

James R. Jones

His distinguished career in politics includes time spent on LBJ's staff, as well as serving as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico.

Chapter 01 - 1:34

Introduction

Announcer: James Robert "Jim" Jones was born and educated in Muskogee, Oklahoma. By the age of 12, he was campaigning for Ed Edmonson's bid for Congress. He graduated in 1961 from the University of Oklahoma, and graduated with a law degree from Georgetown University in Washington D.C.

Jones first important political job was as the legislative assistant for Congressman Ed Edmonson. Then, in 1965, Jones moved from the United States Congress to the White House, where he became the youngest person to ever hold the position of Appointments Secretary or Chief of Staff, assisting President Lyndon Johnson until Johnson left office in January, 1969.

In 1972, after returning to Oklahoma, Jones ran for Oklahoma's 1st congressional district. He won the election and was re-elected six times. During his tenure in Congress, which lasted until 1987, Jones served four years as the Chairman of the House Budget Committee.

After fourteen years in Congress, he made an unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate seat held by Don Nickles in 1986.

Jim later served as the chairman of the American Stock Exchange from 1989-1993. After the election of President Bill Clinton, he was appointed the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and served from 1993 to 1997. In February, 2003, he was inaugurated Chairman of the World Affairs Council of America.

In 1994 Jones was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Listen to James Robert "Jim" Jones tell his story as recorded by the Oklahoma oral history website *Voices of Oklahoma.com*.

Chapter 02 - 10:05**Jim's Early Years**

John Erling: My name is John Erling and today's date is July 27, 2012. Jim, would you state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age?

James R. Jones: I'm James R. Jones. My date of birth is May 5, 1939. I'm currently seventy-three.

JE: Where are we recording this interview?

JJ: In Washington, DC, at our offices here in downtown Washington.

JE: And the name of your offices?

JJ: Manatt Jones Global Strategies.

JE: Where were you born?

JJ: Born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, Baptist Hospital, 5th Street.

JE: Your mother's name, her maiden name and where she was born and grew up?

JJ: Her maiden name was Margaret Kunagundo Wich, born in St. Louis, Missouri. Moved to Oklahoma, moved to Muskogee in 1907. After Oklahoma became a state, her father who had been with Dun and Bradstreet for many years was sent down from St. Louis to open the Dun and Bradstreet offices in Oklahoma.

My father is Robert P. Jones. He was born in Neodesha, Kansas, in 1895, and moved to Oklahoma in the 1920s, around 1923.

My mother and father were married in Muskogee in 1927, were together until he died, and she died in 1977 and 1988.

JE: Personalities, what was your mother's personality?

JJ: Her family came from Wiesbaden, Germany, and settled in Southern Illinois, and St. Louis in the 1800s. So she was thoroughly German. She had a very subtle sense of humor, very low-key. Both she and my father were the oldest children in their families, and as a result in those days the oldest child, usually if he or she got through high school—my father did, my mother was taken out of school after the eighth grade to go to work and help support the family. So she worked all of her life, loved it. Finally retired when forced retirement at age seventy.

JE: What did she do? What kind of work did she do?

JJ: Well, she was a telephone operator. And during World War II she was an administrative person at Fort Bragg near Muskogee. Then here at the temporary headquarters of the Department of Army in Washington for a year. Then worked at the Veteran's Administration until she retired.

JE: Your father and his personality and what he did for a living?

JJ: Well, my father did a little bit of everything. He was a good athlete as a child, and then went off to World War I. He got gassed in World War I and never played sports again. He thought he might have a pro baseball career but that didn't happen.

JE: How did that affect him, the gassing?

JJ: Internal problems for the rest of his life, but it didn't slow him down any. He was sort of the original Willie Loman in that he tried many, many things. Didn't succeed at a whole lot of things, but he never quit trying, and he always instilled that in all of us, the three children that they had. He did everything. He was a shoe salesman at one point. He had a sandwich shop, an orange juice shop in Muskogee at one point. He was a rural mail carrier when I was born. He was a postal clerk and was a postal clerk until he retired.

And then afterwards he scrambled and I, still to this day, buy Keebler cookies because after he was so old that was the only organization that would hire him to peddle their cookies, so I'm very loyal to Keebler to this day.

JE: That's great.

You have brothers and sisters?

JJ: I have one of each. My sister lives in Muskogee. She married right out of high school to her high school sweetheart. He died just a few years ago. They had eight children and they mostly in Muskogee and in Oklahoma.

She was a housewife and mother until after all of her children grew. And then she also went to work in the Veteran's Administration in the administrative offices.

My brother was an aeronautical engineer, graduate of Oklahoma State University. He worked first for Douglas, then McDonnell Douglas, and then Boeing all his career until he retired. He was in California. He worked on some of their major rocket activities and airplanes.

JE: What was the first house you remember?

JJ: Well, the first house I remember was in Muskogee. Actually, we lived above a grocery store when I was born, but we moved to 2005 Denison Street, probably when I was about one years old. And we lived there until 1946, when I was seven years old, and moved to 529 7th Street. That's where they lived the rest of the time I was home.

It was interesting because in those days Muskogee was segregated pretty much and we always lived in a segregated part of town. There were very few whites in either one of the houses. And part of that was, I think, my dad was able to get a better deal in terms of getting more house for the money.

So I was very comfortable growing up with African American children that I played with, at all. It was not at all any kind of a big event when Brown versus Board of Education came down in 1954, and when they had the first black student integrate Muskogee Central High School in my junior/sophomore year. But it was a great experience to have that kind of background.

At the time I was growing up it was embarrassing because all your friends lived in a totally white neighborhood and there was prejudice, clearly, lots of prejudice in those days. But in the long run it was the best thing to grow up in that multicultural atmosphere.

JE: So when you played with the black playmates and for school time you left for the white school, they left for their school?

JJ: Yeah. I went to Catholic schools from the first through the eighth grade and then went to public schools in the ninth grade through senior year. I don't recall that there are any black children in any of those schools until I was a sophomore/junior.

JE: You were too young to remember December 7, 1941, I would imagine, but did it affect your family or neighbors or anybody that you remember? That went off to war?

JJ: Well, I had a cousin in Sand Springs who went off to war and was a pilot, a bomber pilot, but no other immediate family members in World War II. I do recall a very little bit about Pearl Harbor. I was just a little over two years old.

I do remember more in 1945, when President Roosevelt died, and my dad came in on that afternoon and said, "There's been a tornado on the east side of Muskogee and President Roosevelt died."

Being five years old at that time, I guess, I said, "What's President Roosevelt doing in Muskogee when the tornado hit?" So I always connected those two things.

JE: Your elementary years then, you were in a Catholic school, you said?

JJ: The Sacred Heart School for the first five years. It was a great experience. I rode my bicycle there. In the first grades, interesting story because the first and second grade teacher was Sister Anne Maria. In retrospect, probably in her early twenties at the time. But she was a great motivator and just a teacher that made you feel that you could conquer any world there is. She really got me and a lot of other students off on a very good track.

Twenty-some years later, I found myself at the White House in the office next to the president. I had not heard from Sister Anne Maria all those years, and the White House operator rang me and said, "There's a Sister Anne Maria on the phone for you. Should I put her through?"

I said, "Absolutely."

She had been a missionary in Chile or Peru or somewhere in Latin America. They were trying to get some sort of a foreign aid loan to help their work in helping the poor in that country and they were having a very difficult time. She said do you think I can help?

I said, "Sister, consider it done."

She got her grant and I thought that was a nice little payback.

JE: In the elementary years and on up were you considered a good student?

JJ: Well, I was very active in athletics in all different sports. And I was a good student. The competition wasn't all that stiff but I was a good student, basically an A student. Sort of the teacher's pet in most of those classes, if not all of them.

JE: Because learning came easy for you?

JJ: Yeah. Reading was a little harder for me. I think I probably have a little dyslexia. Reading is slower and I was more verbal at that time, but I enjoyed school.

Also, my brother had a paper route and had some sort of independent income. So I hounded my parents to have a paper route and I finally got one in the first grade. I think I was six years old, maybe in the second grade, seven years old. I delivered the *Tulsa Tribune*, and then later the *Tulsa World* in Muskogee.

I loved the outside activities of having a little business as well as school. So I've always combined the two things.

JE: You said sports, were you pretty good at sports?

JJ: I was quite good at sports until probably I was about thirteen or fourteen years old when the curve ball, when I first experienced the curve ball and these other esotery pitches. I was in the Little Leagues, I was on the All-Star team and things like that.

In fact, our All-Star team when I was twelve in Muskogee came second in the state. As a sort of reward, the community fathers gave us a three-day trip to St. Louis to see the Cardinals play the Boston Braves. We stayed at the Jefferson Hotel. We were a rowdy group of little kids but we had a wonderful three-day weekend there. Got to meet some of the baseball players, Stan Musial, Warren Spawen, and some of those people.

I met a pitcher named Wilmer "Vinegar Bend" Mizell. Several years later we served together in Congress.

JE: How great.

Chapter 03 - 4:00

Pre-teen Politician

John Erling: Somewhere along the line here too, I think politics came into your life at a very early age. Tell us about that.

James R. Jones: Well, my dad was a rural mail carrier and politics was the sport in rural Oklahoma. Before there was much television it was the summer sport, basically. So they had all the rallies and the politicians would come out and give their speeches. People would be there and eat their barbeque, etcetera. I found that just a fascinating life, so I was attracted to it from early on.

Then I met Ed Edmondson, who was a young county attorney in Muskogee. He started something called the Junior Officer Corps. We met at the Roxy Theater every Saturday

morning and Ed would come in and speak to us about government and things like that. I really just enjoyed that.

And then when I was eleven, he had been two terms as county attorney and was making a run for the congressional seat in the Second District, which was an open seat at that time. Bill Stigler, the incumbent, did not seek reelection. At a VFW or American Legion dinner with my parents, he was the speaker. And I went up to him afterwards and reintroduced myself and said I knew all the kids in Muskogee and I could help deliver their votes, and wanted to work for him.

So he hired me.

JE: At eleven or twelve years old?

JJ: Yeah. I did some radio commercials for him, put up signs, and worked at the headquarters. Did all the things that you do. That just further hooked me on politics.

JE: So your father, mother, were they Democrats from the get-go?

JJ: They were.

JE: So you grew up thinking Democrat?

JJ: Yeah. My father, there are four sons in his family, two of them were Democrats, two of them were Republicans. When they were together they just fiercely talked politics, bitter differences. So I'm on the Democratic side.

It's interesting because when I ran for office, I tried to look up and see if anybody else in my family had ever run for office. And my grandfather, who died two years before I was born, it's interesting because he was born in 1846, not my great grandfather, my grandfather, and he had fought in the Civil War in the Illinois regiment at age seventeen. Then settled in Kansas and ran for county commissioner as a Republican, and lost.

My grandmother on my father's side, was staunch Democrat, and my grandfather on my father's side was a staunch Republican because he was an Abraham Lincoln Republican from the state of Illinois.

JE: Who was Ed Edmondson's opponent in that race for Congress?

JJ: As I recall, it was the chief of the Cherokee Nation, Dennis Bushyhead. In those days, I had understood that there were Republicans, I'd just never seen one. In the Second District, once you got the Democrat nomination, basically, that was it.

I do think there was a Republican who ran that year, but later after he lost the election, President Eisenhower won the presidency and he was appointed Postmaster at the Muskogee Post Office.

JE: So you would look upon Ed Edmondson as a political mentor? Or not?

JJ: Absolutely. Ed Edmondson had real political talent. He was very cautious, didn't take risks, but he thoroughly thought out his all of his political moves, his policy decisions, etcetera, and was just 100 percent honest.

So he was a mentor and a person I respected and looked up to.

JE: Was he an outgoing person, his personality?

JJ: Yeah but he wasn't a big backslapper, but he had good political skills.

JE: His brother, J. Howard Edmondson, were they different?

JJ: A little bit different. J. Howard was a lot more risk-taking than Ed was. For example, Ed passed up, I think, some opportunities at a higher office earlier on. Howard took his first opportunity and ran for governor. He would take a bigger risk than Ed would normally.

Howard was an excellent politician, he just didn't have the same discipline that Ed had, in my judgment.

Chapter 04 - 4:35

Newspaper Reporter

John Erling: When you were in high school, you carried on with political work. Did you do anything for the newspapers?

James R. Jones: The *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, which was the daily newspaper that the Tams Bixby family had owned for years, had a strike in the '40s and they just got rid of all union labor. So by the '50s, the union started the rival newspaper called the *Muskogee Morning News*. When I heard that I went down and applied. I think I was fifteen or so, maybe a sophomore/junior in high school. I applied and was hired as a sportswriter.

As happens in those things, the money got smaller and smaller to support the newspaper and the *Muskogee Phoenix*, the dominant newspaper, just got more dominant.

So the union that owned the *Muskogee Morning News* had to lay off people. And, of course, one of the last to be laid off would be me because I was the cheapest in terms of cost. And I ended up being the sports editor and then the night editor.

I covered my first murder when I was fifteen and things like that. So as people were laid off I had more and more jobs to do.

In the summer of '56, I went to Oklahoma Boys State, which is the American Legion sponsored week in Norman where you study and you go through the whole process of government. When I got there, one of my competitors from Oklahoma City in high school debate was there and met me and he had cards printed and he was running for governor.

Well, I was kind of offended at that and I said, "Well, I'm running for governor too," which I hadn't planned to do. And I got elected governor.

After I was elected, John Criswell, who had been the city editor of the *Muskogee Phoenix*, sent me a telegram and offered me a job with the *Muskogee Phoenix*. The *Muskogee Morning News* was on its last leg anyway. So when I came back from Norman I went to work for the *Muskogee Phoenix*, worked there full time during the summers and in the evenings. That was a great experience.

That same summer, Criswell and I covered the Wagner Vote Scandals. On the election night we'd put the paper to bed and I went home. Criswell called me and said there had been a shooting at Stillwell. "I'll pick you up and we'll go over and cover it."

And it turned out the sheriff and the sheriff elect, who had been running against each other, had a shootout at the Sheriff's Department in Stillwell. So I did the sidebar and John did the main story.

Just great experiences that you couldn't get any other way.

JE: With that kind of experience in newspapers you didn't go on to journalism. You must have considered that.

JJ: I also was a radio disc jockey at both KMUS and KBIX at different times in high school. In college, one of my two majors was journalism. I always thought that I would either go into journalism or politics and ended up liking more making the news than reporting it. It was a close call, but I enjoyed being able to affect public policy directly as opposed to indirectly by journalism.

I went to OU and majored in journalism and government, double major. My senior year, the *Wall Street Journal* offered me a job in their Latin American bureau. But at the same time, Ed Edmondson and I had breakfast in Muskogee the spring of my senior year, and he said that his legislative assistant Lacy Grimes had emphysema and was going to have to leave his staff. Would I be interested in coming to Washington to be his legislative assistant?

And I told him that I had gone through ROTC, and as a commissioned officer I have to do active duty commitment. And he said, "Well, you can postpone that and if you like you could go to law school at night and work for me during the day."

So I applied to Georgetown Law School and got admitted. That sort of sidetracked me from journalism. If that hadn't come along I might have gone to work for the *Wall Street Journal* and life would have been different.

JE: But didn't even in OU you served at J. Howard Edmondson's press secretary?

JJ: Well, after my freshman year in 1958, Howard was running for governor. And Ed hired me to work on Howard's campaign. They had to fire the press secretary, the one they had.

John Criswell, by this time, was City Editor of the *Houston Press* in Houston, Texas. So they were going to hire John to be the press secretary. But he couldn't get up there during those summer months. And so for a month or more, I was the press secretary until John got there.

Chapter 05 - 5:30**President's Chief of Staff**

John Erling: So then, you do come to Washington, DC. You're twenty-four by the time you receive your law degree—

James R. Jones: Yeah.

JE: ...at Georgetown University. You have law, you have this experience, were you having political ambitions then at that time?

JJ: Yeah, as a matter of fact, Oklahoma Boys State whetted my appetite. I haven't thought of this in a long time.

There was a professor of OU Government, Dr. Thornton. And Dr. Thornton inspired me to study government. So I had sort of outlined, rewritten, the Oklahoma Constitution, and I intended to be the youngest governor in the state of Oklahoma, at age thirty-one.

From that point on, I've pretty well had a bent toward politics.

JE: But then you were in the Army Reserve from 1961 to 1968?

JJ: That's correct.

JE: Then what motivated you to join the Army Reserve?

JJ: Well, I was in ROTC at OU and I got commissioned as a second lieutenant.

JE: That wasn't a choice that everybody had to make?

JJ: No, you didn't have to go through ROTC, but I had always sort of been raised with you have a certain duty. Part of that duty is to serve in the military. And I would rather serve as an officer. That's why I did it.

JE: Between '61 and '68, we had Vietnam in that era, of course.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: You served as a captain?

JJ: I finished as a captain, yes.

JE: In the US Army Counter Intelligence?

JJ: Right.

JE: And you became a Special Military Aide to President Lyndon Johnson in '64. How did all that come about?

JJ: It's interesting because I had postponed my active duty from '61 to '64 while I finished law school. While I was in law school, my best friend in law school was a fellow named Tommy Boggs. Tommy was the son of Hale Boggs, who was the Whip of the House, the number three position in the House of Representatives. Tommy introduced me and brought me into being a part-time advance person for then Vice President Johnson, and ultimately President Johnson. And we advanced a couple of trips together.

When I graduated it was an accelerated program for night students. You had to go year-round. So I graduated in the summer of '64, and was going to report to active duty that fall.

The decision was made by the Johnson campaign that because they had just passed the '64 Civil Rights Act that it would not be the best thing for President Johnson to campaign in the South, but that Ladybird Johnson, who was from Alabama originally, and southerners treat women properly regardless, she would carry on the campaign in the South.

So they were going to kick it off, in I think it was August, with a whistle stop campaign train starting in Washington, with eighteen, twenty stops through the South and ending up in New Orleans. This thing was just an idea and they hadn't put it all together. And they didn't have any advance people or anything else.

So Tommy called me and said, well, would I volunteer to be an advance person at one of those stops?

I said, "Sure, I don't have anything to do until the fall."

So we came down, got the group together, assembled, and Tommy and I had a lot of our friends there. One vacuum after another developed that I filled and I ended up being in charge of putting the train together. It was a successful trip.

Mrs. Johnson and her press secretary, Liz Carpenter, took an eye on me. And Mrs. Johnson told her husband, "There's this young man that you ought to have on your staff."

So I go off, after finishing the train tour, and then a little bit of help to Ed Edmondson and his congressional race that year. And then I go off to active duty at Fort Benning. I had volunteered for Vietnam and the next stop was Fort Holabird for Counter Intelligence school, followed by Monterey Language school, back to Benning for Airborne school, and then to Vietnam.

Well, I finished basic training at Fort Benning and Ed Buckner, who was a classmate of mine from Sand Springs and at OU, he was an intelligence officer too. We drove together back up to Fort Holabird in Baltimore.

I checked in Fort Holabird one evening and the sergeant said, "Lieutenant Jones, the White House is calling."

I said, "Well, who is it?"

They said, "Marvin Watson." I didn't know who Marvin Watson was and I said, "Well, tell him I'll call him tomorrow."

And they said, "Lieutenant Jones, you'll call him right now."

And so I called and Marvin had taken Kenny O'Donnell's place, which the position is called Chief of Staff today. And he said, "Can you come down in the morning? I need to interview you."

I said, "Well, I'm on active duty."

He said, "Well, I'll take care of that."

I come down the next morning. First of all, Jack Valenti interviews me. Then Marvin Watson. And he calls General Clifton, who is the military aide to the president and a holdover from the Kennedy White House. They called General Clifton in and says, "We need to change Lieutenant Jones's orders to the White House."

So my first year there I completed my active duty at the White House, in the military, but I was the deputy appointment secretary, which is Deputy Chief of Staff today. And the last three years a civilian. And then ended up being Chief of Staff in the end of '67, the last fourteen months of the presidency.

JE: Well, that was a swirling twenty-four, forty-eight hours for you, wasn't it?

JJ: It was. I was kind of surprised.

JE: And all because Ladybird Johnson and Liz Carpenter spotted your talent.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: Is really what it boiled down to.

JJ: Yeah, Ladybird and Liz Carpenter were responsible for my being there.

Chapter 06 - 2:17

Duties of Chief of Staff

John Erling: And so, when you then become the appointment secretary, or Chief of Staff in '68, you're just twenty-eight years old.

James R. Jones: Yeah.

JE: You would be the youngest person in history to hold that position.

JJ: Dick Cheney is the second youngest. Dick was thirty-four when he made it.

JE: There was a White House Fellows Program, Doris Kerns Goodwin was part of the program. Did you remember her then?

JJ: Yeah. The White House Fellows Program was started the first year I was there in '65. And '66 was the first class. People like Tom Johnson were in that first class. Tom, after he left President Johnson, later became publisher of the *L.A. Times*, and then president of CNN. He's retired now and is a good friend. He was in that first class.

And then Doris was in the third class, the one in '68. The White House Fellows are attached to the different departments, the secretaries, etcetera, that heads up the various cabinet offices and the White House. Doris was assigned to the White House. So I got to know her quite well and she's very, very smart.

JE: She has gone on to become a noted historian, written many books about presidents and all.

So here you are Assistant Chief of Staff and you are the Chief of Staff. So what were your early on assignments with Lyndon Johnson?

JJ: The initial assignment was as deputy to Marvin Watson, and that was basically to be sort of the person who makes things happens. Marvin's job and the appointment secretary's job is a number of things. It's not only federal appointees, it's the schedule, it's making sure the policy follow-ups happen, coordinate with the cabinet, etcetera, etcetera. But that job also with Lyndon Johnson, you were with him most of the time.

So my job was to implement and carry out the things that needed to be done to make sure that things were set up correctly for ceremonies, for events and speeches. To make sure we had advance people out to make sure whatever the program was, was going to be successfully carried out. To coordinate with the cabinet officers to make sure they got the instructions, etcetera. Basically, it was a facilitator's job and to back up Marvin and all the kinds of responsibilities he had.

Chapter 07 - 4:04

Meeting LBJ

John Erling: You remember the first time you met Lyndon Johnson?

James R. Jones: Yeah. Marvin told me, he said, "Until he gets to know you don't crowd him." So I stayed way in the background.

Perhaps the first time I had a real conversation with him I had been there maybe a month. The way our White House was configured you had the Oval Office, you had the little office off the Oval Office that was sort of the president's private study. Then you had the Chief of Staff's office, Marvin Watson's office. Then you had Jack Valenti's office. Then you had an office where two or three of us were in that office, one of the secretaries and myself. I guess there were two of us at that time. And then you had a speech writer at the other end. That was the West Wing, from the Oval Office to end of the West Wing. I was in that third office over.

But I was in Marvin's office, and I should backtrack. The president had six special assistants, which were the top rung, had the same salaries as cabinet officers. To those special assistants, which was the National Security Advisor, the Press Secretary, the Appointments Secretary, the Domestic Legal Counsel, etcetera, on their phones was the president's direct line. You know, it rang continuously. It didn't ring intermittently, it ran

continuously until someone picked it up. And it was louder than all the other rings. So when that phone rang you picked it up, "Yes sir!"

Well, I was in the office when the president was calling Marvin. Jack Valenti was in there also. All I heard was this end of the conversation was, "Yes sir! Yes sir. Yes sir. Will do, sir. Yes sir." And they hung up the phone.

Remember I'm twenty-five years old and I said, "You guys have to speak up to the president. You can't be yes men."

Well, in any event, about a month later, Marvin calls me and said, "Can you come into my office?"

I said, "Yeah."

And he said, "The president wants to talk to you." And so, one of my responsibilities was to have the schedule made up that I would give to the press secretary, who would then publish it for the press briefing for the next day's president schedule. At least, the public schedule.

And so, I think it was every Wednesday, we had a congressional breakfast where the leadership of Congress met with the president for breakfast. Unbeknownst to me, the president had canceled the breakfast that particular week because he was having some games with Everett Dirksen or Mike Mansfield, or one of them, and he wanted to cancel the breakfast. He told Larry O'Brien, but Larry O'Brien forgot to tell me.

So I'm issuing the next day's schedule and there it is. The president is having breakfast with the congressional leadership, which the press secretary gives out. Well, President Johnson, he was a nut for news and he had two AP and UP A-wires in the Oval Office. Between appointments he would go and read what is coming in off the wires.

So he read the president's schedule, hit the fan, called the press secretary. He said, "What did you—"

He said, "Well, Jim Jones gave it to me."

So he then calls Marvin and says, "Get Jim Jones."

So I come into Marvin's office, just perky, the president wants to talk to me. And I get on the phone, "Yes sir?"

"That's the stupidest thing that I've ever heard!"

And I, "Yes sir, yes sir, yes sir."

Marvin brought Jack Valenti in to listen to this.

And the final thing he says is, "Well, it sounds to me like you were scratching your ass when you should have been scratching your head."

I said, "Yes sir!" So they had great fun with payback. That was my first real conversation with the president. I wouldn't call it a conversation.

JE: The president understood then that you hadn't gotten the word and couldn't have—

JJ: Oh I'm sure.

JE: ...blamed you entirely. Yeah.

JJ: Yeah, well, I wouldn't have lasted.

JE: His size, he was so tall, his demeanor, he was overpowering in person?

JJ: Yeah, yeah, he had a strong, strong presence. He was six foot four, he weighed two hundred and thirty pounds, except when he put us all on his diet. And he'd lose a pound or two, but he was a big fellow.

Chapter 08 - 3:05

Johnson Treatment

John Erling: He was known for the "Johnson Treatment."

James R. Jones: Yeah.

JE: What would that be? Describe it.

JJ: Well, it depended on the person. He could just overpower you. He could look right through you, number one. His staring, or his eye contact was amazing. The physical presence was such that there were very, very few people that could match his size and bearing. And he was one of the most colorful with words that I've ever known. So it was very hard to outmatch him on those kinds of things.

JE: Were you afraid that his colorful speech would be part of his public appearances sometime? That he would just speak the way he may behind closed doors?

JJ: Very seldom did he do that. The intimidating factor of the Kennedys I don't think can be overblown, overstated. He always acknowledged that his education was Southwest Texas Teachers College. That he didn't have the same grooming and sophistication as, he called, the Ivy Leaguers had.

And his view of the presidency, he had a really reverent view of the institution of the presidency. He wanted to be gauged by history, not by times there but by history, as a great president. Part of that was to not be a cornpone person when it came to public appearances, which in one respect was good and in another respect was bad, because the colorfulness was really part of Lyndon Johnson. And when he tried to be sophisticated or less Texan, he came across as phony.

And particularly showed up on television. He liked to look people in the eye, you know, grab them and have that physical contact with them in conversation. And he never warmed up to a television camera. And it showed.

Bill Moyers and I, one time after one of his press conferences, were in my office and said, "If we could just bottle the Lyndon Johnson we know and run that it would be great." Well, we concocted this idea. All of his press conferences were formal. He had a podium and he would call on people from behind the podium and speak from behind the podium, sometimes using the teleprompter, but not much for press conferences.

For reasons I don't fully understand, the Secret Service didn't want him to use a Lavalier mic, strapped around his neck. And we finally got him to agree in about December of 1967 to wear a Lavalier mic and have no podium and move all the cameras to the back of the East Room instead of in front. It was one of the best press conferences, it was the real Lyndon Johnson.

And I think it's the only time he did that because he then got into color and he got into movement, use of arms and moving around.

JE: It helped him forget about the TV cameras?

JJ: Yes.

JE: Is that it?

JJ: We moved the cameras way to the back.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JJ: And as I say, had no podium so he had nothing to lean on. And it was the real Lyndon Johnson.

Chapter 09 - 2:15

Bobby Kennedy Feud

John Erling: We know of the feud between Bobby Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Were you ever in the same room when the two of them were together? Or witnessed the two of them?

James R. Jones: Only one time, and that was in early April 1968. I forget whether Bobby asked to have the appointment or whether the president request that he come down. It was over the issue of Vietnam. Bobby had been making some statements, which were not helpful to the peace negotiations that the president was trying to proceed on.

So Bobby and Ted Sorenson came down. I didn't stay for the whole meeting. It was in the Cabinet Room. It was a very frank meeting and Johnson, I thought, just overwhelmed Bobby and there you are.

Interestingly, according to Johnson, I wasn't there, but Bobby Kennedy had continually insulted Johnson as vice president. It rankled President Johnson for a number of reasons.

Johnson had thought that Jack Kennedy ought to have issued an executive order before the Civil Rights bill was even passed. Basically, opening up opportunities for minorities.

Bobby Kennedy, according to Johnson, blocked that and said, "That would be political suicide and you cannot ask the president to do that."

Also on Vietnam, according to Johnson, Bobby Kennedy was a hawk, and then all of a sudden he's a dove. So the about-faces that Johnson perceived Bobby Kennedy making, for political gain, and some of the insults that were given against Johnson, there was no love lost.

JE: The Kennedy name would come up every once and a while you heard him and he would be upset with Bobby and you'd hear that kind of conversation?

JJ: Well, I rarely heard him talk about Bobby Kennedy. Again, after the president took himself out of office and was really trying to get a peace settlement in Vietnam before he left office, he felt that some of the statements Bobby was making were undercutting that. But Bobby Kennedy wasn't a cause for Lyndon Johnson.

Teddy Kennedy he liked very much. And he respected Jack Kennedy very much. But I think he just avoided talking about Bobby Kennedy.

Chapter 10 - 6:20

Vietnam

John Erling: You were officially on with the president from '65 to '69?

James R. Jones: From January 20, noon.

JE: The country was getting upset and very angry with Vietnam.

JJ: Right.

JE: So in the summer of '65, were you on with the president then?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: When the riots?

JJ: Right.

JE: Antiwar movements, all that kind of thing came about? The summer riots broke out in most major cities after '65.

JJ: Well, '65 was, as I recall, the Watts Riots. It spread a little bit but it was mainly the Watts area of Los Angeles. The big ones that spread were basically after the Martin Luther King assassination in '68. And that affected Washington, it affected many different cities around the country.

Joe Califano actually is sort of the ground central center for mobilizing our efforts against the city riots in both of those times.

JE: Were you writing speeches for the president?

JJ: I didn't really write speeches. I edited speeches and some cases there was a lot of editing that had to go on and rewriting, particularly when we were on Air Force one and we were between stops and something he didn't like, so I would go back and do some rewriting.

And then I coordinated the State of the Union speech of '68. We were all down at the ranch and I did some editing on that. But that I recall, I don't think I ever wrote a speech from start to finish for him.

JE: Did you hear him agonize about Vietnam? For instance, I have a quote here in May of '64. He said, "I'll tell you, the more that I stayed awake last night thinking of this thing the more I think of it. I don't know what in the hell it looks like to me. We're getting into another Korea. Just worries the hell out of me. Don't see what we ever hope to get out of it, where we're committed. I believe the Chinese Communists are coming into it. I don't think we can fight them ten thousand miles away from home." Did you hear him talk like that?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative). I wasn't there at that time, I didn't come until February of '65. But, yes he agonized over Vietnam. And again, it goes back to him wanting to be viewed in history as a great president. Vietnam was something that he was not familiar with. He trusted Bob McNamara, Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, or CIA Director, FBI, National Security Council, etcetera. And without any negative votes it was unanimous that all the decisions that were made were recommended to the president. And really, his decisions were not a minority decision in favor of escalating or what-have-you.

Bob McNamara was one of the most persuasive people I have ever known. He would come with his charts and graphs and statistics. And each time, I think he was the most persuasive in the decisions to escalate on Vietnam.

Bill Westmoreland was encouraging the same thing when he was Chief in Vietnam.

Finally, McNamara, in probably late '67, started having self-doubts. I think probably the last straw when he had the electronic fence, the virtual fence, so to speak, that also proved not to be successful against the Vietcong. And he had lots of self-doubts.

In fact, Lyndon Johnson, the reason he appointed McNamara as president of the World Bank, the president told me, he thought he was going to be another Jim Forrestall and commit suicide. That he was that depressed over what's going on, the decisions that he had promulgated in Vietnam. And that's why he moved him out of Secretary of Defense. He's very fond of McNamara.

And brought in Clark Clifford, and Clark Clifford had a different perspective. It took him a little while to sort of express that perspective but he did.

Talking about the Chinese Communist, we had intercepted some of the Chinese cables and what-have-you. And the one that was most persuasive I recall reading was after Vietnam they were going to take Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, ultimately Indonesia, which was then the fifth largest country in the world. So the domino theory wasn't just something made out of whole cloth, it was something that as a result of intercepting cables and intelligence gathering of the Chinese themselves, and somewhat with the Soviets, gave the president a strong grounding that you had to draw the line somewhere or all of Southeast Asia and South Asia would be in the Communist hands.

And, of course, that not only has a military significance but it has an economic significance because there's so many minerals in that part of the world that are fundamental to running an industrial economy like the US. But it was of great frustration to him because everything we seemed to try didn't work.

And, as I have written, I think the main reason, he gave lots of different reasons for not running for reelection, but I think the main reason was that he felt that if he was a candidate for reelection in 1968, that he would be so focused on politics and be somewhat reticent to make a bold decision on Vietnam that he might pass up an opportunity to get peace in Vietnam. And he really felt that if he could get peace in Vietnam before he left office then history would look on his presidency very kindly. Because of all the other accomplishments he had made.

And I think that was the main motivation for not running for reelection.

JE: But his own party was conflicted, split, and feuding about this.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: And the personal experience here in radio in Fargo, North Dakota, and WDAY and Walter Mondale is next door in Minnesota, so he would stop in. I had an afternoon talk show. He had just come back from Vietnam, and he declared then that he was against the Vietnam War.

I'll never forget, I looked at him, I thought he was a traitor because he was one of the early ones.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: To come out publicly against it.

JJ: Yeah. Yeah.

JE: And so the president sensed all these major figures in his own party were beginning to oppose the war. His support was falling apart.

JJ: As I used later when I was in Mexico, we lost that war, not in Vietnam but in Washington. And we lost it in Washington because the perception is that we couldn't win it. And once you lose it in Washington, once you lose it in the United States, you know it's unwinnable. So in any kind of foreign action you've got to have the public support. You can't be deeply divided and be successful. And I think he recognized that.

Chapter 11 - 8:23**Johnson Will Not Run**

James R. Jones: We started talking about whether he would run for reelection or not, way back in September of 1967. We would intermittently have conversations. When we were at the ranch in late '67, and I was coordinating the State of the Union speech, separately we coordinated, or had Horace Busby write the peroration, as he called it, that he would not run and announce that at the State of the Union in January. And he ultimately didn't do it then, but...

John Erling: Why didn't he do it then?

JJ: Well, he never had a good reason. We didn't put it on the teleprompter, we only kept it on a separate piece of paper. He had a copy, I had a copy, that was all. And he said he left it on his dressing table and forgot it.

Well, my personal belief is he didn't want to do it at that time because he still had a legislative program that he was trying to get through the Congress, and he felt that once you announce that you're not running, that you're a lame duck, you're powerless to get things through the Congress.

It turned out that that wasn't quite the case but that's what he felt. So I think that's why he didn't announce it then.

JE: So you're interfacing with him during this time?

JJ: Oh yeah.

JE: You're with him. What were your personal feelings about the war? And did you agree that he should resign? Or did you think he ought to run again?

JJ: Well, I didn't express myself on that until the Friday before the Sunday speech. By that time I had assumed, of course you're twenty-eight years old and you know everything, right? I had assumed when he didn't make that announcement at the State of the Union speech in January that he just couldn't give up power. That was my thought. So we're on with the race.

By this time, Marvin Watson had gone over to run the abortive campaign and I had replaced him. We did a couple of things. He had asked me to have Ollie Quail, Oliver Quail was our pollster, a very good pollster, and he had asked me to have Ollie do a poll about ten days or so before the middle of March somewhere against all Democrats and Republicans running for the presidency. And he beat them all. Beat them all by fairly substantial margins. That doesn't mean November he would have beaten everybody but at that particular point in time he was, I think, solace to him that he wasn't being run out of office. It would be a very divisive campaign but he could win.

Subsequent to that, we had the historian look and see when Harry Truman announced he was not going to seek reelection and it was the end of March. So March 29 we had a little rose garden press briefing and he said he was going to make a speech to the nation on Vietnam on Sunday night, March 31.

We leave the rose garden and go into the little office off the Oval Office. He had asked Marvin Watson and George Christian, who was the press secretary, and myself to come in and visit. And we had drinks, for a couple of hours. He said, "I think I'm going to announce I'm not going to run for reelection Sunday." This is Friday night. "So what do you all think about it?"

And we had a very vigorous discussion. We split two to one. Marvin and I both thought he *had* to run at this point. Otherwise, he turns the party over to Bobby Kennedy. George Christian said he should not run, "It's going to be a very nasty, divisive campaign and he doesn't need to do that."

We had no decisions that night. We left, he asked me to get Horace Busby again, put him over in the Indian Treaty Room over in the Mansion and have him rewrite the peroration, which Buzz did.

JE: You call it peroration, what does that mean?

JJ: Well, Lyndon Johnson called it that, it's the final part of a speech.

JE: Okay, so that is the definition of that word? The final part, or is that a word he made up? I'd never heard it.

JJ: I have no idea, we ought to look it up.

JE: But the president—

JJ: That's the word he used.

JE: Peroration, right.

JJ: Yeah, yeah. In any event, I spent all day Saturday basically getting all the different drafts and putting them together and giving them to the president. We'd go over them, give them back.

Harry McPherson, I think, was sort of the chief speech writer on that one. But we had lots of input from Walt Rostallen and others. Buzz was over in the Indian Treaty Room working on the peroration. And then we thought we had the speech fairly well done on Saturday night.

I went back to my apartment. He calls me early Sunday morning and said he and Lucy are going to go over to the Little Monks. Lucy had become a Catholic at some point in there, and said, "We're going to go to mass at eight o'clock. Why don't you come down and go with us?"

So I got down to the White House and the three of us went to mass. And while there he said, "Have the Secret Service called Hubert." Hubert Humphrey was headed to Mexico City on a visit that day. He said, "Tell him to postpone the trip. We're going to

come by and see him after mass.” And he said, “And have them get the peroration for me and the full speech.”

So they went back to the Mansion, got that, brought it back. In those days, the vice president didn’t have a house. He lived in the same apartment complex that I did in Southwest Washington. A bigger apartment, obviously.

So we go over there and Muriel Humphrey and Lucy go in another room. And the president and Hubert Humphrey and I go into the little study. The president says, “I want you to read the speech.”

Hubert is reading away, and then at the end, the peroration, he gets short of breath as he’s reading this, tears welled up, he had no idea this was going to be coming. And the president said, “Now, I don’t want you to tell anybody because I haven’t decided for sure that I’m going to do this. But Jim will call you tonight in Mexico City when I make the decision so that you’ll have notice.” And he said, “If I do this, you’d better get started on your campaign.”

And I’ll never forget the look of hopelessness with the tears in his eyes, Hubert Humphrey saying, “There’s no way I can beat the Kennedys.”

And I thought, “They have really just whipped him.”

JE: Did he try to talk him out of it?

JJ: I don’t recall that he did. I think he was just so overwhelmed and surprised and just felt that the party was going to be turned over to Bobby Kennedy. It just came out of the blue so there was no reason why he should, I guess.

Then we went back to the White House and went through several more drafts that night. I think the speech was like nine o’clock, and about seven o’clock or so, he was over in the Mansion taking a shower and getting ready and all that sort of stuff. And he called over and he said, “Have them put it on the teleprompter.”

JE: And you knew it first?

JJ: Yeah. There were only about four or five people that had any idea that this was going to happen. As a matter of fact, Bob Fleming, who was an assistant press secretary, I asked him to go into the Oval Office and sit next to the president and follow the speech. So if the teleprompter went bad he could slip the speech, where it was, under the president and he could follow it on the script.

I had to go back in my office and start making calls. Hubert Humphrey, Dean Rusk, and several of the cabinet members were headed to Japan or somewhere in Asia. So I had to contact them to their plane and tell them what was going to happen, etcetera, etcetera.

Bob Fleming nearly passed out. As he was kind of thumbing through the pages he nearly passed out when he saw that. He had no idea.

JE: And the words were, “I shall not seek and I will not accept the nomination of my party for another term as your president.”

JJ: Right.

JE: Who wrote that?

JJ: Horace Busby.

JE: So your emotions through all of this, I mean, you know you're a witness to history, you're so close up to it, you're right in the room—

JJ: You know what? You know what?

JE: ...with the vice president and the president and there you are.

JJ: You don't have time to have emotions. You have too many things to do. The only time that I think I had emotions was, I don't know, somewhere in there, '67 or so, it was the middle of the night, and it was a Vietnam bulletin, I can't even remember what it was about, but I felt I had to go over to the Mansion and wake up the president and give this to him.

The lights are very dim in the White House before you take the elevator up to the family quarters. I was going through there and I thought, "You know, here's a kid from Muskogee, Oklahoma, who is seeing the presidents' and the first ladies' portraits on the walls." It was the first time I thought about what a historical time I was a part of.

Chapter 12 - 3:53

Hubert Humphrey

John Erling: Lyndon must have liked you. You two had an affinity, apparently, to each other.

James R. Jones: Well, Bill Moyers and I, I think, were somewhat like the sons he didn't have.

He could chew us out, but we could also give it back where nobody else could. We got away with an awful lot that others didn't get away with, so to speak.

JE: Did you ever say to him, "But, Mr. President, I respectfully disagree with you, I think that's wrong"? Would you ever challenge some of his judgment?

JJ: Yeah, because he was impulsive in many ways, particularly when he was angered or what-have-you. He would say, "Do this, do that," or whatever, and he would give maybe eight or ten things to do.

And sometimes I would say, "Well, could we talk about X?" Or, "Could we talk about Y?" or something. And give my point of view at that. Other times, I would let him vent and just ignore what he said to do. That was fraught with peril because sometimes he meant it and he was wiser than I. And sometimes he didn't mean it. So if you didn't carry out what he said to do you could get a good dressing down.

JE: Did you ever think that, "Oh, oh, I've gone too far"?

JJ: No, not on those. Lyndon Johnson liked his personal staff, his White House staff, not to be glamour boys. I would be in the newspaper from time to time and I always worried about that. I didn't want the publicity. Because of my age I didn't want it because there are knives out, that position in particular, if you have any kind of a weakness or what-have-you, the knives are out and they can really just kill you in terms of your effectiveness.

I never worried about being fired but perhaps being moved out of the line of power if I got some publicity that I didn't want.

JE: Hubert Humphrey and Johnson, what was Johnson's view of Hubert? Did he like him? Did you think he treated him fairly?

JJ: Well, I think in those days, no vice president is treated fairly. I recall, you know, when I was Appointment Secretary in the White House staff mess in the basement there, it had a little dining room and I had a table. It was always my table. Well, Philippine mess boys were the people who served at the White House dining room. I had this pension for a brownie and ice cream, vanilla ice cream as a dessert. So they always had one there for me, whatever time I ate. I usually ate lunch when the president would go back to the Mansion for lunch and taking his nap. So it would be two o'clock or so.

One time, Humphrey was there and had finished his meeting with the president and so he said, "Do you want to go down and have lunch?" We did.

We came to dessert, I said, "Do you have the brownie and ice cream today?"

And they said, "Oh yes, sir."

Hubert says, "That sounds great, I'd like to have that for dessert."

And they said, "Well, I'm sorry, but we only have one left and that's Mr. Jones's."

I said, "Hell no, that's the Vice President's."

So that gives you an indication in those days the vice president was an afterthought. Hubert Humphrey was, in many cases, an afterthought to the central decision-making. But Lyndon Johnson liked Hubert Humphrey extremely. He respected him, he respected his mind, he was frustrated by him because he talks too much and sometimes talked more than he should, in terms of getting certain things made public that Johnson didn't want made public at that particular time.

I'll never forget, and this sounds denigrating but it was not intended to be, I don't think, Humphrey was going out on an overseas trip and he was in the Oval Office. Johnson was telling him, "I want you to do this, I want you to do that, etcetera. And get this point across." And the end, he said, "Now, Hubert, don't go off and make a whole bunch of statements," he said.

JE: Did Hubert take that in stride?

JJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JE: Hubert was known as a happy warrior, wasn't he? He had that—

JJ: He was a very nice fellow.

Chapter 13 - 4:45**Public and Private Johnson**

John Erling: Michael Beschloss, historian, said, “Johnson was very suspicious, very emotional, very terrified person. Tended to focus on Kennedy as behind everything. When there was a bad newspaper story it was Kennedy. When black leaders were complaining he wasn’t doing enough in civil rights, he thought Kennedy was behind it.” You think there’s anything to that?

James R. Jones: Kennedy wasn’t the only one, but yes, the Kennedys were what Johnson called the Georgetown set. They had cultivated the Joe Krafts and the Scotty Restons and the national columnists who were part of the so-called Georgetown set, and they had done that very well. So as things leaked or what-have-you or criticisms, oftentimes he thought that was one of the Kennedys, probably Bobby Kennedy. They were not the only ones.

It was interesting again, Moyers and I were talking and he said, “You’re not paranoid if they really are out to get you.”

JE: Right.

JJ: And Johnson, more correctly than incorrectly, identified people that were out to get him and that these leaks or these kinds of stories emanated from them.

JE: Beschloss also says that this was perhaps the president of the century where there was the greatest difference between the way he appeared in public, he said, “This commanding, stoical Texan and the way he was in private, which was charming, bulldozing, oftentimes terrified, very emotional, and very different from what I’d been led to expect.”

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Was there a difference there?

JJ: Well, yeah. As I say, the Lyndon Johnson that we knew privately was much more outgoing, much more loose than the Lyndon Johnson that was seen in public ceremonies and on television. And I think this is true about anybody I’ve ever known in very high office, whether it’s CEOs of companies or whether it’s top political leaders, there is a certain insecurity that goes with that. You know everybody’s gunning for you. There’s a certain insecurity that goes with that, and certainly Johnson had that.

JE: Do you know about or read the book *The Passage of Power*? This is the fourth book in the series, *Path to Power, Means of Ascent, Master of the Senate* by Robert Caro.

JJ: Yeah, I’ve just started it.

JE: He portrays Johnson as alternating between steaming opportunist and visionary progressive. Would you have a comment that that’s an accurate description?

JJ: I first was interviewed by Bob Caro and, of course, I don’t show up until ’65, which is going to be in his next volume, if he lives that long. But he had written his first book in early ’90s.

The Johnson people were just furious about it because it painted a Lyndon Johnson very one-sided and very negative.

Olivia and I used to host a reception at our home, I mean, for the PEN/Faulkner Award winners, which was a literary award. We never knew who was coming because it was the novelists, it was the historians, etcetera, etcetera. One year, like '92, '93, somebody told Olivia, this was after Caro's book came out, that Robert Caro was here. She came to me and she said, "I understand Robert Caro is here. Get "bleep" out of our house!"

So I made a point of meeting him. And I was charmed by him, I liked him. And he said, "Well, could I interview you?"

I did, and every one of the Johnson people, John Conley, George Christian, everybody, said, "You're a fool to do that because he misquoted the people in the first volume. Can't be trusted," etcetera.

So I started the interview and I said, "It's too bad you're such a damn good writer." I said, "You captured Alend and Johnson very, very well and in a very entertaining way. You missed another thirteen or fourteen Lyndon Johnsons that a number of us got to know." And I said, "My impression of you having read the Moses book, Robert Moses' book, and this, that you are fascinated by people who wield power. You dislike intensely people who enjoy wielding power."

He paused and he said, "That's a very interesting observation."

Flash forward about fourteen years in our second interview up in New York, he had hauled out the notes, he had kept those notes, and he said that either he changed his attitude or Lyndon Johnson changed over those years. Because he sees other Lyndon Johnsons and he thinks they will come out in his books. And indeed they did.

And I think, from what I can tell of this book so far, he's got more Lyndon Johnsons. And I think he'll have even more Lyndon Johnsons, the negative and the positive in his next volume.

JE: So it is accurate the way he's portraying it?

JJ: Yeah, pretty much so, pretty much so. I never knew Lyndon Johnson before '65, basically. I've heard stories about him and everything. I can only attest I was with him virtually in the bedroom at seven every morning until he retired at night, for four years. And then stayed in touch with him the four years before he died.

Chapter 14 - 3:50**7 AM**

John Erling: You were the first one to awaken the president in the morning?

James R. Jones: Well, he—

JE: And why were you with him at seven every morning?

JJ: Well, he liked to work from bed in the morning, and so usually two or three of us would go up there. Marvin Watson, I was not in that group the first year. So the last three years was usually Marvin, Jack Valenti, and myself, or Marvin and me. And then me and Larry Temple. We would assemble all the memos and things he had to read, what he called “night reading.” And if he didn’t finish it up before he left the Oval Office to go back to the Mansion it was all piled up and sent to him over in the Mansion.

And he would get up early, six o’clock or so, and start reading the night reading. And so we would come in about seven o’clock and go over the assignments, everything that needed to be done for that day. And he would vent or what-have-you.

As a good example of how Bill and I had sort of a special relationship, one morning I didn’t get there until about seven thirty. I walked in, he said, “You’re late.”

And I said, “I’ll make up for it by leaving early.” Well, I thought, “Why in the hell did you say that?” You know?

But he just gave you that look, that sort of crooked little look. But he worked from bed till about nine, nine thirty. We would go back to the West Wing and he would get dressed and come over and we would start the public appointments, usually around ten, go to about two, and he would go back, have lunch, and take a two-hour nap, get his pajamas on, come back around four or four thirty and start the afternoon meetings and then work into the night until about eleven or so. And I was there from early on.

JE: Could he sleep? Did he complain about not being able to sleep?

JJ: Most of the time he could sleep, he didn’t sleep that long, but most of the time he could sleep. Sometimes he was really worried about something, most often it was Vietnam, and he worried about Chuck Robb, his son-in-law who was over there.

I had to give him one cable that looked as though Chuck had been killed. That really hit him, you know, right in the stomach. Turned out, obviously, not to be true.

But he would get up in the middle of the night and go down to the Situation Room in the West Wing basement, particularly after he had ordered a raid, an air raid or what-have-you, and see if the planes came back, how many casualties.

Committing troops was not an abstract thing for him, it was a very personal thing, like he was sending his own children.

JE: Hmm. He leaves office in January of '69, you returned to Oklahoma. Did you stay in touch with him after he left office? For a long period of time?

JJ: Yeah, we would talk by phone. I had handled the transition to the Nixon administration. Basically my instructions were, "Make sure the entire government is cooperative and that Richard Nixon and all of us his team on January 20 at twelve noon when he takes office is fully ready to take over the government and is fully briefed, etcetera." That was my charge. So I had gotten to know most of those people.

So when he felt that there was something he wanted or was slighted or what-have-you, he would call me and I would intervene with the administration. My successor in the Nixon administration was Bob Haldeman. I would call Bob or Dwight Chapin or someone like that to get it straightened out.

JE: Were you ever in the same room with Nixon?

JJ: Oh yeah.

JE: What was that about? That in the transition you'd be with him?

JJ: Sure, in the transition.

JE: And speak to him and did he ask you questions?

JJ: Uh, I was never with Nixon alone, it was usually with Johnson. And it had to do with the mechanics of the transition. I'll never forget him telling me, because I was trying to make sure I knew who was his people, and basically he said, "If you can't get me always talk to John Mitchell. He speaks for me."

Well, Lyndon Johnson had nobody speaking for him. That was just kind of a shocker to me that the President Elect would have someone who he felt totally comfortable in making decisions for him, which, again, led to, I think, some of the Watergate stuff that later happened.

Chapter 15 - 5:00

Politics for Jim

John Erling: You do come back to Tulsa?

James R. Jones: Yeah.

JE: Somewhere in line here you met this lady by the name of Olivia.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: You're married in 1968, and then you have two sons?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And their names are?

JJ: Jeffrey and Adam.

JE: And where are they today? What are they doing?

JJ: Jeffrey lives in New York. He's been in finance every since he graduated from Stanford, and then had an interruption to do his MBA at Stanford. He has his own financial consulting business now and he helps entrepreneurs buy companies and things like that.

Adam, after being a travel writer in San Francisco he came back to Washington, pounded the streets, and he's the legislative assistant to a Colorado senator Mark Udall.

JE: So you practiced law then in Tulsa?

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: But in 1970, you campaigned as a Democrat for the First District seat, held for years by Republican Page Belcher. You were so close to the president, and see the way this operates. Was there something that you thought, "You know, I'm going to come back. I'm going to be president of the United States one day"? Did you think those thoughts back then?

JJ: Not quite like that. I felt that if I were ever in a position to be president I would probably be as well prepared as anybody that would be running against me. But I have to backtrack. March 31 the president took himself out of reelection.

In April, I attended on behalf of the White House a charity premiere of a movie in Washington called *2001: A Space Odyssey*. I had a date. I went to sleep in intermission. I woke up and I saw this dazzling blonde with a sequined miniskirt coming up with a friend of mine, it was her date. I thought maybe she was one of the stars of the movie or something. And I made a point to go over there and get in conversation with them and meet them.

Then after that, we went down to the ranch for about ten days in April. I guess it was Easter or something.

JE: To the ranch? To the?

JJ: LBJ Ranch in Texas. While we were down there I thought, "Well, you know, we're coming back. I ought to find that Olivia Barclay." So I asked the White House operator to find her. I said, "She's an attorney over at Hogan and Hartson. She if you can find her for me."

Well, they traced her down in the Los Angeles County Law Library where she was researching the case that she had out there. She came on the phone, and I said who I am. "We met at the such and such and let's have dinner."

It was early May. So we had our first date in May. I proposed in June.

JE: Wow.

JJ: She accepted in August, and we were married in November. Forty-four years ago.

JE: How about that.

JJ: So anyway, the president was very nice. They came to the wedding, as did most of the cabinet.

JE: Where were you married at?

JJ: Here in Washington at Holy Trinity Church where JFK was married with Jackie. The president gave a nice reception at the White House for us, etcetera.

So the president wanted me to go to the ranch with him and run his operations there in retirement. And I said, "Mr. President, I would love to do that, but I really want to see if I can get elected myself. And I want to have a political career."

And he said, "Well, now you think about it."

And so, I asked Tom Johnson, who was in that first class White House fellows, he was an assistant press secretary by this point. I said, "Tom, what do you have planned after we leave office?"

He said, "I don't have any plans."

I said, "Why don't you think about going to the ranch and running the president's operations there?"

Well, it turned out that he did and it worked out well for both of us. We both accomplished what we wanted to accomplish. It was interesting because after the inauguration, the new president has lunch at the Capitol, and the old president gets off and goes into history.

Well, Clark Clifford had a luncheon for all the Johnson close folks at his house. And then the president after that took a helicopter to Andrews and flew on to the ranch.

So Olivia and I had been married two months, so we pack up and get in our car and drive to Oklahoma. She had never been to that part of the country and I thought Tulsa probably would be the place she would like best in Oklahoma, either Tulsa or Norman. I chose Tulsa, and so we came down there.

My idea, again, I was going to fulfill that dream of being the youngest governor in Oklahoma. Dewey Bartlett was the governor and was running for reelection. Everybody said, "He's invincible." I didn't think he was so I started going around the state making speeches.

And Olivia, in this period of time, became pregnant. She knew nobody in Oklahoma when we moved there. So it was going to be a real sacrifice to make that race. And I decided at the end of 1969, after exploring it, I thought I had a reasonable chance of winning but it was going to be a sacrifice that I wasn't prepared to make for personal reasons, family reasons. So I decided I wasn't going to run.

We get into '70, and they didn't have anybody running against Page Belcher. I thought, "Well, I might just try that." And that's how I got into the congressional race.

JE: How old were you then when you ran in that race?

JJ: Thirty-one. Thirty when I announced and thirty-one when I ran.

Chapter 16 – 4:12
Congressional Race

John Erling: He was a ten-term incumbent.

James R. Jones: Right.

JE: What made you think you could be this ten-term incumbent?

JJ: Well, primarily, and I guess I had a different vision, I thought he was a very nice man but he accomplished nothing. His expertise was agriculture and the district had changed so it was more urban and not agriculture. I just thought that I could make the case that I had more energy, more ability to get things done, and that he had had a good career, but it was time, as he used to say, to turn the page.

JE: It was a rough campaign, wasn't it?

JJ: It wasn't that rough. No, it wasn't that rough.

JE: Lots of arrows back and forth?

JJ: No.

JE: You were defeated, was it close?

JJ: I think it was 53/47, 54/46, it was closer than anybody thought it was going to be.

JE: Two years later then, Page Belcher retires in '72.

JJ: He retired a month after I announced.

JE: Do you think it was for health reasons? Or it was fear of another campaign?

JJ: I think he, by that point, was tired and knew it was going to be a tough campaign to win. We had made good strides. For example, Walt Helmerich in 1970, Walt Helmerich had his people taking our signs out of properties that he owned where the tenants were there and to ask us to put a sign up, and Walt would have his people come and take the signs out of the yard.

JE: In Utica Square?

JJ: No, all down 21st. Houses he owned.

JE: Oh.

JJ: Things like that that he had rented. This is just one example, but after that election I called him and I said, "If you have a minute I'd like to come meet you." And I went over to his office and we met. I basically said, you know, "I want you to see who I really am. We've never met, I'd like to see who you really are."

We had a wonderful visit and he ended up, I don't remember that year, but he ended up being Republican for Jones, and a lot of the people like that, Joe Williams. And I think a number of those people talked to Page and said, "It may be time to gracefully retire."
There you are.

JE: I should have asked, Olivia, was she from Washington, DC area?

JJ: No she was born in New York City and grew up in Southern California. Her family were all in the movie business.

JE: You win that election then in '72, first of seven successful congressional campaigns. As a matter of fact, Nixon carried Tulsa with 78 percent of the vote, and you won with 11 percent of the vote. That was probably a surprise.

But the Republicans had recruited former Tulsa mayor Jim Hewgley to run against you.

JJ: Right.

JE: That campaign. Was it easy for you? Did you think you were on the upswing winning that campaign all along?

JJ: After Page announced he wasn't going to run for reelection, there were about four Republicans running. Jim Hewgley won the primary. And he was the hands-down favorite to win the race.

We ran probably the best campaign that I've ever run. Strategically, tactically, and everything else. Obviously, as the Republicans do, they try to paint any Democrat as a big liberal. Before they could even do that, Jim Hewgley in the start of the campaign stood out in front of the McDonnell Douglas place and said, "Jones, like McGovern, is such and such liberal. Jones like McGovern ...Jones like McGovern."

So we did a commercial then because it was not factual. We did a commercial and I stood out in front of something, and I said, "Hewgley says such and such, that's a lie. Hewgley said such and such, that's a lie." And did sort of the same format. And then the punch line was, "And these days when trust and public officials is so important, can we afford to elect someone who is so *liberal* with the truth?"

And overnight he became the liberal. It was an excellently run campaign.

JE: Was the district known as Republican or Democrat?

JJ: I remember about my second term the *National Journal* or CQ ran a matrix of all 435 congressional districts. And mine was considered the second most Republican and the second most conservative in the whole country, next to Orange County, California. And they could never understand how we won.

JE: And would win again and again and again.

Chapter 17 - 3:25

Last Visit with Johnson

John Erling: In '73, Lyndon Johnson dies. Do you remember the last conversation you had with him?

James R. Jones: Yeah. I had been sworn in, in early January 1973. I had had a nice conversation with him before going to Washington to be sworn in. In any event, I can't remember, he called me or I called him after I was in the office, about a week or ten days before he died. We had gone down there after the election just to see him and talk about the committee assignments that I was hoping to get, etcetera, etcetera. And he had started smoking again. He was popping nitro glycerin pills, smoking, and eating badly and things like that. So his health was not all that good.

And he called me about a week or ten days before, and he said, "Now, you're on the Interior Committee, right?"

And I said, "Yeah, that's one of the committees."

He said, "I want you to do this and I want you to do that and look after the Ladybird Park and the Wildflower Foundation," and this and that and the other thing.

I said, "Yeah, I'll certainly do that." That was the last conversation that I had with him. And so I understand he was making other calls to other people not in Congress. I was the only one from the team elected. Sort of cleaning up his list of to-dos.

JE: Were you conscious of those as you served? His to-dos, to try to come through for him?

JJ: Oh yeah, I mean, he didn't have that many to-dos, but yes, the Wildflower Foundation was Ladybird's creation and the Park and all that. It was a very natural thing to try to help those.

JE: We should point out that you served on several committees during your fourteen years, including the Armed Services?

JJ: The first term I served on Armed Services as the major committee and the Interior as the minor committee. And then I was an Assistant of the House.

JE: You were on the Ways and Means Committee?

JJ: In the second term through the end I was on Ways and Means Committee and the Trade Subcommittee where I was ranking Democrat and Chairman of the Medicare Subcommittee.

JE: And you won a seat on the Budget Committee. Tell us about winning, how does that work?

JJ: Well, the majority party has the chairmanships. So in the Democratic Caucus, whoever they elect as chairman are the ones that will be the chairman. So I decided to run, maybe it was after the '80 election, was it? Yeah, it was after the '80 election and I decided to run for Budget Chairman.

David Obey, who later became Appropriations Chairman was there. And Paul Simon, who later became a very distinguished senator from Illinois. So the three of us were running.

The interesting thing is, I was always on the conservative side of the Democratic party on economic policy. And they were on the liberal side on economic and all social policy too. I had coauthored the bill that became the 1978 Tax Act and had done that against

Jimmy Carter's tax proposal. So it was a bit controversial that a Democrat would undercut the president on his own tax proposal.

But the Democrats liked the proposal so much, and many of them ran on it. And so, by '80, I had attracted a lot of Democratic caucus votes that would not have been there if I hadn't made that challenge, basically.

So on the first ballot David Obey and I tied and Paul Simon came in third and so he lopped off. In the runoff on the second ballot David Obey and I tied again. So we went into a third ballot, and on the third ballot I won 121 to 116.

Chapter 18 - 10:00

Memorable Campaigns

John Erling: Some of your memorable campaigns from names that we still know. In—

James R. Jones: Where did you get all this stuff?

JE: In '76, 1976, Jim Inhofe ran against you.

JJ: Right.

JE: In the Republican primary he defeated state senator Frank Keating.

JJ: Right.

JE: And Mary Warner.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: And then he loses in the general election to you, 54 percent to 45 percent.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: About that campaign, was that a difficult campaign? Was this the first time you maybe thought, "Well, I don't know if I'm going to make this. He's a Republican and Republicans are getting stronger"?

JJ: It was interesting because Olivia and I, before every campaign, usually at the beginning of the year, would map out how do you beat this guy Jones? We were pretty good at beating Jones. So that when we got to the real campaign they could throw nothing at us that we hadn't thought of ourselves and were ready with a counterpunch.

On Inhofe, we had thought of everything he could throw at us. And we get into the fall campaign, I'm still in Washington. We had a late session of Congress, and they would be sending the clips of stuff in the paper that he had charged me this and charged me that, and I thought, "This guy must be brilliant. I've never thought of that and we never thought of that." And I thought, "God, I've never run against such a brilliant tactician and strategist as Inhofe."

Came back to Tulsa with about three weeks before the election. We finally adjourned. And we had a debate before the downtown Kiwanis Club, Lion's Club, one of those. And I came home, and I told Olivia, I said, "I think we figured out Inhofe."

She said, "What's that?"

I said, "He's just dumber than a post." And once we figured that out we were able to handle him easily.

JE: I don't understand. He still said the same things but?

JJ: We had plenty of counterpunches. The other thing that he couldn't stand was humor poked at him. And humor has to be used delicately because humor against someone else can also be cruel sometimes. But our humor just drove him up the wall. He would almost self-destruct in public gatherings. And so we could ignore him basically, except when we were together. And play our own game, and it turned out to be good.

JE: You debated with him?

JJ: We debated. I don't remember how many times but I think we had maybe two or three.

JE: And he had run for governor.

JJ: Right.

JE: And been defeated as well.

JJ: Against Boren, yeah.

JE: Then another memorable campaign would be 1984, when Frank Keating ran against you.

JJ: Right.

JE: And he had been a state legislator. And you received 52 percent of vote as Reagan carried the district in his forty-nine-state landslide.

JJ: Right.

JE: So this was a huge win for you?

JJ: Well, the interesting thing was that every Republican that ran against me, I knew they were going to come out and just throw mud right off the bat.

JE: Just because you were a Democrat?

JJ: Yeah, and always they overstated the case. So I never threw the first punch, but once the punch was thrown we counterattacked ferociously. And Frank had made a commercial standing in the boxing ring, if you recall, and he says, "As US Attorney I've never lost a case."

Well, there's never any attorney that hasn't lost a case somewhere. Olivia goes down to the law library, does the research and found a couple of cases that were significant that he lost. So we counterpunched with a commercial on that and it just turned the tide.

Again, it was one of those things if the candidate won't be honest with you when he's asking you for your vote, how do you think he's going to be honest with you afterward?

After the election, I saw Frank at an airport somewhere. We visited and I said, "You know, I just want to tell you something. I'm glad I never lost, but if I had had to lose to

someone you would have been the one I wanted to lose to, because you were in public service for the right reasons, and you were smart.”

And we've been friends ever since.

JE: Nice compliment. And we all know he went on to become the Governor of the State of Oklahoma.

JJ: Well, he said he never could have been governor if I hadn't beaten him.

JE: So then you decide being a representative, you've done that long enough and to enter into a campaign for the US Senate. And that happened in 1986.

JJ: Well, it's a little more complicated than that. In 1980, it was an open senate seat when Don Nickles won for the first time. Some polls were done. I don't know that I did them but some polls were done that showed that of all the candidates, Democratic and Republican, I was the odds on favorite to win.

I thought about it and I thought, “You know, I'm not that enamored with the Senate. I love the House and I would love to be Speaker of the House. And if I can be elected Budget Chairman that would be the stepping stone to be Speaker.” And so I decided not to run in 1980.

When Frank Keating ran against me, of all the Democrats in the House, I had more requests from other members to come speak in their districts. And the press said that Tip O'Neill's successor would either be Jim Wright, Dan Rostenkowski, or myself. It would be a three-person race. I was tied down that whole campaign. I could either go around the country and make speeches for other people and pick up the chits and get defeated, or I could reelected and hope.

By the time that election was over, it was obvious that Jim Wright, who had no opposition in Texas, had gone around the country and picked up the chits. And he was going to be elected Speaker.

So I thought to myself, “I could hang around maybe twenty more years and be Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, but do I want to do that?” And I decided I didn't. I didn't want to just be an ordinary member, and there were many other things.

So I called my mother, this would be 1987, she was eighty-seven years old. And I'll never forget this, I called her and I said, “Mom, I just want you to know I'm going to have a press conference tomorrow. And I'm going to announce that I'm not going to run for reelection. I just wanted you to know ahead of time.”

Long pause and she says, “You think you can get another job?”

And I thought I was really disturbed by that at that time. I'd done all these things. Now, being a parent, you see exactly what she meant. In any event, I had no particular plans, and then nobody was running against Don Nickles.

So some Democrats came to me and said, “Would you run?”

And I thought, "Well, I don't have any other plans. Yes I will." I had gotten into the race, maybe the first week, and going around outside the *Tulsa World* circulation area into the *Daily Oklahoman* circulation area I realized, "This is not winnable. The attitudes of Oklahomans are such that I can't win this race. I mean, we can make a good run at it but this is really uphill."

But then, you're in a situation where you have to put on the smile and keep up the front until the election is over. That's a very tough thing to do, but I don't regret doing it. I learned a lot.

JE: When did you determine you couldn't win this election? Early on in the campaign?

JJ: Pretty early on. I would either have to substantially change my beliefs and talk about them. We closed the gap, we closed the gap and by Labor Day our polls showed that we were like within two or three points of Nickles, and we felt that we had some momentum going.

At that point, we had just started running an and with the entire congressional delegation, including David Boren endorsing me. This had been cleared before, these are things that they had all said publicly, etcetera, etcetera. David apparently got some pressure out of Oklahoma City and he called and said we had to pull the ads, we couldn't run the ads.

And I said, "But you had agreed to basically."

Well, he said, "We just can't. I didn't see this commercial and I didn't approve it."

So we had to pull the ads. Not only that, but a simultaneous story leaked front page in the *Daily Oklahoman* that David Boren insisted that we pull the ads. And our momentum we saw on the polls, our momentum just reversed. So once that was done I knew it was going to be very tough.

JE: So why was David Boren pressured to withhold that endorsement?

JJ: I—I have no idea. He had many friends over in Oklahoma City, the Gaylords, and what-have-you. And whatever they had on him or pressure to put on him apparently they did.

But as I tell Olivia, in many ways we should be thanking David because I've gone on to do many more things. And I'm in a much better financial situation than I never would have been had we been elected.

JE: Think Nickles painted you as a liberal? Actually you were a centrist.

JJ: Yeah, yeah.

JE: But the Republican shift also, the drumbeat was on. And it's like who could win as a Democrat?

JJ: Yeah. It was amazing to me because if you strictly looked at the Reagan policies and what they were doing to average Oklahomans, you would say, "If they're voting their self-interest they would vote Democratic." But Reagan was such an icon and so beloved that you couldn't penetrate that. And so it was a Republican year.

JE: Ronald Reagan, very popular, made two visits to the state, on top of you being a Democrat.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: That had to help, obviously, as well.

JJ: Oh yeah. Yeah. No, there's no questions. And Nickles ran a good campaign. We had one debate, which was not televised in Tulsa, at one of the Jewish women's organizations. And I felt that I had won that debate hands-down. But he would never debate me again, so we could never contrast the two of us, which was very smart on his part. And then using the Reagan umbrella, it was a smart campaign.

Chapter 19 - 1:42

Tough to Lose

John Erling: We'll have students of politics and all listen to this. How tough is it to lose a campaign? To lose a race?

James R. Jones: Oh I think it's tough, particularly if you've been in it a long time. You don't know for sure what's out there and what's next. But you wouldn't get in it to begin with if you felt that you were going to lose. You go in it to win, so it's tough. I really enjoyed being in public office and having the wherewithal to solve problems.

The *New York Times*, I think it was, or maybe it was *Wall Street Journal* did an interview with me before I left office. And they said, "Are you going to miss all the perks of office? The receptions you might have had?"

I said, "Not a bit. We didn't participate in many of those anyway. But I really will miss is that farmer in Bixby or that small shop owner in Collinsville has a problem, and comes to me, and I can fix it. Whereas when you're not in office you can't fix it." I said, "That was the satisfaction I got out of it." From that standpoint it was a tough thing to lose, but I don't regret any of it.

JE: Well, as your life has turned out there should be no regrets, but we still like to win. But then you decided to move back to Washington, DC.

JJ: After I left office, I got offers from various places. Most of the offers I got were law firms out of Washington, or national law firms. Out of Oklahoma I really didn't have any offers that I thought matched. And I think Oklahoma thought of me as a politician and not as someone who understood law and business.

So I took the best offer, which I enjoyed. I was a partner in a law firm here. Did that for a couple of years before I was recruited to go to New York for the Stock Exchange.

Chapter 20 - 3:12**American Stock Exchange**

John Erling: And there you were Chair from '89 to '93, and Chief Executive Officer of the American Stock Exchange.

James R. Jones: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Tell us the difference between the American Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange.

JJ: Well, the New York Stock Exchange had more of the big companies listed on it and traded on it. American Stock Exchange had historically catered to the mid-sized companies, the smaller companies. There were a few big ones like *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and the company that owns CBS. There were some large companies but mostly it was mid-sized companies.

And then the American Stock Exchange had a particular niche in derivative products, particularly options.

JE: The major challenge for you then, as Chair was to grow the Exchange? Or what were the challenges?

JJ: Well, the Exchange had been losing market share. Arthur Levitt had been Chairman and CEO of that for a number of years, and had done a magnificent job. But the American Stock Exchange had been losing market share, particularly in the trading of equities.

So my job was to find different ways to reverse that trend and to increase market share, as well as increase overall trading activity, i.e., derivative products and things like that. So we beefed up the so-called financial engineers. We got really bright people.

We were the first ones to introduce something called ETF, Exchange Traded Funds. And the first one was called the Spiders (SPDR), the S&P derivative product, call them Spiders. These financial engineers came up with all kinds of financially engineered derivative products.

And the best thing I did there at the Exchange was when a product or an equity is traded, as Chairman CEO I have to sign that and send it to the Securities and Exchange Commission and they rubberstamp approval. But it's my responsibility for making sure it's done. I took that very seriously and even when the General Council and the CFO had gone through it, I read each one of those.

And one time, they presented the product to me to be traded, and I read it, and I couldn't understand it, I couldn't understand how the investor was going to get anything out of it. Olivia is the smartest person I know. I took it home that weekend and I said, "You read this and tell me what you think about it." She couldn't understand it.

So on Monday morning I got all these financial engineers in my office and I said, “Now, fellows, I’ll tell you one thing. I’m not the brightest guy in the world, but I’m damned sure not the dumbest. If you can’t present something to me that I can understand and believe in we’re not trading it, period.” That was the smartest thing I ever did to keep us out of trouble.

And if you flash forward to a few years ago when they had all these esotery products that helped bring the market down, these mortgage-backed security combinations, etcetera, I asked a board member of one of the major financial institutions, “How in the world did the CEO approve of trading that?”

He said, “You know, we asked him about that once and he said, ‘Well, I don’t understand it either.’ ”

Well, I thought to myself if the CEO doesn’t understand it you shouldn’t be trading it, you shouldn’t be operating in it. To admit that you don’t know it all is really a very good lesson.

JE: Yeah.

Chapter 21 – 3:45

Ambassador to Mexico

John Erling: You served as Ambassador to Mexico from ’93 to June of ’97, assisting with the passage and implementation of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, which is an agreement that is contributed to increases in agricultural trade and investment between the US and Canada. What part did you play in that passage?

James R. Jones: Before it was done, as I say, I was with a group of CEOs in New York that were part of a larger business group that was promoting the administration and Congress to negotiate and pass NAFTA. George H.W. Bush had basically completed the negotiations and then Clinton wins the race in ’92. During the transition I had been, first of all, asked if I would be interested in being considered for Director of OMB.

And I said, “Maybe in a second term but I can’t right now.” I couldn’t tell them at the time that I was trying to put together a merger of the American Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange. And I said, “Business just doesn’t allow me.”

A few weeks later, I got a call about being Ambassador to Japan. I said, “I have no interest in being an ambassador. Never did, take me off the ambassador’s list. And besides, business won’t let me, I’m doing something else that I can’t interrupt.”

Well, that merger thing fell through early in ’93, and about May of ’93 President Clinton called. I was just going out on a ten-day trip. I periodically would go around the country

meeting with the CEOs of our traded equity companies. And I was just about to go out on a ten-day trip. The president called at the office and started talking about the economy.

And, of course, you're always glad to be advising the president on the state of the economy and what he should do and this and that. And so we talked. And I finally said, "Mr. President, I would love to talk some more but I've got to catch a plane, blah, blah, blah."

He said, "Well, that's not why I called you anyway." And he said, "I want you to be Ambassador to Mexico."

I said, "Oh, Mr. President, I have no interest in being an ambassador. I appreciate the honor and all."

And he said, "No," he said, "NAFTA's in trouble. You've got the reputation of putting bipartisan coalitions together. I need you to do this."

I said, "Let me think about it and I'll call you when I come back." Because I hadn't told any of my directors.

And it leaked from the White House that he had offered this to me during this trip. So I called and he said, "Well, I need you to do it."

President Johnson had told us, "In the future, if any president, Democratic or Republican, ever calls and says he needs you, you just drop whatever you're doing and you do it."

So I said, "Okay, I'll agree to do it for a year to help pass NAFTA and help implement NAFTA. I'll do it for a year." In that year, we passed it, we implemented it, and then you had the Chiapas Uprising, you had an election and everything else. And I ended up doing it four years. They said they would like for me to do it another four years and had I been ten years older or younger I would have done it. It was one of the great experiences of my life.

JE: But there were facts or myths out there that NAFTA cost the US jobs, had hurt America's manufacturing base, and suppressed US wages. Those kind of arguments were out there against NAFTA.

JJ: They were out there and they were totally untrue. Every study that was made of NAFTA showed that it increased jobs, the jobs that were related to NAFTA trade were on average 15 to 18 percent higher than jobs that were not related, that were strictly domestic. The trade between us more than quadrupled. Every study except one early on showed that it was a net benefit to the United States. But the opposition who opposed it, and it was mostly labor unions, who opposed it in the beginning kept opposing it and created the myth that it was not successful, when it was very successful.

Chapter 22 - 5:45**Drug War**

John Erling: As Ambassador in Mexico there you were obviously involved in working against drug trafficking. Tell us about the strategy for fighting drug trafficking in the '90s. Did you believe the cartels would ever be put out of business? And was that even a possibility?

James R. Jones: When I was there, there were three major cartels. Today there are fifteen to twenty. There were three major cartels: Tijuana cartel, the Juarez cartel, and the Gulf cartel. What I recognized fairly early on is that you'll never shut down the cartels until you shut down the demand for drugs in the United States, illegal drugs. And as long as this market was here, which was a multi, multibillion dollar market for illegal drugs, someone would find a way to get them to the market.

For many years, they were shipping them from Colombia, Bolivia, etcetera, through the Gulf of Mexico to Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and then distributing them that way. It took us about ten years to shut down those routes. And finally when we were successful, the next best route to the United States was through Mexico. That's how the cartels developed in the late 1980s in Mexico.

What I concluded was, there's no way to shut down the cartels totally as long as the market demand in the United States was so large. How do you deal with them? I called our strategy the Cucaracha Strategy. Cucaracha is Spanish for cockroaches. If you've ever lived in row houses in a city, you move in, you have cockroaches, you spray, and the cockroaches are gone and then they come back. So then you get a monthly spray and the cockroaches stay out of your house. But then three houses down all the cockroaches are.

So my theory was, keep harassing the cartels and disrupting their business activities and ultimately they will move somewhere else. Mexico City and Vienna used to be the crossroad of the spies in the Cold War days. So the Mexican Embassy, the US Embassy in Mexico was the largest embassy in the world. And we had electronic intelligence gathering capability that was the best in the world.

What I had done at the end of the Cold War was to retrain, redeploy that intelligence gathering to other causes among which was the drug operations.

Essentially, the only real, the biggest death threat I've ever had was then the big cartel was the Gulf cartel and it was headed by a guy named Juan Garcia Ábrego. So we targeted him through various intelligence gathering. We found out his girlfriend had arranged for a facelift for him.

Because the Mexican is so leaky and corrupt, I dealt strictly with the Attorney General of Mexico, who was a very honest and capable guy. We mapped out a plan to nab this guy

while he was out getting his facelift. Ultimately, we had to expand the circle. Before it was done it was compromised and the guy got out of it.

Then we got messages in our interception that this guy was going to teach the US Ambassador a lesson, so he put a contract out on me to bomb the US Ambassador. So for ten days or so there I had extra security and everything else.

Then it turned out that when this was born he was born simultaneously in Mexico and Texas. And he had two birth certificates, one in Texas, and one in Mexico. In those days, extradition was very, very difficult. It was almost impossible to extradite a Mexican to the United States. But expulsion was very easy. So if you had a foreign citizen you could expel them.

So I had arranged with the Foreign Minister to recognize the Texas birth certificate, and if we ever nabbed this guy to let me know. We'd have a plane here, put him on a plane. Well, that's what happened. We, quite by accident, got the guy caught and within a few hours we had a plane down there. Put him on the plane, sent him to Houston. That was about 1994 or 5, and he is still in prison in a high intensity prison in Colorado.

JE: The *New York Times* carried a story just a few weeks ago, July 17, where they said the policies the United States has had for the last forty-one years had become irrelevant. Morris Panner, a former counter-narcotics prosecutor in New York and in the American Embassy in Colombia. The United States was worried about shipments of heroin and cocaine for years, but whether those policies worked or not it doesn't matter, because they are now worried about Americans using prescription drugs.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: So, since 2010, programs for building the rules of law in stronger communities has become the largest items in the State Department's anti-drug budget.

JJ: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: So they've changed that.

JJ: Well, we're still supporting them very strongly in the anti-drug cartel interdiction and what-have-you. We're sharing more intelligence with them now. We have supplied them through the Mérida Initiative with about seven or eight hundred million dollars worth of equipment and things like that. We're very deficient because our gun laws are such that almost all the heavy weapons that the drug cartels are using against the police and civilians are bought at gun shows in the United States.

JE: This is startling, of the over thirty-six thousand overdoses' deaths in the United States in 2008, twenty thousand involved a prescription drug, more than all illicit drugs combined.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: That's how serious the problem is here.

JJ: Yeah. And some of these drugs that come from prescription are really dangerous. I'm on a board of something called Drug Strategies. We do a lot of studies on that stuff. It really can turn a human being into an animal.

Chapter 23 - 2:53

Immigration

John Erling: As a former Ambassador to Mexico, and this is a huge topic, but maybe just a general comment, the plan that you would favor in dealing with the illegals that have been living in the United States?

James R. Jones: I think the ones who have been living here for a fairly long time and have obeyed the laws, I think should have a path to become at least a permanent resident, and if not that, a citizen. Our whole history is built on immigrants who are hungry and will work hard, and they built this country.

You look at so many families and companies that have been built. What we're doing now is saying, "We don't want you." If that becomes a national attitude, I think we might as well say that we're on the downhill slide.

JE: You also went to work for a clothing company, didn't you?

JJ: After I left Mexico, a woman who is a really hard-charging person named Linda Wauknor I had met while I was at the Stock Exchange. And we were a part of a group of executives in New York that were promoting NAFTA. She called me when I announced that I wasn't going to stay in Mexico beyond the four years that I was there. She said, "I want you to be president of my company," which was a fashion company. We had the licenses for Calvin Klein jeans, Calvin Klein underwear, Ralph Lauren Chaps products, all kinds of these fashion products. We had the licenses, and some of them were worldwide licenses, so that we manufactured, distributed, and sold.

I said, "Linda, I don't know a damn thing about the fashion business."

She said, "Aw, it's easy to learn." And she made a financial offer to me that I had never even dreamed of.

So I told Olivia, I said, "Well, I'll try it for a year. I've always done things I didn't know anything about but would be fun to learn something about."

I was into that not very long and I just didn't like the business. It was a mean-spirited, backstabbing kind of business. What was the Prada movie that Meryl Streep was in?

JE: Yes.

JJ: I think the lady wore Prada, or something like that. It was very representative of that kind of business. So, toward the end of that year, I told Linda, I said, “You know, this is just not cut out for me.”

She had been giving me many different options and had advanced the vesting date so that within about six months I had about six million dollars of options that would exercise. The stock price was here and the exercise price was there. And she said, “You’re crazy.” She said, “You got all this.”

And I said, “Well, you know, I love to work, but if I don’t like coming to work all the money in the world is not worth it to me.” So I left. A month later, not because I left or anything, but a month later the stock fell below the strike price and never surfaced again.

So if I had stayed there six months I probably would have had a heart attack, been miserable, and been out of the money.

JE: And that was the Warnaco International Company?

JJ: Yeah.

Chapter 24 - 2:25

Presidential Race Prediction

John Erling: Now you’re senior counsel here at Manatt, Phelps, and Phillips, Washington, DC, legal firm. Your role here at the firm, what is it?

James R. Jones: Basically, the subsidiary is the ManattJones Global Strategies. And I’m Chair and CEO of that. Almost all of my work is in Latin America. We put offices in Mexico City and São Paulo, Brazil. We don’t practice law there but we, basically, through business consulting and advisory help US-based companies open markets or solve market problems in those countries.

JE: Since this is capturing a view of history right now, people who will listen to this years to come, we have a presidential election coming up. The economy is at issue.

Have you met President Obama, by the way?

JJ: Yeah. I don’t know him at all well but I met him once, yes.

JE: Can you make a prediction on how this election is going to turn out?

JJ: My personal belief is that 98 to 99 percent of the votes are already decided. And it’s going to be a very small percentage of the voting population in about six or seven or eight states that’s going to determine. And I think the determination is going to be on a perception of the economy. If on the first Tuesday in November that small 1 percent believes that the

economy is at least on the improving track, is on the right path, that Obama is helping to guide that, I think Obama wins by a very small margin.

If they believe the otherwise, I think Romney wins by a very small margin. I don't think Romney would be a very good president. Neither one of them have connected emotionally with the voters the way a Bill Clinton or a Ronald Reagan has. I think that's a very important part of leadership and neither one of them have that, in my judgment.

JE: There seems to be a likeability for Obama that, who knows, could play—

JJ: He's more—

JE: ...in his favor, if it's that close.

JJ: Yeah, I think that is a factor. Given all the mud thrown on Obama on the Internet and what-have-you consistently since he was elected, and consider there's still some racism in this country, the fact that he's holding his own now is partly due to that likeability factor.

That's one of the things that Ronald Reagan taught me. And then Clinton had it in spades too. Likeability is probably more important than intelligence, in terms of leadership.

Chapter 25 - 3:00

Fred Harris

John Erling: I've interviewed former senator Fred Harris.

James R. Jones: Um-hmm (agreeing).

JE: Did your lives cross each other?

JJ: Well, Fred came to Washington, he defeated Howard Edmondson in 1964. After Senator Kerr died in '63, Howard appointed himself Senator, and then lost in the primary to Fred. And Fred then beat Bud Wilkinson in '64. I got to know Fred during that campaign. I worked for Ed Edmondson but had also, once he defeated Howard, had helped Ed put together some Democratic functions before I left Ed's office.

Then I got to know Fred because Lyndon Johnson liked him and appointed him to, I guess it was the Kerner Commission, one of those commissions, so I knew Fred during that period. We were never particularly close but very friendly. Fred was very capable.

When he first came to Washington I thought he'd had a good career in the State Senate, but he really was a greenhorn in terms of Washington. But he learned fast.

JE: And he was pretty young. He was thirty-three years old, I believe, when he came there.

JJ: Yeah, something like that. Yeah.

JE: He had said in his interview he thought he was the only person who could have breakfast with Hubert Humphrey, lunch with Bobby Kennedy, and dinner with Lyndon Johnson.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: They all hated each other.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: If that's true, but somehow Fred was likeable enough so they all liked him.

JJ: Yeah, and I think he was finally perceived, by at least Johnson and Humphrey, as being closer to the Kennedys. The relationship with Johnson diminished a little bit after two or three years there.

JE: He talks about Humphrey selecting a vice president and then came down to Fred Harris and Ed Muskie, the two of them.

JJ: I don't think it was quite that way.

JE: Well, he in graphic detail talks about how they were in separate bedrooms.

JJ: Yeah.

JE: And then Humphrey comes to Fred with tears in his eyes and says, "I'm sorry, I have to go with the older gentleman." And he said, "Will you come with me into the other room to tell him?" And they did.

JJ: I'm not disputing—

JE: And Humphrey says to Muskie, "And so, this is the man." And it was a pregnant pause, "Who will introduce you at the convention as Vice President of the United States."

JJ: Yeah, that's very probably true. We were at the LBJ Ranch during that time and we only got calls from Humphrey, sort of trying to clear the ones he had talked about. I don't remember Fred's name. The first choice, early on, was Sarge Shriver. But the Kennedys, they vetoed that, basically.

And then the next thing I recall hearing from Humphrey was Ed Muskie. There was a family problem, which I'm not going to go into because the family member is still alive. But there was a family problem, which wouldn't be a problem today, but it was in those days, that Muskie had. It was a question of whether this would come out. It never did and we didn't have a problem with Muskie.

JE: The Kennedys didn't care for Hubert Humphrey?

JJ: No. The Kennedys didn't want a non-Kennedy to be the vice presidential candidate.

JE: Oh? Even though Shriver—

JJ: Was the brother-in-law.

JE: Even though he had married into the family he still wasn't a Kennedy.

JJ: He was not a Kennedy. That's the story we got.

Chapter 26 – 2:00**Advice for Students**

John Erling: Advice for students who would be interested in international trade, the economy, how to prepare themselves as they look to the future, or getting involved in politics, what kind of advice would you throw out?

James R. Jones: Well, getting involved in politics, start at the local level, and start putting up signs and doing whatever it takes to make the candidate's life easier and more successful. You'll get noticed and then there'll be vacuums developed and those vacuums may be nothing more than filing or whatever. But volunteer to fill those vacuums and ultimately you'll be noticed even more.

When I was in Muskogee, in those days, you had a lot of itinerant journalists and itinerant radio broadcasters. And it usually meant that they had a drinking problem and they went from town to town because they drank too much at the previous place. But KBIX, maybe KMUS, there was a disc jockey named Don Gilvert, I assume that was his real name, it may not have been. But he took a liking to me and I thought he had sage advice on a lot of things. And one of those was, he said, "Be interested in everything, learn as much as you can about everything, keep your eyes open and study people, and learn as much as you can about people and things. And you never know when opportunity hits. But if you have that kind of curiosity you'll be prepared for it and take advantage of it."

That's to me, the secret. To me, when I interview people, loyalty, honesty, and curiosity. Curiosity is very, very important when I look for people I want around me.

JE: Well, thank you.

JJ: Thank you, John. Good to talk to you again.

JE: I refer to you as Mr. Ambassador, but you're Jim. And, Jim, in the district they still revere you a lot. We used to enjoy our interviews on KRMG radio together.

JJ: Monday morning.

JE: While you were in Congress. Monday mornings, yes. I thank you for allowing me to take up your time here today.

JJ: No I'm delighted. Good to see you again.

JE: Thank you.

Chapter 27 - 0:33**Conclusion**

Announcer: (music) This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on *VoicesofOklahoma.com*.