first generation, so I didn't even think that was comparable.
- G: You don't think the generational difference was a factor in terms of--?
- O: I don't think there was a difference there. Jack Kennedy was in his mid-forties. He and I were only six weeks apart in age. We were contemporaries. That brought us into the White House at, what, forty-one, forty-two?--something like that. How old was Johnson at that time?
- O: Let's see, he was born in 1908.
- O: 1908. God, there was only nine years difference, ten years difference between the two of them.
- G: Was Johnson a less secure individual than Kennedy, do you think?
- O: Probably so. But I think when you say that you have to quickly focus on the position he held, because I found insecurity apparent with Hubert Humphrey re Lyndon Johnson. And I'm not at all sure that that isn't the nature of things with the unique system we have. I'm sure that Lyndon Johnson would often wonder about whether or not Jack Kennedy was happy with him or happy with his performance. Now, under a different set of circumstances would he exhibit that kind of insecurity, I don't know. I think not, because he was, after he joined the Senate, pretty much in a position of being first among equals. But I can bet as we're talking that George Bush every day gives a thought to whether or not Ronnie Reagan is happy with him. Is there anything he did that might not please the President or anything he's going to do that day that might not please the President? I think there's a considerable sensitivity there. With Hubert that was his nature, the kind of fellow he was. He'd say to me, "Do you think the President feels I'm doing a good job? Does the President have any problems with me that you're aware of?" But I'll bet that that would be in the mind of anyone in that position.
- G: Did Johnson seem to have a less cohesive political philosophy than Kennedy? Was he more fluid or more perhaps. . . ?
- O: Johnson's political philosophy, his general political outlook and his views generally would coincide with mine. We used to say in Massachusetts, "You're born a Catholic and a Democrat." I think with Johnson we were both born Democrats, and Kennedy as

well--traditional to the FDR concept and approach to social problems and belief in and commitment to the party. I would consider Johnson and Kennedy in that mold. You exchanged views with Johnson about the NYA and the CCC and Roosevelt and those weren't discussions I had with Jack Kennedy. I could equate with those. After all, I lived through the era of the WPA and I imagine our economic level in life was somewhat comparable. That wasn't the case with Kennedy.

But there are people to this day that are disbelieving when I recount my period with Lyndon Johnson and recount it in the terms I do--what I considered a good working relationship, the way he and his wife treated me and my wife, the enjoyment I derived from the involvement, the effort and the results, the sharing of concerns and sharing of problems in a very warm and outgoing manner. I add it all up, and I'll have to tell you that I have no reason to ever remotely share the views of some regarding Lyndon Johnson who claim they had a long acquaintance with him and were negative regarding him. I don't think that you make judgments on that; you can only make them on your own experience. Now, if I had a limited experience with Lyndon Johnson and he was a casual acquaintance, I'd probably accept a lot of the stories I heard. After eight years of involvement, you certainly can make judgments. You're probably in a far better position to make judgments than a lot of people and it comes out a significant plus. I had this discussion with an old acquaintance--this goes back a few years now--a few years after his departure, and the bitterness had grown in this man, and there was no discernible reason. It just eluded me.

G: This was a Kennedy man?

O: Yes. We spent an evening on this subject. We didn't wind up in a mean confrontation, but we weren't far from it, because he could not for the life of him accept my evaluation of Lyndon Johnson and my recounting of my experience with him. He wasn't going to accept it, never would, and as I continued to recount he became more and more negative. I'm positive I'm right. And I think it's unfortunate, frankly. My reaction the next day when I told my wife about the prior evening was it depressed me and I felt sorry for him. I thought it was a sad commentary. But I guess Lyndon Johnson had the capacity to elicit strong views pro and con.

G: Others have noted the difference in style between Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

O: Sure. There was a total difference in style. It went to dress; it went to areas of interest, it went to social life, the whole thing. They were completely different. I don't think you probably could find two more different fellows. Kennedy was idolized by many; he was a handsome guy, admired by women to an inordinate degree. He exuded that Harvard look and air, at least what people discerned as a Harvard look and air, and he had an accent that fitted into the pattern. Johnson came from Texas, from a little town, the basic farm belt originally, I guess. A world of difference in style.

End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview V