

Post 10-17-71

Dallas Opened '64 Drive; 'It Was Going Beautifully'

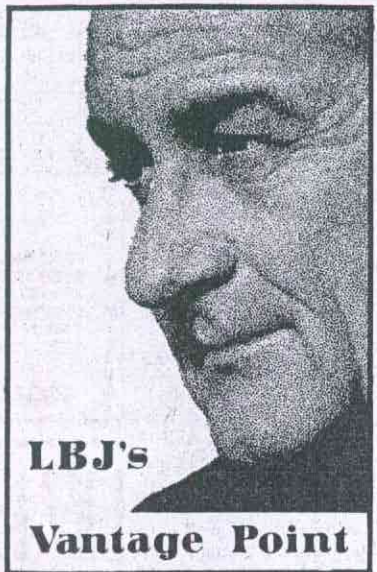
PREFACE

It has been said that the Presidency is the loneliest office in the world. I did not find it so. Even during the darkest hours of my administration, I always knew that I could draw on the strength, support, and love of my family and my friends.

But if I was seldom lonely, I was often alone. No one can experience with the President of the United States the glory and agony of his office. No one can share the majestic view from his pinnacle of power. No one can share the burden of his decisions or the scope of his duties. A Cabinet officer, no matter how broad his mandate, has a limited responsibility. A Senator, no matter how varied his interests, has a limited constituency. But the President represents all the people and must face up to all the problems. He must be responsible, as he sees it, for the welfare of every citizen and must be sensitive to the will of every group. He cannot pick and choose his issues. They all come with the job. So his experience is unique among his fellow Americans.

For better or worse, then, this is a book that only a President could have written. That is the sole excuse for its existence. I make no pretense of having written a complete and definitive history of my Presidency. I have tried, rather, to review that period from a President's point of view—reflecting a President's personal and political philosophy, a President's experience and knowledge, a President's aspirations, and a President's response to the demands that were made on him.

I have not written these chapters to say, "This is how it was," but to say, "This is how I saw it from my vantage point." Neither have I attempted to cover all the events of my administration. I have selected what I consider to



LBJ's

Vantage Point

The Washington Post today begins publication of excerpts from Lyndon B. Johnson's account of his Presidency. His book, "The Vantage Point," will be published shortly by Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc. The excerpting was done for The Post by Chalmers M. Roberts.

be the most important problems, the most pressing goals, and the most historic accomplishments of my years as President.

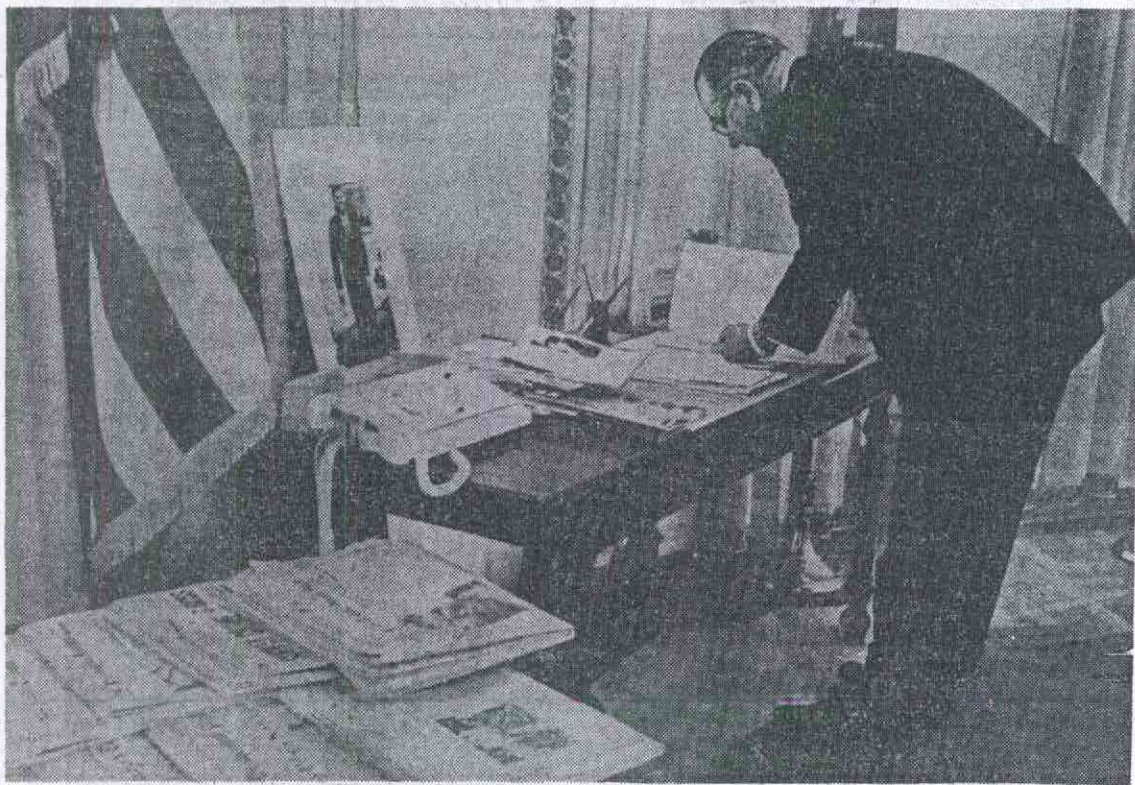
Finally, I have tried to avoid engaging in historical pamphleteering. I did

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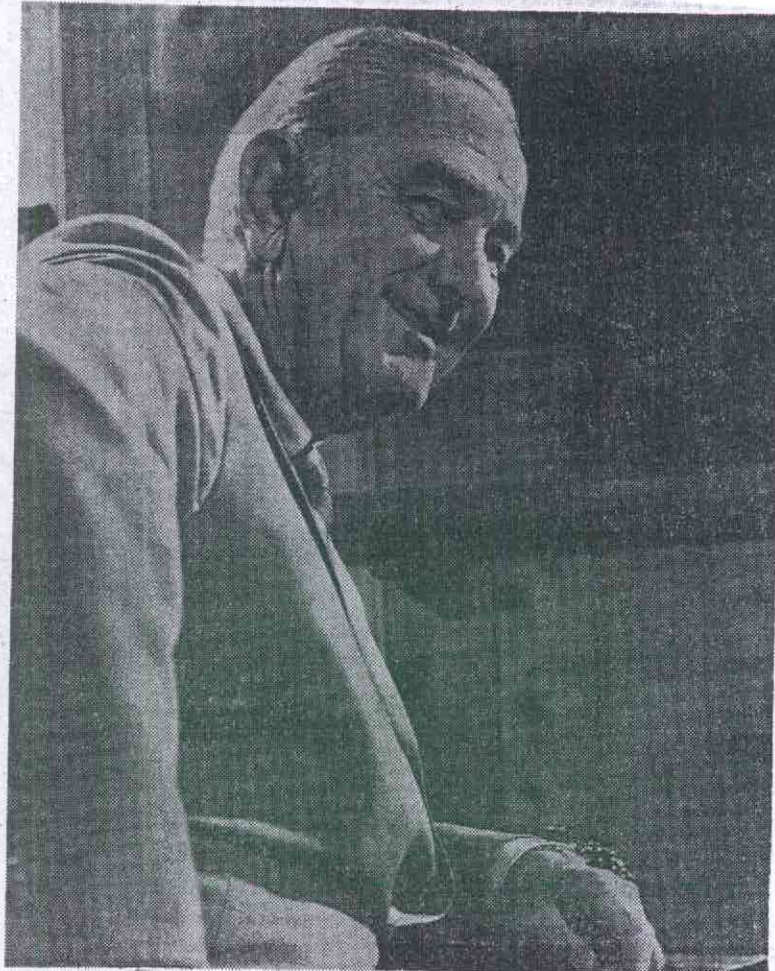
Cecil Stoughton

President Johnson, with his wife and Mrs. Kennedy beside him, is sworn aboard plane in Dallas.



Y. R. Okamoto

President Johnson on a busy day in his Oval Office early in his administration.



Associated Press

**Former President Johnson in a CBS television interview in 1969:
He said he had no doubt that he could have been reelected in 1968.**

JOHNSON, From A1

not set out to write a propaganda piece in support of my decisions. My purpose has been to state the problems that I faced as President, to record the facts as they came to me, to list the alternatives available, and to review what I did and why I did it. Others will have to judge the results on their merits. The struggle in Vietnam, for example, inspired one of the most passionate and deeply felt debates in our nation's life. That debate will go on, no matter what is written in these pages. History will make its judgments on the decisions made and the actions taken.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON.

Johnson City, Tex.

April 1971.

"THE BEGINNING"

"We're going to carry two states next year if we don't carry any others: Massachusetts and Texas."

The speaker was John F. Kennedy.

The time was Friday morning, November 22, 1963.

I had gone to the President's eighth-floor suite in the Hotel Texas in Fort Worth to introduce my younger sister, Lucia Alexander, to him. The President's spirits were high. He had come to Texas for politics, and the trip so far was successful—much more successful than I had expected. He had been warmly received everywhere he went. The crowds in San Antonio and Houston on the previous day had been large and enthusiastic.

That morning in Fort Worth he had already made two speeches, one to a large gathering in a parking lot across the street from the hotel and another to a chamber of commerce breakfast in the hotel. Money and power were represented at the breakfast, but the parking lot audience—made up of workers, mothers, and children—gave me more assurance about the mood of Texas. Many of them had waited in a steady drizzle for more than an hour to hear him and to see Mrs. Kennedy.

"Where's Jackie?" someone in the crowd shouted.

"Mrs. Kennedy is organizing herself," the President said. "It takes longer, but of course she looks better than we do when she does it." The crowd loved this, and roared its approval.

Now it was time to leave for Dallas. John Kennedy was thinking about the future, about the approaching presidential campaign and the necessity for carrying Texas. No one, including the President, considered his reelection to be a cinch. In fact, the President's ratings in the polls were as low as they had ever been. But his reception thus far in Texas seemed to disprove the polls, and this fact was very much on President Kennedy's mind. The polls may have given him cause for gloom, but the people certainly did not.

That was obviously what he was

thinking about when he remarked to me, cheerfully, that we would at least carry Massachusetts and Texas. They were the last words John Kennedy ever spoke to me.

When John Kennedy first offered me the Vice Presidential nomination, I asked him to be candid with me. If it was only a courteous gesture, I said, I wanted him to say so. He replied that he needed me to run with him if the ticket was to be successful.

I served John Kennedy for three years—as a candidate and as his Vice President. I served him loyally, as I would have wanted my Vice President to serve me. We did not always see things in the same light. I did not always agree with everything that happened in his administration. But when I did disagree with the President, I did so in private, and man to man.

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What some people did not understand was that our relationship, which dated back to our service together in the House of Representatives, had always been one of mutual respect, admiration, and cooperation. When I was running for Senate Minority Leader in 1953, John Kennedy called me from Massachusetts and said: "I want you to know you can count on my support." It was purely a self-initiated act on his part. I hadn't even contacted him.

Then in the fall of 1955, Senator Kennedy's father, Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, called me at my ranch. He said that he and John Kennedy wanted to support me for President and would like to work for my nomination at the 1956 Democratic convention if I would run. I thanked him but said that I did not wish to be a candidate. As it later developed, my name was placed in nomination, but purely for reasons of local Democratic politics. Remembering that Governor Allan Shivers of Texas had left the party in 1952 to support General Eisenhower, House Speaker Sam Rayburn felt that someone should head the Texas delegation to the Democratic convention. As a result, we maintained control of the delegation and I cast the vote of the Texas delegation for John Kennedy for the Vice Presidential nomination at that convention.

A few days later, after I had returned home, I wrote the following letter to Joe Kennedy:

August 25, 1956

Dear Joe:

For a week now I have been taking care of Lyndon Johnson—sunbathing, swimming and sleeping as much as my folks would let me. But in addition, I have been thinking of a lot of things, one of them being that phone call from you in October of last year.

You said then that you and Jack wanted to support me for President in 1956 but that if I were not interested, you planned to support Adlai Stevenson. I told you I was not interested and



Cecil Stoughton

Fort Worth, Nov. 22, 1963; President Kennedy with Vice President Johnson, Sen. Yarborough and Gov. Connally.



United Press International

Former President Johnson and his daughter Luci Johnson Nugent at the annual Texas-Oklahoma football game in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas last weekend.

it occurs to me that you may be somewhat mystified about my activities in Chicago last week. When I see you I will explain how they involved a local political situation here in Texas and were not inconsistent with what I told you last October.

But this note, Joe, is being sent your way to tell you how proud I am of the Democratic Senator from Massachusetts and how proud I am of the Texas Delegation and other Delegations from the South for their support of him in Chicago last Friday afternoon. In my opinion, that session of the Convention lighted the brightest lamp of hope for a truly great Democratic Party. I hope we can talk about this sometime when you are in Washington.

With all good wishes and warmest regards, I am

Sincerely,

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Once he became President, John Kennedy was always courteous, thoughtful, and solicitous of me. I think he felt the Vice Presidency was basically a difficult job, and he did everything he could to give it substance. He sent me to twenty-six foreign countries on goodwill or fact-finding missions. He sent me as his representative to West Berlin on a most urgent and important mission shortly after the Berlin Wall was raised. He appointed me Chairman of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity and asked Congress to pass a bill relieving him of the chairmanship and designating me as Chairman of the National Aeronautics and Space Council.

I do not think that any President ever made a greater effort to make sure that his Vice President was briefed and kept fully informed on all the vital and sensitive issues of the day. In fact, I do not think I missed a single meeting on national security affairs, unless I was sick or out of town.

I considered President Kennedy a great and inspiring national leader and

a compassionate man of vision and imagination. I was honored to serve him. My personal feelings toward him were those of admiration, fondness, and respect—and I always believed that those feelings were returned in kind by the President.

I remember that on many occasions, after a tiring meeting was over or when he wanted to shed his cares after a long day in the Oval Office, he would ask me to stay behind and visit with him and a few friends. At those sessions the President was relaxed and companionable, a lively conversationalist, and easy to be with.

A great deal has been written about the purpose of that fateful trip to Texas. Much of what has been written is wrong.

President Kennedy came to Texas to raise money for the Democratic campaign coffers and to pave the way for a Democratic victory in Texas in 1964. We were soon to be involved in a Presidential election. We would need millions of dollars for the campaign, and the Democratic National Committee was still painfully in debt. The President hoped to raise several hundred thousand dollars in Texas.

President Kennedy also came to Texas to try to shore up our slipping popularity there. A Texas poll, taken a few weeks before his trip, showed that only 38 per cent of the people approved of what he was doing as President. The same poll showed Governor

Connally with an 81 per cent approval. The fact is that Governor Connally was more in tune with the prevailing political thinking in Texas. Some of administration's actions — particularly the Bay of Pigs, the fiscal policy, and the civil rights program—had hurt us in Texas and throughout the South.

So President Kennedy had decided to go to the people—to let them see him and get to know him; to appeal to them directly for their support. He also wanted to consolidate the party machinery of the State of Texas behind him—from the Governor on down. He wanted to come to the large Texas cities, where he could gain maximum exposure.

The President had originally wanted to come on my birthday, August 27. He suggested this date to Governor Connally and me in June 1963 at the Cortez Hotel in El Paso, where we met following a visit to the missile range at White Sands, New Mexico. The President had already attended two fund-raising dinners in New York and a dinner in Boston in May 1961. He planned another dinner in Boston for the fall of 1963. He now wanted to come to Texas. The President had reminded me on several occasions that Massachusetts, New York, and Texas were going to have to bear the burden of financing the 1964 Presidential campaign.

He suggested at our El Paso meeting that we hold a series of four fund-raising

ing dinners—in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston. John Connally opposed that plan, and I think he shocked President Kennedy by his immediate and frank reaction. He said that, in the first place, the date was impossible; it was too close to Labor Day. The rich people would be in Colorado cooling off, he said, and everyone else would be down at the Gulf of Mexico cooling off. "You won't be able to get a crowd." In the second place, he said, the worst thing the President could do would be to go into four cities and charge people \$100 apiece to see their President. "They will think you only came here to take their money."

Connally suggested instead a single fund-raising dinner in Austin and a series of nonpolitical public appearances in the other four cities — "at the proper time." President Kennedy reluctantly agreed to this suggestion and postponed the trip.

The following October President

Kennedy met with Governor Connally in Washington and they agreed on the November date. When I heard that John Connally was in town, I naturally asked him to dinner. That evening he said that he assumed the President would tell me about it, but he advised me that they had discussed the Texas trip and had made some definite plans concerning it. The next I heard about the trip was when the President asked Bill Moyers to make advance preparations for it.

The idea that President Kennedy came to Texas to settle a political feud between Senator Ralph Yarborough and me is not true. Whatever differences the Senator and I may have had could have been settled in Washington, where neither of us was more than ten minutes away from the White House. There was no need for anyone to travel to Texas to settle our differences. In addition, President Kennedy was too smart to try to intervene in local political controversies. That's a buzz saw that most Presidents seek to avoid.

The difference that Senator Yarborough and I had was over patronage. I had made an agreement with President Kennedy—when he asked me to go on the ticket in Los Angeles—that I would be allowed to pass on all federal appointments in Texas. Senator Yarborough resented this. If I had been in his position, I might have resented it too. He felt that he should have complete control over those appointments. He knew that other Senators could make recommendations that did not have to be approved by the Vice President and he was not pleased to find that his did.

Senator Yarborough did refuse to ride in the car with us on the previous day in San Antonio and Houston. He never told me that, but I was informed that he told members of the Kennedy staff and President Kennedy was very irritated by it. So Senator Yarborough and I had our differences. But they were differences between two rather strong-minded men, and President Kennedy, quite rightly, never tried to intervene. These political differences had nothing to do with his coming to Texas or not coming to Texas. The trip was Presidential politics, pure and simple. It was the opening effort of the 1964 campaign. And it was going beautifully.

From the book, THE VANTAGE POINT, Perspectives of the Presidency 1963-1969, by Lyndon Baines Johnson, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Copyright (c) 1971 by HEC Public Affairs Foundation.