

## Prologue

# THE FATAL TRIP TO TEXAS

THREE years after John Kennedy was murdered in Dallas, Lyndon Johnson was alarmed by early reports about the soon-to-be-published book *The Death of a President*,<sup>1</sup> by William Manchester. Inspired by Jacqueline Kennedy, who wanted a single authorized history to overshadow other books being written by authors she distrusted,<sup>2</sup> Manchester's book was said to show a Johnson eager to seize power and insensitive to the dead President's family.<sup>3</sup> While privately asking for advice on how to muffle the political damage of Manchester's book, LBJ offered his own memories of November 22, 1963, and its prelude.<sup>4</sup> In Manchester's narrative, the fatal trip to Texas is foreshadowed when President-elect Kennedy visits the LBJ Ranch eight days after he and Johnson win the 1960 election.<sup>5</sup>

LBJ: I didn't force him to come to Texas. Hell, he wanted to come out there him-*self*! Called up and he came. He didn't bring Miz Kennedy, and he may have told her that he didn't want to come because he brought some other people.<sup>6</sup> [chuckles darkly] But it is a hell of a note.

Manchester writes that although Kennedy believed that "all killing was senseless," Johnson cajoled him into a deer hunt at dawn, during which Kennedy "looked into the face of the life he was about to take . . . fired and quickly turned back to the car."

<sup>1</sup>Harper & Row, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Such as Jim Bishop, author of *The Day Lincoln Was Shot* (Harper, 1955).

<sup>3</sup>Some of the early published and hearsay reports on Manchester's book that reached Johnson exaggerated its hostility to him. These included a report by a Johnson aide who had obtained the galley's (Assassination File, Lyndon B. Johnson Library).

<sup>4</sup>Johnson's remarks in this Prologue are heard in taped conversations with Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach (December 6, 1966, and January 25, 1967), Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas (December 16, 1966), Press Secretary Bill Moyers (December 26, 1966), and Special Assistant Robert Kintner (December 20, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, pp. 118-19.

<sup>6</sup>Johnson may allude to the presence of at least one unattached woman in the Kennedy traveling party.

LBJ: Forcing that poor man to go hunting? Hell, he not only killed *one* deer. He insisted on killing a *second*! One took two hours and then, by God, he insisted on killing one for Torby O'Donnell and we just worked so hard. It took three hours and I finally gave up. I said, "Mr. President, we just can't do it."<sup>1</sup>

Poor little deer—he saw it in his eye and he just could not shoot it? Well, hell, he wasn't within 250 yards from it. . . . He shot it and he jumped up and hooped and put it right on the fender of the car so he could kill another one. . . . Most of them have got a rule—they will not let you kill but one. But he was the President? . . . and we wanted him to have whatever he wanted. . . . He wasn't competent to be President if he—I think it is the greatest desecration of his memory that an "impotent" Vice President<sup>2</sup> could force this strong man to do a god-damned thing.

As Manchester had it, based on his interviews with Jacqueline, Kennedy told his wife the "distressing" story in order to "rid himself of the recollection" and "heal the inner scar." Johnson had the deer's antlers and head mounted. After Kennedy became President, Johnson persistently suggested that JFK display his trophy in the Oval Office. Although "inwardly appalled," according to Manchester the President, as a "favor" to Johnson, allowed it to be hung in the nearby Fish Room.<sup>3</sup>

LBJ: My calling him up and making him put a deer head in his outer room and he didn't want to? I never called him in my life on it. He had his fish up there that he caught on his honeymoon.<sup>4</sup> He put his deer head up there.

[sarcastically:] But even if we had made the *tragic* mistake of forcing this *poor man* to put up a deer head here along with his fish—I do not know who forced him to put up the fish in the Fish Room that he caught on his honeymoon, but I damned sure didn't force him to put up anything. It is just a manufactured lie.

Manchester wrote that Kennedy came to Texas in November 1963 because Johnson had failed to resolve the "petty dispute," which threatened the 1964 Kennedy-Johnson ticket in Texas, between LBJ's old protégé, Governor John Connally, and their political enemy, the liberal Democratic Senator, Ralph Yarborough.<sup>5</sup>

LBJ: My forcing him to go to Texas! I never *heard* of it. Matter of fact, I tried to *postpone* it. Told him our popularity was too low.

<sup>1</sup>Johnson confuses the names of Kennedy's companions—his old Harvard roommate, Torbert Macdonald, a Democratic Congressman from Massachusetts, and his aide Kenneth O'Donnell. It was Macdonald who had trouble with the deer.

<sup>2</sup>Actually President-elect.

<sup>3</sup>Manchester referred to Johnson as "virtually impotent in his own state" by 1963 (p. 3).

<sup>4</sup>The Fish Room was later renamed the Roosevelt Room by President Richard Nixon.

<sup>5</sup>Kennedy had also hung a sailfish he had caught on his 1953 Acapulco honeymoon.

<sup>6</sup>Manchester, *The Death of a President*, p. 3.

Kennedy insisted for two years that he come and make five money-raising speeches and he finally told him in my presence, said, "Mr. President, they are going to think that all the Kennedy's want out of Texas is money. . . . I would suggest you make one money-raising speech and whatever else you do totally nonpolitical." And he told him that in the spring—April?—and he told him that in June, and then, because I would not encourage it, by God, he called him up and would not let me know he was calling him and he came up here and had a secret meeting with him.<sup>1</sup> . . . And he told John the reason he didn't tell me: "The Vice President is not enthusiastic."

That's a great myth, that he came here to settle things for me. He came down here because he wanted to raise a million dollars and try to improve *himself*. And he'd been to Massachusetts and done the same thing.<sup>2</sup> I put him off several months and Connally put him off several months. Didn't want him to come. Told him it was a mistake for him to come. And he finally called Connally. . . . secretly to the White House, and he didn't tell me a thing about it. And Connally agreed that if he'd wait two or three months, he would help him with a dinner. And he didn't want to. . . . And I. . . had to call my personal friends long distance to get them to put up in order for em to even have a respectable crowd.<sup>3</sup>

At the Rice Hotel in Houston, on Thursday evening, November 21, 1963, Johnson had his final private meeting with Kennedy. In the next room, Jacqueline was rehearsing her Spanish, preparing to speak downstairs to a Hispanic-American group. According to Manchester, the first lady heard "raised voices"—Kennedy complaining, "expressing himself with exceptional force," about LBJ's treatment of Yarborough in Texas—and that when Johnson departed, the hotel manager thought that he "looked furious."<sup>4</sup>

LBJ: This Manchester stuff about Kennedy and I having an argument—I never had an argument with him in my life.

All I can remember was Miz Kennedy was practicing, talking about her Spanish and about. . . whether she would go or not to this Spanish thing. The President. . . told me that he just thought that it was an outrage, that he had heard what Yarborough had done, that he had told him that Yarborough had to ride with us or get out of the party.<sup>5</sup> There was no disagreement of any kind and no violence

<sup>1</sup>Connally.

<sup>2</sup>1963.

<sup>3</sup>The "secret meeting" between President Kennedy and Connally was on October 4, 1963, in the Oval Office.

<sup>4</sup>In October 1963, Kennedy had staged a fund-raising dinner in Boston.

<sup>5</sup>Tickets for the scheduled fund-raising dinner, planned for the evening of November 22, 1963, in Austin, were so slow-selling that LBJ flew to Texas early to ensure that the President would not be embarrassed in Johnson's home state.

<sup>6</sup>William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, p. 82.

<sup>7</sup>Asked to ride in the Johnson motorcade car to demonstrate unity among Texas Democrats, Yarborough had refused.

of any kind. A very friendly thing. And he and I had a drink together, and he sat there with his shirt off and left. We had no debate or no argument or no report and I had not asked to see him anyway. If she heard anybody having a disagreement of any kind, it was the President talking about Yarborough.

The next day came the assassination. According to Manchester, after Kennedy's death was announced at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, Johnson's "slumped figure" was seen "sniffing from a vapor inhaler." Manchester wrote that a "dazed, silent" LBJ was "far ruder to take orders than issue them." Presented a choice between flying back to Washington on *Air Force One* or the vice presidential backup plane, Johnson chose the President's aircraft and was taken in an unmarked car to the Dallas airport, Love Field.<sup>1</sup>

LBJ: One place they say I slumped, had a vapor inhaler, and would not take any leadership, and the next day I was so arrogant I was bossing everything.

What raced through my mind was that if they had shot our President, driving down there, who would they shoot next? And what was going on in Washington? And when would the missiles be coming? I thought it was a conspiracy and I raised that question, and nearly everybody that was with me raised it.

And the thought that I should go to a plane that did not have the Bag<sup>2</sup> and did not have the communication—by God, after this terrible thing had happened—is inconceivable to me.

At 1:33 p.m., heeding a Secret Service agent's shouted order, Johnson ran up the steps to *Air Force One*, where he prepared to take the oath as President.

LBJ: The reason I went to the airport and didn't take it in the hospital was, first, I wanted to be able to talk to the Attorney General<sup>3</sup> and get the oath. And the second thing was McNamara<sup>4</sup> had always told me that . . . if you got a warning [of possible nuclear war] . . . the thing they ought to do is get as high in the air as you can because you was least vulnerable there. Flying, a missile doesn't get you. A plane doesn't get you. You have time to think and you have adequate communications.

With the shades on the plane yanked shut, Johnson sat in the Presidential bedroom on Jacqueline Kennedy's bed and made telephone calls. One was to the late President's brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, at his home in Virginia. Johnson later insisted that RFK advised him to take the oath immediately. According to Manchester, drawing on interviews with Robert, no opinion

<sup>1</sup>William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, pp. 229-32.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson suspected that the assassination might be the forerunner of a surprise, Pearl Harbor-style attack by the Soviet Union against the United States.

<sup>3</sup>The "Black Bag" containing instructions for Presidential use in case of nuclear war, is supposed to accompany the President at all times. Actually, as Johnson knew, the "Bag" could have been carried onto any aircraft.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Kennedy.

<sup>5</sup>Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense.

was offered by the Attorney General, who would have sentimentally preferred that Johnson wait until he landed in Washington so that John Kennedy could return to the capital one last time as President.<sup>1</sup>

*Why else could Kissinger?*  
LBJ: I thought the most important thing in the world was to decide who was President of this country at that moment. I was fearful that the Communists were trying to take us over. . . . I think that Bobby agreed that it would be all right to be sworn in. He said he wanted to look into it and he would get back to me, which he did.

There's also an implication that Bobby didn't want us to take the oath, when the implication made to me was that he thought it was better to take it there, that he would have somebody call me to give me the oath, and he did?

"He sprawled out on the bunk"? I didn't sprawl. I sat and talked on the phone.

According to Manchester, when Mrs. Kennedy boarded the plane, she found Johnson "reclining" on her bed and "came to a dead stop." LBJ "hastily lumbered past her" followed by his secretary, Marie Lehner, while "the widow stared after them." Then Johnson returned to offer condolences and "called her 'Honey.'"<sup>2</sup>

LBJ: "He lumbered out of the room as she came in"? Well, now, lumbering—I don't know, I guess that's their way of saying I walked out. But he didn't see me walk out or he doesn't know whether I lumbered or trotted or walked or anything else.

You know, if I call some guy's office to get him, I say to his secretary, "Honey, have him call in." I don't think that I said that to anybody. And I don't think that I called Miz Kennedy "honey." I think that's their idea of "you-all" and "cornin'"—C-O-M-I-N—and this stuff they write about Texas.

I think I would call people "honey" if I felt they were "honey." And I might have very well said that to Miz Kennedy, although I never felt that way about her and never believed it. I have held her kind of up on a pedestal and been very reserved with her, as her letters to me will indicate—very proper, very appropriate, very dignified, very reserved.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, pp. 238-39, 266-72.

<sup>2</sup>This somebody does not appear in the final version of Manchester's book, only in an early report that made its way to Johnson.

<sup>3</sup>William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, pp. 310, 316. In a 1964 oral history interview for the John F. Kennedy Library, which was sealed for fifteen years, Robert Kennedy said that "the treatment of Jackie" was one matter "which made me bitter—unhappy, at least—with Lyndon Johnson."

<sup>4</sup>Jacqueline Kennedy wrote Johnson by hand in January 1967 that she too had heard that Manchester had disparaged his calling her "honey." By then, the former First Lady was suing Manchester's publisher to remove material from his book that her advisers thought too personal or too anti-Johnson. (The suit was withdrawn later that month.) Mrs. Kennedy told Johnson

On Manchester and his book:

LBJ: I took the position when Manchester was selected that he was a fraud.<sup>1</sup> I refused to see him. I asked my people not to see him. . . . Just as I asked them not to see Teddy White?<sup>2</sup> I think they're agents of the people who want to destroy me. And I hate for them to use my friends to do it. . . . My friends don't know it, and they want to be popular and they just do it. And I don't say it's so much popularity. I don't think my wife wants to be popular. But I think she wants to be—accommodating would be a good word.<sup>3</sup>

I am just going to keep my counsel and try to endure it. But it is vicious, mean, dirty, low-down stuff.

All of it makes Bobby<sup>4</sup> look like a great hero and makes me look like a son of a bitch.

My feeling on the Manchester book is . . . that we're not equipped by experience, by tradition, by personality or financially to cope with this. I just do not believe that we know how to handle public relations and how to handle advertising agencies, how to handle manuscripts, how to handle book writers. . . . So I think they're<sup>5</sup> going to write history as they want it written, as they can buy it written. And I think the best way we can write it is to try to refrain from getting into an argument or a fight or a knockdown, and go on and do our job every day, as best we can.

that Manchester's reference to his calling her "honey" was so typical of how the author had twisted everything. Honey was a "loving" word, and she hoped he would call her that again. She added that no matter how his feelings toward her might change, she would always remain fond of Johnson. Once she decided that she cared about someone, nothing could ever make her change (Jacqueline Kennedy to Lyndon Johnson, undated, January 1967, Johnson Library).

<sup>1</sup>Johnson was right to be worried that Manchester was no LBJ fan. But as a World War II hero and the author of seven books before *The Death of a President*, Manchester was not a fraud.

<sup>2</sup>Journalist and author of *The Making of the President: 1960* (Atheneum, 1961) and its successors.

<sup>3</sup>Lady Bird Johnson did agree to be interviewed by Manchester.

<sup>4</sup>Kennedy.

<sup>5</sup>The Johnson circle.

<sup>6</sup>The Kennedys.

## Chapter One NOVEMBER 1963

### FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1963

ROSE FITZGERALD KENNEDY

*Mother of John F. Kennedy*

3:15 P.M.<sup>1</sup>

TWENTY-EIGHT MINUTES after *Air Force One* leaves Dallas for Washington, the new President makes his first telephone call after the swearing-in to the mother of his murdered predecessor.<sup>2</sup> Rose Kennedy is summoned to the telephone from a walk outside the Kennedy house at Hyannis Port. The sounds on this tape proclaim emergency—the shrill cries of the telephone operators and steward, the quavering voice of the dead leader's mother, the new President and First Lady shouting through static and over the shriek of jet engines.

VOICE: AF-1, AF-1, please stand by. We have Mrs. Rose Kennedy. . . . I'm going to put Mrs. Rose Kennedy on the line now.

ROSE KENNEDY: Hello? Hello? Hello?

VOICE: Just a moment, Mrs. Kennedy.

VOICE: Roger, one moment now, please.

ROSE KENNEDY: Hello?

VOICE: Stand by One, now, please.

VOICE: AF-1, AF-1, AF-1, from CROWN,<sup>3</sup> come in.

<sup>1</sup>Central Standard Time. All times provided in this volume are local, based on where Johnson was at the time.

<sup>2</sup>Unknown to Johnson, his conversation with President Kennedy's mother and the one that follows were recorded by the Signal Corps, which monitored them from Andrews Air Force Base, outside Washington.

<sup>3</sup>Secret Service code name for the White House.

SGT. JOSEPH AYRES:<sup>1</sup> CROWN, this is *Air Force One*. Do you read us, over?

VOICE: I'm reading you loud and clear. I have Mrs. Kennedy standing by. Are you ready with VOLUNTEER?<sup>2</sup> Go ahead.

AYRES: Yes, we are ready. Can you put her on and I'll turn over to him, over.

VOICE: Roger, Roger, she's coming on now.

VOICE: AF-1 from CROWN. Mrs. Kennedy on. Go ahead, please.

AYRES: Hello, Mrs. Kennedy. Hello, Mrs. Kennedy. We're talking from the airplane. Can you hear us all right, over?

ROSE KENNEDY: Thank you. Hello?

AYRES: Yes, Mrs. Kennedy, I have—uh—Mr. Johnson for you here.<sup>3</sup>

ROSE KENNEDY: Yes, thank you.

LBJ: Mrs. Kennedy?

ROSE KENNEDY: Yes, yes, yes, Mr. President.

LBJ: I wish to God there was something that I could do and I wanted to tell you that we were grieving with you.

ROSE KENNEDY: Yes, well, thank you very much. That's very nice. I know. I know you loved Jack and he loved you.

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: Mrs. Kennedy, we feel lucky—

ROSE KENNEDY: Yes, all right.

LADY BIRD: We're glad that the nation had your son as long as it did—

ROSE KENNEDY: Well, thank you for that, Lady Bird. Thank you very much.

Goodbye.

LADY BIRD: —thought and prayers—

ROSE KENNEDY: [weeping] Thank you very much. Goodbye, goodbye, good-bye. [she hangs up]

#### NELLIE CONNALLY

*Wife of Texas Governor John Connally*

3:30 P.M.

NEXT JOHNSON calls the wife of the close friend who had become his congressional secretary in 1939, who was also wounded in Kennedy's limousine.

AYRES: *Air Force One*. VOLUNTEER would like a patch to Governor Connally of Texas—Mrs. Connally. That's the Governor's wife. Go ahead.

VOICE: VOLUNTEER would like a patch with Mrs. Connally. Governor Connally's wife. Is that a roger?

<sup>1</sup> Chief Steward on *Air Force One*.

<sup>2</sup> Code name for Lyndon Johnson.

<sup>3</sup> Ayres later recalled that he almost slipped and said "the President," but that, wary of hurting Mrs. Kennedy's feelings with a brutal reminder that her son no longer held that title, he simply said "Mr. Johnson" (William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, p. 371).

AYRES: Is a roger.

VOICE: Roger, Roger, stand by *One*.

VOICE: Stand by for the Connally call.

VOICE: Oh, Roger, Roger, we have Dallas on the line, and we are trying to contact her now. Stand by, please. . . . *Air Force One* from CROWN, the Connally residence in Dallas is on the line, and Mrs. Connally is available to speak with Mr. Johnson if he can get to the phone patch.<sup>1</sup> Go ahead.

AYRES: Roger, he wants specifically to speak with her. Go ahead.

VOICE: Roger, stand by just a moment. AF-1, AF-1, from CROWN, would you put VOLUNTEER on, please? Mrs. Connally is on the line, standing by for his call.

LADY BIRD: Nellie? Can you hear me? We are hearing some reassuring news over the TV. We are up in the plane, but the surgeon speaking about John sounded so reassuring. How about it?

NELLIE CONNALLY: The important thing was true. That was the surgeon that had just gotten done operating on him. John is going to be all right, we are almost certain, unless something unforeseen happens—[static]

LADY BIRD: Nellie, I can't hear you too well.

VOICE: Uh, Mrs. Johnson—

LBJ: [shouting into telephone] Nellie, do you hear me?

NELLIE CONNALLY: Yes!

LBJ: I love you, darling, and I know that everything's going to be all right, isn't it?

NELLIE CONNALLY: Yes, it's going to be all right.

LBJ: God bless you, darling.

NELLIE CONNALLY: The same to you.

LBJ: Give him a hug and a kiss for me.

NELLIE CONNALLY: Good luck!

#### DWIGHT EISENHOWER

*Thirty-fourth President of the United States*

7:10 P.M.

AFTER *Air Force One* lands at Andrews Air Force Base, Johnson flies by helicopter to the White House. From his old vice presidential office, Room 274, in the Executive Office Building, west of the White House, he telephones the living former Presidents—Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower. As Democratic leader of the Senate throughout the Eisenhower years, Johnson had an amiable relationship with Ike. In 1963, unlike Hoover or Truman, the Supreme Commander of World War II in Europe still had a vast

<sup>1</sup> Actually Mrs. Connally was connected not at the "Connally residence" in Dallas but Parkland Memorial Hospital, to which the wounded Kennedy and Connally had been taken.

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1963

J. EDGAR HOOVER

*Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation*

10:01 A.M.

The LEGENDARY Director of the FBI, who detested Kennedy, reports to Johnson, his friend of decades and longtime Washington neighbor, on what the FBI knows about the murder. Hoover is eager to impress the new President with the Bureau's efficiency, partly out of concern that Johnson and the public might blame it for lapses that might have made Kennedy's assassination more likely. Forty minutes before this call, Johnson had been briefed by CIA Director John McCone. The CIA had information on foreign connections to the alleged assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, which suggested to LBJ that Kennedy may have been murdered by an international conspiracy.

HOOVER: I just wanted to let you know of a development which I think is very important in connection with this case—this man in Dallas.<sup>1</sup> We, of course, charged him with the murder of the President. The evidence that they have at the present time is not very, very strong. We have just discovered the place where the gun was purchased and the shipment of the gun from Chicago to Dallas, to a post office box in Dallas, to a man—no, to a woman by the name of "A. Hidell."<sup>2</sup> ... We had it flown up last night, and our laboratory here is making an examination of it.

LBJ: Yes, I told the Secret Service to see that that got taken care of.

HOOVER: That's right. We have the gun and we have the bullet. There was only one full bullet that was found. That was on the stretcher that the President was on. It apparently had fallen out when they massaged his heart, and we have that one.<sup>3</sup> We have what we call slivers, which are not very valuable in the identification. As soon as we finish the testing of the gun for fingerprints ... we will then be able to test the one bullet we have with the gun. But the important thing is that this gun was bought in Chicago on a money order. Cost twenty-one dollars, and it seems almost impossible to think that for twenty-one dollars you could kill the President of the United States.

LBJ: Now, who is A. Hidell?

HOOVER: A. Hidell is an alias that this man has used on other occasions, and according to the information we have from the house in which he was living—his mother—he kept a rifle like this wrapped up in a blanket which he kept in the house. On the morning that this incident occurred down there—yesterday—the man who drove him to the building where they work,<sup>4</sup> the building from where the shots came, said that he had a package wrapped up in paper. ... But the important thing at the time is that the location of the purchase of the gun by

a money order apparently to the Klein Gun Company<sup>1</sup> in Chicago—we were able to establish that last night.

LBJ: Have you established any more about the visit to the Soviet embassy in Mexico in September??

HOOVER: No, that's one angle that's very confusing, for this reason—we have up here the tape and the photograph of the man who was at the Soviet embassy, using Oswald's name. That picture and the tape do not correspond to this man's voice, nor to his appearance. In other words, it appears that there is a second person who was at the Soviet embassy down there.<sup>2</sup> We do have a copy of a letter which was written by Oswald to the Soviet embassy here in Washington, inquiring as well as complaining about the harassment of his wife<sup>3</sup> and the questioning of his wife by the FBI. Now, of course, that letter information—we process all mail that goes to the Soviet embassy.<sup>4</sup> It's a very secret operation.<sup>5</sup> No mail is delivered to the embassy without being examined and opened by us, so that we know what they receive. ... The case, as it stands now, isn't strong enough to be able to get a conviction. ... Now if we can identify this man who was at the ... Soviet embassy in Mexico City. ... This man Oswald has still denied everything. He doesn't know anything about anything, but the gun thing, of course, is a definite trend.

LBJ: It definitely established that he—the same gun killed the policeman?

HOOVER: That is an entirely different gun. We also have that gun. ...

LBJ: You think he might have two?

HOOVER: Yes, yes, he had two guns. ... The one that killed the President was found on the sixth floor in the building from which it had been fired. I think that the bullets were fired from the fifth floor, and the three shells that were found were found on the fifth floor.<sup>6</sup> But he apparently went upstairs to have fired the gun and throw the gun away and then went out. He went down to this theater.<sup>7</sup> There at the theater was where he had the gun battle with the police officer.<sup>8</sup>

LBJ: I wonder if you will get me a little synopsis and let me have what developments come your way during the day and try to get to me before we close up for the day.

<sup>1</sup>Actually, Klein's Sporting Goods Company.

<sup>2</sup>A CIA memo written that day reported that Oswald had visited Mexico City in September and talked to a Soviet vice consul whom the CIA knew as a KGB expert in assassination and sabotage. The memo warned that if Oswald had indeed been part of a foreign conspiracy, he might be killed before he could reveal it to U.S. authorities (National Archives).

<sup>3</sup>The tape and photograph came from CIA surveillance. The discrepancy has yet to be fully explained.

<sup>4</sup>After defecting to the Soviet Union, Oswald had married Marina Prusakova in Minsk in 1961. Then he returned to the United States.

<sup>5</sup>In Washington.

<sup>6</sup>Between 1953 and 1973, although the CIA was forbidden by law to engage in domestic operations, mail from the Soviet Union to the United States was covertly opened and photographed by the Agency in concert with the FBI.

<sup>7</sup>Actually the three empty cartridge cases were found on the sixth floor.

<sup>8</sup>The Texas Theater in Dallas, where Oswald was apprehended.

<sup>9</sup>Hoover's early information was wrong. J.D. Tippit was killed on a Dallas street.

<sup>1</sup>Lee Harvey Oswald.

<sup>2</sup>The official view later had it that the bullet was on Connally's stretcher.

<sup>3</sup>Wesley Frazier drove Oswald to the Texas School Book Depository.

(LJ)  
OK WJK

WJK

LBJ: [agrees:] I dictated a whole page on hate—hate international—hate domestically—and just say that this hate that produces inequality, this hate that produces poverty, that's why we've got to have a tax bill—the hate that produces injustice—that's why we've got to have a civil rights bill. It's a cancer that just eats out our national existence.

YOUNG: Right, right. That's wonderful.

LBJ: God bless you, and I was thinking of you.

YOUNG: One thing more—and I haven't heard anything about it—we sort of expected an invitation to the funeral. How are they handling that?

LBJ: I have no idea under the sun, but let me inquire on it. I'd sure—I'm taking my family and I'd almost take you as my guest if I can get an extra ticket. Let me see about it. I don't know. Bobby<sup>1</sup> is handling it. But I'll check it.

#### WHITNEY YOUNG

6:23 P.M.

LBJ: That invitation will come through to you and Roy<sup>2</sup> tonight... We talked to Sargent Shriver<sup>3</sup> and he said that he'd work it right out.

YOUNG: Thanks so much. What time is that?

LBJ: Damned if I know. [aside, to aide:] What time—when will the invitations come through, tonight?

YOUNG: Well, I mean, what time is the service?

LBJ: [back to Young:] Noon... Now, if you don't, you can call Bill Moyer [sic] through the White House switchboard... M-O-Y-E-R [sic]. He's my assistant.<sup>4</sup>

YOUNG: Yes, I know him. Had him speak at our conference last summer.

LBJ: [joking:] No wonder he hasn't been worth a damn to me! He's running around with you all the time. [both laugh]

<sup>1</sup> Robert Kennedy.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Wilkins.

<sup>3</sup> The late President's brother-in-law, Director of the Peace Corps, who is organizing the ceremonies on behalf of the Kennedy family.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson sometimes referred to Moyers, his old Senate aide who had become Shriver's Deputy Director under the Kennedy presidency, as "Moyer."

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1963

### OFFICE CONVERSATION

10:29 A.M.

VOICE: Yes, sir.

LBJ: [angry:] Everybody just keeps coming on. Now I can't work with an office like that, 'cause I'll get right talking with J. Edgar Hoover and you and Juanita<sup>1</sup> will start talking and saying hello. If the telephone system can't work, will you just tell 'em I'll have to go home? I've asked you for three days to do it!

VOICE: Yes, sir... Mr. Hoover on 2383.

LBJ: Let me find it—

### J. EDGAR HOOVER

10:30 A.M.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S funeral ceremonies are to begin in an hour. Johnson, in a bad humor, is under pressure to appoint a presidential commission to investigate the Kennedy assassination. He would prefer to leave the investigation to the FBI and state of Texas.<sup>2</sup> Knowing that Hoover will agree, he asks the FBI Director for help.

LBJ: Apparently some lawyer in Justice<sup>3</sup> is lobbying with the *Post*<sup>4</sup> because that's where the suggestion came from for this presidential commission,<sup>5</sup> which we think would be very bad and put it right in the White House. We can't be checking up on every shooting scrape in the country, but they've gone to the *Post* now to get 'em an editorial, and the *Post* is calling up and saying they're going to run an editorial if we don't do things.<sup>6</sup> Now we're going to do two things and I wanted you to know about it. One—we believe that the way to handle this,

<sup>1</sup> Juanita Roberts, a Johnson secretary.

<sup>2</sup> Suspecting that Kennedy was killed by a conspiracy, Johnson wished to close off public speculation about Oswald's foreign connections to forestall public outrage that might lead to his first night as President, horrified to learn that Dallas prosecutors were threatening to charge Oswald with killing Kennedy to further "a Communist conspiracy." LBJ ordered aides to get the Dallas district attorney in line and to encourage a Texas Court of Inquiry (*Washington Post*, November 14, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Kennedy's Justice Department, which, as Johnson knows, is Hoover's nemesis.

<sup>4</sup> The *Washington Post*.

<sup>5</sup> To investigate Kennedy's murder.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed the *Post* ran an editorial the next day saying that to investigate the assassination, "no state or local inquiry" would be enough: "The Federal Government must prosecute this inquiry by means that assure the most objective, the most thorough and the most speedy analysis and canvass of every scrap of relevant information. The disclosures and conclusions must be so sweeping and extensive that they leave no room for the imagination of the morbid, the propaganda of the left or right, or the sheer fantasy of the irresponsible."

as we said yesterday—your suggestion—that you put every facility at your command, making a full report to the Attorney General and then they make it available to the country in whatever form may seem desirable. Second—it's a state matter, too, and the state Attorney General is young and able and prudent and very cooperative with you. He's going to run a Court of Inquiry, which is provided for by state law, and he's going to have associated with him the most outstanding jurists in the country. But he's a good conservative fellow and we don't start invading local jurisdictions that way and he understands what you're doing and he's for it. . . . Now if you get too many cooks messing with the broth, it'll mess it up. . . . These two are trained organizations and the Attorney General of the state holds Courts of Inquiry every time a law is violated, and the FBI makes these investigations. . . . You ought to tell your press men that that's what's happening and they can expect Waggoner Carr, the Attorney General of Texas, to make an announcement this morning, to have a state inquiry and that you can offer them your full cooperation and vice versa. . . .

HOOVER: We'll both work together on it.

LBJ: And any influence you got with the Post . . . point out to them that . . . just picking out a Tom Dewey lawyer from New York<sup>2</sup> and sending him down on new facts—this commission thing—Mr. Herbert Hoover tried that and sometimes a commission that's not trained hurts more than it helps.<sup>3</sup>

HOOVER: It's a regular circus then.

LBJ: That's right.

HOOVER: Because it'll be covered by TV and everything like that.

LBJ: Just like an investigating committee.

HOOVER: Exactly. I don't have much influence with the Post because I frankly don't read it. I view it like the *Daily Worker*.<sup>4</sup>

LBJ: [laughs] You told me that once before. I just want your people to know the facts, and your people can say that. And that kind of negates it, you see?

JOSEPH ALSOP

Columnist, Washington Post

10:40 A.M.

JOHNSON PRODS one of the most powerful columnists of the time to turn *Washington Post* colleagues against the notion of a commission.

ALSOP: You know what I feel about you and you know how I—well, I put it all in the letter<sup>5</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup>Of Texas.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Dewey, former New York Governor and twice Republican nominee for President, was Johnson's image of a Wall Street lawyer.

<sup>3</sup>Former President Hoover chaired two presidential commissions for Harry Truman that, contrary to Johnson's memory, were generally accounted a success.

<sup>4</sup>The old American Communist Party gazette.

<sup>5</sup>Alsop wrote Johnson a letter of praise on his succession to the presidency.

LBJ: [reading from notes:] "He has ordered—or will order during the day, probably right after the funeral—a state Court of Inquiry headed by the Attorney General. . . . He will have associated with him one or two of the outstanding civil liberties jurists in the country." Perhaps Jaworski, who represented the Attorney General in the Fifth Circuit Negro case,<sup>2</sup> or the head of the trial lawyers of America or Dean Storey,<sup>3</sup> or—

ALSOP: You mean, somebody from outside Texas?

LBJ: No, they're going to have FBI from outside Texas, but this is under Texas law<sup>4</sup> and they take all the involvements and we don't send in a bunch of carpetbaggers. That's the worst thing we could do right now.

ALSOP: You think so?

LBJ: I know. . . . If there's any question about a Texas operation, they've got an FBI that's going to the bottom of it. . . . But paralleling that is a blue-ribbon state Court of Inquiry headed by the brilliant Attorney General<sup>1</sup> and associated with him, somebody like, say, John Garwood, Will Clayton's son-in-law, who was a brilliant Supreme Court Justice, that's retired<sup>4</sup>—somebody like Roberts did at Pearl Harbor? . . . Now, if we have another commission, hell, you're gonna have people running over each other and everybody agrees. Now I know that some of the lawyers—they thought of the blue-ribbon commission first, at Justice, and we just can't have them lobbying against the President, when he makes these decisions. We decided that the best thing to do to counterattack is, number one, to put the FBI in full force, number two, to put the state<sup>5</sup> in full force.

ALSOP: Nobody, nobody, Mr. President, lobbied me. I lay awake all night.

LBJ: No, not you. [Irritated:] They lobbied me last night! I spent the day on it. I had to leave Mrs. Kennedy's side at the White House and call and ask the Secret Service and FBI to proceed immediately. I spent most of my day on this thing yesterday. [more shrill:] I had the Attorney General from Texas fly in here. . . . And the FBI is of the opinion that the wisest, quickest, ablest, most effective way to go about it is for them to thoroughly study it and bring in a written report to the Attorney General<sup>6</sup> at the earliest possible date, which they've been working

<sup>1</sup>Of Texas.

<sup>2</sup>Leon Jaworski of Houston prosecuted the first major war criminal at Nuremberg in 1946 and resurfaced in 1973 as the second Special Prosecutor to pursue Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal. In 1960, Jaworski defended LBJ's right to run simultaneously for Vice President and Senator from Texas. On behalf of Robert Kennedy's Justice Department, Jaworski had also prosecuted Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett for delaying a Fifth Circuit Court order to allow black students to enroll at the University of Mississippi.

<sup>3</sup>M. Robert Storey, former president of the American Bar Association and dean of Southern Methodist Law School in Dallas.

<sup>4</sup>Assassination of a President still fell under state law in 1963. Only two years later did Congress declare presidential assassination, kidnapping, or assault to be federal crimes.

<sup>5</sup>Of Texas.

<sup>6</sup>Will Clayton was a wealthy Texan who served in the Roosevelt and Truman State Departments. His daughter, Ellen Garwood, appeared during the Jean-contra hearings in 1987 as one of those who had raised private funds in league with Colonel Oliver North for the Nicaraguan rebels. Clayton's son-in-law, John Garwood, was a Texas Supreme Court Justice.

<sup>7</sup>U.S. Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts chaired a commission established by Franklin Roosevelt to investigate the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

<sup>8</sup>Texas.

<sup>9</sup>Robert Kennedy.

on since twelve-thirty yesterday. Number one—and they have information that is available to *no one*, that has not been presented thus far... Number two, to parallel that, we're having a blue-ribbon Court of Inquiry... in Texas, where this thing occurred.

ALSO P: Mr. President, just let me give you my political judgment on the thing. I think you've done everything that could probably be done—

LBj: We just don't want to be in a position—I'll make this one more statement and then I'm through—I want to hear you. We don't want to be in the position of saying that we have come into a state, other than the FBI... Some outsiders have told them that their integrity is no good and that we're going to have some carpathag trials. We can't haul off people from New York and try them in Jackson, Mississippi, and we can't haul off people from Dallas and try them in New York.

ALSO P: I see that, Mr. President, but let me—

LBj: It is their constitutional right. Go ahead now.

ALSO P: Let me make one suggestion because... I think this bridges the gap which I believe and Dean Acheson<sup>1</sup> believes still exists... 'Friendly' is going to come out tomorrow morning, with a big thing about a blue-ribbon commission, which he thought of independently... I'm sure you're right except there's one missing piece. I suggest that you announce that as you do not want the Attorney General to have the painful responsibility of reporting on his own brother's assassination, that you have authorized three jurists... to review all the evidence by the FBI and produce a report to the nation for the nation... If you'll get out such an announcement this afternoon, you're going to make a marvelous—well, you've already made a marvelous start. You haven't put a damned foot one quarter of an inch wrong, and I've never seen anything like it... I'm sure that if Moyers calls 'Friendly,' you'll have terrific support from the *Washington Post* and from the whole of the rest of the press instantly.

LBj: I'll ruin both procedures we've got, though... My lawyers, Joe, tell me that... the President must not inject himself into local killings.

ALSO P: I agree with that. But in this case it does happen to be the killing of the President...

LBj: I know that.

ALSO P: Mind you, Mr. President... I am talking about a body which will take all the evidence the FBI has amassed... That, I think, you see, that is not an interference in Texas.

LBj: No, but it's—

ALSO P: Wait a second, now. That is a way to transmit to the public... and in a way that will carry absolute conviction what the FBI has turned up.

LBj: Why can't the FBI transmit it?

ALSO P: Because no one... on the left—they won't believe the FBI. And the FBI doesn't write very well.

LBj: They'd believe Nick Katzenbach??

<sup>1</sup> The Truman Secretary of State had become a Washington lawyer.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Friendly, managing editor of the *Washington Post*.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Kennedy's Deputy Attorney General.

ALSO P: I just wouldn't put it on Bobby and Nick Katzenbach... I think it's unfair to put it on Bobby. It is his own brother's death.

LBj: I'm not going to put it on Bobby. [growing more irritated.] We're putting it on the finest jurists in the land... Then we're putting it on the top investigative agency and asking them to write a report.

ALSO P: ... I'm just suggesting... this very small addition to the admirable machinery that you've already set up... And I now see exactly how right you are and how wrong I was about this idea of a blue-ribbon commission.

LBj: Now, you see, Katzenbach suggested that and that provoked it. The lawyers that counsel me just hit the ceiling. Said, "My God Almighty!"

ALSO P: ... What I am suggesting is not at all what Katzenbach suggested... I worry about this *Post* editorial. I'd like you to get ahead of them.

LBj: I worry about the *Post*, period, but—[chuckles]

ALSO P: ... If you make this decision and have Moyers call 'Friendly' or 'Kay'... they'll be flattered... And I hate to interfere, sir. I only dare to do so because I care so much about you.

LBj: I know that, Joe.

ALSO P: ... What I'm really honestly giving you is public relations advice and not legal advice.

LBj: Well, I'm not grounded. I don't have the depth in the civil liberties picture that some of the folks that have worked on this with me. I had a lawyer<sup>2</sup> left my house around midnight and spent, I guess, three or four hours going over this thing from A to Z... and we thought that this was the best way to handle it.

ALSO P: Mr. President... I must not keep you because you'll be late getting into your trousers.

#### MCGEORGE BUNDY

4:00 PM.

JUST AFTER KENNEDY'S BURIAL at Arlington National Cemetery, Johnson returns to the White House anxious about what will happen when the national day of mourning is over.

LBj: The Securities Exchange, commodity markets, and so forth—I'm a little worried about them tomorrow. You know what they did—they dropped—after Eisenhower's heart attack.<sup>3</sup> So that's the main reason we really wanted to speak<sup>4</sup> Tuesday. We hoped that we could hold 'em. But I wonder if you wouldn't mind talking to Dillon and Martin<sup>5</sup> and seeing if they've got any suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> Katharine Graham, *Washington Post* Company president since her husband's death by his own hand in August 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson's longtime friend and close counselor, Abe Fortas.

<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower suffered a massive coronary in September 1955.

<sup>4</sup> To a joint Session of Congress.

<sup>5</sup> Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon and Federal Reserve Board Chairman William McChesney Martin.

BUNDY: I talked in a general way to Doug yesterday and he was not worried, but let me check again, because that's twenty-four hours old.

LBJ: I think both of them might make some kind of statement about the continuity, stability, or something, and express their confidence—it might help. They ought to be imaginative enough to find something that they think could stabilize it.

BUNDY: Your Latin American idea<sup>1</sup> is regarded a ten-strike and we're going to organize that for tomorrow afternoon. There's some problem of where, but we'll have a recommendation on that for the morning. De Gaulle is the senior of these three men you're seeing this evening? I think you probably ought to see him first. You'd be seeing them all three in order. He's very protocol-aire and the other two don't care. The other two, you see, are not heads of state.

LBJ: All right.

BUNDY: Does that bother you?

LBJ: A little.<sup>2</sup> I thought I'd sandwich him in, but if you think it'd be disagreeable. You see, he urged—what time do we have to see him?

BUNDY: Well, we hope you'll be through with the reception and certain private interviews, and you could see him at seven and then have Pearson and Ikeda<sup>4</sup> right after that. They're both tickled pink.

LBJ: All right, I'll follow your judgment on that.

#### LAWRENCE O'BRIEN

##### *Special Assistant to the President for Congressional Relations*

4:04 P.M.

JOHNSON MAKES his pitch to Kennedy's congressional liaison, who has returned from the Kennedy burial with a fellow member of JFK's "Irish Mafia," Kenneth O'Donnell, in a deep state of melancholy.

LBJ: Needless to tell you, I'm most anxious for you to continue just like you have been, because I need you a lot more than he did.

O'BRIEN: Mr. President, Ken is here with me. Do you have any immediate problem?

LBJ: No, no, I just wanted you to know how strongly I felt about you and Ken and all the rest of the staff, and I had talked to some of them individually, but I hadn't had a chance to run into you, and I think you know the confidence I have in you and admiration I have for you.

<sup>1</sup>Johnson had asked Bundy to arrange a special meeting with a hundred representatives of Latin American nations to reaffirm his commitment to Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, designed to improve relations among the Americas.

<sup>2</sup>At the aforementioned State Department reception.

<sup>3</sup>De Gaulle's relationship with the United States was rocky in 1963, thanks in part to his opposition to British membership in the Common Market and to the American-Soviet-British partial nuclear test ban treaty.

<sup>4</sup>Prime Ministers Lester Pearson of Canada and Hayato Ikeda of Japan.

O'BRIEN: I know that, Mr. President.

LBJ: I don't expect you to love me as much as you did him, but I expect you will after we've been around awhile.

O'BRIEN: Right, Mr. President.

LBJ: ... I wanted to congratulate you, too, on that Mundt vote up there.<sup>1</sup> I think it would be a terrible thing to Kennedy's memory to have this wheat sale thing repudiated. ... I did tell Mansfield that I thought it would be ... a hell of a way to launch a new administration.

O'BRIEN: Right, I agree.

LBJ: And so I want somebody to give it a little attention and let me know tonight or in the morning if there is anything that I need to know about it if it's not well taken care of. ... And then you let me know any suggestions you have because we're in this thing up to our ears.

#### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

##### *President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference*

9:20 P.M.

LBJ: A good many people told me that they heard about your statement, I guess, on TV, wasn't it?

KING: Yes, that's right.

LBJ: I've been locked up in this office and haven't seen it, but I want to tell you how grateful I am and how worthy I'm going to try to be of all your hopes.

KING: Well, thank you very much. I am so happy to hear that and I knew that you had just that great spirit and you know you have our support and backing. We know what a difficult period this is.

LBJ: It's just an impossible period. We've got a budget coming up that's ... practically already made and we've got a civil rights bill. ... We've just got to not let up on any of 'em and keep going. And I guess they'll say that I'm repudiated. But I'm going to ask the Congress Wednesday to just stay there till they pass 'em all. They won't do it, but we'll just keep them there next year until they do and we just won't give up an inch.

KING: Uh-huh. Well, this is mighty fine. ... I think one of the great tributes that we can pay in memory of President Kennedy is to try to enact some of the great progressive policies that he sought to initiate.

LBJ: I'm going to support 'em all and you can count on that. And I'm going to do my best to get other men to do likewise and I'll have to have you-all's help. I never needed it more'n I do now.

<sup>1</sup>Republican Senator Karl Mundt had sought to block JFK's financing of the sale of surplus wheat to the Soviet bloc through the U.S. Export-Import Bank. At Kennedy's death, the administration lacked the votes to defeat him. By casting the issue as a vote of confidence in the new President, Johnson managed to turn around nine Democrats and one Republican to thwart the Mundt bill by 57 to 35.

<sup>2</sup>Stating confidence in Johnson's leadership.

night at dinner and how what you and Phil had said about me and how touched she was, and how she remembered it and what the President had said to her several times about it. We just kind of had a real lovely session for about thirty minutes here. We're going to name Cape Canaveral Cape Kennedy' and —

ALSTOP: Yes, Kay and I after your speech this morning—she lunched with me—and we both sort of had a ridiculous cry because Phil wasn't there to see how right he'd been.

LBj: Did you see what she sent me that he had written?

ALSTOP: No, I didn't.

LBj: We'll have to have you and Susan Mary' some night.

ALSTOP: Your speech was a triumphant success, Lyndon.

LBj: Was it?

ALSTOP: And I have to tell you because I'm going to write it. I've never thought that speaking was your long suit. I've thought that acting was your long suit—action, not oratory. But it was everything that one hoped... And good luck to you and let me come and see you.

LBj: I sure will, sure will.

# THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1963

JAMES EASTLAND

Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee, Democrat of Mississippi

3:21 P.M.

Now JOHNSON is swinging around to the idea of a presidential commission, suggested by Katzenbach and the *Washington Post*, that will hold closed-door hearings into the Kennedy assassination. He believes that a commission may have the best chance to preempt other investigations that might get out of control, exciting the public about Oswald's Cuban and Soviet ties.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>At Johnson's suggestion, after Mrs. Kennedy asked him to do something to commemorate JFK's support for the space program.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Alsoop, *JFK and Mrs. Johnson*, had written Moyer's, "It is important that all of the facts surrounding President Kennedy's assassination be made public in a way which will satisfy people in the United States and abroad that all the facts have been told and that a statement to this effect be made now. 1. The public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin, that he did not have confederates who are still at large and that the evidence was such he would have been convicted at trial. 2. Speculation about Oswald's motivation ought to be cut off, and we should have some basis for rebutting that this was a Communist conspiracy or (as the Iron Curtain press is saying) a right-wing conspiracy to blame it on the Communists" (Johnson Library); *Whom Mrs. del. ref. Nov 11/24/63. See*

*Notes again!*

He calls Eastland to talk him out of holding separate Senate hearings on the assassination.

LBj: Jim, on this investigation—this Dallas situation—what does your committee plan to do on it?...

EASTLAND: We plan to hold hearings and just make a record of what the proof is. That's all. Show that this man was the assassin... We've had a great number of Senators that have come to us to request it, beginning with Morse; ... Now if you want it dropped, we'll drop it.

LBj: I had this feeling—this is very confidential and I haven't proposed it to anybody and I don't know that I would—but we've got a pretty strong states' rights question here and I've had some hesitancy to start having a bunch of Congressional inquiries into violation of a state statute,<sup>2</sup> and it might—

EASTLAND: You see, we've got a bill in to make it a federal—<sup>3</sup>

LBj: I know it, but you haven't got any law and it might set a precedent that you wouldn't want to have. I talked to some of the fellows about it day before yesterday. Russell<sup>4</sup> was down here for luncheon.

EASTLAND: Now, there's one of them that's urged it.

LBj: Now my thought would be this, if we could do it—we might get two members from each body. You see, we're going to have three inquiries running as it is.

EASTLAND: Well, I wouldn't want that. That wouldn't do.

LBj: And if we could have two Congressmen and two Senators and maybe a Justice of the Supreme Court take the FBI report and review it... I think it would—this is a very explosive thing and it could be a very dangerous thing for the country. And a little publicity could just fan the flames. What would you think about if we could work it out of getting somebody from the Court and somebody from the House and somebody from the Senate and have a real high-level judicial study of all the facts?

EASTLAND: Well, it would suit me all right. Now you'd have—there's going to be some opposition on the committee....

LBj: If it is all right with you, I'm not worried about your committee. I know what you can handle.

<sup>1</sup>Wayne Morse, Democrat of Oregon.

<sup>2</sup>Knowing that Eastland is a strong champion of states' rights, especially in blocking federal integration plans, Johnson uses this approach to derail the Senator's intentions on the Kennedy assassination.

<sup>3</sup>Eastland was considering a bill making an assassination attempt on a President or other high administration officials a federal offense.

<sup>4</sup>Senator Richard Russell, Democrat of Georgia.

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1963

ILEALE BOGGS

*Assistant House Majority Leader, Democratic Congressman of Louisiana*

11:35 A.M.

BOGGS: You were magnificent last night.<sup>1</sup> We sat down—Lindy<sup>2</sup> and I, and a few of our warm friends—and just cried. God, what a job you've done and you were utterly magnificent.

LBj: You're mighty wonderful. Bird wants Lindy to help her on a good many things. So tell her to be as charitable with my little girl as she can because she's got to be careful who she asks to help.

BOGGS: Don't worry. She's got a block of letters and things she's working on right now.<sup>3</sup>

EVERETT DIRKSEN

11:40 A.M.

LBj: I want to talk to you and Charlie<sup>4</sup> in the next day or two about how in the world we're going to get some little action between now and the time we go home. If we don't, why, we're going to get a bad press.

DIRKSEN: Yeah.

LBj: ... Now Harry Byrd is very interested in seeing what this budget'll be before he reports this tax bill out. ... I've already done everything that I humanly can to keep that within bounds. ... Everett. ... We can pass the tax bill in a week. ... They've got the MacGregor Burnses and the rest of them writing about the Congress.<sup>5</sup> ... There is some merit to some of the things they're saying. And my life is the Hill, as I said the other day,<sup>6</sup> but I do think that if we could, we ought to show some evidence of progress. And you be thinking about how you can help us get that tax bill out. ... Every businessman I've talked to since I've been in here—from the tops on down. ... says every one of them are waiting to see whether they're really going to pass one. ... That market went up the other day,<sup>7</sup> because they thought that we were going to be stable in business,

<sup>1</sup>Boggs refers to Johnson's Thanksgiving evening television speech from the Oval Office.

<sup>2</sup>Mrs. Boggs.

<sup>3</sup>Mrs. Boggs was already working at the Johnson house to help Mrs. Johnson with her avalanche of mail.

<sup>4</sup>Congressman Charles Halleck of Indiana, the Republican House Minority Leader.

<sup>5</sup>James MacGregor Burns had described what he called "the deadlock of democracy" on Capitol Hill in an influential book of the same name (Prentice-Hall, 1963).

<sup>6</sup>At the Joint Session.

<sup>7</sup>When the stock market opened after the Kennedy funeral, it made the greatest advance on record. This was widely ascribed to the smoothness with which Johnson had taken over the reins of government.

because they think we're going to be frugal. But you've got to help me, my friend.

DIRKSEN: I'll be back there Monday and I'll talk to Harry.

LBj: ... If Congress is to function at all and can't pass a tax bill between January and January, why, we're in a hell of a shape. ... They ought to pass it in a week. Then ... every businessman in this country would have some confidence. And you'd probably pick up a bunch of Senate seats<sup>1</sup> because you're running the Senate like I ran it, you being pretty patriotic. And you cooperate. ... We've got an obligation to the Congress. And we've just got to show that they can do something because we can't pass civil rights. We know that.<sup>2</sup>

ABE FORTAS

*Washington Attorney and Partner, Arnold, Fortas & Porter*

1:15 P.M.

Johnson's Memphis-born New Deal friend, intimate counselor, and troubleshooter had defended LBj after the 1948 Democratic primary for Senator from Texas. When Johnson's opponent, Governor Coke Stevenson, charged that Johnson's fabled eighty-seven-vote margin was due to voting irregularities, a federal district court judge kept Johnson's name off the election ballot. Fortas argued his case before Justice Hugo Black, who ordered it restored. Now LBj has asked Fortas to help persuade Chief Justice Earl Warren to chair his proposed presidential commission on the assassination.

LBj: Progress on the Court?

FORTAS: Yes, sir, and I've been trying to handle this with the greatest tact, and so the way we worked it out is that Nick<sup>3</sup> and the Solicitor General<sup>4</sup> are going to call on the Chief Justice, see, instead of my doing it.

LBj: We need it right quick, though, because they're already announcing it<sup>5</sup> in the House and Senate and all over the damned place. Like talking into a big microphone.

FORTAS: I know. ...

LBj: All right. How many men on the commission are we going to have?

FORTAS: If you had Dulles<sup>6</sup> and the general,<sup>7</sup> and two from the House, two from the Senate, then the Chief Justice—

<sup>1</sup>Johnson actually believes the exact opposite.

<sup>2</sup>Meaning that LBj, at the moment, cannot summon the two thirds of the Senate necessary to invoke cloture and abort the inevitable Southern Democratic filibuster. As in the House, Johnson knows that he must recruit Senate Republicans to support cloture in order to get a civil rights bill, and he is already beginning to work on Dirksen, suggesting that despite the Illinois Senator's old reservations about civil rights, the time was now. Dirksen was going to be left behind, and that that was Dirksen's chance to establish a place for himself in the history books.

<sup>3</sup>Katzenbach.

<sup>4</sup>Archibald Cox, later the first Watergate Special Prosecutor.

<sup>5</sup>The prospect of a commission.

<sup>6</sup>Allen Dulles, former Director of Central Intelligence.

<sup>7</sup>Johnson wants a military man on the commission.

LBj: Who do you think of as the general?

FORTAS: Only one I can think of—and I don't know many of those fellows—is Norstad.<sup>1</sup> . . . So I thought we'd probably have to take Eastland and the ranking minority member of the Judiciary Committee and similarly on the House. . . .

LBj: Yeah, but Celler? God I hate to—Celler and Eastland! I hate to have them.

What would you think about John McCloy?<sup>2</sup> Instead of General Norstad?

FORTAS: I think that'd be great. He's a wonderful man and a very dear friend of mine. I'm devoted to him.

LBj: Let's think along that line now. Can we do this by executive order?

FORTAS: Yes, sir.

LBj: Do we infringe upon the Congress in any way in doing it? Reflect on them in any way?

FORTAS: No, sir. I think on the contrary, you know all these editorials are saying this would be a shame to have all these investigations. I think the country will think the Congress had started acting wisely for a change. I think it would be a great thing. Mr. President, for them and for the country.

LBj: Who would you think about in the Senate? . . . I'd a whole lot rather have Russell than Eastland.<sup>3</sup>

FORTAS: Oh, I would too. Yes sir, for anything I'd rather have him. . . .

LBj: I'd like to have Russell and Cooper<sup>4</sup> be my two.

FORTAS: That would be marvelous—simply marvelous. On the House side, we could get Hale Boggs.

LBj: Well, he's talking all the goddamned time. He's a good fellow, but he's done announced it in the House.<sup>5</sup>

FORTAS: That's what I mean and I thought maybe this would help get it through.

LBj: What do you have to get through?

FORTAS: I mean just the agreement that they'll do this in lieu of a Senate and House investigation.

LBj: He's agreed to that.

FORTAS: That's wonderful.

LBj: And McCormack has agreed to it, I would guess. What's his name—that

<sup>1</sup>General Lauris Norstad had been Supreme Commander of NATO from 1956 until January 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Emanuel Celler, Democrat of New York and Chairman, House Judiciary Committee.

<sup>3</sup>Roosevelt's Assistant Secretary of War, Truman's High Commissioner to Germany, and then head of the Chase Manhattan Bank was identified by the *New Yorker* writer Richard Rovere in a famous 1962 *Esquire* article as "the Chairman" of the American Establishment.

<sup>4</sup>Johnson is far closer to Russell than Eastland and sees him as a more large-minded, national figure.

<sup>5</sup>Senator John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky. "At noon that day, Boggs had tricked Johnson by telling the House that he could state "on the highest authority" that there would be a "very high-level" nonpartisan inquiry into the assassination to avert any "unseemly scramble for hearings."

fellow McCulloch—he's the ranking Republican.<sup>1</sup> He's pretty good. Or Jerry Ford? I would think Jerry Ford would be good for the Republicans.

FORTAS: . . . How about little old Carl Albert?<sup>2</sup> . . .

LBj: . . . It might be a slap at Hale if we did that. . . .

FORTAS: Yes sir, I wonder if we aren't struck with Hale. . . . Now . . . the Chief Justice may not want to do this, but I'll call Nick immediately and see if he's got a report yet. He should have gone over there right away. I really gave him the hotfoot.

LBj: They've already announced it. You call him back and see what the hell is happening.

FORTAS: Who's announced it?

LBj: Hale Boggs got down, you see. I had to tell him what we were contemplating, so he got down on the floor of the House. Some jerk got up and said something, so he thought he had to show his knowledge.

FORTAS: Oh, Lord! I thought you meant he'd just announced the House was going to investigate.

LBj: No, he announced there was going to be a high-level commission.

FORTAS: I see.

LBj: . . . I guess we have to talk to these fellows before we announce we're going to appoint them, don't we?

FORTAS: Yes sir.

LBj: All right. God . . . I think we ought to order them to do it and let them bellyache.

#### J. EDGAR HOOVER

1:40 P.M.

WHILE SOUNDING OUT the FBI Director about names for the Presidential commission, Johnson is sidetracked by fascination with what the FBI is discovering about the murder.

LBj: Are you familiar with this proposed group that they're trying to put together on this study of your report and other things—two from the House, two from the Senate, somebody from the Court, a couple of outsiders?

HOOVER: No, I haven't heard of that. . . . I think it would be very, very bad to have a rash of investigations on this thing.

LBj: Well, the only way we can stop them is probably to appoint a high-level one to evaluate your report and put somebody that's pretty good on it that I can

<sup>1</sup>William McCulloch of Ohio, ranking Republican on the House Judiciary Committee.

<sup>2</sup>Republican Congressman from Michigan, later Vice President and President of the United States.

<sup>3</sup>House Majority Leader, Democrat of Oklahoma.

select . . . and tell the House and the Senate not to go ahead . . . because they'll get a lot of television going and I thought it would be bad.

HOOVER: It would be a three-ring circus.

LBJ: What do you think about Allen Dulles?

HOOVER: I think he would be a good man.

LBJ: What do you think about John McCloy?

HOOVER: I'm not as enthusiastic about McCloy. . . . I'm not so certain as to the matter of the publicity that he might seek on it.

LBJ: What about General Norsiad?

HOOVER: Good man.

LBJ: . . . I thought maybe I might try to get Boggs and Jerry Ford in the House, maybe try to get Dick Russell and maybe Cooper in the Senate.

HOOVER: Yes, I think so.

LBJ: . . . Me and you are just going to talk like brothers. . . . I thought Russell could kind of look after the general situation, see that the states and their relations—

HOOVER: Russell would be an excellent man.

LBJ: And I thought Cooper might look after the liberal group. . . . He's a pretty judicious fellow but he's a pretty liberal fellow. I wouldn't want Javits' or some of those on it.

HOOVER: No, no, no, Javits plays the front page a lot.

LBJ: Cooper is kind of border state. It's not the South and it's not the North.

HOOVER: That's right.

LBJ: Do you know Ford from Michigan?

HOOVER: I know of him, but I don't know him. I saw him on TV the other night for the first time and he handled himself well on that.

LBJ: You know Boggs?

HOOVER: Oh, yes, I know Boggs.

LBJ: He's kind of the author of the resolution. That's why. Now Walter tells me—Walter Jenkins?—that you've designated Deke<sup>3</sup> to work with us, like you did on the Hill, and I tell you I sure appreciate that. I didn't ask for it 'cause. . . . I know you know how to run your business better than anybody else. . . . We consider him as high-class as you do. And it is a mighty gracious thing to do. And we'll be mighty happy. We salute you for knowing how to pick good men.

HOOVER: That's mighty nice of you, Mr. President, indeed. We hope to have this thing wrapped up today, but could be we probably won't get it before the

<sup>1</sup> Republican Senator Jacob Javits of New York.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Jenkins had been Johnson's close aide since 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Cartha "Deke" DeLoach of the FBI, whom Johnson has known and liked since 1958, when, at Hoover's request, DeLoach called on the Senate Majority Leader and asked him for a bill that would award the FBI Director his salary for life. LBJ was happy to accede. (See Cartha DeLoach, *Hoover's FBI*, Regency, 1995, pp. 371–75.)

first of the week. This angle in Mexico is giving us a great deal of trouble because the story there is of this man Oswald getting \$6,500 from the Cuban embassy and then coming back to this country with it. We're not able to prove that fact, but the information was that he was there on the 18th of September in Mexico City and we are able to prove conclusively he was in New Orleans that day. Now then they've changed the dates. The story came in changing the dates to the 28th of September and he was in Mexico City on the 28th. Now the Mexican police have again arrested this woman Durán,<sup>1</sup> who is a member of the Cuban embassy . . . and we're going to confront her with the original informant, who saw the money pass, so he says, and we're also going to put the lie detector test on him. . . .?

LBJ: Can you pay any attention to those lie detector tests?

HOOVER: . . . I wouldn't want to be a party to sending a man to the chair on a lie detector. . . . We've found many cases where we've used them—in a bank where there's been embezzlement—and a person will confess before the lie detector test is finished. They're more or less fearful of the fact that the lie detector test will show them guilty psychologically. . . . Of course, it is a misnomer to call it a lie detector because what it really is is the evaluation of the chart that is made by this machine and that evaluation is made by a human being. . . . On the other hand, if this Oswald had lived and had taken the lie detector test and it had shown definitely that he had done these various things together with the evidence that we very definitely have, it would just have added that much more strength to it. There is no question but that he is the man now—with the fingerprints and things we have. This fellow Rubenstein<sup>2</sup> down there—he has offered to take the lie detector test but his lawyer<sup>3</sup> has got to be, of course, consulted first and I doubt whether the lawyer will allow it. He's one of these criminal lawyers from the West Coast and somewhat like an Edward Bennett Williams<sup>4</sup> type—and almost as much of a slyster.

LBJ: [laughs] Have you got any relationship between the two<sup>5</sup> yet?

HOOVER: . . . No, at the present time we have not. There was a story down here—

LBJ: Was he ever in his bar and stuff like that?

HOOVER: There was a story that this fellow had been in this nightclub<sup>6</sup> that is a striptease joint, that he had. But that has not been able to be confirmed. Now

<sup>1</sup> Silvia Durán, a Mexican woman who was secretary to the Cuban consul in Mexico City, Eusebio Azcue.

<sup>2</sup> While in Mexico City in September, Oswald had talked to Silvia Durán about obtaining a Cuban visa. On November 26, John McCone had informed Binny by memo that a Nicaraguan named Gilberto Alvarez had told the U.S. embassy in Mexico City that he had seen Oswald on September 18 discussing assassination and taking money from someone inside the Cuban embassy. McCone warned that this information was "as yet completely uncorroborated." (National Archives.)

<sup>3</sup> Jack Ruby, n.e. Jacob Rubenstein, who murdered Oswald with a revolver as the accused assassin is being moved from the Dallas jail.

<sup>4</sup> Melvin Belli of San Francisco.

<sup>5</sup> Legendary Washington attorney and one of Hoover's munny pet dislikes.

<sup>6</sup> Ruby and Oswald.

<sup>7</sup> Ruby's nightclub was called the Carousel Club.

this fellow Rubenstein is a very shady character, has a bad record—street brawler, fighter, and that sort of thing—and in the place in Dallas, if a fellow came in there and couldn't pay his bill completely, Rubenstein would beat the very devil out of him and throw him out of the place. . . . He didn't drink, didn't smoke, boasted about that. He is what I would put in a category of one of these "egomaniacs." Likes to be in the limelight. He knew all the police in that white-light district. . . . and he also let them come in, see the show, get food, liquor, and so forth. That's how I think, he got into police headquarters. Because they accepted him as kind of a police character, hanging around police headquarters. . . . They never made any moves, as the pictures show, even when they saw him approaching this fellow and got up right to him and pressed his pistol against Oswald's stomach.<sup>2</sup> Neither of the police officers<sup>3</sup> on either side made any move to push him away or grab him. It wasn't until after the gun was fired that they then moved. . . . The Chief of Police<sup>4</sup> admits that he moved him in the morning as a convenience and at the request of motion-picture people, who wanted to have daylight. He should have moved him at night. . . . But so far as tying Rubenstein and Oswald together we haven't as yet done. So there have been a number of stories come in, we've tied Oswald into the Civil Liberties Union in New York, membership into that and, of course, this Cuban Fair Play Committee, which is pro-Castro,<sup>5</sup> and dominated by Communism and financed, to some extent, by the Castro government.

LBI: How many shots were fired? Three?

HOOVER: Three.

LBI: Any of them fired at me?<sup>6</sup>

HOOVER: No.

LBI: All three at the President?

HOOVER: All three at the President and we have them. Two of the shots fired at the President were splintered but they had characteristics on them so that our ballistics expert was able to prove that they were fired by his gun. . . . The President—he was hit by the first and third. The second shot hit the Governor. The third shot is a complete bullet and that rolled out of the President's head. It tore a large part of the President's head off and, in trying to massage his heart at the hospital on the way to the hospital, they apparently loosened that and it fell off onto the stretcher.<sup>7</sup> And we recovered that. . . . And we have the gun here also.

LBI: Were they aiming at the President?

HOOVER: They were aiming directly at the President. There is no question about that. This telescopic lens, which I've looked through—it brings a person as

<sup>1</sup> Hoover probably means "red-light."

<sup>2</sup> This refers to Ruby's shooting of Oswald on Sunday.

<sup>3</sup> Escorting Oswald.

<sup>4</sup> Jesse Curry, Dallas Chief of Police.

<sup>5</sup> Fidel Castro, the Communist leader of Cuba.

<sup>6</sup> Searching for evidence of conspiracy, Johnson knows that bullets fired at both the President and Vice President might mean a plot to bring down the government.

<sup>7</sup> Hoover's information here conflicts with the later official view that one bullet missed, another pierced Kennedy's throat and struck Connally, and a third fatally struck the President's skull—and that the bullet found was discovered on Connally's stretcher.

close to you as if they were sitting right beside you. And we also have tested the fact that you could fire those three shots. . . . within three seconds. There had been some stories going around. . . . that there must have been more than one man because no one man could fire those shots in the time that they were fired. . . .

LBI: How did it happen they hit Connally?

HOOVER: Connally turned to the President when the first shot was fired and I think in that turning, it was where he got hit.

LBI: If he hadn't turned, he probably wouldn't have got hit?

HOOVER: I think that is very likely.

LBI: Would the President've got hit with the second one?

HOOVER: No, the President wasn't hit with the second one.

LBI: I say if Connally hadn't been in his way?<sup>1</sup>

HOOVER: Oh, yes, yes, the President would no doubt have been hit.

LBI: He would have been hit three times.

HOOVER: He would have been hit three times from the fifth floor of that building where we found the gun<sup>2</sup> and the wrapping paper in which the gun was wrapped. . . . and upon which we found the full fingerprints of this man Oswald. On that floor we found the three empty shells that had been fired and one shell that had not been fired. . . . He then threw the gun aside and came down. At the entrance of the building, he was stopped by a police officer and some manager in the building<sup>3</sup> told the police officer, "Well, he's all right. He works there. You needn't hold him." They let him go. . . . And then he got on a bus. . . . He went out to his home and got aboard of a jacket. . . . and he came back downtown. . . . and the police officer who was killed<sup>4</sup> stopped him, not knowing who he was and not knowing whether he was *the man*, but just on suspicion. And he fired, of course, and killed the police officer. Then he walked.

LBI: You can prove that?

HOOVER: Oh, yes, oh, yes, we can prove that. Then he walked about another two blocks and went to the theater<sup>5</sup> and the woman at the theater window selling the tickets<sup>6</sup> she was so suspicious the way he was acting, she said he was carrying a gun. . . . He went into the theater and she notified the police and the police and our man down there went in there and located this particular man. They had quite a struggle with him. He fought like a regular lion and he had to be subdued, of course, and was then brought out and. . . taken to the police headquarters. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Johnson misunderstands. Presuming that Hoover was correct in arguing that the gunman shot from behind and above, Connally, who sat in the jump seat in front of Kennedy, would not have been in the way.

<sup>2</sup> Like the three empty cartridge cases, Oswald's rifle was actually found on the Depository's sixth floor.

<sup>3</sup> Roy Truly.

<sup>4</sup> Tippit.

<sup>5</sup> The Texas Theater in Dallas, where Oswald was apprehended.

<sup>6</sup> Julia Foster.

LBI: Well your conclusion is: (a) he's the one that did it; (b) the man he was after was the President; (c) he would have hit him three times, except the Governor turned.

HOOVER: I think that is correct.<sup>1</sup>

LBI: (4) That there is no connection between he and Ruby that you can detect now. And (5) whether he was connected with the Cuban operation with money, you're trying to—

HOOVER: That's what we're trying to nail down now, because he was strongly pro-Castro, he was strongly anti-American, and he had been in correspondence, which we have, with the Soviet embassy here in Washington and with the American Civil Liberties Union and with this Committee for Fair Play to Cuba. . . . None of those letters, however, dealt with any indication of violence or contemplated assassination. They were dealing with the matter of a visa for his wife to go back to Russia. Now there is one angle to this thing that I'm hopeful to get some word on today. This woman, his wife, had been very hostile. She would not cooperate, speaks . . . Russian only. She did say to us yesterday down there that if we could give her assurance that she would be allowed to remain in this country, she might cooperate. I told our agents down there to give her that assurance . . . and I sent a Russian-speaking agent into Dallas last night to interview her. . . . Whether she knows anything or talks anything, I, of course, don't know and won't know till—

LBI: Where did he work in the building? On this same floor?

HOOVER: He had access on all floors.

LBI: But where was his office?

HOOVER: He didn't have any particular office. . . . Orders came in for certain books and some books would be on the first floor, second floor, third floor, and so forth. . . . He was just a general packer of the requisitions that came in for school books for the Dallas schools there and therefore he had access . . . to the fifth floor and to the sixth floor. Usually most of the employees were down on a lower floor.

LBI: Did anybody hear, did anybody see him on the fifth floor or—

HOOVER: Yes, he was seen on the fifth floor by one of the workmen there before the assassination took place. He was seen there so that—

LBI: Did you get a picture of him shooting?

HOOVER: Oh, no. There was no picture taken of him shooting.

LBI: Well what was this picture that that fellow sold for \$25,000?<sup>2</sup>

HOOVER: That was a picture taken of the parade and showing Mrs. Kennedy climbing out of the back seat. You see, there was no Secret Service man standing on the back of the car. Usually the presidential car in the past has had steps on the back, next to the bumpers, and there's usually been one on either side standing on those steps. . . . Whether the President asked that that not be done,

<sup>1</sup>Since he presumes that the shots came from behind and above the late President, Hoover is still getting it wrong.

<sup>2</sup>The Texas School Book Depository, from which Kennedy was presumed to have been shot. Johnson may have seen a report that Abraham Zapruder, Dallas garment manufacturer, had sold his home movie of the assassination to *Time-Life* for \$25,000. Orville Nix had sold his film of Mrs. Kennedy climbing onto the car's trunk to UPI for \$5,000.

we don't know. And the bubble-top was not up.<sup>1</sup> But the bubble-top wasn't worth a damn anyway, because it is made entirely of plastic and, much to my surprise, the Secret Service do not have any armored cars.

LBI: Do you have a bulletproof car?

HOOVER: Oh, yes I do.

LBI: You think I ought to have one?

HOOVER: I think you most certainly should have one. . . . I have one here. . . . I use it here for myself and if we have any raids to make or have to surround a place where anybody is hidden in, we use the bulletproof car on that because you can bulletproof the entire car, including the glass, but it means that the top has to remain up. . . . But I do think you ought to have a bulletproof car. . . . I understand that the Secret Service has had two cars with metal plates underneath the car to take care of a hand grenade or bomb that might be thrown out and rolled along the street. Of course, we don't do those things in this country. In Europe, that is the way they assassinate the heads of state. . . . They've been after General de Gaulle, you know, with that sort of thing. But in this country, all of our assassinations have been with guns. . . . I was very much surprised when I learned that this bubble-top thing was not bulletproof in any respect and that the plastic—the top to it was down. Of course, the President had insisted upon that so that he could stand up and wave to the crowd. Now it seems to me that the President ought to always be in a bulletproof car. It certainly would prevent anything like this ever happening again. . . . You could have a thousand Secret Service men on guard and still a sniper can snipe you from up in the window if you are exposed, like the President was. . . .

LBI: You mean, if I ride around my ranch, I ought to be in a bulletproof car?

HOOVER: I would certainly think so, Mr. President. It seems to me that that car down at your ranch there, the little car that we rode around in when I was down there, I think that ought to be bulletproof. I think it ought to be done very quietly. There is a concern, I think, out in Cincinnati, where we have our cars bulletproofed. I think we've got four, one on the West Coast, one in New York, and one here and I think it can be done quietly, without any publicity being given to it or any pictures being taken of it if it's handled properly. But I think you ought to have it at the ranch there. It is perfectly easy for somebody to get onto the ranch.

LBI: You think those entrances all ought to be guarded though, don't you?

HOOVER: Oh, I think by all means. . . . You've got to really almost be in the capacity of a so-called prisoner because without that security, anything can be done. Now we've gotten a lot of letters and phone calls over the last three or four or five days. We got one about this parade the other day that they were going to try to kill you then and I talked with the Attorney General about it. I was very much opposed to that marching from the White House.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The "bubble-top" was a clear plastic top that could have been attached to Kennedy's open Lincoln Continental. It was usually used to protect the passengers from rain while allowing onlookers a view of the President.

<sup>2</sup>Jacqueline and Robert Kennedy led a march from the White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral, where the funeral service was held. The press was told that by marching, LBJ had overruled the wishes of Secret Service agents by saying, "I'd rather give my life than be afraid to give it" (William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, p. 573).

LBJ: Well, the Secret Service told them not to, but the family felt otherwise.

HOOVER: That's what Bobby told me . . . I was very much opposed to it because it was even worse than down there in Dallas—you know, walking down the center of the street.

LBJ: Yes, yes, that's right.

HOOVER: And somebody on the sidewalk could dash out. I noticed even on Pennsylvania Avenue—I viewed the procession coming back from the Capitol, and while they had police assigned along the curbstone looking at the crowd, when the parade came along, the police turned around and looked at the parade—

LBJ: [laughs]

HOOVER: —which was the worst thing to do. They also had a line of soldiers, but they were looking at the parade.

LBJ: Well, I'm going to take every precaution I can . . . and I wish you'd put down your thoughts on that a little bit, because you're more than the head of the Federal Bureau. As far as I'm concerned, you're my brother and personal friend. You have been for twenty-five to thirty years. . . . I know you don't want anything happening to your family.

HOOVER: Absolutely not!

LBJ: . . . I've got more confidence in your judgment than anybody in town.<sup>1</sup> So you just put down some of the things you think ought to happen and I won't involve you or quote you or get you in jurisdictional disputes or anything, but I'd like to at least advocate them as my opinion.

HOOVER: I'll be very glad to indeed. I certainly appreciate your confidence.

LBJ: Thank you, Edgar. Thank you.

#### RICHARD RUSSELL

*Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee, Democrat of Georgia*  
4:05 PM.

CALLING RUSSELL at his home seat in Windy, Georgia, Johnson tries to persuade him to join the presidential commission on the assassination. As soon as he reached the Senate in 1949, LBJ had maneuvered himself into a place on the powerful Georgian's committee as the only way "to see Russell every day." Johnson had the shy bachelor home for Sunday meals and had his daughters call the old man "Uncle Dick."<sup>2</sup> Now Russell gracefully treats his old pupil with the deference due a President. Knowing how much Russell dislikes the Chief Justice, LBJ does not mention that he has asked Warren to come to the Oval

<sup>1</sup>In December 1968, Johnson told President-elect Richard Nixon, "If it hadn't been for Edgar Hoover, I couldn't have carried out my responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief. Period. Dick, you will come to depend on Edgar. He is a pillar of strength in a city of weak men" (Richard Nixon, RN: *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, Grosser & Dunlap, 1978, p. 358).

<sup>2</sup>See Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (Harper, 1976), pp. 103-07, and Robert Dallek, *Love Star Rising* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 376-80.

Office twenty-five minutes from now in an effort to overcome Warren's resistance to chairing the commission.

LBJ: I talked to the leadership on trying to have . . . about a seven-man board to evaluate Hoover's report. . . . I think it would be better than . . . having four or five going in the opposite direction.

RUSSELL: I agree with that, but I don't think that Hoover ought to make his report too soon.

LBJ: He's ready with it now and he wants to get it off just as quick as he can.

RUSSELL: Oh-oh.

LBJ: And he'll probably have it out today. At most, on Monday.

RUSSELL: Well, but he ain't going to publish the damned thing, is he?

LBJ: He's going to turn it over to this group and there's some things about it I can't talk about.

RUSSELL: Yeah, I understand that, but I think it be mighty well if that thing was kept quiet another week or ten days. I just do.

LBJ: . . . They're taking this Court of Inquiry in Texas and I think the results of that Court of Inquiry, Hoover's report, and all of them would go to this group. . . . Now here's who I'm going to try to get on it. . . . I don't think I can get any member of the Court. I'm going to try to get Allen Dulles. I'm going to try Senator Russell and Senator Cooper from the Senate—

RUSSELL: Oh no, no, no, get somebody else now.

LBJ: Now wait a minute, now I want to try to get—

RUSSELL: I haven't got time.

LBJ: —Jerry Ford. It is not going to take much time but we've got to get a states' rights man in there<sup>3</sup> and somebody that the country has confidence in. And I'm going to have Boggs in. . . . I think that Ford and Boggs would be pretty good. They're both pretty young men.

RUSSELL: They're both solid citizens.

LBJ: And I think that Cooper as a Republican and you're a good states' rights' man. I think we might get John McCloy . . . and maybe somebody from the Court. . . . Who would be the best then if I didn't get the Chief?

RUSSELL: I know you wouldn't want Clark hardly?<sup>2</sup>

LBJ: . . . No, I can't have a Texan.

RUSSELL: Really, Mr. President, unless you really think it would be of some benefit, it would really save my life.<sup>3</sup> I declare I don't want to serve.

LBJ: I know you don't want to do anything, but I want you to. And I think that this is important enough and you'll see why. Now, the next thing I know how you feel about this CIA, but they're worried about having to go into a lot of this

<sup>1</sup>Johnson resorts to the same approach he had used with Eastland.

<sup>2</sup>Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, an old Texas friend of Johnson's.

<sup>3</sup>Russell suffers from emphysema.

stuff with the Foreign Relations Committee. How much of a problem would it give you to just quietly let Fulbright and Hickenlooper come into your CIA committee?<sup>1</sup>

RUSSELL: As long as it is confined to those two, it wouldn't present any problem at all.

LBJ: That's all we make it now.

RUSSELL: . . . Some of those fellows have got no business there . . . and we've had a splendid record . . . I've even kept Margaret Chase Smith<sup>2</sup> off that committee, even though I've got a lot of faith in her.

LBJ: I had a nice visit with your Governor<sup>3</sup> and told him—

RUSSELL: Yes, you didn't tell me you'd invited him up here.<sup>4</sup>

LBJ: I didn't invite him up here.

RUSSELL: Well, how did he happen to get ahold of you?

LBJ: . . . I told him that you said he was going to have lunch with you and to get ahold of him and tell him I wanted to see him before going back. Hell, I hadn't invited him up here. Never heard of it.

RUSSELL: Oh, I saw where he was in the box there with Lady Bird.<sup>5</sup>

LBJ: Oh well, they—they heard that he was coming, you see, when you told me that afternoon that he was coming and so they wanted some Southerner, some outstanding Southerner<sup>6</sup>—

RUSSELL: . . . I just was surprised you didn't say something about it.

LBJ: No, I didn't know at the time I'd seen you that he was invited. See, Bird got up the list for the folks and I guess we got—

RUSSELL: Well, you couldn't have done better. He's an awful nice young fellow.

LBJ: I just told him how much I loved Georgia and he told the press that his granddaddy came from there. [laughs]

RUSSELL: Yes, well, he's a good boy.

LBJ: Well, Georgia is a good state. That's what I like about it.

RUSSELL: Yes, it is a good state, Mr. President. See if you can get someone else.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Fulbright of Arkansas was the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa its ranking member. In those days before the House and Senate established permanent committees on intelligence, high CIA officials would periodically consult quietly with Russell and the ranking Republican on his Senate Armed Services Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Republican Senator from Maine.

<sup>3</sup> Carl Sanders. (See Joseph Alsop conversation, November 27, 1963, above.)

<sup>4</sup> Russell is offended that Johnson had not checked with him before inviting the Governor of his state.

<sup>5</sup> At the address to the Joint Session, Russell is trying to catch Johnson in a fib.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson is getting himself in deeper here.

<sup>7</sup> Rather than Russell for the commission.

LBJ: If I can, I will. But I'm not gonna. This country has a lot of confidence in you and if I had it my way, you'd be in my place and I'd trade with you.

RUSSELL: No, no, that would never do.

LBJ: Well, it would too. The country would be in a hell of a lot better shape.

RUSSELL: You're going to run it the next nine years.<sup>1</sup> I'll be dead in another two or three years.

LBJ: You get your rest. I don't want to bother you anymore, but I'm going to have to be calling you every once in a while.

RUSSELL: Well, you know, I'm always available.

RUSSELL: Now you're going to let the Attorney General nominate someone aren't you?

LBJ: No. Uh-uh.

RUSSELL: Well, you going to have Hoover on there?

LBJ: No, it is his report.

RUSSELL: Oh, that's right, that's right. It wouldn't do. . . . Let me see, if I think of a judge in the next thirty or forty minutes. . . .

LBJ: . . . What do you think about a Justice sitting on it? . . . You don't have a President assassinated but every fifty years.

RUSSELL: They put them on the Pearl Harbor inquiry, you know.

LBJ: I know. That's why he's against it now.<sup>2</sup>

RUSSELL: Afraid it's might get into the courts?

LBJ: I guess so, I don't know.

RUSSELL: That's probably the theory of it. . . .

LBJ: Give me the arguments why they ought to.

RUSSELL: The only argument about it is that, of course, in a matter of this magnitude . . . the American people would feel reassured to have a member of the highest Court. . . . If you would have some top-flight state Supreme Court Chief Justice—but they're not known all over the country. . . . This thing in television and radio has narrowed the group of celebrities. I don't know. You've got some smart boys here around you who can give you the name of some outstanding Circuit Court judge.

LBJ: Okay. You be thinking.

<sup>1</sup> Under the Twenty-second Amendment, Johnson was indeed eligible to run twice for President and serve nine years.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to Chief Justice Warren's refusal of the Katzenbach-Cox plea to chair the commission.

<sup>3</sup> The prosecution of Ruby and other aspects of the legal process connected with the assassination.

JOHN MCCORMACK  
4:55 P.M.

With AN EMOTIONAL APPEAL, Johnson has just persuaded Chief Justice Warren to chair what will now be called the Warren Commission. Now he asks the Speaker of the House to help clear the way on Capitol Hill.

LBJ: We don't want to be testifying, and some fellow comes up from Dallas and says, "I think Khrushchev planned this whole thing and he got our President assassinated."<sup>1</sup> . . . You can see what that'll lead us to, right quick. . . . You take care of the House of Representatives for me.

MCCORMACK: How am I going to take care of them?

LBJ: Just keep them from investigating!

MCCORMACK: Oh that. I've been doing it now. Listen, outside, I had Otto Passman in here? . . . I want to call him in and would like for you to say hello to him.

LBJ: Okay, you betcha. I've got a Pakistan Ambassador waiting on me since four forty-five, but put him on.

MCCORMACK: [calls to Passman] Otto! Otto! Hurry up! The President is here! Mr. President, here's Otto. . . .

PASSMAN: Mr. President, how are you? God bless you and remember that I will cooperate in every way that I possibly can. . . .

LBJ: I wish I could trade jobs with you, Otto.

PASSMAN: I know that you do, but remember that my prayers are with you. . . . I'm not going to make it any harder than I have to. I was in here conferring with our great Speaker<sup>2</sup> a little while ago about foreign aid. It is not going to be an easy thing, but if and when—

LBJ: Otto, remember this. Remember this. This is just between you and me. I don't want you to repeat it to anyone, but you've been my friend. The one thing I've found out since I've been down here: in my relations with a hundred and ten other nations, about all I've got is a foreign aid bill to deal with them with and we've got more damned problems than you ever saw. I just finished talking to the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Committee and he said the only one who knew this was Kennedy and you're the only one that knows it now. And when he walked out, I wished I hadn't known it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nikita Khrushchev was the leader of the Soviet Union.

<sup>2</sup>Congressman Otto Passman, Democrat of Louisiana, nicknamed "Otto the Terrible," the chief roadblock to the administration's pending foreign aid bill.

<sup>3</sup>Passman clearly cares more about buttering up the Speaker than the new President.

<sup>4</sup>This presumably refers to Johnson's briefing on the effects of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

HERBERT HUMPHREY  
6:20 P.M.

SENATOR PETER DOMINICK, Republican of Colorado, has speculated that Humphrey might run against Johnson for President in 1964. Johnson reassures himself by talking to Humphrey.

LBJ: Some damned Republican nominated you against me today and I said, "I didn't know we had them at our convention."

HUMPHREY: [laughs nervously]

LBJ: Fellow named Dominick. Do you know Dominick? [sardonically:] Is he a pal of yours? I've got to check.

HUMPHREY: Dominick nominated me today?

LBJ: Yes, he nominated you for President.

HUMPHREY: Well, wasn't that nice of him?

LBJ: He said that you were probably going to run, so you'd better answer it and tell them that.

HUMPHREY: By God, Mr. President, I'll tell you I'm not going to give you any worries. I am not a candidate, so you can sleep better tonight.

LBJ: All right, all right. [both laugh]

CHARLES HALLECK

House Minority Leader, Republican of Indiana  
6:30 P.M.

GATHERING SUPPORT for the Warren Commission, Johnson locates the House Republican Leader on a Thanksgiving turkey-shooting trip in Indiana.

LBJ: What are you doing?

HALLECK: I'm going to kill one of these turkeys.

LBJ: [laughs] Well, you kill one for me and bring it back now and don't put any arsenic in it!

HALLECK: [laughs] Arsenic? My friend, I'd fix it up so that it would be real good for you.

LBJ: Charlie, I hate to bother you but . . . I've got to appoint a commission and issue an executive order tonight on investigation of the assassination of the President because this thing is getting pretty serious and our folks are worried about it. It's got some foreign complications—CIA and other things—and I'm going to try to get the Chief Justice to go on it.<sup>1</sup> He declined earlier in the day but I think I'm going to try to get him to head it. . . .

HALLECK: Chief Justice Warren?

<sup>1</sup>Johnson conceals the fact that Warren has agreed.

LBj: Yes.

HALLECK: I think that's a mistake. . . .

LBj: I'd be glad to hear you, but I want to talk to you about—he thought it was a mistake till I told him everything we knew and we just can't have House and Senate and FBI and other people going around testifying that Khrushchev killed Kennedy or Castro killed him. We've got to have the facts, and you don't have a President assassinated once every fifty years. And this thing is so touchy from an international standpoint that every man we've got over there is concerned about it. . . .

HALLECK: I'll cooperate, my friend. I'll tell you one thing, Lyndon—Mr. President—I think that to call on Supreme Court guys to do jobs is kind of a mistake.

LBj: It is on all these other things I agree with you on Pearl Harbor and I agree with you on the railroad strike.<sup>1</sup> But this is a question that could involve our losing thirty-nine million people.<sup>2</sup> This is a judicial question.

HALLECK: I, of course, don't want that to happen. Of course, I was a little disappointed in the speech the Chief Justice made.<sup>3</sup> I'll talk to you real plainly. He's jumped at the gun and, of course, I don't know whether the right wing was in this or not. You've been very discreet. You have mentioned the left and the right and I am for that.

GERALD FORD

*Republican Congressman from Michigan*

6:52 P.M.

LBj: Happy Thanksgiving! Where are you?

FORD: I'm home, sir.

LBj: You mean Michigan?

FORD: No, no, I'm here in Washington.<sup>4</sup>

LBj: Thank God there's somebody in town! I was getting ready to tell MacGregor Burns he's right about the Congress—they couldn't function.

<sup>1</sup>"The railroad strike" presumably refers to the presidential commissions appointed by Eisenhower and Kennedy to deal with labor's opposition to changes in outmoded railroad work rules, such as featherbedding. In March 1963, the Supreme Court ruled that railroads had the right to change such rules, and that railroad unions had the right to strike in protest.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson is arguing that if Americans conclude that Khrushchev or Castro was behind Kennedy's murder, they will demand a retaliatory nuclear response against the Soviet Union, which could result in the loss of thirty-nine million Americans.

<sup>3</sup>At the Capitol Rotunda ceremonies the previous Sunday, the reformist Chief Justice had declared, "What moved some misguided wretch to do this horrible deed may never be known to us, but we do know that such acts are commonly stimulated by forces of hatred and malevolence, such as today are coursing their way into the bloodstream of American life. What a price we pay for such fanaticism!" This was at the time that some American highway billboards said, "IMPÉACH EARL WARREN." Conservatives like Halleck not only considered Warren's words a swipe against them but pointed out that the right could scarcely be held responsible for Oswald, an avowed Marxist.

<sup>4</sup>Ford and his family actually lived in the Washington suburb of Alexandria, Virginia.

FORD: I thought your speech was excellent the other day.

LBj: Thank you, Jerry. Jerry, I've got something I want you to do for me.

FORD: We'll do the best we can, sir.

LBj: I've got to have a top blue-ribbon presidential commission to investigate this assassination. I'm going to ask the Chief Justice to head it and then I'm going to ask John McCloy and Allen Dulles and I want it nonpartisan. . . . You forget what party you belong to and just serve as an American. . . . I want somebody on Appropriations who knows CIA over in your shop. . . . I'm going to ask Hale Boggs and you to serve from the House. . . .

FORD: You know very well I would be honored to do it and I'll do the very best I can, sir.

LBj: You do that and keep me up-to-date and I'll be seeing you.

J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT

*Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Democrat of Arkansas*

7:11 P.M.

JOHNSON AND FULBRIGHT had been sufficiently close in the Senate that LBj tried to get the newly elected Kennedy in 1960 to appoint the skeptical Arkansas Secretary of State. Here a relationship that in time will grow badly strained over Southeast Asia begins with warmth.

LBj: I was talking to Dick<sup>1</sup> earlier today and I expressed the hope that he would invite you and Hickenlooper to sit in with him on his CIA committee for these briefings. . . . I think it is very important that you know all they tell them. And then I want to be talking to you from time to time and get your judgments on it.

FULBRIGHT: Sure, sure. Be glad to.

LBj: All right. You just wait until he invites you because I told him to extend the invitation because it'd be better for him to do it than for me to be saying who served on his committee. . . .

FULBRIGHT: Good, good, good.

LBj: How's Betty? Is she still living with you?

FULBRIGHT: Fine, and she and I both want to tell you we thought you were absolutely marvelous at the speech the other day really. 'Course I know you've been told it, but it was absolutely first-rate.

LBj: Is she there?

FULBRIGHT: Yes.

LBj: Let me talk to her.

FULBRIGHT: Oh, fine, she'd love to. Hold on a second. You really were wonderful, Lyndon. [apologizes for his familiarity:] I may slip now and then. Don't hold it against me.

<sup>1</sup>Russell.

LBJ: That's all right. I make it myself.

FULBRIGHT: Hope you don't mind until I get used to it.

LBJ: You know I'm like that little Jewish boy. He said, "How can I trust Ikey when I don't trust myself?" [both laugh] I can't blame you for something that I do myself. . . .

BETTY FULBRIGHT: Mr. President!

LBJ: Hi, Betty, how are you, honey?

BETTY FULBRIGHT: I just want to tell you you've never been so eloquent or delivered so beautifully in all your life. I was just sending Bird a note about it.

LBJ: Well, you're a mighty sweet girl and I just wanted to tell you how much I loved you and that old Bill Fulbright is a jealous man, but he just got in there first.

BETTY FULBRIGHT: I know he is.

LBJ: And I'll tell you, he's got a lot of men that are pretty envious of him.

BETTY FULBRIGHT: I hope he's just jealous as can be of you and . . . he has reason to be. You were wonderful.

LBJ: Well, I love you and if you run into any pretty things when you're shopping for Christmas, pick them up and send me a bill 'cause I'll have a lot of women I want to send things to. And men too, so I won't ask you to do all that you do for Dick Russell.

BETTY FULBRIGHT: I'm writing Bird. . . . I know she has lots of friends who she knows better. . . . but. . . . you tell her I would love to do anything I can any time.

LBJ: Thank you and she'll want you and she'll need you and she's so shy that she'll never tell you. But I'll tell you now she does. And she was asking me yesterday about would it be all right for her to ask a couple of friends to do some things that she just couldn't do because she doesn't get but ten thousand letters a week.

RICHARD RUSSELL

8:55 PM.

JUST AS HE WAS TOLD FORWARDS, the President has simply announced that Russell will be on the Warren Commission. Learning that he has been outfoxed, Russell reacts with astonishment, indignation, then the weary resignation of one who has been dealing with LBJ for years.

LBJ: Dick, I hate to bother you again but I wanted you to know that I made that announcement.

RUSSELL: Announcement of what?

LBJ: Of this special commission.

RUSSELL: Oh, you have already?

LBJ: Yes. May I read it to you? [reads from statement]

RUSSELL: Now, Mr. President, I don't have to tell you of my devotion to you, but I just can't serve on that commission. I'm highly honored you'd think about me in connection with it. But I couldn't serve on it with Chief Justice Warren. I don't like that man. I don't have any confidence in him at all. . . . So you get John Stennis.<sup>1</sup>

LBJ: Dick, it has already been announced. And you can serve with anybody for the good of America. And this is a question that has a good many more ramifications than on the surface. And we've got to take this out of the arena where they're testifying that Khrushchev and Castro did this and did that and kicking us into a war that can kill forty million Americans in an hour. And you would put on your uniform in a minute. Now the reason I've asked Warren is because he is the Chief Justice of this country and we've got to have the highest judicial people we can have. The reason I ask you is because you have that same kind of temperament and you can do anything for your country. And don't go to giving me that kind of stuff about you can't serve with anybody. You can do anything.

RUSSELL: It is not only that. I just don't think the Chief Justice should have served on it.

LBJ: The Chief Justice ought to do anything he can to save America and right now we've got a very touchy thing. And you wait until you look at this evidence. . . . Now I'm not going to lead you wrong and you're not going to be an Old Dog Tay.<sup>2</sup>

RUSSELL: I know that but I have never—

LBJ: You've never turned your country down. This is not me. This is your country. . . . You're my man on that commission and you're going to do it! And don't tell me what you can do and what you can't because I can't arrest you and I'm not going to put the FBI on you. But you're goddamned sure going to serve—I'll tell you that! And A.W. Moursund is here and he wants to tell you how much all of us love you.<sup>3</sup> Wait a minute.

RUSSELL: Mr. President, you ought to have told me you were going to name me.

LBJ: I told you! I told you today I was going to name the Chief Justice when I called you.

RUSSELL: You did not. You talked about getting somebody from the Supreme Court. You didn't tell me you were going to name him.

LBJ: I told you! I told you I was going to name Warren. . . .

RUSSELL: Oh no! . . . I said Clark wouldn't do.

LBJ: No, that's right, and I've got to get the highest Justice I can get. He turned Bobby Kennedy down! Bobby and they talked to him and he just said he wouldn't

<sup>1</sup>Democratic Senator from Mississippi.

<sup>2</sup>A reference to Stephen Foster's ballad: "The morn of life is past / And evening comes at last. . . / Old Dog Tray's ever faithful. . . / He's gentle, he is kind; / I'll never, never find / A better friend than Old Dog Tray."

<sup>3</sup>A.W. Moursund is a Hill Country insurance man, ex-judge, and LBJ intimate with whom Johnson played dominoes, hunted, and dealt in cattle, ranching, real estate and banking. Russell knows Moursund because just as LBJ made his family Russell's family, he had made his friends Russell's friends.

serve under any circumstances. I called him down here and I spent an hour with him and I begged him as much as I'm begging you.<sup>1</sup> I just said, "Now here's the situation I want to tell you."

RUSSELL: You've never begged me. You've always told me.

LBJ: No, I haven't. No I haven't.

RUSSELL: Mr. President, please now—

LBJ: No! It is already done. It has been announced.

RUSSELL: You mean you've given that—

LBJ: Yes sir. I gave the announcement. It is already in the papers and you're on it and you're going to be my man on it and you just forget that. Now wait a minute. A.W. wants to say a word to you and I'll be back.

A.W. MOURSUND: Hello, Senator. We were just sitting here talking and he says, "I've got one man that's smarter than all the rest of them put together."

RUSSELL: You don't have to butter me up.

MOURSUND: I ain't buttering you up, Senator. You know I'm not that kind of a fellow. I just heard that and I wanted you to know it. Hell, he's depending on you. You know that.

RUSSELL: ... A.W., I don't know when I've been as unhappy about a thing as I am this.

MOURSUND: I know, but you can take 'em. God Almighty, you've taken it for years and the hard ones and the tough ones, and you can take care of it and you can take care of yourself.

RUSSELL: [changes subject] How are things down in Texas? Kill any deer down there?

MOURSUND: But you come see us. But don't say you can't do anything 'cause you're the best can-do man there is.

RUSSELL: Oh, no, oh, no.

LBJ: Dick? Now we're going into a lot of problems. ... I saw Wilkins<sup>2</sup> today and had a long talk with him. Now these things are going to be developing<sup>3</sup> and I know you're going to have your reservations and your modesty.

RUSSELL: [disgusted] Oh—

LBJ: Now, wait a minute! Wait a minute! Now your President's asking you to do these things and there are some things I want you in besides civil rights<sup>4</sup> and, by God, you're going to be in 'em, because I can't run this country by myself.

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's desire to show that he had succeeded where Robert Kennedy had failed has overcome his strict adherence to the truth: it was Katzenbach and Cox who had appeared in vain to Warren.

<sup>2</sup> Actually the President's meeting with Warren lasted twenty-five minutes (President's Daily Diary, Johnson Library).

<sup>3</sup> Roy Wilkins of the NAACP.

<sup>4</sup> The forthcoming battle over passage of the civil rights bill, which will throw Johnson and Russell into grand confrontation.

<sup>5</sup> In other words, despite their differences on civil rights, LBJ intends to consult Russell on presidential business as no other President ever has.

RUSSELL: You know damned well my future is behind me, and that is not entering into it at all.

LBJ: Your future is your country and you're going to do everything you can to serve America.

RUSSELL: I just can't do it. I haven't got the time.

LBJ: All right, we'll just make the time.

RUSSELL: With all my Georgia items in there.

LBJ: Well, we'll just make the time. There's not going to be any time, to begin with. All you're going to do is evaluate the Hoover report he has already made.

RUSSELL: I don't think they'll move that fast on it.<sup>1</sup>

LBJ: Okay, well then, we won't move any faster than you want to move. ... The Secretary of State came over here this afternoon. He's deeply concerned, Dick, about the idea that they're spreading throughout the Communist world that Khrushchev killed Kennedy. Now he didn't. He didn't have a damned thing to do with it.

RUSSELL: I don't think he did directly. I know Khrushchev didn't because he thought he'd get along better with Kennedy.<sup>2</sup>

LBJ: All right, but we've—

RUSSELL: I wouldn't be surprised if Castro had.

LBJ: All right then, okay. That's what we want to know. And people have got confidence in you and you can be just surprised or not surprised. They want to know what you think. ...

RUSSELL: You're taking advantage of me. ...

LBJ: No, no, no. ... I'm going to take a hell of a lot of advantage of you, my friend, 'cause you made me and I know it and I don't ever forget. And I'll be going to be taking advantage of you a good deal. But you're going to serve your country and do what is right and if you can't do it, you get that damned little Bobby<sup>3</sup> up there and let him twist your tail and put a cocklebur under it. Where is he?

RUSSELL: I don't know. He's in Atlanta tonight.

LBJ: Well, you just tell him to get ready because I'm going to need him and you just tell him that.

RUSSELL: I saw he and Vandiver<sup>4</sup> this afternoon for about thirty minutes. They came by here.

LBJ: Just tell either one of them that I just would like to use them anyway because I'm a Russell protégé and I don't forget my friends and I want you to stand up and be counted and I don't want to beg you, by God, to serve on these things. ...

RUSSELL: I know, but this is a sort of rough one.

<sup>1</sup> Russell proved to be right.

<sup>2</sup> Russell means better with Kennedy than Johnson.

<sup>3</sup> Russell's nephew Robert Russell.

<sup>4</sup> Former Georgia Governor Ernest Vandiver, husband of Russell's niece.

LBJ: No, it is not rough. What is rough about this? . . . They had a full-scale investigation going, Dick, with the TV up there. They had the House Un-American Activities Committee in it.

RUSSELL: . . . They shouldn't have done it.

LBJ: Of course, but how do I stop it? How do I stop it, Dick? Now don't tell me that I've worked all day and done wrong.

RUSSELL: I didn't say you'd done wrong. I just said . . . it could have been stopped some other way. . . .

LBJ: What do you think I've done wrong now by appointing you on a commission?

RUSSELL: Well, I just don't like Warren.

LBJ: Of course, you don't like Warren, but you'll like him before it is over with. RUSSELL: I haven't got any confidence in him.

LBJ: Well, you can give him some confidence. Goddamn it! Associate with him now. . . . I'm not afraid to put your intelligence against Warren's. Now by God, I want a man on that commission and I've got one!

RUSSELL: I don't know about the intelligence, of course, and I feel like I'm being kidded, but if you think—

LBJ: Well, if you think—now Dick, do you think I'd kid you?

RUSSELL: If it is for the good of the country, you know damned well I'll do it and I'll do it for you, for that matter. . . .

LBJ: Dick, do you remember when you met me at the Carlton Hotel in 1952? When we had breakfast there one morning?

RUSSELL: Yes, I think I do.

LBJ: All right. Do you think I'm kidding you?

RUSSELL: No, I don't think you're kidding me. [laughs] But I think—well, I'm not going to say any more, Mr. President. I'm at your command and I'll do anything you want me to do.

LBJ: You damned sure going to be at my command! You're going to be at my command as long as I'm here.

RUSSELL: I do wish you be a little more deliberate and considerate next time about it but . . . if you've done this, I'm going to . . . go through with it and say I think it is a wonderful idea.

LBJ: . . . I'm going to have you on a good goddamned many things that I have to decide. . . . I've served under you and I don't give a damn if you have to serve with a Republican, if you have to serve with a Communist, if you have to serve with a Negro, or if you have to serve with a thug—or if you have to serve with A.W. Moursund.

<sup>1</sup>This may refer to a secret arrangement Johnson was said to have made with Russell in 1952, when the Georgia Senator made a quixotic campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination: if Russell failed, he would use his influence to get Johnson onto the ticket as Vice President. (See Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising*, pp. 417-18, and Ronnie Dugger, *The Politician*, Norton, 1982, pp. 373-75.)

RUSSELL: I can serve with a Communist and I can serve with a Negro. I can serve with a Chinaman.

LBJ: Well, you may have to serve with A.W. Moursund!

RUSSELL: And if I can serve with A.W. Moursund, I would say: "Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to serve with you, Judge Moursund." But—we won't discuss it any further Mr. President. I'll serve.

LBJ: Okay, Dick, and give Bobby my love and tell him he'd better get ready to give up that fruitful law practice he's got.

RUSSELL: He's been appointed to the Georgia Court of Appeals. Now, you see, I got him on there. He's making as much money as I am.

LBJ: What about Vandiver?

RUSSELL: Well, he's running for Governor next time and he'll be elected!

LBJ: Who in the hell is going to help me besides you?

RUSSELL: Those boys will help you if you need them.

LBJ: Well, I need 'em.

RUSSELL: Goddamn it, they're harder for you than I was—remember?

LBJ: No, nobody ever has been more to me than you have, Dick—except my mother.

RUSSELL: [laughs scoffingly]

LBJ: No, no, that's true. I've bothered you more and made you spend more hours with me telling me what's right and wrong than anybody except my mother.

RUSSELL: You've made me do more things I didn't want to do.

LBJ: No, no, I never made you do anything that was wrong. I never—

RUSSELL: I didn't say "wrong." I said more things I didn't want to do. But Bobby<sup>2</sup> and Ernie<sup>3</sup> are two of the most loyal friends you've got on earth.

LBJ: I know that.

RUSSELL: They both called me up and said, "You've just got to do whatever Mr. Johnson says."

LBJ: No. . . . I just want to counsel with you and I just want your judgment and your wisdom.

RUSSELL: For whatever it's worth, you've got it.

LBJ: I'm going to have it 'cause I haven't got any daddy and you're going to be it. And don't just forget that.

RUSSELL: Mr. President, you know—I think you know me.

LBJ: I do. I do. I know you're for your country and—period. Now you just get ready to do this and you're my man on there.

RUSSELL: If you hadn't announced it, I would absolutely be—

<sup>1</sup>He was not.

<sup>2</sup>Russell.

<sup>3</sup>Vandiver.

LBj: No you wouldn't. No, you wouldn't.

RUSSELL: Yes, I would. Yes, I would.

LBj: ... Warren told me he wouldn't do it under any circumstances. Didn't think a Supreme Court Justice ought to go on... He said a man that criticized this fellow that went on the Nuremberg trial—Jackson.<sup>1</sup> ... And I said, "Let me read you one report." And I just picked up one report and read it to him, and I said, "Okay, now, forty million Americans involved here."

RUSSELL: I may be wholly wrong. But I think Mr. Warren would serve on anything that would give him any publicity.

LBj: You want me to tell you the truth? You know what happened? Bobby and them went up to see him today and he turned them down cold and said, "No." Two hours later, I called him and ordered him down here and he didn't want to come. I insisted he come. He came down here and told me no—twice. And I just pulled out what Hoover told me about a little incident in Mexico City<sup>2</sup> and I said, "Now I don't want Mr. Khrushchev to be told tomorrow—and he testifying before a camera that he killed this fellow and that Castro killed him and all I want you to do is look at the facts and bring in any other facts you want in here and determine who killed the President. And I think you put on your uniform in World War I, fat as you are,<sup>3</sup> and you do anything you could to save one American life. And I'm surprised that you, the Chief Justice of the United States, would turn me down." And he started crying<sup>4</sup> and he said, "I won't turn you down. I'll just do whatever you say." But he turned the Attorney General down!

RUSSELL: You ought not to be so persuasive.

LBj: I think I ought to.

RUSSELL: I think you did wrong in getting Warren, and I know damned well you did wrong in getting me. But we'll both do the best we can.

LBj: I think that's what you'll do. That's the kind of Americans both of you are. Good night.<sup>5</sup>

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1963

DONALD COOK<sup>1</sup>

*President, American Electric Power Company*

1:16 p.m.

LBj now focuses on the deepening problem of Vietnam. Four weeks earlier, the South Vietnamese President, Ngo Dinh Diem, and his brother and first adviser, Ngo Dinh Nhu, were assassinated in a coup to which John Kennedy had acquiesced. On Sunday, November 24, LBj met in his vice presidential office with the U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge, as well as Secretary of State Dean Rusk, McNamara, Bundy, McCone, and other officials. During the meeting, Johnson said he approached the problem of Vietnam with considerable misgivings. Strong voices in Congress, he said, felt that the United States should get out of Vietnam. He wondered whether they had taken the right course in toppling Diem and complained that America tried too hard to shape other countries in its own image. The main job now, he said, was to help the South Vietnamese resist those using force against them. After the meeting, Johnson insisted that he was not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China did.<sup>2</sup>

LBj: You're already out spending all that money you fat cats make up there? They tell me you were down at Saks Fifth Avenue.

COOK: I had a youngster in town for the Thanksgiving holidays and I had to take him down and keep him from being naked....

LBj: ... Well, I've got a sixteen-year-old girl and she's very unhappy about the Secret Service accompanying her on all of her dates. [chuckles]

LBj: I appreciate your memo<sup>3</sup> very much, and thought it was excellent and I just want to philosophize with you a little bit.... I don't want to mess up any of your business, but you try to figure out if you can come down Monday afternoon.... Maybe you can have dinner with us.... There's not anything, except I'm just lonesome for you.

COOK: ... May I say something? ... You've been a magnificent President.... Everybody else up here I've talked to says the same thing....

LBj: I want to be... and I want you to start looking for some good people for me because that's the great problem.... For instance, we got nobody to run the war in Vietnam for us. We need the ablest man that we've got, the toughest

<sup>1</sup>As a Supreme Court Justice, Robert Jackson served as chief counsel for the prosecution in the International Military Tribunal that tried leading Nazis at Nuremberg after World War II. Warren was skeptical of Jackson's decision to accept the dual role.

<sup>2</sup>Oswald's visit to the Soviet embassy and the Cuban consulate.

<sup>3</sup>Warren was of robust physique.

<sup>4</sup>So Johnson claims, anyway.

<sup>5</sup>See the Appendix of this book for release of the Warren Commission report.

<sup>1</sup>By now a New York utilities executive, Cook had served sporadically as Johnson's counsel on a House Naval Affairs subcommittee studying World War II production, when the Senate Rules Committee investigated LBj's disputed 1948 hailbreadth Senate victory over Coke Stevenson, and when Johnson's Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee investigated the conduct of the Korean War.

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum of conversation, November 24, 1963, and Tom Wicker oral history, Johnson Library.

<sup>3</sup>On the tax cut bill.

JOHN MCCONE

*Director of Central Intelligence*

3:14 P.M.

MCCONE HAD BRIEFED LBJ that morning about Gilberto Alvarado, the Nicaraguan in Mexico City who had claimed to see Oswald taking money and speaking of assassination at the Cuban Embassy in September.<sup>1</sup>

MCCONE: We got a phone call from Mexico City that this fellow Alvarado that I was telling you about this morning signed a statement that all the statements he'd made in connection with that matter have been false.

LBJ: [chuckles]

MCCONE: . . . Apparently there's no substance in it at all. He explained that he had wanted to ingratiate himself to the United States interests in order to gain admission to the United States and to work with the security forces here. So we're sending down a whole series of questions to be sure this isn't misleading, but this is the opinion of our station<sup>2</sup> and, I guess, the FBI. . . . This looks to me like it probably washes that out entirely.

LBJ: Okay, my friend, thank you.

LUCIA JOHNSON ALEXANDER

*Sister of Lyndon Johnson*

3:16 P.M.

JOHNSON HAD LAST SEEN his sister when he took her and her engineer husband, Birge, who lived in Fort Worth, to meet President Kennedy in his eighth-floor suite at the Hotel Texas in Fort Worth, two hours before the assassination. Kennedy had said, "We're going to carry two states next year if we don't carry any others—Massachusetts and Texas." These proved to be the last words JFK ever spoke to LBJ.

LBJ: Hi, my darling. . . . This is the first moment I've had to try to get anybody on the phone and I just wanted to tell you I was thinking of you.

ALEXANDER: Well, you *know* we've been thinking of you.

LBJ: I sure do. I wish you were here.

ALEXANDER: I don't know. I think I'd rather be in my place than yours.

LBJ: [laughs] I'd like to trade with you.

ALEXANDER: I went up to Johnson City and looked at the wallpaper.<sup>3</sup>

LBJ: Uh-huh. . . . It's going to cost a million dollars to rebuild that old \$5,000 house, isn't it?

<sup>1</sup> See LBJ conversation with J. Edgar Hoover, November 29, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> The CIA station in Mexico City.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson's boyhood home was being re-created.

ALEXANDER: It looks that way. . . . I started to call A.W., but I didn't know where to go from here. . . .

LBJ: . . . He's in the office right now. . . . He and Don Thomas came up to work some of our private business things.

ALEXANDER: [anxious:] Lyndon, what am I supposed to do when these newspaper people call?

LBJ: Oh, I'd just tell them as little as I could.

ALEXANDER: That's what I do, but if you don't say anything, they print that you didn't say anything. I just don't know what to do. . . . I'm afraid somebody's going to take a pot-shot at me!

LBJ: [laughs] I think I'd just tell them you-all have talked it over in the family and . . . you're not going to be conducting interviews because, just very frankly, you don't have the facilities to handle them and the time either, that you have to do your own work and you just hope they'll understand. Sam Houston and Rebekah<sup>1</sup> gave out a good interview, I see.

ALEXANDER: I haven't seen it. . . .

LBJ: . . . The *Press* was the mean one, wasn't it?<sup>2</sup>

ALEXANDER: Yes, the *Press* was the mean one. This woman . . . appreciated my position, but . . . they asked where Birge worked, and I figured if I didn't say something, they'd make something out of nothing. . . . She told me she'd call me before she printed anything. . . . and when I came back, why, it was all over the front page. . . .

LBJ: Okay, well, I just wanted to tell you I love you.

ALEXANDER: Honey, you know how I felt when everything was happening.

LBJ: I guess you're one of the last ones to talk to him.<sup>3</sup>ALEXANDER: That's right, but it was you I was worried about—and John.<sup>4</sup>

LBJ: God bless you and I'll see you.

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's brother and other sister.

<sup>2</sup> The *Fort Worth Press* ran a front-page article, headlined "Sister Tells of LBJ Devotion to Kennedy," two days after the assassination. The Alexanders disliked it.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy.

<sup>4</sup> Connally.

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1963

KATHARINE GRAHAM<sup>1</sup>*President, Washington Post Company*

11:10 A.M.

Mrs. GRAHAM's husband, Philip, who took his own life four months before this conversation, had been close to Johnson since the 1950s, when he saw possibilities in the Majority Leader that few outside Texas and the Senate did.<sup>2</sup> Having taken over the company, which owned the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, after her husband's death, Mrs. Graham innocently asks the President to speak at a publishers' dinner, not knowing that she would be treated to an LBJ stream of consciousness.

LBJ: Hello, my sweetheart, how are you?

GRAHAM: Well, I'm fine. Are you?

LBJ: You know, the only one thing I dislike about this job is that I'm married and I can't ever get to see you. I just hear that sweet voice and it's always on the telephone and I'd like to break out of here and be like one of these young animals down on my ranch. Jump a fence. [both laugh]

GRAHAM: Now, that's going to set me up for the month, Mr. President!

LBJ: Now that's true. But . . . we've got to get us together some evening and just three or four of us sit around.

GRAHAM: Anytime.

LBJ: I've been here till after oh, ten, eleven every night.

GRAHAM: I'm worried about you.

LBJ: Not at all, not at all.<sup>3</sup>

GRAHAM: Don't you do that too much. I know you have to now, but I hope we stop it soon. Mr. President, I'm calling you really on behalf of the newspaper publishers.<sup>4</sup> . . . Every year, as you probably remember . . . they have a huge dinner . . . at the Waldorf, and they hope very much that this April 23rd, Thursday . . . you might be willing to speak to them. . . .

LBJ: I would. Who else is speaking? I don't want to get in a debate with Goldwater or Nixon<sup>5</sup> or somebody.

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Graham recalled in her memoirs, *Personal History* (Knopf, 1997), that her husband gave LBJ advice on how to improve his national image, "arguing that the Senator needed to counteract the reputation he had as a conservative, sectional and (oil and gas) interest-motivated politician." She was not pleased when, during their 1956 visit to the LBJ Ranch, Johnson, having "put away a good deal of whiskey," complained about the press, saying, "You can buy any one of them with a bottle of whiskey." Mrs. Graham wrote that her husband's exchanges with LBJ "reflect a relationship in which the press is closer to government than journalists ought to be—at least today. However, for those times, for that decade, it was not unusual" (p. 237).

<sup>2</sup>Johnson once again deflects what he thinks are worries about his heart condition.

<sup>3</sup>The American Newspaper Publishers Association.

<sup>4</sup>Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona and former Vice President Richard Nixon—two prospective Johnson opponents for 1964.

## Chapter Two

## DECEMBER 1963

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1963

WALTER LIPPMANN

*Columnist, Washington Post*

5:46 P.M.

LBJ pursues his couriership of the press with a call to the most influential American journalist of his time. Lippmann is at his home, next to the Washington National Cathedral.

LIPPMANN: Oh, how do you do, Mr. President?

LBJ: I'm doing as good as I could under the circumstances. How are you getting along?

LIPPMANN: . . . I'm very satisfied with you, but you know it is a tragic business.

LBJ: . . . Could I drop by and burn a drink from you?

LIPPMANN: . . . Oh, you certainly could. Come right along.

LBJ: . . . I'm at the office and I'm going to be here about another ten minutes, and I'll run by on my way to dinner.

GRAHAM: Oh, of course, they wouldn't have anybody else.

LBJ: ... My answer would be I wouldn't hesitate the slightest if you had Phil here. If you'd just go up in heaven, get him, bring him back where he could sit and advise with me awhile. But it's so difficult—I just—it was tragic the other night. I had Abe Fortas in my bedroom till two-thirty 'fore I got my message out to the Congress and I was—I could have just blown everything and fallen on my head—and I'm glad Russ Wiggins<sup>1</sup> said he wouldn't change a word... But it was such agony that I haven't recovered from it. I didn't do that when Phil was here. He'd sidown and write in longhand in thirty minutes what we were going to do and after talking it over and fighting about it and arguing, why, we'd get it. I don't find anybody that's that easy with me anymore. I've got all these temperamental people. And he didn't care if you took half his stuff out. He didn't give a damn whether you took any of it. What he'd do—he was just trying to help a human being and a country and not trying to help himself. But they... all go and cry and they say, "Well, Abe Fortas put this paragraph in and took my paragraph out."<sup>2</sup> But Adlai did a wonderful job, bless his heart, and I want you to thank him on behalf of your children for being a big man. He came in here when this happened, he brought in a speech of his own that he had personally written, he said, "I am at your service."<sup>3</sup> And a good deal of it was in the message delivered.<sup>4</sup> I don't want that in the paper.<sup>4</sup> But he was a big man and most of the rest of them were, but—

GRAHAM: Mr. President, can I say one thing on behalf of somebody whom I don't think looked very well but I think is a great man? And that is Ted Sorensen.

LBJ: Yes, I think he's just absolutely indispensable.

GRAHAM: He's marvelous and he is very hurt and I encountered him and I know the mood he was in and I don't forgive him for it<sup>5</sup> but I—

LBJ: He did it to me, going up to deliver it. We spent the whole time arguing and I said, "Well, you've got 80 percent of your stuff in there."<sup>6</sup>

GRAHAM: He was just unforgivable, and yet I think that we all have to just imagine how he feels and he's a man who, instead of crying, he did this really naughty trick, but—of being cantankerous and hurt—because he had that peculiar relationship with President Kennedy.

LBJ: Well, the President<sup>7</sup> took out a good deal of his stuff—

GRAHAM: But, Mr. President, I think he's gonna come around and I think that if you just give him a little love and—

<sup>1</sup> Russell Wiggins was executive editor of the *Washington Post* (and, in 1966, Johnson's final Ambassador to the United Nations).

<sup>2</sup> Johnson here is referring to Sorensen's unhappiness that Johnson did not use his draft for the Joint Session address intact.

<sup>3</sup> Along with Calhoun, Fortas, and Humphrey, U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, the 1952 and 1956 Democratic presidential nominee, was one of those Johnson had solicited for a draft. Almost certainly the President is making a point of praising Stevenson to Mrs. Graham out of knowledge that Mrs. Graham's mother, Agnes Meyer, was one of Stevenson's closest friends and most stalwart supporters.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson does not want the public to think that the controversial Stevenson (or anyone else, for that matter) is writing his speeches.

<sup>5</sup> This refers to Sorensen's complaints about Johnson's failure to use his entire draft.

<sup>6</sup> Some of this argument took place in Johnson's car on the way up to Capitol Hill.

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy.

LBJ: I'm going to, I'm going to.

GRAHAM: I know you did. Incidentally, that little girl of his<sup>1</sup> said to me that "President Johnson has been an angel to Ted." And so, she knows—

LBJ: I've done as much as I can and have any pride and self-respect left. I just—

GRAHAM: No, I know what you did and I think he's going to come back from the weekend and be all right and I just hope he is. I do think he can be just terrible.

LBJ: Kay, here was our feeling. He did the best job, the fastest job that you ever saw, but I had Stevenson and he had some good things that I wanted to say. Abe Fortas had the action in that speech. He just meant civil rights... and "the time for action is now." We are not only just going to continue. Now, the speech that came in was a great tribute to a great man but the Congress expected a little sump'n else.<sup>2</sup> They wanted to know how I was going to stand on these things, and I had to say so and I had to say "action now" because—I've got to talk to you about it, and no better time than right this minute, although I am thirty minutes behind on my appointments and I've got the Cabinet waiting out here.<sup>3</sup> But I've got to ask you this.

GRAHAM: Mr. President, I—

LBJ: [getting more intense, interrupts:] Howard Smith<sup>4</sup> said to the Speaker of the House that—I quietly and judiciously asked to go talk to him about civil rights—that "you'll have to come back and talk next year, January, and we'll all be late coming back in January"... He won't even give 'em a hearing, he won't even call a meeting. He just said, "I'm out at my farm and I can't have any hearings"... We thought Oswald ought to have a hearing! We are upset. That's why we've got a commission.<sup>5</sup>... So they are going to try to sign a petition that will give 'em a hearing in the House so they can discharge the Rules Committee and bring it out.

GRAHAM: Right.

LBJ: Now every person that doesn't sign that petition has got to be fairly regarded as being anti-civil rights... I don't care if he votes against the bill after he gets a chance to vote on it... But I don't think any American can say that he won't let 'em have a hearing either in the committee or on the floor. That is worse than Hitler did. So we've got to get ready for that and we've got to get ready every day. Front page. In and out. Individuals. Why—are you—a-against—a—hearing? And point 'em out and have their pictures and have editorials and

<sup>1</sup> Sorensen was seeing a schoolteacher named Sara Ann Elbery, whom he married in June 1964 and later divorced. He had been divorced from his first wife in July 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Sorensen had wanted Johnson to say, for example, "I who cannot fill his shoes must occupy his desk." (See William Manchester, *The Death of a President*, p. 605.)

<sup>3</sup> Here LBJ flagrantly exaggerates. His *Daily Diary* shows that his Secretary of Commerce, Luther Hodges, was the only one waiting for him, but it was more flattering to suggest to Mrs. Graham that her call was important enough to keep the entire Cabinet waiting.

<sup>4</sup> Chairman of the House Rules Committee, the eighty-year-old Virginia Bourbon segregationist was blocking a House vote on the civil rights bill by saying that he had "no plans" to schedule floor action before the end of the year. This compelled the administration to request a discharge petition, requiring signatures of more than half the House members to bypass Smith's committee.

<sup>5</sup> The Warren Commission.

have everything else that is in a dignified way for a hearing on the floor. . . . Once we get that, then these cowards will all vote for the bill. But we've got to try to appeal to the Southerners—a few of 'em in border states—to sign that petition. We've only got 150 Democrats. The rest of 'em are Southerners. So we've got to make every Republican. And we ought to say, "Here is the party of Lincoln. Here is the image of Lincoln." And whoever it is against a hearing and against a vote in the House of Representatives is not a man that believes in giving humanity a fair shake. Vote against it if he wants to. Let him do it. But don't let him refuse to sign that petition! Now, if we could ever get that signed, that would practically break their back in the Senate because we could see that there is a steamroller that can petition it out and they'll put closure on and the psychology would be just like Texas' won every game this year—that they're a going outfit.

GRAHAM: Right.

LBJ: Otherwise—now they're saying Johnson's a great magic man. Well, I'm not. But you want to bear in mind that Mr. Kennedy was able and he was popular and he was rich and he had young giants helping him—and much more enthusiastic helping him than they are me—and he had the newspapers helping him and he had everything else. But his tax bill? The last conversation I had with Phil, he said he had asked the President to make me take charge of the tax bill and pass it because it would never be passed until I did? Ask Gerry Siegel.\* That's the last thing he said in a conversation with me, and he—it's almost unbelievable how prophetic he was, and I'm sitting here today—and the tax bill—he came and got me and just was real ugly to me.

GRAHAM: [sympathetically:] I know.

LBJ: And he said *mean* things to me. But he was trying to drive me into action on the tax bill. But the President's tried for a year and he hasn't been successful in twelve months. Now I hope in twelve months I can be. But he tried since May<sup>5</sup> on civil rights and he hasn't been successful. So they better not be too quick to judge it. If this Mickey Mantle that's got a batting average of .500 and is the star of the Yankees—if he couldn't do it, how do you expect some plug-ugly from Johnson City to come in and do it pretty quick? But we're working on it. . . . So you can tell your editorial board that this Rules Committee has quietly said they're not going to do anything. And somebody ought to be asking these leaders. I can't do it. But you know what I tried to do in appointing your commission the other day—the Kay Graham Commission?<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Johnson is asking Mrs. Graham to have the *Washington Post* viftly those who are blocking the civil rights bill in the House.

<sup>2</sup>The University of Texas.

<sup>3</sup>Kennedy was not thrilled with the suggestion. From the start of his administration, remembering LBJ's old domination over the Senate, he was wary of giving Johnson much influence over his relations with Capitol Hill.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald Siegel, the *Washington Post* counsel in 1963, had worked for Johnson in the Senate in the 1950s.

<sup>5</sup>Actually, June.

<sup>6</sup>In his current mood of deference to Kennedy's memory, especially while talking to those he considers to be JFK friends like Mrs. Graham, Johnson is being exaggeratedly self-deprecating in a way that he does not actually feel.

<sup>7</sup>Johnson refers to the Warren Commission as the "Kay Graham Commission" here in homage to the fact that the *Post* had been one of those who had originally suggested a blue-ribbon panel to investigate Kennedy's murder.

GRAHAM: Yeah?

LBJ: I talked all day long and into the night on that, including talking to you, but they—Justice Warren turned. . . the Justice Department down. Nick Katzenbach and them went to him and he wouldn't do it. I had to come in here, plead with him and finally got him to do it. Everybody else wanted to turn it down. Dick Russell—I had to talk to him four times. But we went through with all that thing. Now, you know where I had to talk to 'em? Russell was in Winder, Dirksen was in Illinois, Humphrey was on the beach, Mansfield was on the beach in Miami in houses that people who've become popular have lent to 'em. Charlie Halleck was out hunting turkey. Now there wasn't a human here. And they're not here now. And they are not working now. And they are not passing anything! And they are not going to! [growing shrill:] Now somebody has got to—instead of just writing the stories about how the pages live or about Bobby Baker's girl! Whether he had a girl or whether he didn't is not a matter that is going to settle this country. But whether we have justice and equality is pretty damned important. So I'd like for them<sup>2</sup> to be asking these fellows, "Where did you spend your Thanksgiving holidays? Tell me about it, was it warm and nice?" And write a little story on it. . . because if you don't, they are going to start quitting here about the 18th of December and they'd come back about the 18th of January and then they'll have hearings in the Rules Committee till about the middle of March and then they'll pass the bill and it will get over and Dick Russell will say, "It's Easter and Lincoln's Birthday." And by the time you get him, he will screw them to death, because he's so much smarter than they are.

GRAHAM: Yeah, yeah.

LBJ: He advocates going home at four-thirty and Mansfield's wife says he can't meet after five o'clock. And you can't ever beat this crowd doing that. You can't run your business doing that! Now you had better take these broad outlines and give to your "broad people" and say. . . "I don't care what you cover in the sex route, but let's cover some of these folks' vacations." Not in a mean way, but just point up that. . . these things haven't been done and we've paid 'em to do 'em. And if your reporter didn't show up all this time—and, of course, a part of their job's at home, and in an election year they'll be at home, but they oughtn't to go home until they do something to go home to talk about.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Reporting on the growing scandal involving LBJ's old protégé and ex-Secretary of the Senate Majority Bobby Baker, the *Post* told of the women who were habitués of Baker's Capitol Hill town house.

<sup>2</sup>I.e., the *Washington Post*.

<sup>3</sup>At the *Post*, Mrs. Graham pressed the gist of this talk on to her editors but did not ask them to carry out Johnson's wish, believing that for the *Post* to write about congressional vacations in the manner the new President described would have been "ridiculous." The following evening, the Johnsons had her and the Joseph Alsops for dinner at The Elms, telling them over drinks that day, "the Kennedy men had come in, one by one, to give him their resignations (*USA Today*, December 12, 1996, and Katharine Graham, *Personal History*, pp. 354–55).

- THEODORE SORONSEN (1928- ). Special Counsel to the President (until February 1964).
- JOHN STENNIS (1901-1995). Democratic Senator from Mississippi.
- ADLAI STEVENSON (1900-1965). 1952 and 1956 Democratic nominee for President, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.
- MAXWELL TAYLOR (1901-1987). Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam (beginning July 1964).
- ALDRIT THOMAS (1898-1966). Democratic Congressman from Texas.
- J.D. TIPPIT (1924-1963). Dallas policeman, allegedly killed by Lee Harvey Oswald.
- HARRY TRUMAN (1884-1972). Thirty-third President of the United States.
- JACK VALENTI (1921- ). Special Assistant to the President.
- CYRUS VANCE (1917- ). Deputy Secretary of Defense (beginning January 1964).
- CARL VINSON (1883-1981). Chairman, House Armed Services Committee, Democrat of Georgia.
- ROBERT WAGNER (1910-1991). Democratic Mayor of New York.
- GEORGE WALLACE (1919- ). Democratic Governor of Alabama.
- EARL WARREN (1891-1974). Chief Justice of the United States.
- EDWIN WEISL, Sr. (1896-1972). Partner, Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett, New York.
- EARLE WHEELER (1908-1975). Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (beginning July 1964).
- LEE WHITE (1923- ). Associate Counsel to the President.
- WILLIAM S. WHITE (1905-1994). Syndicated columnist.
- GERALDINE WHITTINGTON (1931-1993). Personal secretary to the President.
- ROY WILKINS (1901-1981). Executive Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- RALPH YARBOROUGH (1903-1996). Democratic Senator from Texas.
- WHITNEY YOUNG (1921-1971). Executive Director, National Urban League.
- RUFUS YOUNGBLOOD (1921-1996). Secret Service agent.

## Appendix

# The Warren Report and the Garrison Investigation

THROUGHOUT HIS TIME in the White House, Johnson was forced to deal with questions raised by the assassination that ushered in his presidency. In September 1964, the Warren Commission released its controversial report, finding that the thirty-fifth President had been killed by a lone sniper, Lee Harvey Oswald, that Oswald had been killed by another lone gunman, Jack Ruby, and that no conspiracy, foreign or domestic, was involved. By 1967, New Orleans District Attorney James Garrison was pursuing the possibility of a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy that originated in his city.

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1964

RICHARD RUSSELL

7:54 P.M.

AT THE END of the Warren Commission's deliberations, nine days before its report was released, Johnson calls Senator Russell at his home in Windsor, Georgia, to ask about what it contains.

RUSSELL: That danged Warren Commission business, it whupped me down so. We got through today. You know what I did? I . . . got on the plane and came home. I didn't even have a toothbrush. I didn't bring a shirt . . . Didn't even have my pills—antihistamine pills to take care of my em-fy-see-na.

LBJ: Why did you get in such a rush?

RUSSELL: I'm just worn out, fighting over that damned report.

LBJ: Well, you ought to have taken another hour and gone get your clothes.

RUSSELL: No, no. They're trying to prove that the same bullet that hit Ken-

nelly first was the one that hit Connally, went through him and through his hand, his bone, and into his leg... I couldn't hear all the evidence and cross-examine all of 'em. But I did read the record... I was the only fellow there that ... suggested any change whatever in what the staff got up.<sup>1</sup> This staff business always scares me. I like to put my own views down. But we got you a pretty good report.

LBJ: Well, what difference does it make which bullet got Connally?

RUSSELL: Well, it don't make much difference.<sup>2</sup> But they said that... the commission believes that the same bullet that hit Kennedy hit Connally. Well, I don't believe it.

LBJ: I don't either.

RUSSELL: And so I couldn't sign it. And I said that Governor Connally testified directly to the contrary and I'm not gonna approve of that. So I finally made 'em say there was a difference in the commission, in that part of 'em believed that that wasn't so. And 'course if a fellow was accurate enough to hit Kennedy right in the neck on one shot and knock his head off in the next one—and he's leaning up against his wife's head—and not even wound her—why, he didn't miss completely with that third shot. But according to their theory, he not only missed the whole automobile, but he missed the street! Well, a man that's a good enough shot to put two bullets right into Kennedy, he didn't miss that whole automobile... But anyhow, that's just a little thing.

LBJ: What's the net of the whole thing? What's it<sup>3</sup> say? Oswald did it? And he did it for any reason?

RUSSELL: Just that he was a general misanthropic fellow, that he had never been satisfied anywhere he was on earth—in Russia or here. And that he had a desire to get his name in history... I don't think you'll be displeased with the report. It's too long... Four volumes.

LBJ: Unanimous?

RUSSELL: Yes, sir. I tried my best to get in a dis-sent, but they'd come 'round and trade me out of it by giving me a little old threat.<sup>4</sup>

*Cooper*

<sup>1</sup> Russell was not the only commission member who questioned the "single bullet" theory. So did Hale Boggs and John Sherman Cooper. But Russell was the only one who felt so strongly that he balked at signing a report affirming full confidence in the theory. Insistent on a unanimous report, John McCloy brokered a deal to use compromise language, saying that there was "very persuasive evidence from the experts to indicate that the same bullet which pierced the President's throat also caused Governor Connally's wounds." McCloy's language, which Russell approved, went on to say that testimony by Connally had "given rise to some difference of opinion as to this probability," but all commission members agreed that all of the bullets that struck Kennedy and Connally "were fired from the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository." (See Kai Bird, *The Chairman, Simon & Schuster*, 1992, pp. 564-66.)

<sup>2</sup> Actually it could have meant a world of difference. For Kennedy and Connally to have been struck by separate bullets, with another shot missing the car, suggested that there may have been two gunmen firing at them in Dallas, and hence a conspiracy.

<sup>3</sup> The Warren Report.

<sup>4</sup> McCloy had insisted that a report that was not unanimous would damage the national interest. He thus fashioned the aforementioned compromise that allowed the commission to call itself unanimous in its conclusions.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1964

MIKE MANSFIELD

7:22 A.M.

LBJ: There's a good deal of feeling that maybe the Cuban thing—they don't quite understand why he<sup>1</sup> was messing back and forth with Cuba and what connection that had with it. And they don't quite find the motive yet that this fellow had for wanting to kill him.<sup>2</sup> He was going back and forth to Russia. He was messing around in Mexico with the Cubans.

LBJ: I'm going to... try to get Hoover and the Secret Service together... They<sup>3</sup> had the stuff on Oswald but didn't give it to the Secret Service.

LBJ: Honestly, just 'tween us, on the whole I'd rather have you protected or my daughter protected and my wife—somebody I love—by FBI. They're sharp, fast, and quick.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1967

RAMSEY CLARK

Acting Attorney General

10:39 A.M.

CLARK, who was about to become LBJ's third Attorney General, and Cartha "Deke" DeLoach, the FBI liaison to the Johnson White House, helped LBJ keep discreet track of Jim Garrison's freewheeling investigation of Kennedy's murder.

CLARK: I talked to Deke further about it yesterday... What he<sup>4</sup> is working on must be the associations that Oswald had in the three, four months he was down there<sup>5</sup> in '62, '63... I think that the subject is so volatile and emotional though that it could get confused and obscured. I had heard that Hale Boggs<sup>6</sup> was saying that Garrison was saying—privately around town—if he traced back

<sup>1</sup> Oswald.

<sup>2</sup> What motive Oswald had to kill Kennedy.

<sup>3</sup> The FBI.

<sup>4</sup> Garrison.

<sup>5</sup> In New Orleans.

<sup>6</sup> House Majority Whip, of Louisiana.

or if you could be found in it someplace, which—I can't believe he's been saying that. The Bureau says they haven't heard any such thing and they've got lots of eyes and ears. . . . Either that or this guy Garrison is completely off his rocker.

LBJ: Who did Hale tell this to?

CLARK: Apparently Marvin.<sup>1</sup>

LBJ: [to Watson:] Hale tell you . . . that this fellow—the district attorney down there—said that this was traced to me, or something?

MARVIN WATSON: Privately he was using your name as having known about it.

LBJ: You know this story going around about the CIA and their trying to get—sending in the folks to get Castro?

CLARK: To assassinate Castro.

LBJ: . . . Has anybody ever told you all the story?

CLARK: No.

LBJ: I think you ought to have that. It's incredible. I don't believe there's a thing in the world to it? I don't think we ought to seriously consider it. But I think you ought to know about it.

CLARK: Who would I get it from?

LBJ: I've had it from three or four. I've forgotten who's come in here. I'll have to check.

CLARK: Does the Bureau have it?

LBJ: No, I don't think so. . . . Drew Pearson<sup>2</sup> came and gave it to me. Said Morgan told him—Hoffa's lawyer.<sup>3</sup> He says that they have a man that was involved that was brought in to the CIA with a number of others and instructed by the CIA and the Attorney General to assassinate Castro after the Bay of Pigs.

CLARK: You know, I've heard that much. I just haven't heard names, places.

LBJ: . . . I think it would look bad on us if we'd had it reported to us a number of times and we . . . just laughed, if this is true. . . . He said that the limitations<sup>4</sup> runs out in November. . . .

<sup>1</sup>Marvin Watson of the Johnson White House staff.

<sup>2</sup>This refers to CIA-Mafia efforts to have the Cuban leader murdered under Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. By deflecting the story so airily, Johnson may not be leveling with Clark. He had suspected Cuban involvement in the assassination from almost the moment Kennedy was killed. (See Chapter One.) He later said that he was shocked to be informed that we were running a damn Murder, Incorporated, in the Caribbean, and that Kennedy was trying to get Castro, but Castro got him first" (*Atlantic*, July 1973, and *New York Times*, June 25, 1976).

<sup>3</sup>The syndicated columnist.

<sup>4</sup>Edward P. Morgan, lawyer to Teamsters union president James Hoffa. Pursued since 1937 by Robert Kennedy, in his drive against union corruption, Hoffa had been convicted in 1964 of jury tampering and mail fraud. He had appealed the verdict. Morgan had been told of the CIA effort against Castro by another of his clients, the Mafia boss John Roselli, who was involved. Morgan had confided what he had learned to Drew Pearson, who conveyed it to LBJ—including Robert Kennedy's possible role in authorizing the murder attempts, which Johnson may have considered a lever for use against RFK, if it ever became necessary.

<sup>5</sup>Edward P. Morgan, referring to the statute of limitations.

CLARK: It'd be six years, all right, which would mean November probably. But not for a concealed situation.

LBJ: That's what I'd think. But anyway he says in November he's going to tell it.

CLARK: Pearson is?

LBJ: No, this individual. . . . There's just all kinds of things that come to me every day. I don't pay any attention to 'em, but maybe I was a little worried this morning because one of my lawyer friends told me I ought to call you and talk to you about it so you'll have a file that protects you, that you don't just look like they report these things to us and we just throw them overboard. . . . But anyway, that following this, Castro said they had these pills and they were supposed to take 'em when he caught 'em. And they didn't get to take their pills. So he tortured 'em and they told him all about it. . . . So he said, "Okay, we'll just take care of that." So then he called Oswald and a group in and told them about this meeting and go set it up and get the job done. Now that's their story and I talked to Abe<sup>1</sup> about it first and he just said, "Well, it's so incredible. . . . Then they also claim that you-all<sup>2</sup> have tapped. . . . Hoffa's lawyers' telephones and haven't admitted that yet and that they're going to have to explode that. . . . There have been two or three here circulating it to me and Pearson was just one of 'em. But I've forgotten who the others are. They were reputable people or they wouldn't have gotten in here.

LBJ: He<sup>3</sup> came to see me in the mansion, I would say, a month ago. . . . It sounded just like you're telling me that Lady Bird was taking dope. I just wouldn't pay much attention to it. . . . Anyway, I'll try to think of the other names and give 'em to you. He's the only one I can remember now. . . . I credit it 99.99 percent untrue. But that's something I think we ought to know has been reported and you-all ought to do what you think ought to be done to protect yourself.

LBJ: You can be your own judge about it, but I would think what you ought to do is either write or call Deke—and take notes on what you say to him—and say the President has seen this on television and read of it and he says to tell you—without interfering or obstructing in any way the local investigation—to be sure that if there's anything to this or any scintilla of evidence that should be considered that you be sure that it is presented to me. . . . I think that his local people there are watching it anyway probably, but I think that would show that you weren't. . . . totally uninterested in pursuing it.

CLARK: I did everything that you said last week, except I didn't mention your name in it. . . . I didn't document it, but I can do that.

LBJ: Maybe you don't need to do either. You be the judge. I'm just telling you what Abe told me he thought we ought to do. This had a pretty good run this morning on NBC.

<sup>1</sup>Hoffa, appointed by LBJ in 1965 to the Supreme Court.

<sup>2</sup>The Justice Department.

<sup>3</sup>Pearson.

## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1967

RAMSEY CLARK

6:40 P.M.

EARLIER IN THE DAY, David Ferrie, whom Garrison was about to have arrested as a conspirator in the Kennedy assassination, was discovered dead in New Orleans.

CLARK: The Special Agent in Charge<sup>1</sup> down there... says that they are quite convinced the death was by natural causes, that it was a small cerebral hemorrhage... The only part of the autopsy that's not complete is the toxicology, and it'll take two to three days to complete that... The FBI interviewed Ferrie in November of '63 because he had known Oswald in New Orleans. He was a commercial pilot and there was some allegation at the time that he may have flown Oswald to Dallas. All the evidence at that time indicated that that had not happened. The plane that he had was not suited for the purpose. Any idea that the plane would be used to take Oswald to Cuba after he did this? Is just not a real possibility. In addition to that, of course, Oswald had left New Orleans and gone to Dallas long before President Kennedy's trip was known of...  
Ferie denied it all quite vociferously. He called the Bureau Saturday and said that he was quite a sick man and he was just disgusted with Garrison. He was going to sue him for slander... He wanted to know what the Bureau could do to help him with this nut. Garrison has apparently said that Ferrie wasn't involved, that he's checked it out, his plane wasn't suited... that while he may have been part of the discussions, he wasn't one of the people that he was referring to. So fortunately, unless he tries to change, he's apparently cut himself off from using Ferrie as his way out of what I think is his predicament.

Ferie was a homosexual. He had a long list of arrests. And there was an eleven-year-old boy with him when he was discovered, but they don't have any evidence of foul play. It's all a pretty sordid mess... I'd given kind of a background to some press people yesterday, saying that I thought Garrison had to bear responsibility for anything he had to the Secret Service and the FBI immediately, that I couldn't imagine any half-responsible district attorney in the country in a situation vaguely comparable to this not immediately reporting to them... The SAC's down there just can't talk with him. He just has no confidence in Garrison. He's afraid that Garrison would try to use him... I had thought at one time for me to call on him... myself. But I'm afraid he would use that to try to escalate the thing... That's what we have on Ferrie. It sure took a bad turn today.

LBJ: [chuckles grimly]

<sup>1</sup> Of the FBI.

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy's assassination.

<sup>3</sup> Special Agent in Charge.

## THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1967

JOHN CONNALLY

9:22 P.M.

THE TEXAS GOVERNOR CALLS Johnson from New York with more conspiracy rumors about the Kennedy assassination.

CONNALLY: All day today, I have been interviewed up here. They continue to break some stories on this conspiracy thing, based on what this fellow, this D.A. in New Orleans talked about—Mr. Garrison... Of course, I just simply say I know nothing about it. But a newsman named Paul Smith has just been here to interview me again. They have a long story on the radio tonight, over WINS, the radio station here in New York... from a man who saw the files in Garrison's office... that Garrison has information that would prove that there were four assassins in the United States sent here by Castro or Castro's people. Not Castro himself, but one of his lieutenants. One was picked up in New York... and interviewed by the FBI and the Secret Service, but did not reveal a great deal of information... One of the teams was composed of Lee Harvey Oswald, this fellow Shaw<sup>1</sup> that has just been arrested in New Orleans yesterday and the man Ferrie, plus one other man... And there were two other teams that I know nothing about.

WINS Radio has had some reporters... in Cuba working on various angles of this thing for the past day... In Cuba they found... and all of this is not going on the air at all... that after the Missile Crisis, President Kennedy and Khrushchev had made a deal to leave Castro in power. But about six months after the Missile Crisis was over, the CIA was instructed to assassinate Castro and sent into Cuba. Some of 'em were captured and tortured by Castro and his people... President Kennedy did not give the order to the CIA but that some other person extremely close to President Kennedy did. They did not name the man, but the inference was very clear... that it was his brother<sup>2</sup> who ordered the CIA to send a team into Cuba to assassinate Castro. That then one of Castro's lieutenants, as a reprisal measure, sent four teams into the United States to assassinate President Kennedy. That Lee Harvey Oswald was a member of the team operating out of New Orleans...

LBJ: Good. This is confidential too. We've had that story on about three occasions and the people here say that there's no basis for it... I've given a lot of thought to it. First, one of Hoffa's lawyers went to one of our mutual friends and asked him to come and relay that to us... A week or two passed, and Pearson came to me—Drew Pearson. Told me that the lawyer Edwin [sic] Morgan here had told him the same thing and... they would tell all the story after November, when the limitation<sup>3</sup> ran out... Our lawyers said they couldn't believe there

<sup>1</sup> Clay Shaw, a New Orleans businessman who was another Garrison target. He was later tried for and acquitted of conspiring to assassinate Kennedy.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Kennedy.

<sup>3</sup> Statute of limitations.

was any limitation on a conspiracy. I talked to another one or two of our good lawyers . . . a few months ago. He evaluated it pretty carefully and said that it was ridiculous.

Now with the CIA thing breaking and the thing turning, as it did, and reconstructing the requests that were made of me back there right after I became President,<sup>1</sup> I have talked some more about it and I've got the A.G.<sup>2</sup> coming down to see me tomorrow night to spend the weekend with me. I thought I'd go over it with him again . . . so Hoover and them could watch it very carefully. They say that there's not anything to the Garrison story. At least, Hoover<sup>3</sup> says so, as near as he can tell. He says that they interviewed Ferrie and they interviewed this other fellow very carefully and closely and the fellow claims that he got a call from Oswald, but that they can't find any record of it. And the doctor that had him under surveillance said that he wasn't in a position to talk on November the 23rd, and he was under very heavy sedation. And that the Shaw thing is a phony, and that Ferrie died of natural causes and that that was a phony. But that some of these same sources that were preventing trying to involve this jail thing<sup>4</sup> have been feeding stuff to Garrison, as they did here. I don't know whether there's any basis for it or not. . . . It's pretty hard to see how we would know directly what Castro did. . . . As Abe<sup>5</sup> said, who is it that's seen Castro and heard from Castro and knows Castro that could be confirming all this? . . . So we will look into it and I appreciate very much your calling me and I'll try to bear this in mind.

LBJ: The FBI thinks that both Ferrie and Shaw are frauds—I mean, that Garrison using them is a fraud. . . . They do not give any credit to it. But we can't ever be sure and we just want to be sure.

<sup>1</sup>This may refer to requests for Johnson to resume covert action against Castro.

<sup>2</sup>The Attorney General, Ramsey Clark.

<sup>3</sup>J. Edgar Hoover.

<sup>4</sup>LBJ refers to the desire of Morgan and other Hoffa allies to keep the Teamsters leader out of prison. They may have hoped that Johnson might be willing to intervene at the last minute as the price of ramping down public revelations about the CIA-Mafia conspiracy against Castro. But five days after this conversation, Hoffa entered prison to begin a thirteen-year sentence, which was commuted in 1971 by President Nixon. Four years later, Hoffa disappeared.

<sup>5</sup>Forras.

## Acknowledgments

THE NOTION of this book sprang from a dinner I had at the Jockey Club in Washington, D.C., in June 1994, with Harry Middleton, Director of the Johnson Library, and the Washington lawyer Harry McPherson, who worked for LBJ in both the Senate and White House, and his wife. Middleton mentioned that having opened a series of Johnson White House tape recordings in response to the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, the Library had decided, as its highest priority, to open its entire collection of tapes, from 1963 to 1969. I replied that if so, some historian should transcribe, edit, and annotate a selection of the conversations in book form. Not only was this the only time a President had ever taped himself from the beginning until the end of his presidency (or almost certainly ever would, in light of the public outrage when Richard Nixon's recording system was revealed in 1973). It would also be a vital new means of understanding Lyndon Johnson, who, as we have known from a rich offering of journalism, memoir, history, and biography, was such a different person in private from in public.

My literary agent, Esther Newberg, shared my view of the potential importance of a multivolume edition of the Johnson tapes, with annotation and historical commentary. My editor, Alice Mayhew, instantly agreed, observing that the Johnson years were a pivotal moment in American history and that the private LBJ could not be anything but riveting. In September 1994, we three flew down to Austin to view shelf after shelf of Dictabelts and reel-to-reel tapes in their large, walk-in vault, speak with archivists who were processing them, and listen, with rising enthusiasm, to the private Johnson in some of the conversations that the Library had opened. During a talk with Middleton in his office, we all concurred that my book would be strictly independent and unauthorized. I would have no privileged access to the tapes. No Library official or other member of the Johnson circle would see the book before it emerged from the printer.

From Harry Middleton and his colleagues—Patrick Borders, Tina Houston, Barbara Bittle, Juanita Hannusch, Yolanda Boozer, Claudia Anderson, Regina Greenwell, Linda Hanson, Mary Knill, Philip Scott, Ted Gittinger, and the others in the Johnson Library—I have for three years experienced nothing but high archival professionalism. Processing a collection with such complex demands as the five years of Johnson tapes would strain the resources of any presidential library. Throwing these conversations open will almost certainly irritate some of those around LBJ who would have preferred distant, embellished memories of what he said and what others said to him,

instead of reality. There is no better evidence of Middleton's commitment to openness than his insistence on opening all of the recordings as quickly and fully as possible. A different kind of library director might have attempted to hide behind LBJ's spoken instructions to keep the tapes under seal until at least 2023 and used lawyers to thwart whatever legal challenges historians might have raised to their closure.

The incomparable Esther Newberg was a constant source of enthusiasm and wisdom—practical, literary, and historical. In this she was abetted by Jack Horner, Sloan Harris, David Schmeidler, John DeLaney, and Jessica Green. And I now know firsthand why so many authors I admire insist that there is no better editor in America than Alice Mayhew. She made it possible for me to interrupt work on another book in order to create this volume and made working on it a pleasure from beginning to end, as did all of her superb colleagues at Simon & Schuster—particularly Roger Labrie, who met the challenges of a complicated publication process with judgment and sangfroid. Stephen Messina oversaw the book's copy editing with extreme skill and good humor. I am grateful also to Liz Stein and Lisa Weisman, as well as Jonathan Newcomb, Jack Romano, Carolyn Reidy, Michele Martin, Michael Sellen, Victoria Meyer, Pamela Duevel, Marcella Berger, Eric Rayman, George Turianski, Michael Accorino, Edith Fowler, Wendy Nicholson, and Theresa Horner—and Fred Chase, of Laredo, Texas, who copyedited the manuscript. Don Reuben generously gave me the benefit of his long and distinguished history in literary and copyright law. Dolores Figiel oversaw much of the word processing, to which Lisa Spodak contributed. Maryam Mashayekhi helped the author to assemble research materials, Sandi Fox to check facts.

Most of all I thank my wife, Afsaneh Mashayekhi Beschloss, and our two sons, to whom this book is dedicated—Alexander and Cyrus (who was born two thirds through the work on this volume)—for tolerating the many distractions and interruptions that the relentless, demanding voice of Lyndon Baines Johnson imposed on their lives.

MICHAEL R. BESCHLOSS  
Washington, D.C.  
August 1997

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nedly first was the one that hit Connally, went through him and through his hand, his bone, and into his leg. . . . I couldn't hear all the evidence and cross-examine all of 'em. But I did read the record. . . . I was the only fellow there that . . . suggested any change whatever in what the staff got up.<sup>1</sup> This staff business always scares me. I like to put my own views down. But we got you a pretty good report.

LBJ: Well, what difference does it make which bullet got Connally?

RUSSELL: Well, it don't *make* much difference.<sup>2</sup> But they said that . . . the commission believes that the same bullet that hit Kennedy hit Connally. Well, I don't believe it.

LBJ: I don't either.

RUSSELL: And so I couldn't sign it. And I said that Governor Connally testified directly to the contrary and I'm not gonna approve of that. So I finally made 'em say there was a difference in the commission, in that part of 'em believed that that wasn't so. And 'course if a fellow was accurate enough to hit Kennedy right in the neck on one shot and knock his head off in the next one—and he's leaning up against his wife's head—and not even wound her—why, he didn't miss completely with that third shot. But according to their theory, he not only missed the whole automobile, but he missed the street! Well, a man that's a good enough shot to put two bullets right into Kennedy, he didn't miss that whole automobile. . . . But anyhow, that's just a little thing.

LBJ: What's the net of the whole thing? What's it<sup>3</sup> say? Oswald did it? And he did it for any reason?

RUSSELL: Just that he was a general misanthropic fellow, that he had never been satisfied anywhere he was on earth—in Russia or here. And that he had a desire to get his name in history. . . . I don't think you'll be displeased with the report. It's too long. . . . Four volumes.

LBJ: Unanimous?

RUSSELL: Yes, sir. I tried my best to get in a *dis-sent*, but they'd come 'round and trade me out of it by giving me a little old threat.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Russell was not the only commission member who questioned the "single bullet" theory. So did Hale Boggs and John Sherman Cooper. But Russell was the only one who felt so strongly that he balked at signing a report affirming full confidence in the theory. Insistent on a unanimous report, John McCloy brokered a deal to use compromise language, saying that there was "very persuasive evidence from the experts to indicate that the same bullet which pierced the President's throat also caused Governor Connally's wounds." McCloy's language, which Russell approved, went on to say that testimony by Connally had "given rise to some difference of opinion as to this probability," but all commission members agreed that all of the bullets that struck Kennedy and Connally "were fired from the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository." (See Kai Bird, *The Chairman*, Simon & Schuster, 1992, pp. 564–66.)

<sup>2</sup>Actually it could have meant a world of difference. For Kennedy and Connally to have been struck by separate bullets, with another shot missing the car, suggested that there may have been two gunmen firing at them in Dallas, and hence a conspiracy.

<sup>3</sup>The Warren Report.

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