

INTERVIEW I

DATE: June 13, 1969
INTERVIEWEE: LUTHER E. JONES, JR.
INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB
PLACE: Judge Jones' Chambers in the Nueces County Courthouse,
Corpus Christi, Texas

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M: First of all, I'd like to know a little bit about your background. Where were you born, where did you get your education, when were you born?

J: I was born January 12, 1914, Montgomery, Montgomery County, Texas.

M: City of Montgomery.

J: Well, it was a very small village in East Texas. I stayed there till I was about twelve years old, and then I moved to Houston. After my parents' divorce, I went with my father in Houston who was a druggist. I finished high school in Houston. That's where I met Mr. Johnson. He was a teacher of speech at Central High School where I was [a student]. I was a part of his debating team. After I finished high school, I went to Rice Institute for two years.

During the summer immediately after that two-year period, I became assistant secretary to Congressman Richard Kleberg. At that time Mr. Johnson was secretary. I went to Washington--let's see, this would be in early 1934--and worked in the office of Congressman Kleberg as an assistant secretary. Mr. Johnson was the secretary and really ran the office. In a very real sense, he was the congressman.

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I started back to college; I enrolled in Georgetown University Law School the following September. That would be the September of 1934. At the same time Lyndon Johnson enrolled with me, but he pulled out after two or three weeks and went to Texas to head up the NYA--no, I think he went a little later. Anyway, he pulled out of law school. I think he pulled out to get married; I believe that's the secret. Anyway, I went to night law school and finished one year at Georgetown.

Then the following summer--Mr. Johnson in the meantime had become National Youth administrator and had gone to Austin--I joined him in Austin. I started my second year of law school at The University of Texas, and I lived with Mr. Johnson in the home of Dr. Robert Montgomery in Austin, Texas. Montgomery was an economics professor who was on leave, I think, with the Roosevelt Administration. Anyway, he had a big house and it was leased to Mr. Johnson, and Willard Deason, who is now on the Interstate Commerce Commission, and I were roommates in one of the upstairs rooms of that home. I lived there during my second and third year of law school and worked part-time with the National Youth Administration. I was in Mr. Johnson's office. I was more or less a personal secretary. I got my law degree in June of 1937.

Before that, a month or two earlier, the congressman of that district, Mr. Buchanan, died, and Mr. Johnson offered for election and was elected. I participated very actively in that campaign. There are a few stories probably worth telling in connection with that. I

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almost busted out of law school because I spent so much time running sound trucks.

M: Let me pause here for a moment and ask you some questions about this earlier period and then pick up with that 1937 election. You were in high school at the time when Johnson came down to teach.

J: I was a senior when he was there.

M: Do you have any impressions of him when he first came in as a teacher? Do you remember what he looked like?

J: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Of course, as you will see if you look at pictures of him at that time, he was very slender. And then as now he was characterized by enormous physical energy. In fact, all the qualities that people associate with him as president were manifested at this early period. I mean, the human dynamo, the intense dedication to a particular problem at hand, unlimited enthusiasm. I never will forget, the principal of the school was a man, I believe his name was [W. J.] Moyes--he may be dead now--anyway, he was the principal of the school, and I can recall two or three discussions where I was present and heard rather vigorous arguments by Mr. Johnson. He'd be asking for money, for example, to take the debaters on trips, and he would be informed that it had never been done. Mr. Johnson would say, "Yes, but you've never had a teacher like me." (Laughter) In other words, by some people's standards you would say he was very conceited, or at least very assured. He was not at all timid, very, extremely aggressive.

M: Did he work with his debaters pretty hard?

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J: He worked. Everything about the man was intense. Yes, he worked very hard. This is the dominating theme, I think, of Lyndon Johnson's life, at least the part of it I saw: just unceasing effort, but effort that was pleasant to him. I don't think he ever felt like he was being overworked or anything. I never, ever heard him complain.

M: That debate team went all the way to state finals.

J: Yes, we lost the last debate.

M: That must have been heartbreaking.

J: Oh, yes. I suppose you've seen the stories when he cried and sobbed when it was over.

M: Is that true?

J: I think it's probably been exaggerated, but he was heartbroken and extremely sad over it because we had been lucky that far. We should have made it.

M: It must have been a sad homecoming trip for you.

J: Oh, I don't know, I've forgotten about the reaction.

M: Then he stayed on at the high school that fall semester, did he not, and you went on to Rice? Did you have any connection with the debate team after that?

J: Yes. Mr. Johnson was succeeded by a classmate of his named Hollis Frazer. I think Mr. Johnson suggested it, I don't remember for sure, but anyway, Mr. Frazer welcomed assistance from me. I was a freshman at Rice, but I would come down afternoons and continue working with the debaters. Spiritually, I was still a high school student, perhaps.

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M: Johnson went off to help Congressman Kleberg.

J: Yes.

M: And then you got on that staff, too.

J: Ultimately. I went to Rice two years.

M: Yes. Did Kleberg hire you, or did Johnson hire you?

J: No. The way I got hired was, my father had a drugstore, and I worked in the drug store. The summer after my second year at Rice, I think it was August, Mr. Johnson dropped in. He was very fond of my father, and it was mutual fondness. My dad always insisted on making presents to Mr. Johnson. He'd just insist, you know, if he needed any tooth-paste or hair oil or anything. On this occasion he told me that there was a vacancy, and that I could go to Washington and could go to school at night up there.

You know, I never had any doubt about taking it. I think that the decision was made in just a few minutes. He said it was there, and I asked my father what he thought and he said as usual, "Do what you want to." If I remember right, I think I left with Lyndon Johnson. We came right on to Corpus either that day or the next. We moved into the Medical Professional Building, and we stayed in Corpus Christi all the rest of that fall and didn't go to Washington until January or just before January. There was a hurricane that occurred while we were here. We were staying at the time in the Plaza Hotel. It was then the Plaza Hotel; that's been destroyed since. The Kleberg home, Mr. Kleberg's home, there's a Catholic church now where that home was. I never will forget that around midnight I walked from that home to

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the Plaza Hotel in the middle of the storm. I don't know why I did that, [I've] forgotten why, but I did and it was a terrifying experience. The wind was very high.

M: What kind of work did you do?

J: Just stenographer.

M: You'd take care of letters and dictation and that [sort of work].

J: Yes. Actually, at the beginning he dictated a lot, but ultimately no dictation was required. I mean, he'd have a pile of letters and he'd just sit there and make a few comments, "Say yes, say no, put him off, butter him up." In due time we developed a set of systems, so that I knew what he wanted. At first, Lyndon Johnson was a hard man to work for because he insisted on perfection. Everything had to look just right, and it had to be the way he wanted it. He had pet phrases, and, of course, I adapted to that very quickly. But at first I wrote literally hundreds of letters over. And he had no compunction at all about making you write them over, I mean, even if you had to stay till midnight. You handed him fifty, sixty letters at five o'clock, and he might mark out every one of them.

M: Did he insist on prompt answers to letters?

J: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. The man was an extremely able executive from the very beginning. It's fantastic how absorbed he was in that job; it was to the exclusion of everything. Of course, he was not different from anybody else in regard to females. He liked them and he had an occasional date, but that was very peripheral, tangential in his life.

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M: Did you mention ~~that~~ he practically ran that office?

J: Oh, yes. Even to the extent of writing personal letters to Dick Kleberg's mother. (Laughter) He knew exactly what Mr. Kleberg wanted and liked, and there was total affection between these two. At least during the time I was there, Mr. Kleberg loved Lyndon Johnson just like a son and had a tremendous respect for his political astuteness. I've been at many conferences between Mr. Kleberg and Mr. Johnson where Mr. Dick, as I called him, would yield, and Lyndon was never timid, never timid about expressing political viewpoints. Bear in mind, he was just a very young fellow and Kleberg was a very distinguished congressman and much older than Mr. Johnson, but he did respect his political astuteness.

M: There is some story that Johnson persuaded Kleberg to withdraw a position in Roosevelt's AAA program.

J: That is certainly the truth, although I can't remember, I can't give you details. I can remember there was a period when Mr. Kleberg was attending these committee hearings, and that he would come in after them aghast at some of the proposals which ultimately became the AAA legislation. And there were many, I won't say heated discussions, earnest discussions would be better, between Mr. Johnson and Mr. Kleberg about the wisdom of the legislation and the alternatives to it. To make a long story short, I don't think there's any question but that Lyndon Johnson had a big part in persuading Mr. Kleberg to ultimately vote for the legislation. Kleberg was a very dedicated, conscientious man, too. I don't know whether he would have voted for

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it without Johnson, but Johnson, then as now, was very liberal and very conscious of social problems, very eager to do something.

M: Did you stay in the Dodge Hotel?

J: Yes.

M: Did Johnson arrange those quarters for you, or did you find those on your own?

J: When we got to Washington in January of 1934, that's when I went up there, we moved into the Dodge down in a room shared by Gene Latimer and myself and Lyndon--there was a connecting bath--and Robert Jackson, who is now the editor of the paper here in Corpus, who then was secretary to then-Congressman [Robert Ewing] Thomason, later Federal Judge Thomason, now retired Federal Judge Thomason. There were many others. Later prominent people were there in the Dodge Hotel. John Connally came later, several years later. You see, there were two phases in my life in Washington, one was before law school and one after. But there were many young men down there in the Dodge Hotel. Arthur Perry was there. At that time he was secretary to Senator [Tom] Connally, and, as you know, he later became an assistant to President Johnson. I think he's still alive, isn't he?

M: I don't know.

J: I saw him, yes, he's still alive. I know it, but he's not a young man anymore.

M: Do you suppose that those quarters close by the Capitol were intended to get more work out of you?

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J: Oh, I doubt that. I think that the only significance to those quarters is that they were economical and convenient. I mean, it cost almost nothing, I think probably twenty-five dollars a month for that room, and all we did was sleep there.

Most people wouldn't believe the way we worked. Johnson would wake up at five, five-thirty, very early, and he'd see that we got out of bed. We'd have breakfast by the time the dining room opened, and we'd be working by seven or seven-thirty and not home till midnight many nights. (Laughter)

M: So about all you did was sleep there, then.

J: That's right. But you know, nobody minded. I mean the atmosphere was full of challenge, and this guy's enthusiasm was just absolutely contagious. I'm sure you've heard this before, you've been talking to other people, but even in those days we were all speculating: "This guy's someday going to be either president or the equivalent"; "He's going places"; "It's inevitable he's going to be a man of destiny." We all had that feeling. This guy had an extra something, I'm stating it poorly, but an extra quality that was quite evident to everybody.

M: Do you remember when he got married?

J: Oh, yes.

M: 1934.

J: Yes, I remember.

M: Did you happen to attend the wedding?

J: No, no, I didn't.

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Huey Long, you know, in those days was in the public eye a great deal and wrote a book called Every Man a King. Are you aware of that book?

M: Yes.

J: I remember that Mr. Johnson got hold of it and he and Bob Jackson read it and discussed it at great length. I also remember--this is sort of interesting--back in those days Mr. Johnson wasn't as favorable to spending; he thought you should have more efficiency in government as distinguished from the excessive expenditures. See, Huey wanted to spend great quantities of money, and Johnson was critical. At least this is my memory; I remember him as being critical.

M: Is he critical of the book?

J: Of Long. His position was you should be more efficient, not waste the money. Now some people would say that he changed, considering some of the programs that he launched as president.

M: Do you remember the episode of the Little Congress?

J: Very well. Oh, yes, I'll never forget that. Am I being too personal? Do you want all this?

M: No, this is fine.

J: The Little Congress, as you know, was an organization of secretaries. I never went, but my only connection with the Little Congress [came because] Lyndon did go and was active and got elected speaker of it early in the day. He was speaker while I was in Washington. On one occasion this organization went to New York--I've forgotten why, but it was a convention--and we were on the train together. The thing

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that I remember about that trip though, was that I was sort of a callow youth and country boy in every sense of the word, and I had never been subjected to alcoholic beverages. We got in one of those big hotels up there, and I had a fish dinner. I can still remember this because of the pain that was involved. I ate a large fish dinner and drank several mixed drinks, and I have never in my life been so sick as I was; you know, I got nauseated. The mixture didn't work. Maybe it was bad fish or something.

But on that trip Mr. Johnson dominated it. He dominated every place he went. He was always making arrangements, making plans, buttonholing people, getting the job done. In other words, whatever else you may say about him, he never wasted any time just playing for its own sake. Now he did play, and I've seen him play vigorously, but at least, to my eye, there was always purpose in his playing in the sense that he was achieving some goal that the play had a connection with.

M: This is a question that's come up before: what does he do to relax?

J: I can't ever recall in my whole connection with Lyndon Johnson when he wasn't pursuing some objective.

M: He just didn't sit down and read a novel.

J: I don't recall Mr. Johnson ever reading anything in my presence or ever discussing reading anything other than the newspapers and the current magazines, Life and Time, which he devoured. He was totally aware of current events, but I don't ever recall his engaging in a discussion about having read a book on philosophy or religion. It

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wasn't that he wasn't interested in these things. It was that his life didn't raise any problems that caused him to be interested in them.

M: Did he go to plays or movies?

J: Oh, I don't recall his ever going to any play or movie or ever mentioning going to any play or movie, or even being aware that there were any plays or movies. (Laughter) It's incredible, the dedication. Now I'm sure that he would have gone if it had helped him accomplish some mission that was germane at the moment.

M: There's been a lot of talk about the so-called Johnson "treatment," which refers primarily to a style of talking to people, persuading people, and one of the attributes is that he would get very close to a person, tap him, yank on their lapels, that sort of thing. Is that the truth?

J: Well, I don't know about that. The only comment I would make about his style is that--and of course I have to make comparisons with my own efforts to impress people--any time that Lyndon Johnson, at least in my connections with him, wanted to impress anybody or convince anybody, he got prepared in whatever means, by telephone call or by reading or however. He was always well informed about the project at hand, and he was intense about it and enthusiastic about it. I think this is the way that he convinced people. I mean you can't be around the guy at all--first he fills himself up with knowledge, and then he pours out enthusiasm around it and you can't stop him. I mean there's no way. I think that's the secret: he just overwhelms you.

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He's a very careful man in thinking out a program. Just to give a homely example of somebody, I can remember several instances where some citizen would come in wanting an appointment for West Point or some favor of some kind, and Lyndon spent all day or maybe a week on the background before he zeroed in on whoever had to make the final decision. Now this is the side that the public never sees. It's like the fellow on the trapeze, you know, it looks easy. That's why I'm distressed about Vietnam. If he couldn't solve it, it probably can't be solved. I mean because this guy's a genius at addressing himself to a particular problem, zeroing in on it, first getting the information about it, and zeroing in on it and just overwhelming everybody with enthusiasm.

M: Do you remember when he took the NYA position?

J: Yes.

M: Why did he do that?

J: Oh, I don't know why except that--

M: Was it a better paying position?

J: He never discussed it with me, but my guess would be that Lyndon Johnson didn't think too far ahead on that. It was an opportunity and a challenge, it was better than where he was, and it was back in Texas. This man didn't speculate too much about tomorrow; he was more concerned about doing what had to be done today. I think others have stated this. He seems to have that quality, at least some of the present observers think he's still that way.

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M: So he returned to Texas and you came back and went to UT law school, is that right?

J: Yes. I came back in the summer of 1935 and stayed until 1937 and lived with him while he was NYA director.

M: Did he carry enthusiasm in the NYA?

J: Oh, yes, yes.

M: Still up early and working late.

J: I was with him when he first took over, and one of the problems of a new outfit is to do something to start the ball rolling. Well, I was present when there were a series of conferences about, "What can we do? What tangible can we do?" He had a man with him who had been Maury Maverick's speech writer and who worked for an Oklahoma newspaper. He's dead now--Herbert Henderson. Well, anyway, this newspaperman was writing up [proposals]. You know, they'd get an idea, and then he'd write it up to see how it sounded. They finally came up with these parks that you see on the Texas highways.

M: Roadside parks.

J: Roadside parks. This emerged from the early conferences. And it was rapidly decided, I say rapidly, there were a series of conferences, but anyway, Mr. Johnson made the decision that this would be their first tangible effort. Then, with characteristic efficiency, he just worked night and day, I mean he just drove his staff to distraction doing what had to be done. You know, there was a lot of paperwork. As I remember it, you had to first describe the plan to the Washington people with maps, and you had to name the people who were going to

set it up and everything. He had a tremendous administrative problem, and it could have taken months. He did it in days. I think just a matter of a few weeks after the decision was made the first roadside park was in existence or was being constructed. I remember there was one lady, I can't remember her name, who almost had a nervous breakdown because of the pressure that she was subjected to.

M: Do you recall why they selected the roadside parks in particular?

J: No, no. I just know there were discussions, and they canvassed many areas. They wanted something that would cover the whole state, and that would do good and could be done and also fit the budget. This turned out to be perfect. It didn't cost too much, and it was needed. I can even remember on that roadside park deal the final plans, after this newspaper man had done the final write-up and Mr. Johnson had checked it and double-checked it, had been typed up. I took it to the post office late at night to go to Washington so you could get the green light.

M: In living with the Johnsons in that house, did you all cook meals together and that sort of thing?

J: Oh yes. Mr. Deason and I ate breakfast there every morning. I think we ate supper; you know, I can't remember.

M: Did Mrs. Johnson do the cooking?

J: I don't remember. Aunt Effie, that's the woman that raised Bird, lived there too and it was just like a family. We weren't like boarders. We had the run of the house, and I felt exactly like a member of the family and was treated like one.

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M: Can you tell me why he decided to run in 1937 for Congress?

J: When Buchanan died, of course, there was speculation that the widow would run, and then also very rapidly a number of people announced that they would run, among whom were some fairly prominent people in Austin whose political backgrounds were very impressive, at least on the surface much more so than Mr. Johnson's. But at that time, when he made his announcement, I was an apprentice--under the Texas bar rules you have to be an apprentice in a law firm--for Alvin Wirtz, who was one of Mr. Johnson's dear friends and mentors. Since I was an apprentice in that office, I had occasion to be present and hear the crucial discussions on whether he would run. I don't know who else Mr. Johnson discussed it with, but he did confer at length with Senator Wirtz.

M: Wirtz encouraged him.

J: Wirtz encouraged him to run, and Wirtz told him--I can remember it very well--"You can win provided you endorse and follow the Roosevelt program, including the court-packing plan," which was a red-hot issue then. It was Wirtz's idea, as I remember, that "You've got to give the people a symbol of what a total Roosevelt man you are, and this will be the clincher. Of course, there will be those who will be bitter at you, but to hell with them. They're in the minority. The people like Roosevelt." And this was interesting, because most of Senator Wirtz' clients would be, I'm sure, among the people who would dislike Roosevelt and the court-packing plan. But he personally, apparently, was a very astute politician.

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M: Johnson then followed that advice?

J: Yes. And the first problem that they had after that decision was made was to pick a campaign manager. As you know, Claude Wild, who had not too long ago been the head of a campaign for Jimmy Allred I believe it was, was asked if he would run the campaign. I've forgotten the details, but I know there was great joy in the Lyndon forces when Wild announced that he would head up the campaign.

This is an aside, but I think--for whatever it's worth, posterity might be interested in it--Mr. Wild was an unusual man, extremely unusual. Is he alive or dead?

M: He's alive.

J: He's still alive? I had the good fortune to watch him organize this campaign, and it was fascinating the way within an hour after he was hired he had already booked all the time that he needed for the radio program--[we] didn't have TV then--near the closing days of the campaign, [had] all that arranged in advance. Of course, he had an organization already created, and it went into immediate action. One of the conditions on which he took the assignment was that Lyndon Johnson would have to do what he said absolutely, that Wild would tell him when to speak, where to speak and what to say. And as far as I know, Mr. Johnson did, he complied.

M: Where did he get the money to run this, do you know?

J: From the usual sources, I guess, but of course Mrs. Johnson put up some money, I've forgotten how much.

M: There is a story that she financed this campaign.

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J: My memory's vague on this, but the fact is in my mind I believe I took the check to the bank, and I think it was a ten thousand dollar check. I'm sure this has been written about somewhere else. Anyway, she did make a substantial contribution to this campaign and was very enthusiastic about it.

M: Did she do any speech making?

J: I don't think so, but she was very much in favor of his running. He'd have never made it without her. She, in her own right, is just as unusual a person as he is. She's an extremely unusual person.

M: Unusual in what sense?

J: In just any department you want to name, I mean, charm or good health or good humor or--

M: Intelligence.

J: Intelligence. He's a lucky guy to have a balancing wheel such as she was. Most women wouldn't have put up with him, I'm certain, because of his rather overbearing ways, at least to a female.

During the war I was on company punishment up at Bolling Field for about a week, and my new wife came up to see me. The Johnsons had her in their home while I was in company punishment, and my wife's reactions to the rather summary and, to her, high-handed way he ran his household served to highlight the fact that Lady Bird is an unusual person. She never gave the impression of worrying at all about it; she just took it in stride. She could be real stern with him, although I don't think I ever saw her lose her temper more than two or three times and then only mildly. See, he was always under great pressure,

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always imposing on her, at least by some standards in the sense that he'd call her up at six o'clock and say, "I'm bringing over five people for dinner." Most women don't react very well to that sort of thing. And his political life caused him to be gone a lot, travel a lot. She never complained at all, at least in any way I could see.

M: Lyndon Johnson has the reputation of being a rather impatient individual. How did she react to something like that?

J: She matched him with calmness, matched his impatience. She's a good antidote. You know, I said he never read anything, and of course she's just the opposite. She read everything, I mean the art and the literature and the philosophy. She is a real interesting female and a good companion. She liked good talk and good food.

M: Did she ever advise him about politics?

J: I couldn't say. I never was aware of that if she did. I've read later stories. I'm sure that her advice would have been good. In fact, her background and reading probably helped fill up some of his gaps. I don't know. I don't know whether she [did or not].

M: In the 1937 campaign, to get back to that, what did you do?

J: I ran a sound truck.

M: You had a speaker on top of the truck?

J: Oh, yes, we'd go into these little towns and tell them he was going to be speaking. I'd get there an hour ahead and try to round up a few people in the town square.

M: You were what is now called an advance man then.

J: Well, I guess so.

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- M: You'd bring in your sound truck, and you'd say that he's coming and try to get people [out]?
- J: Yes, these would be little towns where we'd be lucky if we had fifty people, but the speeches would be very short.
- M: Then he'd follow behind you about an hour or so.
- J: Right, or thirty minutes later and make the speech and move on.
- M: And you'd be going on to the next [place].
- J: Another little town.
- M: Did Johnson work pretty hard on that campaign?
- J: Oh, yes. I remember when the decision was made that he was going to run. We were in Senator Wirtz' office and the die was cast--he was going to run. So he walked out of the office, we got on the elevator [in the] Littlefield Building--I believe that's where we were--walked out on the street, and he immediately, first person we passed, stuck his hand out and said, "I'm Lyndon Johnson. I'm running for Congress." (Laughter) I bet he shook hands with fifty people before we got to his car. You know, just an excess of enthusiasm. He's probably got an overactive thyroid.
- M: Did he have an appendicitis operation then?
- J: The last day of the campaign.
- M: Did that create a crisis for him?
- J: Yes, but a very favorable crisis. There's no question about the man having the pain and everything, but the timing of the operation some cynics think was engineered by Mr. Claude Wild. I have no idea whether that's true or not. I think that it operated in such a way as to

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create a good [reaction]. I mean I think it was good for his campaign; I don't think it hurt him. Because, now, one reason for that, Wild made the speech that he was going to make on that last day.

M: Was this on the radio?

J: Yes. And Wild is a better speaker than Lyndon Johnson. Wild could have been a radio announcer. I'm just talking about the quality of his voice and everything and his style. I think Mr. Johnson realizes that public speaking, his speech making is probably not his forte. I heard his daughter speak. I thought she was a better speaker than even the President, his eldest daughter. She's really a smoothy, isn't she?

M: Have you ever reflected on how ironic that is, that he taught debate?

J: I don't mean to reflect on him. It's just that this is now that which he does with the greatest skill; his greatest skill is in hand-to-hand fighting, or hand-to-hand talking. He does best in small groups where there can be informality. Something happens to Mr. Johnson, though, when you put him in front of a TV screen; he becomes very formal and loses this warm, personal [quality] to some extent. It's not for me to criticize him. I don't mean to be critical; that's just my own observation. I thought Wild was a better speaker than he was.

M: So it may have helped him.

J: Wild made a marvelous speech. He worked in the appendicitis and everything, the thesis that he just may have worked himself into this illness and "I wish he could be here, but he's not."

M: Did you celebrate the victory then?

J: I've forgotten. It's been a long time ago.

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M: Apparently, shortly after that, Roosevelt made a trip though Texas, and Lyndon Johnson had occasion to meet him. Remember anything about that?

J: No. I don't. I'm sure it was in the papers, but I don't know where I was.

M: Then Johnson went to Congress, and what did you do?

J: I got my law degree in June. He went just before that, and then I went to Houston and started to go to work there. I went to several law firms, and had the recommendations, I could have gotten into any one I wanted to, but seventy-five dollars a month was the going rate. I called Mr. Johnson in Washington, and he told me he was positive he could get me a job with the Justice Department for maybe one hundred and fifty dollars a month. (Laughter) It was purely economics. So I decided to go to Washington and see if I could get such a job. He did not have a secretary at the time. He was a new congressman without a secretary, so I became, I suppose, his first secretary, just a temporary thing. I had to wait six or seven weeks before we cleared Justice, the hurdles to get in. Finally I got a job in Justice.

Really, at that stage our paths diverged and have almost never come back together since, except very seldom, although when he had his big case in Fort Worth I saw him again at some length.

M: Before we get to that, let me ask you, did he enter into this organization of his own congressional office with the same enthusiasm?

J: Oh, yes. Oh sure, sure.

M: Just continued--

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J: You may recall in literature some British speaker referred to as Macaulay as a steam engine in pants? I think it would be proper to refer to Lyndon that way, or perhaps to say he's a jet engine in pants, to use a modern example.

M: After that organization in his office, then you say your paths diverged. Didn't you have contact with him through letters, et cetera?

J: Well, yes. Yes, there just wasn't any occasion. I went to the Justice Department and stayed there a year, and then I became clerk to Justice Butler on the Supreme Court for about thirteen months. Then I went and worked for Alvin Wirtz, who had become under secretary of interior, for about a year. Of course, in every one of these changes Mr. Johnson would write letters of recommendation and make phone calls, and in that sense I was keeping continuity. But I never saw him anymore hardly.

Then finally I came to Texas. After I left Wirtz, I went back to the Justice Department. They were condemning these air bases down here, outlying fields out of Corpus Christi; that was 1942. I stayed here about a couple of years, and the Army got me in 1944. I served in the Army, and when I got out of the Army I married a Corpus girl. I got out of the Army in 1946 and started practicing law here. I did a little bit of work for the city, city corporation prosecutor, for about a year. I've been practicing law ever since, almost thirty years.

M: Did you get involved with any of the Johnson campaigns?

J: No, no. I had very little to do with politics, except tangentially. I mean, I never contributed money to any campaigns, I never worked in

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any campaigns. I don't know why I didn't, except I got busy practicing law. I would have been better off if I had, but I didn't.

M: You mentioned that you had some contact with him over this Fort Worth case.

J: When that case came up, as you know, a petition under the civil liberties statute was filed by Dan Moody, a former governor who died recently, and some other people to restrain the Texas election officials from putting Mr. Johnson's name on the runoff ballot. I believe that's right. I was one of a fairly large group of lawyers who went up there to help him. Judge Allred was off the bench then--he had been federal judge--and he was sort of the leader of the Lyndon Johnson forces. Johnny Crooker of Houston and Mr. [John] Cofer from Austin and Dudley Tarleton from Corpus, who's now dead, and a man named Scarborough from West Texas and Everett Looney, who is high in the list, and I were among the group. There were others whose names I've forgotten.

But there are two stories I can tell you about that that may be of some interest to posterity because they illustrate something. The lawyers had the problem of producing a reply pleading--a hearing was due the next morning--an opposition to this effort to get this restraining order. All day long these various talented lawyers would have a hand at trying to create an appropriate opposition pleading. But antecedent to making the efforts, they had to reminisce. Each of these lawyers was famous in his own right, and the reminiscing was just awful, really, because it stopped the work. Mr. Johnson was getting impatient to a degree that's hard to describe because they

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were not producing the pleading that was needed. Nobody could agree on how to do it. The rules are perhaps less clear than you might think. Judge Allred wrote one; Mr. Johnny Crooker wrote one; Mr. Cofer wrote one--he was there--Everett Looney wrote one. I didn't write any. There was just too much effort going, and nobody would have paid any attention to me. Anyway, the day moved on and night came and midnight came, and they still had not agreed on the opposition paper. I say midnight, anyway it was late at night.

The phone rang, and it was Abe Fortas, who was in town or in Dallas stopping momentarily on the way to some destination. I don't know whether this story's been told before, but anyway, Abe changed his plans and came immediately to the hotel. I had known Abe before, I was no stranger to him, and knew he was a brilliant lawyer. Also, I knew about his reputation, too. I was delighted to see him, because this federal civil procedure is his specialty. It was a thing of beauty to watch the way he handled it. He listened to all of them for perhaps an hour, took all their work and got a secretary, and in ten minutes came back with a one page opposition, or two pages, a very brief one.

M: That's the one that was used?

J: That's the one that was used, yes. In other words, when you know what you're doing, you don't have to be long-winded. You know, this guy's an expert. He knew exactly what needed to be done, and he did it. He may have added a few things that others contributed, but it was basically his product and it was just exactly what was needed. Of

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course, we were all impressed with Mr. Fortas. It distresses me that he's had the problems he's had. I think the country's lost a great man.

M: You mentioned there's another story in connection with that Fort Worth incident.

J: Oh, yes. This is more germane to your problem, to Lyndon Johnson. Somewhere in this case, near the end of it, before the court ruled, the court somehow directly or indirectly suggested that maybe a settlement would be in order--put both men's names on the ballot. I don't know whether he did that directly or had the court reporter relay it to us or how, but anyway, we had a bit conference to participate in by Lyndon Johnson. All his team of lawyers were back in this conference room. Should we seek a settlement? Should we cinch it? This is one of the few times that I've seen Mr. Johnson truly angry. And I might say this is almost the only time I ever saw him just lose his temper. The substance of what he said was that he was outraged, he was indignant. He said he had won the election, and he was not going to temporize; he was a citizen and he had rights and he insisted on their being followed and he didn't want to temporize one bit. He just said, "I instruct all of you to proceed accordingly." (Laughter) He used some profanity in regard to the judge which I've forgotten, but he was outraged. Maybe his temper was short because this thing was a nerve-wracking ordeal, and it looked like that judge was going to take it away from him, did try to after he entered the order. It had to be undone.

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I was the lawyer that took the papers to New Orleans. I believe we had a Brown and Root airplane. Somebody flew me in a twin-motored plane to file this prohibition effort. I've forgotten all the details. Then that was heard later in Atlanta, and on that occasion we had a private airplane. I think Brown and Root furnished it, I'm not sure who. Johnny Crooker and Judge Allred and I went to Atlanta, and Judge Allred carried the ball or Judge Crooker, I don't know, one of them. Lyndon Johnson is a man of force and power and, boy, he exhibited it that day. He's not a timid man, I mean at all.

M: Did you have any other contacts with him, other than this?

J: No.

M: Beyond that point in time?

J: No. That's about it. Of course, I went up to a White House dinner, the last White House dinner. I think it was the last one. I think all the strays got invited. (Laughter)

M: Sort of a homecoming.

J: People that hadn't been to the White House. I had been invited once earlier and couldn't come because my wife was sick. I think the President gave the dinner just to give a chance to some of his old friends to come. There wasn't any reason to go except to see the White House.

M: Well, let me conclude the interview then with an open-ended question. Is there anything I should have asked you about that I didn't in regard to--?

J: No, no.

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M: Or do you have any statements you wish to make?

J: No. I'll just give you my overall impression of Lyndon. I thought even within six months after I first knew this guy that he was extremely unusual, in every sense a great man, in a way a genius, with faults, true, but very human faults. His good qualities consist of his extreme dedication to the job at hand. [He's] a very bright person, very intelligent. I mean Lyndon Johnson catches on real quick. Now, actually, he got very impatient with people, he got impatient with me many times because I didn't catch on as quick as he did. He'd have to show me, you know, and he could be very impatient with somebody being dumber than he. It's hard to work for a man that's as bright as he is. (Laughter) No, he was a great man, a great president. I'm sorry he didn't solve Vietnam. And as I said it distresses me, because if he couldn't, his failure means that probably it's not going to be solved, because Nixon's not even in his league, in my opinion.

M: I thank you for the interview and thank you for your time.

J: Okay.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

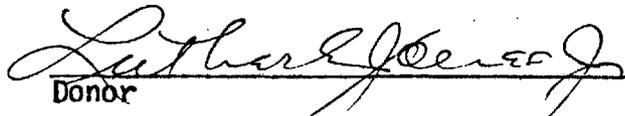
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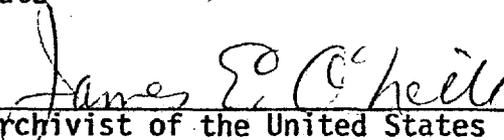
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