

**ORAL HISTORY OF
HARRY C. MCPHERSON, JR. - SEVENTH INTERVIEW
FEBRUARY 28,2003**

This is day seven, February 28,2003, at three o'clock in the afternoon on a gray day in Harry McPherson's office.

Mr. Vanderstar: Harry, we left off the other day talking a little bit about the 1960 campaign and your non-involvement in it. I want to pursue that a little bit because here you had been working for Lyndon Johnson pretty directly for a number of years and here he's going out in a vice presidential campaign and you didn't join that. You said in your book you were politically so naive that Johnson remarked to you that you couldn't be elected constable. But I suspect there was more to it. What about your own attitude toward taking on a campaign? It could be very exciting for somebody who was in political life to take on the responsibility of being in a presidential campaign. Did you have any aspiration to do that or was that of no interest. Talk about that if you would.

Mr. McPherson: If I had been asked by Johnson to do that, to get involved in the campaign, I would have in a minute. If he had asked me to write speeches for him, to take part in strategy sessions, to go talk to people, I would done it all. The fact is he didn't, and I think he saw me as a reasonably competent lawyer devoted to the business of the Senate and the leadership of the Senate—that I had a pretty good understanding of how government worked in a formal sense, but not much of a grasp of hard-core politics.

At one time, I can't remember what it was, I think it must have been 1958 or '59, I'd been there about three years, Johnson asked me whether I would like to succeed Charlie Watkins, who was the Senate Parliamentarian. I was astounded by the request. I couldn't

imagine that he thought I would want to spend my life in the Senate Chamber ruling on parliamentary issues, counseling the presiding officer on how to rule on various issues. Yet Johnson, I think with Senator Russell's backing or urging, asked me if I would do that.

Charlie Watkins was **an** institution in the Senate. He had masterminded the publication of Senate precedents that were invaluable, and he wrote a book on Senate procedure which is or certainly was the touchstone of lore and practice in the Senate. I turned it down at once. The fact that Johnson would ask me to do that suggested that he didn't think of me in a political sense.

He had on the one side the Texas political apparatus that he had developed over the years. That came in part from the men who had surrounded him in his National Youth Administration days and who had remained loyal to him ever since. There was a group of people in the labor movement, the railroad unions, particularly, who were very fond of Johnson, very sympathetic to him. There was a guy named Bob Oliver who had been the chief lobbyist of the UAW and I think was from Texas, who admired Johnson and worked with him on many issues. Johnson was extremely fond of him. So he had a number of labor supporters, despite the distance between him and the usual array of industrial unions—Texas didn't have many of those and was a right-to-work state. Johnson had developed many friendships while working over the years on behalf of liberal legislation, side by side with union lobbyists.

He had people like Jim Rowe, who was FDR's first Special Assistant and was in law practice, doing lobbying and law as a partner of Tommy Corcoran's. And he had Corcoran. He had a very interesting group of New York, largely Jewish, supporters in business, banking and law, people who had been attracted to Johnson in his very first campaign in 1937 as a 28-year-old congressman. Back then, a couple of people in the White House had talked to a few

people in New York about getting some money for this young fellow running down here. He was the only pro-Roosevelt man out of 11 candidates for Congress, and they thought he had a chance and ought to be supported. Johnson took advantage of that and people in New York like Eddie Weisl at Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett, Elliot Janeway, the economist-consultant — all these people worked in the background for Johnson over the years, raising money for him and his friends.

I remember in 1956 when the Suez crisis occurred, Ike and Dulles really went after the Israelis and sharply challenged them to get out of the Sinai and get away from the Canal. Ike sent to Congress a resolution of censure against the Israelis for creating this problem in the Middle East. It was bound to pass because the universal feeling was that the British and the Israelis had created a huge problem for the West in the Middle East. As it was being debated on the floor, I was standing near Gerry Siegel when Johnson came over and said, “Call Bobby and tell him I’ve changed it, I’ve taken some of the sting out of it. It’s probably the most I can do.” “Bobby,” I learned, was Bobby Lehman of Lehman Brothers, and it was the first time there in my first year working for Johnson, the first time I had any sense of this other universe of Johnson friends and supporters.

All that played its own role in 1960 in that campaign when Johnson accepted the Vice Presidency because Elliot Janeway and Eddie Weisl both abandoned Los Angeles with expressions of contempt for his having done that. Eddie Weisl had served on the board of Paramount with Joe Kennedy. Kennedy had one day blown up at a board meeting and talked about “kikes,” and Eddie Weisl said, “I will never speak to that man or any member of his family again.” Eddie was the biggest figure in Democratic fund raising, in gaining support of the law firms and the banks of New York for the Democratic Party. He was an important figure.

And he was quite repulsed by Johnson's acquiescence in running for vice president with Jack Kennedy.

In any event, these people worked with Johnson on politics. Bobby Baker in the Senate was Johnson's political operative. He and Johnson's closest staff man, Walter Jenkins. Walter was truly the centerpiece of an intelligence apparatus that connected all of these people, from John Connally, from the Texas oil people, and Brown & Root, and Herman Brown, George Brown, the Texas business cadre who had benefited from Lyndon Johnson and had been enormously supportive of Johnson over the years and helpful to the Democratic Party. In those days it was possible to think of conservative businessmen doing so. With the New York people, with the labor unions, Walter was really the centerpiece. George Reedy was the speech writer for Johnson who had in his mind a Johnson construct—the brilliant legislator, the centrist, the person who could draw everybody in the Democratic Party together. That was George Reedy's contribution. As far as I was concerned, I was a guy, a young lawyer working in the Senate, helping to keep Johnson out of trouble in his continuing role as majority leader.

Mr. Vanderstar: He remained majority leader until the term ended, did he not?

Mr. McPherson: He did. There was a plan cooked up by him and Rayburn to try to encourage people in Congress to support Johnson at the convention and to give Johnson a platform, if he were nominated, for the election. The plan was to come back after the conventions and have a session of Congress in the early fall or late summer of 1960, prior to the campaign. If ever there was a dud of a session, this was it. (laughter) Nothing happened. Kennedy was nominated, Johnson was vice president. There was a very witty rather waspish Republican named Hugh Scott from Pennsylvania, who just had great fun mocking the situation in which this young Jack Kennedy, who was certainly a third-tier senator in terms of importance

in the Senate, was now the Democratic leader, and the former top-tier fellow was the deputy, the number two guy. Scott just had a glorious time with that.

Mr. Vanderstar: Then I guess what you're saying is that the majority leader aspect of Johnson became very unimportant relatively after the convention because Congress was simply not doing much.

Mr. McPherson: Yes.

I guess there must have been also another aspect that kept me from pushing myself forward in a way that might have gotten me a role in the campaign, and that was that I didn't have the slightest sense that it could work. I didn't think Johnson was going to be nominated. I didn't think his campaign for the nomination could be successful. I remember being on the floor one morning in the spring of 1960. It was pretty clear that Johnson's stalking horse—I'll come back and say whether that was entirely the right word—was Hubert Humphrey. Not that Humphrey saw himself that way, but Johnson thought that Humphrey would carry the fight against Kennedy and then, when it became clear that Humphrey couldn't get nominated, Johnson would step in and take advantage of the anti-Kennedy vote and the anti-Catholic vote, I suppose. As we learned later, Joe Kennedy bought the state of West Virginia and Kennedy beat Humphrey in that primary. The following morning in the Senate chamber—Johnson frequently had a little press conference at his desk on the floor before the Senate began. He would sit there and the press from the press gallery would come down on the floor and gather around him—I was a yard away from him, I suppose, not much further than you and I are right now, and I could not hear his answers. He was being asked questions about West Virginia and he was mumbling replies. They were (in low voice), "I don't know." "It doesn't make any difference to me." "The people of West Virginia have to vote and they expressed

themselves.” “I’m sure that either one of these men would make a great candidate.” Then someone would start to ask, “Well, what effect does this have, if you were going to run, Senator Johnson,” and Johnson would cut him off, saying, “I haven’t announced that I’m going to do any such thing. I don’t know what you are talking about because I haven’t said anything about running for president.” “Well, if you were, wouldn’t this be a rather discouraging event that Senator Kennedy, even in a Protestant state like West Virginia, was able to win?” “I don’t know, I don’t think that means a thing at all. I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Anyway, it was so pathetic, I thought, had no fun to it, it had no life to it and I didn’t think it sounded like the expression of a winning candidate. So I didn’t really urge myself on to anybody.

Mr. Vanderstar: But he did get the nomination as vice president.

Mr. McPherson: He got the nomination as vice president, and I had nothing to do with that. I did a little research on a few issues, I wrote a couple of memos, but not much more. I really didn’t feel myself to be part of the political team. I guess it must be true because for one reason or another I’ve never really been involved in a hands-on way in a presidential campaign.

Mr. Vanderstar: Your comments about the low level of activity in Congress after the convention that year prompts this questions, which I should have asked a long time ago: What did your work at the Senate consist of when the Senate was not in session? I mean, not for just a day or two but when they recessed for a long time. For example, take the fall of 1960. If the Senate was not functioning as a Senate and Congress was not functioning as a Congress and everybody’s attention was on the campaign, what was your activity?

Mr. McPherson: One of the roles of the Democratic Policy Committee was a

kind of a historical one. We had a very able woman named Pauline Moore who had been there since Scott Lucas was the majority leader. She was from Illinois. Pauline was responsible for putting out very detailed records of every vote and every act of the Senate in the course of a year which would be sent to each Democrat. She was sort of a one-woman CQ—Congressional Quarterly.

And she would turn out excellent books—large notebooks filled with maybe 300 pages of exposition of the meaning of various votes, amendments, all that sort of thing. It was quite an exercise, and I would turn my hand at her request to writing a description of those votes. This became rather significant in matters like civil rights, the 1960 Civil Rights Act and various education and housing legislation. So I learned a fair amount about these acts. I would get out the Senate reports and the Congressional Record and, if need be, I would go off to the library and read cases and statutes. Then I would come back and turn out a description of the measures voted on that would be sent to each Senate Democrat's office and occasioned a fair amount of feedback from those offices. People complaining about this or that or, more frequently, saying this is helpful for them as they ran for reelection.

Mr. Vanderstar: Every Senate Democrat. So, Pauline Moore was working for the Democrats.

Mr. McPherson: She was the chief clerk of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee.

Mr. Vanderstar: So this was a Democratic Party instrument.

Mr. McPherson: It was and I was the general counsel. Then we had these other people, George Reedy was on the payroll and several other people who did various clerical functions, but Pauline Moore and I were the main cogs.

Mr. Vanderstar: So that's the kind of activity that kept you occupied after the Senate session?

Mr. McPherson: Well, that and going to the Library of Congress and checking out novels and folk music from the Lomax Collection in the Library. I made use of Washington and senatorial perks without the slightest bit of embarrassment. Usually by the time you got to the end of the session you were working some fairly ferocious hours, and I figured, just as a lawyer sometimes will might feel a little sheepish about running up a large bill for one client but then figures that some other client got a whole lot of work for very little, it all evens out.

For some reason I was thinking the other day of one event that occurred. Over time I became known to quite a lot of people in the State Department and elsewhere in the executive branch. There was an *Esquire* article entitled "Who's Really Running the Country?" in Kennedy's first year in office, '61; there were about six such people, the article said, people like me, young-ish staffers. Two of us were from the Hill, me and Bobby Baker. The guy who wrote it was somebody who had many of the interests and curiosities that I did, so he wrote a flattering piece about me because he was really writing about himself.

Sometimes my State Department reputation created a problem for me. There was a guy from the Senate Labor Committee staff that I liked whose name was Stuart McClure. He had been in the Army in France during World War II and then had spent about five years in Paris living on the Left Bank, getting to know Sartre and Camus and such people. He came back and worked in the Senate and became chief clerk of the Senate Labor Committee. He was quite an interesting guy. One very hot day, the Senate was out, they had gone campaigning. He and I went down to Union Station, where the Savarin Café was the only place within a mile of the Capitol, I think, in which one could get a dry martini for lunch. Since the Senate was out and we

were having a glorious time talking about France and literature and beautiful women and so on, we had three martinis.

I went back to the office to learn to my dismay that there was waiting for me—had been waiting for about an hour—a very elegant, ebony black figure from Guyana. He was the principal staff man, if you will, of the Guyana Parliament. A very tall and handsome man with a Mark Cross briefcase and a beautiful hat, something like a Homburg. Well, he came into my office and there was a lot of light behind him, a lot of brilliant summer sunlight. He started explaining that the State Department had sent him to see me and that I had agreed to see him and we would talk about the role of staff in legislatures, the Congress and the Parliament, or something like that.

Mr. Vanderstar: So he had an appointment?

Mr. McPherson: He had an appointment, and I'd completely forgotten it. And so here I was, full of three martinis and I sat there listening to him and the light behind him was intense and I slowly fell asleep. I must have been asleep for about five minutes when I sat up with a start, (laughter) and he stood up and he said (deep voice) in these very elegant tones, "Mr. McPherson, perhaps there will be another occasion when we may have a meeting. It has been very pleasant meeting you, sir." I was just absolutely shocked. It was the last time I had a martini at lunch in my life. (laughter) Not once again. I figured this New York practice was not something I could move down to Washington very well.

Mr. Vanderstar: Let me ask about something else and that is, you worked for the Democrats in the Senate. You worked for the Democratic Policy Committee and so on, and the Democrats were in the majority the whole time you were there, I guess. Did the Republicans have a Republican Policy Committee or an apparatus of that sort and did you have any

interaction with the Harry McPherson of the Republican side?

Mr. McPherson: Daily.

Mr. Vanderstar: Tell me about that.

Mr. McPherson: The scheduling of legislation in the Senate is only rarely a matter of muscle, that is, of the majority saying, "We're going to do this and we don't give a damn what you think about it." There has to be a little of that, or at least the threat of that, or otherwise you can't get anything done, but you don't want to irritate people unless you have to. If you can give people a little more time on certain legislation, particularly time to work out a compromise on controversial aspects to it, you do. Even when we had a very large majority, as after 1958—after that election we suddenly had a huge majority, 64-36—even after that I would go over and check out the proposed schedule with a fellow named Oliver Dompierre, who worked for Senator Knowland. He was a nice man. There was a guy named Mark Trice who was in the same position that Bobby Baker was on the Democratic side, though with nothing like the political range and effectiveness of Bobby.

There were several Republicans that I worked with. One of the real pleasures of working in the Senate in the late '50s and early '60s for me was in spending a lot of time with Senator Thomas Kuchel of California. He was just a lovely human being, a very liberal Republican. He was the whip, and he was a Jacob Javits, Clifford Case, George Aiken kind of Republican; there aren't that many any more but there used to be quite a contingent of them. I got along well with him. I wrote in *A Political Education* about, as part of my education, coming to realize that Republicans were very often pretty decent people. (laughter)

Mr. Vanderstar: How generous of you! But there is another aspect to it, namely that there was a Republican in the White House and therefore there were Republicans all over

the executive branch.

Mr. McPherson: Right.

Mr. Vanderstar: Did you ever work with the executive branch on legislation or were you, was your focus entirely within the Senate?

Mr. McPherson: If it wasn't entirely, it was almost so. I don't remember an enormous amount of interaction with, say, the White House legislative fellows. Brice Harlow, I scarcely knew. I had a lot of interaction with bureaucrats—

Mr. Vanderstar: Career people?

Mr. McPherson: Career people. Largely because of the New Deal and the attractiveness of government work, people getting out of college, getting out of various other jobs, had been drawn to government in the '30s and stayed. You can see when you go to the National Symphony Orchestra today, if you sit up in the balcony, you look down on a couple of thousand gray heads and a lot of those, you know very well, are people who came here in the '30s and '40s to work in the government and who love music, they are cultivated people. Silver Spring is populated with thousands of such people who are still just as politically vigorous as ever they were.

So I dealt a lot with bureaucrats. I got to know a great many bureaucrats in those years working in the Senate, and it helped a lot when I went on to jobs in the Pentagon, the State Department and the White House.

Mr. Vanderstar: Well, before we get there, why were you working with bureaucrats or career civil servants?

Mr. McPherson: Because very often in trying to counsel Johnson, Mansfield, Humphrey, anybody on the Democratic side, particularly in the Policy Committee, about

legislation, very often the committee staff reports were—I'd give them about a B- as far as really laying out the nature of a problem that was not sufficiently attended to by current statutes. So I would call people in the departments and agencies to get more information. I'd tell them I was calling from the Senate Democratic Policy Committee and had been reading the committee reports and reading the statutes and I still couldn't understand why this legislation was being advanced. Very often I was told "it shouldn't be done—that there was nothing wrong with the current statutes and if they would just be applied by the executive branch as they should be, no one would think of amending them; anyway, this was the wrong way to go about it and it would create more problems than it will solve." And often you'd find out they were dead right, that some senator who was in a position to do it had had a particular burr under his saddle for a long time and wanted to bring about a radical change in some area of law and had persuaded his committee to indulge him, but it wasn't a very good idea.

Mr. Vanderstar: In your work for the Senate Democratic Policy Committee which you described, both in our sessions and in the book, to what extent did you focus on the appropriations process? That's almost the second half of the game, the first half being given the authorization and then the second half getting the money.

Mr. McPherson: Absolutely.

Mr. Vanderstar: Was that an integral part of what you did or was that something separate?

Mr. McPherson: It was rather more separate, although I had many experiences with appropriation subcommittees. Some of them were very Texas related. Johnson would ask me to get involved on some matter that applied either totally to Texas or to states like Texas—Rural Electrification Administration appropriations, Interstate Waterway appropriation,

the inter-coastal waterway that goes down the Texas coast, drought relief. During the late '50s when I was first working in government Texas was going through a drought very much like the one that is hitting the West today, and there were a lot of things that people tried to do to assure that cattlemen were not completely wiped out.

Usually that was handled in appropriations, so I got to know the appropriations staffs, and I would tell them that the majority leader certainly hoped that we could get a good response from them on that. To be honest, a staffer's request that some special effort be made was often not very effective, not like Johnson speaking to Richard Russell about agricultural appropriations or to Lister Hill about education or health appropriations. In that latter field Johnson was stimulated very much by two women, Mary Lasker and Florence Mahoney, who were fantastically successful pro bono lobbyists for health research and were in part responsible for the dramatic development of NIH. They worked with Lister Hill of Alabama and Warren Magnuson of Washington, both friends of Johnson's, to develop the heart institute, the cancer institute, and similar entities out there at NIH.

Hill was a wonder. I quote him in here [the book] in the "Brief Lives" chapter as responding to a question one time from Styles Bridges, a very crusty Republican conservative with whom Johnson got along pretty well—though I didn't realize it. I didn't like Bridges, I thought he was a harsh old reactionary, but he could play the game and Johnson played it with him.

One time Bridges was complaining to Lister Hill, "Can the senator tell us whether there is any limit to what he's going to be asking for in the way of increases for the cancer institute and heart institute research. We all want to do something about these diseases, but we have to protect the budget and just what can the senator say?" Lister Hill had a practice of

saying at the beginning of a sentence, “Ah-wah.” (southern accent) “Ah-wah, Mr. President, I just wanted to first say that here is no senator in this body who has done so much for the people of the U-nited States, helping fight these dread diseases, than the senator from New Hampshire, Mr. Bridges. There’s no body who’s ever stood up for the ailing, for those who desperately need this research like the senator from New Hampshire. And, Mr. President, ah-wah, I ask for a vote on the amendment.” (laughter) Bridges would just stand there and shake his head, realizing that was all he was going to get out of that colloquy.

Money and the amount of money that would be provided in particular aspects was really something among the cardinals, as they were called and as they’re still called in the House, the subcommittee chairmen on appropriations. Johnson, as you can tell from listening from the tapes that are currently being played on Saturday afternoons, was enormously interested in the mechanics of government and the money for government. I am astounded how much he knew about what was being appropriated, what was being asked and whether it was in the ballpark, whether it was enough and not too much. He was extremely professional.

I was saying last week about the men on the Policy Committee, what really made them unusual in my experience with politicians is that they took their legislators’ roles very seriously. Though most of the legislation in the books I gave them, the stuff that was on the calendar that they had to clear and okay for scheduling, was not in their committee jurisdiction, they treated it seriously and they wanted to know about it. They asked questions and they’d say, pretty often, “Well, I don’t really like that, I don’t think I like that, I’d like you to just hold that up until we can have a look at that.” That you don’t see very much today. Most senators, I believe, and Congressmen work in rather confined areas, they are areas in which their committees have jurisdiction. They really don’t get into other stuff very much. These men

didn't have much question about doing that.

Mr. Vanderstar: I assume that those pieces of appropriations legislation were part of your work, your notebooks, your Calendar Committee and so forth and so on as much as "substantive legislation."

Mr. McPherson: Yes, on appropriations stuff I would tell the Policy Committee about anything that was unusual. I might say, "You know, this is about a 20 percent jump over the last year and last year was a 20 percent jump; you may want to consider whether this is okay, especially in a time of big deficits."

Mr. Vanderstar: Now, what about the, I'll call routine or recurring appropriations for the State Department and the Commerce Department and the SEC and so forth. Was that also part of this process?

Mr. McPherson: It was. If anybody remembers the story in *A Political Education*, it's about the orange sourballs,

Mr. Vanderstar: Oh, yes.

Mr. McPherson: That had to do with appropriations. Johnson was the chairman of the Subcommittee on State and Justice Department Appropriations. He had John Foster Dulles up to an appropriations session, and he asked me to prepare questions. I was brand new to the process, I had just come up from Texas, so I wrote a lot of questions about the Russians and about missile defense and all kinds of things that had nothing to do with appropriations, and I gave it to Johnson. In the hearing Johnson, after he made his own statement and Dulles started speaking, Johnson saw me and motioned me up to his seat behind the podium. I was very excited. I thought this was going to be about my questions. He said, "Go upstairs and see Mary Margaret [Mary Margaret Wiley, his secretary] and get me some of those orange sourballs." I

was humiliated and furious. Here, I'd gotten myself through law school, I'd become the assistant counsel of the Democratic Policy Committee—I went up and got them and said to Mary Margaret, who was a friend, I said, “Put them in one of those big manila envelopes.” And I licked it and made it really tough to open and took it back down and gave it to Johnson. I went and sat in the back of the room and watched him angrily tear open this brown envelope. That was my first experience with appropriations. (laughter)

Mr. Vanderstar: You were not on the next bus back to Texas.

Mr. McPherson: I guess I might have been.

Mr. Vanderstar: We've been talking about general work and so on, let me go back to 1960 after the convention, after Johnson was nominated, you talked about that. But then came the election and, by gosh, now he's the vice president-elect and is going to be sworn in in January as the vice president. What thoughts crossed your mind about your future, either in the Senate or working for the vice president or heaven knows what else? For example, did you ever think about leaving government at that point?

Mr. McPherson: I don't think I did think about leaving government. I thought, as I mentioned last time, about working in government and I went down and saw Ralph Dungan and had no ideas about what to suggest about what I might do. About that time, it must have been in December, Mansfield, who was clearly going to be the majority leader to succeed Johnson—he had been the majority whip—invited me up to his office and asked me if I would be his counsel. And I said I would and asked for a raise. He gave me a raise. I'm pretty sure I was to be paid \$13,500 a year.

Mr. Vanderstar: This was in 1961?

Mr. McPherson: Right. I remember the pay grades over the years that I went

through, including counsel to the president. It was pretty clear that I would accept his offer. I liked Mansfield and figured that in many respects it would be a good move humanly, because he was a sweeter man, an easier man to live with than Johnson.

Mr. Vanderstar: I had made a note to ask you about your salary and I'd forgotten to and then you volunteered. You went from \$4,600 in January of '56.

Mr. McPherson: And I got several modest increases over the years with Johnson. I think I was up to about \$10,000 when Mansfield asked me to be his counsel, and I said, "Yes, but I'd like \$13,500" and he said, "Okay."

Mr. Vanderstar: So in five years you went from \$4,600 to \$13,500, about double what a new associate at Covington & Burling made that year. (laughter) Let me point that out to give you some perspective.

So, you worked for, you continued in that position but now Senator Mansfield was the majority leader and so, of course, things changed and the atmosphere changed but the work continued to be what you had been doing.

And then you were persuaded to go into the executive branch.

Mr. McPherson: First just a few words about Mansfield.

I went up on an average, I think, once a week, sometimes more, even when we weren't dealing with hot stuff, to sit with Mansfield for an hour or two in the mornings in his office off the Senate floor. He had a wonderfully warm and gentle Black servant named Morris, who made coffee. In this very quiet room, softly lit with curtains pulled, he had a portrait of Jacquelyn Kennedy wearing a lace mantilla. I remember seeing that one day and thinking, "My Lord, this place is being run by Irish Catholics." The Speaker of the House was John McCormack, the president was John Kennedy, the majority leader of the Senate was Mike

Mansfield, all Irish Catholics. I don't think it had ever hit me before, but I wondered whether these fellows would get together and talk about Sister May and Father Bill.

My youngest son is in Gonzaga, and I am experiencing for the first time a Jesuit education and Jesuit fathers and teachers and I admire them, I enjoy the environment, but back in 1961 that Catholic political world was quite foreign to this east Texas Protestant.

Anyway, Mansfield and I would talk about the schedule and about what the president wanted—what Kennedy had said to Mansfield that he was looking to get. A fair amount of my chore was to see what senators of consequence thought about those things that Kennedy wanted thought about the administration's program. In other words, I was a kind of information gatherer about senators' views on things. At the same time, I was still doing the Calendar Committee, and my committee then was Senators Phil Hart and Ed Muskie.

Mr. Vanderstar: You are now with the Democratic administration, of course, the dynamics are going to be a little different.

Mr. McPherson: Yes. Mansfield did most of the talking with Larry O'Brien [of the White House staff]. I did some on occasion. Mansfield had a sidekick, a friend whom he had moved from the Library of Congress to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff and had befriended and formed a very close personal tie to. His name was Frank Valeo. At one point later on he made him secretary of the Senate.

Frank was a scholar of Asia and so was Mansfield. Mansfield had taught Asian affairs in the history department of Montana State University before he was elected to Congress. He and Frank Valeo both knew a lot about Asia and had a passionate interest in it. They both felt that the United States ought not to be in Vietnam, ought not to be in Indo-China at all—Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. That was a continuing interest.

I have been reading the drafts of a book being done by Don Oberdorfer of the *Post*, who is an old friend, about Mansfield, and it reflects a lot of interviewing by Don of Mansfield and a lot of reading of Mansfield's memos sent to Johnson, certainly as president and it could have even been as vice president. Mansfield was on this case from the early times of Johnson's involvement with the Vietnam business and was constantly urging him to consider other courses than one involving a large American military commitment.

Mansfield and Frank Valeo were very much on the foreign policy circuit and were deeply interested in that, which left me a fairly large range of things to be interested in with Mansfield on the domestic side. I can't remember many specific bills, but I was involved with pretty much all of them because I was his main fellow on the floor.

By early '63 I had come to one of those emotional forks in the road where you ask yourself whether you want to keep doing what you are doing or go elsewhere. Working for Senator Mansfield was a satisfying thing. It was certainly something about which I never had the slightest embarrassment, but it was also a little dull because he was a hands-off, *laissez-faire* leader by comparison with Johnson, who really wanted his LBJ brand on every legislative hide that went through the Senate. He wanted some role in everything, and Mansfield was pretty much the opposite. If you were the staff man for the former, you might be driven half nuts sometimes, but you were never bored, and sometimes you were really excited and thrilled to be part of it. With Mansfield, while you weren't driven mad, you also weren't driven to elation.

I got a call from Cyrus Vance, secretary of the Army. In 1957 the Russians had put up Sputnik, the first vehicle to circumnavigate the globe. Johnson was persuaded, by whom I'm not sure—I'd have to read the books about that to find out—that he ought to treat this not only seriously but as something that he could play a major role in. So he took his Preparedness

Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee and used it as the forum for Senate hearings on the U.S. space program. He asked Eddie Weisl from New York to come down and be the counsel for that committee, and Eddie brought his young sidekick, Cyrus Vance, also from Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett, down to be his deputy counsel. Johnson told me to go over to the old SEC building where we had some offices, this was near the Acacia Insurance Company there, and prepare questions and a strategy for hearings, which I did with a couple of other guys for probably a month. We just sort of left the Senate for that time. I'd go back and do whatever I needed to do, but spent most of my time on the Space Committee.

Cy Vance called me in the middle of 1963, having become secretary of the Army, and he said "There's a job over here." It had a long title, deputy under-secretary of the Army for international affairs. He said, "It is the job that oversees the Panama Canal Zone and Okinawa—wherever the Department of the Army and the secretary of the Army have responsibilities for civic order, in effect being governors. Panama, ever since the canal was built, had had a large contingent of Americans, and the Army operated as a kind of city hall for these so-called "Zonians." The same was true out in Okinawa, where there was an Okinawan legislature but also a U.S. military role.

Also it ran a program called the Civilian Aides Program. The Army picks somebody in each state, a banker or lawyer, somebody who has an interest in the Army and can be helpful to it—when Army tanks destroy cornfields in the course of maneuvers and it becomes a huge issue, they might ask their civilian aide for that state to weigh in and smooth things over. My job was to run that and a whole lot of other odds and ends. Subsequently, I inherited a fascinating job as special assistant to the secretary for Civil Functions, which oversees the *Corps* of Engineers for the secretary.

All this sounded kind of interesting to me, and it was an executive job, not a staff job. I would have my own responsibilities. I asked Senator Russell about it and said, "I've been offered this job. What do you think?" And he said (deep southern accent), "Well, I think if I were you, I'd want to shoot for something a little farther up the ladder than that, but it doesn't sound like a bad job. If you think you might want it, why I think the Pentagon is probably a pretty interesting place and I think this fellow McNamara's interesting and Cy Vance is a good fellow. So maybe that would be all right."

Then I went to see Johnson, who was vice president. I wanted his counsel. I must have told the story a hundred times to people who've come to see me asking for advice about their careers. It was after lunch, another hot day—no martinis this time— and Johnson was sitting in the well of windows in his Capitol office building, hot sun all behind him, I was blinking and so was he. I told him that I had had this offer. I said, "You know, the attraction for me is that I've been a staff guy here and I've pretty well milked this job for everything I think I can get out of it. I like Senator Mansfield, a good man, but I don't quite have the sense of excitement that I once had, and I thought maybe getting into the executive branch might be better and Cy's a good guy to be with."

Well, as I talked I saw to my dismay that Vice President Johnson was falling asleep (laughter). His head drooped further and further down and finally it was just inert, and I sat there in the chair looking at him, wondering whether to get up and leave. I didn't know the right thing to do. After two or three minutes he suddenly opened his eyes and looked at me, and he said, "What do you want?" And it was clear that he wasn't asking, "Do you want to be deputy under-secretary of the Army for international affairs?" It was more serious than that. "What do you want, what are you after in life?" I thought that if the question had been put to

him at my age he'd have said "Power." That's what he was best at using and hungry to acquire. I forget what I mumbled. A number of people have said, "That sort of drew me up and made me think," in the same way that **Johnson** made me think. So, I went to the Pentagon.

Mr. Vanderstar: Let's end there.