

Often Moody, Defensive

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Carroll Kilpatrick, White House correspondent for The Washington Post, covered Lyndon B. Johnson when he was in the Senate as well as the five years Mr. Johnson was in the White House.

Lyndon B. Johnson was often a moody man and he suffered fits of depression. When he was down, he was way down and the entire world was against him. Even his closest friends were suspect. One day, when one of his oldest and most trusted supporters offered words of advice, LBJ retorted: "You're just trying to get me defeated."

The former President now says that on Aug. 26, 1964, he drafted a statement declaring that he would not be a candidate for re-election. That was after the Democratic National Convention had assembled in Atlantic City to nominate him by acclamation.

If he had said "no" at that time there would have been chaos. There was no chaos. The convention ran like clockwork under LBJ's masterful direction.

The only question to be decided at the convention was who would be the vice-presidential nominee. LBJ himself finally gave the convention the name in the early evening of Aug. 26, the same day he says he wrote out a statement declining the nomination.

To keep the suspense to the last moment, he invited Sens. Hubert H. Humphrey (Minn.) and Thomas J. Dodd (Conn.) to leave Atlantic City on the afternoon of Aug. 26 and confer with him at the White House. When they arrived at the White House both Dodd and Humphrey were kept waiting in a limousine while LBJ walked round and round the drive with perspiring reporters.

The walk that day set a record—15 laps or 4.35 miles. The President was so impressed by the reporters' ability to keep up with him in the broiling sun that he invited them to supper, along with Humphrey and Dodd.

On that walk, the President pulled from his pocket copies of poll results. He would easily carry Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, the polls showed. He was ahead 62 to 28 in Texas.

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In California, his lead was two to one. In Indiana, he said, he had "only" 55 per cent and in Wisconsin "only" 60 per cent.

He did not sound like a man who had any doubts at all about his future. The world was waiting for him to be nominated and for him to name his running mate. His mood was euphoric the very day he said he drafted a memo saying he would not be a candidate. Everyone, including all the pollsters, knew that he was a winner.

When I read the transcript of the former President's interview with Walter Cronkite I remembered that famous walk on the South Lawn and the exuberant President. Could he have entertained doubts on Aug. 26 of all days? And I began to search my own notes.

They show, to my surprise, that in May 1964, three months before the convention, LBJ told a group of reporters that "maybe the country needs a new man as President, one who has fewer scars than I have." But he quickly added that "as long as I'm the only President you've got I'm going to call the shots as I see them."

No doubt he said to others that he might not run again, but no one paid any attention, any more than the old friend had taken seriously the jibe that he was trying to bring about LBJ's defeat. That was the way Mr. Johnson talked.

Despite the evidence the former President now produces to show that he considered bowing out, the recollection of nearly everyone who knew him is that few men in American political

showing in the polls and asked him if he didn't feel sorry for the Republicans. "Don't you think you should let them have one state?" the visitor asked.

"Oh, no, no," President Johnson solemnly replied. "Gene Pulliam (a conservative Republican and publisher of the Arizona Republic) called me the other day from Arizona and said that if I would come there he would have the Republican Governor out to meet me, all the Republicans in the state and others and that they would put on a huge reception for me." LBJ was not even willing at that point to concede Barry Goldwater's home state.

The campaign of 1964 began early. Of course, LBJ did not call it a campaign, but it began and ended in a whirlwind. In early May 1964, The Washington Post began a story with

life ever wanted the high office more than LBJ.

Often as a senator he talked about what he would do if he were President; he complained about the hurdles that he, a Southerner, faced in seeking the office. As one of his closest friends in those days said at the time when asked if the senator wanted to be President: "He wants it so much he can taste it."

LBJ's depression was enormous when he failed to win the presidential nomination in 1960 and was offered instead second place. When he became President on Nov. 23, 1963, he took immediate command. He was a natural leader. He had great confidence in himself. He knew what the presidency was, what it meant and how it should be used.

From the moment he became President, LBJ's aim was renomination and re-election in 1964, or so it seemed to all who watched him. One who was with him daily during that period said yesterday that there was never any doubt in the minds of any who worked with him that re-election was the big goal.

In the spring of 1964, he had a number of polls taken to determine whether Humphrey, Robert Kennedy, Eugene McCarthy, Edmund Muskie, John Pastore or some other Democrat would be a help as his running mate. He discovered from the polls, and proudly told visitors, that whomever he chose as a running mate hurt his own standing by two or three percentage points.

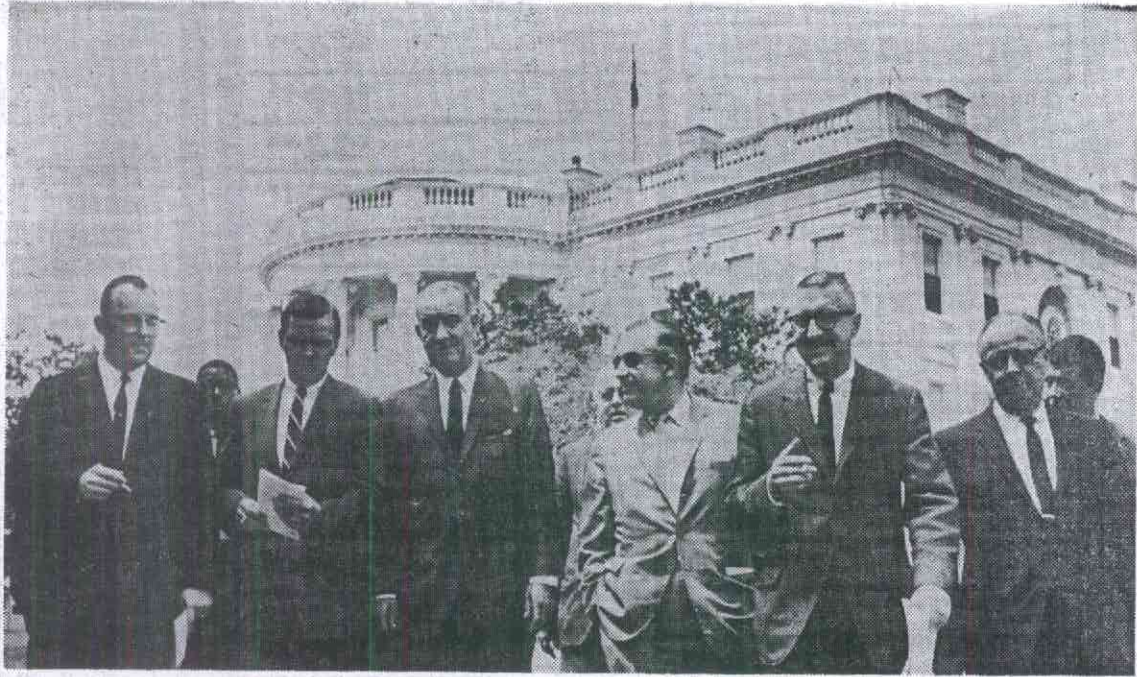
In May, 1964, when it seemed fairly clear that Barry Goldwater would be the Republican nominee, a visitor chided the President on his strong

these words: "In the last two weeks, President Johnson has made 30 speeches—and the campaign hasn't even begun."

He traveled to Appalachia twice in two weeks. He spoke in Atlanta. Then he flew to Ann Arbor, Mich., to project the vision of a "great society," to outline his program for the future.

In June, he was in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The June 19 story in The Washington Post began: "Cheered by a huge crowd here, President Johnson today predicted a Democratic victory in November and declared that Sen. Barry Goldwater's ideas are as out of date as the dinosaur."

After his nomination, LBJ waged an exuberant campaign from one end of the country to another. He said that he never tired and afterwards he called it "the best-run campaign in history."



Associated Press

Reporters recall the time when President Johnson took them on a 7-lap news conference around the White House.

It was a breathtaking campaign with LBJ ahead all the way and finally winning by the biggest margin in history. He was in seventh heaven. "Y'awl come to the speakin'," he shouted until he was hoarse.

Sophisticates didn't like the way LBJ talked, but they admired his skill in skewering the hapless Republicans.

LBJ knew that many persons were laughing at him behind his back, making fun of his corny mannerisms and speech. The jibes hurt him to the quick and helped produce the depression that caused him to tell his wife he might not run.

He took all the criticisms personally. But he was too proud not to run. He

was a professional politician; the highest goal in his reach was the presidency. He wanted it in 1960; he demanded it in 1964. The laughter at his expense was almost more than even a strong man like himself could bear. But he was proud, inordinately proud. The prize was his in 1964 and he sought ferociously to keep it.