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Interview #5:
The Story Behind the Photograph
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RITCHIE: You mentioned that there were women who were strong influences in your life.

TAMES: Oh, yes, I think that women have had strong influences on politicians' careers as well as my own life. My wife and my daughters, of course, all had a great bearing on me. And that's why I'm a little apprehensive about Jesse Jackson and his campaign. I keep looking to see his wife next to his side, parrying off questions, and answering questions, and considering what her views are, what she's going to contribute to this would-be presidency. Of the women that I have been acquainted with, as far as politicians have been concerned, who have had a great influences on their husbands, Mrs. Frank Church had great influence, and Mrs. [Tom] Connally the old Texas senator, had great influence.

As I see them, the women who have had the greatest influence on the presidency, were Jacqueline Kennedy, Rosalyn Carter, and Mrs. Ford. I did not know enough about Mrs. Truman, she always stayed in the background but we kept getting hints that she was trying to straighten out the old man. Mrs. Roosevelt was in a category all to herself, because the length of the presidency of her husband was so long. The first years that the president was in the White House, I was not aware of the president or Mrs. Roosevelt. When I first became aware of her in 1939 and '40, by that time she had been in the White House eight years, nine years, and as a result her immediate family for all practical concerns were gone from the White House and she was becoming more of an independent thinker and doer. The president was involved in his own world, and so she went out and did her thing. I think she would have made a great president on her own, like Mrs. [Margaret] Thatcher. Those were the two women who I think of in my lifetime who I've considered capable of governing.

The other women were great influences, but I never thought of them as presidents. Mrs. Kennedy made wide use of the presidency, and helped her husband in many ways. Her sponsorship of art, redoing the White House, the numerous little things to bring a touch of family life into the White House, the snow scenes in the backyard--we talked about that earlier.

RITCHIE: Did any of these women ever comment to you about the photographs you took of their politician-husbands?

TAMES: No, not a one. Not a one ever mentioned it. In fact, I received a note from Mrs. Reagan when I made a picture of her, and I was giving her direction on how I wanted her to pose. She liked the

result, and she sent back a picture of me making a picture of her, and I've got my arm extended and I'm telling her what to do. She wrote on it, "See, George, I do know how to follow direction." I thought that was very nice on her part.

No, the women never commented one way or the other, except Mrs. Kennedy commented on the picture that I made of the president, "The Loneliest Job," because that was such an outstanding shot at that time, and subsequently, that she commented on it.

RITCHIE: What was her comment?

TAMES: That it was a very good picture, that it depicted the awful weight of the presidency, and that it would live forever. I kind of hope it does. I know it will long after I'm gone, the way it's hanging now in the Kennedy Library in Boston, occupying a whole wall.

RITCHIE: What was the story behind that picture?

TAMES: I was doing "A Day with the President." President Kennedy operated differently than any other president that I have been acquainted with, in that his personal office, the Oval Office, was open. All the doors leading into the president's office were open at all times. Very few times did they close that door. I can't say *all* the time, but every time I walked back it was always open, and I went back many times when there wasn't any photo op, or I was just going back to see the president. I'd make a request to see him, and he always was very gracious about giving me some time. One of the things about Kennedy was he appreciated the power of the media, and to my mind was the first president who really knew how to use us. He used us. We thought we were using him, but he was using us as much as we were using him.

I'd come up with an idea for a story, or a picture suggestion, or I was doing a story about someone and I wanted to photograph him with that person. So I was wandering back and forth quite open. The door leading to Mrs. [Evelyn] Lincoln's office, which was off the president's office leading towards the Cabinet Room, was always open, and days like today, a beautiful spring day, the doors leading out to the patio were wide open. They weren't even screened, so quite a few bugs would come in. The door leading off the office into the hallway was open, and the door going to his private little hideaway, which as you go into the Oval Office was on your right. A little room is back there that very few people know about. President Eisenhower had it set up as a little bedroom. After he had his heart attack, every time he felt tired he'd just go back there and lay down. Those doors were always open, so anyone walking in the hallway could stick his head into the president's office and see him, and if he wanted to speak to him he could, or if he just ignored him he'd go on.

Well, while doing this "Day," I got me a chair and I sat just inside the president's office, right smack up against, practically, the door going to the Cabinet Room. So I was in the office, but as far away from

his desk as I could possibly be. Sometimes, if a visitor was coming in that I thought might feel uneasy with me in the room, I would pick up my chair and go into the other room, but the door was always open. I'd keep sticking my head in to see what was going on.

President Kennedy's back was broken during the war, when that torpedo boat of his was hit by the Japanese destroyer. As a result of that injury he wore a brace on his back most of his life. Quite a few people didn't realize that. Also he could never sit for any length of time, more than thirty or forty minutes in a chair without having to get up and walk around. Particularly when it felt bad he had a habit, in the House, and the Senate, and into the presidency, of carrying his weight on his shoulders, literally, by leaning over a desk, putting down his palms out flat, and leaning over and carrying the weight of his upper body by his shoulder muscles, and sort of stretching or easing his back. He would read and work that way, which was something I had seen him do many times. When I saw him doing that, I walked in, stood by his rocking chair, and then I looked down and framed him between the two windows, and I shot that picture. I only made two exposures on it--we were very conservative with our film. Then I walked out of the room and stood there for a while, then I saw him straighten up. I went in again and I photographed him straight up, for a different shot, from the back, then I walked around to the side and photographed him profile, right and left.

He had a copy of the *New York Times*, he was reading the editorial page--and I have that print right here, I was looking at it just the other day. He looked over and he saw me. He hadn't been aware that I took that picture from back, but he saw me when I moved to the side there. He glanced over at me, and he said: "I wonder where Mr. Krock gets all the crap he puts in this horseshit column of his." Apparently he was much upset about Mr. Krock's column that day. So that was the occasion of that picture.

Also, I'd like to point out that he had such an eye for pictures that when I took the make-ready of that magazine--this picture was on page three of a three page photo lay-out and story that ran in the *New York Times*. Tony Lewis wrote the story on "A Day With the President." On the cover we ran a picture that I made from the Rose Garden looking into the president's office. That was the first time that had ever been done. I think McGeorge Bundy was sitting with him, I don't remember anymore to be honest. Anyway, the *Times* used that on the cover of the magazine. So I went in on a Thursday to show him the make-ready. I showed him the cover, and he said, "Very nice, very nice." Then he flipped over and started looking at the pictures. He flipped one page over. We had pictures timed from early morning until when he left at night. When he got to the third page and his eyes were wandering down he spotted this picture. It was a small size, right in the center, looked like it was three inches by four inches, or something like that. He put his finger on it, and looked over at me and said: "This should have been on the cover." It struck him right off that he knew that was an important picture and that it was not being played properly. That's the history of that shot.

Oh, by the way, Ted Kennedy today wears the same kind of brace because of his back injury in that airplane crash. One day I walked in on Ted and he was doing exactly what the president had done. But

he was in the offices of his committee, Judiciary, and he was leaning over a desk with his hands stretched out like his brother had done. It's incredible how the Kennedys all look alike from the back. You add forty more pounds to President Kennedy, and you've got Teddy--from the back.

RITCHIE: It's a remarkable picture. You wouldn't guess from looking at it that he was reading the newspaper.

TAMES: Well, whether he was reading the paper when I made the picture I don't know. He had a stack of other documents he was working on. He would work that way, turned around standing. So whatever he had been working on when he was sitting, he just simply took it and reversed it. He had his papers there, but when I went back in after making that first shot--it must have been three or four minutes before I went back in--whether he was reading the paper at the time that I walked in on him, I don't know. I know that I have repeated that story many times as a joke, and for impact I've always said he was reading the editorial page of the *New York Times*, particularly when he made that comment about Mr. Krock. When you repeat this story to other newsmen who have known Mr. Krock, they just break up. So I did that as sort of a joke, but whether he was actually reading it at the time I took it, I don't know. But I know he was reading the Krock column about three or four minutes later, when I walked back in the second time.

RITCHIE: You had also mentioned, when we talked on the phone the other day, that reading the first interview reminded you of your breakfast with Richard Nixon.

TAMES: Oh, yes, that was the interview that I had with Richard Nixon when I came to Chicago from Indianapolis. In our first interview, did I mention that I went out there with [Robert] Taft or not?

RITCHIE: No, you just mentioned that you had met Nixon on the street and chatted with him, but you did not mention Taft.

TAMES: Well, see just before that I went west for the Republican Convention in Chicago by traveling with Taft, who was the front-runner for the nomination, and literally had it wrapped up. Everybody kept saying that he had it wrapped up, just as much as they say George Bush has it wrapped up today. And he had just as many delegates, according to his own count, but there were some disputed delegations in the South. There were some rules under the Republican party, there was some gray area there, but by and large he had them. I went west with him and we ended up out there in Indianapolis. After we finished that rally, the next morning very early we took a train--Taft took a train to Chicago. Here he was the front-runner and there was no media with him. Maybe one or two people who met him in Indianapolis and covered him there during that big rally in that very hot, hot ballroom at the hotel. We were just incredibly sweating. He was in his shirt sleeves, wiping that bald head of his.

We came aboard the train and I was with him. There were three or four reporters and he told them he

would see them later in Chicago. They went off to the dining car, and he looked over at me and said, "Come on in." So I sat with him all the way to Chicago--here I am a shirttail photographer. I made a couple of pictures of him working on these tally sheets he had. He kept adding them up and adding them up from every direction and he kept saying, "I've got them." "I've got them." Somehow the figure 1604 sticks in my mind, whether that was how much he needed, or that's how many he had, but he said, "I've got them here." He said, "I think I'm going to get the nomination on the first ballot." We arrived at the Union Station in Chicago, only to be met by this huge throng of young people, young college students, all carrying banners and shouting in unison: "Thou Shall Not Steal." Apparently the Republican credentials committee was going to meet the next day to take up the question of Taft's southern delegates, which were critical to him.

Somehow it had been plotted by Eisenhower's supporters and it was a very successful campaign. Whatever the merits of Taft's claim, he ended up losing his delegates. As a result he never got it. They were so close in delegates that I think the southern delegation between winning the nomination and losing the nomination, and Taft lost it strictly on that "Thou Shall Not Steal" campaign. He never got over it. For the year that he lived after that, increasingly he was less active politically and very hurt. He took the rejection of his party very hard, in my opinion, and deservedly so, because if anyone fought the battles in the vineyards of the Republican party it was "Mr. Republican" himself, Mr. Taft, there was no question about that. And here was this upstart of a general coming along and stealing the nomination. I think Adlai Stevenson would have whipped Taft, so the Republicans in their wisdom--the same damn way that Democrats in their wisdom today are not about to nominate Jesse Jackson--knew they would lose going away.

RITCHIE: Did you tell Nixon this story when you met him?

TAMES: Oh, yes, coming back to Nixon--see, there in my Byzantine Greek way my mind just goes drifting, as my wife always says, I go drifting--what happen was that after this incident, Ike got the nomination or it was a foregone conclusion. Then the question who was going to be Ike's vice presidential nominee. Well, I was just coming out of the Drake Hotel when a cab pulled up and out jumps Senator Nixon. I said, "Hi, Senator, how are you?" And he said, "Hi, George, what's going on?" "Not much," I said. "I think it's pretty well wrapped up and Ike has got the nomination." He said, "I figure as much, but who's got the vice presidential nomination?" I named about three names, but the one I concentrated on was Henry Cabot Lodge. I said, "Lodge is the logical one. He's got the inside track on that, and rumors seem to be that he's going to be it." Nixon said, "Yeah, well what are you doing now?" Nothing, I said. He said, "Come on and have breakfast with me."

So we went down and sat, Nixon and I, and had a long breakfast, in which he probed my mind as to what I had been hearing, and what was going on, and what everyone heard. I just frankly talked to him the way we're talking now, based on what I had been hearing, to make conversation in a friendly way. I've always wondered if at that moment whether he knew that he was being considered or not, and that

he was just testing me to see what rivals he might have, or whether it came as a complete surprise to him a little later. I've always wanted to ask him. One of these days if I can get next to him somewhere I'm going to ask this one question, whether he knew at that moment that he was under consideration for the vice presidency.

RITCHIE: What sort of a man was Nixon, especially in private in a meeting like breakfast, or when you saw him as a senator or vice president?

TAMES: Well, you know I first met him as a member of the House. I first made some pictures of him early, around the Tidal Basin, riding his bicycle with his wife, around cherry blossom time.

RITCHIE: I've seen that picture.

TAMES: I wasn't the only one that made it. I think AP or UPI did too. I think we were there, we spotted him, or he spotted us, and made a point of coming to us. So it was a good picture, very nice. Then I got to know him very well during the Communist hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, because he became a favorite member for us photographers, who were limited in the different types of pictures we could get. Getting a witness talking got to be pretty boring after a while. But Nixon was a probing member, and we could always sense that he wanted his picture made, and would get into a situation that would oblige us and further himself. What we would do was to try to get him into any kind of situation.

I remember one time sliding along the dais, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, and leaning over to him and whispering: "Bring the witness up to you." Then I backed off. What I wanted him to do was to bring the particular witness, who was showing off some particular papers, up to the dais, so then we could get a picture of Nixon looking at the papers with the witness there. The chairman was Parnell Thomas, a big guy, he was a gross looking fellow. Anyway, we would ask Nixon to do that, and he would do it. We'd all stand by, and in about five minutes, or ten minutes, the first thing you'd know, Nixon would ask this man to come up. And when he did so, snap, snap, everybody concentrated on the shot and we made it, and it would make the front page the next day.

Personally, he was very likable, always willing to stop and have a cup of coffee and inquire about us. Then when he found the Pumpkin Papers and all the hullabaloo, we knew we had a live wire here. He was the Joe McCarthy of that period, always looking for the cameras and always willing to spout anything that would get your attention. Then Nixon ran against Helen Gahagan Douglas for the Senate, and it was such a vicious campaign that my own liberal feelings were offended. But at the same time we remained very good friends. To this day I think we are. I don't see him that often. But Mrs. Nixon was very nice, and the children were small, two and three years old, I saw them around. I never campaigned with him, but later as vice president he would have us over to his house. I remember one particular occasion where one of his daughters put on a tutu and did a little ballet dance for us. She was in the

second or third grade. It was very personal.

I found that even though I instinctively wanted to be anti politically, you know that in your business you're supposed to be neutral: shoot and observe what you see. But it's practically impossible not to try to improve on situations when there's someone you favor, and not take a person who you disfavor and make him look bad, but only shoot what they're doing at that moment without trying to editorialize a little bit and improve situations. The light might not be as flattering as it would be if you move him fifteen feet away, but you just don't bother to move, you just shoot it the way it is. But by and large I have no personal complaints about Nixon.

In his later years, I kept thinking Nixon was hitting the bottle a little bit. He would make me promises and never keep them. Particularly when I was president of the White House Photographers for three years, and those three years he never came to our annual dinner. I was looking forward to presiding over a dinner with the president of the United States, and he made a point of telling me the second time that it wasn't me or the *New York Times* but there were circumstances that he just couldn't make it that year. But he put his arm around me as I was leaving his office and said, "I'm going to be there at your next one." So I made full plans for the next one. At that time I had brought the five members of the original twenty-eight that had started the White House Photographers Association in 1921, who were still alive in 1971. I don't think but one is alive today, if not they're all dead. They came in to see the president and we presented him with a gift that we had for him.

I took my camera and said, "Here, Mr. President, you make a picture of the five surviving members." And he did. We published that picture as publicity. The next thing I got the idea that since he was coming the next year, that we were going to make a real to-do about it. We added a special photo category to our annual contest. It was called "President's Class." Not presidential, we had that ourselves. But only presidents were eligible to enter the "President's Class." And since we had only one entry, that's the picture he made of the five, that he won. In so doing, he was to receive a plaque stating this, like all other winners, and he was to receive a gold dipped--we didn't get him solid gold--White House news photographers pass, with his name on it, signed by me as president, making him a member. We were to present that to him first, then declare him a winner. We had this all in our annual, listed the whole event.

At the same time, I thought since this was my swan song as president after three terms that I was going to do something special on top of all this. I went to Tiffanys and had them engrave a dozen cuff links, 18k gold cuff links, with the White House on the cuff links and the date, 1971, and our initials, for which Tiffany, if I recall, charged me something like eight hundred dollars for the dozen cuff links. I kept one for myself; I gave one to my vice president; one for every officer in the organization; and one for the chairman of the dinner committee. And we had Nixon's ready to give to him. Needless to say, he didn't show up. So to this day, if you want to see his cuff links, his plaque, and his citation, I'll show them to you. I have them downstairs. I figure if that bugger wants them, he can come to my house and

get them. I'll present them to him right here in my living room, but I'm not going to deliver them to him!

RITCHIE: I remember very vividly the White House Press Photographers' annual exhibit that they put up in the first floor gallery of the Library of Congress.

TAMES: Oh, that's a great place.

RITCHIE: When Nixon was president, they had some of the most uproarious pictures of him. They somehow managed to catch him in some of the funniest looking positions. For a man who wanted to be photographed, he somehow seemed uncomfortable and unnatural in so many of his poses. What was it about Nixon?

TAMES: Of course, his was a face that cartoonists had a field day with. It was those jowls and that sloping nose. He was conscious of that, and the very fact that he sweated so profusely. You could get pictures of him with the long lens with the water just rolling off of him. I wonder if sometimes if he had the same type of mind that I have, in the sense that it races so that your mouth cannot keep up. As a result, you stumble. And you have that detached look in your eye, where you are actually hearing your mind, which is way ahead of your mouth. That's what I thought he was doing. As a result, you could see that he was hesitant. It's a good way to study the people, through that lens.

RITCHIE: To go to a Congressional photograph, as we were coming up the stairs today I was reminded again of one of my favorites among your photographs, which is the picture of Frank Church and John Stennis in a committee room. It's a wonderful picture that says so much about senatorial chairmanships, and power, and generations. What was the story behind that picture?

TAMES: There's a situation again where I doubt if any other photographer will ever have the opportunity to repeat, because nobody's going to have the access that I had. It's just impossible with the mass of the media. I could ask to go backstage, so to speak, and photograph members in meetings, and do it without causing a tremendous amount of flack. This picture was made at a meeting of the Democratic Senatorial Steering Committee, who were then deciding and voting on chairmanships for the new Congress. It was the Congress before Church ran for president, which had to be the nomination that Carter got, which had to be twelve years ago. Since he wanted to run for president, he wanted to be chairman of a committee that was going to put him in the forefront and make his name known even more so than it had been. So he wanted to be chairman of the Senate committee to investigate the CIA. That was being talked about, and he thought that would be a very good platform for himself and his political ambitions.

While he was in this Steering Committee room, with all these senators milling around, he was lobbying for the job. He walked up to Senator Stennis, who was a powerful member of the Steering Committee, and also a very powerful senator on the floor to this day, who by the way some members were touting

to be chairman of such a committee to investigate the CIA. They thought that particularly southern senators would look with favor on this, plus the fact that they thought that Stennis had the judicial background, being a former judge, to bring a little bit more weight than Senator Church or anybody else. See, there were several people besides Church who were running for the position.

I had just photographed Church making the same request of another senator. Then all of a sudden he spotted Stennis and he walked over and said, "Senator, I am seeking to become chairman of the committee to investigate the CIA, and I'm soliciting your vote." With that, Stennis drew himself to his full height and looked down his nose, with that patrician type of air, and said, "Senator, I will not vote to investigate the CIA. However, if my views do not prevail, I shall vote for you for chairman." So he did get Stennis' vote. It's always been my observation, too, around the Hill, is never take any vote for sure. You always ask a person to vote for you, even though they've told you before that they were going to vote. You ask them again, and you make damn sure that they know and are coming around to vote for you. Never take any voter or vote for granted.

So that's how that came about. It ran on the front page of the *New York Times*, which prompted a letter from Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, who wrote me. She wrote: "I have been an observer of the political animal all my life, and this is the finest example of the species." I've always treasured that picture and that quote.

RITCHIE: It's a wonderful moment. Again, we talked the other day about the difficulties in capturing the legislative process, but here you have personalized it in those two very different figures. If it hadn't have been for the combination of the young, handsome looking, and older, patrician-looking senators, the picture wouldn't have had the same impact, but those two faces up against each other said so much.

TAMES: The pleading of Senator Church. You could see his deference to Senator Stennis.

RITCHIE: And Stennis' chin makes its own statement.

TAMES: Yes, being a politician himself, Senator Stennis realized that Church would make a good chairman.

RITCHIE: The Senate is such a verbal place that it seems as if another battle that a photographer has to fight is how to capture a verbal institution in a picture, a non-verbal way. That picture did it.

TAMES: See, you can only shoot in so many places. And when I showed up, there were very few places where we could shoot: outside the Capitol, special committee rooms, never on the floor. I have photographed senators on the floor in the forties, but without the Senate being in session. I've done the same thing with the House, even as late as the Nixon era. But you are never allowed to work the floor, you can't shoot from the balconies. I told you how I tried when Kennedy was assassinated, and they took my film.

Did you ask me what made a great photographer? I think that question came up down at the Smithsonian Associates when I gave them a lecture about three weeks ago. I immediately said, "I'm not a great photographer. I've been a lucky one, just as lucky as Eisenhower was that World War II came along--otherwise he'd have retired as a colonel History would never have had more than a footnote on him, the fact that he was an aide to General MacArthur." If there was one thing that distinguished me from my colleagues, and I do consider about fifteen of them in this city to be my equal--none my better, but my equal--that none of those fifteen have the sense of history that I bring to this business, and the views that I have. That makes a difference.

It's one thing to shoot something by blind luck, and another thing to shoot something knowing that what you are doing is a footnote--and sometimes a big, big step--in the notes of history. You can see that in this house, with all this stuff: that pile of Truman negatives over there that I rescued, that the *Times* was going to throw out because they didn't have any use for them anymore. Too bad that people like yourself were not around at that time. We could have saved a lot of history. They threw out glass plates going back to before World War I. Incredible destruction.

RITCHIE: Tell me, with your sense of history, and your fifty years of watching the Congress, how would you say that Congress has changed over the years? What's different about the Congress now than when you first started going up there in the late thirties and the forties taking pictures?

TAMES: It's become more and more show biz. More and more playing to the eye of the TV camera, which is not a bad situation as far as I'm concerned. However, when you start deciding how you're going to appear on the tube, it takes away a lot. That's why I think it would have improved the Senate by limiting senators to two terms only. I mentioned that once before. You know that you are only going to be in for two terms consecutively, then if you want to come back you've got to make a record for yourself to be reelected. I think they're playing too much Hollywood. It's reflected in their outlook.

RITCHIE: Well, you had some flamboyant senators in the forties, like the Vandenbergs and the Connallys, who were conscious of their image and posed for photographs. Were they all that different from the ones who are running out looking for the television cameras now?

TAMES: Well, in those days you could count on one hand the people who were like that. Today it takes both hands and your toes. That's the big difference. The young ones coming along are polishing their images and not trying to appear the buffoon. Tom Connally of Texas used to put on some of his best acts on the floor of the Senate, in his populist views. I remember one time when they were debating the price support for cotton, I was there watching him and the whole Senate was laughing. Connally was walking up and down in the well area describing the poverty of the poor cotton farmers who literally had to hold their pants because of the holes in them when they walked down the street,. He grabbed his pants, and he was a massive man anyway, and he was walking around with his hand

shoved up his butt practically. That was flamboyant.

I think one good thing about TV has been that statements made by the senators on the floor today are carried on TV and they no longer can rub them out of the *Record*, so that there's no mention of them anywhere. The beautiful English, Shakespearean prose of some of the senators in the *Record* belies their actual deliverance. What a difference some of them made! Bilbo could never have gotten away with some of the remarks he made on the floor, because they would have been carried by TV and you could *not* have ignored it. They would have to be put in the *Record*, instead of the whole Senate unanimously agreeing to drop it. You can't do that.

Did I mention my idea about the president being invited to debate? Well, I think the members of the Senate should have only two consecutive terms. Members of the House should have six consecutive terms. Twelve years for the House, twelve years for the Senate. Then they can go out and come back. That is a reform that I think would eliminate a lot of problems coming from money being generated to run for campaigns that cost millions and millions, every year getting higher and higher, because you know you're not going to run the next time and it's up to the other fellow. This also creates a vast pool of ex-members who know how government works and they will be able to guide from the outside, that's been my feeling. I also thought that as a compromise on the parliamentary system, I've thought about this for a long time, that the Senate should be empowered under a two-thirds votes of the members present and voting, to request the president of the United States to come down and debate the issues of the day. That to me would be a tremendous improvement. See, by having a vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting you just can't get a group to suddenly jump up and say we want the president to come down and talk about this. They have to think it out.

This would accomplish two things, you could test the president, how he thinks on his feet and what his answers are, and so forth. This would also eliminate a lot of those press conferences, where questions are being shouted at him by media personnel who are making a name for themselves by badgering the president, and then saying they're doing it only because he won't hold press conferences. Sure, he won't hold press conferences, but I think you just say that he doesn't hold press conferences, don't start yelling at him, particularly this president, who I'm convinced at times does not hear the question. I find it now, I'm seventy years old coming up and my hearing isn't as good.

We used to laugh at Eisenhower for not being able to hear in one ear very well. We caught on early and we used to get some of those great expressions on his face by asking him to do something. I'd say, "Mr. President would you do ba de ba do ba do?" And he'd say "Hah?" Then he'd cock his head and open his eyes and just tilt. I find myself tilting my head, and words do run together and mumble.

So it's unfair, but there should be a lot more communication with presidents. They should do, if they possibly could with this man, the way that Jim Hagerty did with Eisenhower. He put Eisenhower in a press conference every Wednesday, *every* Wednesday, to such an extent that after about two months

of this, a delegation of reporters went in and said, "Make him shut up. That's all he's doing is talking, and we're just going crazy writing what the hell he's saying. Just cool it." That was from one extreme all the way t this man. He's never made a pretense of being an intellectual. He's never made a pretense of having a mind that was quick and agile and could answer in a superfluous sort of way some of the--for a better word I'll say scatological questions. I feel embarrassed by my colleagues, and I just turn my head away and say, "Oh, God, not this! Is this what we're meant to be?" They say, "Well, that's our democratic tradition." Yes, I don't say don't print what you want, or what you feel. You can even print downright lies, it's been done. But don't censor.

RITCHIE: Speaking of what to print, and what to censor, having been associated with the newspapers all these years, do you think that the Congress has been well reported by the press, the *Times* and other papers and the media.

TAMES: Yes, in particular the *New York Times*. But at this moment I have detected a trend in the *Times* to put less emphasis on the committee hearings, which are the bread and butter, and really where most of the action takes place on the Hill. They only pick and select, whereas at one point they were saturated. However, I would have to qualify that by saying that the moment the *Times* started doing that a new industry was created that does it. You have the *Congressional Quarterly* and your special regional bureaus, including one that was established by an ex-writer for the *New York Times*, who have reporters assigned on the Hill to report on each state. They also assign reporters for each subject. So they are writing, and they are reporting back, but it's being reported on a local basis and not on a national basis. When papers like the *New York Times* start deciding that certain hearings are not worth covering, or not worth the print, their readership is not interested until they develop it. But by and large yes.

By and large the Congress has been covered fairly and objectively. Particularly by the *New York Times*, and I have read quite a few papers in my time. You know, the *Washington Post* has a great reputation and is making a lot of money, but it still doesn't touch us. They're behind us. They follow us. Every once in a while they'll have a story or something ahead of us, they'll jump on it. They always pride themselves on first jumping on Watergate, but we knew it. We were on the story from the beginning, but we considered it more of a local break-in. I'm sure that the *Post* thought about it that same way, at least at the beginning. You were going to say something?

RITCHIE: I was going to ask you who you thought was the best Congressional reporter during your career. Who really captured the flavor of it in print the way you did in pictures?

TAMES: Oh, if you want to do it that way it would have to be in poetic prose, and that would have to be Russell Baker. He covered the Hill with the eye of a poet, and he did great work. Tom Wicker did a good job. Who was the one who was such a great friend of LBJ's?

RITCHIE: William White?

TAMES: White! White did a very good job. I used to read all of his stuff. Several of the *New York Times* reporters have covered it more than adequately, but I can not conjure them up by name at the moment, thinking back. Of course, a political commentator who has never been equaled was Mr. Krock. Scotty Reston will never be forgotten.

RITCHIE: What kind of feedback did you get from people like Krock and Reston, who were heads of the Washington bureau? How did they respond to your photographs, and how they fit into what the Washington bureau was sending to New York?

TAMES: Well, Scotty Reston was the first bureau chief to really become enamored of the photograph. He was aware of what the camera could do, but more importantly he was in a way envious of my entree because of that little box. He could not get into some of those places that I got into. He always used to make a comment, he'd say, "George, with that little box you're getting into some places and doing the things I can't do." I'd come back and tell him in sort of a general way, or if I had permission to I'd repeat, what I had heard or seen. Mr. Krock just thought that pictures were a nuisance. The written word was all. Sure, I've got his *Memoirs* right here. In fact, I read them again just before I started mine. His is sort of a first version of Hendrick Smith's *The Power Game.* He relates his experiences with the figures of his time, and the power plays that took place, but they were nothing compared to what's going on today. The country is just the world capital and things are just happening here.

We never had to worry about the Japanese after we whipped them once, now they're whipping us and we're trying to figure out a way of getting back at them. I don't know if we ever will. With my experience with the Japanese as makers of cameras, and how they snuck up on the Germans, as unassuming as possible, in a quiet way, making superior goods, and then slipping them in slowly so that they did not cause alarm, until it was too late. Now, the Leica and the German optic industry will never catch the Japanese at the rate they're going. The same thing applies to our automobiles. I doubt if we will ever be able to capture back that market that we have let them get here. As far as economics are concerned, I think they are going right down that same path. The Japanese are smart enough to let us have just enough so that we don't rebel, but at the same time keep us on the string. That's exactly where they've got us right now.

We're just caught in a Catch-22 situation. We ask for them to take up the slack and start paying for their own defense, and the Russians on the other side are starting to yell: we're going to cut back, you don't have to do it. We tell the Europeans. . . that's one thing else about Mike Mansfield. If Mike Mansfield and I talked once, we talked a hundred times on the need to bring our troops back from Europe. This was twenty years ago that we first started talking about it. He said, "Let us set a time limit, let us say we're going to do it. I say, do it in five years, but if you say do it in twenty-five years, and we compromise on fifteen," he said, "at least we've got a cut off date so the people in Europe will know that fifteen years from now all our troops are going to be out." All this talk about committing ourselves,

that the Europeans know we're committing ourselves because we've got a lot of troops there, is a lot of crap. If it's to our interest to commit ourselves, we're going to commit it. And if it's not to our interest, we never will. The same thing applies to the European countries. We can no longer count on them as friends simply because we're handing out money, or we have a nuclear umbrella over them. Let them do it on their own. If they want to face the Russian bear, or if they'd rather be red than dead, that's their prerogative. It's not up to us to say, "No, you should be dead rather than red." I think they should go and get out. I don't mean just pack up, but say, "We're going to leave in five years." Give them ten years! Look, we've been there fifty now. How much more do we do? Do we stay there like the Roman legions, and then have our own troops become more European than they are American?

Earlier you heard me say that I'm the same liberal Democrat I've always been all my life, but these are not Democratic statements that I'm making now. I read somewhere that one of the French philosophers, I believe it was Voltaire, who said that if a person is not a liberal at the age of sixteen they have no heart, and if they are not a conservative by the age of sixty they have no brains. I'm just wondering whether I'm acquiring brains! Well, anyway.

RITCHIE: But you haven't lost heart, either.

TAMES: No, thank God for that.

RITCHIE: Well, it's been interesting for me to see the Congress from your point of view, through the camera's lens. There's no one who comes anywhere close to equaling your record in terms of . . .

TAMES: Continuous service.

RITCHIE: And the people you have known and had a chance to photograph.

TAMES: You have to remember also, I keep referring to fifty years. This will be fifty years when my book comes out. Actually I started in 1940, so it's forty-eight years to the present time.

RITCHIE: Well, even longer, because you've said that you watched the Capitol Dome from your bedroom window as a child.

TAMES: Oh, yes, but I'm talking in terms of coverage. Listen, the Capitol Dome was my early imprint. They say that birds and ducks and animals imprint on humans if they see them first, and they get to think they are humans. A donkey raised with giraffes thinks he's a giraffe, and a midget raised with the giants thinks he's a giant. Maybe in retrospect some of the midgets in the Congress today consider themselves giants simply because they are occupying the seats that were held by the giants.

It's a very interesting institution. Nothing like it in the world. The Israelis like to think that they are like

us, but they are not. Also their self-interests are different, their form of government, although patterned on ours, suits their unique views. Of course, what we are today, I'm sure the Greeks were not thinking of as a result of their form of government, however for their times they had the answer. I think for our times we have the answer. Like Churchill said, this is the worst form of government ever created by man, but it's the best so far we've come up with. If that's the case, then I think we'd better watch our step, and watch what is happening. History has to be very, very careful, particularly with these so-called "kiss and tell" books, a lot of self-serving horseshit is being dished out. I was very pleased to read in the *Post* today, one of the columnists was pointing out that in Don Regan's book he had some glaring errors as to fact. He described the President's inaugural in '81 as being cold and blustery and overcast and rain and so forth. Hell, it was a beautiful day. Maybe he read the wrong horoscope!

Well, it's been a very interesting conversation again.

RITCHIE: Thank you.

End of Interview 5.