

# THE THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

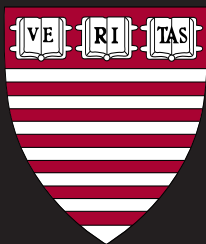
WITH

**ROBERT A. CARO**

Joan Shorenstein Center

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**PRESS • POLITICS**



**▪ PUBLIC POLICY ▪**

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Harvard University  
John F. Kennedy School of Government

**2003**

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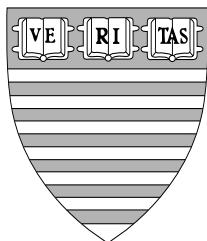
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The Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics commemorates the life of the late reporter and historian who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

White, who began his journalism career delivering the *Boston Post*, entered Harvard College in 1932 on a newsboy's scholarship. He studied Chinese history and Oriental languages. In 1939, he witnessed the bombing of Chungking while freelance reporting on a Sheldon Fellowship, and later explained, "Three thousand human beings died; once I'd seen that I knew I wasn't going home to be a professor."

During the war, White covered East Asia for *Time* and returned to write *Thunder Out of China*, a controversial critique of the American-supported Nationalist Chinese government. For the next two decades, he contributed to numerous periodicals and magazines, published two books on the Second World War and even wrote fiction.

A lifelong student of American political leadership, White in 1959 sought support for a 20-year research project, a retrospective of presidential campaigns. After being advised to drop such an academic exercise by fellow reporters, he took to the campaign trail and, relegated to the "zoo plane," changed the course of American political journalism with *The Making of the President 1960*.

White's *Making of the President* editions for 1964, 1968, and 1972 and *America in Search of Itself* remain vital historical documents on campaigns and the press.

Before his death in 1986, Theodore White also served on the Kennedy School's Visiting Committee, where he was one of the early architects of what has become the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. The late Blair Clark, former senior vice president of CBS who chaired the committee to establish this lectureship, asked, "Did Teddy White ever find the history he spent his life searching for? Well, of course not, he would have laughed at such pretension. But he came close, very close, didn't he? And he never quit the strenuous search for the elusive reality, and for its meaning in our lives."



"I was never interested in writing biography just to show the life of a great man," Robert A. Caro, Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, told Kurt Vonnegut in an interview. He wanted "to use biography as a means of illuminating the times and the great forces that shape the times."

For six years Caro was an award-winning investigative reporter for *Newsday* on Long Island. During that time, he wrote a series on a bridge project that was directed by public works czar Robert Moses. At this time Caro realized the importance of understanding political power and how it is acquired and exercised.

To write *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, he spent seven years tracing and talking with hundreds of men and women who had worked with, for, or against Robert Moses, and examining myriad files never before opened to the public. *The Power Broker* won both the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1975 and the Francis Parkman Prize, awarded by the Society of American Historians for the book that "exemplifies the union of the historian and the artist." It was chosen by the Modern Library as one of the hundred best books of the 20th century.

To research *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, Caro and his wife, Ina, moved from his native New York City to the Texas Hill Country and then to Washington, D.C., to live in the locales in which Johnson grew up and in which he built, while still young, his first political machine. He has spent years examining documents at the Johnson Library in Austin and interviewing men and women connected with Johnson's life, many of whom had never before been interviewed. The first volume of the Johnson work, *The Path to Power*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award as the best nonfiction work of 1982. The second volume, *Means of Ascent*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award for 1990. In preparation for writing *Master of the Senate*, the third volume, Caro immersed himself in the world of the United States Senate, spending week after week in the gallery, in committee rooms, in the Senate Office Building, and interviewing hundreds of people, from pages and cloakroom clerks to senators and administrative aides. In 2002, Caro won his second Pulitzer Prize for Biography with *Master of the Senate*.

Mr. Caro was born in New York City, was a graduate of Princeton University in 1957, and was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University in 1965-66.

When it comes to explaining political power, Robert Caro has no equal. Like Theodore H. White, he brings to life both the drama and subtlety of politics with consummate artistry.

# THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

## OCTOBER 28, 2003

**Mr. Jones:** Good evening. I'm Alex Jones, I am Director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. It is my great pleasure to welcome you to one of the great events of the year for the Shorenstein Center, and that is the Theodore H. White Lecture.

The Shorenstein Center was created here at the Kennedy School in the mid-1980s, and it was created as a memorial to Joan Shorenstein. Joan Shorenstein was a journalist for CBS, a television journalist, and a very serious one when it came to politics and policy and journalism. She died far too young, of breast cancer, and her father, Walter Shorenstein, chose to memorialize her by creating the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Marvin Kalb was the first director and I am the second.

And I would ask you, if you would please, to join me in a round of thankful applause for Walter Shorenstein, who is here.

(Applause)

**Mr. Jones:** The Theodore White Lecture was created as a tribute to Teddy White, a reporter's reporter, a historian's historian, and a real Horatio Alger. I didn't really realize this until relatively recently, he was really like a Horatio Alger, starting as a paperboy in his newspaper career and he had a newsboy scholarship to Harvard College. He went to *Time* and covered East Asia. He did a foreign correspondent's route.

But then in the late 1950s he really found his true calling, which was presidential politics. And he really changed the whole landscape of what we consider to be appropriate political reporting, campaign reporting especially, with the publication of *The Making of the President: 1960*. He also wrote *The Making of the President: 1964; '68; '72*. Lyndon Johnson, of course, was part of his meat and potatoes. He also wrote a tremendous book called *America in Search of Itself*, and he was one of the early architects of the Shorenstein Center.

The thing that marked Teddy White's brand of history and journalism was that he told a very human story, always; his politicians were very, very alive. His son, David White, is here, as is Nancy White Hector, David's mother, and I want to say how happy we are that you are here.

And I would ask that you join in a round of applause for the Whites.

(Applause)

**Mr. Jones:** I also want to offer a special welcome to David Broder of *The Washington Post*, Jill Abramson of *The New York Times*, Daniel Schorr of NPR, and Ernie May, a historian here on the faculty of Harvard, who are going to join Bob Caro tomorrow for the annual T.H. White Seminar. And our point of departure will be Bob Caro's remarks tonight, and then we will range on from there. This seminar includes the people who are in attendance as part

of the conversation, and I hope as many of you as possible will join us. I think you'll find it a very, very stimulating group of people.

In common with many of you, I have favorite portions of Bob Caro's magisterial biographies of Lyndon Johnson and Robert Moses. The wonder to me in the way Bob Caro does his work is that he takes so much time and endless, exacting effort to learn about his subject and then uses his vast writing talent to create a world complete on the page.

Bob is from New York, he lives on Central Park West in Manhattan, worked before he became a biographer at *Newsday*, on Long Island and has a retreat in the Hamptons. He is a graduate of Princeton and was a Nieman Fellow here at Harvard. He and Ina, his wife and indefatigable researcher and sounding board, celebrate the completion of whatever section of the book that they are working on by going to France, to eat and drink and visit museums. In other words, Bob Caro is not a country boy.

And yet Bob Caro seems to understand what he called the nauseating loneliness of the world of the depression-era Texas Hill Country, where the older-beyond-their-years women walked with a permanent stoop from carrying countless buckets of water with a wooden yoke across their shoulders. Small homesteads strung out across the prairie made it impractical to bring electricity, so water had to be carried from the well in a grueling treadmill of brute toil, straight from the Middle Ages.

Lyndon Johnson used all his wiles and persuasiveness and influence and—here is the key word—power, to bring electricity to these people. And the power of Bob Caro is that he makes us understand their world, makes us understand why Lyndon Johnson twisted the rules like a length of soft flexible rope to do this for them. It makes us understand why they loved him and why they were loyal to him. He was able to work this alchemy because he went there, and Ina went there, and they went back and back and back, two Yankee strangers who stayed until they felt the place and people in their bones.

Bob Caro has been working for over 25 years on what he calls "*The Years of Lyndon Johnson*." His first book on LBJ, *The Path to Power*, then came *Means of Ascent*, and last year, *Master of the Senate*—those three volumes constitute over 2,500 pages. And vast as that number may sound, I can assure you that those 2,500 pages represent a distilled and honed version of the story that could easily have been twice that length, or more. And even at that longer length, that book only represented a part of the knowledge that Bob Caro assembled about his book and related subjects that demanded nearly three decades of his focused attention.

For instance, *Master of the Senate* contains a sort of stage-setting platform for the arrival of LBJ, a fascinating tour through the institution of the Senate over the course of American history. It is a typical Bob Caro element, not a flourish, not a conceit, and essential, essential to understanding the man and the action that is to come. Frankly, the idea that Bob can get

Lyndon Johnson's time in the White House into a single fourth volume, which he says he is determined to do, seems unlikely to me. But few will complain if there is a fifth volume or even a sixth.

Bob's first book, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, took seven years of investigation in the face of every obstacle Robert Moses could erect, and Moses was a man of staggering power. The book won the Pulitzer Prize, the Francis Parkman Prize, which is awarded by the Society of American Historians, and would eventually be chosen by Modern Library as one of the hundred best books of the 20th century. He then began work on his magnum opus. *The Path to Power* and *Means of Ascent* both won the National Book Critic's Circle Award. *Master of the Senate*, which took twelve years, won a second Pulitzer for Biography, and also the National Book Award.

Bob Caro has said that he was never interested in writing a biography just to show the life of a great man; his interest, he said, was to use biography as a means of illuminating the times, and the great forces that shaped the times, particularly political power.

Not surprisingly, his books have been controversial. His portrait of Lyndon Johnson is not the one drawn by some others, it is harsher in some respects, and more critical. But Bob Caro's LBJ is always human and vivid and fascinating. And I think it is safe to say that no multivolume biography of a president has ever been more honored or, an even greater compliment, more read, more debated, more discussed.

Teddy White would most certainly have approved this year's choice to deliver the Theodore White Lecture. It is my honor to introduce this evening, Robert A. Caro.

(Applause)

**Mr. Caro:** Thank you all. It's always wonderful to be back here at Harvard. I didn't go here as an undergraduate, but I was, as Alex said, a Nieman Fellow here while I was a reporter at *Newsday*. And it was during my Nieman year that I decided to write my book on Robert Moses. Driving from Back Bay Station today, along the river, I saw Leverett House across the river, and I remembered vividly exactly where and how I decided to write *The Power Broker*, and if you don't mind, I'll tell you about that for a minute.

Everybody, all the Niemans, had a special year when we were Niemans. It was a wonderful program, as it is today. But mine was special in a way, a little different from the other members of the Nieman class. In those days there were a lot of evening events: dinners, cocktail parties, seminars, talks with people.

Ina's mother was very ill that year—she died that year, in fact—so Ina was not here much. And I don't feel much like going to things in the evening by myself. At that time each house at Harvard gave the Nieman Fellows an office—it was just a little bare room; I had mine in Leverett



House. And I would go there at night and read, and think. As a reporter, one thing you never have time to do is think. When I look back at my six years as a reporter, my overall memory is one of running frantically, trying to get one story done after another.

But as a Nieman Fellow, suddenly, what I really had, for the first time, was time to think about what I had been doing at *Newsday*. And what I concluded was I didn't really know very much about what I had been doing. I had been writing about politics more and more, investigative stories about political power, getting more and more interested in political power. I had won a couple of minor awards (*really* minor awards), but when you're young and you get an award, you think you're being told that you really have succeeded in explaining to people what you wanted to explain to them, and you really think you know what you're talking about.

But what I realized while I was up here, and for the first time had a chance to stop and think, was that I really didn't know what I was talking

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about. I had always been assuming as a reporter what I had assumed as a student, that in a democracy power comes from the ballot box, from being elected, that power resides in elected officials. In New York you would say that the mayor of New York City and the governor of New York State—they have the power. But I had already realized as a reporter that this man Robert Moses, who had never been elected to anything, whose only job titles were things like city planning commissioner or chairman of various public authorities, had more power

than any mayor or governor, more than any mayor or governor combined, and that he had had this power seemingly forever.

When I began researching *The Power Broker*, I found he had actually held this power for 44 years, almost half a century. And that he, not any elected official, had shaped the city in which I had grown up. And I, who thought I knew so much about political power, realized while I was up here sitting in Leverett House, that I had no idea where Robert Moses had gotten the power to do that.

To excuse myself, I might say that no one else knew either; as those of you who have read *The Power Broker* know, a large part of Moses' power came from public authorities. At the time that I did *The Power Broker*, not only was there not a single book that examined adequately, in any depth at all, the public authority as a source of political power, there wasn't even a magazine article that did that, as I recall.

So I would sit up there in Leverett House and try to think of a way to sell my editors on the idea of doing a very long series explaining Robert

Moses. But I realized I couldn't do it. Gradually, I came to realize I couldn't possibly do this in the context of a daily newspaper, so I wrote a book proposal. After a number of publishing houses said no one will read a book on Robert Moses, something I did believe at the time, I finally got what I have always called the world's smallest advance. I can no longer remember the amount—whether I got \$5,000, of which they gave me \$2,500, or \$10,000, of which they gave me \$5,000.

But in thinking about what I wanted to find out, because I had for the first time, time to think about what I had been doing. In thinking about the book, I realized that I really didn't want it to be just a biography of Robert Moses. As Alex said, I wasn't interested in writing a biography of a famous man, I didn't want it to be a story of his life, that wasn't what I was interested in. I was interested in his political power, how he got it, how he used it, how he shaped New York with it. That power that had affected so many people, that's what I wanted to write about.

That was quite a moment for me in my life, it happened in a little room at Leverett House, and I am grateful to Harvard for giving me the room and giving me the time to think about it. So it's great to be back here.

The only thing that makes being here tonight slightly less great is that I have to be up here speaking. The way things seem to have worked out in America today is, if you're a writer you spend an awful lot of time giving talks. But no matter how many talks I give, I am still happier writing, I'm always more comfortable sitting at my desk with a typewriter than I am at a lectern like this.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** But having said that, I'll repeat again that it's great to be back here.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** Franklin Roosevelt, who went here of course, was very fond of the young Lyndon Johnson, whom he met when Johnson was first elected to Congress, at the age of twenty-eight. James Rowe, one of Roosevelt's advisors, once explained it to me this way: "Those were two political geniuses. When Roosevelt talked about politics most people here didn't really understand what he was saying; Lyndon Johnson understood it from the first time they met." One time when Lyndon Johnson had just walked out of the office, Roosevelt said to Harold Ickes: you know, that's the kind of uninhibited young politician I might have been if I hadn't gone to Harvard.

(Laughter)

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**Mr. Caro:** I said *The Power Broker* is really about political power, not about Robert Moses. All my books are basically about political power; with Robert Moses it was about urban political power. I felt if I could find out where he got the power and how he used it, I would be succeeding in explaining power not just in New York but in all the cities of America, and not just the trappings of power in cities but the reality, the real essence, the fundamentals of that power.

What first caught my interest about Lyndon Johnson, was I wanted to try and do the same thing about national power. What first caught my interest about Johnson were his six years, 1955 through the end of 1960, as Senate majority leader and the fact that in the whole 20th century almost the only time the Senate worked as the Founding Fathers had intended it to work—by which I mean as a center of governmental energy and creativity and ingenuity—was during that six-year period when it was led by Lyndon Johnson.

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When Johnson became leader the theory—well it was more than a theory; it was said so often in columns and magazines and newspaper articles that it was a cliché—was that no one could lead the Senate. One of Johnson's predecessors as majority leader, Alvin Barkley, said that no one can lead senators. He said: "I have nothing to promise them. I have nothing to threaten them with."

But Johnson led the Senate: he controlled it and dominated it. So I felt if I could find out how he did that, how he made it work, that would be a way of understanding legislative power, not in theory but in reality. In this country we think so much of political power in terms of executive or presidential power; I wanted to look at legislative power.

When I first thought of Lyndon Johnson's Senate years and what I wanted to do with them, what I had in mind was something much shorter than what finally emerged, got longer and longer and required a whole book by itself. Once, when Winston Churchill was asked how his biography of Lord Marlborough was coming, he said I'm working on the fourth of a projected three volumes.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** I'm not equating myself with Winston Churchill but at this moment we are in the same boat in that respect.

I guess this talk tonight is in many ways about how I got into that boat. The book got longer and longer because the deeper I went into Johnson's

Senate career, the more I realized there were things about his career and the Senate as a whole that I hadn't really thought were very important or worth much attention that were really quite important.

One of them was his rise to power. Nothing in Lyndon Johnson's career was more remarkable than his rise to power in the Senate. Today, seniority is important in Washington; in the 1930s and '40s it was much more important in all aspects of Washington life than it is today. It even extended into people's homes: if you were giving a dinner party in your home and you had more than one senator there, it was expected that you would seat them, if you were the hostess, away from you in order of seniority. Seniority governed the questioning behind closed doors in executive sessions of the Senate committees. The questioning would literally go from the senior member of the majority party, say it was a Democrat, from the senior Democrat, he'd ask all his questions, then across to the senior Republican and then back to the second Democrat, etcetera. It governed the selection of offices, parking spaces, et cetera.

As far as speaking, you weren't supposed to speak very much during your whole first term, the whole first six-year term in the Senate. And you were hardly supposed to rise on the floor at all during your first two years in the Senate.

At the end of *his* first two years in the Senate, Lyndon Johnson is the assistant leader of his party. At the end of four years he is the leader of his party: the Democrats are in the minority, he's the minority leader. He is the youngest man ever to be the leader of a party in the Senate, he is only 44 years old. Neither party had ever before elected a leader who was in his forties; the average age of the previous leaders had been sixty. He was not only the youngest leader in history; he was the youngest by quite a margin.

How did he do it, how did he rise to the leadership so fast? And how, after Lyndon Johnson got the leadership, did he manage to run the Senate so successfully when one of his predecessors had said that no one can lead them, I have nothing to promise them and I have nothing to threaten them with.

The best explanation of how he did it is a quote not from me, but from Lyndon Johnson himself; I use it as the epigraph of the book. Here is Lyndon Johnson talking about himself, and I think that every phrase in this

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quote is significant: "I do understand power, whatever else may be said about me. I know where to look for it and how to use it." Well, Lyndon Johnson was right in that self-assessment, and in this book he looks for and finds power in places that no one else has thought to look for it.

Johnson found things to promise senators, he found things to threaten them with. In the book I probably identify 20 or 21 different sources of such power. I'll talk about just a couple tonight.

One was in a place where no one else had looked for it, the other side of the Capitol. Now in those days, even more than today, the House and the Senate regarded themselves as sort of rival bodies, and there wasn't much cooperation between them. But Johnson realizes as soon as he comes to the Senate in January, 1949, that he possesses over in the House something that no other senator has: the affection, the love really, of Sam Rayburn.

The title of this talk tonight is "Personality and Power." Sometimes I think that the more I learn about power the more important I find that personalities are in it, the human factor. It's hard today to imagine that there was ever somebody like Sam Rayburn in power. He became Speaker of the House in 1940; with a couple of breaks when the Republicans were briefly in control, he stayed Speaker until he died in 1961, 21 years. Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy—whoever was president, Sam Rayburn was Speaker. And he ran the House, at least when he was young, until he got old in the last couple years, as an absolute ruler.

I don't know how many people here remember Sam Rayburn. He was a short man, 5' 6", he had immense shoulders, huge arms and a very burly body, he was a man of great physical strength. He had this big, completely bald head, that he was always afraid the television lights would shine off and make him look ridiculous. They said of him, that nobody can fool Sam Rayburn and nobody can cross him. He was almost unique in the way he ran the House with such absolute power, and he was unique also in his honesty. When he died in 1961, after all those years in power, his savings totalled \$15,000.

He would walk through the corridors in the House and people would come running up to him and ask for this assignment or that assignment, or they'd ask for a change in a bill one way or another way and he would give them an answer. Someone once said to him, "Don't you need to make notes to remember what you said?" Rayburn said, "If you always say what you mean you don't need notes to remember what you said."

He had a terrible temper, a fiercesome temper, you could see his face, grim and unsmiling, people knew when he lost his temper because this deep red flush would rise out of his collar and cover that big bald head. And people were really afraid to rub him the wrong way. One of his assistants, Ken Harding, once said to me that to watch Sam Rayburn walk through a crowd in the corridors of the Capitol was like watching waves breaking on a stone. "People would part before him." If he was in a bad

mood, people would hurry to get out of his way; no one wanted to take a chance on antagonizing him.

So I came to appreciate Sam Rayburn's power, but I also came to appreciate his loneliness. When he comes to Washington in 1917, he spends his weekends driving around Washington and its suburbs. He tells his friends he's looking for a house big enough to hold all my children. Some years later when he still hasn't had any children, he writes to his sister back in Bonham, "God, what I would give for a tow-headed boy to take fishing!" But Rayburn never had a tow-headed boy, he never had a family.

He considered himself very inept socially; he once said, "I once tried to tell a joke and by the time I was finished I was the joke." He didn't like to go to cocktail parties, he felt he couldn't make small talk. With women he was very shy. He married once, the marriage lasted only three months. No one knows why, I certainly don't, but he never married again. And he once said, "Loneliness breaks the heart, loneliness is what consumes people."

You know, if you're Speaker, during the week you are always surrounded by people who want something from you, but of course on the weekends everybody else goes home to their family. Rayburn lived alone in an apartment on Dupont Circle. What he did on the weekends was to go down to the Capitol and walk around the Capitol and the streets around the Capitol, for a long time, with that grim face set in that unsmiling, almost glare, as if he wanted to be left alone, as if didn't want anyone to come up to him.

But I found out better, because I interviewed the elderly men (well by the time I interviewed them they were elderly men) who had, when they were young, worked for Sam Rayburn. They would talk to me about when they were young men. They would say that sometimes on the weekend, loneliness would get to be too much for "Mr. Sam," as they called him, and he would telephone one of his assistants and tell him to come down to his office because he had something urgent for him to do. They described having to go down to the office and they'd watch the Speaker sit there behind his huge desk, pulling open one drawer after another, trying to find some excuse for having called the young man down there.

Now when Lyndon Johnson marries Lady Bird and comes to Washington in 1934, they have a small apartment, and almost immediately Johnson invites Sam Rayburn to dinner. He has the entrée to do this because Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson's father had been friends in the Texas House of Representatives years before. Generally, if Rayburn was invited to someone's house for dinner, he would always go once, as a politeness. He almost never went again. But at this very first dinner at the Johnsons' apartment, a bond, a love, a paternal affection springs up.

At first it is not between Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson, but between Rayburn and Lady Bird Johnson.

Those of you who have read my first volume know that Lady Bird Johnson, when she was young, was very different from the poised, gracious, dignified First Lady that we all have come to know. She was terribly shy, she once told a friend that when she was a senior in high school she had prayed that she wouldn't finish first or second in her class, because if she finished first or second she would be valedictorian or salutatorian and have to get up and give a speech at graduation. She said she prayed she would finish third, she told a friend I prayed that if I finished first or second I would get smallpox—

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** I wrote, “—she would rather risk the scars than stand up before an audience.” When Lyndon Johnson, a few years later, was running for Congress, not only can she not speak for him on the platform, she can't even really be an effective hostess at the receptions. In Texas they used to call these receptions “coffees,” where the women in the district would have other women in, to meet the candidate's wife. A friend of hers told me that to watch Lady Bird stand on the receiving line at a coffee, with that smile carved on her face as if it were set in stone, was the saddest thing I ever saw.

At that very first dinner a bond, a paternal affection, is struck between this fierce but very shy man and this very shy young woman. It never goes away.

Just yesterday I was—I'm dealing with the presidency now and the assassination—yesterday I was looking through some pictures, and there is a picture I'd never seen before of Lady Bird arriving to move into the living quarters of the White House, after the assassination. Movers have brought everything else; she is carrying a photograph of Sam Rayburn.

But the bond extends from Lady Bird to include Lyndon, and Sam Rayburn comes to be very fond of him. In that same year, 1934, Lady Bird is back in Texas visiting her father and Lyndon Johnson gets pneumonia, which in those days of course was very serious. Sam Rayburn comes to the hospital and sits beside his bed all night in a straight-backed wooden chair. Rayburn is a chain smoker, he smokes all night—we didn't know it then that smoking might not be the best thing for your lungs.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** But he is so afraid that if he stands up to brush the ashes away he'll disturb Lyndon, that he doesn't stand up. And Johnson recalls that when he woke up in the morning the first thing he sees is the mighty Speaker sitting there beside the bed with his lapels and vest completely covered with cigarette ashes. Lyndon also recalls that as soon as Sam Rayburn sees he is awake, he leans over, gets up and leans over the bed and says, Now Lyndon, don't you worry. Take it easy. If you need anything just call on me.

Well Lyndon Johnson being Lyndon Johnson, it isn't very long before he calls on Sam Rayburn.



(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** A few months later President Roosevelt announces a new New Deal program, it's the National Youth Administration. They are going to have a separate state director for each state, and Lyndon Johnson wants to be the state director for Texas.

At the moment, Lyndon Johnson was only a secretary to a congressman, his administrative experience was zero, there was no reason in the world why anyone was going to put him in charge of an agency that would have hundreds of employees and dispense millions of dollars a year.

Tom Connolly was the old Texas senator who was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and therefore, enough of a power in Washington so that Franklin Roosevelt had to keep him as an ally. Tom Connolly told his biographer: An amazing thing happened yesterday: everyone knows Sam Rayburn never asks another man for a favor, but yesterday Sam Rayburn came to my office and asked a favor, and would not leave until I granted it. The favor of course was that Connolly use his influence with Roosevelt to get the NYA appointment for Lyndon Johnson; Johnson gets the appointment as state director for Texas, and his career is on its way.

As those of you who have read my first volume know, things didn't always go smoothly between Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn. Very late in 1939 or early in 1940, I don't remember which, Johnson sees a way to get ahead that involves betraying Rayburn—and he betrays him. Roosevelt's man in Texas, the guy whom FDR allows to oversee the giving of New Deal contracts and patronage in Texas, has always been "Cactus Jack" Garner, the vice president.

But now Garner has split with Roosevelt and Roosevelt needs a new man in Texas. The obvious choice is Sam Rayburn, who is then majority leader. But Johnson wants the job for himself, and he persuades Roosevelt that Rayburn is his secret enemy. Actually no one had been more loyal to Franklin

Roosevelt than Rayburn. A lot of legislation, an amazing amount, of what we consider Roosevelt's legislation, would never have become law if Sam Rayburn hadn't rammed it through the House of Representatives, through a conservative southern-dominated House of Representatives.

But Lyndon Johnson persuades Roosevelt that Rayburn is his enemy, and Johnson gets the job. He thinks that Rayburn is not going to find out what he's done, but nobody ever fools Sam Rayburn, and he knows immediately. For almost two years, he is cold to Johnson, but the coolness ends in

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an instant with Pearl Harbor. Johnson enlists. Actually, he activates his naval reserve commission, and Rayburn thinks he's going to war, into combat in the Pacific. The day Lyndon Johnson leaves, as I wrote, Rayburn's heart melted toward Johnson in an instant, as a father's heart melts toward an estranged son when the son is in danger.

The day that Lyndon Johnson leaves for the Pacific he writes Sam Rayburn a one-page letter. Sam Rayburn folds it up very small and puts it in his wallet. When he dies, 20 years later, the curator of the Rayburn Library has to inventory the contents of his desk, he opens a special drawer in which Rayburn kept letters from his mother—and the letter from Lyndon Johnson. And the curator wrote Johnson that Rayburn had carried that letter in his wallet for many, many years, actually, apparently till shortly before he died.

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**Johnson realizes he is the only senator who can go to the man who rules the House of Representatives and ask for action on senator's bills.**

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So Johnson realizes as soon as he gets to the Senate that he has a power that no other senator has. Senators need the House of Representatives. Say you need a public work for your state, your constituents are demanding that you get a dam built, it's not enough that the Senate authorizes the dam, the House has to authorize the dam. No matter how successful a senator is in getting a particular piece of legislation passed in the Senate, the House can still rewrite it.

Johnson realizes he is the only senator who can go to the man who rules the House of Representatives and ask for action on a senator's bills. And immediately an awareness of this, you can see it in the memos and the letters in the Lyndon Johnson Library, memos and letters coming in to Johnson from very senior senators, committee chairmen, saying Lyndon, my dam authorization bill is stalled in the House, can you put a word in the Speaker's ear? Or Lyndon, I don't like what the House did to my appropriations bill, can you say something to Mr. Sam? And Johnson, of course, whenever he does these favors for senators, he makes sure that they know it and that they know that they owe him something in return. That's one source—and it was a very potent source—of Lyndon Johnson's power.

Maybe there's one other source of his power I can sum up in a quick paragraph or two, which is cash: campaign contributions. Johnson is a political genius, and he realizes he has another thing that no other senator has, he is the only senator who is familiar with two different groups of people, the very conservative, reactionary Texas oilmen, natural gas men, contractors in Texas, who need federal contracts and laws and are willing to pay, in the form of campaign contributions, to get them.

And he also knows the liberal representatives and senators from the northeast who need campaign contributions. He makes sure that the Texans know they should contribute only through him, and he makes sure that it becomes known in Washington that he is the source, and the only source, of Texas campaign contributions. If there is one scene that sums this up, it's in the book, from 1952. Johnson isn't running for the Senate, but other senators are. One of his lawyers, Arthur Stehling, walks into that big living room of the ranch on the Pedernales and Johnson is sitting there saying, "Well, I've got 20 for him and 20 for him and 30 for him." That's a source of power.

And Johnson used all these powers with a ruthlessness that made them even more effective. Here is another quote from Lyndon Johnson, speaking about himself: "I'm just like a fox. I can see the jugular in any man and go for it, but I always keep myself in rein. I keep myself on a leash, just like you would an animal."

Well in that self-assessment Lyndon Johnson is only partially correct. There are more than a few examples in this book of how he let himself off the leash.

During those same first few months in the Senate, in fact, he sees the jugular in a man and destroys him with what he sees. The man's name was Leland Olds, he was an idealistic New Dealer, who had worked for Franklin Roosevelt for a long time, going back to when Roosevelt was Governor of New York. His field was public power, hydroelectric power from rivers, natural gas power, he believed very deeply that while private companies were entitled to profits from a natural resource, they shouldn't be allowed to gouge the public just because they had a monopoly on it. As another New Dealer wrote, "who owns a river if not the people?"

Roosevelt believed the same way. When he was Governor of New York he makes Olds chairman of the New York State Power Authority, and when Roosevelt becomes president he makes him chairman of the Federal Power Commission. Now it's 1939, Olds has served two five-year terms as chairman of the Federal Power Commission and has to be renominated and confirmed by the Senate for another term. President Truman, who admires and respects Olds as much as Roosevelt did, has renominated him.

And almost Johnson's first assignment from these Texas natural gas men is to defeat Olds' renomination.

This seems almost impossible to do, because most of the senators had gotten to know Olds. As a senator you have to deal with the Federal

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Power Commission frequently in one way or another, and even the most conservative Republican senators had come to admire Olds' fairness and everybody liked him. Attacking his record would be difficult.

So Johnson takes another route. He finds Olds' jugular. He learns that 25 or 30 years before, when Olds was a young man, he was a reporter for a wire service. Now wire services, as I suppose everyone knows, like the Associated Press is a wire service, if you're a reporter you work for it and any subscribing paper is entitled to print your articles, and should they choose to do so, to put your byline on top of them.

I think that the wire service that Olds worked for was called The Federated Press. It had, as I recall, 80 clients, 79 are mainstream newspapers, but the other is The Communist *Daily Worker*. Lyndon Johnson has his assistants go through every issue of *The Daily Worker* during the 1920s; they find 54 times where the byline Leland Olds appears in the *The Daily Worker*.

Johnson has those 54 pages photographed, he takes them around to senators in the privacy of their offices and convinces them that Olds was a Communist, and may still be a Communist. Then he gets himself made chairman of the subcommittee that is dealing with Olds' renomination. No one wants the job, it's easy for him to get it, everyone thinks the subcommittee hearings are going to be pro forma. And he destroys Olds with his cross examination, demanding what he meant by these articles that he had written 25 years before. Then he gives a speech on the floor of the Senate, the key line that Johnson says is: "Shall we have a commissioner or a commissar?" And the Senate votes Leland Olds down.

Olds is really destroyed by this. "Destroyed" is sometimes an exaggerated term, but I don't think it is in regard to him. He is 58 years old, he has been a civil servant all his life, he has almost no savings, he is never going to get another decent job in government, he can't get a job with any company in the industry he's given his life to learning about, because who would dare to hire a Communist? He lives the rest of his life as a poor man.

And poverty was really not the worst of it. His wife Maud, who sat in those subcommittee hearings, listening to Olds being called a traitor and a Communist, couldn't believe that the women in her little neighborhood in Washington, that she had thought were her friends, wouldn't talk to her anymore when they saw her on the street, either because they didn't want to or were afraid to be seen talking to someone who was married to a Communist. After the hearings, she suffered a series of nervous breakdowns from which she never really recovered.

Of all the unpleasant things that I had to learn about when I was researching this book on Lyndon Johnson's life, and there were a lot of unpleasant things, the worst one for me was to hear about a scene that occurred outside the open door of that subcommittee meeting where Johnson has just destroyed Olds with his cross examination. Olds knows what

has happened to him, he's standing there stunned, with his wife, and with one young assistant, Melvin Van Scorack. Johnson comes out and puts his arm around Olds' shoulders, and says: "Lee, I hope you understand there's nothing personal in this. We're still friends, aren't we? It's only politics, you know."

Well that was politics, part of Lyndon Johnson's style of politics, and it was very effective. After that, a lot of older senators were very wary of Johnson, a little afraid of him. And of course fear creates more power.

As leader Johnson displayed the same ruthlessness. Even men who were pragmatic, who thought they knew Washington, who thought they understood how power worked, saw there was something special about Lyndon Johnson. Scoop Jackson, of the state of Washington, who worked with Johnson for 25 years in the House of Representatives and the Senate, once tried to explain the difference between President Kennedy and President Johnson, if they needed a senator's vote on a bill. Jackson said that Kennedy "would explain precisely why the bill was so important and why he needed this senator's support. But if the senator said that his constituency simply wouldn't allow him to vote that way," Jackson wrote, "Kennedy would finally say he was sorry they couldn't agree, but he understood." Lyndon Johnson, Scoop Jackson would say, Lyndon Johnson wouldn't understand, he would refuse to understand. He would and these are Jackson's words: "He would charm you or knock your block off or bribe you or threaten you, anything he had to do to get your vote, and he'd get it, that was the difference."

So when Lyndon Johnson became leader, he had the powers he had found and created and the ruthlessness with which he was willing to use these powers. And what did he do with them? What did he do with this power that he obtained by such methods, by such means? Only this: he broke the dam that the Senate had put up for two decades against every form of liberal legislation. He passed the first significant housing for the poor measure that had been passed in years. He got the first increase in the minimum wage in years, the first expansion of Social Security, he added disability benefits to Social Security. He passed bills of which liberals had been dreaming for 20 years, and had all but given up hope of passing. And with these bills Lyndon Johnson improved the lives of millions and tens of millions of people.

Most important of all, in my opinion, he passed, in 1957, the first civil rights bill since Reconstruction, the first civil rights bill that had been passed in 82 years. During that time hundreds of civil rights bills had been

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introduced on Capitol Hill, scores had passed the House of Representatives, not one had passed the Senate. You know, we all learned Lord Acton's axiom: all power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The more I learn about power the less sure I am that that axiom is always true. But I'll tell you what I think *is* always true, what power always does—power *reveals*, power unmask what was underneath all along.

Someone asked me at dinner tonight, do I feel that Lyndon Johnson always wanted to pass civil rights. I said I think I do, and the reason I feel that way is something he did when he was twenty years old. He was going to a teacher's college down in Texas, he is very poor, he has to drop out of school for a year to get the money to continue, and what he does is teach at a Mexican-American school down in Cotulla, and the children who were there talk about how Johnson spared no effort to teach them. I wrote, "no teacher had ever cared if these children learned or not; this teacher cared." He thinks it's important they speak only English, so he spanks the boys, tongue-lashes the girls if he hears them speaking Spanish.

He persuades a school board to give them bats and balls like the white teams. When they wouldn't authorize a debating team he makes himself a debating coach and persuades the fathers, the men who were migrant workers, the fathers of these children, to take days off from work to drive the children to the debates.

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You could, I suppose, say, that that is merely an example of Lyndon Johnson always trying to do the best job he could, no matter what job he had, and that was indeed a characteristic of Johnson. But the reason I always felt that I knew he truly wanted to help was that he didn't just teach the children, he taught the janitor. The janitor at that school was named Tomas Coronado. He said

that Johnson wanted him to learn English, so he bought him a textbook and every afternoon after school they would sit on the steps outside the school, and Coronado says, Johnson would pronounce the word, I would repeat; Johnson would spell, I would repeat. I felt he always wanted to help poor people, and in particular people of color.

When Johnson gets power, the cruelty and brutality he can show people is also unmasked, and it can be shocking. But it's not only depths that power reveals. Throughout Lyndon Johnson's life there had been hints of what he might do with great power, should he ever succeed in attaining it, hints of compassion for the downtrodden and of a passion to raise them up. Hints that he might use power not only to manipulate others but to help others, to help those who most needed help. And now, once he had acquired power in the Senate, that compassion shines forth at last.

In order to understand the significance of what Lyndon Johnson did in passing that first civil rights bill in 1957, you have to appreciate the

magnitude of the problem, or maybe a better word would be the intractability of the problem, the seeming impossibility of solving it. There were a lot of things that I wasn't understanding about it. At first, I didn't understand at all many of the subtle factors that made the problem so incredibly difficult to solve. For example, I knew that in 1956—the last election before 1957, of course—out of six million black Americans of voting age in the South, only about one million had managed to register to vote. One of six—that's bad enough; there were whole counties in the South in which no black American had ever been able to register. But there was another figure, tied into that, that I didn't understand: out of the one million who had registered in 1956, something less than six hundred thousand had actually cast votes. In other words, more than four hundred thousand of the million, almost half, had gone through all the difficulties to register to vote, but then hadn't actually cast a vote. Now for a black man or woman to register in the South took such great courage, that I wondered what were the conditions, the factors, that could make people who had done that, who had had the guts to register, not exercise that right they had secured for themselves?

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So I guess what I was trying to do was get more of a feeling of what life was like for a black American in the South who was trying to actually vote. The United States Commission for Civil Rights held a series of hearings throughout the South in 1958, '59 and '60, they were on voting, and they had a lot of witnesses. I had read all their testimony, but their testimony focused largely on the actual process of registration, not on actual voting.

The testimony was largely about the registration examiners, the unfair oral questions about how many bubbles are there in a bar of soap type. The written forms that were so difficult to fill out or were simply unavailable when someone asked for them. I wanted to know what life was like for African-Americans trying to vote, to actually vote, what was life like outside the process of voting? What was daily life like if you will. I wanted to try to get a feeling for that.

So what I was doing was simply going through the list of witnesses at these hearings and trying to locate them and talk to them, those that were still alive. Of course it was already forty years since they had testified and a lot of them weren't alive. And it was after I started talking to them that I began to understand the depth of the problem and the nobility of what Lyndon Johnson had done. I began to understand aspects I had never really gotten.

I remember talking to a black man named Aaron Sellers who during the 1950s had registered black votes, in Bullock County, Alabama. It was a

one-sided conversation. Mr. Sellers by this time was completely deaf, so he couldn't hear my questions. Luckily his daughter, Gladys Sellers, was visiting from Washington Heights in Manhattan. So I would ask her the question and she would tell Aaron, her father, the question, and he would talk to me. And when I asked why he had been able to get people registered and then they wouldn't vote, he said, "well, the white people in town kept a list of the names of who was trying to vote, and they kept the list in their pockets for ready reference."

So I said, what would they use the list for? and I started to get a real education. I can't tell you about it all tonight. I'll tell you just about crop loans. People who were on that list couldn't get crop loans, and if you

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were a poor farmer in the South, you needed in the spring, a loan from a bank to buy your seeds and fertilizer to plant your crops. In Bullock County it was cotton and peanuts. Without that loan you couldn't plant a crop for the next year, you wouldn't have a harvest to sell, you wouldn't have any income coming in. You would have to pack up your wife and children in many cases, get into your rundown car and drive off, often with no place to go. If you wanted to vote in the South, that was something that was facing you.

And there were other obstacles. I remember calling a woman named Margaret Frost. I always ask, no matter what else they tell

me, I always ask them to describe the room where the scene was occurring, and you never know what's going to happen when you ask people to describe the room. She was telling me that the Board of Registrars in her town, this is the scene that opens *Master of the Senate*, they met in the county clerk's office after hours and there was the counter at which the clerks sat during the day, and now the Registrars are sitting behind the counter, and in front of them was Margaret Frost and I think the two other black people who were trying to register. And I asked her, so what was in front of the counter—chairs? And she said, no, there were no chairs. I asked why. I don't remember her exact words but the idea was that the Registrars knew the hearing wasn't going to take very long.

Then she said, maybe you want to speak to my husband. Her husband was David Frost, and he had registered to vote some years before. And he told me the story with which I open the book. He had managed to register, but then he said a white man had told him "the white folks are the niggers' friend as long as the nigger stays in his place," but that if he actually tried to cast a vote, "I had got out of my place, if I was going to vote along with the white man."



He told me how when the whites in the town learned that, despite their threats, he was planning to actually vote, a car full of men stopped in front of his house one night and shot out the porch lights. He told me how, cowering inside, he thought of calling the police, until as the car drove away he saw it was a police car. A police car! Where do you turn if you can't turn to the police?

I realized that I was writing about a people who had no place to turn. Their state was not going to pass a law to help them. Nothing that could be done within that state was going to help them. They needed a national law. While the Civil Rights Bill of 1957 is a very weak law, one important thing is that it was the basis for other laws.

In order to appreciate what Lyndon Johnson did for civil rights in 1957, you have to understand the difficulty in doing what he did. It seems just impossible. As I said, I'm interested in power, legislative power.

If you're interested in legislative power it seems absolutely impossible that anybody is going to get a civil rights bill through that Senate. The number changed from year to year. If I remember correctly, and I may not, of the nine most powerful Senate committees in 1957, Southerners were chairmen of seven. They had virtually all the power in the Senate. William S. White of the *Times* wrote in 1956 that the Senate is "the South's unending revenge upon the North for Gettysburg." Not just revenge, *unending* revenge. He wrote that the Senate was the only place in the country where the South didn't lose the war. Mr. White was correct. As long as the South didn't lose control of the Senate it really hadn't lost the war.

When I was learning how Lyndon Johnson got the votes to pass that civil rights bill, it seemed to me like he was getting them one vote at a time, you could almost trace it hour by hour, not just by memos and letters but by those little pink telephone message slips that secretaries would bring in to Johnson—Senator Russell is on the phone, he says he'll do this if so and so happens. Senator Humphrey is on the phone, he won't do that. To watch how Lyndon Johnson got the votes to pass that bill, by all the things I try to describe in the book, the maneuvers on the floor, the maneuvers in the cloakroom, was for me getting a lesson in so many nuances of legislative power that I had no idea even existed.

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And it's a lesson in something more also: in determination. In the section of my book on the civil rights fight, I repeat in several different places the same two sentences. They are: "A civil rights bill had to be passed. And a civil rights bill was going to be passed." What I do over and over again: Johnson comes to some obstacle erected by the Southern senators that seems insurmountable, and he retreats back to his ranch on the Pedernales, and what he does down there is think. And after I describe this obstacle that the South has erected, and its seeming insurmountability, I end by saying, to show the depths of Lyndon Johnson's determination: "But a civil rights bill had to be passed. And a civil rights bill was going to be passed."

Lyndon Johnson was the greatest champion in the halls of government that black Americans, and indeed all Americans of color, had during the 20th Century. And indeed, as I wrote, with the single exception of Abraham Lincoln, he was the greatest champion with white skin that they had in the history of the republic.

He became that champion during his time in the Senate. The life of Lyndon Johnson is for me a very poignant life. The story of his boyhood is just sad, poignant, and so was a lot of the rest of his life. But his time in the Senate was not sad, and that fact is in a way the most poignant fact of all, because he wasn't content to stay there but wanted something else, which he got. In later years, Lady Bird Johnson was to say, "Those twelve years in the Senate were the happiest years of our lives," and they were. Lyndon Johnson was born to be there.

For the United States those were very productive years. When you look back at the Senate of the United States during the first two and a quarter centuries of its existence, of the republic's existence, after the days of Webster, Clay and Calhoun in the 1840s and 1850s, and after the Civil War, the Senate worked really during only one period, a single six year period, 1955 through the end of 1960, in which Lyndon Johnson was its leader. It really worked then. Lyndon Johnson was indeed what I call him: Master of the Senate.

Well, I tried to keep this speech short, but if I could keep things short I wouldn't always be writing thousand-page books. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

**Mr. Jones:** Bob has agreed to take some questions.

**Mr. Sarris:** Hi, my name is Reed Sarris, I'm a senior at the college. Thank you very much for your work, Mr. Caro.

**Mr. Caro:** Thank you.

**Mr. Sarris:** I don't want you to give away the end of your book or anything else, but the question that you ask in the second volume, you juxtapose the 1948 election with the speech before the joint session of Congress, saying "we shall overcome."

**Mr. Caro:** Right.

**Mr. Sarris:** And you ask if the means justify the ends, and I know it's a rhetorical question, and maybe you haven't resolved it yourself because you're still working through it, but what is your leaning on this with regards to Lyndon Johnson?

**Mr. Caro:** That's the right question. I haven't worked it all through. I would say, people always want to say, do the means justify the ends? With Lyndon Johnson, I think it's more complicated. I would say the life of Lyndon Johnson raises, inescapably, in its deepest form, the question of the relationship of means and ends because Lyndon Johnson, the "we shall overcome" speech, the civil rights acts, the Great Society, he brought to realization most of the most noble liberal aspirations of the 20th century. But he wouldn't have been in a position to do it, talking about the 1948 election. A lot of people tried to say he didn't really steal it—he stole it.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** He used some ruthless means in the Senate, but he would never have been in position to achieve those ends if it hadn't been for those means. I'm still working that out. I don't know if I'll work it out.

**Mr. Good:** My name is Josh Good, I'm a recent graduate of the Harvard Divinity School.

I found very thought provoking your suggestion that political power reveals. Any thoughts about how political power might differ from the power held by a business CEO or a journalist or an educator, religious leader?

**Mr. Caro:** Yes, political power affects our lives in a more direct and all encompassing way. When I talk about Robert Moses I try to put it in a very small context. If you live in Manhattan and you're driving up the East River Drive in Manhattan to go across the Triboro Bridge, you may notice as you pass 96th Street that the bridge comes down across the river in Queens opposite 96th Street, so why are you driving all the way up to 125th Street and then coming back down to 96th Street, which I think is four extra miles.

Well the reason of course is that William Randolph Hearst in 1934, when Moses is starting to build that bridge, owned tenement houses at 125th Street. Before the Depression they had been very profitable, now it's the Depression, people can't pay their rents anymore and he wants to get rid of them, he wants the city to condemn them. Hearst has three newspapers in New York then, and his price for supporting the Triboro Bridge is that it come down at 125th Street, right at his tenements. So every time you drive those four miles, that's political power.

You might say also that every time a low-income student gets to go to college on one of Lyndon Johnson's programs, that's political power.

And on the other side, and I haven't even mentioned it tonight, every time someone dies a needless death or suffered a needless wound in

Vietnam, that was political power. I think there is a vast difference between political power in a democracy, and other forms of power.

**Mr. Steele:** Hi, my name is Chris Steele, I'm a Master of Public Policy student here at the Kennedy School of Government. Thank you very much for being here, Mr. Caro.

My first question is, I just finished *Master of the Senate* this summer, and it was just a fantastic book. I think this is a bit of a premature question, but I'm wondering when the next volume is going to be finished, if we have to

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wait another decade for hearing about the vice presidency and the presidency?

And then secondly, I'm very intrigued by the close working relationship you have with your wife, and I wonder if you'd say a few more words about that?

**Mr. Caro:** Let me say the last first, because Ina isn't here tonight, I wish she was so I could introduce you to her, as those of you who have read my acknowledgements know, the only person who ever works with me on my books is my wife, who also writes her own books. She is actually finishing, although with the Caros finishing is an elastic term—

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** —she is in the latter stages of finishing her second book now. Ina is a medieval historian, and while I was working on the *The Power Broker*, she was doing her Ph.D. thesis. But I got hurt and had to stay in bed for about a year and I needed some-

one to try to do research for me, so she learned her way around the courthouse, we were then doing records on the political deals by which Jones Beach was put together. And she has been working with me ever since.

In the hill country, of course, she was really invaluable. Alex said something about me being a city boy. Because I was a city boy, the people in the hill country really didn't trust me, and I needed to talk to these very elderly women. You know, if you didn't have electricity when Johnson went to Congress in 1937, you had to be in your late 70s or 80s. And I really couldn't get them to talk to me, and Ina would go and make friends with them. By the time I came, they would be willing to talk. She is really a great researcher.

Your other question is when I'm going to be done. Whatever I said, why would you believe it?

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** I'm doing it as fast as I can.

(Laughter)

**Ms. Pennis:** Hi, Mr. Caro, my name is Cher Pennis, I'm a junior at Harvard College.

You spoke tonight about how seniority was so important in the Senate before Lyndon Johnson came to power. And you also spoke about how the only years the Senate really worked was when Lyndon Johnson was in power. So I'm wondering whether you think that Lyndon Johnson instituted any long-term changes in the structure of the Senate and the way it works that affect the way the Senate runs today?

**Mr. Caro:** That's a great question. The things that Johnson ran the Senate with were so personal to him that they didn't really out-live him. Part was just the force of his personality, his ability to bargain with people. Part was there had always been in the Senate something called the unanimous consent agreement, which would take me three days to explain to you, that's if I could remember the details. But Johnson made it an instrument of power, not that they still have the unanimous consent agreements in the Senate but they are no longer used the same way.

Although other Senate leaders were really outstanding, very respected leaders, like Mike Mansfield and all, when Johnson was leader they would really be creating legislation. They would take bills that the Eisenhower White House sent over and rewrite them completely, so they were Senate bills, and those were the bills that would pass. I don't think much of it, I may be overlooking something, but I don't think much of it survived him.

**Mr. Siaperts:** Hi there, my name is Joe Siaperts, I'm a junior at Harvard College.

I wanted to ask you about your interviewing style, and specifically, how you got people to recount very distant memories. And also, as a journalist, how you dealt with those memories, and whether you question any of the accuracy of those memories and how you dealt with that in print?

**Mr. Caro:** Sure. Well you always question, you always try to check it with other people. Interviews are very tricky things. If there are other people in a meeting, I try to talk to all of them. What I also do is I go back. Let's say, these are not the correct names, but say you had a meeting with McNamara, Rusk, Walt Rostow and someone else. After you have interviewed them all, then you would go back to Rusk and say McNamara says this, as I say these are not the right names, you said so and so; he says something different—how do you square that? Then you go to the third person, then you go back. Sometimes you go back to a person several times. I spend a lot of time recreating meetings.

I don't know that I have an interviewing style, except for one thing, which I'll tell you. The two greatest interviewers in fiction are Inspector Maigret and George Smiley, in John LeCarre, but their technique, which was always hard for me because I always talk too much, was to shut up and just let the other person fill the silence. To make himself stop talking, Smiley, who liked to talk also, would take his glasses off and polish his

glasses on his necktie, until the guy started talking. And Maigret would start to clean his pipe. What I do, if you looked in my interview notebooks, you'd see the word "shut up" a lot.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Maigus:** Hi, Mr. Caro, my name is John Maigus, I'm an alumnus and I'm a writer.

I appreciated your prologue remarks about how you sat in Leverett House and how you think and how you changed your view of politics and power.

"Personality and Power" is your theme tonight. First, as a writer, how do you think about what you want to describe to your reader?

And then secondly, since you mentioned every time Lyndon Johnson did something good for civil rights we should remember that; but also you said every time a needless death occurred in Vietnam we should remember that.

Johnson put such a stamp and change on American politics, not always for the better. How would you talk about his legacy today, and not necessarily the good legacy because you beautifully describe his usage of power?

**Mr. Caro:** Those are terrific questions, these are all terrific questions.

I don't know how I would describe his legacy. All you can really say, that I know I feel right now, is that it's a watershed presidency, and I use that in the exact meaning of the term, which is a watershed is a continental divide, on one side the waters run this way and on the other side they run the other way.

I do feel, from my reading, that America was a different place when Lyndon Johnson left office in January, 1969, than it was when he took office in 1963. How much of that was due to him, his personality, how much of it was due to the forces of the time, I haven't decided yet. But certainly, it's not like Roosevelt's presidency when you say what is the arc of Roosevelt's presidency, he brought the country through a depression and through a great and good war.

With Lyndon Johnson on the one side you have the Great Society, you have the great civil rights acts. You have all those things. On the other side you have the credibility gap, mistrust of government, which really dates back to Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam. It's a very complicated story.

Your first question, about what I try to think of when I try to write, you never really know what you're trying. I have one thing, I always try to ask myself, can the reader see what is happening? You have to spend time describing the place, describing the people, it's not enough to keep putting facts down.

Sometimes you are a judge for one award or another, so you have to read at least a few pages, and sometimes a lot of nonfiction books, and you see in some cases there has been terrific research but the writer seemed to feel that all that mattered was to get that research down one fact after

another. But nonfiction that endures, to me, is written at the same level as fiction. Francis Parkman, people like that, they are writing at a very high level. I can't write at that high a level, but I do think the same things that are important in fiction writing are important in nonfiction writing.

**Mr. Bosch:** I'm Matt Bosch, I'm a first year at Harvard College.

This past Saturday there was a forum here about John F. Kennedy and his legacy, and there was a lot of speculation as to what would have happened if Kennedy had lived and filled out his term. I'm sure the group was quite biased, but the general feeling was all of Johnson's programs, the Great Society, civil rights acts, etcetera, were a result of Kennedy's vision, that Johnson just ended up implementing them after his death. And it seems to me that you might not totally buy into that?

**Mr. Caro:** I haven't, that is certainly an argument that is being advanced. It's something that I am doing research on, I don't know how I'm going to come down on that.

**Mr. Burke:** Hi, Terrence Burke, with WGBH.

Mr. Caro, would people like Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson have been able to achieve their power in today's world of the 24-hour news cycle? And just talk a little bit about these two powerful men and their relationship with the press, please?

**Mr. Caro:** In New York, they say there could never be a Robert Moses today, we have all these processes in place to prevent that.

When Robert Moses came to power in 1934, everyone was saying New York will never be able to build anything big, the government will never be able to build anything, the city was, not literally, because they didn't call it bankrupt, but it was bankrupt. All the public works projects were stopped, the automobile age started in 1914, the city had been able, in all those years, to build, I used to know this, I think 13 miles of arterial highway, they couldn't build bridges. Everyone said no one can build.

Moses comes to power and in one year he started the Triboro Bridge, finished the Henry Hudson Bridge, built whatever I say in the book, 217 playgrounds, 143 miles of parkways. If Robert Moses came along today he wouldn't be able to use the same methods but it is the nature of political genius to find a way to do something that no one has been able to do before.

**Mr. Pacharamsi:** Good evening. My name is Ankil Pacharamsi, I'm a graduate student here at the Kennedy School.

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I have a question for you about the psychology of power. I remember reading an interview with President Clinton soon after he had left office, in which he said he was more idealistic after having left office than before he went in.

And that really struck me, because it seems to be counter-intuitive, that once you get to this high level of politics you come across vested interests, you have to become more pragmatic, and just the ruthlessness of the whole thing.

When I read some of your ideas about Johnson, and when you were going over them right now, this same theme seemed to ring true again. There seems to be something, certainly not in all, that once they have accomplished this great power, they seem to, in a way, have some of this very idealistic drive in them. And I was wondering if you could tell us how and why you think this happens, or explore the idea a little bit more?

**Mr. Caro:** That's such a broad question, I don't think I can tell you how it happens in leaders. I think some leaders have it and some leaders don't. I happened to write about two men who wanted to change the world, so in some ways maybe they changed it for the worse and maybe some ways for the better. But they left a lasting impact. Some people come to power and they don't want to change the world, all they want is to be in power. Sometimes they want to use the power for something and sometimes they just want the power, each I think is different.

**Ms. Meckler:** Hi, I'm Laura Meckler, I'm a Nieman Fellow here this year, on leave from the AP in Washington.

My question is sort of a journalist's question, which is, is there a question that you would like to, knowing what you know now, ask Johnson, if you had the opportunity?

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** Well, there are a lot.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** I guess if I had one question I'd like to ask him about his relationship with his father, because I think it's the single saddest thing, sort of a defining thing in Johnson's life. And I've heard about it from his brother and one of his sisters, and maids who were in the house and all, but I really would like to hear about it from him.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause)



# THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR

## OCTOBER 29, 2003

**Mr. Jones:** We've got too much talent on this panel, and in this room, to not get going. I'm Alex Jones. I'm director of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. And I want to welcome you all to this second part of the Theodore White Lecture, a panel discussion which uses the lecture of the previous night as a point of departure but then branches into fields that are related, or even unrelated, but always focused on issues of press, politics and public policy. That covers a very broad swath, as you know.

I'd like to briefly introduce this panel which really needs very little introduction. On my left, your right, is David Broder who's the national political correspondent for *The Washington Post*, Pulitzer Prize winner, and able to both be the national political correspondent and a twice-weekly columnist, and earned the accolade from Richard Reeves as the most respected and influential political journalist in the country.

Sitting next to him is a rival for that kind of accolade. Dan Schorr is the senior news analyst for National Public Radio, before that a very long and distinguished career in broadcast journalism. He is one of the, maybe the only remaining one of Edward R. Murrow's original team who is still at the daily grind. I don't know whether you can call someone in broadcast journalism as sort of a long term, ink stained wretch but if there is such a thing, and I mean that as a compliment, Dan Schorr is one.

Next to him, of course, is Bob Caro, certainly the person who we have built this event around, with great pleasure. Those of you who missed his lecture last night missed one of the real, real high points of the Theodore White Lecture Series. It was an absolutely stunner, and we're going to be discussing, as I say, part of our program is to at least take as a point of departure, what Bob Caro was talking about, and then go on from there.

Bob Caro, I think, does not need an introduction aside from saying that his books on Robert Moses, and how his three-volume, soon to be four-volume, I say soon to be four-volume in a kind of relative sense, biography of Lyndon Johnson are among the most admired books of the last hundred years.

Next to me, on my right, is my colleague from *The New York Times*, and friend, Jill Abramson. Jill was recently named the managing editor of *The New York Times* for news coverage in a very unusual arrangement. The managing editor's job at *The New York Times*, in July, was divided into two, another guy got all the bad parts. He is in charge of all of the pay raise things, the administration. Jill gets to direct the coverage and tell us all what to think, on the front page of *The New York Times*, every day. Jill is a superb journalist. A reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* for many years,



Al Hunt, who many of you know, is also a very good friend of the Shorenstein Center, frames Jill as simply the best. That, I think, covers it.

Next to Jill is Ernie May, the Charles Warren Professor of History here at Harvard. He was Dean of Harvard College, Director of the Institute of Politics, a distinguished historian whose specialty has been American history in the 20th Century. He has written extensively on all manner of issues including Vietnam, and one of his books, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers*, seems particularly apt as a background for discussing some of the things that we're going to be talking about today. Ernie May, unfortunately, was not able to be at the lecture last night, but I think that it's fair to say that he has a pretty fair inkling of what Bob Caro has done over the years.

So with that, let's get going.

David Broder, let me begin with you. One of the things that Bob Caro

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**Mansfield, in contrast to Johnson, saw a Senate made up of a hundred equals and was very reluctant to impose his will, in any direct way, on one of his colleagues.**

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said last night was that the Senate worked, maybe for the first time, or only one of the very, very few times in that six year period when Lyndon Johnson was the man in charge, the master of the Senate. Is that a reasonable way of looking at a Senate that was truly responsive to one man? Is that what being a working Senate is in your perspective as someone who has observed it for a long time? How do you respond to the way Bob characterized Lyndon Johnson's tenure there?

**Mr. Broder:** Well, as I said to him last night, he got it exactly right. That was the time that I started working in Washington for *Congressional Quarterly*, and was spend-

ing a lot of time on the Hill, and his description of the way in which Johnson led the Senate was so precise that it was extraordinary to me that somebody who had not actually been in the gallery, to watch it, could get the gestures and the temperament and the techniques as precisely right as he did in the book.

It's not the only way to lead the Senate, and it may not be the only way in which the Senate can be productive. I was thinking about it because I just finished, well, about a month ago now, a book by a former colleague of mine, Don Oberdorfer, on Senator Mike Mansfield, Johnson's successor as the leader. And the observation that Bob made last night that power reveals, that it scrapes away whatever may have been hidden before but has always been there. It's certainly true, I think, about both those men.

Mansfield, in contrast to Johnson, saw a Senate made up of a hundred equals and was very reluctant to impose his will, in any direct way, on one of his colleagues. He kept saying, you know, you're here for the same

reason that I am, your voters sent you here, and I respect them and, therefore, I respect you. But it was in many respects, a productive time also in the Senate. It's something I look forward to in volume four—the conflict that Don Oberdorfer describes between Mansfield and Johnson over Vietnam revealed a strength of character on Mansfield's part that maybe was disguised a bit because of his willingness to defer to his colleagues in the Senate.

But the Senate is a funny institution. It worked extremely well in the years that Bob describes, for the reasons that he describes. But I'm not convinced that it's the only way the Senate can work.

**Mr. Jones:** Did it work very well because it passed legislation? Would you have described it as working as well if the Johnson agenda had been what Senator Russell actually thought it was?

**Mr. Broder:** No, and it wouldn't have had that moral and historic significance that Bob ascribes to it. There's a conflict which is described well in the book between the way in which Johnson and Rayburn led the Democrats in the Senate, and the House, and what the Democratic party thought it needed to do to prepare for the 1960 campaign. What Johnson and Rayburn gave to Kennedy in his campaign was an agenda of bills that had been worked through so that when Kennedy said we need to get the country moving again he had some meat to put on those bones. But because they worked out the kind of relationship that they had with Eisenhower was not helpful to the Democratic party, politically, in the short term.

**Mr. Caro:** I think that that's right. You use the phrase, I wished I had used it in my book, it was a moral Senate. In the things that Johnson did on civil rights, for example, but not just on civil rights, on the minimum wage, which he got increased. It hadn't been increased, I think, in eight years and he enlarged it to cover millions of other workers. He got the first large, low income housing program for the poor, first increase in disability benefits.

In that sense, the Senate was not just a Senate of ingenuity and creativity, but it had a moral force which was lacking from the Eisenhower White House. I was following it in the newspapers but the more you get into the Eisenhower White House and civil rights, the more you see how reluctant the president then was to take the leadership in that.

I think one big thing that the Senate did then, which it hasn't done very much in this century, is create its own legislation on a number of things, civil rights being one of them, and a number of others are mentioned in the book, they would take an administration bill and still call it the administration bill, but they would rewrite it so thoroughly that it was, in effect, a Senate bill, a Lyndon Johnson bill, and that is what was passed.

One thing that I didn't mention last night was how the Senate saved America, and I think, I don't know how you feel about this. When the Bricker Amendment was introduced, which would have really hamstrung the president's role in foreign policy. (No one, today, is really aware how

close the Senate came to passing that, how impossible it seemed to defeat it.) When Johnson goes back to the ranch on the Pedernales to try to find a way to defeat the Bricker Amendment, it seems impossible to defeat it. I think he does by one vote.

**Mr. Broder:** You should tell them what the Bricker Amendment was—the young people don't know about the Bricker Amendment.

**Mr. Caro:** If I describe the Bricker Amendment to you, accurately, you're not going to believe it. The idea was that the president had to have the complete consent of the Congress to do anything in foreign affairs. But if you read the Bricker Amendment, it literally says that they needed the individual consent of all 48 states, and it was introduced by Republican conservatives in the Midwest who were determined, that, I think, they didn't really want to do that, that was just the wording of it. But the wording was so strong that it would have hamstrung the president completely in foreign policy. And I think once that had been passed it would have been very difficult to get it unpassed because the reactionary isolationist sentiment in the United States in the early 1950s was very strong. Johnson manages to defeat this by a single vote and it's a great example, I used the words legislative power last night, you almost feel it's legislative genius, that no one else could have defeated that amendment.

**Mr. Jones:** One of the things about this panel that I value, in fact this room, with a few young exceptions, is that every one of us has, in some sense, known Lyndon Johnson. In some cases, many cases, people in this room knew him personally, and knew him well.

Let me ask you, Dan Schorr, you began doing your reporting during the time of the McCarthy hearings.

**Mr. Schorr:** Correct.

**Mr. Jones:** You went through the rise of Lyndon Johnson, as a reporter, and then the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. When you hear the account that Bob Caro gave last night—

**Mr. Schorr:** Even the vice presidency.

**Mr. Jones:** That too. No, use the large one. These small mics are for recording.

**Mr. Schorr:** Well, what would I know about microphones?

(Laughter)

**Mr. Jones:** I want you to react and give your own impressions of the Lyndon Johnson that you knew and experienced as a journalist at that time, compared to what you heard last night.

**Mr. Schorr:** Okay, let me just leave behind a question that I wanted to put to Bob Caro.

When Johnson was in the Senate, the Senate became as important as the executive branch; when he was in the executive branch you turned around. It was as though he had the power and took it with him from one place to the other, where Johnson was there was a tendency for the power to reside; let me say, question mark. I just wanted to raise that as a possible

subject for discussion.

I first met Johnson, myself, actually, when he was vice president. I was in Berlin, and the communists started a wall, and President Kennedy sent the vice president to sort of hold the hands of the very, very nervous Germans there.

My very first experience with him, he had gone on a motorcade through the heart of Berlin, and then came back to the American Mission Headquarters there, and I said "Do you have time to talk Mr. Vice President?" He said, "not right now." He said, "I'm going to the PX now."

(Laughter)

**Mr. Schorr:** And then he said it's usually, you know, it's closed on late Saturday afternoon but they're keeping it open for me.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Schorr:** And you thought here was buried in this big, great powerful man was a little kid who wanted to buy the trinkets in a PX, and now that he was vice president and representing the president, he had the ability to keep the PX open a little bit longer.

The other distinct memory that I have of him was as president, and I was working for CBS at the time, and I did one story in which I indicated that there was a secret understanding being forged between President Johnson and Wilbur Mills, the powerful chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. Johnson needed a tax surcharge to help pay for the Vietnam war. Mills wanted some restrictive amendments to the Welfare Act, and they decided between them that would be the tradeoff. It could not have been with great pleasure that Johnson did that because it really undermined his whole approach to the poor people.

But I broke the story on "CBS Evening News" one evening and that night, at midnight, I got a call at home from somebody saying this is your president, Mr. Schorr. I just want you to know that you're one prize son-of-a-bitch.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Schorr:** And he hung up.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Schorr:** I'm not quite sure what my response would have been but I never got a chance to.

If I was in the receiving line at the White House, a lot of people shaking hands, he would stop when I got there and he'd say Dan, I've got some new polls here, and if I showed you these polls, which I'm not supposed to show you, I want you to know that the American people want me to do more and not less in Vietnam. And all you people who think that the Americans are against the war in Vietnam, you don't understand. I'm holding them back from going further.

Well, that was the kind of incident that you would have which gave me this sense of a person who, in spite of all the power he had as senator, as Senate Majority Leader, as President of the United States, somewhere,

there seemed to me, to be a little insecurity still. And again, I want to pose it more as a question than as a statement, he had certain insecurities still which he could only overcome by winning over, in one way or another,

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**. . . in spite of all the power he had as senator, as Senate Majority Leader, as President of the United States, there seemed to me, to be a little insecurity still. . . . which he could only overcome by winning over, in one way or another, the people he had to deal with.**

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the people he had to deal with. Call it coercion, call it cajoling, or some very odd combination of the two, I'd say?

**Mr. Caro:** Well, I think that's absolutely—. I'm taking notes—

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** —on what you and Mr. Broder say.

I'm really glad you brought that up because I think when you give a talk you always have to leave so much out, and the insecurity that Johnson had is such a dominant thing in his life. People don't understand what his boyhood was like, and the real reason they don't understand it is that he was ashamed of it, and concealed it, and sort of created a myth about his growing up that glosses over the reality of it. You know, he idolized his father, they lived on the Johnson ranch. But his father, while he was a wonderful rural legislator, he actually had the best explanation of the role of government, at least what I think the goal of government should be, that I've ever heard. He

said the role of government is to help people caught in the tentacles of circumstance. But while he was a wonderful legislator, and Lyndon used to follow him around, and go campaigning with him in the country, he was a

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**the role of government is to help people caught in the tentacles of circumstance.**

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terrible businessman and he went broke and in effect, bankrupt, although in Texas that word had a slightly different meaning with regard to ranchers. So they lose the Johnson Ranch, when Lyndon is 13, they have to move into a little house in Johnson City. And Johnson really lived the rest of his boyhood in fear that that house was going to be taken away from them by the bank also.

When people talk about the compassion he had, the understanding he had for poor people and poor people of color, it's because he had to do their jobs, the same kind of jobs that they did. The kids in Johnson City picked cotton. I've never done it, but it certainly sounds to me like the worst job in the world except for the job that he had for two years which was driving a

fresno. He worked on a road-grading gang before there was machinery, so mules pulled a thing called a fresno. You had two mules, or one mule pulling it. A fresno was a big slab of steel or iron, with a sharp front edge and it dug into the ground, and loosened the ground so that the men, the pickaxe men behind it, and the shovel men could scoop it up. Lyndon Johnson did what was called driving a fresno when he was 17 and 18 years old.

On top of the fresno are two handles, and you have to have a hand on each handle so you can push the edge of the fresno into the ground. You don't have a hand free for the reins of the mule so what you do is you loop the reins around your back, and knot them behind your back so that the driver of the fresno is, basically, if you want to think of it that way, in harness with the mule.

Now Johnson is too skinny. Although he's very tall, he's not a physically strong young man at that age, and his friends working with him said he just wasn't strong enough to do that but he did it for quite a long period of time. His whole boyhood was a really, I use the word poignant because I can't think of a better one, it's just a terrible story. I mean there were insecurities, but what I got out of the PX story was this note almost of boastfulness, they're keeping it open just for me.

**Mr. Schorr:** Exactly.

**Mr. Caro:** I don't know if that's, in conversation I might say that, I don't know if I'd say it in the book. But he always felt he had to boast about his power and I think it all stems, everything seems to go back, in a way, to that boyhood that he had.

**Mr. Jones:** Ernie May, you were not able to be there last night but Bob talked about Lyndon Johnson in the Senate. He's saving his lectures on Lyndon Johnson in the White House for a later date. But given the situation we're in now where President Bush, this morning, sounding defensive in the press conference that he gave yesterday, almost like a Lyndon Johnson in the Vietnam era. I wonder if you, yourself, would give us some sort of sense of how you see this Johnson who was the master of the Senate, became vice president in an almost invisible, passive role and the suddenly became president with these difficulties of Vietnam, and also the huge successes of the Civil Rights Act.

**Mr. May:** I don't mean to duck your question but I want to pick up a couple of things that were said earlier.

**Mr. Jones:** Okay, go ahead.

**Mr. May:** First of all, and I think I probably met Lyndon Johnson before anybody else in the room. I grew up in Fort Worth, Texas and I met him in his first senatorial campaign. I was a tot and the thing I remember about him were the huge hands, my sense of that. When Kennedy died in 1963 I was out at the Behavioral Sciences Center at Stanford and I was doing an index for a textbook on the history of the United States that I'd written the year before. And one of the things that struck me was looking at that, I

had more entries in the index for Lyndon Johnson than I did for John Kennedy, and it was largely because of the things you described in such wonderful detail in your *Master of the Senate* book. He was such a really dominating figure, partly also because of the extent to which Eisenhower deliberately kept pertinent information behind the curtain.

Chiefly, I wanted to pick up David Broder's point about power migrating. Also, I'm one of the general editors of this series which will ultimately be 40 volumes of the transcripts of presidential tapes, and we've published three volumes of Kennedy tapes last year, and next year we will publish the first three volumes of Johnson tapes which go up through January '64. So, I've listened to these two presidents being president. And Johnson, you

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you hear Kennedy  
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listening to people,  
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can follow on those tapes the kind of thing that you described him doing in the Senate, doing the same thing as president. He's on the phone all the time, sometimes eight hours a day he's on the phone talking to people, and it's very carefully orchestrated. The sequence of people, he called somebody, he appears to ask their opinion or he knows what it's going to be. He gets them to say something, then he calls somebody else and he says the first caller told me this, how do you react to it, and it builds up. And it's just wonderful, it produces the results that he clearly wants. He gets all kinds of things done in that period when he's just become president.

**Mr. Jones:** Would you be a little more specific or give us an example of what you're talking about, for instance.

**Mr. May:** Well, Johnson has an appropriation act, and there is a supplemental appropriation act which is threatened, and he takes it that it's going to be a test of whether he can lead or not. So he's there, day after day, getting people, talking to people who are going to—it's the same kind of thing he was doing because he was talking to people on the Hill, for the most part, but he stretches it outside. There are a whole series of pieces of legislation, none of them in that

period really terribly important but all symbolic, he works very hard at that.

Now the contrast with Kennedy is quite sharp because in the Kennedy tapes you hear Kennedy primarily concerned about what choice he's going



to make. So he's listening to people, he's getting a debate going, and he's making a decision about what position he's going to take. You don't get any evidence in these tapes, or much evidence in these tapes, that Johnson is consulting anybody, that he seems to be thinking to himself but he's concerned with getting things done. He's an operator, actor, somebody who's using power. It's quite a striking contrast between those two and I think it fortifies the point that you make in the *Master of the Senate*, and that David was making about the extent to which he really exercised power. He loved it and he loved to make things happen.

**Mr. Jones:** Let's leave the Vietnam issue aside for the moment because this raises a very interesting question based on something that you said last night, Bob, and I'd love to get the response, especially the people who were there during the Johnson and Kennedy Administrations.

You said last night, Bob, effectively, that the best thing that probably could have happened would have been for Lyndon Johnson to stay in the Senate. I don't know whether you meant that or maybe I inferred something, but that that was where he would have been, he would have not had the responsibility for Vietnam. He would not, of course, have had the same kind of power. Imagine, if you will, that in 1960 Lyndon Johnson was not invited by Jack Kennedy to be his vice president. What would have happened? Imagine it. I mean I know it's hypothetical, but I think it's really fascinating to attach Johnson as still the Senate leader in an administration with a Democratic president that had not chosen him, and who may or may not have been his friend afterwards.

**Mr. Caro:** I just wanted to say, I may have said it wrong in the lecture. I didn't mean that it would have been better if he never became president. I was talking in terms of his personal happiness.

**Mr. Jones:** I understand.

**Mr. Caro:** That those were the happiest years. His presidency, he was not, well I'm not done with the research, it was not a time of similar happiness. You saw in the Senate a guy who really felt that he was in control, he knew every nuance of it. There's a wonderful description of Johnson standing at his desk in the Senate. David Broder was there, and he reminded me that Johnson used to direct the votes. If he wanted the votes to go faster he'd put his arm up over his head at the majority leader, and go like this, and the clerk would call the roll faster. I'll see if I can remember this, because it's better than anything I wrote. He described him standing there,

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**. . . Johnson used to direct the votes. If he wanted the votes to go faster he'd put his arm up over his head at the majority leader, and go like this, and the clerk would call the roll faster.**

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he said he'd signal the roll calls faster and slower, signal, the door would open and two more guys would run in, and my God, running the world, power enveloped him. You never have that quite sense of security as president, that's what I meant by that.

**Mr. Jones:** Would he have been able to maintain that if he had not, in the Kennedy Administration?

**Mr. Caro:** That's a very interesting question. I'm not sure I've come to a conclusion myself. It would have been difficult. I don't know what the people who were there felt about it. One thing that would have complicated things was his relationship with Robert Kennedy, which was a relationship of real hostility.

You know Johnson and Jack, President Kennedy, there was sort of a grudging respect, each for the other. That was not the case with Robert Kennedy, and I think he would have had real problems. I think that that's one of the considerations that made him accept the vice presidency. There were many considerations. He thought with a Democratic president the Congress would no longer be setting the party's agenda. He would just be sort of an errand boy. He was always aware of Joe Robinson, the Senate leader under Franklin Roosevelt, who was regarded as a great Senate leader. Johnson always felt that to some extent Robinson was only effective when Franklin Roosevelt was behind him.

**Mr. Jones:** One of the things that Ernie raised is the issue of how Lyndon Johnson made up his mind. That was an interesting point, Ernie, your impression that Kennedy consulted but Johnson already had a fully formed agenda. You mentioned last night that the woman that he had, Alice, the woman he had the relationship with was a critical, political advisor. Did he really have other advisors or how did he make up his mind on these things?

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**Mr. Caro:** When you talk, Professor, about Johnson on the telephone making his calls, one after the other, it's just fascinating

what he was doing. Let's say he had 20 people that he was going to call about some wage bill. He had labor leaders, he had business leaders, he had political leaders. All he wanted to know was if the response was what he expected it to be. If the labor leader said what he thought the labor leader should be saying in response to this legislation, he would quickly get off and go on to the next call. Only when he heard something that he didn't expect, did he think there was something he hadn't taken into account and have a long conversation with the person.

You know that's a real kind of a genius and Johnson had this unique ability, I use the words in reading men, he very seldom read books but he certainly could read men, and he knew what to expect from each one, and

if they didn't give it to him, then he would think there's something in this legislation I haven't taken into account. That was his telephone polling technique if you want to call it that.

**Mr. Jones:** Was the antipathy with Robert Kennedy because they were too much alike in terms of their manipulative will to power?

**Mr. Caro:** Alex, I'm going to take a pass on that. No, I'll tell you why honestly. In the first place I'm not done with my research on that so I really haven't reached a conclusion. But in the second place, if I tell, if I go into the story in great detail now it's not going to come out as well.

**Mr. Jones:** I'll wait.

Jill, you have been in Washington, and now New York, for many seasons. You heard the description of the Lyndon Johnson Senate versus now, the Senate that we've had for the last years, do you see it in the same way Bob Caro described it, as a Senate that worked and now a Senate that doesn't? What is your take on all this?

**Ms. Abramson:** Yes, I agree with that template for the Senate under Johnson. I think one of the transforming events that's changed it so much, and changed politics so much, is the role of television and the burgeoning power of the press as another player in the power game in Washington.

I think Bob didn't have a chance to cover this territory in the lecture but one of the fascinating parts of *Master of the Senate* is how he shows how press savvy Lyndon Johnson was. Really, from the moment he came to the Senate, he realizes that hearings provide a platform to attract press attention, and that oversight committees that have the power to carry on high profile investigations, the kind that have now exploded in modern Washington, were also a magnet for press attention.

I was hoping that I could entice Bob to also tell the story of how Johnson intervened when one of his constituents, a Hispanic soldier, was killed, and Johnson began championing that effort to have him buried at Arlington, which in turn attracted what would be today a kind of feeding frenzy of press attention, and how he may have learned that too much of a good thing is too much.

**Mr. Caro:** I'm glad you asked about that. People are always asking me, you know, how do I know that his compassion, his desire to help poor

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people of color was real. For those of you who haven't read the book, and the test isn't until Tuesday—

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** In 1949, he's hardly gotten to the Senate when he learns that a little town in Texas has refused to use the funeral home to bury a Mexican-American soldier who was killed in the Philippines. You know there are scenes where you really feel the real Lyndon Johnson comes through. The widow of the soldier complains to the American GI Forum in Corpus Christi, and the director, a man named Hector Garcia, sends a telegram to the president and 17 senators and representatives; none of them respond except Johnson.

We know what happens in this scene because two people that I spoke to a lot, John Connolly and Walter Jenkins, were present, and actually three, there was Secretary Mary Rather. When the telegram was opened neither Connolly nor Jenkins could remember which one opened it but they hand it to Johnson and in an instant he says: "By God we'll bury him at Arlington."

Now Connolly said to me, he said that was instinctive, that was from the heart, that was outrage. That was his first gesture, that was his first feeling. And of course, being Lyndon Johnson he knew the perfect gesture, that that's the way to do it.

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But what Jill is talking about is that not long after he does this he realizes that it's going to have real, really serious political consequences for him in Texas. And while he goes through with the ceremony, he never recants on that, he takes a lot of pains to make sure that the funeral will have as low a profile as possible. He pulled back. It wasn't until compassion and ambition were pointing in the same direction that the power that was underneath was really

revealed fully at last. But what was underneath, to me, is undeniable, that first reaction is what was underneath.

**Mr. Jones:** Let me ask David Broder and Dan Schorr to address something. The period of Lyndon Johnson's Senate mastery was also a time when the media in Washington was much more circumspect in its coverage. Since then we've had Vietnam and Watergate, and now we seem to have evolved into something that is sort of a post confrontational kind of coverage. I don't know whether that's a fair way to characterize it, but certainly in the era of spin, and the era of more politically oriented coverage in terms of partisanship, where are we now in terms of coverage of institutions and individuals like Lyndon Johnson, a man of great power at the

moment? If there was a Lyndon Johnson in the Senate now how would that person be covered, David Broder?

**Mr. Broder:** The pattern of coverage in the Senate is not radically different. I think where you find a radically different pattern now is probably at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, at the White House. The Senate leaders are still routinely accessible, almost on a daily basis, to the Senate reporters, and both Senator Frist and Senator Daschle are quite skilled in using those dugouts, as they call them, to set the press agenda for the day in terms of coverage, much as they set the legislative agenda for the day.

And the Senate reporters, particularly those like Helen Dewar at the *Post*, who've been there as long as any senator almost, now, understand the rhythms of the institution and can translate, very accurately I think, for the public.

What's changed, of course, is television which has moved away from covering the Congress. The hearings, the kinds of things that Johnson exploited are only rarely now covered by television, even cable doesn't do much with routine Senate hearings on legislation. So it takes a much higher threshold now to get through to the television, for anybody in Congress, to get through to the television audience which is probably the critical audience.

Can I sneak in one quick story? I was listening to the conversation about Johnson as Senate leader and then Johnson as president. Most of my insights into Lyndon Johnson came from Jim Rowe, his great friend. And for the young people Jim Rowe was a man who came out of Montana, Harvard Law School, as a young man came to work on Franklin Roosevelt's staff, and then became part of that whole New Deal generation, a great friend, particularly of Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey.

And I had the advantage of him having his law office one block from *The Washington Post*, and he would conduct these street corner seminars for which I was immensely grateful, and I owe him probably as much as any single person about trying to understand politics.

But Jim Rowe told one story that is relevant to this discussion. He said, you know when I go to meet the Almighty, he says to me, James, you have lived a good life and I am going to reward you. You can have one amendment to the Constitution of the United States. He said, David, do you know what my amendment would be? I said no, and he said it would be very simple, he said no senator of the United States shall be eligible for the office of president.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Broder:** And I thought coming from a man who was a great friend of both Johnson and Humphrey, I thought that was striking. But his point

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was the Senate, that's a different set of skills entirely from what it takes to be an effective president.

**Mr. Caro:** Could I just, that's such an incisive point, and one other thing, it is such a difference between, from what's required to be a Senate leader and a president. One of Lyndon Johnson's favorite expressions as Senate leader was: it's not the job of a politician to go around saying principled things. His point, of course, was that things had to be done behind closed doors, that's how you got things done, and to a degree that's correct in the Senate, to a degree.

It's the opposite of correct as president. One of the jobs as president is to rally the country, to set a moral tone, moral tone is not the right phrase, but to rally the country behind his policies, to provide a different type of leadership. And it's one of the things that I have to examine about why Lyndon Johnson's presidency failed in some respects, and succeeded so much in some respects.

**Mr. Jones:** Dan, do you want to take on the issue of the evolving Senate coverage, political coverage, in the sense of accountability especially.

**Mr. Schorr:** I would use the word press and journalism, I think, very lightly. I think there's been a profound change in the nature of the role played by the news media today because people in the Congress, and people in the White House have become very adept at manipulating the news media to their own advantage. I mean we've had an example with President Bush last week being a little tired and upset with the press in Washington; he went out and gave a series of interviews to local media all over the country.

Also, it has been my impression that what reporters have to say in analyzing or reporting what our politicians do is much less important than what they do when they are on television themselves. Television is not only a medium of information for reporters, it is, and much more so, a medium through which our leaders can transmit what they want to.

Johnson, I thought, was never terribly good at that. I thought that Johnson's speeches, I think that he, himself, felt somehow that he was not able to transmit what he wanted to transmit, and apparently there were long considerations given every time he had an important speech to make, even though the speeches were sometimes quite remarkable speeches. I have a sense, and again, everything ends up as a question for Bob Caro, as to whether he seemed a little ill at ease with that medium in spite of the twenty-odd television monitors that he maintained in his office.

**Mr. Jones:** Bob?

**Mr. Caro:** Well, I think he was ill at ease on television, and he was, although, you know, you have to say, and I have to, with Johnson there's always a but. Of all the speeches of the 20th century, I don't think many are greater than the speech he gave in 1965 where he adopted the civil rights slogan as his own and said we shall overcome. That is one of the great speeches of the 20th century. Of all the indications of its greatness is

that Martin Luther King is then down in the living room listening to it, he's in Selma, Alabama where they have no idea that they're going to win. Of course, you hear it now and you say, well of course they're going to win. Well, they might not have won. They didn't know what the president was going to do, and when Johnson says we shall overcome, Martin Luther King starts to cry.

Having said that, however, when you look at Johnson's traits, you know I'm not nearly done with the research on this volume so I'm not sure of my answers to these things. But it's indisputable, from what we know from his assistants and all, that he was very ill at ease on television, he felt he always looked bad on television.

**Mr. Jones:** Ernie May, I want to go back to the question I asked you originally. The words credibility gap were mentioned, that originated in the Johnson presidency. How do you see that era compared with the one that we are living through right now?

**Mr. May:** There's increasing resemblance, it seems to me, from day to day. Whether it actually turns out to look very similar in the end is hard to tell because it's early days. And certainly the performance of the administration, in stressing the good side of what's going on in Iraq, is eerily like what people were trying to do with regard to Vietnam, actually the Kennedy Administration as well as in the Johnson Administration.

And this theme that the press doesn't get it right, and they do the negative side. The question of whether the substance underneath will turn out to be as crumbly as was true in Vietnam, it's hard to tell, but part of the problem with the credibility gap then was that it was real. When people, even people in the administration, tried to test the line that was being taken about Vietnam, it just didn't turn out to hold up.

I remember one of Kissinger's assistants who was trying to get some numbers, like Rumsfeld's matrix, before Kissinger was trying to get some numbers on Vietnam, and one of his assistants went out and was given a briefing by a colonel in the South Vietnamese army. And he put some numbers up on the blackboard and Kissinger's assistant said but those aren't the numbers we have in Washington, and the Vietnamese erased them and said, what numbers would you like?

(Laughter)

**Mr. May:** I'm not sure yet whether the news that's being given about Iraq is invented to the extent that news about Vietnam was.

**Mr. Jones:** Jill, I know you can't compare being under the pressure that *The New York Times* was during the Vietnam War, but you are one of the critical news executives in the world when it comes to either challenging or vetting the president's view of, and the administration's view of what's going on in Iraq.

If you would take us inside that process, to the extent you can, about how you deal with trying to find the reality, or what you perceive to be

*The New York Times'* responsibility when you have a president saying that the media's getting it all wrong, and you have on the other hand a lot of people who believe that the media has been far too gentle in their treatment of George Bush.

**Ms. Abramson:** Well, I think something to take into account that's critical as a backdrop to answering the question is that in many ways, I think, the '60s and the mentality of the '60s was shaped by two bookends and that really, the JFK assassination which brought Johnson to the presidency in such unusual circumstances, and then President Nixon's resignation. That in a way the skepticism that the president, and that Washington, would perpetuate lies was a very shocking thing. And you know, I think before the Johnson presidency, and then definitely the years of Nixon's presidency, most people in the public, and even in the media, gave the president the benefit of the doubt. The idea that lies would be purposely told was something very new and quite shocking.

And that by the end of the arc I'm talking about, by the point that President Nixon resigned, a kind of extreme skepticism, bordering on cynicism, has begun to set in, to certainly journalism, in the way it views the presidency. I first came to Washington in 1985. I've covered presidential elections going back to '76 when I was a student here at Harvard, and it's ebbed and it's come back. Jimmy Carter being elected after Nixon. Part of that was trying to recapture this—remember his slogan? "I will never lie to you." But you know, the press, especially in the tradition of Watergate, investigative reporting, Woodward/Bernstein has been, I think, much more aggressively questioning of the official pronouncements of the government.

The press was criticized a bit during Reagan's presidency for losing some of that aggressiveness. And certainly, I think, after 9/11 those kinds of questions have intensified, of whether in some kind of mode of patriotism, or fear of a very secretive White House, that gives so little access, that the press has been tamed somewhat. I think that that, again, when I was talking about the ebbing and flowing of aggressiveness, and then that receding a bit, I think aggressiveness is coming back.

But I think the short answer is that the lies about Vietnam, the publishing of *The Pentagon Papers*, changed journalism and its acceptance of official pronouncements from Washington in a forever kind of sense. That is probably the most profound media event, vis-à-vis how journalists cover Washington that happened in my lifetime.

**Mr. Jones:** I invite those of you at the table, and those of you in the audience, to offer questions or comments, and the floor is open.

Joe?

**Mr. Nye:** I found this a fascinating discussion and I want to go back to this idea of the portability of power, because I don't think we really teased that out adequately. Power depends on context. Something that's powerful in one context, not another. I watched that when I was in government. You



have somebody who has been an excellent, powerful businessman or academic go into government and be not very good, and vice versa.

And the interesting thing, I think, about *Master of the Senate*, which is a brilliant book, is how much Johnson's power depends on that context.

The question I'd like to ask is what happened when he goes to the vice presidency, which is really powerless institutionally. Is it really true to say that there was portability of power? I mean there is that period between the Senate and the presidency, what happens there to Johnson's power?

And then second, when he goes to the presidency, as I think the discussion pointed out, there were different types of skills, partly the same legislative skills like getting on the phone, rounding up the votes. That's basically portable, but that ability to rally a country with a general message seems to be quite different, and that's not portable. So the extent that power and leadership depend very heavily on context, it would be very interesting if you'd say a little bit more about how portable was Johnson's power.

**Mr. Caro:** Let me just say on that, you know, I'm in the process of working on that and my ideas are changing. I'll tell you one thing that's happened, as some of you know because *The New York Times* reported it, the Johnson Library had kept closed, they just said they didn't have enough manpower to open it but I think it was largely because of me, they had kept closed a large number of boxes, a lot of his papers that I needed and many of them relate to the vice presidency. Now that library has a new director and she's opening these papers as fast as they can open them.

I'll just say, because there are a lot of journalists here, it's just a thrilling thing because they were literally working one day ahead of me the last time we were down there in June. Before a file folder can be opened they have to be reviewed by an archivist on a number of grounds, you know, national security, embarrass or harass a living person, and there are a number of other grounds. So when an archivist opens a file she writes the date it's opened, whatever, June 6, 2003, just in handwriting right at the top of that file folder. And they would deliver them to my desk where I do the work down there, these file folders, and they might, the file folder might say opened June 6, 2003, I was looking at it June 7, 2003. These things hadn't really been opened or seen by anyone in forty, however many years that is. And what I'm relating it to is it's changing my view of Johnson. It just seems like every day that I was down there I learned something that I had thought I knew was not right.

I think the picture of Johnson in the vice presidency is going to be more complicated than we thought in the past, although you never know what the other boxes are going to reveal. But it's certainly true, you know, he had this boastful, he said, when someone said you won't have any power as vice president if you leave the Senate, he said power is where power goes, you know, meaning he could take it anywhere. He was certainly

wrong in that, and the time of his vice presidency was really a time of great humiliation for him.

Dan Schorr, you and David were in Washington. I don't know if you would see him during this, I'm going to have to come and ask you all about that.

**Mr. Schorr:** I think that is absolutely right, and I think that Johnson, during that period, felt humiliated, felt badly used. Apparently President Kennedy didn't like him very much and they shared that lack of respect for each other.

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But I forget who it was who said to me during that era that Johnson acts as though he's a man for all funerals.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Jones:** Now you see how a book is done.

David, do you have a comment you want to make about this?

**Mr. Broder:** No, I can't top that one.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Nye:** Alex, just to finish the point, I think what we hear, then, is power is not portable.

**Mr. Caro:** Certain aspects of it are. You know, it's a terrific question, you could write a whole book just to try to answer that.

Johnson's presidency has dark aspects and bright aspects. But in getting these civil rights and Great Society bills through he shows, as you said, in the rallying of the votes, which is not a nothing, it's a huge thing. He really does have this same savage determination, he is going to get these bills through. So in that respect power is the same.

His uses of power, whether or not he actually said, and I'm afraid I'm beginning to believe that although it's a great quote he didn't really say it to Frank Church, if you want a dam go to Walter Lipmann.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** He really could use the levers of power but the power of the presidency is a moral power, a bully pulpit. You have to rally people. Johnson was really unsuited to do that.

**Mr. Bator:** I'd like to tell you a couple of stories about the vice presidency. I worked for Johnson for three and a half years as deputy national security advisor, and during the last two years after Bundy left, the job was basically split so I really was working for him, I was his principal staff person on American/European relations, Soviet relations and on foreign economics.

The vice presidency stories that I would like to tell you with respect to his perception of what had happened to his power. Typically he would break the day by going back to the mansion, putting on his pajamas and

sleeping for about 40–45 minutes, somewhere in the middle of the day. It doubled his sort of working energy following that.

The occasion I want to report about is when he was especially sort of hyper and the words were coming out and Jack Valenti, who was about half his size, started trying to nudge him in the direction of the mansion, so that he would stop and go to sleep. He looked down on Jack, and said, “Listen boy, if the vice presidency didn’t kill me, nothing will kill me.”

(Laughter)

**Mr. Bator:** The other story which is, as historical truth I wouldn’t vouch for it. Sunday evening, March 31, when he said that he wouldn’t run and pulled himself out on TV, and I was scheduled to go to Washington on Monday, Tuesday for something, and I called up Tom Johnson at the White House, his appointment secretary, and said Tom, I’d like to go in and have five minutes with the boss, I’d just like to shake his hand. And I did get in there on Tuesday. It turned out to be not five minutes. I think, on the record, I would want to look at this, but certainly my own perception is that I was in there about 45 minutes. It was a soliloquy.

And one of the things he got into was why he accepted the job of vice president. He said it was a nothing job. He said Lady Bird told me not to do it. Sam Rayburn told me not to do it. Dick Russell told me not to do it. Why did I take that job? He said there was just one reason. He said I didn’t think that Jack could make it on his own without my being on the ticket and I wasn’t going to be responsible for making Richard Nixon President of the United States, he hated Nixon.

One of the clichés about Lyndon Johnson that I think is simply contrary to fact is that he was no good at foreign policy. He was a genius at the domestic stuff but no good at foreign policy and of course, the standard backup for that view is Vietnam.

Johnson’s performance, and it was his personal performance, in managing alliance politics during the 1960s, the second half of the ’60s, a very turbulent and difficult time of transition was really extraordinary. In trying to think about what made him so good at this, and good at this in the face of very bad advice from all his senior advisors, he systematically would overrule Rusk, Ball, Dean Acheson, John McCloy on a whole range of those issues and in each case, I believe, judged by the outcome, he was right.

He was a very majority leader-like president, Mac Bundy once said about him. And many historians interpret that he was sort of negotiating

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with cabinet offices and all that, that's nonsense. But he did, I think, think of Harold Wilson and Erhart in Germany, and de Gaulle, and even Brezhnev and Kosygin, the way he had fought as Senate leader about Dirksen, and Long, and Wilbur Mills. They were potentates out there that he had to deal with and he thought of that part of foreign policy as a bargaining game, and he did it extraordinarily by taking account of what their needs were, their problems were, in making trades in all sorts of a very broad range of issues. And I think, at least in that respect, the Senate experience, is what made him so extraordinarily successful.

One last comment then I will stop, Alex.

People usually think of the Johnson presidency and break it into two. Vietnam was a disaster, it was; voting rights, Medicare, the domestic program, extraordinary. Changed the country in both respects. Very few people have looked at the interconnection between those two.

He thought, basically, that the Fair Deal was small potatoes and as he used to say, he said Jack Kennedy couldn't get Congress to pass the time of day. He thought he had a two year window to move on civil rights, poverty and all that. And the one thing that could damage that would be a major, public debate about Vietnam. A great debate would have ruined the chance for the Great Society program.

**Mr. Jones:** Bob, do you want to respond to that?

**Mr. Caro:** No, because I haven't done my work and I think there are people at this table who really know more about that.

**Mr. May:** Our absent colleague, Dick Neustadt, somewhere is the line that Johnson's problem in Vietnam was that he thought Ho Chi Minh was a sinner.

**Mr. Jones:** In context that's a very interesting way of putting it, as the guy he couldn't get to, in a way.

**Mr. Cogan:** Chuck Cogan, Kennedy School.

We still don't have an integrated picture of Johnson from your books. On the one hand you have this almost, in many respects, a loathsome personality. On the other hand this compassion on the black/white issue, which you all feel strongly about, and what you particularly seem to feel very strongly about. I think it was in *The New York Review of Books* that they noted as contrast between your earlier books on Johnson and *Master of the Senate*, the earlier book seeming like a hatchet job and then *Master of the Senate* bringing out his qualities as a Senator. And perhaps in this next volume we will get some sort of integrated picture which seems to be lacking in this mysterious figure.

**Mr. Caro:** Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way, Mr. Cogan. I don't regard my earlier books as hatchet jobs. I don't regard my picture of Lyndon Johnson as changing. I think the personality of Lyndon Johnson doesn't change. As I said before, I feel power reveals and we see what was underneath all along.

To me it may be that we're never going to have what you would call a completely integrated picture of Lyndon Johnson because it may be that he wasn't a completely integrated personality. Throughout his life you have these moments of compassion, and moments of ruthlessness, that you have great mood swings from one day, or even one hour to the other. But for me the personality of Lyndon Johnson, we were talking before with Dan about the insecurity that you see as president, those insecurities go all the way back to his boyhood. And to me that line of personality is quite striking even if it's not, in your phrase, integrated.

**Mr. Shorenstein:** Walter Shorenstein.

In looking at power, the power of money in politics and that Johnson was very envious of the Kennedy position that came with both power and an elitism that he didn't feel that he possessed, and how he used Arthur Krimm in connection with generating money for his political processes.

**Mr. Caro:** I'd love to talk about that although, again, that's in the presidency and I'm not done with my work. But you know, one of the things up here at the Kennedy School—in many academic circles there's always talk about the use of economic forces to bend the political process. With Johnson we see the use of these economic forces, again, going in a straight line, in my view, going all the way back to his first race for Congress.

But we don't have to, often they're taught in colleges in theoretical terms, as if you can't prove these things, as if they're very difficult to show students a relationship. Well I don't think that that's correct, and I think we can do it by saying that Lyndon Johnson did in 1940, and seeing it in black and white. In 1940 there is a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, it has existed for about 20 years, but it's a moribund institution, it doesn't distribute any funds and it doesn't really do anything.

Johnson, being a political genius, sees then what he sees later in the Senate, that he is the only link between these Texas contractors, at that time, in 1940, Brown and Root. They want power and influence in Washington and they're willing to pay to get it, in the form of campaign contributions. Johnson realizes that although Brown and Root, the Brown brothers are the most reactionary and conservative people you can imagine, that they will give to anyone to have power and influence. And he realizes that he knows all these liberal, northeastern congressman who need campaign contributions.

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Now in 1940 he's a junior member of the House of Representatives, he has no power, no authority whatsoever and he's terribly frustrated. What he does is he gets himself attached in almost an adjunct, informal connection with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and then tells Brown and Root to contribute to the committee, with the stipulation that he will give the money out.

That was the basis of his first toehold on national power because he's going to have power over other congressmen although he's a junior. Now the first person who told me about this was Jim Rowe's law partner, Tommy Corcoran, and you can see it in the Johnson Library, if I can take just a minute to go through this in detail because I think it's worth doing.

You can see in the Johnson Library that something happens in the month of October 1940, that before that Johnson is writing memos to senior representatives asking for a few minutes of their time to discuss one thing or another. But by November 1940, and December 1940, people are writing him saying Lyndon, can we have a few minutes of your time.

So I was then seeing Mr. Corcoran, one of the world's great fundraisers, one of the great fundraisers of history, regularly, and I said, what happened in that month? He used to call me kid for some reason, he said "money, kid, money." Then he said "but you're never going to be able to write about that kid." And I said "why?" He said "because you're never going to find anything in writing. And for many years I thought that he was correct. I was never going to be able to find anything in writing, so I wasn't really going to be able to go into this.

But then, really by chance and because I was trying to go through every box of Johnson's papers, there were only 362 boxes for the House of Representatives, a lot of them were form letters for constituents, you know. I suddenly, in a file folder that had not any label that had to do with money, I think it was called General-Unattached or something like that, you suddenly came across this telegram. I can still see it, it's on an old telegraph form, it was yellow to begin with, it's really yellow, and it's from George Brown, and it says, the exact words are in the first volume. But the first sentence is "Lyndon, the checks are on the way."

(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** And in the corner, it's in October of 1940, and in the corner there someone has written a reference to another file folder, so I called for that folder and in there I found the following thing: there are sheets of typewritten paper, I think John Connolly did the typing but I'm not sure, it could have been Walter Jenkins. There are three typed columns. The left column is the name of the congressman who asks for the money. In the second column is the amount of money he asked for. The third column is why he wants the money. Lyndon, if I could just buy one more round of ads. Lyndon, they're trying to steal the election, I need money for poll watchers.

Now those are typed columns. In the left hand margin, in Lyndon Johnson's handwriting, are little notations by every name, again, the exact things are in the first volume, I won't try to remember them exactly. He would write okay. If he was giving the guy, and, of course, the amounts were very small then, the amounts might be \$1,000 or \$1,500. Politics, the scale of money in politics, was different, he'd write okay. That meant that the guy was getting the money. I asked Connolly what these things meant. That meant that he would get the money, or if he was giving him just part of the money. He'd write okay, \$1,000, or okay, \$500. But then on other names he would write "no," he's not getting anything. And still, next to other names he would write "no, out." I asked John Connolly and Walter Jenkins what did "no-out" mean. That meant the guy was never going to get any money.

Now that is the use of economic power. I always felt that it's no longer necessary to try to teach that aspect of the use of economic power to bend the political process. It's no longer necessary to teach that only in generalities, because those sheets of paper, you can show exactly how the use of money was used to create power in the House of Representatives.

I've now talked so long I've forgotten your original question.

**Ms. Abramson:** Bob, can I jump in for a second, since money in politics, as some of you know, has been the focus of a lot of my journalism. And while you're absolutely right that the scale is immensely different now, what is fascinating is that the techniques, and even some of the players, remain the same in that George Brown, and Brown and Root, are brought to life very vividly in this book.

For those of you who don't know, Brown and Root is a subsidiary of guess what? Haliburton, the very politically connected, contracting-around-the-world firm that's now got one of the big, no-bid contracts to rebuild Iraq. So some of the players remain the same, and the techniques do too. Very vivid parts of *Master of the Senate* about money and politics involve Johnson actually going, and sometimes taking colleagues to, George Brown, who had this hunting preserve in the middle of Texas that Bob describes in this book as

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**. . . you can show exactly how the use of money was used to create power in the House of Representatives.**

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**That's exactly the same way that senators now raise money, although they spend infinitely more time doing it because they need infinitely more money.**

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a very palatial, very manly kind of retreat. Johnson would go and bring favored colleagues, of course he probably needed their votes for something. Brown would get access to them and they would get money from the visit. That's exactly the same way that senators now raise money, although they spend infinitely more time doing it because they need infinitely more money.

**Mr. Shorenstein:** To follow though on it, he utilized his resources in Texas, but once he discovered how much money he could get out of Hollywood through Arthur Krimm, who was president of United Artists, and Lew Wasserman, that added dimension to him on a national basis to generate a lot more money and a lot more power.

**Mr. Caro:** That's certainly right.

**Mr. Kalb:** Bob, I'd love to ask you about Lyndon Johnson and foreign policy, and I may be asking you a question that will invite another disclaimer on your part that you haven't finished the research yet, but let me try.

On the basis of the Johnson experience as Master of the Senate, and I'm trying to figure out his management of the Vietnam War, but in the '50s when he had that kind of power did he demonstrate an interest in foreign policy? Did he take advantage of that power to travel to Moscow, to go to the Middle East, to go to Taiwan and figure out something about China? To deal with the European question that Francis Bator was talking about before, that might, if I knew the answers to a lot of those questions, give us some insight as to how a political genius, as you have described him, could get himself into the mess that he did in the '60s when he would describe the Vietnam War as "that ugly bitch," and described the Great Society as "my beautiful lady." So he was aware of the contrast and yet inextricably he was drawn into the ugly bitch and he couldn't find a way out of it.

**Mr. Caro:** I'll try to answer that somewhat, because you're right. I'd like David to comment on it because he probably knows more about it. Johnson did do wonderful things in the area of foreign policy in the following way. Eisenhower, of course, as president, was an internationalist, but in the Senate the power was held by the old guard which is the midwest. You know we can hardly grasp the depth of their isolationism, their narrow-mindedness, and they had the power in the Senate.

Johnson, when Eisenhower becomes president, he has the political, genius is a word, I hate to use it, I know I've used it three or four times today, it's a hard to define word. But he sees things that nobody else sees. Everyone else thinks Eisenhower has won in this landslide. He's going to be so popular the Democratic party has no chance to come back for awhile. Johnson says, Johnson sees, no, we can use his popularity to bring the Democratic party back and we can do it in the area of foreign policy because the Democrats in the Senate can, if I persuade them in this and

unite them behind Eisenhower, we can be the party that is in foreign policy, the internationalists party. And he does that, and they do support Eisenhower, and over and over again it's Eisenhower and the Senate Democrats against the Republican old guard. That has really great significance, in my opinion, for the country because I do feel that the isolationists could have changed our foreign policy, they had enough power to do that in the 1950s.

So you say how does that relate to Vietnam? Well, there, you know, I haven't finished. I'll tell you one thing—Johnson did not, however, make a lot of trips. One of the things that's really striking about him as senator, and as a member of the House of Representatives, he does go on one inspection trip after VE Day, when he's still in the House. I hope I'm not making a mis-statement here, it's correct in the book. I don't think he made another foreign trip for many years after that, then he goes to a NATO meeting, I think in 1956, because Richard Russell is going and he wants to have time alone with Russell then.

I don't know to what extent what I'm saying is going to weigh against other factors. Johnson didn't do a lot of traveling. Of course as vice president he made a lot of trips, let me just say that, and he didn't do a lot of reading. You can learn about domestic policy if you don't read books a lot. You know it from your own eyes and what you're seeing and what you're feeling. It's a lot harder to learn about a country like Vietnam if you're not willing to read.

Now I don't know yet the extent of Johnson's reading, and books after his college days. He certainly, you're never going to be able to say what someone once told me, that he never read a book after college, you can't prove it. But he certainly read very, very, very few books. And I think when we think about what we know about the world, so much of it comes from books that I think his reluctance to read books is a factor that I have to consider, and traveling.

**Mr. Jones:** Was he a reader of newspapers?

**Mr. Caro:** Yes, he was an avid reader. He was one of the world's faster readers. Memos and newspapers, the Congressional Record, you know, he could go through the Congressional Record every morning like this, seeing what he wanted to see. However, he wanted all his memos to be one page. All executives, I suppose, want their memos to be one page or less, but Johnson got people to do it because they were afraid to cross him. There's something in the idea of trying to sum up a complicated issue in one page which is something that has to be thought about.

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**Mr. Bator:** Alex, he went through a pile of reading like this every night.

**Mr. Jones:** What was it, Francis?

**Mr. Bator:** Memoranda, every night. Next to his bed there was a pile of papers. In fact, if you wanted to play games you'd wait until the pile of papers had been put in there, then you'd go up to the bedroom and put your papers, second, or third, or fourth. Many times, Bob Caro, they were a lot longer than one page. He absorbed when he became interested, his capacity to absorb material and information was really quite extraordinary.

**Mr. Jones:** David, did you have a comment?

**Mr. Broder:** Yes, briefly, I have a half-baked theory about why he got into such trouble in Vietnam.

One of the things that is well documented in Bob's work is the pattern of Johnson's political life was to deal with constituencies through their

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leaders. Whoever had a constituency with somebody who was on his screen, and he basically didn't challenge the legitimacy of anybody who had gained a constituency. He was willing to deal with them in a non-judgmental, almost amoral way. If this person has a constituency that has some significance I will deal with that leader.

I think in Vietnam, and this comes through very strongly in Oberdorfer's book about Mansfield, Johnson kept looking for that leader that he could deal with and you get this succession of people, you know, big men and people that we've forgotten about, that one after another come through there after the coup that the Kennedys arranged. And he never finds a leader that he can really deal with there, and he was, as I suppose any president would have been, totally at a loss as to how to deal with the Vietnamese people and such.

**Mr. Schorr:** I just want to add one word to that. It is true, I think, that President Johnson, Senator Johnson never was really deep into understanding foreign affairs. And if you're not deep into understanding, and don't read books, and don't really know what's going on, you become prey to those who can give you very simplified ideas.

It was a simplified idea that was carried over from the Kennedy Administration, and that was in the phrase "no more Munichs." A terrible mistake had been made before World War II in that an arrangement had been made for peace in Munich but turned out to be a figment of somebody's imagination, and now we didn't stop the Nazis back then but we will stop the Communists now. That was a no more Munich syndrome, and I think that that was absorbed by Johnson who didn't exactly understand what was happening in Southeast Asia, didn't give a damn what was really happening in Southeast Asia but all the Rostows, and all the people who had

worked for Kennedy, the best and the brightest I guess, were still telling him, if they march into Vietnam the next thing you know they're going to be down in Australia.

**Mr. Jones:** No more Munichs is something we've heard recently.

Jill, do we know whether the president we have now is a reader of books?

(Laughter)

**Ms. Abramson:** Well, you know, if you believe the Karl Rove version of history, he's a reader of books. But you know, Professor May used the term eerie similarities a minute ago. And as I was listening to David and Dan talk about lack of reading, a kind of basic incuriosity about foreign affairs and therefore, an attraction to simplistic bromides about how to solve world crises, certainly the lightbulb going off in my mind over here is that that's eerily similar to President Bush with whom I went on one foreign trip.

About a year ago I went with him to Europe and to Russia. And I have never seen a president less curious about getting out, seeing these countries, almost all of them he'd never been to before. The low point definitely came in St. Petersburg when President Putin and his wife made a desperate attempt to show President Bush the treasures in the Hermitage, and then took them to the ballet that night. And you know, Bush did about a 10-minute circuit in this giant museum full of Rembrandts and two da Vincis that he never bothered to see.

And by the time we got to Paris he was so cranky. Some of you will recall that was the famous press conference in which he became irritated at an American reporter for speaking French to him at a press conference in France.

So, there are definitely some similarities there and I do think that despite the White House's attempt to portray President Bush as a deep reader, and they periodically will tell us what books he is reading. I'm sure he does read some books but he is not the kind of deep reader about the world that President Kennedy was, or even that President Clinton was.

**Ms. Hume:** I'm Ellen Hume.

Just to follow up on the question Alex posed earlier to Jill, I think this is a good moment.

To what extent is *The New York Times* being singled out or pressured by the Bush Administration to back-off or to play nice? What's happening to the press corps these days? We hear a lot of rumors but we don't really know what's happening.

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**Ms. Abramson:** Yes, I don't think the *Times* is being singled out. And also to, in part, redirect your question, because it's interesting in light of the history of Johnson in Vietnam when the *Times* was singled out for being late to the anti-war sentiment rising in the country and particularly Scotty Reston, who had the job as Washington Bureau Chief for a very long time, and was a very powerful figure in Washington, himself, during the Johnson years.

He, in particular, having become then a columnist too, was broadly criticized for being immensely late to come to a view of the war that was anti-war. And in part, again, I think it's because, when you think about how the times were then where, beginning with FDR who granted quite a bit of access to the White House press corps, the boys would come in and chat with him. That kind of ends with the Kennedy assassination in many ways.

But Reston was one of the few journalists who continued, during Johnson's presidency, to enjoy access, to come into the White House to speak to the president about policy, to be curried in a way. And that just doesn't happen any more at all which I think, in part, has somewhat freed up the leading political White House reporters to write more freely. But the very lack of access means the curtain is drawn so tightly, that they see so little with their own eyes, with which to really share keen analysis of what's really going on there.

And I don't think the *Times* is being singled out. I think right now the White House may, in fact, even loath Mr. Broder's *Washington Post* more than us because one of their White House reporters in particular is loathed for writing with what I think is a refreshing edge. I think some of that edge actually comes out because of frustration with the secrecy, and putting routine things that the public has a right to know, off the record.

**Mr. Jones:** I think it's worth mentioning that when *The New York Times* was having an internal debate about whether *The Pentagon Papers* should be published, the strongest voice, or at least certainly one of them, was Scotty Reston, who said that if the *Times* wouldn't publish them he would publish them in *The Vineyard Gazette*. And the thing is that *The Pentagon Papers* are mostly about the Johnson Administration. That's one of the reasons Richard Nixon didn't respond to them initially, there was a lot about Johnson.

And one of the things that I've always wondered was whether Scotty Reston was so angry about what was in those papers because he had been, essentially, gulled by the Johnson Administration.

Bob, can you tell us anything about the relationship of Lyndon Johnson with Scotty Reston, as a personality?

**Mr. Caro:** No—  
(Laughter)

**Mr. Caro:** —I'm afraid I can't.

**Mr. Jones:** That answers that question.  
(Laughter)

**Mr. Broder:** Alex, can I? Let me chime in on what Jill said. Because Ellen, I have a less comfortable view of the White House coverage now and much of it, I have to say, comes from Dana Milbank, the *Post* reporter that she was referring to. I'm not down there enough to have my own firsthand impressions but there is a sense that Dana has very strongly that the White House has been, his word is tranquilized, in this administration. And it reflects a change in the composition of that press corps which I had not really focused on.

The agenda setting at the White House press corps now is largely for cable news, the 24-hour news. And the premium for them is getting a 15-second break over their competition on the least significant but freshest development of the day. It doesn't matter whether it's an important story or not, it's a White House story, and if they can get it on the air 15 seconds before the opposition does, then the viewers will come to them and stay with them for awhile.

The net result of this, Dana says, is that the number of people who are assigned to the White House who have, as part of their responsibility, to do what he calls accountability reporting on the White House, has really shrunk in numbers. There are, perhaps, three or four news organizations that staff the White House sufficiently so that they have reporters who are not tied to the White House daily news agenda, and can back-track on a story, try to amplify the story.

And the other part of it is exactly what Jill referred to which is that unlike the Reagan Administration where we had a president who did not want to deal with press firsthand, and a White House staff that understood press conferences were not his best format, speeches were his best format. But the senior level of the White House staff, as you know very well, took as a serious responsibility, briefing those White House reporters as to the day-to-day developments in policy.

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In this White House, the senior staff absolutely rejects that responsibility and as a result, the reporters who are trying to do some kind of contextual reporting there find themselves going further and further from the center. They talk to people who have friends on the White House staff. They talk to members of Congress who may have access to people in the administration. But the opportunities for that kind of reporting, as well as the commitment to that kind of reporting, I think have really shrunk in this current period.

**Mr. Jones:** Ernie?

**Mr. May:** I don't want to pull away from this line of discussion but I want to go back, briefly, to take partial exception to what Daniel Schorr said and at least throw out a couple of hypotheses for Bob Caro.

I would say that one of the other great speeches of Johnson was his San Antonio speech, where he was trying to offer an arrangement with North Vietnam, where he was trying to say, just stop now and we'll underwrite the development of Vietnam, and what happens in the future we could worry about in the future.

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**In order to get money to fight the Vietnam War he had to make a deal with Wilbur Mills which went back on the things he wanted to do for poor people in America.**

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But I think the point is right about Johnson's advisors, including some extremely able people, good friends of mine who were in the administration. There was an absolute uncuriousness about North Vietnam, about who those people were, about who the people were with whom the president might strike a deal.

A friend of mine was in intelligence in the CIA, the chief analyst collecting information about Vietnam. And I asked him once about his relations with the White

House and he said he never got a call, nobody ever telephoned him to ask a question about North Vietnam.

**Mr. Jones:** Francis?

**Mr. Bator:** The key question one has to ask is whether Johnson was right in thinking, as I believe he thought, that had he backed away from Vietnam in June/July of 1965, he would have lost his chance for the entire civil rights, Great Society legislation.

**Mr. Schorr:** What I do believe is that at every point where Johnson felt he had to compromise his Great Society plans and programs and aspirations, it hurt him although he felt he had to do it. In order to get money to fight the Vietnam War he had to make a deal with Wilbur Mills which went back on the things he wanted to do for poor people in America. So that even when it came to appropriations, you found that he had to make compromises which he really didn't want to make, but that he accepted what was passed on to him from the Kennedy Administration is that with those dominos out there, if you let one fall the others are going to fall.



It's just that you could not inhabit those two theories. We want to provide health care, take care of poor people, hunger and all the rest, and at the same time we're going to send battalion after battalion, and division after division to fight the North Vietnamese, for fear that we would lose Asia. Those were two incompatible things that he had to carry around within himself and they destroyed him.

**Mr. Jones:** Marvin, do you have a comment on this?

**Mr. Kalb:** Just on Francis' general point here. I think that the nation was not ready at that time, and would not have indulged in a major, nationwide discussion about Vietnam. We were about two years away from that.

In the early part of 1965, we had begun to bomb in North Vietnam but the country was not absorbed with Vietnam, the country was absorbed with domestic issues. And it was not until the casualties began to increase significantly in the fall of 1965, then '67, that the country itself became absorbed, and felt the pressures of Vietnam in a way that only limited segments of the society had felt earlier. And then at the beginning of '68 came the Tet offensive, and then, bang, it was right there as a national issue.

**Mr. Lambert:** I would like to ask a question about the nature of American power and what power means in America. The reason I ask the question is I was thinking what would Bob have done if he'd been born in Europe. Who would he have found to write about who had the kind of power that he's interested in, and the answer is nobody. He would have found a couple of war time leaders, probably Churchill and de Gaulle. He could have covered Mrs. Thatcher in 150 pages, I think—

(Laughter)

**Mr. Lambert:** —and that would be roughly it. And why is that? Well, obviously, part of it is because you're a superpower and that's obviously very important. But you weren't always a superpower and indeed, when Lyndon Johnson was in power it was a more balanced world. So why is it that people in the U.S. are able to exercise and develop power in the way you brilliantly write about?

Partly, looking at the other side, it's to do with Europe's history. We're deeply suspicious of power. We watched last night President Bush's press conference and were amazed at the exaggerated respect the people in the press showed him. Blair had a press conference last week, exactly the same

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**We watched last night President Bush's press conference and were amazed at the exaggerated respect the people in the press showed him. Blair had a press conference last week, exactly the same sort of press conference in London last week, and it was chaos.**

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sort of press conference in London last week, and it was chaos. People were shouting him down, screaming at him. Blair has, on his little stage, a lot of power. He has no opposition. He has no checks and balances. He's an absolute dictator and we really don't like that. He took us to war against the wishes of most people. We really, really don't like that and so the whole media is against Blair in the U.K., just about the whole lot.

Here, just that little cameo picture of respect and sort of reverence for the office it made me think well maybe the U.S. is a place, because of its

very different history, where people like Lyndon Johnson can walk the stage, and can develop this sort of authority and reach and grip that you describe. Is there anything in that?

**Mr. Caro:** Well, I think you're wary of power in Europe because you've had a lot of wars on European soil, so people know what war is. You know, I think we had a civil war in this country but that was a long time ago.

War, to me, is a very horrible thing. I think that one of the things that brought Lyndon Johnson down was that this war was the first portrayed on television, you saw it every night. I know for myself because I got married and we had a baby, so I never served in any armed forces, to see what combat is like is you know, it's sort of truly horrible. To unleash the dogs of war is something that, on your own soil, you know, is what I think of as one of the great differences between Europe and the United States. They know what war is. To me it is striking.

Of all the things that were said here today, the most horrifying to me was David, and to some extent what Jill was talking about, the lack of access to the White House. Reporters can't see with their own eyes. I think, as an outsider, I think they've been really successful in that. The implications of that, combined with being able to go to the public on television, is changing the nature of political power in the country.

I always feel that eventually we will follow Europe. Europe is just many centuries ahead of us.

**Mr. Parker:** I wanted to follow up on what I thought was an excellent question, on the genius of power that walk into this disaster. Actually two disasters, and that's the question because in a sense Johnson's achievement, and King's achievement around civil rights overturned the political

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coalition that had been built by Franklin Roosevelt that explained Democratic power from the 1930s into the 1970s. But what we've seen is a realignment of the white South with the Republican party.

One, to what extent did Johnson anticipate the scale of the fallout, in terms of political realignment that would follow the civil rights acts? And two, to what extent did he understand that the commitments that he was inheriting, or that he chose to embrace coming out of the Kennedy Administration, particularly around the scale of the tax cut, and that also the advisor's advice about Americanization and deeper engagement, neither of which were Kennedy's position but which became Johnson's through the mechanism of the advice given to him by some of his senior aides, well, Halberstam's best and brightest.

**Mr. Jones:** Bob, do you feel like you can respond?

**Mr. Caro:** In domestic affairs he was always right. And he has this quote that if we passed the Civil Rights Act we will be delivering the South to the Republican Party for, I forget what he said, a generation or two generations.

As to the way he dealt with the advice from the advisors, I think he was, if he understood internationally what he was doing I, as I say, I haven't come to a conclusion about that.

You do know, one of the things that really impresses me about this new biography on President Kennedy by Robert Dallek is the examination of Kennedy's thesis, and his book, and the depth of the sophistication of his awareness of the intricacies, the complications of foreign policy. He studied that. He wrote about that. He really knew about that.

I can only repeat what I said before, I haven't done all my work on it but I think that one thing you really have to think about is what it means when we have a president, as I feel we have a president now, I mean how are you ever going to find out that you don't have to be that worried about the Chinese coming in because over the centuries the North Vietnamese have hated the Chinese. How are you ever going to learn about that from memos?

**Mr. Parker:** Could I just follow up on that because it seems to me that the crux here has not been gotten to but Marvin points to it. Johnson was a man who thought in domestic, political terms even oftentimes when he thought about foreign policy. And the thing that he says to Moyers, for example, 48 hours after he takes on the presidency, and has that meeting with Lodge, and tells Lodge go ahead, and then says to Moyers over scotch, oh God, I know what we're doing here. He understands what he's doing in foreign policy terms in domestic balanced power terms.

The piece that I haven't heard talked about this morning is what Eisenhower referred to in 1961 as the military-industrial complex. A part of American power that Roosevelt didn't have to face, and presidents before Roosevelt, save for Lincoln, really didn't have to face, and yet which

define the Kennedy, Eisenhower, Johnson, Nixon, Reagan, all the presidencies and yet where is it in this narrative as a source of power, and as a challenge to the autonomy of the presidency?

**Mr. Caro:** Well, you're right, it's something that has to be gotten into.

**Mr. Jones:** That will be in Volume Four.

(Laughter)

**Mr. Jones:** This is for Bob. The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, honors Robert A. Caro in recognition of his extraordinary achievement in illuminating, through superb biography, the pursuit and use of power, on the occasion of his delivering the Theodore H. White Lecture on the Press and Politics.

I want to say that we've never had a better. Thank you very much.