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N B C - INTERVIEW BY BOB McCORMACK

SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY: Well, Bob, I am still somewhat in the state of shock that I haven't been able to really get myself functioning like I would like to. It is a real fact, and one that is very troublesome. I was at the, I should Mrs. Humphrey and I, were at the Chilean Embassy yesterday for a luncheon, by the way I don't believe I have accepted one luncheon in years to be away from the Capitol at noontime, but the Chilean Ambassador is a very kind and gracious man, and has been to my home state in Minnesota and I thought I ought to reciprocate, and at least accept an invitation. I was there with Ralph Dungan and others at Mr. Dungan being the late President's assistant, and the news came to us that the President had been shot at that time, wounded, and like others we hoped and prayed that the wound wasn't as serious as the first news reports indicated. And, of course, I received a telephone call from the White House and I was told that the President passed away. He had been killed. I then, all at once, it dawned upon me that the closeness of the relationship. This is something that I have been reflecting upon. I had worked with President Kennedy, I had been a colleague of his in the Senate, and as you all know I had been a contestant with him in the primaries, and then I became a lieutenant of the President's in the legislative program, and I worked very closely with him and had a very friendly

and warm personal relationship. But when that news came that he had been taken from us, that he had been shot, I stood alone in a hallway of the Embassy, and I am not ashamed to say that I just couldn't contain myself, I broke down and sobbed. Because it seemed like a bit of life had gone out of me. And then to try to tell others to come to the table and to tell the guests and the host that we had lost our President was very, very difficult. And so during that day of, yesterday, and this morning, it all seems like, it seems like its not reality. I keep hoping somehow or other that this is one of those moments that just isn't true, that it's unreal, that it's an ugly dream. But of course it is real, we have to face up to it. Mrs. Humphrey and I were at the airport, at Andrews Airbase last night when the President's body was brought back, I still my old friend and the President's intimate friend, Dave Powers, there with his beloved friend, President Kennedy, and Larry O'Brien and Kenny O'Donnell, these wonderful men who had worked with President Kennedy, and they were there with him until the very last moment. They were there as they tenderly and lovingly brought his body back to the Nation's capitol. And then Mrs. Humphrey and I saw Mrs. Kennedy, that poor lady, what she has gone through, losing her baby and now her husband, and the strength and the poise she demonstrates is an inspiration to all of us. I haven't had a chance to see her yet, Mrs. Humphrey hasn't, but I know that she realizes and knows that we are with her in spirit and in prayer and in sympathy. So

we later on during the night moved to see the new President, President Johnson. Now I want to say a word about him, is it alright, Bob.

BOB McCORMACK: Yes, of course, go right ahead. Please do.

SENATOR: All during my service in the Senate. I was a close friend of President Lyndon Johnson. You know that it's very difficult to change terminology because I've always thought of President Johnson as "Lyndon" but now it's President Johnson. And I know of his sterling qualities of leadership and his unique ability to perform the art of politics. He really is competent, a tactician, a born leader, he loves public service. And want to say one other thing about him. I watched him as the companion and the supporting arm of President Kennedy, our late beloved President. He was intensely loyal to President Kennedy. Maybe there were little things which were said that appeared to divide them---he never let that happen, nor did President Kennedy let that happen. I was with them morning after morning at breakfast, every Tuesday morning we'd have breakfast at the White House. I sat right next to President Johnson, the Vice President then, and just across the table from the President. I know the exchanges that took place and the warmth and feeling and the friendliness that was there and the give and take and the good humor, also the seriousness of purpose. I was there, I know, I literally rubbed arms with

the President and looked right across the table into the eyes of late President. And I want to say now so there can never be any doubt about it that the loyalty, the fruitfulness to the man that Vice President Johnson had at that time to President Kennedy was beyond doubt. It was marvelous. He was dedicated to him. And the Vice President was dedicated to President Kennedy's program, and he will continue to be. I happen to know that he will consider that one of the memorials that we can leave or give to President Kennedy is the fulfillment of President Kennedy's program. This is the living memorial. I watched Vice President Johnson as Vice President, I should say, go to great limits, almost beyond his strength to fulfill ~~pass~~ tasks for President Kennedy. So this spirit of understanding and friendship must be clearly understood in the American public and I think it is. And I want our friends overseas to know that in President Johnson you have one who worked alongside President Kennedy, you had one who was dedicated to the same program to the same international commitments, to the love of this Republic, to the love of freedom, all the freedoms, and I am, I must say that while our forefathers had such foresight in giving us a political system where there can be a transfer of power without a contest for power, without a struggle for power, where we had political institutions that can endure almost any kind of pain and crisis. God Almighty has been very good to us too. We have men that are trained for these jobs, and in America with Lyndon Johnson the President of the United States now we have a man now that is trained for the

job, that is an experienced leader, that is dedicated to political life and to the principles of democracy. We are fortunate, very very fortunate.

BOB McCORMACK: Thank you, Senator, and perhaps you'd like to stay for just a moment because I am going to switch to Peter Hackess out at President Johnson's home out in Spring Valley. Peter, are you there?

SENATOR: The leaders were at President Johnson's office for about 45 minutes while we had a very intimate personal talk with the new President pledging our loyalty and our support and our helpfulness. While I was there the phones kept ringing, I had no secretarial staff I had asked them to go to their respective homes, my office people knew President Kennedy, and they were terribly upset with this tragic loss. Those phones kept ringing and they were all long distance calls from out back in Minnesota, practically all of them, 2 other calls from friends of mine in New York, Chicago, and without exception the calls were filled with love for the late President, grief, sadness. I remember the last call which I took just before to my own home in Chevy Chase, Maryland, was from a gentleman who was a taxicab driver in St. Paul. He had finished work, and he had gotten home, and he called up and wanted me to know how he felt, and how his family felt. He wanted me to tell the family of President Kennedy how he and his family grieved for them. You know this is the kind of thing that tells a story of love and affection of a man, moreso than even head-

lines or anything those of us in public life can say. I just went home filled with emotion, not only because of the day, because of what people had told me, folks back home.

BOB McCORMACK: We are accustomed to hear/^{to considering}that the man next door, the neighbor, has a much warmer, much closer feeling to them. We always thought that, but it may not be true. Perhaps President Kennedy was a man next door to everyone.

SENATOR: I think that's very true, and also I sometimes feel that in the expression of freedom which we have in America, in this very free freedom we have, that sometimes we give the people the feeling that there isn't much respect for public office, or even for the high office of the Presidency. But you know when the moment of crisis comes like it did in the Cuban crisis did, or in a moment of tragedy comes like it did yesterday when President Kennedy was taken from us. Then all at once, you see the American people as they really are. Thoughtful people. Considerate people. Emotional people. Warm and friendly people. Their love for their President is genuine and sincere. Very, very much. I remember when President Roosevelt passed away. And I remember then the feeling of loneliness and personal loss. And I can remember when President Eisenhower was stricken with a heart attack, the feeling of concern came across the whole nation, and now I have witnessed this deep personal feeling that people have in our late beloved President Kennedy, and I can honestly tell you, Bob, I felt that just a part of my life had left me. As

I say I didn't even know that I felt that way. That's really the truth, I knew I thought a great deal of the President, and my relationships were extremely cordial, in fact just Wednesday of this week, we were joking and having a great time. I was walking with him over at the White House in the Rose Garden, and having a wonderful, wonderful visit, just like two friends would have. But then all at once when the terrible moment of tragedy comes, death takes your friend, then you realize that something is gone. And we articulate fellows find no words to explain it.

BOB McCORMACK: And yet with all of that, Senator Humphrey, as you said about President Johnson when he steps into the job, he no longer is Lyndon, he is Mr. President.

SENATOR: That's right, and he takes on entirely new responsibilities. He becomes a new person. I know that he will be come a fine president. And I say this without any lack of respect, with great respect for the one who is departed, that President Johnson has fine and great qualities of leadership for this nation. People throughout the world should be prayerfully grateful that out of the plain folk of this country comes a man that is so extremely well qualified for public service and leadership as President Johnson. And I have looked forward to working with him. I literally held his hand last night when I pledged my personal and public support to his efforts, because I know he needs it. Believe me, he needs it in this job.

BOB McCORMACK: You were one of those who has an extremely trying task of keeping the government at a time when actually you don't feel much like devoting time to it.

SENATOR: That's about right. Well, we'll keep the government going and we have jobs to do and work to do and a great many people. A great country like this must not only express its sorrow and its sympathy and its love and its affection but it must also stand strong and carry on, and I know that the greatest tribute and the greatest memorial that we could give to the memory of President Kennedy is to carry out what he started to do. He did so many great things, he revitalized our national power and he brought to us a new respect to the world. He contributed so much to the cause of peace and he has worked so hard for human dignity and human rights. All of these pledges and promises and all of these beginnings now we must continue and I am sure that we are going to be able to do that, because we have the continuity of leadership. Isn't that marvelous that we have a continuity of policy, philosophy and of program. I think this bodes well for the nation.

BOB McCORMACK: Well, thank you Senator Humphrey for a very revealing insight on something most of us hadn't had time to think about. Had neither the time nor the will to think about.

SENATOR: Well, you know, just as you were speaking I was saying to Bob McCormack here that I I was racing through my mind the very same

thought that this is one hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation. This is the Emancipation year, the centennial, and President Kennedy had taken such a brave and noble position on the issue of human rights. Not a position that was radical or was extreme, but one that was within the spirit of the Constitution, and the spirit of our philosophy of life and our way of life. And I am sure you realize and recognize that the now President Johnson was one of the most brilliant and one of the most dedicated and sincere spokesmen these of President Kennedy's Administration for the doctrine of human rights and for civil rights. It is most interesting to see how this man from Texas stood up on this great and fundamental issue of ours on human rights. I remember President Johnson's speech at Gettysburg which was right around the 4th of July, as I recall, and I was going to place it in the Record, the Congressional Record and somebody beat me to it. Someone was there first. But that was a remarkable speech. I want to get that out and read it again, because I was inspired by it at the time. This is the speech of President Johnson's in 1963. It was in the spirit of the Gettysburg Address of Abraham Lincoln, and both these great emancipators, Abraham Lincoln and President Kennedy were taken from us by the assassin's bullet, and as you may recall, President Lincoln was succeeded by President Johnson, and President Johnson was a borderstate man, as a I recall, from Tennessee. And he tried to carry out the policy of reconciliation with the South that was Abraham Lincoln's. And here is President Kennedy being succeeded by President Johnson from Texas. Very much the same situation.

BOB McCORMACK: Very much the same. Hadn't we overlooked the fact

that President Johnson had a great deal of responsibility getting through the last Civil Rights Act, the first one we'd had since the Reconstruction Days in '58?

SENATOR: I should say so. The first major piece of Civil Rights legislation that was passed in over 80 years, was passed under the leadership of President Johnson. And I want to say another thing. President Johnson was majority leader in the Senate, and he worked closely with the Republican President. I think we ought to understand that while we have our party differences in this country, that I have never known a responsible leader in this country, that didn't put his country above his party. And the warmth, and friendship, and the closeness of relationship between the former President Eisenhower and now President Johnson is a matter of record and history. It is a living fact today. And what a great thing it is because President Johnson ^{can}/call upon the experience of President Eisenhower and President Truman. President Truman was a warm good friend, and is today of President Johnson, and all of these great men who have given so much to their country, including President Hoover is who is in years now. They can all do so much now to our new President in advice.

BOB McCORMACK: Thank you once again Senator Humphrey. So now I think we'll give you a rest, and go back to Russ Ward in New York.

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