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WUNIBALD W. SCHNEIDER ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW I

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This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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- (2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.
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Signed by Wunibald Schneider on July 26, 1979

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ACCESSION NUMBER 79-124

INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 21, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: FATHER WUNIBALD W. SCHNEIDER

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

PLACE: St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Stonewall, Texas

Tape 1 of 2

M: Let me identify this tape first of all, so we'll know who we're talking to. This is an interview with Father Wunibald, spelled--?

S: W-U-N-I-B-A-L-D.

M: And your middle initial is W, also.

S: W. W stands for Willibald. That's two German names: Wunibald Willibald.

M: How do you spell Willibald?

S: W-I-L-L-I-B-A-L-D.

M: The last name is Schneider. S-C-H-N-E-I-D-E-R.

S: Yes. Schneider means, of course, in English, tailor.

M: And the date is April 21, 1971. I'm at his lodgings. What do you call this?

S: We call it the parish rectory.

M: Parish rectory.

S: Of St. Francis Xavier Church, Stonewall.

M: Yes, in Stonewall, Texas. It's about two-thirty in the afternoon, and my name is David McComb.

S: Are you Doctor?

M: Yes.

S: Dr. David McComb?

M: Yes, sir. The first thing we need to do is find out something about you and your background; so let me ask you, where were you born, and when, and where'd you get your education?

S: Yes. Well, I was born in 1907, in a place in Bavaria called Pollenfeld.

M: How do you spell that?

S: P-O-L-L-E-N-F-E-L-D, which is in Bavaria. I am one of a family of twelve. Eight are still alive.

M: And you went to school there?

S: I went to school, what you call the elementary school there. When I was fourteen years old my ambition was to go to the seminary to be a priest, you know, a Catholic priest, since I am a Catholic priest now. However, my people having so many children--and this was the time of the First World War, the currency and the money all went down, there was inflation and my people were poor--they couldn't send me to the seminary. So I went out at the age of fourteen, I left home to work. I was trained as a professional gardener.

M: Oh?

S: I became a gardener. Over there in Germany you have to learn to be a gardener or a barber or just any profession. You have to learn the profession for three years, then you have an examination, and then you are qualified to work in that trade.

M: That's why your flowers look so nice out here.

S: Yes. President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson said last year I had the nicest yard, the nicest flowers in the country. I don't know whether it was so or not. However, I worked then as a gardener, and I worked in different places in Germany. As a matter of fact, I worked two years in Switzerland also as a gardener. Then I went back to Germany again, and when I was twenty-one years of age I still had the desire to become a Catholic priest. There still was the problem of the education, and there was no money for going to college, going to school. However, then, I don't know whether you understand it if I say I became a brother, a religious brother. You might know in Austin St. Edward's College, they have brothers.

M: Yes.

S: Okay. I became a brother, and then I was a brother for sixteen years. If it is interesting to you or not, I don't know. However, I became a brother in Germany, and then in 1937 my superiors in Germany sent me to England, and to a house affiliated with the order where I was a brother in

Germany. That was in 1937 I went to England, and there I still continued my profession as gardener in England, as a brother.

Then in 1939 I was in need of a vacation, and I went to Northern Ireland for a two weeks vacation. While I was in Northern Ireland the war broke out, and then, of course, there was a problem, I being a German, and the war and all that. And so from Northern Ireland I went to Dublin. Northern Ireland belonging to England was a war country, and Southern Ireland was neutral, so I went to Dublin. That was the beginning of my stay in Ireland, a stay of eleven years. I lived in Ireland then for eleven years. The good Irish people were very kind to me. They just loved me, and I loved them. However, it was then in Ireland toward the end of the war when I tried once more to be a priest.

M: Let me ask, what did you do in Ireland?

S: I still did mostly work in my profession. I did all kinds of things: I did cooking for a little community and nursing the sick, I did all kinds of things.

M: But you were still a Catholic brother?

S: I was still a brother, yes. Then toward the end of the war--it was in actually 1944 when I once more decided to be a priest. And there in Ireland the good Irish people, good, very good Christians that they are, they financed my studies. So I studied in Ireland, studied my two years' philosophy which is necessary for the Catholic priesthood, and when I finished that, I went to Rome and studied my theology. The Irish people still financed that. So no wonder that I love Ireland. I love the Irish people, and I always tell them when I see them that my heart is in Ireland. However, I became an Irish citizen during the time I lived in Ireland, and I even had the privilege to use my name in Irish. Schneider or tailor in Irish means McAnTalur, and I did use my name. Even now when Irish people ask my name I say Lane [?] McAnTalur, and they look and they are wondering where I got that name from.

M: Yes. I've got a typist that's going to come back and say, "How do you spell that?"

S: McAnTalur?

M: Yes.

S: Okay. You want to write it down?

M: We'll just put it right on the tape.

S: Oh. McAnTalur. That's M-C. Mc in Gaelic, means "the son of." McAnTalur. Mc means the son of the tailor, McAnTalur. Talur means tailor.

M: How do you spell that, Talur?

S: Talur? T-A-L-U-R. McAnTalur. In Ireland I got from the Department of the Interior, I got this in writing, that I may use my name in Irish, and even my passport is written in Irish. I just put this in now because [we're] talking about Ireland and about my name. I became Irish, and I kept on my Irish citizenship until September, 1968, and then I became an American citizen. However, not because LBJ asked me or so. He never said I should. He knew I was an Irish citizen, and he loved me as much as an Irish citizen as he loves me now as American citizen. However, when I became an Irish [American] citizen, and that of course was published in the paper, the President wrote me a very beautiful letter which I treasure very much. He said, "You always were a good American even though you were an Irish citizen." He really flattered me very much by writing me this beautiful letter.

Going back to my education--

M: Let me clear one thing on this spelling. M-C-A-N?

S: That's Mc, yes. Mc. That's M-C, and then there's a capital A-N, and then again a capital T.

M: That does it.

S: McAnTalur.

M: A beautiful name.

S: Yes, thanks. Musical, isn't it?

M: Yes. It's pretty.

S: Actually, when I was in Ireland I learned a bit of Gaelic. I mean I still know, for example, a little prayer if you like. We Catholics, we use the sign of the cross when we bless ourselves. You say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And in Irish it is, (says prayer in Gaelic). That is the sign of the cross in Irish. I learned a good deal of Irish, but of course now being away so long I forget. Like when I was in Rome I learned a good deal of Italian, but when you don't speak it anymore you forget. But I still know, like when I was in Rome, when in the morning you say, "Buon giorno," or when you say goodbye you say, "Arrivederci," or when you say many, many thanks you say, "Grazie, mille grazie." That means a million thanks or so. However, as I say, this is beside the point.

But when I was in Rome I had a wonderful, wonderful experience. This is worthwhile to recall because it was most interesting. I was in Rome at a place called the Beta [?] College. That college is a Papal college for people who study for the priesthood who are advanced in age. I went to Rome in 1950. I was born in 1907, consequently I was already forty-three years of age. Normally the boys who study for the priesthood will be ordained at the age of twenty-four years of age or so. I was in Rome three years. I was forty-six or forty-seven years of age when I was there. When I was in Rome we had an audience with the Pope, that was Pope Pius X, a very fine man, though some tried to belittle him. Some said that he didn't treat

Jewish people as he should have done during the war, during the German persecution of the Jews. But he was a good man. There were thousands of thousands of Jews that got shelter in the Vatican during that time. However, this is beside the point.

I happened to meet Pope Pius XII. We had an audience with Pope Pius XII and all the family of the Beta College. We had about fifty students and the professors and director and everybody. The Pope went from one [to the other]. He shook hands with everyone and talked a few words. When he came to me somebody advised, said to me, "If ever you talk to Pope Pius XII talk in German with him, because he knows and loves German. He was Papal nuncio in Munich." And I come from Bavaria, Munich. So when the Pope came to me and shook hands with me I said, "Ja, Heilige Vater"--"Yes, Holy Father." He said, "Oh, sie sphrechen deutch." The college of Beta was an English college, and that was in 1950 or '51, just five or six years after the war. He was so surprised that I, as a German, was in the Beta, an English college. He thought that it was almost impossible after a horrible war, and so he asked me, "How come you are in this college?" "Well," I said, "I lived in Ireland and I lived in England, and I like the English and I like the Irish. I like them all. I have no enemies."

Then he asked me where I was to go when I was a priest. I said, "I'm going to Texas." He said, "Oh, wunderbar! How extraordinary! Born in Germany, studying in an English college in Rome and going to Texas." That was to him a most extraordinary situation. However, the Pope talked to me so long that the Monsignor who was guiding him around urged him to go on. But the Pope just wanted to talk to me. Then after that, after the audience, what you call an audience, we went home, and everybody almost was mad with me. They all said, "Schneider stole the show of the day," because the Pope talked to me so long. However, there were no misgivings, and as I say, the other students all were English and I was German. I got on well, and as a matter of fact the director was English, too, but the director was very very kind to me.

Then a year later we had another audience with the Pope. I think that was the time when I was an ordained priest. He remembered me, and he asked me, "Are you still going to Texas?" And I told him, "Yes." So this was an extraordinary affair, and I thought I was very highly privileged to be honored by the Pope, to be known by him personally.

However, after I was ordained in April, I still studied in Rome until June, and then I left Rome and went back to Germany to celebrate my priestly ordination. You know, like you used to do over there. I went back to Ireland, got my papers ready and the visa and everything to come to the United States.

M: How come you came to Texas?

S: That's another story. My desire was to be a priest and to go, well, almost anywhere, and so I found a friend of mine in Ireland. He had a brother living in the United States, I think it was in Chicago somewhere. He wrote to his brother, and his brother was a priest, and he advised his brother back in Ireland to tell me I should write to Chicago to Bishop O'Brien, who would be in the situation to find a place for me. So right enough he advised me to write to San Antonio to Archbishop Lucey, the Catholic Archbishop of San Antonio, and so I did. Lucey, after several

exchange of letters, was happy that I would come to the San Antonio diocese. He said, "We have some communities where there are Germans, and you'll be very useful to work with those people." That's why I was in Fredericksburg for thirteen years.

So I got my visa and I came out to Texas, and when I got to San Antonio, well, it was a big change, you know, from Europe. Especially when you are about--that was in 1953, and I was forty-six years old. However, I went to San Antonio, and there I was in San Antonio. They called it the Joske's church. You know, the big store, Jos--

M: Joske's?

S: Joske's, yes. There was a pastor there [who] was very kind to me, and I got accustomed to everything. I was there for three months, and then I was changed to New Braunfels to another church. San Antonio St. Joseph's used to be a German parish, that's why I was sent there. Then after three months I went to New Braunfels, another German town. I was in New Braunfels for six months and then at Fredericksburg, another German town. So however, I get on with the Germans, Mexicans and everybody. I mean there's no problem. So that is the way I came out to Texas.

Then one thing, of course, I said already that the Irish people educated me. Even when I was in Rome they paid for my education. I am not ashamed to say that my people just were poor. Then at that time when I studied, there was the Second World War, and again in 1948 they lost everything. Because I lived in Ireland during the war, and in 1948 went back home to visit them, I didn't see my people from 1937 until 1948 because of the war and all the problems. Again, they had another inflation and lost everything, so I didn't even get one cent from my people, because they didn't have it. So that's why I say my people, the Irish people, they educated me. So that was, as far as my background is concerned, how I became a priest.

Then, of course, later I go on from when I arrived in Fredericksburg; that was in 1954. And it doesn't matter the month, I said it was in August. That's beside the point, but really when I went from New Braunfels to Fredericksburg, I already know the country. That farm to market road out there passes by Honey Creek[?]. Do you know Honey Creek?

M: Yes, yes.

S: I happened to have a wreck there, and I wrecked my car.

M: Oh?

S: Yes. Right in front, you might say, of the church in Honey Creek. However, I wrecked my car, but I wasn't hurt. That's beside the point. But what really happened was, it was in August, the evening setting sun got in my eyes, a car came against me, and with the setting sun. I tried to avoid the car, and so I got off the pavement and on the soft shoulder, lost control of the car, and finally the car turned over. But I wasn't hurt, that was the main thing.

When I arrived in Fredericksburg, the very first Sunday I was in Fredericksburg I came out to Stonewall. Stonewall was a mission. Stonewall, St. Francis Xavier Church, was a mission of St. Mary's in Fredericksburg. In other words, I took over Stonewall, and I lived in Fredericksburg until 1967, from 1954-1967 I lived in Fredericksburg. That was every Sunday the same and the same program. I used to have church in Fredericksburg in the morning at six o'clock, which meant I got up every Sunday at least at five. I had church in Fredericksburg at six, and then I got ready and came to Stonewall. I think we had church here at Stonewall in those days at eight o'clock. So I came every Sunday to Stonewall and once or twice a week during the week.

When I was here in Stonewall, well, it takes you some time to get to know the people. Maybe that was 1954 or '55, and one day somebody said to me, "Father Schneider, did you know we had company today?" I said, "No, I don't. There are people I don't know." And then he said, "Yes. Senator Johnson was here." And I, in my innocence, said, "Who is Senator Johnson?" I'm sorry to say I didn't know. I didn't know anything about the American system of government, you know. So he said, "Yes. He lives down the street across the river, but he's not a Catholic. But he comes sometimes to Church." I said, "How interesting. Next time if he comes, if you know, let me know. I sure would like to meet him."

I still remember when somebody came around to the sacristy, came around back outside of the sacristy and said, "Senator Johnson is here with some friends." So then I knew, and then I made it my business after church to go out the back door to meet him. So that's when I met LBJ for the first time, and he was nice, very friendly. He said, "I am not a Catholic, but I come to your church occasionally, especially when I have friends staying with me from Washington or New York, people who are Catholic. They want to go to church, and I go with them because I want to make them feel at home. It's better if I go with them than if I send them off on their own." So at that time he had some friends from New York, I think, and I met him. So every time he came, I knew him then. I always tried to welcome him. When he was a senator, I thought it was a privilege to have him.

All this was nice, and then time went on and I got to know more about the American system of government. Finally then, the election came, and when the election came of course I couldn't really vote because I was still an Irish citizen. However, then John F. Kennedy got in as president, and he as vice president. Even as vice president he came to the church, and he brought his visitors and company, or even the family, Lynda and Luci. Then, of course, Luci got married. Oh, yes, Luci got married in Washington. I wasn't there, but Luci and Pat used to come to church when they were at the Ranch or so. And then in the summer--

M: Did you talk to Luci about the Catholic religion?

S: No, I didn't. She had the priest up there in Washington, who instructed her and received her into the Church. I forget his name, but it was the same priest. He baptized Lyn, and Lyn was baptized here in this church. But I wasn't here then, I was in Germany for my vacation. That was in 1967. Lyn was born, I guess, in June or July. I think June. He was baptized here in this

church by the priest. I think the priest who received Luci into the Catholic Church was the one who baptized him.

However, let us go back to the year 1961, because this was an occasion which I remember real well. 1961--LBJ was vice president then. He was here; I think he was here in church. No, I forget exactly when and where, but I remember that he asked me, "Father Schneider, we are getting company Sunday, and German Chancellor Adenauer is coming. As you know, he's a very strict Catholic, and he wouldn't miss Mass for anybody." I said, "Oh, what are we going to do about it?" He said, "Well, I would like you to have a special Mass for him." I said, "Okay, okay. That's okay." That was 1961, and in those days in the Church we had rules and regulations. In those days we were not allowed to say Mass after noon hour, after twelve o'clock, midday. However, I brushed these regulations aside, and I said, "No matter what happens, I'll say Mass when Adenauer comes." Because Adenauer and his party, about twenty members of the German government, came that Sunday morning from Washington.

They flew down from Washington, and then they arrived here after twelve. They landed in the helicopter over there in the public school ground, and it was almost one o'clock when they came into the church. I didn't mind. I said Mass, and I knew the Bishop wouldn't mind either. So they came to church. President Johnson also asked me a few days beforehand, "Would you be able to say a few words in German in the church for the old man?" I said, "Yes, sure." Then I had a German sermon. Then I had asked some people around here, in this community there are lots of Germans, and from Fredericksburg [to come]. They still knew some German church hymns. So they sang German hymns during the Mass, and I preached in German about an hour. He was so surprised, and his daughter, too, and the rest of them also. They were so surprised that they found a German service in Texas. They were very, very surprised and very happy about it. Adenauer wrote a letter of thanks to LBJ. I, too, got a letter, and then the church. All went well.

M: The Bishop never said anything to you.

S: No, no. No, he didn't. He was happy I used my common brain, you know, I used common sense. However, in the afternoon that day we had barbecue down on the LBJ ground right on the river. It was all organized; it was a catering firm from Waco, I think, that came. They had about four or five hundred people there eating. And here again, LBJ said, "Father Schneider, we need to say grace before we eat." "You know," he said, "We have to pray when Adenauer is here." And I said, "Sure, I will." He said, "Do it in German. I don't understand German, but the old man, it makes him happy." So I said, "Yes, of course I will." So I had the grace before eating in German. I was sitting up there on the platform with all the big shots, you know, and I felt real big. I felt real happy.

Then they had the kind of barbecue meal where you pass by and you help yourself whatever you want, you know.

M: Right.

S: Then after the eating they had a program there. They had--oh, I forget what they had. They had trained dogs and the riding and, oh, maybe a cowboy was there. So after that they went to Fredericksburg, the party all went to Fredericksburg, and in Fredericksburg they had the official welcome for Adenauer, in the fairground, because at the fairground they had lots of space there. In Fredericksburg I wasn't involved, because I had my share already down here. However, I got a couple of letters, even from a minister, Foreign Minister von Brentano, and a few more of the guys that were in the party wrote letters to me. They were so happy, and President Johnson told me on one occasion. It was when he was already President, yes.

We had a birthday party for President Johnson here the first year he was President. We had it over there in the rodeo arena. There's a rodeo arena over there, and there was a big black platform. The President and all the big shots were on the platform, including myself, because I had the invocation. He always asked me to have the invocation, although there were other ministers and preachers around. But he always wanted me. It seems that he just likes my way of--I don't know. However, we were sitting there up on the platform, and President Johnson came over to me and we talked. He whispered something in my ear. There were thousands of people around, and everybody asked me later on, "What did he say? What did he say that was a secret?" Well, I told them he said that this relationship between the United States and Germany was never as good and as friendly as it is now. That is when Adenauer was German chancellor, and he was right, too.

This I also say, that I remember back when he was still senator I asked LBJ once about the political situation. He told me, and I think he still thinks the same, he said, "We have to watch, we have to look out that the communists don't get the better of us. We have to fight them." That's what, I think, even now is his opinion. And of course as far as this war is concerned, he did his utmost best to try to win a victory in Vietnam, but he just couldn't succeed. He tried real hard.

However, let us go back to 1961. The years when he became President, then of course he came to church here, and I would say almost every time he came back to Texas. Not only that, but he would invite me down to dinner. Like he'd come home on a Thursday or Friday night, and before he goes in the ranch house, he would give already instructions on the two-way radio. He would tell the security, "invite Father Schneider down for dinner." That was always; every time he came that was the first thing. In one occasion, I think it was 1967, that was when I still lived in Fredericksburg, the guy said, "Will you come, the President wants you to come down for supper?" And in my own stupid ignorance I said, "I have eaten supper already." Then he said, "Come down for the dessert anyway." And so I did go down. This is not a joke, but it is true, in my own stupid way. However, he used to invite me down.

M: Did he ask you to say grace when you came?

S: Oh, yes, always. And I always put a plug in, asking the good Lord to take care of the two boys and son-in-laws when they were in Vietnam. I would pray for those who were in Vietnam and

for those absent members of the family and ask the Lord to bring them back safe, and he liked that. He said so, that he was happy I prayed for them.

M: Did he ever ask you to pray for him in his job?

S: Oh yes, oh yes. I mean if I had any occasion where there would be a party or so, I would always ask, "Dear Lord, and give our President the strength he needs to do his work, with the help of God to do the right thing" and so forth. Oh yes, he would almost miss it if I wouldn't do it. One day, that was, he came over to the Hall. In our Hall we had a party there, and I again said [grace]. There was a party, I forget what it was. I said the grace before the meal, and I didn't mention his name, but I prayed for "all here present." And then afterwards he said, "Father, you didn't pray for me." I said, "Oh yes, I prayed for all here present, all the sinners." Then he laughed, really. Oh yes, he depended on [my prayers for him] when he was in office.

Once he went to Latin America when he was president. Personally, as a matter of fact, I didn't like the idea at all. I thought something might happen. I said, "Mr. President, I wish you wouldn't go." And he said, "Why?" "Well," I said, "I'm afraid." He said, "That's your business to bring me back safe; that's your business to bring me back safe." Oh yes, he believed in prayer. I think in his own way he's a very religious man. He believes in prayers, I know that. He depended on prayers, and at times I would ask my sisters, back in Germany I have two sisters who are nuns--you know nuns?

M: Yes.

S: And they are nuns. I would ask them and tell them they should ask all the other nuns to pray, and I would ask nuns around here in San Antonio to pray. I'd tell him, "Mr. President, don't you worry, the nuns are praying for you." He said, "I'm glad, I need God's help."

So [there] were other incidents. He's very good, very kind hearted, very concerned.

One day I remember down there at the Ranch we were ready to eat dinner, and in the dining room there is a big window like this and there is a long table there, seating about fifteen or sixteen people. Then we were all lined up, and Lady Bird placed the guests. She said, "Let me sit on the farther end, and then so on and so." When she was halfway up the President said, "Where is Father Schneider going to sit?" He thought she forgot me. Then she said, "He's sitting right beside me!" So, he always likes for me to be near him.

Oh, when he came home from Washington on one occasion, one Sunday, I was in Fredericksburg, and they were looking for me. I was in Fredericksburg, and they couldn't find me. There was a wedding in Fredericksburg, and I was at the wedding. Finally they found me. They said, "You are wanted on the phone." So I answered the phone, and I said, "Ja?" And he says on the line, "The President wants you to come over to the lake." I said, "Over to the lake? What lake?" "The LBJ Lake." I said, "For heaven's sake, this evening at seven o'clock? Driving over to the lake, that's almost too much." He said, "All you have to do is come down to the Ranch, and they will fly you over." So there was a helicopter there flying me over to the

lake. Over there we went boat riding, and later on we had a steak dinner. Then we came back, maybe eleven o'clock at night, by helicopter.

M: Did he just want to talk to you?

S: He just wanted me to take me out boating, give me a good time. Oh, yes. Well, there were so many occasions. He is always concerned with what to do to make a person happy, you know. That is his ambition, to make people happy.

Well, when I went in 1967, I think that's the next big occasion, when he wanted me over to Bonn for Adenauer's funeral.

M: Before you get into that, let me ask you: were you around for Erhard's visit?

S: I was, yes. I mean, they had a banquet over there in the school gym, they had a banquet there. I was over there. I was invited over there. I had really nothing to do, nothing special, but I met him. Of course, Adenauer was quite a different man. Oh, yes, LBJ told me, "Adenauer has his own mind. He doesn't say "yes" all the time, but he's a great man." And for this, really President Johnson respected him. Oh, yes. Of course, Erhard was not the great leader that Adenauer was. Adenauer was absolutely outstanding, because after the war Germany was down and out completely, and he built up the country in a couple of years.

M: But Johnson had respect for Erhard, too?

S: Yes, oh, yes. That's true, very much so.

M: Well, Erhard came shortly after Johnson became president, did he not?

S: Yes.

M: Did Johnson ever say anything to you about the assassination of Kennedy and taking over office, all the troubles he had there?

S: No, not in particular. Except that he would say, "There are problems in the Democratic Party." Yes. And, oh, of course--this is not necessarily for publication--actually, a few weeks before Bobby Kennedy was assassinated he told me, "Bobby gives us a lot of trouble in the party."

M: Yes. Well, then when Erhard came, you went to the receptions and the parties?

S: Yes. I had nothing further to do.

M: Then the next major event is when you go to Germany to Adenauer's funeral?

S: Yes, that's right. Adenauer, of course, after he retired I never expected that I would go to the funeral.

M: Yes.

S: But that Sunday evening there was a phone call from Washington to St. Mary's. I wasn't in; I was in the Parish Hall playing bingo, I guess. Then the other priest came over and said there was a phone call for me from Washington. So I went over, and they called again maybe twenty minutes later. He called again and--Captain. . . . I forget his name, the Army man--he said, "President Johnson is in Bonn, but he wants you to come over for the funeral." I just couldn't figure it out. I said, "There must be a mistake. This is Sunday and the funeral is Tuesday." I knew the funeral was Tuesday.

M: Yes.

S: I said, "There must be a mistake." He said, "No. Monday you would have to be in the Ranch at ten-thirty in the morning, and then they fly you to Washington and from there you would fly on Air Force One with General Lemnitzer." Still I was bewildered, I still couldn't say anything. I said, "I don't know." I figured that I couldn't leave the country without the permission of my bishop. Then he said, "I tell you what, I will ring back in the morning. In the meantime, you get in touch with your bishop." In the meantime, I did try to get my bishop. I couldn't get him, but I got the auxiliary bishop, Bishop Laven [?] and I told him. He said, "Okay, okay. Go. Go. That's all right." So in the morning the Captain phoned again, and I told him, "Yes, I'm going." And he said, "Yes, be at the Ranch at ten-thirty."

They flew me to Washington, and I was the only passenger in the plane! There was an attendant there in the plane, to bring me drinks or whatever I wanted. However, in Washington, then, they kept me there in the officers' mess, whatever you call it, until Air Force One was leaving. There were about ten generals of the Army on the plane, that was a small--I think it was Air Force One, too. Then in the plane we ate dinner, and I always thought this General Lemnitzer was awful nice towards me, very nice. He was always trying to make me happy, and so after dinner we would talk for a while. Then while we were in bed, we wouldn't go to sleep. So later on I heard that President Johnson had given him the order to take care of me and be nice to me.

When we arrived over there in Bonn there were two officers there waiting for me, that was Colonel Cross and Colonel Smith. Colonel Cross, by the way, I think is in Austin now, in the Air Force Base there in Austin. He is a general now, Colonel Cross; I believe he is going to retire. However, they were waiting for me. I arrived there in Bonn, and they drove me over to where the President stayed. Gosh, I forget the name right now [Bad Godesberg]. However, we arrived there in the Villa Hillenbrand, and it was in the morning, about eight or nine o'clock, beautiful morning. Then we got into the door and Colonel Cross rings the bell, and the President's attendant came and opened the door. It was Marvin Watson. I remember him; I remember that. Then he went upstairs and told the President, "Father Schneider arrived." And then the next thing I heard downstairs, "Bring him up!" President Johnson was still in bed. He had a late night the night before, and he was still in bed. He just woke up, I guess. So I went up to his bedroom, and he was so happy to see me. He just was beaming with happiness that I

came. He embraced me he was so happy. Then we talked and talked, and finally he got up and shaved and got ready for the services.

Then there was a memorial service in the German Bundeshaus, where there were all the dignitaries there. I had a special ticket there, and after that was the funeral. But, oh, there were some other Germans in the President's place in Bonn. There was, well, some basket lunch. There wasn't time to have a regular banquet, wasn't time for it. Then the funeral procession started, and they had me in a car right behind the President. I could see, observe everything. The German people all were lined up in the streets, and they all were very happy toward President Johnson. They cheered him. And so we got to Cologne. We got to the cathedral there, the famous cathedral which took seven hundred years to build. Oh, by the way, in the last war it was badly damaged, it got four hundred hits. However, they have done marvelous repair work.

There was the funeral. Yes, in Cologne in the cathedral there was the funeral service, and Cardinal Frings of Cologne had the funeral mass and the funeral service. There during the funeral Mass the President looked around a few times to see whether he could see me, because I was about nine rows behind him. And believe it or not, a few days after the funeral one German paper wrote and said, "President Johnson was irreverent in church. He looked around all the time!" The only thing, the only purpose he looked around for was to find out where I was!

M: Why do you suppose he wanted you there?

S: Why? I don't know. I just think he figured that I would enjoy it, and he was very happy, very proud of me. After the funeral, we went down to the Rhine when they took the body over to the boat.

M: Yes.

S: And they took it up the Rhine to Adenauer's home, Rhöndorf, but we stayed in Bad Godesberg. But they took the funeral up the Rhine to his home town Rhöndorf. I can't remember the place right now. However, when we were there, I mean they took the body over. They had all kinds of ceremonials and all the dignitaries. And President Johnson, even on the way down the Rhine, standing there and waving, always had the Secret Service looking for me. I drifted away, and [they would say], "The President wants to see you." He wanted to introduce me. I heard on the radio the British Prime Minister Wilson is coming here. Did you hear that? He introduced me to him.

M: Yes.

S: Prime Minister Wilson, he was the prime minister then. He introduced me also to De Gaulle and to all the big shots. President Johnson was really very happy to have me around him. As I say, I was his only guest, really. I was the only guest besides a few secretaries who stayed in Villa Hillenbrand with him. However, I got lost. Oh, after the funeral they had a reception, the

German government gave a reception in Cologne in the Küngenich hall. They gave a reception there. Again all the Secret Service men were looking for me: "The President wants to see you." He introduced me to Cardinal Frings and Cardinal Doepfner of Berlin, all the church people there. He introduced me to them. I'll show you a few pictures afterwards that were made there. While we were there, on one occasion he was sitting there away from the people and talking to me just as if there were nobody else there. He just [wanted] to talk to me, and there were five hundred or more people there.

However, after maybe an hour or so the President and the American party left. They left this hall that's in Cologne and went back to Bad Godesberg to the Villa. They left without me, and so I looked around. There were lots of people there. I asked some people, "Did you see President Johnson?" Oh, some of them said, "I think they left already." "They left?" I said, "And they leave me behind? What's the big idea?" So I said to myself, "Okay, I'm sure they will come back and pick me up." So maybe [they would come] after half-an-hour or so. I didn't mind, I wouldn't get lost in Germany. I didn't mind. However, after half-an-hour or an hour, a guy approached me and said, "Excuse me." I had a little white patch here so that they would recognize me. He said, "Excuse me, are you Father Schneider?" I said, "Yes. Why?" He said, "Thank God!" I said, "Why?" "Oh, the President got mad because we went home without you."

M: Oh.

S: So he sent him away to hunt for me. So finally we got there, and after that of course the Secret Service never let me out of their eyes.

So then that day, the evening, the President said to me, "Father Schneider, you want to visit somebody around here? You can have a White House car and a driver. You can go wherever you like." So I went out to visit people, drove around Cologne and so forth. Oh, I forgot to tell you that when I arrived in Bonn Colonel Cross and Colonel Smith said, "The President said if you want to fly to Munich to visit your brothers and sisters there's an airplane ready for you." And I said, "No, I would rather stay here for the funeral." Because I had already planned a trip home to Germany in June. I have three brothers and four sisters alive, and I couldn't see them all. The time was too short. If I go and see only one or two, then the others would be mad, you know. However, I said, "No." And then Colonel Cross turned around and said to the pilot, "It's all off, he's not going." So, I just didn't want to go. I preferred to stay at the funeral, and I enjoyed the funeral, too.

Then I guess the following day we left. We flew from Bad Godesberg to Bonn for the Air Force One, in the helicopter, the number two helicopter. There were four helicopters, you know, and all the party wasn't in number two. In the helicopter there was Dean Rusk and I think Marvin Watson, and a guy whom I never liked and still don't like, Willy Brandt.

M: Yes.

S: He was sitting beside me, and his behavior was most unfriendly to me.

M: Why would that be?

S: He is a communist.

M: Who?

S: Willy Brandt.

M: Oh.

S: He disappeared during the war. He was in communist country. I regret very much when he became chancellor in Germany. So there was Willy Brandt sitting beside me; however, he was not a bit interested in any conversation. I don't know why the German people voted for him. I think--I can't figure it out. However, I asked some people who know more about it. I said, well, I thought that he might sell West Germany to the communists. But they said, no, he couldn't do that. This Strauss is a member of the government in Germany, and he is a very strong man, a very smart man. However that is beside the point.

We flew to Bonn, and then we came back on Air Force One. There were about eighty or a hundred people on Air Force One. I nearly always was in company with the Secret Service, because they wouldn't let me out of their sight since I got lost. Then on the way home they invited me to play cards with them--it was poker--the Secret Service guys.

M: Yes.

S: I don't know why, but I won. I didn't want to win. On one occasion President Johnson came into the main body of the aircraft--he had his private apartment--and saw me playing poker, and he was so surprised. Then I didn't know whether he liked it or disliked it. I didn't know. However, about ten minutes [later] he sent in a pack of cards like this.

M: Yes.

S: For me.

M: Yes.

S: And then I figured--

M: I'd better tell the tape what this is. This is a sealed package—

S: This is a sealed package of playing cards, a double deck, and on it is written the presidential seal, and it is written on Air Force One and LBJ. I have it here in my hand; I treasure it very much. And then he smiled, and then I knew after that. He passed by later again and smiled, and so I knew he didn't mind me playing cards. Only the other day he said, "Yes, you with all

the winnings from playing poker on the Air Force One." I said, "I didn't win after all. I didn't want to win, and the one time I won a few dollars I lost them again." I said, "Only the other day I thought I would like to play with you once and win some!"

However, we came back on Air Force One, and then in the plane he invited me into his private apartment there. There was also George Meany, the labor man, you know, George Meany.

M: Yes.

S: Lots of other people [were there], I don't remember all the names, Dean Rusk and so forth. In there we had something to eat, and then he invited me into his bedroom and he gave me presents. He gave me some of his books and other presents, memories of our trip to Germany together. He gave me this wrist watch, here.

M: Oh, he did?

S: Yes. On the back of this, the back of it says here, "Father W. Schneider from his devoted friend, President Johnson." And on the front, on the face there is LBJ's initials and around the numerals it says "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That watch I treasure very much, too.

M: He gave this to you on the plane on the way home?

S: On the plane coming back.

M: He must have planned this ahead of time.

S: He must have, sure. He must have had that planned.

M: Isn't that nice!

S: Then another nice thing that shows how nice he is, I'm sure he won't mind if I tell you this thing.

M: No.

S: This is something I was very much impressed. Before the plane landed in Washington he said, "Father Schneider, I want you to be my guest. I want you to stay in the White House tonight." I said, "Oh, my, that's a big honor." "Yes," he said, "I think tomorrow there is a plane going to Texas when you fly home." I said, "I'm very grateful for that." Then when Air Force One landed we all went into the Army helicopter and flew over--about fifteen of us, you know, the presidential party--to the White House. We landed right at the back door of the White House. And then something happened, which I was so amazed. We got out of the plane, and believe you me, he took my bag, which I had my belongings in. He carried my bag and said, "Come on, I'll show you your room." He carried my bag, and I walked behind! I was so embarrassed.

M: Yes.

S: But he wouldn't let me have it. Then that day there was a reception planned. Lady Bird had organized a reception for all the foreign diplomats. We arrived there in the White House in the evening, maybe about seven o'clock,

M: Yes.

S: And there he carried my bag. The people in the White House were all standing around. They were coming in for the reception, all those high-class people, and he wouldn't talk to anybody. He just walked through carrying my bag. We went into the elevator, and we went upstairs into the quarter where the rooms are for the visitors, he and myself. He gave me the room where I am to stay. We went into the room, and he looked around and said, "Oh, that's not a nice room. Let us look for another one." Then we went to another room. There was a suite of rooms: a sitting room, a bedroom, bath, telephone and TV, and he looked around and said, "I think that's better. I hope you will be comfortable." "Oh, wait a minute," he said, "let me see, you might not find a station." So he put on the TV, and he was kneeling there on his knees trying to find a station for me and fooling around on the TV. I said, "Mr. President." He said, "What do you want, Father Schneider?" I was so uneasy, I said, "There are hundreds of people downstairs. They are waiting for you. They are more important than I." He said, "You are more important to me."

M: Oh.

S: I just felt uneasy, because I thought he wasted his time with me, but that's the way he is. Then we went down. Finally I guess he washed his hands and brushed himself up a little, and finally he went among the people. There were hundreds of people there.

Then I had something to eat in my room, and later on, when the reception started, then he was looking for me again. He wanted me down there to meet his guests. And then I drifted away again. I didn't want to be around, to be the important person. However, he said, "Father Schneider, if you'd like to go out sightseeing, this is night, all the fountains and memorials are lit up. Go out sightseeing." And Marie Fehmer, she used to be secretary, a very nice girl, she'll go along with me. We had a driver, you know. We went sightseeing, and later on the evening he was looking for me again. They couldn't find me, I think maybe about ten o'clock or so. Finally he remembered, he said, "Oh, yes, Father Schneider went out sightseeing with my secretary." And everybody screamed, "with my secretary," you know.

However, finally we came back, and he had me there again, introduced me to his friends. We had a very elaborate--oh, what do you call it--cafeteria style meal there, you know. You could take what you like, and so I ate something. Maybe about eleven, eleven-thirty I was tired and went upstairs to my room, and then he was looking for me again. He wanted to introduce me to somebody, and then I was already in bed asleep. I don't know whether somebody went up to look for me or not. He was looking for me, and they couldn't

find me. Then he said, "Oh, yes, Father Schneider is snoozing already in bed." So he always liked to have a little fun about these things. However, again the following day I had a White House car and a chauffeur and drove around. I went to visit friends and had a wonderful time.

Sometime in the afternoon, late in the afternoon, then I was told that the plane would leave for Texas. Mrs. Johnson and Lynda flew down also to Texas. Not only that, and this is worthwhile, I almost forgot it, when we flew down to Texas--of course they waited upon us with food and drinks and all that--and we landed at the Ranch I thought to myself, "How will I get home?" Somebody from Fredericksburg drove me down to the Ranch, I didn't take my car. I said, "How will I get home?" I thought to myself, "I'll just phone a taxi in Fredericksburg." It was later, maybe it was, I think, ten or eleven o'clock. I didn't want to burden anybody, so I figured I would phone the taxi place. Then when we got out of the plane there was a car there waiting for me, and I asked the chauffeur of the car, "How did you know I was coming?" I guess he was a Secret Service man, or whoever he was he said, "The President phoned from Washington to see that we would take you home." That shows you the kind of man he is, honestly.

M: Yes.

S: He's concerned; he just wants you to feel free and be happy and comfortable and having a good time. Yes. Oh, that was a wonderful trip.

And then again, I mean I often was down at the Ranch. One New Year's night we flew over to the lake. There was a party over there at Arthur Krim's place. You know Arthur Krim?

M: Yes.

S: That's a good friend of his. I guess Arthur Krim is a millionaire, I don't know. Arthur Krim has a room for LBJ over there by the lake. That room, oh [it is] terrific.

M: Yes.

S: And the bathroom oh, just the most beautiful place you every saw. However, they had a party over there, and he took me over there. And then one New Year's night he went down to the Mermaid Club down there near Rocky Creek, and he took me along. Only last Saturday he was looking for me, he said, "How come you are never at home?" I said, "Why?" He said, "Oh, I wanted to take you to Fredericksburg to the club for a drink." I said, "I am sorry. I had evening Mass, and after that I had--". Oh, no, that was Friday night, Friday night--a meeting with the Head Start, so that's why I wasn't in the house. I was out at the church or so." And even though he can't get me over there, he likes the idea that I am not sitting around in my house here and looking at the four walls.

M: Right.

S: He likes that. And for fear that I might feel lonely or so, he just thinks about it to take me out or so. And then, of course, the big event was in October, 1968. In October, 1968, one Sunday when he came home from Washington, he said, "Father Schneider, what are you doing this week?" I said, "Well, I guess the usual." He said, "Can you come to Washington for the week to the White House, be my guest?" I said, "Oh, sure. I have always time for something like that." "Oh," he said, "Okay." And then he said, "Sunday." Sunday evening, I think he said. "We'll leave in the afternoon or evening, and then you come to the White House and be our guest, have a good time and do what you like, see friends and visit." So okay, we, that is, Pastor Truesdell, his wife and myself, flew up to Washington with him. There we had our rooms and had everything. He was concerned that I would see everything in Washington, places like the Ford Theatre. You know about that?

M: Yes, sure.

S: And he asked me whether I saw it, and I said, "No." He said he made sure that I would see [it] and St. Matthew's Cathedral, that's the Catholic cathedral I believe, and then the Episcopal cathedral and even the quarter where the foreign diplomats live, you know.

M: Yes.

S: Oh, of course, he was concerned about me to see the Immaculate Conception; that's the Catholic cathedral where Luci was married. He was concerned that I just see about everything: what do you call it, the Smithsonian? And where they make the money?

M: The Mint?

S: Yes.

M: Yes.

S: And everything. We even went down to the presidential boat, and he made arrangements that they would [let us on board]. Of course, they wouldn't let everybody in, you know.

M: Yes.

S: He made arrangements that we could get in, and the officers there showed us around. They were friendly, and we just saw about everything. We got into the--what do you call this place where the Army is?

M: The Pentagon?

S: Pentagon, yes. We got in there.

M: Yes.

S: Yes. Oh, yes. All you have to say to the chauffeur is, "These are friends of President Johnson." At first they wouldn't believe it, they just called the White House to find out. This stay at the White House was wonderful.

I don't know whether you knew Jimmy Jones. He was one of his attendants, Jimmy Jones. Do you know Mr. Jake Jacobsen?

M: Yes.

S: You know him? He was his attendant, the President's attendant. He's Catholic, and he used to come to church here when they were at the Ranch.

M: Oh.

S: He came and Marie Fehmer came. You know, every time he came to the Ranch when he was President they came to the church, and at that time I didn't know too much. So at the time I thought Marie Fehmer was Jake Jacobsen's daughter.

M: Oh.

S: I went to visit Jake Jacobsen down in Austin, in the Sunny Slope or wherever he lived, and I told him that. He had a big laugh. However, Jimmy Jones, he took the place of Jake Jacobsen.

M: Right.

S: Jimmy Jones came, and he was another Catholic. The President always tried to kind of tease me. He said, "You know, Father, my place is becoming more Catholic. Now I'm getting a Catholic aide, Jimmy Jones, another Catholic. And Luci's Catholic and so and so is Catholic. They all talk about Catholics!" Now, that reminds me, talking about Catholics, [that] when I was in the White House we used to wait for him to come in for dinner in the evening. Lady Bird said to Reverend Truesdell and his wife and me, we stayed there, "You can eat early in the evening if you want to. But if you'd like to wait until my husband comes in, we will eat together." We all preferred, of course, to wait.

One day, one evening when they were eating dinner, [as] lightning from the blue sky he said, "Father Schneider, how come you don't give me Holy Communion?" I was stunned. I didn't know what to say. And then he said, "And Pastor Truesdell, you never give it to me either. What is the matter with you guys?" Then Pastor Truesdell started to defend himself. I was glad he did. I had at least the time to think. So Pastor Truesdell said, "Well, Mr. President, it just happens that we didn't have Holy Communion when you came to church." Of course I couldn't say that, because we always have Holy Communion during Mass. Then he said, "What about you, Father Schneider?" I had time to collect my thoughts, and I said, "Well, Mr. President, the way it is in the Catholic Church one has to be received in the Church officially, and this we haven't done." So he always talked about this several times, that I wouldn't give him Holy Communion. Of course, I said, "I would be willing to if you want to."

However, I was talking about Jimmy Jones. One evening Jimmy Jones, I was up in my room, said, "Father, are you dressed?" [It was] about seven o'clock. I said, "Yes, I'm dressed. I'm always dressed." He said, "Come down right away. The President is flying to New York, and he wants you to come along, and Pastor Truesdell, too." And so we went down. A few minutes later we left for New York. We flew by helicopter to the Air Force base, and there we caught a small Air Force One and flew to New York. There, from the Air Force base, or I don't know where we landed, we drove downtown to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. I was in the presidential car, the bulletproof car. I didn't know what this was all about at the time, I didn't know. But there was a big gathering of people; they had a big banquet. The Al Smith charity foundation banquet.

M: Yes.

S: The Cardinal Spellman in New York started a foundation in memory of Al Smith, and they have a banquet there once a year. President Johnson went over there, and I believe Nixon was there, and Humphrey and all the big shots were there. However, I just happened to sit at the table with some New York bankers. They had big round tables, about twelve sitting around the table, and they had a fabulous dinner. I believe the drink bill for that table alone was a couple of hundred dollars.

M: Oh!

S: And I believe, I don't know, but the plate was five hundred dollars or so, whatever. However, that was at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. That ballroom was fabulous[ly] decorated, and I never saw anything [like it] in my life. And there he was buzzing around about me, too. Cardinal Cooke was there, the Catholic Cardinal, you know.

M: Yes.

S: Spellman had died. Cooke was there, and LBJ did his utmost best to introduce me to Cardinal Cooke. He told Cardinal Cooke that I was his best friend and all that, and so he is really proud of me. That's why I was so upset with that story, that awful story in that National--

M: Observer.

S: Observer. I even had planned to do something about it, but then I was told I couldn't do anything about it. They still write things without your permission. However, I feel happy that he came to my birthday.

Now I don't know really what else I could tell. There are a whole lot of things I just can't recall. You might want to ask me a few things.

M: Yes. Were you surprised when he chose not to run again? Johnson?

S: I was, very much so. I was. I had hoped, like many of my friends had hoped, that he would run again. I didn't ask him why he wouldn't run. I knew why. Because people, a certain class of people, were just plain ugly. I never asked him why he wouldn't run, but I told him once, "Mr. President, my friends and everybody tells me that you should run again." He said, "No, I'm out, and I'm staying out." Even shortly before he went out of office I was down at the Ranch, and I remember the TV was on and all that and so forth. [We were] listening to the news and so, and they just did their utmost to blackmail him. One thing I think I've noticed is that the news service, it seemed to me, and I think he thought the same, did him an injustice. I know even at the convention in Chicago he was mad with the news service, because they'd rather bring the riots when there were other things they should have brought on the TV.

M: Yes. That upset him?

S: That upset him, very much so.

M: Yes. Did he ever appoint you to any committees or anything like that? Like to Head Start?

S: Well, yes. President Johnson did talk to me and to Pastor Truesdell of the Trinity Lutheran Church about Head Start. He thought that we should try and get this thing going, the Head Start. Yes, I'm still a member of the Head Start, a board member. We had a meeting last week of the Head Start here in our hall. We started this thing, the Head Start, and we've had it going ever since. It's going okay, but as I said last time at the meeting it seemed that we're running out of children. We really don't know what to do next year because--I mean there are children, but what I mean to say is that we're running out of children who come under the Poverty Program.

There are children here, but you know it depends on how many members there are in the family. If a family has about six or eight children, they could have an income of about five thousand dollars or so. They still would qualify for Head Start. The more children there are the more income is allowed, you know. And so when we accept the children for Head Start, we review the parents. We have to know how many members there are in the family. We have to know how much income there is in the family. I know one family here, a Mexican family, they have about ten children. They go to Michigan in the summer. They may earn six thousand dollars up there, but with the number of children they still qualify for the Head Start.

M: Did President Johnson ever ask you about Head Start in this area?

S: Yes.

M: Or local problems like that?

S: Well, it was his wish that we start this Head Start here.

M: Then would he ask you about it later, how it was going and things?

S: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He was, and Lady Bird, too, very interested, very concerned. Last September when we started the Head Start he thought that some of the children from the Ranch should get into the Head Start. You know, Mexicans--

M: Yes.

S: --and black children. Then, of course, in all sincerity, we, Pastor Maeker--who took the place of Pastor Trusdell at the Trinity Lutheran Church at Stonewall--myself, pointed out to him that if these children from the Ranch get into the Head Start that might throw a bad reflection to him, because they were working for him at the Ranch. People would say, "They should not come under the Poverty Program."

M: Yes.

S: He understood that. Then of course what we did, we started a kindergarten in the Trinity Lutheran Church, started a kindergarten beside the Head Start that's still going. The Head Start has about twenty children, the kindergarten about twenty-five children. The children from the Ranch go to the kindergarten.

M: Right.

S: However, I think the kindergarten is fifteen dollars a month. I'm not quite sure, but I do think that President Johnson does pay for the children, or partly he pays for them. He told me only the other day, to be quite honest with you, I think the Johnson City Foundation maybe will give some grant to the kindergarten so that they find it easier to run it, so that it doesn't need to charge so much.

M: Did you happen to attend the wedding of either one of his daughters?

S: No. The wedding was in Washington. Both weddings were in Washington. I wasn't invited, and I didn't [go].

M: Did President Johnson ever say anything to you about Vietnam and the difficulties he was having?

S: Yes. I remember, I guess towards the end of his office--oh, yes, it was when I was in the White House; we were in the White House in October, 1968--he told us that he used the hot line a few times. He just had to be up in the middle of the night. He said he was so close to--as he called it, he almost hit a home run--have this thing settled in Vietnam, and still it didn't work out.

M: What was he referring to right then?

S: Either to a settlement or whatever he was referring to. But he worked so hard, and he thought that after he announced that he wouldn't run that he would, according to my own opinion, be able to finish that war.

M: But it didn't work out for him.

S: But he never, of course, would surrender unconditionally, you know. So I know he worked really very hard on that.

M: Did he ever say anything to you about civil rights movements, black or Mexican American?

S: Oh, yes. He's all for that. That was his pet, to give equal rights to Mexicans and to blacks.

M: You think he was deeply concerned?

S: Oh, yes. He's definitely deeply concerned. He is. Then of course you might say--I don't know, but people might say, "Why doesn't he pay them better?" and so forth. Well, there is a point to it. Because he has a house down on the Ranch; he fixed up the house, he put paneling in the house like this, and floors and washing machine and freezer and ice box and everything. He fixed up the house, and two Mexican families live in the house. Well, I don't blame him if he doesn't pay them top wages, because after all he has to get some recompense for giving them the house.

M: Yes. In this description you mentioned "paneling like this." I ought to point out for the purpose of the tape that you were gesturing toward wooden paneling in this rectory.

Did you ever have any difficulty with your church because of your friendship with Lyndon Johnson?

S: Not real difficulty. Of course there are a few people, you'll find that everywhere, who dislike Johnson. They find fault, they talk to me, and I in turn wouldn't say too much. I would say, "After all, President Johnson is very good to us." I wouldn't say that he would bribe me or so. It is true while he was in office once he gave me two hundred dollars for me personally. And in those days, when we built this house here, we were more or less in a financial problem. I put the two hundred dollars into the church treasury, because I knew it was needed there. When he comes to church he gives a nice offering.

Oh, yes, while he was in office he was in church, and one Sunday he put two hundred dollars in the collection basket. Somehow or another I told somebody, and this got in the paper. I shouldn't have. Then Jimmy Jones said the President said it wasn't necessary that I should tell the people what he puts in. However, now it doesn't matter. He was here Easter Sunday, Mrs. Johnson and the Nugents were here, and the men who take up the collection know that, too. He put in a hundred dollars for the parish. I have my financial report in the bulletin. I could show it to you after a while.

M: Okay.

S: Now, for example, the Sunday after Easter I had a hundred and twenty-nine dollars loose collection, and every other Sunday I have maybe fifteen or twenty or twenty-five dollars loose collection.

M: Yes.

S: So, without telling anybody, even the people who don't like Johnson say, "Oh, that Johnson must have put in something big in the collection." For this reason they tolerate that he comes, and somehow or another they're happy. Because if he doesn't give then they have to, they have to support their own parish. I mean it is their parish, it is not mine.

So as a matter of fact, I believe that President Johnson actually did do his best that I would come here to Stonewall. I believe that he did write to the archbishop and ask him to send me here.

M: But the bishops and the archbishops did not mind you having this friendship with Johnson?

S: No, they are very happy about it. As a matter of fact, you may have read about when President Johnson was in office after Lucey--the Archbishop of San Antonio--was very outspoken for President Johnson's policy, very outspoken. Lucey's a great friend. Last year in the summer, he invited Lucey, Archbishop Lucey's retired now, and after a few visits with the new bishop he invited them up to the Ranch here. He drove them around the Ranch and showed them around, and so they were very impressed and enjoyed it. I saw Archbishop Furey yesterday. I have confirmation here in my parish the sixteenth of May, and Archbishop Furey said, "Be sure and invite President Johnson for the church service." And for the meal of course, we have the parish [dinner]. I don't know what they call it, the parish family dinner we have. I think he will come.

M: Let me interrupt for just a minute. That tape's about ready to run out.

S: Okay. Are we through then?

M: Let me ask just a few more questions, then we'll be through.

S: Okay.

M: But I need to change the tape because it's going to run out.

Tape 2 of 2

M: Do you remember when Lyndon Johnson had his heart attack, about 1955?

S: Yes.

M: Did you see him any at that time?

S: No.

M: He came to the Ranch to recover.

S: Yes, he did, but I didn't know him too well then.

M: A question about Lady Bird: lots of people seem to have great praise for Lady Bird and think that she did a fine job as First Lady; do you have any comment about that?

S: Well, I would say Lady Bird is a very gracious lady, and she's very kind. When you are in her company there is never a dull moment, she always has some material for the conversation. Only the other day I had my book, I mean the book about the White House memories, and she did initial it, autograph it. She said that, "You know, Father Schneider, of my love for the flowers and the beautiful country," something like that. She wrote in my book the autograph. She's very, very anxious to have a beautiful country, a clean country, and even now this summer here in Stonewall we have a contest, a yard contest, the one who has the best-kept yard and the nicest flowers. Now I may have nice flowers, but I may not have the best-kept yard.

There will be the beautification program, they call it. They have some money, and they've got money in the treasury and through this autograph party we had in Fredericksburg. The beautification program got so many per cent of the book. I guess they must have gotten maybe a couple of thousand dollars. However, they give prizes, first, second and third prize for different categories in this yard contest. So Lady Bird is very anxious [to have] more flowers, more beautiful wildflowers, too. Now this spring the weather was dry. We all tried to have lots of bluebonnets, but it was too dry. I spent myself about ten dollars worth of bluebonnet seeds and didn't have any success, because just the weather was not good enough.

However, even now, as far as the cleanliness is concerned on the highways, the Highway Department do their best, but they just can't pick up beer cans all the time. Now the ranch road, the local boy scouts troop keep the ranch road clean. Every Sunday or Saturday the boy scouts drive up and down the ranch road and collect paper and cans and bottles, whatever they find. So we do succeed in having the ranch road clean. I keep score, I suppose; I write it down. And on Sunday there may be five or six boy scouts and an adult, or two adults, and they keep busy maybe two or three hours to pick up. Indeed, the first time they did it they had a truck load of this rubbish. I tell you. Now they don't get so much, but they always find stuff. And then I keep a record on this. And then President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson in turn have given already a thousand dollars toward the building of the boy scout hut, which is down the road here by the LBJ State Park. They have the roof on now. They are working on it. They depend on free labor a lot. President Johnson told me the other day he's looking forward to give another donation toward the building of the boy scout hut. So they are really helping, they are helping the community.

Last year, here in the community we planted crape myrtle. I planted myself three, four, five, something like that. Nearly every family or landowner got one or two free, and then they could buy a few extra ones. So, as time goes on, we'll have nice brush. This year we planted flowering peach, which are blooming now. I planted about six or eight. However, next year we might plant something else. So that as time goes on the country will be real nice, and then tourists passing by, they'll see. This year there are many more tourists passing by than last year. They've really increased, and then of course down at the Birthplace. Down there, the Birthplace, that's federal now. They've taken over, and the federal government's taking care of that. And also in Johnson City, the Boyhood Home, that's also federal. That became a historic site last June, the Birthplace down here. Before that they used to charge thirty-five cents to go to the Birthplace, but now it's free, which is a good thing of course.

M: Then the Johnsons really are taking a part in the community life?

S: Oh, very much so. Again, that's why people really can't be too much against him, because they do a lot of good. Down here in Stonewall last year we built a city dump, which is for a small community a big undertaking.

M: Yes.

S: I guess it took a man with heavy equipment a whole week to dig out a big hole that will last about ten years or so. Now if we had to pay that we couldn't afford it, but Johnson gave his man and his equipment and we got it free.

M: So the town got a city dump.

S: Yes. That's why I say there are lots of things being accomplished with the help of the Johnsons.

M: And one other thing I wanted to ask you about: you mentioned that you had a birthday recently, and he brought you some presents.

S: Yes.

M: How long ago was this?

S: The twenty-fourth of March.

M: He came down and brought you these presents?

S: Yes. Oh, yes. My people like to celebrate my birthday. Last year they gave me a surprise party, and it really was a surprise party, because one lady in the parish invited me for supper that day. She said, "Will you come to eat supper with us?" I said, "Oh, yes, I'm glad to." People invite me out, you know.

M: Sure.

S: I have no housekeeper, and they invite me out to eat. So when evening come, another guy saw to it that I wouldn't go out there to eat supper. Of course the lady knew that they were giving me a party. So when evening came this guy took me in the car, in his pickup. We drove down this way here, and we saw a light over there in the hall, it was already dark, and a lot of cars. I said, "What's going on in the hall?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "I don't know either." Normally, they ask me if somebody wants to use the hall, and I obviously didn't know anything. He said, "Let us go up and see." Then he drove up and went into the hall, and I in my innocence stayed in the pickup. Because we were supposed to go down to the ranch; we were supposed to go down to the ranch to get the tools or so. So we drove up, and he went into the hall. I guess he told the fellows, "Schneider's outside." And so after he came out, he said, "Come in, Father. Let us look around and see what's going on." So I went in then, and they start to sing "Happy Birthday." And Johnson was there too, Mrs. Johnson, too. Yes.

I mean every year they have a party for me, somehow or another, and the Johnson's always come. And this year they didn't want to make it a surprise. They told me before, "We are going to have a birthday party. We are going to have it in the evening, after evening Mass, about eight o'clock, and then if anybody wants to play cards or bingo or dominoes they can do so." They asked me to put it in my parish bulletin, so I did. I said in the bulletin the officers of my societies suggested that we should have a birthday party, and so forth. And then we have to go over there. Of course, around here they always have beer for a party and something to eat, some sandwiches and cake and coffee. Everybody was happy over there. We started about eight o'clock, and I thought to myself, "It seems that Johnson's not coming this year." It got to be about nine o'clock, no President Johnson; ten o'clock, no Johnson. I had given up. I figured, "Oh, well, maybe he's out of town." And then I thought maybe because of that stupid article in the National--what do you call it?

M: Observer.

S: Observer. And then, well, after ten o'clock, lo and behold he came in, and loaded with packages. Did I show you my hat he gave me?

M: Yes.

S: That hat and the pictures and other presents. I was really surprised. I was very happy. And so he brings me gifts like that every year, oh yes.

M: Well, this exhausts all the questions I have for you. Do you have anything else you wish to say?

S: Well, I think I touched almost on everything. Of course, there are things which I have forgotten already. If there is anything else that you can think of, any more questions . . . Oh yes, last year Lady Bird had beautiful flowers down there in the Ranch, zinnias, and she came by here and said, "Father Schneider, why don't you get yourself some zinnias down in the Ranch?" They had them out in the field, a whole long row, hundreds of them. So

I went down and cut myself all the zinnias I want, and brought them in the church and decorated my church. She's definitely a very great friend of flowers.

President Johnson told me the other day, "Father Schneider, why don't you teach young people the art of gardening?" I said, "Yes. I would like to, but it's hard to do, because people haven't time." He said, "What about if you get these young people once or twice a week for a couple of hours, so that they would learn something, how to have nice flowers and how to keep a nice yard. Maybe we could help them and pay them something, so much an hour." I said, "That sounds mighty fine, but I would have to talk to the parents, of course, first of all. I know there are problems. Young people are busy, especially in school time they are busy." Then he also said the other day, "You know, you're not supposed to work so hard. You should have a riding lawn mower." Well, I bought myself a lawn mower the other day; it was a pusher, because I feel that a riding lawn mower costs a couple hundred dollars more than a pusher, you know. On the other hand, of course, I like to do some walking behind the lawn mower. That keeps the weight down, you know.

Oh yes, when he was in office he gave me permission to go down to the swimming pool, to go down swimming. He would give me permission to take two friends along. So at that time I used to go down swimming every day. It was nice and private, you know, and to take some boys around along, altar boys, who help me in the church. We have a good time. Then, of course, the swimming pool was built in the Park, and then I don't go down there anymore. In fact, I don't even go to the Park swimming pool, because I have a little trouble with my bladder. So I gave up swimming.

However, the swimming pool, that's another thing. He calls it "Father Schneider's swimming pool." When I was in New York with Pastor Truesdell one day we talked about the swimming pool. I said, "Mr. President, we should have a swimming pool in the community. These young people have to go to Fredericksburg, sixteen miles, to go to a swimming pool." And Pastor Truesdell said, "There's no need for a swimming pool in Stonewall. They don't mind to drive to Fredericksburg." I said, "And that's precisely what I don't want. I don't want to have the young people on the highway. It's so dangerous." He was against the swimming pool; I was for it.

I talked and I talked and I said, "The tourists. Look at here, the tourists come here to the Park. They have access to the swimming pool, and without any further obligation. If they go to a tourist motel they have to rent a room, and then they can go swimming. But here they can do it during the day and go swimming and go on wherever they want to go." So I talked and finally one day when I saw LBJ, that was shortly before he went out of office--excuse me if I say LBJ, that's a shortword for Lyndon B. Johnson--he told me, "You've won." I said, "What do you mean, Mr. President, 'You've won'?" He said, "Well, they are going to build a swimming pool in the Park." So he calls it Father Schneider's swimming pool.

M: Oh, I see. Well, I wish to thank you for your time.

S: Yes. Well, it was longer than I thought. We are at it at least two hours, isn't that right?

M: Just about right.

S: So you got a lot of material.

M: Yes, sir. It's been a delightful interview. Thank you very much.

S: You're welcome.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]